

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Numbers 8:1-8

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. This week we will read Numbers chapter 8 and 9. Today we will read Numbers 8:1–8.

Numbers chapters 1–6 take place on the first day of the second month in the second year after Israel came out of Egypt. At that time, the Lord instructed Moses how to organize the Israelites into an army and how to appoint the Levites to serve in the work of the tabernacle.

Then, in Numbers 7, the timeline returns to the first day of the first month in the second year. When Moses erected the tabernacle and anointed the altar with the holy anointing oil, the twelve tribes of Israel came to present their offerings for the dedication of the altar. The dedication lasted twelve days, with one tribe presenting its offering each day.

Taking place simultaneously with the dedication of the altar was the ordination of the priests. This lasted for seven days, and beginning on the eighth day the priests officially began their ministry, serving for five consecutive days. By the time all twelve tribes had completed the dedication offerings, it was the twelfth day of the first month. The priests were now fully prepared, and the twelve tribes had all presented their offerings. We now arrive at Numbers 8, which records the events of the twelfth day of the first month, when God instructed Moses to consecrate the Levites to serve Him in place of the firstborn of Israel.

I repeatedly emphasize this timeline because I hope the saints will see that from the day the tabernacle was erected on the first day of the first month, God was busy, Moses was busy, and the Israelites were busy. First, the priestly system of ministry was established. At the same time, the leaders of the twelve tribes voluntarily presented offerings for the dedication of the altar. Finally, on the twelfth day of the

first month, the Levites were consecrated according to God's ordinance, so that by the fourteenth day, the day of the Passover, everyone would be fully prepared.

In this way, after entering the wilderness they could celebrate their first Passover there and offer sacrifices to God according to His ordinances. Following the Passover came the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread. After resting for that week, they arrived at the first day of the second month, when God commanded Moses to number the army, arrange the various ministries, and prepare to lead Israel from the Wilderness of Sinai into the wilderness journey toward the Promised Land of Canaan.

Verses 1–2: "And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 'Speak to Aaron, and say to him, "When you arrange the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light in front of the lampstand.'"

After the dedication of the altar was completed and the priestly ministry had been established, Moses was about to hand over the responsibility of managing the tabernacle to the priests.

We know that inside the Holy Place were the golden altar of incense, the golden lampstand, and the table of showbread, while inside the Most Holy Place was the ark of the covenant. Exodus 40:17–33 records that when Moses erected the tabernacle on the first day of the first month, he personally arranged every furnishing and utensil according to God's command, anointing each one with the holy anointing oil so that they became most holy. Twelve days later, Moses transferred the responsibility of caring for the tabernacle to the priests. In these two verses, God specifically mentions the golden lampstand as its representative.

The lighting of the lamps here was probably not the first lighting. Exodus 40:24–25 says: "He put the lampstand in the tabernacle of meeting, across from the table, on the south side of the tabernacle; and he lit the lamps before the LORD, as the LORD had commanded Moses." Therefore, Moses had already lit the lamps when he first erected the tabernacle according to God's command. What is happening now is the

transfer of that responsibility to the priests. Here, God especially emphasizes the function and spiritual significance of the golden lampstand. He told Moses to instruct Aaron that when the lamps were arranged, all seven lamps were to shine toward the front of the lampstand.

The lampstand stood on the south side of the Holy Place, while the table of showbread stood on the north side. The table held the twelve loaves of showbread, representing the twelve tribes of Israel. The phrase "in front of the lampstand" most likely refers to the north side. Thus, all seven lamps were to shine toward the north. When the priests replaced the showbread, they stood on the north side of the table. This meant the light shone in front of them, preventing their own shadows from blocking their view. This reveals the first function of the golden lampstand—to illuminate the priest's path of service so that he would not walk in his own shadow.

Since the golden lampstand was the only source of light in the Holy Place, if the light came from behind the priest, his own shadow would obscure his vision, making it difficult to carry out his ministry. Therefore, the light needed to shine in front of him. Spiritually speaking, Christ is the true Light, and the light shining in the darkness points out the path before us. Therefore, everyone who serves God must be careful not to let his own shadow block the light. Every one of us has fallen. We must confess and repent, removing every shadow of condemnation from our lives so that we may stand in the light. Only then can we serve God according to His commands.

Verse 3: "And Aaron did so; he arranged the lamps to face toward the front of the lampstand, as the LORD commanded Moses."

Aaron obeyed Moses, took up the responsibility of tending the lamps, and caused them to shine forward exactly as the Lord had commanded Moses.

When the priest stands in the light, with the light guiding him from the front, he is able to fulfill his ministry properly. Although Scripture does not explicitly state it, I believe the lampstand serves as a representative of all the ministry within the

tabernacle. Every aspect of service was being transferred from Moses into the hands of Aaron the high priest. From this point on, Aaron bore full responsibility for everything in the tabernacle.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:15, "Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house." A lamp must be placed on a lampstand in order to give light to everyone in the house. This tells us that every church must have its lamp burning. When the whole church is filled with shining light, no one remains in darkness.

Verse 4: "Now this workmanship of the lampstand was hammered gold; from its shaft to its flowers it was hammered work. According to the pattern which the LORD had shown Moses, so he made the lampstand."

This verse especially emphasizes how the golden lampstand was made. In Exodus 25:31–40, we see that Moses made the lampstand exactly according to the pattern God showed him on the mountain. It was fashioned from one talent of pure gold, and it was made entirely by hammering. The lampstand had a base and seven branches. On each branch were cups, ornamental buds, and blossoms. It was an extremely intricate and beautiful design, yet it was all formed simply by patiently hammering the gold.

Typologically, the golden lampstand represents the church. For the church to be formed into a shining golden lampstand, it must undergo the hammering work of the Holy Spirit. When the saints gather together to form the church, the faith within each believer is brought together into that one talent of gold. This united faith must be tested, just as gold is refined by fire until it becomes pure gold. Each time believers serve together, the Holy Spirit adjusts and shapes them through His hammering work. Gradually He forms the stable base, the upright shaft, the emptied cups, the rounded buds, and finally the beautiful blossoms. In this way, the golden lampstand is built. As each servant is filled with the Holy Spirit, it is like filling the lamp with oil. Then the lampstand can be lit, giving light to the whole household.

God specifically uses the golden lampstand as the representative before introducing the consecration of the Levites in the following verses. This teaches us that everyone who desires to serve God must meet two requirements. First, there must be light leading the way. Second, he must be fashioned by the Holy Spirit. As believers together become the testimony of one golden lampstand, everyone who serves must possess these two qualifications in order to fulfill his ministry properly.

Beginning in verses 5–19, God reveals to Moses how the Levites are to be consecrated for His service. Today we will stop at verse 8, focusing on the preparation of the Levites.

Verses 5–6: "Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 'Take the Levites from among the children of Israel and cleanse them ceremonially.'"

This took place on the twelfth day of the first month. God instructed Moses to select the Levites from among the Israelites. By this time, the leaders of the twelve tribes had already presented offerings on behalf of their tribes. The tribe of Levi was not included among those twelve tribal offerings. Now God turned His attention to the Levites. The Levites were those set apart to serve God. They were not to be organized into the army but were to devote themselves to the work of the tabernacle. Moses first selected the Levites and then cleansed them. God is a holy God, and those who serve Him must be holy.

Verse 7: "Thus you shall do to them to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purification on them, and let them shave all their body, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean."

The cleansing of the Levites involved three steps. The first step was to sprinkle them with the water of purification. Scripture does not clearly explain what this water was, and commentators generally offer two interpretations.

The first view identifies it with the water prepared from the ashes of the red heifer described in Numbers 19:1–10. Personally, I do not think this is likely, because God revealed that ordinance only after Korah's rebellion as the means of removing ceremonial uncleanness. The preparation of that water was quite elaborate, so it seems unlikely that it would have been required at the very beginning of the Levites' ministry.

The second view, which I find more convincing, is that it refers to the water from the bronze laver. Before the priests could minister, they had to wash their hands and feet at the laver before handling the holy things. Since the Levites assisted the priests in their ministry, it seems more reasonable that water from the laver was sprinkled upon them. As we have previously noted, the water of the laver represents both illumination and cleansing. It signifies that everyone who desires to serve God must first be enlightened by God's Word and washed by the cleansing water of His Word. The sprinkling of this water upon them shows that this provision comes from God Himself.

The second step was to shave their entire bodies. Hair represents man's natural life. Everyone who serves God must follow God's instructions completely rather than relying on natural ability or human methods. We need to recognize that serving in God's house is different from working in a company. We cannot bring worldly methods into God's house. Everything in the church must be carried out according to the pattern revealed in Scripture. Therefore, shaving off all the hair signifies putting away the natural man.

The third step was to wash their clothes. In Scripture, clothing often represents a person's conduct. Everyone who comes to serve must put off the behavior of the old man and put on the new man before he can serve God appropriately. Paul writes in Colossians 3:8–10, "But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him." Paul very practically tells us to put away the conduct of the old man and live in the

new man. In other words, we must wash our garments before we are fit to serve God.

Verse 8: "Then let them take a young bull with its grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil, and you shall take another young bull as a sin offering."

After the Levites had cleansed themselves, they were to bring three offerings. The first young bull was for a sin offering. This was not primarily for specific sinful acts but for acknowledging the sinful nature with which all people are born. Even when we feel that we have not sinned against God or others, we still need the sin offering because we recognize that we possess a nature inclined toward sin. Therefore, they were to bring one young bull as a sin offering. Another young bull was to be offered as a burnt offering. First, the sin offering removed the barrier between man and God. Only then could the burnt offering be presented.

In the burnt offering, the entire animal was placed upon the altar and gradually consumed until it became ashes, ascending as a sweet aroma to God. The burnt offering represents complete consecration. Everyone who serves God must be a consecrated person, wholly given to Him. We must no longer insist on our own thoughts or preferences but allow ourselves to be reduced to ashes, fully surrendered to God's will. Only then can we obey His instructions completely.

The third offering was the grain offering, presented together with the burnt offering. The grain offering consisted of fine flour mixed with oil, representing Christ's perfect humanity mingled with the Holy Spirit. When the offering was presented, the priest took a handful of it, added frankincense, and burned it on the altar. Frankincense represents the fragrance of resurrection, making the grain offering a sweet-smelling sacrifice that satisfies God's heart.

Thus, the Levites were to cleanse themselves and bring the young bull for the sin offering, the young bull for the burnt offering, and the fine flour mixed with oil as the grain offering. Once these preparations were complete, they would come

before the tabernacle for the ceremony of consecration. We will read about that consecration tomorrow.

Let us pray together: Lord, we thank You. Through the details recorded in the book of Numbers, You show us that everyone who is willing to serve You must first undergo preparation. May we serve You in the light, according to Your instructions, and be willing to let the Holy Spirit shape and refine us. May the church become a golden lampstand, shining as a light in this crooked and perverse generation.

Before we serve, teach us to prepare ourselves—to receive illumination from Your Word, to be cleansed by Your Word, to put away our natural life, and to put on the new man—so that we may serve our brothers and sisters appropriately in the church. Help us to value every act of service we perform, knowing that it is ministry pleasing to You. Help us to prepare ourselves for every opportunity to serve, recognizing that everything we do is done before Your face. We also pray that the church where we serve may become a golden lampstand, bearing a beautiful testimony for You wherever You have placed us. We pray in the holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ.