



In this chapter we are able to see how the Princes of Israel all brought offerings. These offerings were brought for the dedication of the Altar. They brought these offerings on the same day that the Tabernacle was set up. The Tabernacle had been constructed and this is recorded Exodus 39 and 40. It was set up by the priests, but we read throughout this chapter that it was Moses who set the

Tabernacle up, he reared up the Tabernacle, fastened its sockets, set up the boards, reared up the pillars; these were objects which required wagons to transport them, and therefore would have required more than one strongman to lift. So it was not in fact Moses who physically set up the tabernacle but he was responsible for the assembling of it, and it was finally erected on the first day of the first month of the second year. The Tabernacle foreshadowed the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus also as types, patterns and shadows as the word of God, the logos was reared up at the beginning of time; *for by him were all things created, he is before all things and by him all things consist* (Col 1:17) ... the law prefigured Jesus' life and death in precise detail. The law itself though, was only a means to an end, not a means in itself. In the same way the Tabernacle and law prefigured Christ, so too did Moses and his work of manufacturing the Tabernacle and establishing it, prefigure the work of the high priest. Moses could not enter into the Tabernacle once it had been completed, for the glory of God instead entered into the house and the Tabernacle became God's dwelling place. Moses' role had been fulfilled. God spoke out of the Tabernacle after it had been anointed and dedicated, and He gave Moses the portion of the law- Leviticus - from out of the Tabernacle. After God had finished speaking, all obeyed God and the camp way of life sprang into action as God had pronounced. All the children of Israel went about organising themselves pitching their tents in the correct prescribed location. The Levites then gathered near to the Tabernacle to receive the commissions and order of work, their duties and service, how they were to have differing responsibilities with transporting, dismantling and re-erecting the Tabernacle. Finally before concluding, God gave all the children of Israel one final reminder of the direction of their life journey towards Him - the ultimate way to please Him in the possibility of a full dedication to God in the devotion of the Nazarite. Every Israelite from whatever tribe, all could be priests and kings in this kingdom of God. We see how God commanded Moses to command Aaron and his sons to bless the nation Numbers 6:24-27:

*The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them.* After this wonderful blessing given to Aaron and his sons, the same day, this spirit of graciousness and holiness would have filled the people as they rejoiced to obey, and transformed themselves into an organised structure wonderful to behold. Millions of people working together as one. *How goodly are thy tents O Jacob, and thy tabernacles O Israel, as the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the riverside, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted* (Numbers 24:6) Each tribe had been given a Prince, a leader, men of renown in the congregation. These men filled with the grace of God willingly showed their generosity of spirit. We read of no commandment or edict being issued with regards to the offering for the dedication of the altar. The Princes, it appears, were not obliged to bring anything to the Tabernacle at this time. Instead it appears that they showed a marvellous display of leadership, spontaneity, understanding and fellowship. Leadership, in that though they had been elected princes of Israel, they knew all were called to be kings and priests, and that they were no better than any other Israelite before God, but as nominal leaders, because of the weakness of the flesh, they knew and desired to show the way in both thanking God and acknowledging His greatness, His kindness in providing a means for the nation to draw near to God and for them to be reconciled to Him. They showed understanding, that it was only through the shedding of blood that there is remission of sins. It was at the dedication of the altar that they brought their offerings, burnt offerings for dedication, sin offerings - acknowledgement of their natural state, peace offerings for Thanksgiving and gratitude. They showed spontaneity, not having been told to do this, but of their free will showed the way forward for the whole nation. They also showed their unity together. These princes of the tribes got together and worked together. They brought their offering six wagons and twelve

oxen. One wagon from two of the princes. There would have been no argument or quarrelling as they procured these wagons. Perhaps they had brought these wagons up from Egypt, or been recently made. But they were shared gifts. Moreover, each prince brought a separate offering. They each brought 1 silver charger, 1 silver bowl, 1 golden spoon. They brought 1 young bullock, 1 ram, 1 lamb of the first year for a burnt offering. They brought 1 kid of the goats for a sin offering. They brought 2 oxen, 5 rams, 5 male goats, 5 lambs of the first year for a peace offering. All twelve princes brought the same. We see their cooperation again in unity of mind. None allowed the luxury of self-satisfaction in giving more than another, or tried to out-do everyone else. They were representing the nation. There is no respect of persons with God. All are one in Christ Jesus. It is not what we give that counts but how we give. God had respect unto Abel's offering, for he gave with understanding and he gave the best. So the Princes of Israel on this occasion understood what they were doing. The gifts from the Princes to the Levites showed that they appreciated that the priests and Levites with their important duties had been given to the nation as a gift, and in response, as representatives of the nation they wanted to share that burden.

Moses distributed the wagons in accordance with God's earlier arrangements. The sons of Gershon received 2 wagons and four oxen to pull them. Their duty was to carry the curtains, the coverings, the tent itself, the pegs and cords, which was quite a heavy burden. The wagons would come in very useful. The sons of Merari had the duty of transporting the boards and pillars of the Tabernacle, the heavy sockets, the pillars of the coat with the pins and cords. A very heavy burden. The wagons would come in very useful. The sons of Kohath didn't receive any wagons. Their duty was to transport all the furniture of the Tabernacle, all of which had to be carefully covered with cloths of blue. All items of furniture had been designed to be carried by men, having staves fitted. So it was that it was decreed they would not have any wagons, as they had the privilege of carrying these items on their shoulders. It was a privilege and we do

not read of any complaints or sour grapes - it's not fair! The distribution of the gifts was accepted with grace. The burden to be borne was a privilege, one which was sadly forgotten and it took the tragic death of Uzzah the son of Abinadab, who was instrumental in the rough manhandling of the Ark on a cart. The ordained worship of God demanded respect, and He is holy as we should be, the lesson must not be lost on us. It was the Pharisees who relished in burden bearing as Jesus observed but only when it was others doing the work...Matthew 23:4 *For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.* The duties of life may appear burdensome at times, but Jesus said 11:28 *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

When the princes brought their offering, God decreed that they should bring their offerings day by day. Thus Nahshon the son of Amminadab brought his on the first day, Nethaneel the son of Zuar brought his on the second day and so on, so that the dedication of the altar took 12 days. The prince's came up in the same order that they were positioned around the Tabernacle about revealing their support in the order that had been instituted throughout the camp. Similarly in the offerings which they brought, we can see the same carefulness, as they behaved in a way appropriate for true disciples who were occupying 12 Thrones in Israel. 1 silver charger of the weight of 130 shekels, a silver bowl of 70 shekels. Both were filled with fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering. These were very large plates. The average dinner plate weighs about half a pound but these weighed 4½ pounds and were of solid silver - this gives us some idea of the size. In today's silver markets this will be worth around about £1000.00, showing that this gift was a significant donation. These plates would not be used inside the tabernacle, for all those utensils had to be made of gold. Instead, they would have

been used in connection with the altar of burnt offering, and would have reminded the nation of the work of redemption taking place. The smaller bowl which was given by each prince would have been used to carry liquid, perhaps for conveying the blood of the sacrifices. A golden spoon was also offered by each Prince, full of incense. The incense would have been taken within the sanctuary and offered up on the altar of incense as part of the dedication of the altar, the prince is on behalf of the congregation recognising that their cries of prayer to the Almighty will be heard through their high priest. The prince's brought one young Bullock and one ram and one lamb for the burnt offering. Rams were not normally used as burnt offerings except for on behalf of the high priest and for the people (see Exodus 29, and Leviticus 16:5) Revealing that the Princes were not just offering for themselves but also for the people. The peace offering was five times larger than the burnt offering. Five is the number of Grace in Scripture, the heads of the tribes showing deep gratitude for the grace that had been given them. The last time oxen were offered as a peace offering (Ex 29:5) was actually before the law had been given, as this was when Israel entered into a covenant with God at the foot of Mount Sinai when they said All that the Lord has commanded we will do! After Moses had blessed them, the elders of Israel sat down in fellowship (Exodus 24:9-11) *And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.* In giving oxen again for a peace offering the Princes were showing their understanding that the giving of the law, the tabernacle and the priesthood was the way in which God was continuing in fellowship with them.

The description of the giving of this offering is particularly repetitive. It is even summed up at the end of the chapter. Why could not this summary be all that was necessary to record? Why the seemingly tedious repetition? It is because a tally of every individual offering, and every donation to God is kept in the book of life, even if it is a

collective effort. Even the widows two mites counted. It is the graciousness of God that He does not overlook the effort each one puts in, - even if it is rather insignificant.

Brother Terry