

# The book of Numbers

The book of Numbers was written by Moses.

The name “Numbers” comes from the two censuses taken in this book that determined the number of the people of Israel at that time. These are found in chapters 1 and 26. The first census was taken during the second year after they left Egypt. The second was taken thirty-eight years later when the new generation was about to enter the Promised Land.

The explanation of this book can be found in Numbers 1:1 and 33:1.

Nu. 1:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of the congregation, on the first *day* of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying,

Nu. 33:1 These *are* the journeys of the children of Israel, which went forth out of the land of Egypt with their armies under the hand of Moses and Aaron.

As indicated in these verses, this book deals with the travels of Israel “in the wilderness”.

This is the record of their travels as they head towards the land of promise. It is vitally important to recognize, this is not a detailed log of their journey but deals mostly with the events that occurred near the beginning and the end of their travels.

There are approximately thirty seven years of their travels in the wilderness where nothing is recorded. This speaks to the fact of how wasted those years of wandering actually were and how rebellion against the Lord will result in failure.

Numbers resumes where Exodus ends. Leviticus established the laws for the priests to assist the people with their spiritual condition. So, the people of Israel should have been ready to proceed on their journey towards the Land of Promise. It won't take long for us to realize, they were a long way from being ready.

In Numbers we find Israel at their worse. They grumble at God and Moses, they refuse to obey the Lord and they depend on themselves instead of trusting God. An entire generation perishes because of their lack of faith and because of their disobedience.

Hebrews 3:17 But with whom was he grieved forty years? *was it* not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?

Psalms 95:10–11 Forty years long was I grieved with *this* generation, and said, It *is* a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.

But, the people of Israel also experience the power, mercy and grace of God in a very real way. We find God providing for his people miraculously.

In this book, we will find God preparing his people for war. Once they enter the Promised Land they will face strong enemies and impossible battles. During the forty years of wandering in the wilderness, God is getting them ready for the fight.

The information found in this book is vitally important to us today. What we find here is for our example to help us live the Christian life in a manner that would please our Lord.

Paul affirms this.

1 Corinthians 10:11. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

We face enemies that are stronger than we are. We must learn to live by faith and trust our God for the victory.

The writer of Hebrews had this book in mind when he warned us to not fall into the same trap Israel did.

Hebrews 3:15–19 While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? *was it* not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

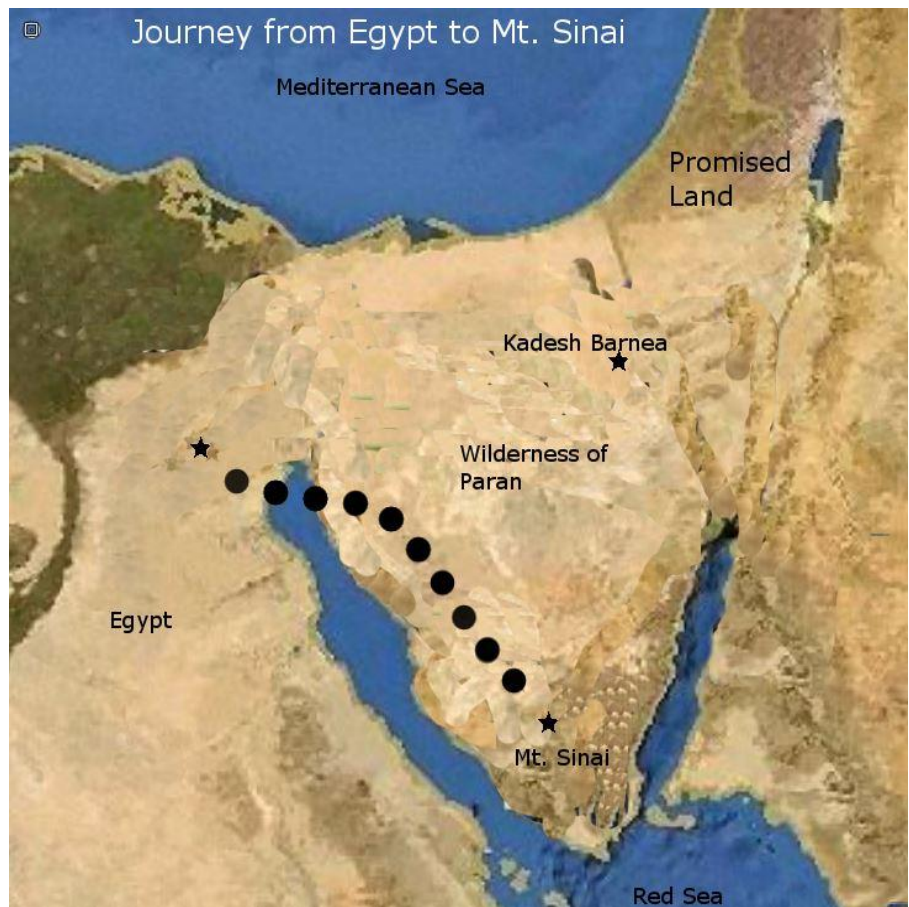
The people of Israel came out of Egypt and crossed the Red Sea. Rather than taking a straight path along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea to the Promised Land, God led them southeast to Sinai. He knew they were not prepared for the battles ahead with those who occupied the land of promise (Ex. 13:17-18)

THIS MAP SHOWS THE PATH FROM EGYPT TO MT. SINAI

Israel spend almost a year at Mt. Sinai.

While there, God gave them The Ten Commandments, the Tabernacle was built and dedicated and the Levites were established as priests.

NOTE: This map below does not show every detail of their journey or every stop along the way.



### OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

#### THE PEOPLE ARE NUMBERED AT SINAI Chapter 1

God told Moses to number the people of Israel. This census was not of the entire nation, but of the men who were above twenty years of age and able to go to war. Remember, those who go into the promised land will face impossible odds. They must be ready and able to fight.

Nu. 1:2-3 Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the house of their fathers, with the number of *their* names, every male by their polls; From twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel: thou and Aaron shall number them by their armies.

When added together, the total number was 603,550 men.

Nu. 1:46 Even all they that were numbered were six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty.

#### THE LEVITES WERE NOT INCLUDED IN THIS CENSUS

The Levites were not included in this census for it was their duty to care for the tabernacle.

Nu. 1:49 Only thou shalt not number the tribe of Levi, neither take the sum of them among the children of Israel:

Considering these numbers and adding the women and children, it is conceivable to estimate the total population to be near 3,000,000.

The Levites were given charge of the tabernacle. They were to carry the tabernacle and all the vessels associated with it. Nu. 1:50–51

The Levites were to camp surrounding the tabernacle. They were to do this in order that there be “no wrath upon the congregation”. God’s wrath would certainly be unleashed on anyone (other than the priests) attempting to handle the tabernacle or the holy furnishings. No doubt, there would be a fascination about the holy things of the tabernacle but those unauthorized must not take the holy things of God lightly.

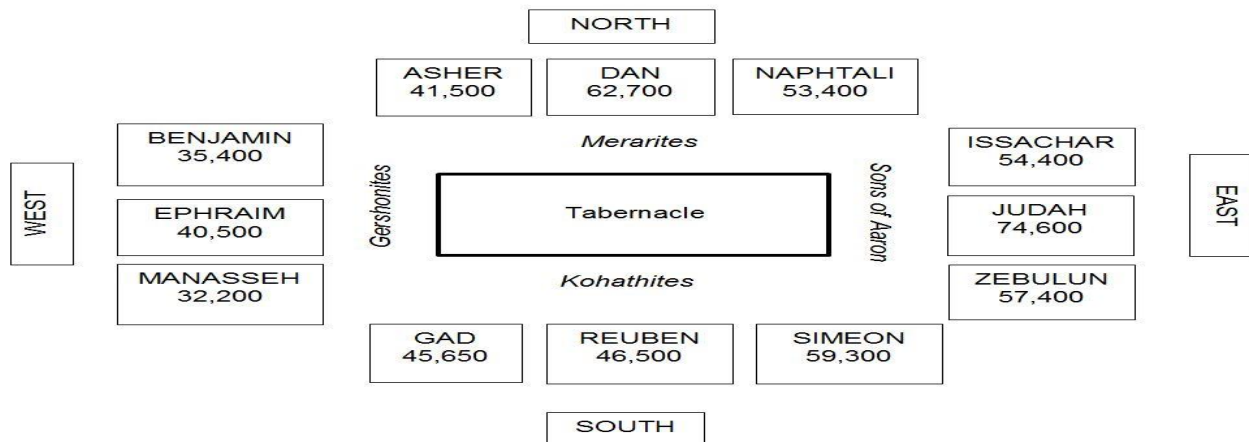
Nu. 1:53 But the Levites shall pitch round about the tabernacle of testimony, that there be no wrath upon the congregation of the children of Israel: and the Levites shall keep the charge of the tabernacle of testimony.

#### THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL Chapter 2

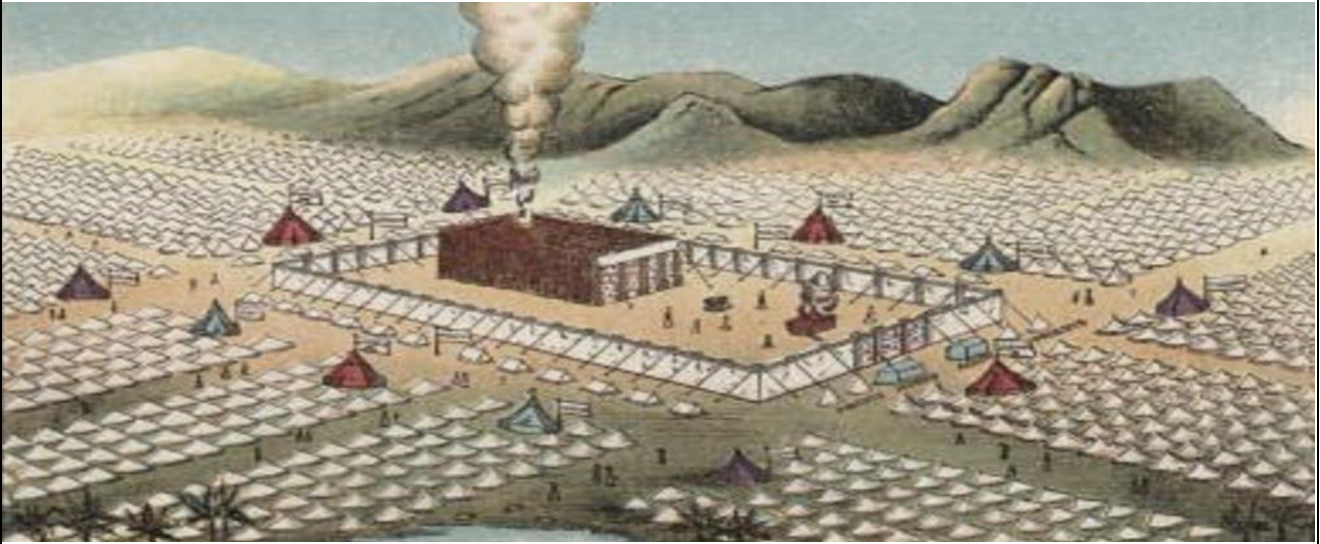
God is a God of order. He designated a specific camping and marching order for the people of Israel.

When they camped, they were to divide by tribes around the tabernacle. The tribes were arranged by four groups of three tribes, one group on each side of the tabernacle.

### Tribal Camping Positions



The tabernacle was in the very center of their camp. Since the tabernacle represented the presence of God, it is evident that God was to be the center of their lives.



The Levites were divided by their clans and placed between these tribes and the tabernacle.

Considering the large number of tents, it has been estimated the camp was as much as twelve miles in circumference.

Nu. 2:34 And the children of Israel did according to all that the LORD commanded Moses: so they pitched by their standards, and so they set forward, every one after their families, according to the house of their fathers.

### INSTRUCTIONS TO THE LEVITES Chapter 3

The tribe of Levi was not included in the census found in chapter one. They were numbered separately because it was their responsibility to take care of the function of the tabernacle.

The tribe of Levi was called to present themselves before Aaron.

Nu. 3:6 Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him.

The word “present” had the idea of an sacrificial animal that gave its life as an offering to the Lord. The tribe of Levi was given entirely to the service of the tabernacle and were to take care of all its furnishings.

Only Aaron and his sons were priests but all Levites were to assist the priests. They did not offer sacrifices but they were to assist in whatever way the priest instructed. They were representing all the congregation.

Nu. 3:7 And they shall keep his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of the congregation, to do the service of the tabernacle.

They were to take care of the tabernacle tent and all the furnishings involved with it.

Nu. 3:8 And they shall keep all the instruments of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the charge of the children of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle.

Only the priests were to do the work connected to the tabernacle. Anyone not a son of Aaron (stranger) trying to do the work of a priest was to be put to death.

Nu. 3:10 And thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest's office: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.

God appointed the Levites as priests in place of the firstborn. God had chosen the firstborn son of each family as the priest for the family.

Nu. 3:12 And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn that openeth the matrix among the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be mine;

God had chosen the firstborn son of each family to be a priest because he had spared the firstborn from the tenth plague in Egypt. (Ex. 13:1-16)

Nu. 3:13 Because all the firstborn *are* mine; *for* on the day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto me all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast: mine shall they be: I *am* the LORD.

God tells Moses to number the tribe of Levi. They were to count all the males from a month old and upwards.

Nu. 3:15 Number the children of Levi after the house of their fathers, by their families: every male from a month old and upward shalt thou number them.

Those included in this number were divided into three clans according to their affiliation of the three sons of Levi, Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. 3:17

The Gershonites, camped on the west side of the tabernacle and took care of the hangings and curtains. Their leader was Eliasaph, the son of Lael. 3:18, 23-26

The Kohathites camped on the south side of the tabernacle and took care of the ark, table, candlestick, altars and vessels. Their leader was Elizaphan, the son of Uzziel. 3:19, 27-31

The Merarites camped on the north side of the tabernacle and took care of the boards, pillars, sockets and vessels. Their leader was Zuriel, the son of Abihail. 3:20,33-37

Aaron and his sons camped on the east side of the tabernacle. They were responsible for the supervision of and function of the tabernacle. 3:38

This reminds us of how it is an absolute privilege to have a place of service in the Lord's work. We may do nothing more than carry a vessel for him but whatever we do is an honor.

LEVITES ARE SUBSTITUTED FOR THE FIRSTBORN 3:40-51

God instructed Moses to count the Levite males that were from a month old and upward. The total number was 22,000.

Nu. 3:39 All that were numbered of the Levites, which Moses and Aaron numbered at the commandment of the LORD, throughout their families, all the males from a month old and upward, *were* twenty and two thousand.

God assigned the sons of Aaron to serve as priests in place of the firstborn sons of each family. As God directed him, Moses counted the firstborn males and found there was 22,273. This meant there was 273 more firstborn males than there were Levites. The additional 273 had to be redeemed with five shekels each and the money was given to Aaron and his sons. 3:40-51

#### THE LEVITES SERVICE AT THE TABERNACLE Chapter 4

As seen earlier (Nu. 3:17) Levi had three sons. These three families had specific duties connected to the tabernacle. In this chapter we find some detail of how they carried out these responsibilities.

An extremely important part of their service was helping to move the tabernacle and its furnishings when the people traveled in the wilderness. Each family had specific tasks when the tabernacle had to be taken down and made ready for travel.

The family of Kohath is mentioned in 4:1-15

The family of Gershon is mentioned in 4:21-28

The family of Merari is mentioned in 4:29-33

THE FAMILY OF KOHATH 4:1-15

God spoke to Moses and told him to number the sons of Kohath. Only those who were from thirty to fifty years old could do the work of the tabernacle.

Nu 4:3 From thirty years old and upward even until fifty years old, all that enter into the host, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation.

This reminds us of how the Lord started his public ministry at the age of thirty.

Those carrying out this service are reminded how holy their work is. God calls it “the most holy things”.

Nu 4:4 This *shall be* the service of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation, *about* the most holy things:

The family of Kohath carried out a service that was a special significance and required great care. When the people were to move great care must be given to the moving of the tabernacle and all that it involved. All the furniture and objects of the tabernacle were holy and had to be treated with great respect. Aaron and his sons would pack the items in the tabernacle precisely as God directed. 4:5-14

Once Aaron and his sons had the items of the tabernacle packed as directed, the sons of Kohath would come to carry them. They were careful to not touch any holy thing for they knew they would die if they did.

Nu 4:15 And when Aaron and his sons have made an end of covering the sanctuary, and all the vessels of the sanctuary, as the camp is to set forward; after that, the sons of Kohath shall come to bear *it*: but they shall not touch *any* holy thing, lest they die. These *things are* the burden of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation.

No one ever touched or even saw the items that were in the Holy of Holies other than Aaron and his sons. These items were all covered before the sons of Kohath came to carry them.

#### THE INSTRUCTIONS FOR ELEAZAR

Eleazar, the son of Aaron was to take care of the oil for the light, the incense and the flour for the daily offerings.

Nu 4:16 And to the office of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest *pertaineth* the oil for the light, and the sweet incense, and the daily meat offering, and the anointing oil, *and* the oversight of all the tabernacle, and of all that therein *is*, in the sanctuary, and in the vessels thereof.

#### WARNING TO MOSES AND AARON

God warned Moses and Aaron to be careful to not let any of the sons of Kohath see any of the items in the tabernacle before they were covered. To do so would be certain death. Aaron and his sons would go in with the sons of Kohath and direct each man as to exactly which item he was to carry.

Nu 4:18–20 Cut ye not off the tribe of the families of the Kohathites from among the Levites: But thus do unto them, that they may live, and not die, when they approach unto the most holy things: Aaron and his sons shall go in, and appoint them every one to his service and to his burden: But they shall not go in to see when the holy things are covered, lest they die.

#### THE FAMILY OF GERSHON 4:21-28

God spoke to Moses and told him to number the sons of Gershon. Only those who were from thirty to fifty years old could do the work of the tabernacle.

Nu 4:23 From thirty years old and upward until fifty years old shalt thou number them; all that enter in to perform the service, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation.

The family of Gershon was to carry the curtains and cords of the tabernacle. 4:25-28

#### THE FAMILY OF MERARI 4:29-33

God spoke to Moses and told him to number the sons of Gershon. Only those who were from thirty to fifty years old could do the work of the tabernacle.

Nu 4:30 From thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old shalt thou number them, every one that entereth into the service, to do the work of the tabernacle of the congregation.

The family of Merari was to carry the boards, bars, pillars, pins and sockets. 4:30-32

A careful inventory was required since there were so many of these items.

Nu 4:32 ...ye shall reckon the instruments of the charge of their burden.

The word “reckon” means ‘to count’.

Moses and Aaron numbered the sons of Kohath, Gershon and Merari that were qualified for serving the priests in their duties.

There were 2,750 of Kohath’s family, 2,630 of Gershon’s family and 3,200 in Merari’s family. 4:34-49

## KEEPING THE CAMP CLEAN Chapter 5

### THOSE WITH LEPROSY, DISEASED OR UNCLEAN WERE TO BE PUT OUT OF THE CAMP 5:1-4

These verses deal with diseases or afflictions that would make a person unfit to take part in the worship of the Lord or fellowship with others.

Those with leprosy, with a physical discharge or those who had come in contact with a dead body, were removed from the camp until they were declared clean.

Those declared unclean were not driven away but were quarantined at the edge of the camp.

Nu 5:2 Command the children of Israel, that they put out of the camp every leper, and every one that hath an issue, and whosoever is defiled by the dead:

The “issue” mentioned in this verse is speaking of a discharge.

The term, “defiled by the dead” is speaking of someone who had come in contact with a dead body.

Why were these people treated in such a manner?

First, since God dwelt inside the tabernacle, there could be no sin allowed near his presence.

Secondly, in some cases, they could be contagious and a danger to those who were healthy.

Thirdly, the camp was to be kept spiritually clean so nothing impure was permitted to stay.

Fourthly, to warn those who were clean to be careful about exposure to sickness or contamination since they too would be excommunicated if they became unclean.

These afflictions are a reminder of sin and the terrible results it brings. To drive someone out of the camp seems harsh, but it is much better than the consequences of allowing them to stay.

Nu 5:3 Both male and female shall ye put out, without the camp shall ye put them; that they defile not their camps, in the midst whereof I dwell.

### THOSE WHO ARE FOUND GUILTY OF SIN ARE TO PAY 5:5-10

The sin in these verses is speaking of sinning against others whereby they suffer harm or loss. We discover how God protects those who have been wronged.

Nu 5:6 Speak unto the children of Israel, When a man or woman shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against the LORD, and that person be guilty;

A sin against God’s people is considered as a sin against God himself. Confession, repentance and restitution were demanded before the sin could be made right.

The law demanded repentance of sin before complete reconciliation could be obtained. If the guilty person had truly repented it would be obvious by their actions. John the baptist told those who came to be baptized “Bring forth therefore the fruits of thy repentance” (Lk. 3:8).

A trespass offering was to be given to atone for the sin but restitution still had to be made. Restitution required a return of that which was stolen or a payment of the value of the item stolen, plus twenty percent.

Nu 5:7 Then they shall confess their sin which they have done: and he shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof, and add unto it the fifth *part* thereof, and give *it* unto *him* against whom he hath trespassed.

If the offended person had died or could not be found, the restitution was to be paid to a heir. If there was no heir, the restitution money was to be given to the priest to be used for the service of the Lord.

Nu 5:8 But if the man have no kinsman to recompense the trespass unto, let the trespass be recompensed unto the LORD, *even* to the priest; beside the ram of the atonement, whereby an atonement shall be made for him.

The idea of confession, repentance and restitution for sin should not be discarded. Sin should have a result sufficient enough to deter those who are tempted to do wrong. Those who have been wronged should not suffer at the hand of another without being compensated.

#### DEALING WITH JEALOUSY AND ADULTERY 5:11-31

In these scriptures, we are reminded of the fact that there is no unseen sin. God sees all and will deal with those who violate his will.

These verses deal with jealousy and the sin of adultery. The guilt or innocence of the accused person was determined by a procedure given here.

God gives instruction to the husband who suspects his wife has been unfaithful, but lacks proof. 5:12-14

We need to remember the importance of trust in any relationship, especially in marriage.

The severity of the punishment of those found guilty was a strong deterrent to those being tempted.

This procedure offered a wife protection from an overly jealous and suspicious husband and would cause a husband to be careful before accusing his wife without sufficient evidence.

We are reminded how our actions affect those who love us.

Nu 5:14 And the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be defiled: or if the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be not defiled:

The word "spirit" has to do with mood or feelings. This means this husband was greatly disturbed because of his wife's possible misdeeds.

Since the wife denied being unfaithful and there were no witnesses, no one could be certain if she was guilty. Therefore, the Lord would determine her guilt or innocence.

The suspecting husband was to bring his wife before the priest. He was to bring an offering when they came. The offering was the tenth part of an ephah of barley meal. He was not to pour any oil or frankincense on the offering. This speaks of the solemnness of this procedure. There is no joy involved.

Nu 5:15 Then shall the man bring his wife unto the priest, and he shall bring her offering for her, the tenth *part* of an ephah of barley meal; he shall pour no oil upon it, nor put frankincense thereon; for it *is* an offering of jealousy, an offering of memorial, bringing iniquity to remembrance.

This offering was given in order to cause the wife to remember her sin (if she was indeed guilty) and produce conviction in order that she might confess and repent.

The woman was brought into the court of the tabernacle and "set before the LORD".

Nu 5:16 And the priest shall bring her near, and set her before the LORD:

The priest would put holy water (probably from the golden laver since it was water dedicated to the Lord's service) in an earthen vessel, take dust from the floor of the tabernacle and cast it in the water.

Nu 5:17 And the priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel; and of the dust that is in the floor of the tabernacle the priest shall take, and put *it* into the water:

The priest would remove the woman's veil. Her veil was a sign of her humility and submission to her husband. If she had been unfaithful, she had been neither. He put the offering in her hands while speaking a blessing or curse on her. In essence, he was saying, "if you are innocent of this accusation you will suffer no harm, but if you are guilty, your thigh (womb) will rot and your belly will swell".

Nu 5:18-20 And the priest shall set the woman before the LORD, and uncover the woman's head, and put the offering of memorial in her hands, which *is* the jealousy offering: and the priest shall have in his hand the

bitter water that causeth the curse: And the priest shall charge her by an oath, and say unto the woman, If no man have lain with thee, and if thou hast not gone aside to uncleanness *with another* instead of thy husband, be thou free from this bitter water that causeth the curse: But if thou hast gone aside *to another* instead of thy husband, and if thou be defiled, and some man have lain with thee beside thine husband:

It's important to note, her innocence is assumed. The priest says first, "if no man have lain with thee and if thou hast not gone aside to uncleanness with another instead of thy husband".

The woman was to say "Amen, amen". This reveals the fact of her being willing to submit to this process and the consequences to its outcome.

Nu 5:22 And this water that causeth the curse shall go into thy bowels, to make *thy* belly to swell, and *thy* thigh to rot: And the woman shall say, Amen, amen.

Before she drank the water, the priest would write the curses (that which she would suffer if found guilty) in a book and then wash the ink of the words he had written in the vessel. So the bitter water consisted of water, dust from the floor of the tabernacle, and the ink from the scroll where the priest had written.

Nu 5:23 And the priest shall write these curses in a book, and he shall blot *them* out with the bitter water:

The woman would drink the bitter water.

Nu 5:24 And he shall cause the woman to drink the bitter water that causeth the curse: and the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her, *and become* bitter.

It's interesting to note, the punishment attacked the organs that would have been used in the woman's sin. The water had no magical powers to produce good or bad effects. It was used by God as an instrument to show her guilt or innocence. If she was guilty she would begin to have pain and other physical symptoms would develop that could not be hidden. Her guilt or innocence would be obvious.

The priest would then take the offering they had brought and wave it before the Lord. Then he would take a handful of the offering and offer it upon the altar.

Nu 5:25–26 Then the priest shall take the jealousy offering out of the woman's hand, and shall wave the offering before the LORD, and offer it upon the altar: And the priest shall take an handful of the offering, *even* the memorial thereof, and burn *it* upon the altar, and afterward shall cause the woman to drink the water.

If the woman was found guilty, she would become a curse to her people and she would become sterile and unable to have children.

Nu 5:27 And when he hath made her to drink the water, then it shall come to pass, *that*, if she be defiled, and have done trespass against her husband, that the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her, *and become* bitter, and her belly shall swell, and her thigh shall rot: and the woman shall be a curse among her people.

If the woman was found innocent, she was publically declared free and God would bless her by giving her children.

Nu 5:28 And if the woman be not defiled, but be clean; then she shall be free, and shall conceive seed.

The question may be asked, why isn't there a mention in these verses about a man who might be guilty of adultery. We must not assume from these verses that men are not held accountable for their sins. The bible clearly teaches, all those who sin, whether man or woman, will be suffer the consequences.

We know death was the penalty for adultery for men and women (Lev. 20:10). This may give us reason to believe the above procedure would be carried out whether the suspected party was a man or a woman. However, since the Word of God is silent on this issue, we cannot be certain.

## THE NAZARITE VOW Chapter 6

The Nazarite vow was a promise a man or woman made in which they dedicated themselves to the Lord.

The word Nazarite means "to be set apart". It speaks of being set apart from the world and unto the Lord and his service. The vow could be for life or for a determined period of time.

Nu 6:2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall separate *themselves* to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate *themselves* unto the LORD:

#### THE NAZARITE VOW CONSISTED OF THREE REQUIREMENTS

ONE...they were to abstain from grapes, wine, any produce of the vine, and all strong drink.

Nu 6:3–4 He shall separate *himself* from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried. All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk.

Abstaining from wine and all products of the vine shows of a life that is not controlled by temporary pleasures. This part of the Nazarite vow deals with a person who is resisting a life of ease and is dedicating themselves to the spiritual matters of life.

Surely the abstinence of any strong drink reminds us how we should not be controlled by anything other than the Holy Spirit.

Eph 5:18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

TWO... they were forbidden to cut their hair.

Nu 6:5 All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled, in the which he separateth *himself* unto the LORD, he shall be holy, *and* shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow.

The long hair would be a visible sign of the Nazarites dedication to the Lord.

THREE... they were to not touch or come close to any dead body even if a parent or sibling dies.

Nu 6:6–7 All the days that he separateth *himself* unto the LORD he shall come at no dead body. He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother, or for his sister, when they die: because the consecration of his God *is* upon his head.

The separation from dead things speaks of desire to avoid any thing that is corruptible. As we have seen before, touching a dead body made a person ceremonially unclean. The unclean person was not allowed to approach the tabernacle or to have fellowship with others.

There is no New Testament equivalent of the Nazarite vow. However, those who are saved should be willing to live a life similar to that which a Nazarite lived. We certainly should be separated from the world and unto the Lord.

2 Co 6:17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you,

If the Nazarite broke his vow, he had to follow specific guidelines. He had to shave his head, bring two turtledoves or two pigeons for an offering. He also had to give a lamb for a trespass offering. In essence, he was starting his Nazarite vow over and the days he had served did not count. 6:9-12

When the period of the vow came to an end, the Nazarite had to present himself at the door of the sanctuary.

When he came he had to bring...

One, a he lamb of its first year for a burnt-offering.

Two, a lamb of its first year for a sin-offering

Three, a ram for a peace-offering.

Once the sacrifices were given, the Nazarite was to cut his hair and throw it into the fire under the peace-offering.

The bible records three men who were Nazarites for life, Samson (Judges 13:4), Samuel (Sam. 1:11) and John the Baptist (Lk. 1:15).

Paul seems to have placed himself under the Nazarite vow on at least two occasions (Acts 18 and Acts 21).

OFFERINGS GIVEN TO DEDICATE THE TABERNACLE Chapter 7

This chapter deals with the offerings given by the people of God. Every tribe contributed.

The tabernacle was completely set up. The people of Israel had given graciously in order that the tabernacle be built (Ex. 35). Now they were generous in giving towards its dedication.

Nu 7:1 And it came to pass on the day that Moses had fully set up the tabernacle, and had anointed it, and sanctified it, and all the instruments thereof, both the altar and all the vessels thereof, and had anointed them, and sanctified them;

It's interesting to note, this is the longest chapter in the book and one of the longest in the entire bible. This certainly speaks to the fact of how God desires His people to be cheerful givers.

God uses his people to provide for his work. When His people give as God leads, the needs of the church will be met.

Heb 13:16 But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

2 Co 9:6-7 But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

Part of what they prepared was six covered wagons and twelve oxen that would be used to carry the tabernacle and all of its furnishings as they traveled.

Nu 7:3 And they brought their offering before the LORD, six covered wagons, and twelve oxen; a wagon for two of the princes, and for each one an ox: and they brought them before the tabernacle.

Moses gave these wagons and oxen to the tribes according to their needs for their service.

Nu 7:6 And Moses took the wagons and the oxen, and gave them unto the Levites.

Moses gave two wagons and four oxen to the family of Gershon.

Nu 7:7 Two wagons and four oxen he gave unto the sons of Gershon, according to their service:

Moses gave four wagons and eight oxen to the family of Merari.

Nu 7:8 And four wagons and eight oxen he gave unto the sons of Merari, according unto their service, under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.

The Merarites received twice the wagons and oxen that the Gershonites because they were to carry the boards, pillars, sockets and vessels, which were heavy and bulky items.

The sons of Kohath received no wagon or oxen. They were to carry the ark, table, candlestick, altars and vessels. These were very holy items and were to be carried on their shoulders and never placed on a wagon.

Nu 7:9 But unto the sons of Kohath he gave none: because the service of the sanctuary belonging unto them *was that* they should bear upon their shoulders.

An example of the results of mishandling the ark can be found where Uzza touched the ark. The tragedy could have been prevented had they not placed the ark on a cart to begin with.

1 Ch 13:9-10 And when they came unto the threshingfloor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God.

Verses 12-88 list the offerings the people gave. The leader of each tribe is mentioned and the items given are recorded.

Moses goes into the tabernacle and God speaks to him. Moses heard the voice of God speaking from the ark. Since he was not a priest and could not go into the Holy of Holies, he must have heard the voice through the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies.

Nu 7:89 And when Moses was gone into the tabernacle of the congregation to speak with him, then he heard the voice of one speaking unto him from off the mercy seat that was upon the ark of testimony, from between the two cherubims: and he spake unto him.

## THE APPOINTMENT OF THE LEVITES Chapter 8

In chapter eight we find information about the setting up of the tabernacle and the priesthood. The instructions are similar to that which was given in Exodus 40.

### THE LIGHTING OF THE CANDLESTICK IN THE TABERNACLE

8:1-4

God gave Moses instructions about the candlestick in the tabernacle. Aaron was to light the candlestick.

Nu 8:1–3 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron, and say unto him, When thou lightest the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light over against the candlestick. And Aaron did so; he lighted the lamps thereof over against the candlestick, as the LORD commanded Moses.

The candlestick was described in Exodus 25:31-40. It was made of beaten solid gold. The candlestick gave no light. The light came from the oil in the candlestick.

The light was to never go out. The priest would attend to the wick and replenish the oil twice a day.

This candlestick is a picture of Christ. He is the light of the world that shines in darkness.

John 8:12 ..., I am the light of the world:...



### THE CLEANSING AND DEDICATION OF THE LEVITES 8:5-26

These verses describe the consecration of the Levites who were not descendants of Aaron. They were not priests but they assisted the priests with various services around the tabernacle. The consecration of the priests took place earlier (Lev. 8) Now God is setting aside the entire tribe of Levi.

This ceremony set the Levites apart for the Lord's service. We discover those who expect to be used of the Lord must be separated from the things of the world. God won't use those who live in the flesh.

The ceremony consisted of sprinkling water on them, shaving all their flesh and washing their clothes.

Nu 8:7 And thus shalt thou do unto them, to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purifying upon them, and let them shave all their flesh, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean.

This cleansing involved more than just being physically clean. It was a symbol of spiritual cleansing. They had to be spiritually clean before they were permitted to come in contact with any of the holy objects in the tabernacle.

A sacrificial bullock was to be brought by the Levites. This is the same sacrifice that was required for a sin offering.

Nu 8:8–9 Then let them take a young bullock with his meat offering, *even* fine flour mingled with oil, and another young bullock shalt thou take for a sin offering. And thou shalt bring the Levites before the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt gather the whole assembly of the children of Israel together:

The entire congregation was assembled. The congregation placed their hands on the Levites as a way to demonstrate the fact that they were being dedicated to the Lord's service.

Nu 8:10 And thou shalt bring the Levites before the LORD: and the children of Israel shall put their hands upon the Levites:

The Levites put their hands on the bullocks that were being offered. One bullock was offered for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering.

Nu 8:12 And the Levites shall lay their hands upon the heads of the bullocks: and thou shalt offer the one *for* a sin offering, and the other *for* a burnt offering, unto the LORD, to make an atonement for the Levites.

The Levites were brought before the Lord just as a sacrifice would be. The Levites became God's to be used as He desired.

Nu 8:13 And thou shalt set the Levites before Aaron, and before his sons, and offer them *for* an offering unto the LORD.

Nu 8:14 Thus shalt thou separate the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be mine.

God appointed the Levites as priests in place of the firstborn. God had chosen the firstborn son of each family to be a priest because he had spared the firstborn from the tenth plague in Egypt. (Ex. 13:1-16)

Nu 8:17–18 For all the firstborn of the children of Israel *are* mine, *both* man and beast: on the day that I smote every firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for myself. And I have taken the Levites for all the firstborn of the children of Israel.

These Levites were given to Aaron and his sons (the priests) to aid them in the service of the tabernacle. They did not offer sacrifices (only the priests could do that) but they ministered to the priests in whatever manner was requested of them.

Nu 8:19 And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the service of the children of Israel in the tabernacle of the congregation, and to make an atonement for the children of Israel: that there be no plague among the children of Israel, when the children of Israel come nigh unto the sanctuary.

These Levites began to serve from the age of twenty five but they did not assume their full role until the age of thirty (Nu. 4:3)

They ceased their service at the age of fifty.

Nu 8:24–25 This *is it* that *belongeth* unto the Levites: from twenty and five years old and upward they shall go in to wait upon the service of the tabernacle of the congregation: And from the age of fifty years they shall cease waiting upon the service *thereof*, and shall serve no more:

#### THE PASSOVER CELEBRATION (the 2<sup>nd</sup> Passover) 9:1-14

##### PASSOVER IS OBSERVED 9:2-5

Chapter nine opens in the first month of the second year after the people of Israel came out of Egypt. Therefore, the events recorded here came before the census in chapter one. This tells us that everything in the book of Numbers is not in chronological order. This is not unusual for Jewish literature.

Nu 9:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying,

God tells Moses to have Israel observe the passover. This would be the second passover they had observed after their deliverance from Egypt. It seems as though this would be the last time they observed Passover until they entered the Promised Land.

Nu 9:2 Let the children of Israel also keep the passover at his appointed season.

##### DEFILED MEN DEALT WITH 9:6-11

There were some men who were unclean because of coming in contact with a dead body. They probably were defiled by assisting at a burial. These men desired to observe passover so they approached Moses and Aaron and pleaded their case.

Nu 9:6–7 And there were certain men, who were defiled by the dead body of a man, that they could not keep the passover on that day: and they came before Moses and before Aaron on that day: And those men said unto him, We *are* defiled by the dead body of a man: wherefore are we kept back, that we may not offer an offering of the LORD in his appointed season among the children of Israel?

Moses told them to give him some time that he might pray about it.

Nu 9:8 And Moses said unto them, Stand still, and I will hear what the LORD will command concerning you.

We would do well to learn what Moses knew. When confronted with difficult decisions or matters that are too big for us, we need to go to the Lord in prayer.

God recognized there would be times when a person would become ceremonially unclean through no fault of their own. For instance, when a loved one died, the contact of the dead body would make the person unclean and therefore unfit to take part of the passover.

Therefore, God granted mercy by allowing the passover to be observed twice. First, at its regular time and again, a month later. The second observance was for those who had been unclean by reason of a dead body or those who were on a journey at the time of the first observance.

Nu 9:10–11 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or *be* in a journey afar off, yet he shall keep the passover unto the LORD. The fourteenth day of the second month at even they shall keep it, *and* eat it with unleavened bread and bitter *herbs*.

We see here a display of God's mercy. He wants His people to enjoy His best. He won't compromise with our sin but He is abundant with His grace.

God knew the tendency of man. He knew their tendency would be to take the first passover lightly since there would be repeated in a month. Therefore, He made it clear, no one should omit the passover because of neglect or any such unnecessary reason.

If a person was able to observe the first passover but didn't, he would be cut off from among the people. What exactly is meant by the term "cut off" has been debated by many. It would seem to be speaking of either, being put to death by the people, being put to death by God himself, or simply being excommunicated from the camp.

Nu 9:13 But the man that *is* clean, and is not in a journey, and forbear<sup>eth</sup> to keep the passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people: because he brought not the offering of the LORD in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin.

#### THE GLORY CLOUD GUIDED THE ISRAELITES 9:15-23

God had told the people of Israel he would lead them to a land flowing with milk and honey. However, they had one big problem, they had no idea which way to go. Their only option was to wait on God and let Him lead them.

God led His people by the Shekinah glory cloud. This cloud was the earthly manifestation of the presence of God. The cloud was first seen in Exodus 40:34-38.

In verse fifteen, the cloud appears over the tabernacle.

Nu 9:15 And on the day that the tabernacle was reared up the cloud covered the tabernacle, *namely*, the tent of the testimony: and at even there was upon the tabernacle as it were the appearance of fire, until the morning.

The cloud appeared as a cloud by day and a fire by night. This made it easy to follow whether by day or night.

Nu 9:16 So it was alway: the cloud covered it *by day*, and the appearance of fire by night.

When the cloud moved, the people moved. They literally followed the cloud wherever it went.

Nu 9:17–18 And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed: and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents. At the commandment of the LORD the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the LORD they pitched: as long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle they rested in their tents.

When the cloud tarried over the tabernacle, the people camped until it moved again.

Nu 9:19–20 And when the cloud tarried long upon the tabernacle many days, then the children of Israel kept the charge of the LORD, and journeyed not. And so it was, when the cloud was a few days upon the tabernacle; according to the commandment of the LORD they abode in their tents, and according to the commandment of the LORD they journeyed.

No matter how long the cloud tarried, whether two days, a month or a year, they stayed until it moved again.

Nu 9:22 Or *whether it were* two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not: but when it was taken up, they journeyed.

It would do us well to follow the Spirit of the Lord in such a manner. He is the only one who knows where He wants us and He is the only one who knows how to get there.

We will never go wrong by following God. We will however, find ourselves in trouble if we go the way we desire or the way we think is right.

#### THE SILVER TRUMPETS 10:1-10

God told Moses to make two trumpets of silver. These trumpets were to be used to communicate with the people of Israel. They were made from solid pieces of silver.

Only the priests were to use these trumpets (v. 8)

Nu 10:2 Make thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps.

God gave these trumpets that He might communicate to His people. Since there was perhaps as many as three million people, a trumpet was the perfect instrument for this purpose. Its sound could be heard easily by all, even though it had to cover a great distance.

There were different sounds devised that would signal the people as the particular message being delivered. There were sounds that meant they were to all assemble, sounds that meant certain leaders were to assemble, sounds that were meant for certain divisions of the camp, there were sounds in times of war, there were sounds that were to be played in times of joy. 10:3-10

One cannot help but think of the preachers of today who sound the gospel trumpet to those who need to hear.

It's interesting to note that a trumpet will be sounded when Jesus comes again.

When He comes in the Rapture.

1 Th 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

And when He comes in second coming after the Tribulation Period.

Mt 24:31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

#### ISRAEL MOVES FROM SINAI TO PARAN 10:11-36

The people of Israel came out of Egypt and crossed the Red Sea. Rather than taking a straight path along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea to the Promised Land, God led them southeast to Sinai. He knew they were not prepared for the battles ahead with those who occupied the land of promise (Ex. 13:17-18)

While at Mount Sinai God gave them the Ten Commandments, the Tabernacle was built and dedicated and the Levites were established as priests.

Now we see God moving them from Sinai to the wilderness of Paran.

## THIS MAP SHOWS THE PATH FROM MT. SINAI TO THE WILDERNESS OF PARAN

### THE GLORY CLOUD BEGINS TO MOVE 10:11-13

After spending eleven months in Sinai (Ex. 19:1 cf Nu. 10:11), God was on the move again and was leading them towards the Promised Land.

Nu. 10:11-12 summarizes the entire journey from Sinai to Kadesh-barnea.

Nu. 10:13-12:16 gives the details of their journey.

The wilderness of Paran mentioned in verse 12 was the area between Sinai and Kadesh-barnea.

NOTE: This map below does not show every detail of their journey or every stop along the way.



The people of Israel are not the same as when they fled from Egypt like an unorganized mob.

- They had been cleansed and set apart to make them fit for God's plan
- The priesthood had been set up providing the means of staying right with God
- They had been divided into organized groups and given instructions as how to travel
- The tabernacle had been completed and dedicated
- They had the glory cloud and the trumpets to guide them
- They had just finished a week of Passover

The people of Israel are excited about the trip into the Promised Land. They are ready to embark on their journey to the land flowing with milk and honey.

Unfortunately, their excitement would be short-lived. Their spiritual decline is close at hand.

Nu 10:11–12 And it came to pass on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was taken up from off the tabernacle of the testimony. And the children of Israel took their journeys out of the wilderness of Sinai; and the cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran.

You would think they were destined for quick and easy success and the Promised Land was just an easy stroll to victory. However, the opposite was true. They would soon discover just how human they were. They would find the worse battles were yet in their future.

This certainly sounds familiar. We also have a promise of victory. That victory is real and obtainable. But, before we can enjoy the victory, we must face the battle with the enemy.

Like Israel, we will find the path to the Promised Land is a path of war and death. We will battle the enemies of self, the world and the devil. But, we will also discover, the fruit of the Promised Land is worth the battle.

### THE TRIBES TRAVEL IN GROUPS 10:14-28

The people of Israel traveled in groups according to their tribes.

Each tribe had a banner that was particular to them. Each tribe had a leader assigned to it.

## MARCHING ORDER FOR PEOPLE OF ISRAEL



<b>Levi, Moses Aaron and sons carrying the Ark</b>
<b>Judah 10:14</b>
<b>Issachar 10:15</b>
<b>Zebulun 10:16</b>
<b>Gershonite and Meraites clans carrying the Tabernacle tent 10:17</b>
<b>Reuben 10:18</b>
<b>Simeon 10:19</b>
<b>Gad 10:20</b>
<b>Kohathite clan carrying the Tabernacle furnishing 10:21</b>
<b>Ephraim 10:22</b>
<b>Manasseh 10:23</b>
<b>Benjamin 10:24</b>
<b>Dan 10:25</b>
<b>Asher 10:26</b>
<b>Naphtali 10:27</b>

MOSES INVITED HIS FATHER IN LAW TO GO WITH THEM 10:29-32

Moses invited Hobab, his father in law, to join them on their journey to the Promised Land. He told Hobab the Lord would bless him if he would go. Hobab refused at first, saying he go to his own land and his family.

Nu 10:29–30 And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses' father in law, We are journeying unto the place of which the LORD said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the LORD hath spoken good concerning Israel. And he said unto him, I will not go; but I will depart to mine own land, and to my kindred.

Hobab knew and where they would be traveling. Moses tried to convince him to go with them. He recognized the value of a man who was familiar with the territory they would be passing through. Even though the glory cloud directed them he understand how a man who knew the land could be a help in directing them to places of water or of grass for their livestock. Perhaps, he could aid them in communicating with any of the people of the land if the need arose.

There's no hint that God considered Moses' invitation to Hobab a lack of faith. God does guide but He also uses man to accomplish His plan. He gave the victory in times of battle but He used the men who fought the

battle to accomplish the victory. He gives His people victory but He will work through us to accomplish it.

Nu 10:31–32 And he said, Leave us not, I pray thee; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes. And it shall be, if thou go with us, yea, it shall be, that what goodness the LORD shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee.

These verses do not tell us clearly if Hobab accepted Moses' invitation but Judges 1:16 seems to imply that he did. There we find Hobab joining with Judah in the battle for the Promised Land.

#### MOSES AND THE PEOPLE LEAVE FOR PARAN 10:34-36

They follow the glory cloud. When it moves, they move. When it stops, they stop.

Nu 10:34 And the cloud of the LORD was upon them by day, when they went out of the camp.

Moses asks the Lord for protection as they journey. It is probable that he would pray this prayer at the beginning and end of each day of travel.

He asks God to scatter the enemies as they travel. He realizes their great need for the God of heaven and earth to go with them.

Nu 10:35 And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, LORD, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee.

Moses asked for God's presence to abide with them as they camped.

Nu 10:36 And when it rested, he said, Return, O LORD, unto the many thousands of Israel.

May the Lord touch our hearts to have such an attitude as Moses did. How desperately we need our God to lead us, protect us, and comfort us as we walk through our wilderness experience.

We do not have a glory cloud to direct us today. We do have the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

The Word of God is our guide.

2 Ti 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

Ps 119:50 This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.

1 Pe 1:23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

Ps 119:105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Jas 1:22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

The Spirit of God is our guide.

Jn 15:26 But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:

Revelation 2:7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches;

John 16:8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

1 Cor.2:10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit:

They traveled for three days. They move from Sinai to the wilderness of Paran heading toward Kadesh-barnea.

#### REBELLION IN THE CAMP Chapters 11-20

These chapters are marked by ingratitude, rebellion and sin. There are few instances in the Bible that reveal more about man's failure and God's grace, than these that lie ahead.

#### THE PEOPLE GRUMBLE AND COMPLAIN 11:1-3

The first sin mentioned along their journey was the sin of complaining. Even though God had brought them out of the terrible bondage of Egypt, they began to complain about the conditions of the journey. We are not told what they complained about at this point.

God was displeased and sent fire to devour those on the outside (“uttermost parts”) of the camp.

Nu 11:1 And *when* the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard *it*; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed *them that were* in the uttermost parts of the camp.

In His anger, God still had mercy. He did not consume the entire camp. Thank the Lord for mercy being mingled with His anger. If it were not for His mercy, we would all be in trouble.

If we fail to appreciate God’s mercy, He is ready to let us experience His anger.

The people cried to Moses, Moses prayed and God stopped the fire.

Nu 11:2 And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the LORD, the fire was quenched.

They acknowledged their failure and got right but we will soon find out, it was short lived. This was just the first of many times of their rebellion and sin. God would be forced to deal with them in wrath.

They named the place “Taberah”, which means ‘burning’. It would always be a place to remind people of how God dealt with their evil attitude.

Nu 11:3 And he called the name of the place Taberah: because the fire of the LORD burnt among them.

#### MORE COMPLAINING 11:4-35

The effects of the fire from God didn’t last long. In no time, they were complaining again.

#### THE MIXED MULTITUDE 11:4-5

The mixed multitude were those mentioned in Exodus 12:38. They were Egyptians and others who came out of Egypt with the people of Israel. They had little or no knowledge of God. It’s easy to see, they had a negative influence on the people of Israel.

Nu 11:4–5 And the mixt multitude that *was* among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick:

They remembered the food etc. they had while in Egypt. It’s amazing to hear them say they “did eat in Egypt freely”. Egypt was a place of bondage for them. They may have been able to eat, but it was not without great cost. They were not free.

The people of Israel fall into the same sin as before, they complain....again.

They had cattle but these had to be kept to breed when they settled in the Promised Land. Had they eaten their cattle, such a large number of people would have devoured them all in a matter of days.

God had provided manna, but they were tired of it. It’s sad state when anyone gets tired of what God provides.

Exodus 16:31 tells us manna tasted like honey. So, even though it was sweet, nutritional and plentiful, they still complained.

Nu 11:6 But now our soul *is* dried away: *there is* nothing at all, beside this manna, *before* our eyes.

#### MANNA IS DESCRIBED 11:7-9

Manna was introduced in the book of Exodus but we find a brief description of it here also.

#### MOSES APPROACHES GOD AGAIN 11:10-17

Moses heard the complaints of the people. He goes to the Lord again on behalf of the people of Israel.

This time, he does more than ask for God's mercy. He unloads his heart to the Lord.

Who would not be understanding of this godly man? He has been placed into one of the most difficult situations anyone could ever imagine. He had the responsibility of hearing the voice of God and obeying Him. He had to lead the entire nation of Israel into a land they did not know. He had been confronted with many obstacles that would have caused the most spiritual of men to give up and quit.

And now, those who should be trusting the Lord were griping, complaining and refusing to obey him or the Lord

Nu 11:10 Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent: and the anger of the LORD was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased.

Moses opened his heart to the Lord and said exactly how he felt. He asked the Lord why He had been afflicted him as He had.

Nu 11:11 And Moses said unto the LORD, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me?

He reminded the Lord that they were not his people, he did not begat them. He pretty much said he was tired of dealing with a bunch of babies.

Nu 11:12 Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers?

He reminded the Lord that he did not have what the people needed. He couldn't even provide their food, he certainly couldn't provide what it would take to make them happy.

Nu 11:13 Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat.

He told the Lord he was not able to handle the load.

Nu 11:14 I am not able to bear all this people alone, because *it* is too heavy for me.

He became so disturbed he told the Lord if He was going to continue to treat him as He had, to just kill him on the spot.

Nu 11:15 And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness.

His prayer was not a proper prayer, but it was a heartfelt prayer. Moses was at the end of his rope and he was expressing to the Lord exactly what he was thinking and feeling.

We should recognize the fact that Moses was really saying that he would rather die than to fail at the task God had given him to do. May that spirit be multiplied among God's people in our day.

Moses asked God to not let him see his wretchedness. That is one prayer God did not grant. He wanted Moses to see his inability to lead the people of Israel. He wanted Moses to admit to his helplessness without His divine assistance.

#### GOD SPEAKS TO MOSES 11:16-23

In response to Moses' complaint about his heavy load, God told him to gather seventy of the elders of Israel and bring them to the tabernacle. The record of him doing this is in verses 24-25.

Nu 11:16-17 And the LORD said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee. And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I

will take of the spirit which *is* upon thee, and will put *it* upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear *it* not thyself alone.

These men were to assist Moses and help carry some of his load. They were to care for the needs of the people and support Moses in whatever manner was needed.

The people had complained about what God gave them (manna) and now they complain about what God didn't give them (meat).

God told them to get ready. He was about to give them what they asked for.

Nu 11:18 And say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow, and ye shall eat flesh: for ye have wept in the ears of the LORD, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? for *it* was well with us in Egypt: therefore the LORD will give you flesh, and ye shall eat.

But, the blessing would become a curse. They would come to loathe the meat they wanted so much.

The problem was not just that they complained, but they longed for what they had in Egypt. Anytime we long for the things of the world, it displeases God.

God told Moses to tell the people beforehand, I will give you so much meat you will get sick of it.

Nu 11:19–20 Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days; *But* even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the LORD which *is* among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?

The worse thing about this situation was the fact they “despised the Lord”. They weren't satisfied with His way of doing things.

#### MOSES QUESTIONS THE LORD

Moses was abundantly aware of the number of the people and the amount of meat it would take to satisfy their needs. He knew he could not provide any food, let alone such a large amount.

Nu 11:21–22 And Moses said, The people, among whom I *am*, *are* six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them?

The six hundred thousand were only the men of war. It has been estimated that the total number of people was close to three million.

God reminds Moses that He is very much able and will do what He promised.

Nu 11:23 And the LORD said unto Moses, Is the LORD'S hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not.

#### GOD GRANTED THEIR REQUEST 11:24-35

##### THE SEVENTY CHOSEN 11:24-25

Moses did as the Lord instructed. He gathered seventy of the elders of Israel.

It is important to notice that God instructed Moses to gather the seventy men at the tabernacle. This is God's business, it is holy business, and must be taken seriously.

God took the Spirit that has been on Moses and put it upon the seventy men.

Nu 11:24–25 And Moses went out, and told the people the words of the LORD, and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle. And the LORD came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that *was* upon him, and gave *it* unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, *that*, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease.

The Spirit “rested” on these men. The Holy Spirit stayed with them enabling them to carry out the function of their tasks.

Before the Lord provided the meat they asked for, He provided leadership. They asked for the meat even though they didn't need it. They didn't ask for the leadership even though they did need it. This shows the missed placed priorities of a worldly person.

#### TWO MEN TOUCHED 11:26

Eldad and Medad were two of the seventy who did not come to the tabernacle when Moses gathered the seventy together. We are not told why they did not come. Even though they were not at the tabernacle, the Spirit rested upon them also.

Nu 11:26 But there remained two *of the* men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the spirit rested upon them; and they *were* of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle: and they prophesied in the camp.

These men prophesied as the rest of the seventy. Since they were to assist Moses, this probably meant they taught the people in regards to handling the problems that arose on a daily basis.

A young man heard these two men prophesying out in the camp and came to tell Moses. He must have been concerned about someone taking authority that would overthrow Moses.

Nu 11:27 And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp.

Joshua heard and told Moses to forbid these men from prophesying. Joshua, also, must have been concerned about Moses' authority being usurped.

Nu 11:28 And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, *one* of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them.

Moses rebuked Joshua. He understood how the anointing by the Spirit that was being displayed in Eldad and Medad gave proof they were being led by God.

Nu 11:29 And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the LORD'S people were prophets, *and* that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!

Moses was not jealous of the ministry of Eldad and Medad. He rejoiced in the fact they were being used of the Lord. Moses was not afraid of any Spirit-filled man being a rival.

Moses and the seventy go into the camp. They go where the need is.

Nu 11:30 And Moses gat him into the camp, he and the elders of Israel.

#### GOD SENDS QUAIL 11:31-34

God sent a wind and brought quail from the sea into the camp of Israel.

Nu 11:31 And there went forth a wind from the LORD, and brought quails from the sea, and let *them* fall by the camp, as it were a day's journey on this side, and as it were a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits *high* upon the face of the earth.

God had provided quail before but not in such vast number as He did here. (cf. Ex. 16:13)

The quail were probably not two cubits deep as some have supposed. It would seem the Lord brought the quail in such a fashion to where they were flying about three feet from the ground. The people could easily catch them out of the air.

The swarm of quail was so large it stretched outside the camp a day's journey in every direction. A day's journey for them would have been approximately ten miles.

The people gathered the quail for two days and a night. The ones who gathered the least had ten homers. A homer was approximately 5 ½ bushels. To say the least, God gave them more than they could use.

Nu 11:32 And the people stood up all that day, and all *that* night, and all the next day, and they gathered the quails: he that gathered least gathered ten homers: and they spread *them* all abroad for themselves round about the camp.

As God had predicted (Nu. 11:18-20) they ate until they got sick.

While they were eating the quail they wanted so much, God unleashed His wrath and sent a plague on them. Many of them died from the plague.

Nu 11:33 And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD smote the people with a very great plague.

The results of unrestrained flesh can be devastating. God had provided manna but they were not content. They paid the price for living after the flesh.

God gave them the meat they wanted but it cost them spiritually. The Psalmist explains it best.

Ps 106:15 And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.

There are times when God will give us what we desire, but we will always, always, regret asking.

Any time we try to satisfy our flesh, our spiritual man will suffer.

The place of the plague was named to make certain this judgment would not be forgotten.

Nu 11:34 And he called the name of that place Kibrothhattaavah: because there they buried the people that lusted.

The word “Kibrothhattaavah” means ‘graves of the lust’.

#### GOD MOVES AGAIN

God moves the people again.

Nu 11:35 *And* the people journeyed from Kibrothhattaavah unto Hazeroth; and abode at Hazeroth.

#### MIRIAM AND AARON CRITICIZE MOSES chapter 12

Miriam and Aaron were Moses’ sister and brother. Moses was the youngest of the three. Aaron was four years older than Moses (Ex. 7:7). Miriam was significantly older because she watched the basket where Moses was placed when he was a baby. Miriam probably felt like the big sister even into their adult years. However, that did not give her the right to override Moses’ authority.

Miriam and Aaron become resentful towards their younger brother. They spoke against Moses for taking an Ethiopian woman as a wife.

Nu 12:1 And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman.

We can’t be certain if this wife is speaking of Zipporah or a second wife Moses may have married after Zipporah’s death. An Ethiopian was not an Israelite but they were not among those God had forbidden the people of Israel to marry (Ex. 4:11.16). The Ethiopians were not necessarily a different color than Moses.

Miriam’s name being placed first, and the fact that she was the one judged, indicates she was the who instigated this complaint. She had played an important role in the escape from Egypt (Ex. 15:20-21). Miriam may have seen Moses’ wife as a threat to her standing as an important female figure in Israel.

Aaron was a man who was easily persuaded. He gave in to the pressure of the people with the golden calf (Ex. 32). Once again, he failed to stand up for what was right.

Miriam and Aaron’s real problem was not who Moses had married but jealousy over the responsibility God had given Moses. This is made obvious in verse two.

Nu 12:2 And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard *it*.

Their jealousy was probably fueled by the choosing of the seventy to help govern the people. Moses' father-in-law had suggested to Moses that he chose seventy men to assist him (Ex. 18:13-26).

Jealousy is an evil master and always has bad consequences.

Moses did not respond to their attack. God called him "meek" but he never called him "weak". Moses knew something we need to learn, God can fight our battles for us a lot better than we can.

Nu 12:3 (Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.)

Moses may have remained silent, but God didn't. He quickly called the three of them together to deal with the issue. God does not hesitate when it comes to defending those who are his leaders.

Nu 12:4 And the LORD spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out.

God made it clear, Moses was the man he had chosen to lead the people of Israel. He would continue to speak through Moses. The bottom line was, God had chosen Moses and he would be speaking through him.

He told Miriam and Aaron he usually spoke to his prophets through visions and dreams but he spoke to Moses mouth to mouth.

Nu 12:8 With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?

This rebellion displeased the Lord. He would not stand by and let it go without dealing with Miriam and Aaron.

Nu 12:9 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them; and he departed.

When the glory cloud lifted, Miriam was leprous. She would suffer for his rebellion.

Nu 12:10 And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam *became* leprous, *white* as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, *she was* leprous.

Times have not changed. The sin of jealousy still contaminates the hearts of God's children. Church leaders still have to deal with those who don't want to submit to their authority. We must all be cautious about our attitude about God's chosen.

Aaron starts quickly asking Moses to have mercy on him and Miriam.

Nu 12:11 And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned.

Moses prayed sincerely for the Lord to heal Miriam. Few things display a godly attitude more than us earnestly praying for someone who has wronged us.

Nu 12:13 And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee.

God explains to Moses how he would handle Miriam's punishment.

Nu 12:14 And the LORD said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in *again*.

Spitting in the face or even spitting at someone was considered the utmost disgrace. It was done only when someone's dignity had been violated.

God was saying, if Miriam had done something bad enough for her father to spit in her face, she would have been ashamed for seven days. Therefore, her punishment for her sin was being shut out of the camp for seven days.

Nu 12:15 And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days: and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in *again*.

As a result of Miriam's sin, the entire nation was delayed for a week from their travel toward the Promised Land. Our personal sin always has a negative effect on the family of God.

## ISRAEL GOES TO KADESH-BARNEA 12:16

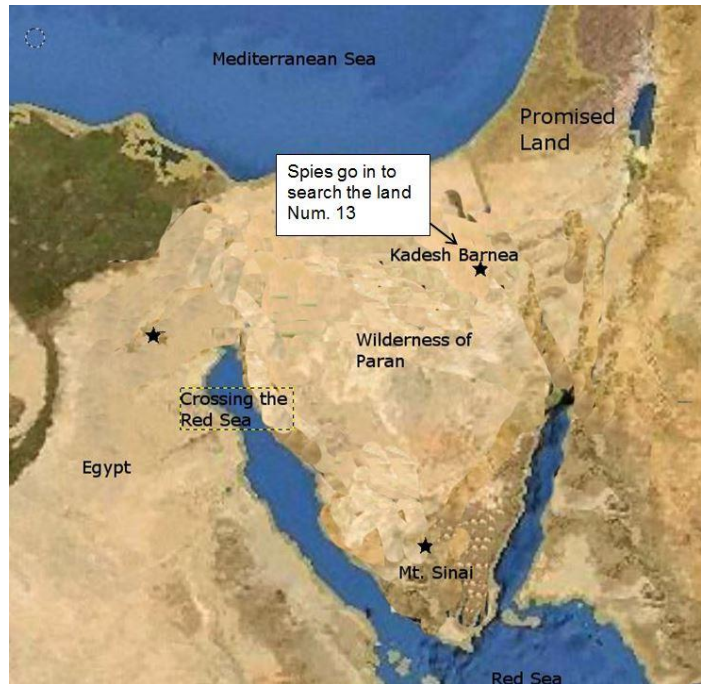
### ISRAEL'S FAILURE AT KADESH-BARNEA Chapter 13-14

Israel arrived at Kadesh-barnea. Kadesh-barnea was a city on the southern edge of the Promised Land. Finally, they were close to the place God had been telling them about.

#### SPIES GO IN TO SEARCH THE LAND

Once again, God spoke to Moses. He told Moses to send spies to search out the land.

Nu 13:1-2 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them.



It isn't explained here but it was the people's idea to send spies into the land. They asked Moses to let them go in and spy out the land before God told them to go. This is revealed in Deuteronomy when Moses reminds them of their request (Dt. 1:19-23).

Moses was pleased with their request but was it God's will for them to send the spies?

I personally believe, it was a sign of their unbelief and it wasn't the will of God. I believe God wanted them to trust him and take the land sight unseen. I'm convinced the Lord wanted them to believe what he said about the Promised Land and trust him to deliver it into their hands. After all, God had told them he would give them the land. Why would they need to spy it out?

One thing is certain, them searching the land caused them to doubt and that was the reason they didn't go in at this point. An entire generation would die in the wilderness because they did not trust God and take the land.

A leader from each tribe was chosen to go in and search the land. 13:3-16

Moses told the spies to search the land to determine whether it was good or bad, and to determine the type of people who lived there. He also told them to bring some fruit from the land back with them.

Nu 13:17-20 And Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said unto them, Get you up this way southward, and go up into the mountain: And see the land, what it is; and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many; And what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad; and what cities they be that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strong holds; And what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein, or not. And be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land. Now the time was the time of the firstripe grapes.

The two things that would determine if the land was worth possessing would be...

One ... how strong were the inhabitants? How hard will it be for Israel to win the battles?

Two ... was the fruit worth the battle? Would the fruit be good enough to justify the battle?

### THE REPORT OF THE SPIES 13:23-33

Verses 21-25 summarize the trip into the Promised Land.

Verses 26-33 give the details of the report of the spies.

#### THE FRUIT OF THE LAND WAS ABUNDANT

The spies returned after forty days and reported to Moses and Aaron. They confirmed exactly what God had told them, it was indeed a land flowing with milk and honey. One cluster of grapes was so large it took two men to carry (v. 23). They brought back pomegranates and figs also.

Nu 13:27 And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this *is* the fruit of it.

This fruit was a mere sample of what the Promised Land offered. The report about the fruit of the land was totally positive. The land was what God had said it was.

#### THE PEOPLE OF THE LAND WERE STRONG

The excitement about the fruit was quickly silenced when the spies reported about the people who lived in the land. The people were strong and their cities were well protected.

Nu 13:28 Nevertheless the people *be* strong that dwell in the land, and the cities *are* walled, *and* very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there.

The walls of some cities of that day were up to fifty feet high and as much as fifteen feet thick.

The children of Anak were descendants of Anak. They were a people who were noted for their unusual height (Dt. 2:21, 9:2).

#### CALEB AND JOSHUA BELIEVED GOD

Even though Joshua is not named here (as we find out in chapter 14) he also believed God and encouraged the people to take the land.

Nu 13:30 And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.

Caleb spoke up and encouraged the people to go at once and possess the land. Caleb and Joshua, were the only ones of the twelve spies who believed God. They knew God was able to do what he had promised. No matter how strong, trained or equipped the enemy was, God would be able to give the victory.

How desperately we need some men and women with the faith of Caleb and Joshua. What a shame to live on the outskirts of the land of victory but never taste it's fruit or enjoy the victory God could provide.

#### TEN SPIES DISCOURAGED THE PEOPLE

Ten of the twelve spies focused on the strength of the people who inhabited the land.

Nu 13:31-32 But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they *are* stronger than we. And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, *is* a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it *are* men of a great stature.

They saw themselves as grasshoppers against giants.

Nu 13:33 And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, *which come* of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.

Some have suggested these spies were exaggerating the situation because of their fear. I know fear can cause us to exaggerate but I believe their explanation summed up the situation pretty well. They were as grasshoppers compared to those who inhabited the land. They were facing an impossible task. But, God specializes in impossibilities. He was able to deliver his people no matter how impossible the situation.

The untrained people of Israel had no hope against such odds. That is, unless they had help from their God.

The report about the land was factual. The land was fruitful, the cities were walled, the people were mighty and giants did dwell there. The problem with their analysis was they were leaving God out of the equation. They were comparing the people of the land with themselves instead of comparing them with God.

How many times are we afraid of the problems we have before us? How many times do we leave God out of our analysis of our situations? How many times do we live in fear, when we don't have to?

## ISRAEL'S REACTION TO THE REPORT OF THE SPIES Chapter 14

### THE REPORT OF THE SPIES DISCOURAGED THE PEOPLE

Nu 14:1 And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night.

As before, the people attack Moses and Aaron and accuse them of misleading them. Once again, they talked about how they wished they had stayed in Egypt.

Nu 14:2–3 And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt?

The people talked about getting rid of Moses and choosing a new leader so they can go back to Egypt.

Nu 14:4 And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.

How many times have people attacked a leader because they didn't like what they had to say or what they did? When will God's people realize, God speaks through those he chooses. He works his plan through those he puts in places of authority. When we rebel against God's men, we rebel against God himself.

### MOSES AND AARON PRAYED

Moses knew how important it was to pray. He and Aaron fall on their faces in front of the people and pray. During our most difficult situations we need to pray more than ever.

Nu 14:5 Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel.

### JOSHUA AND CALEB TRIED TO CONVINCE THE PEOPLE TO TRUST GOD

Nu 14:6–7 And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, *which were* of them that searched the land, rent their clothes: And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, *is* an exceeding good land.

Joshua and Caleb had been part of the twelve that went to spy out the land. They saw the same enemy the other spies saw. They saw the same problems the other spies saw. And yet, in spite of seeing how impossible their odds were, they believed God.

They believed God would bring them into the land, if they would just obey him. They knew if the Lord "delighted in" them, they could be certain that he would give them the land. The blessing of the land would be worth the effort.

Nu 14:8 If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.

We need men and women who will believe God in spite of the odds.

Joshua and Caleb made it clear, refusing to take the land was an act of rebellion against a holy God. This was more than a simple decision that would have little or no consequence. This decision would change their lives forever.

Nu 14:9 Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they *are* bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD *is* with us: fear them not.

"They are bread for us" means the people of Israel would consume the enemy with ease.

### GOD SPOKE TO MOSES

Just as the congregation was talking about stoning Moses and those who were standing with him, the Lord came on the scene. We cannot expect God to stand by silently while we live as we please.

Nu 14:10 But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel.

God was justifiably displeased with his people. He told Moses he would destroy this people and raise from him another nation that would obey.

Nu 14:11–12 And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.

#### MOSES INTERCEDED FOR THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL 14:13-19

Once again, we find Moses pleading with God for mercy for a sinful people. Moses in no way excused Israel. He knew how wrong they were but he still pleads for God's mercy.

Nu 14:13–14 And Moses said unto the LORD, Then the Egyptians shall hear *it*, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;) And they will tell *it* to the inhabitants of this land: *for* they have heard that thou LORD *art* among this people, that thou LORD art seen face to face, and *that* thy cloud standeth over them, and *that* thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night.

Moses reminded God how their enemies (Egypt and the inhabitants in the Promised Land) would hear about it if he destroyed the people of Israel. Everyone had heard how God had spoken to the people of Israel and how he led them by the glory cloud.

In essence, Moses was saying, "God if you destroy this nation, everyone will think you didn't have the power to do what you said you would do".

Nu 14:15–16 Now *if* thou shalt kill *all* this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he swore unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness.

Moses pleaded for God to show his power, not by destroying the people, but by forgiving them. Nothing would demonstrate the power of God more than his forgiveness.

Nu 14:17–19 And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, The LORD *is* longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation*. Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.

#### GOD SPARED THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL BUT JUDGMENT WAS CERTAIN 14:20-38

##### GOD HEARD MOSES' PRAYER

Nu 14:20 And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to thy word:

God said he would forgive them but he would not let them get by without any consequences for their unbelief and rebellion. He would work in such a manner to where the whole world would take notice of how he dealt with Israel.

Nu 14:21 But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD.

God declared that all those who refused to obey him would never see the land.

Nu 14:22-23 Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it:

Caleb would be spared because he had a different spirit. Caleb trusted God's power and provision. He believed God could and would deliver the Promised Land into their hands.

Joshua was also spared but he is not named here. He is named in verse 30 of this chapter. He was no longer among the ranks of the people because of God's plan for his life. He was not named just as Moses and Aaron were not named.

Nu 14:24 But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.

The Amalekites and Canaanites were camped in the valley where Israel was. They were planning to stop the progress of the people of Israel. In other words, God had already put in motion his judgment on the people of Israel.

God told Moses to turn the people of Israel around and go in the direction of the Red Sea. By doing this, he spared them of certain defeat.

Nu 14:25 (Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwelt in the valley.) To morrow turn you, and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea.

There is no way to imagine how these people must have felt. After months of travel in the wilderness, they were finally at the edge of the Promised Land, and now they turn around and head back into the wilderness.

But, they had no one to blame except themselves.

How many times have we been on the brink of a great work of God in our lives, only to be turned around because of our disobedience or unbelief?

#### GOD EXPLAINED THE RESULTS OF THE DISOBEDIENCE OF ISRAEL 14:26-38

God told Moses what to tell Israel.

Nu 14:26–28 And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, How long *shall I bear with* this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. Say unto them, *As truly as I live*, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you:

Those of the generation who would not obey would die in the wilderness. Everyone twenty years old and upwards would die.

Nu 14:29–30 Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, *concerning* which I sware to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.

Those under twenty years of age would survive and God would bring them into the Promised Land.

Nu 14:31-32 But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. But *as for* you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness.

They would wander in the wilderness for forty years (a year for each day they spent in the Promised Land while they were spying it out).

Nu 14:33–34 And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness. After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, *even* forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, *even* forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise.

God killed the ten spies that brought the evil report immediately. They died instantly of a God inflicted plague.

Nu 14:36–37 And the men, which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the land, Even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the LORD.

The instigators of sin are usually those who are smitten first and most severely with the judgment of God.

#### THE PEOPLE MOURNED ABOUT GOD'S JUDGMENT

The people mourned when Moses told them what God had said.

Nu 14:39 And Moses told these sayings unto all the children of Israel: and the people mourned greatly.

The next day they told God they were ready to obey, they would go in the land.

Nu 14:40 And they rose up early in the morning, and gat them up into the top of the mountain, saying, Lo, we *be here*, and will go up unto the place which the LORD hath promised: for we have sinned.

They went from one extreme to the other. They had refused to trust God and now they were trusting self.

Moses told them they would certainly fail. The Lord would not be with them if they tried to enter the land. Without his help, they had no hope.

Nu 14:41–43 And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the LORD? but it shall not prosper. Go not up, for the LORD *is* not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites *are* there before you, and ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from the LORD, therefore the LORD will not be with you.

Moses told them, if you try on your own, you will fail miserably.

In spite of the warning, they proceeded. Just as God said, the Amalekites and the Canaanites defeated them soundly.

Nu 14:44–45 But they presumed to go up unto the hill top: nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and Moses, departed not out of the camp. Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, *even* unto Hormah.

The reason for their defeat is found in verse 44. The ark of the covenant departed not out of the camp. God did not go with them. They were on their own and defeat is always certain for those who try without God.

Their judgment was determined at the exact moment they refused to go in the land,. Even though they confessed and repented, their judgment was certain. In like fashion, there are times when we cannot undo the consequences of what we have done. Confess and repent as we may, we still suffer the results of our sin. David experienced this when the baby died even though he repented (2 Sam. 12:19).

NOTE: The Promised Land is not a picture of heaven as some have suggested. It is a picture of the victorious Christian life. God has promised a life of victory to those who will believe him, trust him and obey him.

The Promised Land experience speaks of a Christian who has totally died out to self. Unfortunately, not many are willing to pay that price, even though the fruit makes it worth it.

How many do you know who have totally surrendered to the Lord and his will? To be even more blunt, are you totally surrendered to the Lord? We can never experience the Promised Land's blessings until we die out to self.

#### INSTRUCTIONS FOR WHEN THEY GET IN THE PROMISED LAND Chapter 15

God spoke to Moses and gave him instructions for when they get into the Promised Land.

Nu 15:2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land of your habitations, which I give unto you,

What a display of God's grace. His people had failed miserably but God did not break his promise. He gave them guidelines they were to follow in the land even while they were still in the wilderness.

#### LAWS CONCERNING THE MEAL AND DRINK OFFERINGS 15:1-16

These guidelines were to apply to the people of Israel, but also, for the "strangers" who were among them.

Nu 15:14–15 And if a stranger sojourn with you, or whosoever be among you in your generations, and will offer an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD; as ye do, so he shall do. One ordinance shall be both for you of the congregation, and also for the stranger that sojourneth with you, an ordinance for ever in your generations: as ye are, so shall the stranger be before the LORD.

The strangers mentioned in these verses were proselytes. These were those from other nations and religions who had come to dwell with the people of Israel. For these people to be associated with Israel, they had accepted the truths of the Jewish faith. However, once one of these “strangers” accepted the truths of Jewish beliefs, they were considered as one of them. There were not two sets of rules, one for the real Jews and one for the proselytes.

Those of us who are Gentiles should thank our God since he did the same for us. By faith, we were grafted into the family. We now have access to God, through Jesus Christ.

#### LAWS CONCERNING DOUGH FOR THE HEAVE OFFERING 15:17-21

#### THE SACRIFICE FOR SIN DONE IN IGNORANCE 15:22-29

God made provision for those who broke the law unintentionally. There would be times when they may fail to keep certain of God’s laws because they were not aware of them.

Nu 15:27–28 And if any soul sin through ignorance, then he shall bring a she goat of the first year for a sin offering. And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly, when he sinneth by ignorance before the LORD, to make an atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him.

#### LAW DEALING WITH SIN DONE INTENTIONALLY 15:30-31

The person who knows the law and sins intentionally was to be “cut off from among the people”.

Nu 15:30 But the soul that doeth ought presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

The word “presumptuously” means “with a high hand”, as with a raised or clenched fist in defiance to God and his commands. This speaks of the person who knew the law and intentionally disobeyed.

This person was to be “cut off from among the people”. This meant either total excommunication or possibly meant being put to death.

The punishment was severe because they had known the law but had deliberately disobeyed. Their action showed a contempt for God’s law. Such actions “reproacheth the LORD”, which means they thought his law was unreasonable and necessary.

Nu 15:31 Because he hath despised the word of the LORD, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him.

“His iniquity shall be upon him” means he must pay for his sin. God’s judgment was unavoidable.

#### DEALING WITH A SABBATH BREAKER 15:32-36

A man was found gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. It seems as though the Lord gave an example of the previous verses. There was a man who was disobeying the law and paid the consequences.

Nu 15:32 And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day.

God told Moses the man was to be put to death by stoning.

Nu 15:35 And the LORD said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp.

The people were to carry out the sentence by stoning the man.

Nu 15:36 And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the LORD commanded Moses.

What an object lesson this would have been. Those who actually stoned the guilty man would not soon forget the price of disobedience.

#### FRINGES ON THE BORDERS OF THE GARMENTS 15:37-41

God commanded they put fringes on the border of their garments to remind them of his commandments.

Nu 15:38 Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue:

Every time they looked at these fringes it was to remind them of God's commandments and the importance of obeying. It was to be a warning that they might not go their own way.

Nu 15:39 And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring:

God reminded them he was their God, he was the one who brought them out of Egypt, and therefore, had the right to expect their obedience.

Nu 15:41 I am the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the LORD your God.

## KORAH REBELLED AND PAID THE PRICE Chapter 16

Korah stirred a rebellion against Moses. Korah was a descendant of Levi through Kohath. He already had vitally important duties at the tabernacle, but he wasn't satisfied with what God had given him.

Korah was jealous of Moses and Aaron. Moses was the leader of Israel and Aaron was the priest. Korah believed he was as capable as Moses and deserved the right to be a part of the decisions being made for the people. He believed he was as holy as Aaron and therefore deserved the right to be a priest. Two hundred and fifty of the Levites joined his rebellion.

Nu 16:1–2 Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men: And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown:

This group accused Moses and Aaron of taking too much authority upon themselves. As is usually the case in matters as this, the men who rebelled were men who were well liked ("famous in the congregation") and had some pull ("men of renown") in the congregation.

They believed all the Levites were as holy as Aaron and therefore should be able to do the work of a priest.

Nu 16:3 And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?

Moses spoke to these men and told them God would reveal who was holy.

Nu 16:4–5 And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face: And he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even to morrow the LORD will shew who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him: even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him.

Moses rebuked these men by reminding them how God had chosen them to a special service for him. God had already chosen them to help with the priests with their work.

Nu 16:9 Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them?

They should have been thrilled to have the work God had given them.

Nu 16:10 And he hath brought thee near to him, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and seek ye the priesthood also?

### DATHAN AND ABIRAM REFUSED TO MEET WITH MOSES 16:12-19

Dathan and Abiram were a part of this rebellion. Moses called them to meet with him and the rest of the 250, but they refused.

Nu 16:12 And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab: which said, We will not come up:

Their rebellion is made even more evident by their refusal to cooperate. They accused Moses of bringing the people of Israel out of Egypt in order to make a name for himself. Their accusation was so ridiculous. They even called Egypt, "a land that floweth with milk and honey".

Nu 16:13 Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us?

They continued their attack by saying Moses had not brought them into a land of milk and honey as he had promised.

Nu 16:14 Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards: wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? we will not come up.

They asked Moses if he planned to put out the eyes of the people. In other words, they were asking Moses if he thought he could persuade the people in such a manner to where they would believe him instead of their own eyes.

Moses got angry and talked to God about the situation. He had not taken anything from these people. Even though Moses was one of the meekest of all men, he could not restrain his anger over these groundless accusations. He knew he had been faithful to listen to God and lead the people as he had directed.

Nu 16:15 And Moses was very wroth, and said unto the LORD, Respect not thou their offering: I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them.

Moses asked God to not respect the offering of these men. He was challenging them to a contest much like Elijah would with the prophets of Baal (1 Kgs. 18). He was asking God to not respect their incense that they would put in their censers.

#### GOD REVEALED WHO WAS RIGHT 16:16-50

Moses told Korah to gather those who were in agreement with him and meet at the door of the tabernacle the next day.

Nu 16:16 And Moses said unto Korah, Be thou and all thy company before the LORD, thou, and they, and Aaron, to morrow:

Korah and the 250 who stood with him were to bring censers, fire and incense.

Korah had claimed that he and the Levites had the right to be priests as much as Aaron and his sons. Their idea would be put to the test. The burning of incense in a censer was something only the priests could do. So, each of these men was instructed to bring a censer with fire and incense. If God approved of them as priests, it would be evident when they attempted to burn the incense.

Nu 16:18 And they took every man his censer, and put fire in them, and laid incense thereon, and stood in the door of the tabernacle of the congregation with Moses and Aaron.

It seems as though Korah, instead of participating with a censer as he was told, was trying to stir up the people against Moses and Aaron even more.

Korah had gathered most, if not all, of the people of Israel to see what would happen.

Nu 16:19 And Korah gathered all the congregation against them unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the congregation.

God told Moses and Aaron to separate themselves from the congregation that he might destroy them at once.

Nu 16:20–21 And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.

Moses and Aaron fell on their faces and prayed for the people. They were not praying for the guilty ones to be spared. They were praying that God would spare those who were not truly part of the rebellion.

Nu 16:22 And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation?

They asked God to have mercy on the people and not judge them for the sin of one person. It is amazing to see the compassion of Moses and Aaron. Most of the people were there in hopes of getting a new leader. They didn't deserve mercy but Moses and Aaron prayed that God would grant just that.

God told Moses to tell the people to get away from Korah, Dathan and Abiram. Something was about to happen. Moses told the people to get away from Korah and those associated with him.

Nu 16:23–24 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the congregation, saying, Get you up from about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

God, in essence, was telling them to choose their side. If they were going to stand with Korah, they were to stay close to him, if they were going to stand with Moses and Aaron, they were to move away from Korah and get close to Moses.

Dathan and Abiram had refused to come to the tabernacle, so Moses went to their tents. The seventy men who had been assigned to assist Moses, went with him.

Nu 16:25 And Moses rose up and went unto Dathan and Abiram; and the elders of Israel followed him.

Moses told the people to get away from Dathan and Abiram and to not touch anything pertaining to them.

He said those who stand with Dathan and Abiram would be consumed with them.

Nu 16:26–27 And he spake unto the congregation, saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins. So they gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side: and Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children.

Moses said God would reveal if he was God's man.

Nu 16:28 And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the LORD hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind.

Moses said, If these men die a common death, you can be assured that I am not God's man. But, if God does a new thing and the earth opens her mouth and swallows them up, you will know that I am God's man and they are wrong.

Nu. 16:29 If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the LORD hath not sent me. But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD.

As soon as Moses finished speaking, the earth opened and swallowed Korah, all those who stood with him, their tents and all their goods.

Nu 16:31–32 And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods.

Those of the congregation fled for fear lest they suffer the same judgment.

Nu 16:34 And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also.

God sent a fire and consumed the 250 men who had followed Korah.

Nu 16:35 And there came out a fire from the LORD, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense.

#### GOD TOLD MOSES TO REWORK THE CENSERS 16:36-40

Nu 16:36–37 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, that he take up the censers out of the burning, and scatter thou the fire yonder; for they are hallowed.

God told Moses to make the censers into a memorial to make sure the people would remember how much sin and rebellion cost.

## THE PEOPLE BLAMED MOSES 16:41-45

The congregation murmured against Moses and Aaron and blamed them for those who had died because of Korah's rebellion.

Nu 16:41 But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the LORD.

As the congregation gathered to speak out against Moses, the glory cloud appeared before the tabernacle.

Nu 16:42 And it came to pass, when the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation: and, behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD appeared.

Moses and Aaron drew near the tabernacle and heard God speak.

Nu 16:43-45 And Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of the congregation. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment. And they fell upon their faces.

God told Moses he would consume the entire nation of Israel because of their sin.

## MOSES AND AARON PRAYED FOR THE PEOPLE AND GOD STAYED THE PLAGUE 16:46-50

Verse 46 says, "the plague is begun". We can't be certain what this plague was but it was spreading throughout the camp.

Moses told Aaron to burn incense in a censer and go into the congregation. Incense is a picture of prayer. As many times before, Moses and Aaron were interceding for the sinful people.

Nu 16:46-47 And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the LORD; the plague is begun. And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people.

Aaron went to the part of the camp where the plague was spreading and literally stood between the living and the dead.

Nu 16:48 And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed.

The plague was stopped because of Moses' and Aaron's intercession, but 14,700 had already died.

Nu 16:49 Now they that died in the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred, beside them that died about the matter of Korah.

What wonderful lessons can be gleaned from these verses.

- God does not play with our sin

I am glad that is true. Sin that is not dealt with will only worsen. The sooner we deal with it, the better.

- God hears the cries of his people

He heard and answered the prayers of Moses and Aaron.

- God is a God of mercy

God had mercy, even though they all deserved to die for their rebellion.

How desperately we need someone who will get a burden for our churches and our country. I am convinced, the need for someone to intercede is as great now as it was in Moses' day.

May the Lord raise up someone who will call out to a merciful God in behalf of our land.

## AARON'S ROD BUDDER chapter 17

The people of Israel were constantly complaining about Moses and how he led them. On occasions, there had been those who openly rebelled, such as with Korah and Miriam. In order to prove once and for all that Moses was the one he had chosen, God made a dead stick (rod) bud, blossom and bear fruit.

God used these rods to show who he had chosen. Moses and Aaron said God had called them but now God said it himself by making the rod bud. The budding of the rod was something that only God could do. Therefore, the owner of rod that budded would be the person God had chosen.

All the aged men carried rods. They used them as canes or walking sticks but the rod was also a mark of their dignity.

God told Moses to have the princes (leaders) of the twelve tribes bring their rods write their names on them.

Nu 17:1-2 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and take of every one of them a rod according to the house of *their* fathers, of all their princes according to the house of their fathers twelve rods: write thou every man's name upon his rod.

Aaron was to include his rod.

Nu 17:3-4 And thou shalt write Aaron's name upon the rod of Levi: for one rod *shall be* for the head of the house of their fathers. And thou shalt lay them up in the tabernacle of the congregation before the testimony, where I will meet with you.

God said he would make the rod of the man he had chosen to bud and blossom in order to stop the argument of who should be their leader. The owner of the rod that budded would be the man God had chosen.

The next day, Aaron's rod had budded, blossomed and grown almonds.

Nu 17:8 And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds.

The budding of the rod was a miracle. But, for there to be buds, blossoms and fruit at the same time was indeed something only God could do. Usually, the buds come before the blossoms and the blossoms come before the fruit but all three were never seen at the same time.

God made each of the men take his rod back. When these men saw their rods were still dead and Aaron's had budded, they knew Aaron was the man God had chosen. Holding the dead rod in their hand confirmed what God had done.

Nu 17:9 And Moses brought out all the rods from before the LORD unto all the children of Israel: and they looked, and took every man his rod.

God used Aaron's budded rod as a reminder to all.

Nu 17:10 And the LORD said unto Moses, Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels; and thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from me, that they die not.

As difficult as it is to imagine, the people responded with even more rebellion and resistance to God's plan. Instead of being thankful that God had given them a man who could lead them as God directed, they were whining about God's affliction on them.

Nu 17:12-13 And the children of Israel spake unto Moses, saying, Behold, we die, we perish, we all perish. Whosoever cometh any thing near unto the tabernacle of the LORD shall die: shall we be consumed with dying?

We are pleased to discover from these verses, God blesses those who are his. Fruitfulness is a result of walking as God directs.

#### GOD SPOKE TO AARON ABOUT THE PRIESTS AND LEVITES Chapter 18

God spoke to Aaron this time instead of Moses.

God told Aaron he was responsible for the tabernacle and the function of the priests. That would include any wrong doing connected with the function of the priesthood or the tabernacle.

Nu 18:1 And the LORD said unto Aaron, Thou and thy sons and thy father's house with thee shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary: and thou and thy sons with thee shall bear the iniquity of your priesthood.

Those of the tribe of Levi would assist the priests (Aaron and his sons) but they were not to go into the areas of the tabernacle that were reserved for the priests. Only the priests could offer sacrifices and only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies where the ark was.

Nu 18:2 And thy brethren also of the tribe of Levi, the tribe of thy father, bring thou with thee, that they may be joined unto thee, and minister unto thee: but thou and thy sons with thee shall minister before the tabernacle of witness.

Those of the tribe of Levi were to assist the priests in whatever way they requested. As we found in Numbers chapter three, part of their duties involved carrying the tabernacle and its furnishings.

If anyone other than the priests came in contact with the holy items of the tabernacle, they would be put to death.

Nu 18:3-4 And they shall keep thy charge, and the charge of all the tabernacle: only they shall not come nigh the vessels of the sanctuary and the altar, that neither they, nor ye also, die. And they shall be joined unto thee, and keep the charge of the tabernacle of the congregation, for all the service of the tabernacle: and a stranger shall not come nigh unto you.

If anyone violated God's directions pertaining to the function of the priesthood or the tabernacle, the wrath of God would be the result. God told them to do what he said "that there be no wrath".

Nu 18:5 And ye shall keep the charge of the sanctuary, and the charge of the altar: that there be no wrath any more upon the children of Israel.

The Levites were a gift God had given Moses and Aaron. I can say without hesitation, those who labor for the Lord are a gift to the pastors and churches. Where would we be if there were no laymen and laywomen serving God? If you are such a laborer, I want to say, "thank you" for all you do to lighten the load of your preacher.

Nu 18:6 And I, behold, I have taken your brethren the Levites from among the children of Israel: to you they are given as a gift for the LORD, to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.

The labor of the priests was difficult and laid many demands upon them. But, they were to remember, their ministry was a gift from God. What a blessing it is to be used of the Lord in his service. It is truly a gift.

Nu 18:7 Therefore thou and thy sons with thee shall keep your priest's office for every thing of the altar, and within the vail; and ye shall serve: I have given your priest's office unto you as a service of gift: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.

In return for their service in the tabernacle the priests were to receive a portion of the sacrifices that were brought by the people. God has always taken care of his servants through and by the people of God.

Nu 18:8 And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Behold, I also have given thee the charge of mine heave offerings of all the hallowed things of the children of Israel; unto thee have I given them by reason of the anointing, and to thy sons, by an ordinance for ever.

A portion of the offering was to be taken and eaten by the priests.

Nu 18:9-10 This shall be thine of the most holy things, reserved from the fire: every oblation of theirs, every meat offering of theirs, and every sin offering of theirs, and every trespass offering of theirs, which they shall render unto me, shall be most holy for thee and for thy sons. In the most holy place shalt thou eat it; every male shall eat it: it shall be holy unto thee.

The portion of the offering that was not consumed by the fire went to the priest and could also be eaten by the members of his family, as long as they were ceremonially clean.

Nu 18:11 And this is thine; the heave offering of their gift, with all the wave offerings of the children of Israel: I have given them unto thee, and to thy sons and to thy daughters with thee, by a statute for ever: every one that is clean in thy house shall eat of it. He explained to Aaron the functions of the priesthood and the tabernacle.

God instructed that the best of the harvest be given to the priests.

Nu 18:12 All the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine, and of the wheat, the firstfruits of them which they shall offer unto the LORD, them have I given thee.

#### THE REDEMPTION OF THE FIRSTBORN 18:1-17

The firstborn, whether child or beast, belonged to the Lord. (Ex. 13:1-2)

For the parent of a child or owner of a beast to keep the child or beast for themselves they had to pay the priest a set amount. This was called "redeeming".

Nu 18:15–16 Every thing that openeth the matrix in all flesh, which they bring unto the LORD, whether it be of men or beasts, shall be thine: nevertheless the firstborn of man shalt thou surely redeem, and the firstling of unclean beasts shalt thou redeem. And those that are to be redeemed from a month old shalt thou redeem, according to thine estimation, for the money of five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs.

In the instance of redeeming a firstborn child, when the child was thirty days old, the parents would call for the priest. The priest would hold the child in his arms and ask the mother if the child was indeed her child. After the mother affirmed the child was hers, the priest would ask her if she had ever had any other children or if she had any miscarriages. When the mother assured the priest this was her firstborn and she had had no miscarriages, the priest would address the father. He told the father if he wanted to keep the child for their own he must pay set amount. The father would give the priest the money while saying something like "I wish to do so and I present this money for this purpose".

The firstborn of unclean animals were not to be redeemed.

Nu 18:17 But the firstling of a cow, or the firstling of a sheep, or the firstling of a goat, thou shalt not redeem; they are holy: thou shalt sprinkle their blood upon the altar, and shalt burn their fat for an offering made by fire, for a sweet savour unto the LORD.

#### THE LEVITES AND PRIESTS WERE TO HAVE NO INHERITANCE IN THE PROMISED LAND

The Lord was the inheritance for the priests. The blessing of knowing him and being able to do his service was better than any amount of land. Even though the Promised Land was wonderful and a gift from God, it was nothing compared to the wonderful relationship the priest had with the Lord of heaven and earth.

God did not want the priests to be cumbered with the tasks of tending land and growing crops. He wanted their time and effort to be devoted to him and his service.

Nu 18:20 And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel.

God reminded them how he had provided for the priests. The people paid tithes. which were given to the Levites. Out of these tithes a tenth was given to the priests. In other words, the people gave a tithe that went to the Levites and the Levites gave a tithe that went to the priests.

Nu 18:21 And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.

Just as the Levites were not to have an inheritance of the land, the common folks were not to try to do the work that was set aside only for the priests.

Nu 18:22 Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin, and die.

If anyone did anything that violated God's regulations in connection with the service of the tabernacle, the priests would be held responsible. It was the responsibility of the priests to make certain the tabernacle and all the function connected to it were kept right.

Nu 18:23 But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they shall bear their iniquity: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance.

## THE RED HEIFER Chapter 19

In chapter nineteen we find the preparation of the water of separation that was used to cleanse those who had become unclean by coming in contact with a dead body.

During the 40 years in the wilderness over a million people died. This meant the people were constantly coming in contact with dead bodies. Those who came in contact with a dead body would be ceremonially unclean. Therefore, God provided a means whereby those who came in contact with these dead bodies could be made clean.

The unclean person could be purified by applying water that had been mixed with the ashes a red heifer. Verses 17-19 describe the method that was used in order to bring about cleansing.

This may sound strange but it really makes sense. As they travelled through the wilderness, they could not stop and put up the tabernacle every time someone came in contact with a dead body. The ashes of the red heifer and the water of separation made it possible to be made clean without having to offer a sacrifice on the altar of the tabernacle.

### THE RED HEIFER WAS KILLED AND BURNT 19:2-5

The children of Israel were to bring a red heifer (cow). The heifer had to be without blemish and one that had never been placed in a yoke.

Nu 19:2 This is the ordinance of the law which the LORD hath commanded, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke:

Eleazar (Aaron's son) was to take the heifer out of the camp and slay it.

Nu 19:3 And ye shall give her unto Eleazar the priest, that he may bring her forth without the camp, and one shall slay her before his face:

While still outside of the camp, Eleazar dipped his finger in the blood of the heifer and sprinkled it in the direction of the tabernacle seven times.

Nu 19:4 And Eleazar the priest shall take of her blood with his finger, and sprinkle of her blood directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times:

The heifer was then burnt before Eleazar.

Nu 19:5 And one shall burn the heifer in his sight; her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn:

As the heifer burned, the priest would cast cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet into the fire.

Nu 19:6 And the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer.

The priest would wash his clothes and take a bath. He would be unclean until evening.

Nu 19:7 Then the priest shall wash his clothes, and he shall bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp, and the priest shall be unclean until the even.

The person who burnt the heifer had to wash their clothes and take a bath. He would be unclean until evening.

Nu 19:8 And he that burneth her shall wash his clothes in water, and bathe his flesh in water, and shall be unclean until the even.

A man who was ceremonially clean was to gather the ashes of the heifer and put them in a clean place outside of the camp. These ashes were kept to be used when needed.

Nu 19:9 And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up without the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin.

The person who gathered the ashes was to wash his clothes and was unclean until evening.

It's interesting to note, this was done outside the camp and not inside the tabernacle as the sacrifices were done.

Nu 19:10 And he that gathereth the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even: and it shall be unto the children of Israel, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among them, for a statute for ever.

#### THE LAW CONCERNING UNCLEANNES 19:11-16

Anyone who touched the dead body of a person would be unclean for seven days.

Being "unclean" meant a person was unfit to be used by God. An unclean person was excluded from service for the Lord.

Nu 19:11 He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days.

The truth of being clean or unclean is carried into the New Testament. God wants His people clean. He demands we be separate from the world.

2 Co 6:17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

2 Co 7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Col 1:10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

It's interesting to note, when someone touched the dead body of an animal, he was unclean until the evening (Lev. 11:24). But the person who touched the dead body of a human was unclean for seven days. This exposes the impurity of man. The uncleanness was more severe from touching a man than a beast.

If the unclean person did as the Lord instructed, he would be clean on the seventh day. If he refused, he remained unclean. There was one remedy, and only one.

Nu 19:12 He shall purify himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean: but if he purify not himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean.

The person who became unclean and did not purify himself as instructed would defile the tabernacle if they came close to it. They would be cut off from Israel because he did not use the means of purification the Lord had provided.

Nu 19:13 Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is yet upon him.

When someone died in a tent, all who entered the tent would be unclean for seven days. All the items in the tent would be unclean for seven days.

Nu 19:14 This is the law, when a man dieth in a tent: all that come into the tent, and all that is in the tent, shall be unclean seven days.

The open vessels in the tent would be unclean.

Nu 19:15 And every open vessel, which hath no covering bound upon it, is unclean

#### THE WATER OF SEPARATION 19:17-22

In order to purify a person who had become unclean by coming into contact with a dead body, they took some of the ashes from the red heifer that had been left outside the camp. They put the ashes in a vessel and added running (fresh) water.

Nu 19:17 And for an unclean person they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel:

A ceremonially clean person would dip hyssop into the water of separation and sprinkle it on the tent, vessels and person that become unclean. Only a priest could offer the usual sacrifices, but any clean person could do this.

Hyssop was a wild bush that grew extensively. It was used the night Israel came out of Egypt (Ex. 12:22) and in the cleansing of a leper (Lev. 14:1-8)

Nu 19:18 And a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave:

This sprinkling was to be done on the third day and on the seventh day after they became unclean. This gave the people time to deal with the burial and all that was associated with a death.

Nu 19:19 And the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day: and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at even.

The person who sprinkled the water must wash his clothes, take a bath and would be unclean until evening.

Those who refused to comply with these instructions would be "cut off". This means, at the very least, they would be excommunicated from the camp.

Nu 19:20 But the man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation, because he hath defiled the sanctuary of the LORD: the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him; he is unclean.

Even touching the water of separation caused the person to be unclean until evening.

Nu 19:21 And it shall be a perpetual statute unto them, that he that sprinkleth the water of separation shall wash his clothes; and he that toucheth the water of separation shall be unclean until even.

Whatever the unclean person touched was unclean. Anyone who touched an unclean person would become unclean. This reveals how sin contaminates all those who come in contact with it.

David had this cleansing in mind after his sin with Bathsheba.

Ps 51:7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

This was God's remedy for those who were unclean. An unclean person did not eventually become automatically clean. The water of separation had to be sprinkled or there was no cleansing.

The water of separation and the ashes of the red heifer differed from other sacrifices. The high priest did not officiate this sacrifice. The animal was a heifer instead of a bullock. The color was designated. The heifer was slain outside of the camp instead of at the tabernacle. The blood was burnt with the rest of the body. The ashes were saved to use later.

## ISRAEL AT KADESH AGAIN chapter 20

Israel traveled to Kadesh again. This was the first month of the fortieth year since they left Egypt.

### MIRIAM DIED

Nu 20:1 Then came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin in the first month: and the people abode in Kadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there.

Miriam was Moses' and Aaron's older sister. She was a strange combination of the spiritual and the fleshly.

She stood true through many difficulties along the way. However, at times, she stood against Moses.

- She was there to help when Moses' mother placed him in a basket in the Nile River (Ex. 2:1-8).
- She participated with the singing after they crossed the Red Sea (Ex. 15:20)
- She spoke against Moses and became leprous as a result (Nu. 12:1).

We must remember, Miriam was a part of that group that God said would die in the wilderness. She died four months before Aaron (Nu. 33:38).

#### THE PEOPLE COMPLAINED AGAIN

As before (Ex. 17) the people complained to Moses and Aaron about having no water.

Nu 20:2 And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron.

They blamed Moses and Aaron for their circumstances. 20:2-5

Those who are hurting always look for someone to blame. The fact remains, many times we suffer because of our own deeds.

Moses and Aaron went to the tabernacle and prayed. They realized they needed help from God. The glory of the Lord appeared.

Nu 20:6 And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto them.

I am glad we have a God we can turn to in times of distress.

#### GOD TOLD MOSES TO SPEAK TO THE ROCK

God told Moses to gather all the people, take his rod, and speak to the rock. He went so far as to tell Moses water would come out of the rock when he obeyed.

Nu 20:7-8 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink.

Moses must have left the rod somewhere in the tabernacle because verse nine says he took the rod from before the Lord.

Nu 20:9 And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him.

#### MOSES STRUCK THE ROCK TWICE

Instead speaking to the rock as God had instructed, Moses took the rod and smote the rock twice.

Nu 20:10-11 And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also.

In anger, Moses cried out at the people. We can all understand his frustration but that does not excuse his behavior. We must not let the stress of our lives dictate our actions.

The book of Psalms records this incident.

Ps 106:32-33 They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.

God rebuked Moses and Aaron for their anger actions.

It is amazing that in spite of the rebellion of the people, the anger and disobedience of Moses, God still gave the water they needed. The people and their animals drank of the water.

There must have been an enormous amount of water considering the fact there was enough to satisfy as many as two million people and an undetermined number of animals.

Even though they did not deserve it, God provided their need. How many times has he done the same for us? He gives us that which we do not deserve. So much of what we receive from God is undeserved.

Even though God gave the water, He was not about to let them get by with their behavior. He told Moses he would not enter the Promised Land as a result of his actions.

Nu 20:12 And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.

Some may wonder, why God would be so severe on Moses for simply hitting a rock. We must recognize the importance of that rock. I Corinthians says, "that Rock was Christ".

1 Co 10:4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

The rock was a picture of Christ. When Moses smote the rock the first time, it was a picture of Jesus being smitten on the cross for our sin. Jesus was to die ONCE. He was to be smitten one time for all sin. When Moses smote the rock the second time, he broke the type. When Moses smote the rock the second time, he was in type, putting Jesus on the cross a second time.

Moses was told to smite the rock to begin with and then to speak to the rock. In like fashion, once we accept the smitten Jesus, we are able to speak to him.

God called that place "Meribah". Meribah means "strife or contention".

Nu 20:13 This is the water of Meribah; because the children of Israel strove with the LORD, and he was sanctified in them.

#### PERMISSION TO PASS THROUGH THE LAND DENIED 20:14-21

##### THE KING OF EDOM REFUSED TO LET ISRAEL PASS THROUGH THEIR LAND 20:14

As Israel traveled, they naturally passed through land that was owned by others. One such land was the land of Edom. The people of Edom were descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob (later called Israel).

Moses sent messengers to the king of Edom to ask permission to pass through their land. Moses pleads to the king of Edom on behalf of the fact that they are "brothers".

Nu 20:14 And Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the king of Edom, Thus saith thy brother Israel, Thou knowest all the travail that hath befallen us:

The messengers of Israel explained how they have no plans to damage the land as they passed through. They would not go through their fields or vineyards, they would drink none of their water from their wells.

Nu 20:17 Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country: we will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells: we will go by the king's high way, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders.

They said they would go by the "king's high way". This is the first time this phrase is used. It probably was a public road made upon the authority of the king and paid for by the state. It took a good bit of ingenuity to build such a road through the sands and mountains.

The king of Edom refused to let them pass through the land. He said they would attack them if they tried.

Nu 20:18 And Edom said unto him, Thou shalt not pass by me, lest I come out against thee with the sword.

The messengers responded by saying they would pay for any water they or their animals drank as they passed through the land. Water was such a valued commodity because of its scarceness, it was not unusual for there to be a charge for its consumption.

Nu 20:19 And the children of Israel said unto him, We will go by the high way: and if I and my cattle drink of thy water, then I will pay for it: I will only, without doing any thing else, go through on my feet.

The king of Edom still refused to allow the people of Israel to pass through the land. This was an especially cruel act considering how they were near kinsmen. He went so far as to dispatch his troops to block the progress of Israel.

Nu 20:20 And he said, Thou shalt not go through. And Edom came out against him with much people, and with a strong hand.

Israel took another route. This detour must have discouraged the people of Israel. Their journey became much more difficult and dangerous.

Nu 20:21-22 Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border: wherefore Israel turned away from him. And the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, journeyed from Kadesh, and came unto mount Hor.

#### AARON DIED

God warned Moses and Aaron how Aaron would die soon. It must have been strange for Aaron to hear the message of his own impending death.

God made it clear, Aaron was dying because he had been a part of the striking of the rock (20:10-12).

Nu 20:23–24 And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah.

Even though Aaron's death was due to his sin, the manner of his death was done in a way of honor.

Aaron was to wear his priestly garments and go to the top of mount Hor. Once there, his priestly garments were removed and placed on his son, Eleazar.

Nu 20:25–26 Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up unto mount Hor: And strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son: and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, and shall die there.

Moses did as God had instructed.

Nu 20:27–28 And Moses did as the LORD commanded: and they went up into mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation. And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there in the top of the mount: and Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount.

How haunting are these words, "Aaron died there". The first high priest was gone. His son, Eleazar took his place.

The people mourned the death of Aaron for thirty days.

Nu 20:29 And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel.

Numbers 33:38 tells us Aaron died in the fortieth year after the children of Israel came out of Egypt. It is interesting to discover, there is very little recorded about these years of wandering in the wilderness. This fact reminds us how they accomplished next to nothing during this time. These years were marked by rebellion, complaints, judgment and death.

During these years, they moved a lot but made no progress. We would do well to realize, we accomplish nothing of value when we walk in the flesh.

#### VICTORY OVER ARAD 21:1-3

Chapter 21 begins a new step in the lives of the people of Israel. They were getting closer to entering the land of Canaan (Promised Land). The old generation of Israel was dying out and new generation was facing their first encounter with a hostile army.

The land of Canaan had several cities. These cities that had to be defeated before the people of Israel could live in the land.

One such city was Arad. The king of Arad heard about Israel and attacked them, taking prisoners.

Nu 21:1 And when king Arad the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south, heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies; then he fought against Israel, and took some of them prisoners.

Israel promised God if He would deliver Arad into their hands, they would totally destroy their land.

Nu 21:2 And Israel vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities.

The word “destroy” meant there would be no spoils to keep for themselves. The common practice of that day was, the conquering people would keep all the belongings of the losing people. Giving up these spoils was quite a sacrifice for Moses and the people of Israel.

The word “destroy” is the Hebrew word “charam”. It has the idea of devoting something to God.

God heard the request of Israel and gave them victory over Arad.

Nu 21:3 And the LORD hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities: and he called the name of the place Hormah.

Total annihilation may seem harsh but we must remember...

- THE SIN OF THE PEOPLE IN CANAAN DESERVED JUDGMENT

The Canaanites were an ungodly people. Everything from their daily lives to their religion was ungodly. They offered their own children as sacrifices to their gods.

- THEIR WICKEDNESS WOULD SPREAD IF IT WASN'T DONE AWAY WITH

If these people were not destroyed, these wicked acts would continue and spread. If they were not dealt with, their sin would spread into the lives of the people of Israel when they moved into the land.

- GOD WAS USING ISRAEL AS A TOOL TO DEAL WITH THE CANAANITES

Israel was the tool God used to deal with the sin of these barbaric people.

- GOD USED THIS JUDGMENT TO PROVIDE HIS PEOPLE WITH THE LAND HE PROMISED

God used his people to deal with ungodly nations, and at the same time, blessed his people.

## THE PEOPLE COMPLAINED AGAIN

After the defeat of Arad, the people were on the move again. The harshness of the travel discouraged them and they started complaining again.

Nu 21:4-5 And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.

They complained about the lack of bread and water and how they were tired of the manna. This makes us think of the many times they grieved God by not being satisfied with His care of them.

Israel, like us, were never satisfied with what God had given them. Life in the wilderness was difficult, but God was taking care of them. He was leading them every step of the way. He was providing every need they had. Most of all, he was going with them in their journey.

## LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT THEIR COMPLAINTS AND THE RESULTS

<b><u>SCRIPTURE</u></b>	<b><u>COMPLAINT</u></b>	<b><u>MOSES' REACTION</u></b>	<b><u>GOD'S REACTION</u></b>
Ex. 14:11	About Pharaoh's army	Encouraged Israel to trust God	Delivered them
Ex. 15:24	About bitter water	Prayed	Purified the water
Ex. 16:2	About lack of food	Rebuked them	Gave them manna
Ex. 17:2	About lack of water	Prayed	Water from the rock
Nu. 11:1	About lack of food	Got angry and prayed	Judged with fire
Nu. 14:2	Grumbled about Moses' leadership	Spoke to Israel and prayed	Judged them
Nu. 16:2	Grumbled about Moses' leadership	Spoke to Israel and prayed	Judged them
Nu. 16:41	Grumbled about Moses	Prayed	Judged them
Nu. 20:2	Grumbled about Moses and lack of water	Rebuked Israel and smote rock	Supplied water from the rock
Nu. 21:4	Grumbled about Moses and manna	No response	Sent fiery serpents

#### THE BITE OF THE SERPENTS 21:6-9

God sent fiery serpents that bit the people. The word "fiery" may refer to its bright color, or maybe the heat and thirst caused by its bite. Many died from these bites.

Nu 21:6 And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.

The people called to Moses and confessed their sin of speaking against him and against God. They asked Moses to pray for them and to ask God to take the serpents away. Moses prayed and God answered.

Nu 21:7 Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.

God told Moses to make a brass serpent (in the form of the serpents that bit them) and set it on a pole.

Nu 21:8 And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.

Moses did as God directed.

Nu 21:9 And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

Anyone who simply looked at the brass serpent on the pole, was healed and would live.

Moses must have told the people about the brass serpent on the pole. He must have told them if they would look upon the serpent, they would be healed.

Those who had been bitten, had to believe what Moses told them about the serpent on the pole. If they did not believe what Moses said, they would not look. The fact that someone looked proved they believed. They were looking by faith.

The serpent on the pole is a picture of Jesus hanging on the cross. Anyone who looks to Him by faith, will be healed of the effects of sin and will live.

## ISRAEL ON THE MOVE AGAIN Nu. 21:10-20

The Israelite traveled to a land called Beer.

### GOD GAVE THEM WATER

They did for water instead of God giving it through the rock.

Nu 21:16–17 And from thence they went to Beer: that is the well whereof the LORD spake unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water. Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it:

Instead of the complaining that marked the people earlier, here there was joy and thankfulness for God's goodness. They sang a song of praise.

### ISRAEL DEFEATED SIHON

Israel sent messengers to Sihon, the king of the Amorites and asked if he would allow them to pass through his land.

Nu 21:21–22 And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon king of the Amorites, saying, Let me pass through thy land: we will not turn into the fields, or into the vineyards; we will not drink of the waters of the well: but we will go along by the king's high way, until we be past thy borders.

Sihon refused. He gathered his people and attacked Israel.

Nu 21:23 And Sihon would not suffer Israel to pass through his border: but Sihon gathered all his people together, and went out against Israel into the wilderness: and he came to Jahaz, and fought against Israel.

Israel defeated Sihon and took possession of his land.

Nu 21:24 And Israel smote him with the edge of the sword, and possessed his land from Arnon unto Jabbok, even unto the children of Ammon: for the border of the children of Ammon was strong.

Israel overcame many cities and dwelt in the land of the Amorites. 21:25-31

Israel defeated Og, the king of Bashan and took possession of the land. 21:32-35

## BALAK AND BALAAM Chapters 22-24

### THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL MOVED TO THE PLAINS OF MOAB

The news of Israel's victories was spreading across the land. Fear smote the people who lived in their path.

Nu 22:1 And the children of Israel set forward, and pitched in the plains of Moab on this side Jordan by Jericho.

The Moabites got their start from Moab, the son of Lot, born of the incestuous relationship with his daughter (Gen. 19:37).

Balak, the king of Moab, was afraid of Israel because he had heard what God had done for them.

Nu 22:2-3 And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. And Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they were many: and Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel.

It seems like the Moabites were not as worried about war as they were worried about Israel moving in and taking over what they had. Their primary concern was their economy.

Moab contacted the people of Midian and spoke to them about Israel. The Midianites were a people who lived near Moab.

Nu 22:4 And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time.

This certainly sounds like our country. Most people are more interested in the dollar, than the things of God.

Balak had nothing to fear of the people of Israel. God had told Moses to show no hostility towards the Moabites because He would not give Israel any of their land. (Deut. 2:8-9)

How many times have we feared unnecessarily?

#### BALAK TRIED TO OVERCOME ISRAEL BY HAVING THEM CURSED

Nu 22:5–6 He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam the son of Beor to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me: Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land: for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed.

Balak was the king of Moab. Realizing the power of Israel and thinking his defeat was inevitable, he devised a plan that he hoped would deal with these people. He believed he could overcome Israel if he could put a curse on them. If he could somehow undo the blessing of the Lord, he could defeat Israel.

#### BALAK SENT FOR BALAAM

Balak sent messengers to Balaam, asking him to come to Moab and curse the people of Israel.

#### WHO WAS BALAAM

Verse 5 tells us Balaam was from "Pethor which was in upper Mesopotamia.

The story of Balaam is one of the most unusual in the bible. On one hand, he seemed to be a man who was in touch with God (Nu. 22:18) on the other hand, he seemed to be a man for hire to the highest bidder. He said he would speak only what God told him to speak (Nu. 22:8,18), yet he told the Midianites to have their daughters seduce the Israelite soldiers in an attempt to defeat them (Nu. 31:16). God used him to prophecy (Nu. 23:16-24; 24:2-24) but he was also used by the devil in soothsaying (Joshua 13:22).

#### WAS BALAAM A TRUE MAN OF GOD

There had been much discussion as to whether Balaam was a true man of God.

#### THERE ARE SOME REASONS TO BELIEVE HE WAS A TRUE MAN OF GOD

- HE CLAIMED TO KNOW GOD

In Nu. 22:18, he said, "I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God".

- HE PROPHESED

At times, he did speak what God told him to speak. Some of what he said did come to pass.

- HE OFFERED SACRIFICES (Nu. 23:4)

#### THERE ARE MORE REASONS TO BELIEVE BALAAM WAS NOT A TRUE MAN OF GOD

However, in my opinion, Balaam was not a true man of God. I've come to this conclusion for the following reasons.

- THE BIBLE CONSISTENTLY SPEAKS OF BALAAM IN A NEGATIVE MANNER

Nu. 31:8, 16; Deut. 23:3-6; Josh. 13:22, 24:9-10; Judg. 11:23-25; Neh. 13:1-3; Mic. 6:5; 2 Pet.2:15-16; Jude 11; Rev. 2:14.

- CLAIMING TO BE A MAN OF GOD, DOES NOT MAKE US ONE

Anyone can CLAIM to know the Lord. Many claim they are God's but that does not make it so.

Mt 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

- PROPHESYING DOES NOT NECESSARILY MAKE US A MAN OF GOD

God speaking through Balaam does not guarantee he was God's man. God also spoke through Balaam's donkey. God has spoken through many who were not believers. He honors His word, not the man.

Joshua 13:22 calls Balaam a “soothsayer”, which means a “diviner”. Divination dealt with sorcery and fortune telling and was forbidden in scripture. (Ex.22:18; Lev.19:26; 19:31; 20:27, Deut. 18:10-11)

Many lost people will stand before the Lord and talk about how they prophesied in His name.

Mt 7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? ....

God has spoken to many who were ungodly. He spoke to Abimelech (Gen. 20:6-7). He spoke to Pharaoh in dreams (Gen. 41:25). He spoke to Nebuchadnezzar in a dream and visions (Dan. 4:1-18).

- OFFERING SACRIFICES DOES NOT PROVE HE KNEW THE LORD

The fact that Balaam offered sacrifices does not guarantee he was God's man. If we'll notice, Balak offered the sacrifices with Balaam and we know Balak was not a man of God. (Nu. 23:2)

In my opinion, Balaam was willing to approach any deity that could help him. He was in it for himself.

Numbers 22:7 tells us he was paid the “rewards of divination”. That means, he was paid as a sorcerer.

Numbers 24:1 tells us he was seeking for “enchantments”. The word “enchantment” means an incantation.

- BALAAM CONVINCED THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL TO SPARE THE MIDIANITE WOMEN

God told Israel to not allow any of the Midianites to live (Nu. 21:1-18). Balaam convinced them to allow the virgin women to live (Nu. 31:15-16). This would lead to the people of Israel going after their gods.

It's one thing to be a believer and be worldly, but this act was more than just an act of a worldly believer. I believe it is one more bit of evidence to show he did not know the Lord.

- BALAAM WAS KILLED WITH THE MIDIANITES IN A BATTLE WITH ISRAEL

He would be killed later in a battle while siding with Balak (Nu. 31:8). There seems to be little doubt, the judgment of God finally caught up with him.

- THE NEW TESTAMENT COMPARES HIM WITH THOSE WHO DO NOT KNOW THE LORD

The greatest argument for Balaam not being real, is how the New Testament uses him as an example.

Peter talks about false prophets and likens them to “the way of Balaam” (2 Pet. 2:15)

Peter compared Balaam with the false teachers of his day (2 Pet. 2:1). The false teachers Peter was referring to were obviously lost. (2 Pet. 2:13-14)

Jude 11 refers to the “error of Balaam”.

Jude is comparing Balaam with those who have crept in unawares, those who were ungodly and condemned (Jude 4). Jude is speaking of those who never knew the Lord.

The “doctrine of Balaam” is mentioned in Rev. 2:14.

In this verse, the church of Pergamos is being rebuked to allowing pagans to influence them to compromise as Balaam did the people of Israel.

The same Holy Spirit who wrote the Old Testament, wrote the New Testament. I don't believe He would lead men to use Balaam as an example of those who are lost in the New Testament, if he was indeed a true man of God.

#### THE PEOPLE OF MOAB AND MIDIAN SEND MESSENGERS TO MEET WITH BALAAM

The elders of Moab and Midian departed with the fee for divination and went to Balaam.

Nu 22:7 And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand; and they came unto Balaam, and spake unto him the words of Balak.

#### BALAAM TALKED TO GOD

Balaam told the messengers to spend the night while he sought the Lord about the matter.

Nu 22:8 And he said unto them, Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the LORD shall speak unto me: and the princes of Moab abode with Balaam.

During the night, God spoke to Balaam and told him to not go with the messengers. 22:9-12

God told Balaam he was not to go with the messengers nor curse Israel. What God has blessed, cannot be cursed.

Nu 22:12 And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed.

Balaam told the messengers to go back home, he would not curse Israel. He told them God would not allow him to go with them nor to curse Israel.

Nu 22:13 And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said unto the princes of Balak, Get you into your land: for the LORD refuseth to give me leave to go with you.

The messengers returned to Moab and told Balak, Balaam had refused to come.

Nu 22:14 And the princes of Moab rose up, and they went unto Balak, and said, Balaam refuseth to come with us.

Balak didn't give up. He sent more messengers, even more important than the first.

Nu 22:15 And Balak sent yet again princes, more, and more honourable than they.

Balak increased his offer to Balaam. In essence, he was giving Balaam a blank check. Some desire money, some desire fame, others desire power. Balak was offering all these to Balaam.

Nu 22:16–17 And they came to Balaam, and said to him, Thus saith Balak the son of Zippor, Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me: For I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people.

Once again, Balaam refused. No doubt, Balak's offer tempted Balaam, but he stood his ground. He told the messengers he would not attempt to curse Israel, even if Balak gave him his house filled with gold and silver.

Nu 22:18 And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more.

At this point, Balaam seemed committed to doing what the Lord told him. Unfortunately, his attitude would change. Balaam told the messengers to spend the night while he sought the Lord once more.

Nu 22:19 Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the LORD will say unto me more.

#### BALAAM DISOBEYED THE LORD

God told Balaam to go with the messengers, IF they called on him again, and asked him to go with them. God made it clear, Balaam was to do only what He said, nothing more and nothing less.

Nu 22:20 And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do.

Balaam got up the next morning, saddled his donkey and went with the messengers. He made this decision in direct opposition to God's directions. The messengers did not call on him, or ask him to go with them. He went on his own.

Nu 22:21 And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.

There are times when God will allow us to do what we are determined to do. Even though He knows it is wrong and we will be hurt as a result, He allows us to make our own decisions.

Ps 81:11–12 But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels

As with Balaam, we will suffer the consequences of those decisions.

#### GOD TRIED TO STOP BALAAM FROM GOING TO MOAB

God was angry at Balaam because of his disobedience. He attempted to stop him before matters got worse.

Nu 22:22 And God's anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the LORD stood in the way for an adversary against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him.

The angel of the LORD stood in Balaam's path, with his sword drawn. There is no doubt who the angel of the LORD is in these verses. It was the Lord himself.

Balaam could not see the angel of the LORD, but his donkey could. The donkey was frightened, turned and went into a field. Balaam, not realizing what was causing the donkey to act in such a manner, struck the donkey.

Nu 22:23 And the ass saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field: and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way.

Further down the trail, the angel of the LORD stood in the path of Balaam and his donkey again. This time, it was a place where a wall was on each side of the road. When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she ran against the wall, crushing Balaam's foot. Balaam struck the donkey again.

Nu 22:24–25 But the angel of the LORD stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side. And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall: and he smote her again.

The angel of the LORD went further down the road and stopped at a place so narrow there was no room on either side. All the donkey could do to avoid continuing toward the angel of the LORD. was stop and lay down

Nu 22:26 And the angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place, where was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left.

When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she fell down. Balaam was really angry this time. He struck the donkey with his staff.

Nu 22:27 And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff.

#### GOD SPOKE THROUGH BALAAM'S DONKEY

God opened the mouth of the donkey.

Nu 22:28 And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?

God can use many tools to speak to those He wants to communicate with. He used a rooster to speak to Peter (Mt. 26:74-75).

Balaam actually spoke back to the donkey. Perhaps he was used to communicating with spirits through his enchantments and was not disturbed by a donkey speaking.

Balaam's excuse for striking the donkey was, he had been "mocked". He was concerned about looking foolish. Balaam said he if he had a sword, he would kill the donkey.

Nu 22:29 And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee.

This shows us the pride of Balaam. He was willing to kill a donkey that had been dependable, simply because he was embarrassed.

The donkey reminded Balaam how he had been dependable and how he had never done anything like this before.

Nu 22:30 And the ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay.

#### GOD OPENED BALAAM'S EYES AND HE SAW THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

Balaam saw the angel of the LORD, with His sword still drawn. Balaam bowed, then fell on his face.

Nu 22:31 Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face.

The angel of the LORD told Balaam He had been trying to stop him. Had his donkey not stopped him, Balaam would have been killed.

Nu 22:32–33 And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me: And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive.

The angel of the LORD made it clear, Balaam's actions were contrary to God's will.

#### BALAAM'S HALF-HEARTED CONFESSION

Balaam admitted that he had sinned, but it seems to be a half-hearted confession. He told the angel of the LORD if what he was doing displeased Him, he would not continue on with the messengers. But, he already knew it was not God's will for him to go. God had already made that clear.

Nu 22:34 And Balaam said unto the angel of the LORD, I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again.

Balaam's words reveal how he was willing to go back home and abandon his plan but there is no sign of conviction for his wrong actions.

God told Balaam to continue with the messengers and go to Balak. He told Balaam to speak only what He told him to say. God was going to use Balaam, but in a way no one would expect.

Nu 22:35 And the angel of the LORD said unto Balaam, Go with the men: but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.

#### BALAAM MET WITH BALAK

When Balak found out Balaam had arrived, he went to meet with him. He expressed his displeasure for Balaam not coming immediately when he called him the first time.

Nu 22:36-37 And when Balak heard that Balaam was come, he went out to meet him unto a city of Moab, which is in the border of Arnon, which is in the utmost coast. And Balak said unto Balaam, Did I not earnestly send unto thee to call thee? wherefore camest thou not unto me? am I not able indeed to promote thee to honour?

What a meeting this must have been. Two men, both power hungry, both self-centered and both expecting things to go their way.

Balaam told Balak he would speak only what God said.

Nu 22:38 And Balaam said unto Balak, Lo, I am come unto thee: have I now any power at all to say any thing? the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak.

#### BALAK AND BALAAM WENT TO KIRJATHHUZOTH

Kirjathhuzoth means "a city of streets".

Balak took Balaam to the top of a mountain to show him the camp of Israel. He hoped Balaam would curse Israel the moment he saw them. He would be disappointed.

Nu 22:39 And Balaam went with Balak, and they came unto Kirjathhuzoth.

Balak offered sacrifices (a practice common in the worship of false gods). Since Balak knew nothing about the true God, this sacrifice was probably offered to the gods of the Moabites. Maybe Balak was hoping these sacrifices would have some influence on the God Balaam spoke of. He was willing to try anything.

He sent Balaam and the princes that were with him an invitation to come and feast on the meat from the sacrifice he offered.

Nu 22:40 And Balak offered oxen and sheep, and sent to Balaam, and to the princes that were with him.

The next day, Balak took Balaam to the top of a mountain so he could see the people of Israel for himself.

Nu 22:41 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Balak took Balaam, and brought him up into the high places of Baal, that thence he might see the utmost part of the people.

No doubt Balak was hoping Balaam seeing the people would stir him to take immediate action and curse them. Seeing such a vast number of people would have an effect on anyone.

#### BALAAM'S FIRST MESSAGE 23:1-12

##### BALAAM TOLD BALAK TO BUILD SEVEN ALTARS AND OFFER SEVEN SACRIFICES

What a strange mixture of beliefs. Balak had taken Balaam to a place where the worship of Baal was practiced. Now, sacrifices were made in an attempt to get the attention of the true God.

Nu 23:1–2 And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven oxen and seven rams. And Balak did as Balaam had spoken; and Balak and Balaam offered on every altar a bullock and a ram.

Balaam told Balak to stand beside the sacrifice (in expectation of an answer) while he went to a solitude place. Balaam went apart and waited to see if God would speak to him.

Nu 23:3 And Balaam said unto Balak, Stand by thy burnt offering, and I will go: peradventure the LORD will come to meet me: and whatsoever he sheweth me I will tell thee. And he went to an high place.

God did meet with Balaam. Balaam was quick to mention how he had made sacrifices. Once again, we see how he thought he could attain favor with God through works.

Nu 23:4 And God met Balaam: and he said unto him, I have prepared seven altars, and I have offered upon every altar a bullock and a ram.

God told Balaam to return to Balak. He gave him the exact words to say.

Nu 23:5 And the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, Return unto Balak, and thus thou shalt speak.

The words Balaam spoke were not his own. He did speak God's message. What he said was a prophecy of what would take place.

Balaam returned to the place of the sacrifices to find Balak and the princes of Moab waiting.

Nu 23:6 And he returned unto him, and, lo, he stood by his burnt sacrifice, he, and all the princes of Moab.

Balaam spoke what God told him. It was in the style of Hebrew poetry. Hebrew poetry is not as we think of as poetry, with sentences that end with words that rhyme. Hebrew poetry has more to do with sentence structure than rhyming. There are pairs of sentences or lines. The first line and the second line are similar. Sometimes, the second line will complete the thought in the first line. Or, the second line may put an emphasis on the subject found in the first line.

Balaam said what God had told him to say. The primary message was about how Balak had asked him to curse Israel but God would not allow him to. Instead of being cursed, Israel would be blessed.

Nu 23:7 And he took up his parable, and said, Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel.

How could Balaam, or anyone, curse what God had blessed?

Nu 23:8 How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the LORD hath not defied?

Balaam continued to speak about God's blessings on Israel. 23:9-10

##### BALAK WAS ANGRY AT BALAAM

Balak was angry at Balaam. Instead of cursing Israel, he had blessed them.

Nu 23:11 And Balak said unto Balaam, What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed them altogether.

Balaam explained that he could not speak on his own, but what he had said was the words of the Lord.

Nu 23:12 And he answered and said, Must I not take heed to speak that which the LORD hath put in my mouth?

**BALAAM'S SECOND MESSAGE 23:13-24**

**BALAK TRIED THE SECOND TIME TO GET BALAAM TO CURSE ISRAEL**

Balak did not give up. If anything, he was a man of determination. He refused to give up.

He asked Balaam to go to another location so he could see the people of Israel from a different perspective.

Nu 23:13 And Balak said unto him, Come, I pray thee, with me unto another place, from whence thou mayest see them: thou shalt see but the utmost part of them, and shalt not see them all: and curse me them from thence.

Balak must have thought Balaam had been overwhelmed by seeing how large the camp of Israel was. He took him to a place where he would see only a portion of the people. He hoped this would give Balaam the confidence he would need and he would be able to curse the people a little at a time.

Balak took Balaam to the top of Pisgah. Once again, they built seven altars and offered seven sacrifices.

Nu 23:14 And he brought him into the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars, and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar.

It's amazing to realize, this was the same place Moses had stood when God showed him the land of promise (Deut. 3:27, 34:1). How different is this gathering.

Balaam, as before, leaves Balak and goes to see if God will meet with him. God met with him again.

Nu 23:15–16 And he said unto Balak, Stand here by thy burnt offering, while I meet the LORD yonder. And the LORD met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, Go again unto Balak, and say thus.

As before, when Balaam returned, he finds Balak and the princes of Moab waiting for him. Balak was quick to ask what God had said.

Nu 23:17 And when he came to him, behold, he stood by his burnt offering, and the princes of Moab with him. And Balak said unto him, What hath the LORD spoken?

Balaam spoke what God had told him to speak. God is not a man, He does not lie and there is no need for Him to ever repent of any wrong doing. When God speaks, it shall come to pass.

Nu 23:18–19 And he took up his parable, and said, Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor: God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

Balaam blessed the people of Israel again. What God has said cannot be reversed, it cannot be undone. God has blessed His people and they shall be blessed no matter what.

Nu 23:20 Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it.

Balaam explained why God would not curse His people. God would not curse His people, because of their lack of sin.

Nu 23:21 He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them.

At first glance, we'd have to wonder how God could say His people were without sin. For years, they had complained, rebelled, and refused to obey God. The problem is solved when we realize what God really said. The words, "iniquity" and "perverseness" are words that refer to the worse type of sin, that being, idolatry. The people had done many things that were a disgrace, but they were, at least at that time, free of idolatry.

Balaam said, "the LORD his God is with him". God had shown time after time, He was indeed with His people. He had walked them out of Egypt and through forty years in the wilderness.

The words, "the shout of a king is among them" speaks of a king who returns to his home after defeating and enemy and taking the spoils.

God spoke about the strength of His people. They came out of Egypt a weak and unorganized Moab. Now, God has used the wilderness journey to mold them into a strong people.

Nu 23:22 God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn.

What the word "unicorn" speaks of is uncertain. It certainly doesn't refer to the mystical character of a horse with one horn. Some say it refers to a rhinoceros. Whatever God has in mind, He is talking about an animal that has great strength.

There is no curse or enchantment that will work against God's people. There is no power on earth that can overcome the people of God. The God of all power watches over His own.

Nu 23:23 Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!

The words, "according to this time", seem to be saying, "in God's own time". In other words, when God wants to, He will. He will do such a work for Israel that everyone will say "look what God has done".

The day will come when Israel shall rise like a great lion and destroy her enemies.

Nu 23:24 Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain.

Israel's enemies will be no more able to defend themselves than helpless animal can defend themselves against a hungry lion.

So Balaam, instead of cursing, had blessed Israel again. He, not only blessed Israel, but he denounced Israel's enemies.

Balak told Balaam to just be quiet, to not curse or bless Israel.

Nu 23:25 And Balak said unto Balaam, Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all.

Balaam reminded Balak what he had said before, he could only say what God told him to say.

Nu 23:26 But Balaam answered and said unto Balak, Told not I thee, saying, All that the LORD speaketh, that I must do?

#### BALAK TRIED THE THIRD TIME TO GET BALAAM TO CURSE ISRAEL

Balak, being as superstitious as he was, thought maybe the place they were was an unlucky place and they needed to move. It was a common belief that some gods were more powerful in the mountains as opposed to the valleys (1 Kgs. 20:28). Maybe Balak thought they simply needed to move to a place where Balaam's god could have more power.

One thing is certain, Balak was determined. He didn't give up easily.

Nu 23:27 And Balak said unto Balaam, Come, I pray thee, I will bring thee unto another place; peradventure it will please God that thou mayest curse me them from thence.

Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor. Balaam told Balak to build seven altars and prepare seven bullocks and seven rams.

Nu 23:28-29 And Balak brought Balaam unto the top of Peor, that looketh toward Jeshimon. And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven bullocks and seven rams.

Balak did as Balaam said, and offered the sacrifice as he had directed.

Nu 23:30 And Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar.

Balaam realized it pleased God to bless His people and He would not curse them, so he stopped seeking for enchantments (incantations). This verse makes it clear, even though Balaam had been met by God, he had been using some type of incantations in trying to curse Israel. He had learned from his two previous attempts, what he was trying was not working. God had met with him but had stopped his efforts. Why try to do the same thing again?

Nu 24:1 And when Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments, but he set his face toward the wilderness.

What a blessing it is to know, God wants to bless His people. He protects us from those who would do us harm. That is not to say we will never be mistreated by others. The early church was persecuted in ways that were unbelievable. The persecution of the early church caused them to draw closer to the Lord. The end result, the gospel spread throughout the world and the cause of Christ exploded. We can rest assured, if God lets us suffer, there is a reason.

Balaam took a good look at the camp of Israel. He was amazed at what he saw. The vast and orderly camp spread out across the countryside (Nu. 2:1-34).

Nu 24:2 And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes; and the spirit of God came upon him.

The Spirit of God came upon him. During Old Testament times, the Spirit of God would temporarily come upon those He desired to use. Once the task He desired to go was accomplished, He would withdraw Himself. That's why David said, "take not thy holy spirit from me".

The Spirit coming on him does not suggest he was a man of God. The Spirit came upon Saul (1 Sam. 10:10-11). There's a vast difference between the Spirit coming on a person to use them for a particular task and Him coming to abide in them.

The Spirit of God coming upon Balaam simply means, God spoke through him the word He desired to speak.

#### BALAAM'S THIRD MESSAGE 24:1-14

Balaam spoke a third message. Balaam was referring to himself when he talked about "the man whose eyes are open". His eyes had been closed to such a degree to where he didn't even see the angel of the LORD that stood in his path. However, now he sees what he had been blinded to.

Nu 24:3 And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said:

God spoke to Balaam. In this message, Balaam would talk about how God would bless His people in the Promised Land.

Nu 24:4 He hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open:

Balaam spoke of the magnificence of the camp of Israel.

Nu 24:5-6 How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the LORD hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters.

God would pour His blessings on Israel like buckets of water.

Nu 24:7 He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted.

Just as He did with Egypt, God would deliver the enemies of Israel in a miraculous way.

Nu 24:8 God brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn: he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows.

Israel was likened to a lion. These words could refer to the victories Israel would have over the inhabitants of the Promised Land. They could be speaking of Jesus, as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who comes and wins the victory over death, hell and the devil.

Nu 24:9 He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.

Most animals have to find a secure place to sleep. Because of his strength, the lion does not have to find a secret place, he lays down wherever he desires.

This speaks of the security Israel would have once they inhabit the Promised Land. No one would be bold enough to attack them.

#### BALAK WAS ANGRY AGAIN

Balak was angry at Balaam because he had still not cursed Israel. Smiting the hands together was a way to insult a person. It showed just how angry Balak was but he was intentionally trying to insult him.

Nu 24:10 And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together: and Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times.

Balak told Balaam to go back home. He had asked Balaam to curse Israel but he had blessed them instead.

Nu 24:11 Therefore now flee thou to thy place: I thought to promote thee unto great honour; but, lo, the LORD hath kept thee back from honour.

The devil tells us the same thing Balak told Balaam. Balak told Balaam the Lord had kept him from receiving something wonderful. May the Lord give us wisdom enough to know the devil has nothing of any value. All good things come from God.

Balaam reminded Balak what he had told him from the beginning (Nu. 22:18-20).

Nu 24:12-13 And Balaam said unto Balak, Spake I not also to thy messengers which thou sentest unto me, saying, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the LORD, to do either good or bad of mine own mind; but what the LORD saith, that will I speak?

Balaam ends his words with a message that said what Israel would eventually do to the people of Balak.

Nu 24:14 And now, behold, I go unto my people: come therefore, and I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days.

#### BALAAM'S FOURTH MESSAGE 24:15-19

Balaam speaks yet again. This time, he spoke of things that would happen in the distant future. This message had to do with the coming of Israel's king. This king would overcome Moab.

Nu 24:15 And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said:

Nu 24:16 He hath said, which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open:

Balaam spoke about a man who would come. He said, "I shall see him, but not now". This man would come later.

Nu 24:17 I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.

The "Star" and "Sceptre" Balaam spoke of was David. David would defeat the Moabites and other enemies (2 Sam. 8:2).

No doubt, these verses also speak of Jesus, the Messiah. He will come again and set up a kingdom for Israel. He will defeat all of Israel's enemies when He returns.

Nu 24:18 And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly.

#### BALAAM'S FINAL THREE MESSAGES 24:20-25

First, Amalek will come to an end.

Nu 24:20 And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable, and said, Amalek was the first of the nations; but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever.

Second, the Kenites will be carried away by Asshur.

Nu 24:21–22 And he looked on the Kenites, and took up his parable, and said, Strong is thy dwellingplace, and thou puttest thy nest in a rock. Nevertheless the Kenite shall be wasted, until Asshur shall carry thee away captive.

Third, Assyria and Eber will be afflicted by Cyprus.

Nu 24:23–24 And he took up his parable, and said, Alas, who shall live when God doeth this! And ships shall come from the coast of Chittim, and shall afflict Asshur, and shall afflict Eber, and he also shall perish for ever.

Nu 24:25 And Balaam rose up, and went and returned to his place: and Balak also went his way.

And so, Balaam had failed to curse Israel. In spite of his many attempts, he succeeded only in blessing Israel.

I am so glad the same God who protected Israel still protects those who know Him. No matter what the devil might try to do against us, he will be unsuccessful.

Ro 8:33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

Ro 8:31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

Balaam went home but he did not stop in his attempt to curse Israel. He would be instrumental in their joining with the ungodly women. (Nu. 31:16).

As we discovered, there is little doubt that Balaam's first priority was himself and his finances. Unfortunately, Balaam's story sounds all too familiar. One of the most predominate teachings of our day tells us God will make us rich and successful. Many have "ministries" who do nothing but talk about how God wants to bless us. As Jude 11 says, they run "greedily after the error of Balaam for reward". I'm glad we have a God who wants to bless us, but that does not mean He promises riches and prosperity to all who will have enough faith.

#### ISRAEL WORSHIPPED FALSE GODS 25:1-18

Israel was in Shittim. It's full name was "AbelShittim" (Nu. 33:49) The men of Israel began to have sexual relationships with the Moabitish women. It's important to remember, the Moabites were idolaters.

It's important to note, the Midianites and the Moabites were both apart of the evil spoken of in the following verses. The Midianites were a nomadic group who, at this time, lived among the Moabites.

Nu 25:1 And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.

It isn't made clear in these verses, but Balaam had not given up. We are told later (Nu. 31:15-16) he convinced the men of Israel to take these idolatress women. He knew God would be angry at His people for such an act. Balaam did this in an attempt to cause the judgment of God to come on Israel (Nu. 31:15-16, Rev. 2:14).

The words "people began to commit whoredom" refer to the fact that they were being spiritually unfaithful to God by worshipping Baal. They also refer to the fact of how sexual relations was a part of Baal worship. Sexual acts were a part of their "worship" to Baal.

The Moabites, still living close to the people of Israel, became friendly with them. The Moabites invited the men of Israel to their worship services. Unwisely, the men of Israel conceded.

How up to date this is. The religious liberals are always asking the fundamental Christians to relax their convictions and come over to their side. They talk about how narrow minded the fundamentalists are. They want us to be more open minded, but they are as closed minded as it comes.

Idolatry was common in the day of Moses. The Moabites worshipped many false gods, one of them being Baal. They believed Baal was the god of the sun, the god of storms and the god of fertility. Those who worshipped Baal believe he controlled childbirth, provided their crops and protected them.

At times, children were sacrificed to Baal (Jer. 19:5).

The contest to determine who was the real God in Elijah's day was with Baal (1 Kgs.18).

Nu 25:2 And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.

As evil influence always does, it had an effect on those who compromised. Soon, Israel was no longer an observer, they began to worship the gods of the Moabites.

Nu 25:3 And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.

This was a direct disobedience to the first commandment.

#### GOD DEALT WITH THE SIN OF HIS PEOPLE 25:3-5

God was angry because of the sin of His people. He told Moses to gather all the leaders of Israel and execute them in public. It was important that all Israel saw the results of disobeying the Lord.

Nu 25:4 And the LORD said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel.

Moses told the judges to put to death every man who had worshipped Baal.

Nu 25:5 And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baalpeor.

God dealt with the sin severely. Who could blame Him? After all He had done for Israel, and then they turn against Him.

It would do us well to realize, He is the same God today. He is still grieved over our sin and still deals with His people when they do wrong.

#### SIN COMMITTED OPENLY

A man (Zimri, v. 14) brought a Midianitish woman into his tent in the sight of Moses and the people. This seems to have happened between Moses' instructions to have those who had worshipped Baal put to death and the actual execution of those who were guilty.

While some of the people were weeping because of the wickedness of the people and the consequences they are about to endure for their sin, Zimri brought a Midianitish woman into his tent. How could anyone be so hardened as to commit such a sin even while people about to die for doing the same type of thing?

Nu 25:6 And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

Balaam had done his best to curse Israel, and failed. But, his influence on the men of Israel had drawn them into a sin that would bring about a judgment and curse from the Lord Himself. What Balaam could not do, their sin and compromise did. Balaam didn't curse them but they ended up cursing themselves. God judged His people because of their deeds.

#### PHINEAS TAKES CHARGE IN DEALING WITH THE SIN

Phinehas, the son of Eleazar (who was the son of Aaron the priest) saw what the man did. He took matters into his own hands. He took a javelin and went to the tent where the man and woman had gone.

Nu 25:7 And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand;

Phineas thrust the javelin through the man and woman, killing them both.

Nu 25:8 And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.

God sent a plague because of their sin. It had already begun to spread throughout the camp. The plague was stayed because the sin was dealt with. The plague was stopped, but not before 24,000 died.

Nu 25:9 And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.

Paul recorded there being 23,000 who died in this plague.

1 Co 10:8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

Paul numbers only the ones who died because of the plague. There must have been 1,000 men put to death as God had instructed, so the total would have been 24,000, as recorded in verse 9.

This was a sad affair but it ended up cleansing the camp of sin. There are times when God's people are strengthened, by subtraction.

#### GOD BLESSED PHINEHAS FOR HIS STAND AGAINST SIN

God told Moses why the plague had been stopped. God explained to Moses that had Phinehas not dealt with the sin, He would have consumed the entire nation.

Nu 25:10–11 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy.

God gave Phinehas a special blessing because of his stand against sin. He called it, "covenant of peace".

Nu 25:12 Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace:

This blessing was not for Phinehas alone, it was for his offspring also.

Nu 25:13 And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.

God named the ones who committed the sin. Verse 14 and 15 tells us the names of the man and woman.

Nu 25:14 Now the name of the Israelite that was slain, even that was slain with the Midianitish woman, was Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of a chief house among the Simeonites.

Nu 25:15 And the name of the Midianitish woman that was slain was Cozbi, the daughter of Zur; he was head over a people, and of a chief house in Midian.

#### GOD TOLD ISRAEL TO VEX AND SMITE THE MIDIANITES 25:16-18

Nu 25:16 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

God told Israel to vex and kill the Midianites.

Nu 25:17 Vex the Midianites, and smite them:

Why were the Moabites not included in this judgment? It may have been because the Midianites were the most guilty.

Nu 25:18 For they vex you with their wives, wherewith they have beguiled you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of a prince of Midian, their sister, which was slain in the day of the plague for Peor's sake.

We'll see this command carried out in Nu31:1-20

#### ISRAEL'S SECOND-GENERATION ARMY chapters 26-36

Israel was getting closer to entering the Promised Land. The first generation (those twenty years and older) have died out. The younger generation had matured now. They had become the leaders. Would they refuse to trust and obey God as their fathers did, or would they trust God and take the land?

## THE SECOND CENSUS Chapter 26-27

After the plague was over, God told Moses and Eleazar to count the people who were twenty years old and upward. These were those who were fit to go to war.

Nu 26:1–2 And it came to pass after the plague, that the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, saying, Take the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, from twenty years old and upward, throughout their fathers' house, all that are able to go to war in Israel.

Thirty eight years earlier, they had taken a similar census (Nu. 1:1-46).

The totals of this census are as follows (including the gain or loss from the first census).

v. 7	Reuben	43,730	(-2,770)
v.14	Simeon	22,200	(-37,100)
v.18	Gad	40,500	(-5,150)
v.22	Judah	76,500	(+1,900)
v.25	Issachar	64,300	(+9,900)
v.27	Zebulun	60,500	(+3,100)
v.34	Manasseh	52,700	(+20,500)
v.37	Ephraim	32,500	(-8,000)
v.41	Benjamin	45,600	(+10,200)
v.43	Dan	64,400	(+1,700)
v.47	Asher	53,400	(+11,900)
v.50	<u>Naphtali</u>	<u>45,400</u>	<u>(-8,000)</u>
v.51	TOTAL	601,730	(-1,820)

Nu 26:51 These were the numbered of the children of Israel, six hundred thousand and a thousand seven hundred and thirty.

The total number was 61,730 men. That was 1,820 less than the first census.

We need to keep in mind, these numbers represent real people. They lived life every day just like we do. They enjoyed the blessings and dealt with the battles, just like we do. They were real people, not just a number in a book.

## DISTRIBUTION OF THE PROMISED LAND 26:52-56

The people were getting close to entering the Promised Land. God told Moses how to divide the land.

Once again, we see order in God's plan. God didn't tell them all to just pick out the spot they wanted, and settle down.

The land was divided into nine and one half parts. The tribes of Reuben, Gad and one half of the tribe of Manasseh settled on the east side of Jordan, outside of the Promised Land (Nu. 32:16-17,33).

The land was divided according to the size of the tribe.

Nu 26:52–53 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Unto these the land shall be divided for an inheritance according to the number of names.

The land was divided by lot.

Nu 26:55–56 Notwithstanding the land shall be divided by lot: according to the names of the tribes of their fathers they shall inherit. According to the lot shall the possession thereof be divided between many and few.

The casting of lots was a method used to determine the will of God in the Old and New Testaments. It could be likened to the rolling of dice or drawing straws. We cannot be certain what lots were, but they could have been sticks or stones with symbols on them. They were thrown (cast) down and their position would reveal the answer the person was seeking. They believed God controlled the lots and how they fell. "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD," (Prov. 16:33).

There are many instances of casting lots in the Bible.

Aaron used to lots to determine which goat would go free.

Le 16:8 And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat.

The order of the priests was determined by the casting of lots.

1 Ch 24:5 Thus were they divided by lot, one sort with another; for the governors of the sanctuary, and governors of the house of God, were of the sons of Eleazar, and of the sons of Ithamar.

After Judas killed himself, they cast lots to see who would replace him.

Ac. 1:26 And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

The casting of lots was used by the ungodly also.

They cast lots to determine who caused the storm in Jonah.

Jon 1:7 And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.

They cast lots to determine who would get Jesus' garments.

Ps 22:18 They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

Mt 27:35 And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.

The last time casting of lots is mentioned in the bible was to determine who would replace Judas.

Lots were not used after Acts 1:26, which was before Pentecost. We surely have no purpose for lots since we have the Holy Spirit and the Word of God to direct us and show us God's will.

#### THE LEVITES WERE COUNTED 26:57-65

The Levites were not included in the second census (26:7-51) because they had no inheritance in the Promised Land.

They were counted here but their number is kept separate from the census. The total number of male Levites from a month old and upward, was 23,000.

Nu 26:62 And those that were numbered of them were twenty and three thousand, all males from a month old and upward: for they were not numbered among the children of Israel, because there was no inheritance given them among the children of Israel.

This record showed no survivors from those who were counted in the first census. As God had said, none of them survived, except Joshua and Caleb.

Nu 26:64-65 But among these there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron the priest numbered, when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai. For the LORD had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness. And there was not left a man of them, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.

None of the crowd who refused to believe had any inheritance in the Promised Land.

#### ZELOPHEHAD'S DAUGHTERS MADE A REQUEST 27:1-5

God's instructions said the land each family received in the Promised Land was to be passed from father to sons. In these verses we are told about a case where there were no sons.

The land was to remain in the family forever. It was a gift God had given them and they were to honor it.

Zelophehad died, having no sons. His daughters came to Moses and the people to ask for the inheritance of their father.

Nu 27:1–2 Then came the daughters of Zelophehad, the son of Hepher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph: and these are the names of his daughters; Mahlah, Noah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Tirzah. And they stood before Moses, and before Eleazar the priest, and before the princes and all the congregation, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying,

Their father was not among those who rebelled with Korah (Nu. 16:32-33). His death had been the result of God's judgment in the wilderness like all the others above the age of twenty.

Nu 27:3 Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not in the company of them that gathered themselves together against the LORD in the company of Korah; but died in his own sin, and had no sons.

These women realized that only the males had been counted in the census. They did not want their family to be excluded because there were no sons.

Nu 27:4 Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family, because he hath no son? Give unto us therefore a possession among the brethren of our father.

#### THE INHERITANCE WAS TO GO TO THE DAUGHTERS

Moses went to the Lord about the situation. God told Moses the daughters were to get the inheritance of their father.

Nu 27:6-7 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, The daughters of Zelophehad speak right: thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father's brethren; and thou shalt cause the inheritance of their father to pass unto them.

#### HOW TO HANDLE THE INHERITANCE WHEN THERE ARE NO SONS

If a man died without sons, his inheritance was to go to his daughter.

Nu 27:8 And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a man die, and have no son, then ye shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his daughter.

If there were no daughters, the inheritance was to go to his brothers.

Nu 27:9 And if he have no daughter, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his brethren.

If there were no brothers, the inheritance would go to his uncles.

Nu 27:10 And if he have no brethren, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his father's brethren.

If there were no uncles, the nearest kin would receive the inheritance.

Nu 27:11 And if his father have no brethren, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his kinsman that is next to him of his family, and he shall possess it: and it shall be unto the children of Israel a statute of judgment, as the LORD commanded Moses.

### MOSES' MINISTRY WAS COMING TO AN END

#### GOD TOLD MOSES OF HIS COMING DEATH

God told Moses go to mountains of Abarim. Abarim was a range of mountains, wherein was Mt. Nebo, one of the highest.

Nu 27:12 And the LORD said unto Moses, Get thee up into this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel.

God told Moses when he saw the Promised Land, he would be gathered to his people.

Nu 27:13 And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered.

God reminded Moses why he would not be able to go into the Promised Land (Nu. 20:12). There is a price for sin.

The exact time of Moses' death is difficult to discern. His actual death is recorded in De. 34:1-8. He was still alive during the war with the Midianites (Num. 31:1). It seems like God was preparing him for his coming death in these verses. He still had some things yet to do before he went to be with the Lord.

How devastating this must have been for Moses. He had gone through the same troubles as the people of Israel. He had endured the years in the wilderness, just as they had. He had longed for the land as much, or more, than any of the people. And now, he sees the land he had longed for, knowing he'd never step one foot into it. He knew he would never enjoy the milk and honey of the land.

Nu 27:14 For ye rebelled against my commandment in the desert of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify me at the water before their eyes: that is the water of Meribah in Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.

God took Moses to Mt. Nebo (Deut. 32:49) and let him see the Promised Land from a distance.

#### MOSES ASKED GOD TO PROVIDE A NEW LEADER FOR ISRAEL

In spite of all that had happened, Moses still had a burden for the people. He loved them, even though they were fleshly and had caused him a great deal of hardship. It was their actions that caused him to smite the rock twice, and thereby lose his chance to live in the Promised Land. But, he still wanted to make sure they would have a leader who would watch after them.

Nu 27:15–17 And Moses spake unto the LORD, saying, Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, Which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the LORD be not as sheep which have no shepherd.

Moses knew these people. He knew if they did not have a godly leader they would be like sheep without a shepherd. So it is with God's people. Thank the Lord for establishing churches where His people can assemble. Thank the Lord for pastors who will "shepherd" the sheep of God.

#### GOD PUT JOSHUA IN THE PLACE OF MOSES

God answered Moses' request with a man whose name was Joshua. Joshua was a man in whom the Spirit of God resided.

Nu 27:18 And the LORD said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him;

It's important to note, this verse says, "IN whom is the spirit". The Spirit of God constantly indwells the New Testament believer (Jn. 14:17, Rom. 8:9). This was not so in Old Testament times. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit came and went as the need arose. Some say the Holy Spirit never entered the people of the Old Testament. But, the bible does say the Spirit came INTO believers on these occasions (1 Pet.1:10).

Joshua was an excellent choice to take the place of Moses. He had assisted Moses on numerous occasions (Nu. 11:28). He had been one of the spies who saw the Promised Land (Nu. 11:26-30). He had already led Israel in times of battle (Ex. 17:9-13). He was one of the two (Joshua and Caleb) who was from the old generation. He, like no one else, fit the position.

Moses brought Joshua before Eleazar and all the people and gave him a charge. That is, Moses instructed Joshua about the importance of the tasks ahead. Joshua would need to trust and obey the Lord if he was to be the leader Israel needed.

Nu 27:19 And set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight.

Some of Moses' authority and honor would go to Joshua.

Nu 27:20 And thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient.

Joshua would never be the leader Moses had been. The people were to obey Joshua as much as they had Moses, but there was still a difference. Moses had met the Lord “face to face” (De. 34:9-10). That would not be the case with Joshua.

Joshua would get instructions from the Lord, through Eleazar, the priest. Eleazar would get the instructions, not face to face as Moses did, but through the Urim.

Nu 27:21 And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the LORD: at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation.

The Urim spoken of in verse 21 is referring to the Urim and Thummim. We cannot be certain what the Urim and Thummim were. We know they were used to determine God’s will for His people. The Urim and Thummin was in Aaron’s breastplate (Ex. 28:30).

Some believe the Urim and Thummim were two stones or sticks, one white and the other black. These stones or sticks were tossed and how they landed revealed God’s will. If they turned up white, the answer was “yes”. If they turned up black, the answer was “no”.

Moses did as God had instructed.

Nu 27:22–23 And Moses did as the LORD commanded him: and he took Joshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation: And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses.

#### SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS REAFFIRMED 28:1-31

Israel was almost prepared to enter the Promised Land. The new census had numbered the men who would be able to fight the battles ahead. Joshua had been named as the new leader.

Now, the spiritual affairs of the people had to be addressed. God does that by reminding them of the sacrifices and offerings. The offerings had already been established but they are reaffirmed here.

They would need the help of the Lord if they were to ever enter the Promised Land. It didn’t matter if they had all the physical matters in order, if their spiritual affairs were not right, they would be in trouble.

The following instructions can be found in Exodus and Leviticus.

Nu. 28:3-8, refer to Ex. 29:38-42

Nu. 28:16-25, refer to Lev. 23:5-8

Nu. 28:26-31, refer to Lev. 23:18

Nu. 29:1-6, refer to Lev. 23:23-25

Nu. 29:7-11, refer to Lev. 23:27-32

Nu. 29:12-38, refer to Lev. 23:33-43

These verses gave the priests a calendar to assist them in when to offer the sacrifices.

#### THE OFFERINGS WERE TO BE OFFERED IN THEIR DUE SEASON

They were to offer the offerings exactly as God had directed.

Nu 28:1–2 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, My offering, and my bread for my sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savour unto me, shall ye observe to offer unto me in their due season.

#### DAILY OFFERINGS 28:3-8

They were to offer two lambs every day, each being a year old and without blemish. God wanted to remind His people how they were to worship Him daily, not just on special occasions.

Nu 28:3 And thou shalt say unto them, This is the offering made by fire which ye shall offer unto the LORD; two lambs of the first year without spot day by day, for a continual burnt offering.

They offered one lamb in the morning and one in the evening.

Nu 28:4 The one lamb shalt thou offer in the morning, and the other lamb shalt thou offer at even;

These offerings were more than just commands given by a God who wanted to be in control of His people. God instituted them in order to keep His people close to Him. The offerings forced the people to keep the Lord on their minds. The offerings kept them coming to the Lord on a regular basis.

We also need a reminder. We should establish a regular time where we commune with Him. He wants that, He enjoys that, and to be honest, He demands that.

The Psalmist took this to heart.

Ps 55:17 Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.

With the lamb, they were to offer a meal offering.

Nu 28:5 And a tenth part of an ephah of flour for a meat offering, mingled with the fourth part of an hin of beaten oil.

These offerings were the same as was instituted at Mt. Sinai.

Nu 28:6 It is a continual burnt offering, which was ordained in mount Sinai for a sweet savour, a sacrifice made by fire unto the LORD.

As the first lamb was being offered, they were to pour an "hin" of wine on the altar. A hin was about a liter.

Nu 28:7 And the drink offering thereof shall be the fourth part of an hin for the one lamb: in the holy place shalt thou cause the strong wine to be poured unto the LORD for a drink offering.

They were to do the same at the evening offering.

Nu 28:8 And the other lamb shalt thou offer at even: as the meat offering of the morning, and as the drink offering thereof, thou shalt offer it, a sacrifice made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD.

#### WEEKLY OFFERINGS 28:9-10

On the Sabbath day two lambs were offered each morning and two each evening. These were to be in their first year and without blemish.

Nu 28:9 And on the sabbath day two lambs of the first year without spot, and two tenth deals of flour for a meat offering, mingled with oil, and the drink offering thereof:

#### MONTHLY OFFERINGS 28:11-15

#### YEARLY AND SPONTANEOUS OFFERINGS 28:16 - 29:40

### RULES CONCERNING VOWS 30:1-16

A vow was a promise to do a certain thing or to act in a certain manner. The vows dealt with in these verses were probably dealing with promises made in reference to the things of God. For instance, when someone promised to give a certain gift at the altar. Or, if someone promised to fast or abstain from particular foods.

#### VOWS ARE TO BE KEPT

Moses spoke to the heads of all the tribes and said what God had told him to say. If anyone makes a vow (promise) they were to keep the vow.

Nu 30:1-2 And Moses spake unto the heads of the tribes concerning the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded. If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.

We should be men and women of our word.

Ec 5:5 Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.

Dt 23:21 When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee.

New Testament believers should be people of their word without making vows. We should be careful what we say at all times. James tells us, "let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay". In other words, if we say "yes", we should mean "yes". If we say "no", we should mean "no". Say what you mean and you'll not have to go back on your word.

#### THE FIRST CASE, VOWS MADE BY YOUNG WOMEN

If an unmarried woman made a vow she had to keep it.

Nu 30:3 If a woman also vow a vow unto the LORD, and bind herself by a bond, being in her father's house in her youth;

If her father knew about her vow and remained silent, she would be bound to keep that which she vowed.

Nu 30:4 And her father knew about her, and her bond wherewith she hath bound her soul, and her father shall hold his peace at her: then all her vows shall stand, and every bond wherewith she hath bound her soul shall stand.

An exception to this rule would be if a woman was young and still living in her father's house. If the woman was still living in her father's house she was considered to be under his authority.

#### A FATHER COULD CANCEL HIS DAUGHTER'S VOW

Nu 30:5 But if her father disallow her in the day that he heareth; not any of her vows, or of her bonds wherewith she hath bound her soul, shall stand: and the LORD shall forgive her, because her father disallowed her.

If her father knew about her vow, he had the right to cancel his daughter's vow. It may be a vow which would involve an expense to the father or the family. The father may disagree with his daughter's vow. In such a case, she was released from her vow. Her father would be cancelling the vow on her behalf. The Lord would not hold her to her word because her father acted on her behalf.

#### SECOND CASE, A WOMAN WHO MADE A VOW BEFORE SHE GOT MARRIED

As the father had the authority to cancel his daughter's vow, so did her husband when she got married.

Nu 30:6 And if she had at all an husband, when she vowed, or uttered ought out of her lips, wherewith she bound her soul;

If the husband said nothing when he heard about her vow, she would be bound by her vow.

Nu 30:7 And her husband heard it, and held his peace at her in the day that he heard it: then her vows shall stand, and her bonds wherewith she bound her soul shall stand.

If her husband heard about her vow, and disagreed for some reason, he could cancel her vow.

The husband could cancel his wife's vow but he had to act quickly. He had to do it the same day he heard about his wife's vow.

Nu 30:8 But if her husband disallowed her on the day that he heard it; then he shall make her vow which she vowed, and that which she uttered with her lips, wherewith she bound her soul, of none effect: and the LORD shall forgive her.

#### THIRD CASE, VOWS MADE BY WIDOWS AND DIVORCED WOMEN

Widows and divorced women were responsible for their promises. No one could cancel their vows for them.

Nu 30:9 But every vow of a widow, and of her that is divorced, wherewith they have bound their souls, shall stand against her.

### BATTLE WITH THE MIDIANITES Chapter 31

#### GOD TOLD MOSES TO ATTACK THE MIDIANITES 31:1-6

God told Moses to send the men of war to do battle with the Midianites. The Midianites were the descendants of Abraham and Keturah.

This is Moses' last battle as the leader of Israel.

Nu 31:1–2 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites: afterward shalt thou be gathered unto thy people.

This battle was the fulfillment of God's decree in Nu. 21:17-18.

The day of reckoning had come. The cup of God's wrath was full. God told Israel to attack the Midianites because of their role in deceiving Israel and leading them into the worship of Baal and sexual immorality.

Nu 31:3 And Moses spake unto the people, saying, Arm some of yourselves unto the war, and let them go against the Midianites, and avenge the LORD of Midian.

Moses was to gather a thousand from each of the tribes.

Nu 31:4-5 Of every tribe a thousand, throughout all the tribes of Israel, shall ye send to the war. So there were delivered out of the thousands of Israel, a thousand of every tribe, twelve thousand armed for war.

Phinehas, the priest went with them to the battle. He, more than likely, did not go as their commander (a priest was never given that position) but as a spiritual representative. He was in charge of the holy instruments.

We cannot be certain, but most likely, Joshua was their commander and led them into this battle.

Nu 31:6 And Moses sent them to the war, a thousand of every tribe, them and Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war, with the holy instruments, and the trumpets to blow in his hand.

What exactly were the "holy instruments"? The fact is, we cannot be certain. Some have suggested, the holy breastplate of the priest with the Urim and Thummim, others believe it was the ark.

The holy instruments were to be taken into battle with them. This shows us it was more of a spiritual battle than military.

#### THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL SLEW THE MALE MIDIANITES 31:7-12

Nu 31:7 And they warred against the Midianites, as the LORD commanded Moses; and they slew all the males.

This does not mean all the Midianite males were totally exterminated. Israel would have trouble with the Midianites on other occasions (Josh. 6:1), so we know all the males could not have been killed here.

The Midianites were a group of tribes that spread throughout the land. The ones who were killed in this battle were only the ones who were in the neighborhood of Israel's camp. These were the ones who were involved with the plot against Israel with Balak.

#### BALAAM WAS KILLED

One name of the listed casualties stands out. Balaam was killed in this battle. We aren't told why Balaam was with the Midianites at that time. He had returned to his home earlier (Nu. 25:25). Perhaps he had heard to the deaths of the people of Israel from the plague and came back to the Midianites expecting a great reward.

Whatever the reason he returned, it was the cause of his death. I wonder if he had time in the last minutes of his life to ponder how he had led his life. As he laid dying, realizing his life was about to end, I wonder if he regretted the choices he had made. One thing is certain, it was too late then and any money he may have received did him no good.

Nu 31:8 And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain; namely, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian: Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword.

Having overthrown the armies, Israel moved into the cities of the Midianites. They took all the women and the children captive, and took the spoils.

#### ISRAEL SPARED THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Nu 31:9 And the children of Israel took all the women of Midian captives, and their little ones, and took the spoil of all their cattle, and all their flocks, and all their goods.

Once the spoils were removed, they burnt all that was within the cities.

Nu 31:10-11 And they burnt all their cities wherein they dwelt, and all their goodly castles, with fire. And they took all the spoil, and all the prey, both of men and of beasts.

They came back to the camp of Israel with the women and the spoils.

Nu 31:12 And they brought the captives, and the prey, and the spoil, unto Moses, and Eleazar the priest, and unto the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the camp at the plains of Moab, which are by Jordan near Jericho.

Moses, Eleazar and the leaders of Israel went to meet those returning from the battle.

Nu 31:13 And Moses, and Eleazar the priest, and all the princes of the congregation, went forth to meet them without the camp.

They met those returning in order to show their gratitude for their efforts, but also to prevent any soldiers from coming into the camp defiled by the blood from the battle.

Moses was angry because they had spared the women.

Nu 31:14-15 And Moses was wroth with the officers of the host, with the captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, which came from the battle. And Moses said unto them, Have ye saved all the women alive?

Moses reminded them how these Midianites were the ones who influenced Israel to commit sin and suffer the judgment of God (Nu. 25:1-3).

Nu 31:16 Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD.

Moses told them to kill all the boys, and all the women who had “known man”.

Nu 31:17 Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him.

This seems harsh but these boys would have grown up to bring revenge against Israel. The mothers were the ones who prostituted themselves with the men of Israel and influenced them into idolatry (Nu. 25:1-18). Had they been allowed to live, they would have been an evil influence on the people of Israel.

The females who had not known a man were keep alive. Any woman who was a virgin would not have been guilty of the sin in Numbers 25, so they were allowed to live.

The words, “keep alive for yourselves” would seem to imply those who were kept alive were to become servants to the people of Israel.

Nu 31:18 But all the women children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves.

#### THE PURIFICATION OF THOSE WHO HAD FOUGHT

Those who had come in contact with a dead body during the battle would be unclean. The soldiers and their captives were isolated from the camp for seven days according to God’s direction (Lev. 15:13).

Nu 31:19 And do ye abide without the camp seven days: whosoever hath killed any person, and whosoever hath touched any slain, purify both yourselves and your captives on the third day, and on the seventh day.

On the third and seventh day, they were to wash themselves. They were to wash their clothing and the things they used during the battle that was made of wood.

Nu 31:20 And purify all your raiment, and all that is made of skins, and all work of goats’ hair, and all things made of wood.

The items made of gold, silver, brass, iron, tin or lead was cleansed by being placed in fire and being washed by the water of purifying (Nu. 8:7).

Nu 31:21–23 And Eleazar the priest said unto the men of war which went to the battle, This is the ordinance of the law which the LORD commanded Moses; Only the gold, and the silver, the brass, the iron, the tin, and the lead, Every thing that may abide the fire, ye shall make it go through the fire, and it shall be clean: nevertheless it shall be purified with the water of separation: and all that abideth not the fire ye shall make go through the water.

At the end of the seven days, they were to wash their clothes, they would be ceremonially clean and could return to the camp.

Nu 31:24 And ye shall wash your clothes on the seventh day, and ye shall be clean, and afterward ye shall come into the camp.

#### MOSES DIVIDED THE SPOILS 31:25-54

God told Moses to take a sum of all the spoils from the battle with the Midianites.

Nu 31:25-26 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take the sum of the prey that was taken, both of man and of beast, thou, and Eleazar the priest, and the chief fathers of the congregation:

The spoils were divided between the soldiers who actually fought the battle and the people of Israel who stayed in the camp of Israel. We will discover, the soldiers portion was much greater than the peoples because they had to suffer the hardship of battle.

Nu 31:27 And divide the prey into two parts; between them that took the war upon them, who went out to battle, and between all the congregation:

A gift was received and given to the Lord in appreciation for the victory He had given. The soldiers gave one in 500 of the captives, cows, donkeys, sheep and goats.

Nu 31:28-29 And levy a tribute unto the LORD of the men of war which went out to battle: one soul of five hundred, both of the persons, and of the beeves, and of the asses, and of the sheep: Take it of their half, and give it unto Eleazar the priest, for an heave offering of the LORD.

The people who had not gone to the battle were to give one in 50 of the spoils they received. Those who had gone to the battle got to keep a good bit more than those who had stayed at the camp.

This certainly was reasonable since they had faced the hardships and danger of the battle.

Nu 31:30 And of the children of Israel's half, thou shalt take one portion of fifty, of the persons, of the beeves, of the asses, and of the flocks, of all manner of beasts, and give them unto the Levites, which keep the charge of the tabernacle of the LORD.

Nu 31:31 And Moses and Eleazar the priest did as the LORD commanded Moses.

They made a list of all the spoils. There were 675,000 sheep, 72,000 cows, 61,000 donkeys and 32,000 young women. Nu. 31:32-35

#### THE TOTAL NUMBERS OF THE SPOILS AND THE GIFTS GIVEN TO GOD Nu. 31:36-47

The share of the spoils that went to the soldiers was, 337,00 sheep and goats, 36,000 cows, 30,500 donkeys and 16,000 young women.

From the soldiers share, they gave to Eleazar, 675 sheep and goats, 72 cows, 61 donkeys and 32 young women.

The share of the spoils that went to the people was the same as the soldiers, 337,000 sheep and goats, 36,000 cows, 30,500 donkeys and 16,00 young women.

From the soldiers share, they gave to Eleazar, fifty out of every prisoner and animal.

#### A GIFT OF THANKS WAS GIVEN TO THE LORD 31:48-51

The officers of the soldiers told Moses they wanted to give a special gift of thanks to the Lord. If He had not given them victory, they would not be alive, let alone have the spoils.

Nu 31:48 And the officers which were over thousands of the host, the captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds, came near unto Moses:

God had not just given them victory, they had not lost one man.

Nu 31:49 And they said unto Moses, Thy servants have taken the sum of the men of war which are under our charge, and there lacketh not one man of us.

It is amazing to realize, the people of Israel did not lose one man in this battle. That is humanly impossible. But all things are possible with the Lord. Once again, we see how God takes care of His own.

They brought an offering of the jewels etc. that taken from the Midianites.

Nu 31:50 We have therefore brought an oblation for the LORD, what every man hath gotten, of jewels of gold, chains, and bracelets, rings, earrings, and tablets, to make an atonement for our souls before the LORD.

This gift was a gift of gratitude and a gift of atonement. They realized they had sinned by keeping the Midianite women and children alive.

Nu 31:51 And Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold of them, even all wrought jewels.

The gold given was 16,750 shekels.

Nu 31:52 And all the gold of the offering that they offered up to the LORD, of the captains of thousands, and of the captains of hundreds, was sixteen thousand seven hundred and fifty shekels.

Moses and Eleazar put the gold in the tabernacle for a memorial. They were to never forget what God had done.

Nu 31:54 And Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold of the captains of thousands and of hundreds, and brought it into the tabernacle of the congregation, for a memorial for the children of Israel before the LORD.

#### SOME WANTED TO STAY ON THE EAST SIDE OF JORDAN Chapter 32

##### THE TRIBES OF REUBEN AND GAD MADE A REQUEST TO STAY ON THE EAST SIDE OF JORDAN

These verses deal with some of God's people who wanted to compromise. These tribes wanted to settle on the east side of Jordan and not go in to possess the Promised Land.

How often do we find people who are content to settle for less than God's best? Like these tribes, they want to stay close to God and still enjoy the things of the world. It never works.

The tribes of Reuben and Gad had a multitude of cattle (cows and sheep). When they saw the land of Jazer and Gilead, they realized it was a land perfect for cattle.

Nu 32:1 Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of cattle: and when they saw the land of Jazer, and the land of Gilead, that, behold, the place was a place for cattle;

They approached Moses and Eleazar to ask if they could settle in this place instead of crossing Jordan and going into the Promised Land.

Nu 32:2-3 The children of Gad and the children of Reuben came and spake unto Moses, and to Eleazar the priest, and unto the princes of the congregation, saying, Ataroth, and Dibon, and Jazer, and Nimrah, and Heshbon, and Elealeh, and Shebam, and Nebo, and Beon,

They tried to add weight to their argument by saying the LORD had given them the land.

Nu 32:4 Even the country which the LORD smote before the congregation of Israel, is a land for cattle, and thy servants have cattle:

They asked if they could claim this land.

Nu 32:5 Wherefore, said they, if we have found grace in thy sight, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan.

##### MOSES' RESPONSE

Moses rebuked them for their request. How could they let their brethren go to war and they stay behind?

Nu 32:6 And Moses said unto the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben, Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here?

If these tribes stayed behind, it would discourage the rest of the people. Who would want to go to war when they see others not having to go? Moses told them if they didn't go it would cause the rest of the people to not want to go.

We dare not forget how important our influence is. There are people who watch us. How we live before them does matter.

Nu 32:7 And wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the LORD hath given them?

Moses reminded them how their fathers had done the same thing at Kadeshbarnea (Nu. 13-20).

Nu 32:8 Thus did your fathers, when I sent them from Kadeshbarnea to see the land.

The spies had come back with a negative report. Their report and their attitude discouraged the people of Israel and kept them from taking the Promised Land.

Nu 32:9 For when they went up unto the valley of Eshcol, and saw the land, they discouraged the heart of the children of Israel, that they should not go into the land which the LORD had given them.

Moses reminded these tribes how God had been angry when His people had refused to possess the Promised Land. Not only had God been angry but He judged those who refused to believe and obey Him. Those who were twenty years old and older (except for Caleb and Joshua) would die in the wilderness, and the rest had wandered in the wilderness for forty years. 32:10-13

Moses made it clear, if God dealt with their fathers, He would deal with them also.

Nu 32:14 And, behold, ye are risen up in your fathers' stead, an increase of sinful men, to augment yet the fierce anger of the LORD toward Israel.

If they refused to obey, God would leave them in the wilderness like He did their fathers.

Nu 32:15 For if ye turn away from after him, he will yet again leave them in the wilderness; and ye shall destroy all this people.

#### REUBEN AND GAD AGREE TO GO TO WAR AND RETURN

The tribes of Reuben and Gad said they would build a place to temporally keep their families and livestock, and go to fight with the people.

Nu 32:16-17 And they came near unto him, and said, We will build sheepfolds here for our cattle, and cities for our little ones: But we ourselves will go ready armed before the children of Israel, until we have brought them unto their place: and our little ones shall dwell in the fenced cities because of the inhabitants of the land.

Once the Promised Land was conquered, they would return to the land on the east side of the Jordan river.

Nu 32:18 We will not return unto our houses, until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance.

They agree to forfeit any inheritance they would have had in the Promised Land.

Nu 32:19 For we will not inherit with them on yonder side Jordan, or forward; because our inheritance is fallen to us on this side Jordan eastward.

#### MOSES AGREED WITH SOME RESTRICTIONS

Moses agreed to their request if they would go in and fight with their brethren, and defeat the people dwelling in the Promised Land. He restated the details just to make certain no one misunderstood.

Nu 32:20-21 And Moses said unto them, If ye will do this thing, if ye will go armed before the LORD to war, And will go all of you armed over Jordan before the LORD, until he hath driven out his enemies from before him,

After the Promised Land was won, they could return to the east side of Jordan and be without guilt.

Nu 32:22 And the land be subdued before the LORD: then afterward ye shall return, and be guiltless before the LORD, and before Israel; and this land shall be your possession before the LORD.

Moses made it clear, if they failed to do what they promised, it would be sin and they would pay for their sin.

Nu 32:23 But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.

Moses told them to build the places for their families and livestock as they had agreed.

Nu 32:24 Build you cities for your little ones, and folds for your sheep; and do that which hath proceeded out of your mouth.

These tribes staying on the east side of Jordan was an unwise decision for the following reasons.

- IT WAS GOD'S WILL FOR THEM TO DWELL IN THE PROMISED LAND
- THE LAND WAS A DISTANCE FROM THE SANCTUARY
- THERE WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO STAY IN TOUCH WITH THEIR BRETHREN
- THEY HAD LITTLE DEFENSE FROM THEIR ENEMIES

Nu 32:25 And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben spake unto Moses, saying, Thy servants will do as my lord commandeth. Our little ones, our wives, our flocks, and all our cattle, shall be there in the cities of Gilead: But thy servants will pass over, every man armed for war, before the LORD to battle, as my lord saith.

#### MOSES GAVE INSTRUCTIONS TO ELEAZAR AND JOSHUA

Moses told Eleazar and Joshua about the arrangements that had been made with Reuben and Gad. He wanted to make sure there was no confusion. When they were in battle would not be the time to discover such information.

Nu 32:28 So concerning them Moses commanded Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the chief fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel:

If the tribes of Reuben and Gad go and fight with the people, they would be allowed to return to, and settle in the land of Gilead.

Nu 32:29 And Moses said unto them, If the children of Gad and the children of Reuben will pass with you over Jordan, every man armed to battle, before the LORD, and the land shall be subdued before you; then ye shall give them the land of Gilead for a possession:

If they fail to keep their promise, they will have to take property in the Promised Land as the other tribes.

Nu 32:30 But if they will not pass over with you armed, they shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan.

They agreed.

Nu 32:31-32 And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben answered, saying, As the LORD hath said unto thy servants, so will we do. We will pass over armed before the LORD into the land of Canaan, that the possession of our inheritance on this side Jordan may be ours.

#### HALF THE TRIBE OF MANASSEH JOINED THE TRIBES OF REUBEN AND GAD

Half of the tribe of Manasseh joined with Reuben and Gad. We aren't told exactly what persuaded them to do this.

This reminds us of how easily some are persuaded to do the wrong thing.

Nu 32:33 And Moses gave unto them, even to the children of Gad, and to the children of Reuben, and unto half the tribe of Manasseh the son of Joseph, the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites, and the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, the land, with the cities thereof in the coasts, even the cities of the country round about.

THEY BUILT CITIES ON THE EAST SIDE OF JORDAN 32:34-42

### CITIES FOR THE LEVITES 35:1-8

The people were still camping in the land of Moab.

Up to this point nothing had been said about where the tribe of Levi would live once Israel entered the Promised Land. God addressed that issue in these verses. He had not forgotten those He had chosen to be His priests and ministers.

When they enter the Promised Land, the tribe of Levi would be taken care of. The people of Israel were to give of their inheritance. They gave certain cities and surrounding lands to the tribe of Levi. These cities were not the permanent possession of the Levites, but merely a place they were to live.

Nu 35:1-2 And the LORD spake unto Moses in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho, saying, Command the children of Israel, that they give unto the Levites of the inheritance of their possession cities to dwell in; and ye shall give also unto the Levites suburbs for the cities round about them.

The Levites were to receive cities to live in, plus land (suburbs) for out-houses, gardens, vineyards, and pasture land for their livestock.

Nu 35:3 And the cities shall they have to dwell in; and the suburbs of them shall be for their cattle, and for their goods, and for all their beasts.

God gave the measurements for the land around the cities that was to be used by the Levites.

The first measurement was to be measured from the wall of the city. This area was to be one thousand cubits (approximately 1,500 feet).

Nu 35:4 And the suburbs of the cities, which ye shall give unto the Levites, shall reach from the wall of the city and outward a thousand cubits round about.

The second measurement was to be measured from the edge of the one thousand cubit area and outward. This area was to be two thousand cubits (approximately 3,000 feet).

Nu 35:5 And ye shall measure from without the city on the east side two thousand cubits, and on the south side two thousand cubits, and on the west side two thousand cubits, and on the north side two thousand cubits; and the city shall be in the midst: this shall be to them the suburbs of the cities.

There has been some confusion about these measurements. Verse four says one thousand cubits, while verse five says two thousand cubits. We must realize, these verses are talking about two completely different measurements. The one thousand cubits was to be measured starting at the wall the city and going outward. The two thousand cubits were to be measured starting from that point and going outward.

Notice the diagram.

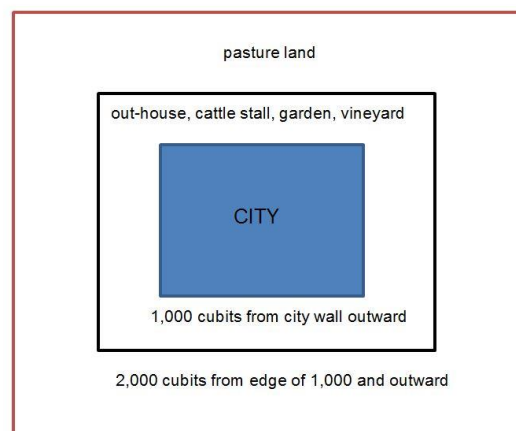
Nu 35:6 And among the cities which ye shall give unto the Levites there shall be six cities for refuge, which ye shall appoint for the manslayer, that he may flee thither: and to them ye shall add forty and two cities.

Forty-eight cities were designated for the Levites. The cities were to be cities of spiritual influence.

Nu 35:7 So all the cities which ye shall give to the Levites shall be forty and eight cities: them shall ye give with their suburbs.

The larger tribes gave more cities than the smaller.

MEASUREMENTS AROUND THE CITIES FOR THE LEVITES



Nu 35:8 And the cities which ye shall give shall be of the possession of the children of Israel: from them that have many ye shall give many; but from them that have few ye shall give few: every one shall give of his cities unto the Levites according to his inheritance which he inheriteth.

#### CITIES OF REFUGE 35:9-33

God told Moses to establish cities of refuge when they were in the Promised Land.

Cities of refuge were established to provide a safe haven. There were times when someone would accidentally cause the death of another. In such cases, the person who caused the death could flee to a city of refuge.

Nu 35:9-11 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come over Jordan into the land of Canaan; Then ye shall appoint you cities to be cities of refuge for you; that the slayer may flee thither, which killeth any person at unawares.

The “slayer” was the person who killed someone. It’s important to realize, there was no police force in those days. In the case of murder, the nearest of kin of the victim had the right to avenge the blood of their relative by capturing and slaying the guilty person.

The person who avenged the death of a family member was called “the avenger of blood” (Josh. 20:3,5,9).

The avenger could not follow the suspect into a city of refuge. If the accused person made it into the city, they had found a sanctuary and were safe.

In the city of refuge, they would be safe until a judicial hearing could be held.

Nu 35:12 And they shall be unto you cities for refuge from the avenger; that the manslayer die not, until he stand before the congregation in judgment.

There were six cities of refuge. They were strategically located so anyone would have easy access to them. Three were on the east side of the Jordan River and three were on the west side. The location made it certain that anyone fleeing to a city of refuge would be close enough to reach it.

Nu 35:13-14 And of these cities which ye shall give six cities shall ye have for refuge. Ye shall give three cities on this side Jordan, and three cities shall ye give in the land of Canaan, which shall be cities of refuge.

These cities were available for anyone, not just the children of Israel.

Nu 35:15 These six cities shall be a refuge, both for the children of Israel, and for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them: that every one that killeth any person unawares may flee thither.



#### THE CITIES OF REFUGE WERE A PICTURE OF JESUS

- THE CITIES WERE A REFUGE

Jesus is our refuge.

Ps 46:1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

- THERE WAS EASY ACCESS TO THE CITIES

Jesus is just a call away from those in need.

- THE CITIES WERE AVAILABLE TO ANYONE

Joel 2:32, Acts 2:21 and Rom. 10:13 say, "whosoever shall call".

- THOSE WHO CAME TO THE CITY OF REFUGE HAD A GREAT NEED

Anyone going to a city of refuge did so because they were in trouble.

- THE CITY OF REFUGE WAS THE ONLY HOPE FOR THOSE IN NEED

The city was the only hope the person had. There was nowhere else to turn.

- THOSE WHO CAME TO THE CITY FOUND THE HELP THEY NEEDED

Those who turn to Jesus find the one who can and will help.

#### GUIDELINES TO DETERMINE IF A DEATH WAS INTENTIONAL 35:16-23

God gave some guidelines to help determine if a death was intentional or accidental.

If an instrument of iron (sword or such weapon), a stone or weapon made of wood was used, it could be assumed the death was intentional.

Nu 35:16-18 And if he smite him with an instrument of iron, so that he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. In such a case, the avenger of blood would have the right to put the person to death. And if he smite him with throwing a stone, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. Or if he smite him with an hand weapon of wood, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death.

In such a case, the avenger of blood was required to put the guilty person to death as soon as he found him.

Nu 35:19 The revenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer: when he meeteth him, he shall slay him.

These verses remind us how God deals with sin. He is loving and patient, but He is holy.

He established the law. The law was designed to protect the innocent and punish the guilty.

God said from the beginning that those who take life, must give their life.

Ge 9:6 Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.

God will not overlook sin. When sin is ignored or tolerated, it always gets worse. That is true in the life of an individual or in a nation.

A nation must have law in order to survive. As stated above, the law protects the innocent but it makes the guilty pay for their crime. When we ignore God's guidelines, we suffer for it.

#### INTENTIONAL DEATH

A person may kill someone because of hatred or anger. In such a case, they were to be put to death.

Nu 35:20-21 But if he thrust him of hatred, or hurl at him by laying of wait, that he die; Or in enmity smite him with his hand, that he die: he that smote him shall surely be put to death; for he is a murderer: the revenger of blood shall slay the murderer, when he meeteth him.

If the person guilty of murder fled to a city of refuge, the elders of the city were to bring him out and deliver him to the avenger of blood. The cities were not set up to harbor the guilty.

Dt 19:11-12 But if any man hate his neighbour, and lie in wait for him, and rise up against him, and smite him mortally that he die, and fleeth into one of these cities: Then the elders of his city shall send and fetch him thence, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die.

#### UNINTENTIONAL DEATH

There would be times when an accidental death would occur.

Nu 35:22-23 But if he thrust him suddenly without enmity, or have cast upon him any thing without laying of wait, Or with any stone, wherewith a man may die, seeing him not, and cast it upon him, that he die, and was not his enemy, neither sought his harm:

If someone accidentally caused the death of another, he would be brought before the people in the town for a trial. The people of the city would decide the guilt or innocence of the person.

Nu 35:24 Then the congregation shall judge between the slayer and the revenger of blood according to these judgments:

If the person was determined to be innocent, the people would protect him from the avenger of blood by making sure he was placed in a city of refuge. He had to stay there until the High Priest died.

Nu 35:25 And the congregation shall deliver the slayer out of the hand of the revenger of blood, and the congregation shall restore him to the city of his refuge, whither he was fled: and he shall abide in it unto the death of the high priest, which was anointed with the holy oil.

If the person who caused the death did not stay in the city of refuge, he had to suffer the consequences. If the avenger of blood found him outside of the city, he could kill him and not be held accountable.

Nu 35:26-27 But if the slayer shall at any time come without the border of the city of his refuge, whither he was fled; And the revenger of blood find him without the borders of the city of his refuge, and the revenger of blood kill the slayer; he shall not be guilty of blood:

The person who caused the death could go back home safely after the High Priest died. The avenger of blood could do nothing.

Nu 35:28 Because he should have remained in the city of his refuge until the death of the high priest: but after the death of the high priest the slayer shall return into the land of his possession.

These laws were to be observed always.

Nu 35:29 So these things shall be for a statute of judgment unto you throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

#### PUNISHMENT FOR MURDER WAS DEATH

The punishment for murder was death. But there had to be two or more witnesses. One witness was not enough evidence against the accused person.

Nu 35:30 Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die.

Money or goods were not to be accepted in exchange for the guilty person's freedom. He was guilty and he must die.

Nu 35:31 Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death.

Money was not to be accepted to allow an innocent person to leave the city of refuge before the High Priest died. He must stay in the city of refuge till the High Priest died or suffer the consequences if he left anyway.

Nu 35:32 And ye shall take no satisfaction for him that is fled to the city of his refuge, that he should come again to dwell in the land, until the death of the priest.

Murder actually defiled the land. The sin had to be dealt with. The only way to totally deal with the defilement was for the murder to be put to death.

Nu 35:33 So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.

God warned them, do not let defilement continue in your land.

Nu 35:34 Defile not therefore the land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I dwell: for I the LORD dwell among the children of Israel.

God considers life to be so precious, when life is taken by someone, they must pay the ultimate price.

#### THE SECOND DECISION ABOUT ZELOPHEHAD'S DAUGHTERS Chapter 36

A group from the families of Gilead came to Moses and the leaders of Israel.

Nu 36:1 And the chief fathers of the families of the children of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of the sons of Joseph, came near, and spake before Moses, and before the princes, the chief fathers of the children of Israel:

They were concerned about the inheritance of the land that would go to Zelophehad's daughters. This issue had been addressed in chapter 27. God told Israel the land left by Zelophehad would be passed on to his daughters.

Nu 36:2 And they said, The LORD commanded my lord to give the land for an inheritance by lot to the children of Israel: and my lord was commanded by the LORD to give the inheritance of Zelophehad our brother unto his daughters.

Since the Promised Land was a gift God had given to Israel, it was to stay within the family of Israel. Also, the sections of land God gave to each tribe were to stay within the tribe it was given to.

This presented a problem. When Zelophehad's daughters married, the land would become the property of her husband. What would happen to the inheritance if Zelophehad's daughters married someone who belonged to a different tribe?

Nu 36:3 And if they be married to any of the sons of the other tribes of the children of Israel, then shall their inheritance be taken from the inheritance of our fathers, and shall be put to the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they are received: so shall it be taken from the lot of our inheritance.

The group from Gilead's family mentioned the Year of Jubilee. The Year of Jubilee was a special occasion which happened every fifty years. At that time, all land that had been sold could be bought back by the original owner. Since women could not legally own land after they got married, the land that came to them from their father, would be claimed by their husbands.

Nu 36:4 And when the jubile of the children of Israel shall be, then shall their inheritance be put unto the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they are received: so shall their inheritance be taken away from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers.

Moses acknowledged the fact that they had a good point. A good leader always listens.

Nu 36:5 And Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of the LORD, saying, The tribe of the sons of Joseph hath said well.

Moses told them what God said to do. It isn't recorded here, but Moses must have prayed about the matter as he had done so many times before.

God said for the daughters of Zelophehad to marry within their own tribe.

Nu 36:6 This is the thing which the LORD doth command concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, Let them marry to whom they think best; only to the family of the tribe of their father shall they marry.

This would solve all the problems about the land.

Nu 36:7 So shall not the inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe: for every one of the children of Israel shall keep himself to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers.

Any woman who inherited land would have to marry within her tribe.

Nu 36:8-9 And every daughter, that possesseth an inheritance in any tribe of the children of Israel, shall be wife unto one of the family of the tribe of her father, that the children of Israel may enjoy every man the inheritance of his fathers. Neither shall the inheritance remove from one tribe to another tribe; but every one of the tribes of the children of Israel shall keep himself to his own inheritance.

Nu 36:10 Even as the LORD commanded Moses, so did the daughters of Zelophehad:

Zelophehad's daughters did as they were instructed. 36:11-12

And so ends the book of Numbers. The last verse describes the book completely.

Nu 36:13 These are the commandments and the judgments, which the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses unto the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho.