

tabernacle, but they minister with their brethren in keeping charge, doing lighter tasks and exerting a certain amount of oversight. Our God sometimes works wonderful things through the very young, and sometimes gives people strength long after the normal age; yet there is a normal procedure which is found to work out in most cases.

f. The first Passover after leaving Egypt (ix.17-14)

In the first month of the second year (1). Again a chapter begins with a date which precedes that of Nu.i.1. Yet this chapter is both chronologically and logically in its proper place, since its principal event, the special Passover, occurred just six days before the beginning of the wilderness journey.

Shortly before the commencement of the events described in Nu.i, the first memorial Passover was observed (1-5), in accordance with all the regulations prescribed in Ex. xii. Then a new problem arose. Some of the people in the camp were faced with a question of conflicting laws. All Israelites must keep the Passover or be cut off from God's people. Yet men who had touched a dead body were defiled and could not keep the Passover. What should be done in such a case?

The problem of conflicting laws is often a difficult one. Among the modern Jews a very important law is sometimes disregarded in view of the application of a less important one. For instance there is a rule that every firstborn child must fast at certain times. Another rule says that whenever the reading of a portion of the Scripture is completed there shall be a time of celebration. As a result men who are interested in keeping the letter of the law rather than its spirit sometimes resort to the expedient of reading the last few chapters of a book at such a time that they will complete it just prior to the day when they are supposed to fast. Then they take their choice of the two conflicting laws and follow the one that allows them to ignore the fast. The situation described in our passage was not of this type. The men seem to have been sincerely anxious to follow God's will. So they came before Moses (6) with their problem and he laid it before the Lord (8).