

# NUMBERS

## Chapter 9

### *The Passover Celebrated*

**9** And 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 people of Israel keep the Passover at its appointed time. **3** On the fourteenth day of this month, at twilight, you shall keep it at its appointed time; according to all its statutes and all its rules you shall keep it.” **4** So Moses told the people of Israel that they should keep the Passover. **5** And they kept the Passover in the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight, in the wilderness of Sinai; according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so the people of Israel did. **6** And there were certain men who were unclean through touching a dead body, so that they could not keep the Passover on that day, and they came before Moses and Aaron on that day. **7** And those men said to him, “We are unclean through touching a dead body. Why are we kept from bringing the LORD’s offering at its appointed time among the people of Israel?” **8** And Moses said to them, “Wait, that I may hear what the LORD will command concerning you.” **9** The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, **10** “Speak to the people of Israel, saying, If any one of you or of your descendants is unclean through touching a dead body, or is on a long journey, he shall still keep the Passover to the LORD. **11** In the second month on the fourteenth day at twilight they shall keep it. They shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. **12** They shall leave none of it until the morning, nor break any of its bones; according to all the statute for the Passover they shall keep it. **13** But if anyone who is clean and is not on a journey fails to keep the Passover, that person shall be cut off from his people because he did not bring the LORD’s offering at its appointed time; that man shall bear his sin. **14** And if a stranger sojourns among you and would keep the Passover to the LORD, according to the statute of the Passover and according to its rule, so shall he do. You shall have one statute, both for the sojourner and for the native.”

**Ch 9** The census, instructions, and consecrations of chs 1–8 took place over c two weeks in 1446 BC. Israel would now observe its second Passover before leaving Sinai. (TLSB)

**9:1–14** This unit is in four parts: (1) the command to keep the Passover (vv. 1–5); (2) the question concerning those ceremonially clean (vv. 6–8); (3) the response of the Lord—giving permission for legitimate delay, but judgment for willful neglect (vv. 9–13); (4) the rights of the alien at Passover (v. 14). The first Passover was held in Egypt (see Ex 12). The second is here at Sinai a year later. Because of Israel’s rebellion and God’s judgment on her (ch. 14), Israel would not celebrate the Passover again until she entered the promised land (see Jos 5:10). (CSB)

**9:1** *first month of the second year.* The events of this chapter preceded the beginning of the census in ch. 1 (see 1:1). (CSB)

Nisan (Apr/May) 1446 BC. (TLSB)

**9:2** *Passover at its appointed time.* One who had not kept the Passover was to “be cut off from his people” (v 13). Some Israelites were unclean, thus excluded from participating in the Passover when it was observed on its regular day, the 14th day of the first month. Their dilemma was presented to the Lord (v 8). (TLSB)

**9:3** *twilight*. Traditional Jewish practice regards this period as the end of one day and the beginning of the next. (CSB)

**9:7** *why should we be kept from presenting the LORD's offering ... ?* Those with ceremonial uncleanness had a keen desire to worship the Lord with the other Israelites. (CSB)

**9:9–11** The Lord commanded the unclean to observe the Passover two weeks later, thus permitting all Israelites to undertake the journey into the wilderness, which began six days later. This special provision applied also when their descendants in the desert had strayed “on a long journey” (lit, “on a distant way”). However, the basic requirements of the Passover were not changed (vv 11–12). (TLSB)

**9:10** *he shall still keep the Passover*. God's gracious provision for these people was an alternative day one month later (v. 11) so that they would not be excluded totally from the Passover celebration. The Lord thus demonstrates the reality of the distance that ceremonial uncleanness brings between a believer and his (or her) participation in the worship of the community, but he also provides a merciful alternative. (CSB)

**9:12** *not ... break any of its bones*. When Jesus (“our Passover lamb,” 1Co 5:7; cf. Jn 1:29) was crucified, it was reported that none of his bones was broken, in fulfillment of Scripture (Jn 19:36). See also Ex 12:46; Ps 34:20. (CSB)

**9:13** *fails to celebrate ... cut off*. The NT also issues grave warnings concerning the abuse or misuse of the celebration of the Lord's Supper (1Co 11:28–30). (CSB)

Judged guilty and subject to punishment. (TLSB)

**9:14** *alien*. Must first be circumcised before participating in the Passover celebration (Ex 12:48). (CSB)

**9:1–14** God commands Moses to celebrate Passover anew as a memorial of His great deliverance. All people were to participate, even if they could not observe the event on the same dates. God reveals His grace in the Passover and in the exceptions He allows for its observance. Just as He continually sought the good and unity of Israel, He seeks our good and unity in the services of His precious Word, which describes our creation, redemption, and sanctification as His people through faith in Christ, our Passover Lamb. • Lord, we deserve death because of our sins. Yet Your Son's blood covers our sins and grants eternal life. Unite our hearts in the confession of this faith. Amen. (TLSB)

#### *The Cloud Covering the Tabernacle*

**15 On the day that the tabernacle was set up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the testimony. And at evening it was over the tabernacle like the appearance of fire until morning. 16 So it was always: the cloud covered it by day[a] and the appearance of fire by night. 17 And whenever the cloud lifted from over the tent, after that the people of Israel set out, and in the place where the cloud settled down, there the people of Israel camped. 18 At the command of the LORD the people of Israel set out, and at the command of the LORD they camped. As long as the cloud rested over the tabernacle, they remained in camp. 19 Even when the cloud continued over the tabernacle many days, the people of Israel kept the charge of the LORD and did not set out. 20 Sometimes the cloud was a few days over the tabernacle, and according to the command of the LORD they remained in camp; then according to the command of the LORD they set out. 21 And sometimes the cloud remained from evening until morning. And when the cloud lifted in the morning, they set out, or if it continued for a day and a night, when the cloud lifted they set out. 22 Whether it was two days, or a month, or a longer time, that the cloud continued over the tabernacle, abiding there, the people of Israel remained in camp and did not set**

**out, but when it lifted they set out. 23 At the command of the LORD they camped, and at the command of the LORD they set out. They kept the charge of the LORD, at the command of the LORD by Moses.**

**9:15** *cloud covered tabernacle.* The cloud was the visible symbol of the Lord's presence hovering above the tabernacle. That this was no ordinary cloud is attested not only by its spontaneous appearance at the completion of the setting up of the tabernacle, but also by the fact that at night it had the appearance of fire. The Lord also directed the movements of his people by means of the cloud (vv. 17–18). (CSB)

**9:17** *set out ... camped.* The final directive for the departure from Sinai and the journey in the wilderness gave explicit marching orders. The first of these came from God in the form of a cloud that had guided Israel on its way out of Egypt (Ex 13:21–22; 14:19–20). The cloud rested over the tabernacle after its completion, and now its future purpose is explained: to signal the breaking and making of camp (v 15; Ex 40:34–38). This function is here repeated and explained in greater detail because God, by this means, was about to lead His people to the Promised Land. (TLSB)

**9:18** *At the LORD's command.* The lifting and settling of the cloud are identified with the Lord's command. (CSB)

**9:23** *they kept the charge of the Lord.* The repetitious nature of vv. 15–23 enhances the expectation of continued complete obedience to the Lord's direction of Israel's movements through the desert. The role of Moses is mentioned for balance: Moses was the Lord's agent, who interpreted the movement of the cloud as signaling the movement of the people. The tragedy of their subsequent disobedience (ch. 11) is heightened by this paragraph on their obedience. (CSB)

Israel showed its trust in God's direction by obeying Him, even when He delayed their journey for a month or longer (vv 17–22; cf Ps 16:11; 27:11; 119:105; 139:3; 142:3). (TLSB)

**9:15–23** At God's directive, the Israelites move away from Mount Sinai. God's providential care is evident. The pillar of cloud/fire symbolizes His gracious hand over His covenant community. Today, God continues to care for His people, sustaining them on the journey of faith through His means of grace. • "Open now the crystal fountain Whence the healing stream doth flow; Let the fiery, cloudy pillar Lead me all my journey through. Strong deliv'rer, strong deliv'rer, Be Thou still my strength and shield; Be Thou still my strength and shield." Amen. (LSB 918:2) (TLSB)