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God's Ordering of Space and Time 28:1 to 29:40



A central issue at the beginning of the book of **Numbers** was the arrangement of **Isra'el's** camp structure (**to see link click [Am](#) - The Camp of the Twelve Tribes of Isra'el**), which allowed **God's people** to have **the holy Presence** dwell in **their** midst. The design of the camp with the central **Tabernacle** and **its** surrounding concentric circles of **priests** and **Levites** functioned as a buffer zone between a holy **God** and a sinful **people**. The order of the camp was an attempt to create a safety space, or zone, to protect **the people** from coming too close and being killed. One of the main responsibilities of the Levites was to protect the Tabernacle from anyone, either unwittingly or intentionally, invading it.

Thus, the introductory chapters of **Numbers** focused on **God** creating spatial order within the camp of **Isra'el**. Such order helped to restrain the forces of sin, chaos, and collapse that threatened the fragile nation. The wilderness remained a potent metaphor for the threatening forces of evil and death even after **the Israelites** arrived in Canaan (**Judges 2:1-5**). For the wilderness generation, who stood poised to enter the Promised Land, the focus moved from creating order in space to creating order in time. To see an excellent website on science and the Bible called "Reasons to Believe, Revealing God in Science," click **here**.



The Jewish festival system is based on the number **seven** (see the commentary on **Genesis Ae - The Number Seven**). On the **seventh day** (the Sabbath) **the people** rest. Following the **seventh week** (after Pesach) the harvester's rest. During the **seventh month** of Sukkot, the nation rests. Every **seventh year** (the Sabbatical Year) the land rests. Finally, following **seven** times **seven years** (the Year of Jubilee) everything rests. The symbolic significance of the number **seven** is that it is the number of earthly perfection and rest. There are **seven** days in the completion of a perfect week, and **ADONAI** rested on the **seventh day** after creating the world in six. Therefore, mankind was also commanded to rest on the **seventh day, week, month, year** and **seven** times **seven years**. In these chapters we can also see assigned dates for morning and evening sacrifices (**28:3-6**), the Sabbath offerings (**28:9-10**), the offerings on the first of the month (**28:11-15**), and offerings for various festivals (**28:16 to 29:40**).

In the context of the book of **Numbers**, the list of sacrifices and offerings in **Chapters 28** and **29** as the means of maintaining order in time, is analogous to the structure of **the Israelite** camp in **Chapters 2** through **4**. The camp and its spatial structure, which was centered on **God's** holy **Presence** in its midst, enabled **the Exodus generation** to move from Egypt through the death march in the desert. **The wilderness generation**, poised on the doorstep of Canaan, was about to enter the Promised Land, a land of fertility and agricultural seasons and a settled existence of rhythms and order. The festivals and sacrifices described in **Chapters 28** and **29** would remind **the Israelites** of **their** status as **God's** holy **people** and help **them** sustain the order of **their** social and religious life against the forces that would continue to threaten it. Moreover, the large quantities of animals, grain, and wine in the offerings presume a prosperous agricultural life in a fertile land. Thus, the appointed times, sacrifices and offerings offered hope and confidence to **the people** that **they** were about to enter a Land of abundance, peace, order, and

stability. **God's** holy **Presence** would be in **Isra'el's** midst, and **God's** holy rhythms of time would order **their** life.⁶³² This ordering of **ADONAI's** time starts with **the weekly offering** (see [Ey](#) - **The Sabbath Offerings**), then progresses to **the monthly offerings** (see [Ez](#) - **The New Moon Offerings**), and ends with **the yearly offerings** (see [Fa](#) - **The Festival Offerings**).