

The Book of

NUMBERS



BIBLE STUDY COURSE BY
RICHARD "RUSTY" DAVID RUTHERFORD

The Book of Numbers

The Story of Israel's Wandering the Wilderness for Forty Years Led by Their God

How often they rebelled against him in the wilderness. How often they caused him grief in the desert. Again and again they tested God and they pushed the Holy One of Israel to the limit. They did not remember his power – the day he freed them from the oppressor, when he performed his miraculous signs in Egypt, his wonders in the fields of Zoan. **Psalm 78:40-43**

Written and taught by

Richard “Rusty” David Rutherford

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Author's Preface



Paul Teaches Us the Lessons of the Book of Numbers

I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that all our ancestors who left Egypt were under the cloud and they all went through the sea. ²They were all united with Moses by baptism in the cloud and sea.

³All of them ate the same spiritual food, ⁴and all of them drank the same spiritual drink. They drank from the spiritual rock that went with them, and that rock was Christ. ⁵Yet, God was not pleased with most of them so their dead bodies were scattered over the desert.

⁶These things have become examples for us so that we won't desire what is evil, as they did. ⁷So don't worship false gods as some of them did, as Scripture says: The people sat down to a feast which turned into an orgy.

⁸We shouldn't sin sexually as some of them did. Twenty-four thousand of them died on one day. ⁹We shouldn't put the Lord to the test as some of them did. They were killed by snakes. ¹⁰Don't complain as some of them did. The angel of death destroyed them.

¹¹These things happened to make them an example for others. These things were written down as a warning for us who are living in the closing days of history. ¹²So people who think they are standing firmly should be careful that they don't fall.

³There isn't any temptation that you have experienced which is unusual for humans. God, who faithfully keeps his promises, will not allow you to be tempted beyond your power to resist. But when you are tempted, he will also give you the ability to endure the temptation as your way of escape.
⁴Therefore, my dear friends, get as far away from the worship of false gods as you can. **1 Corinthians 10:1-14**

Notes on this Bible Translation and My Editorial Insertions

The translation used in this study is the **GOD'S WORD** translation. © 1995 by God's Word to the Nations Mission Society (GWT). The GWT translation is an attempt to make the English text of the Bible developed in the 1500's more readable to modern Americans. It is not a paraphrase, but it has retranslated the oldest manuscripts into modern American English at about newspaper level using "closest natural equivalence". The Bible is meant by God to be understood. Therefore, using modern language is essential.

I have used this translation in my teaching since 1996 and have found it very accurate. I love the King James Version and so when there are variances in the GWT, I may insert within the Bible text the original transliterated Hebrew or Greek word in **10-point bold-face type** followed by an English word to help better understand the meaning of the passage. English words added to aid in understanding are also in 10-point type but are not in bold. Lastly, if the original Hebrew or Greek word appears in the Bible 10 times or less, I may also indicate how often it appears (e.g., 10x or 2x, etc.). Here's an example from John 11:33 and the raising of Lazarus involving three Greek words:

³³When Jesus saw her crying and the Jews who were crying with her were deeply moved *embrimaomai*—groaned 5x *pneuma*—spirit and troubled *tarasso*—agitated.

This has shown me that the GWT translation is remarkable for finding the right meanings to phrases that are often difficult to translate.

Notes on Font Usage

All text is in the Big Caslon font. Scripture text is in regular **14-point**. If I have inserted parallel Scripture quotations, they are also in regular **14-point**, but are slightly further indented (.08) than the main Scripture text and are enclosed by brackets []. All Scripture citations are in **12-point bold face**. All my comments and questions to think about are all in regular 12-point.

Introduction

God Leads His Chosen People to Teach Them

Remember that for 40 years the **LORD** your God led you on your journey in the desert. He did this in order to humble you and test you. He wanted to know whether or not you would obey his commands. So he made you suffer from hunger and then fed you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had seen before. He did this to teach you that a person cannot live on bread alone but on every word that the **LORD** speaks. Your clothes didn't wear out and your feet didn't swell these past 40 years. Learn this lesson by heart: The **LORD** your God was disciplining you as parents discipline their children. Obey the commands of the **LORD** your God. Follow his directions and fear him. **Deuteronomy 8:2-6**

When this story begins, Israel has been at Mount Sinai for a year. In the 20th day of the 2nd month of the 2nd year after they had left Egypt, they begin their eleven-day journey to Canaan, to Kadesh Barnea. Led by God's pillar of smoke by day and fire by night, they follow the Levites carrying the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of God's presence in their camp. Finally they arrive at the Oasis of Kadesh Barnea.

However, after sending 12 spies into Canaan, they chose to rebel against God and decide not to enter the Land God promised Abraham's descendants and return to Egypt. God appears and wants to destroy them. But Moses intercedes for the people. God decrees the people will wander in the wilderness until the entire generation of warriors dies. Only their children, the second generation of warriors, will enter the Land.

For the next 40 years led by God through the leadership of Moses, the Israelites travel complaining and murmuring all the way. They complain about everything, the food, the water, and even Moses' leadership. Finally, after a final apostasy at the plains of Moab, Moses recaps their history recorded in Deuteronomy. Moses dies and Joshua leads the Israelites across the Jordan River into God's Promised Land of Canaan. Will the Israelites now obey God and fulfill his dream for them?

Session One

God Commands a Count of Israel's Warriors

Moses Takes an Initial Census of Israel

1:1 The **LORD** spoke to Moses in the Tent of Meeting in the Desert of Sinai. It was the first day of the second month in the second year after leaving Egypt. He said: ²Take a census of the whole community of Israel by families and households. List every man by name ³who is at least 20 years old. You and Aaron must register everyone in Israel who is eligible for military duty. List them by divisions *tsaba*-armies. ⁴One man from each tribe will help you. Each of these men must be the head of a household.

God commands Moses to take a census of all the warriors in the camp, those who are at least 20 years old and are in condition to battle.

[That very day the **LORD** brought all the Israelites out of Egypt in organized family groups *tsaba*: Exodus 12:51]

⁵Here are the names of the men who will help you: Elizur, son of Shedeur, from the tribe of **Reuben**; ⁶Shelumiel, son of Zurishaddai, from the tribe of **Simeon**; ⁷Nahshon, son of Amminadab, from the tribe of Judah; ⁸Nethanel, son of Zuar, from the tribe of **Issachar**;

⁹Eliab, son of Helon, from the tribe of **Zebulun**; ¹⁰Elishama, son of Ammihud, from the tribe of **Ephraim**; Gamaliel, son of Pedahzur, from the tribe of **Manasseh**. Ephraim and Manasseh are Joseph's descendants. ¹¹Abidan, son of Gideoni, from the tribe of **Benjamin**; ¹²Ahiezer, son of Ammishaddai, from the tribe of **Dan**; ¹³Pagiel, son of Ochan, from the tribe of **Asher**; ¹⁴Eliasaph, son of Deuel, from the tribe of **Gad**; ¹⁵Ahira, son of Enan, from the tribe of **Naphtali**. ¹⁶These were the men chosen *qariy*'renowned ^{3x} from the community, the leaders *nasiy*'princes of their ancestors' tribes *matteh*, and heads *ro'sh* of the divisions *'eleph*-thousands of Israel.

The 70 people of Israel had been organized into the twelve families in Egypt. As they gained in population for the 400 years, they kept their family associations. So this is a normal procedure

for selecting people for each family had its prince or elder. Because people from the tribe of Levi are a priestly tribe, the two sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh are substituted to make 12 tribes.

¹⁷ Moses and Aaron took the men who had been named ¹⁸ and assembled the whole community on the first day of the second month. Each man at least 20 years old provided his genealogy by family and household. Then his name was listed. ¹⁹ So Moses registered the men of Israel in the Desert of Sinai as the **LORD** had commanded him.

The phrase *the LORD commanded* appears in Exodus 36x, in Leviticus 24x, in Numbers 36x, and in Deuteronomy 35x. There is legislation in each of these books in addition to narrative.

The Census of the Tribes

²⁰ The roster of families and households for the descendants of **Reuben**, Israel's firstborn son, listed every man by name who was at least 20 years old and eligible for military duty. ²¹ The total for the tribe of Reuben was **46,500**.

²² The roster of families and households for the descendants of **Simeon** registered and listed every man by name who was at least 20 years old and eligible for military duty. ²³ The total for the tribe of Simeon was **59,300**.

²⁴ The roster of families and households for the descendants of **Gad** listed the men by name who were at least 20 years old and eligible for military duty. ²⁵ The total for the tribe of Gad was **45,650**.

²⁶ The roster of families and households for the descendants of **Judah** listed the men by name who were at least 20 years old and eligible for military duty. ²⁷ The total for the tribe of Judah was **74,600**.

²⁸ The roster of families and households for the descendants of **Issachar** listed the men by name who were at least 20 years old and eligible for military duty. ²⁹ The total for the tribe of Issachar was **54,400**.

³⁰ The roster of families and households for the descendants of **Zebulun** listed the men by name who were at least 20 years old and eligible for military duty. ³¹ The total for the tribe of Zebulun was **57,400**.

³²The roster of families and households for the descendants of **Joseph**—those from **Ephraim**—listed the men by name who were at least 20 years old and eligible for military duty. ³³The total for the tribe of Ephraim was **40,500**.

³⁴The roster of families and households for the descendants of **Manasseh** listed the men by name who were at least 20 years old and eligible for military duty. ³⁵The total for the tribe of Manasseh was **32,200**.

³⁶The roster of families and households for the descendants of **Benjamin** listed the men by name who were at least 20 years old and eligible for military duty. ³⁷The total for the tribe of Benjamin was **35,400**.

³⁸The roster of families and households for the descendants of **Dan** listed the men by name who were at least 20 years old and eligible for military duty. ³⁹The total for the tribe of Dan was **62,700**.

⁴⁰The roster of families and households for the descendants of **Asher** listed the men by name who were at least 20 years old and eligible for military duty. ⁴¹The total for the tribe of Asher was **41,500**.

⁴²The roster of families and households for the descendants of **Naphtali** listed the men by name who were at least 20 years old and eligible for military duty. ⁴³The total for the tribe of Naphtali was **53,400**.

⁴⁴Moses, Aaron, and the 12 leaders of Israel, each representing his own family, added up these totals. ⁴⁵So the Israelites were registered by households. The grand total of men who were at least 20 years old and eligible for military duty ⁴⁶was **603,550**.

The Israelites had been at Mount Sinai for one year after having left Egypt:

[The Israelites left Ramses to go to Succoth. There were 600,000 men on foot plus all the women and children. Many other people also went with them, along with large numbers of sheep, goats, and cattle. **Exodus 12:37-38**]

Members of the Tribe of Levi Are Treated Separately

⁴⁷ But the households from the tribe of **Levi** were not registered along with the other Israelites. ⁴⁸ The **LORD** had said to Moses: ⁴⁹ Don't register the tribe of Levi or include them in the census with the other Israelites.

⁵⁰ Put the Levites in charge of the Tent *mishkan* of God's Words *eduwth*—testimony, including the equipment for the Tent and everything else having to do with the Tent. The Levites will carry the Tent and all its equipment. They will take care of the Tent and camp around it. ⁵¹ When the Tent has to be moved, the Levites will take it down. When we camp, they will set it up. Anyone else who comes near the Tent will be put to death.

The Organization of the Israelite Camp

⁵² The other Israelites will camp with each family in its own area under its own flag. ⁵³ The Levites will camp all around the Tent of God's Words. In this way the **LORD** won't be angry with the community of Israel. So the Levites will be in charge of the Tent of God's Words.

⁵⁴ The Israelites did everything as the **LORD** commanded Moses.

The Levites protect the Wilderness Tabernacle from unholy people and protect the people from a Holy God who gets angry at sin, wickedness, and uncleanness.

The Arrangement of Israel's Camp and the Names of the Tribal Leaders

2:1 The **LORD** spoke to Moses and Aaron: ² The Israelites will put up their tents with each family under the flag that symbolizes its household. They will put their tents around the Tent of Meeting facing it.

³ On the east side, facing the rising sun, the armies led by **Judah** will camp under their flag. The leader for the people of Judah is Nahshon, son of Amminadab. ⁴ The total number of men in his army is **74,600**.

The holiest direction is the east. The entrance to the Tent of Meeting faces east. This is why Judah, the royal tribe, is placed in this position to protect the Wilderness Tabernacle.

⁵ Next to them will be the tribe of **Issachar**. The leader for the people of Issachar is Nethanel, son of Zuar. ⁶The total number of men in his army is **54,400**.

⁷ Then will be the tribe of **Zebulun**. The leader for the people of Zebulun is Eliab, son of Helon. ⁸The total number of men in his army is **57,400**.

⁹ The grand total of all the troops in Judah's camp is **186,400**. They will be the first group to move out.

¹⁰ On the south side the armies led by **Reuben** will camp under their flag. The leader for the people of Reuben is Elizur, son of Shedeur. ¹¹The total number of men in his army is **46,500**.

¹² Next to them will be the tribe of **Simeon**. The leader for the people of Simeon is Shelumiel, son of Zurishaddai. ¹³The total number of men in his army is **59,300**.

¹⁴ Then will be the tribe of **Gad**. The leader for the people of Gad is Eliasaph, son of Deuel. ¹⁵The total number of men in his army is **45,650**.

¹⁶ The grand total of all the troops in **Reuben's** camp is **151,450**. They will be the second group to move out.

¹⁷ When the Tent of Meeting is moved, the **Levites** will stay in the middle of the groups. The tribes will move out in the same order as they are in the camp, everyone in place under his own flag.

¹⁸ On the west side the armies led by **Ephraim** will camp under their flag. The leader for the people of Ephraim is Elishama, son of Ammihud. ¹⁹The total number of men in his army is **40,500**.

²⁰ Next to them will be the tribe of **Manasseh**. The leader for the people of Manasseh is Gamaliel, son of Pedahzur. ²¹The total number of men in his army is **32,200**.

²² Then will be the tribe of **Benjamin**. The leader for the people of Benjamin is Abidan, son of Gideoni. ²³The total number of men in his army is **35,400**.

²⁴ The grand total of all the troops in Ephraim's camp is **108,100**. They will be the third group to move out.

²⁵ On the north side the armies led by **Dan** will camp under their flag. The leader for the people of Dan is Ahiezer, son of Ammishaddai. ²⁶The total number of men in his army is **62,700**.

²⁷ Next to them will be the tribe of **Asher**. The leader for the people of Asher is Pagiel, son of Ochran. ²⁸The total number of men in his army is **41,500**.

²⁹ Then will be the tribe of **Naphtali**. The leader for the people of Naphtali is Ahira, son of Enan. ³⁰The total number of men in his army is **53,400**.

³¹ The grand total of all the men in Dan's camp is **157,600**. They will be the last group to move out. They will travel under their own flag.

³²This is the total number of Israelites, counted by households. The grand total of all the troops in the camps was **603,550**. ³³As the **LORD** had commanded Moses, the Levites were not registered along with the other Israelites.

³⁴So the Israelites did everything as the **LORD** had commanded Moses. They set up camp under their flags and each person traveled with his own family and household.

The Tribe of Levi Is Registered and Assigned Duties

3:1 This is the list of **Aaron** and **Moses'** descendants at the time when the **LORD** spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai.

²The names of Aaron's sons are **Nadab**, the firstborn, **Abihu**, **Eleazar**, and **Ithamar**. ³These are the names of Aaron's sons, the anointed priests, who were ordained to serve as priests. Nadab and Abihu died in the **LORD's** presence because they offered unauthorized fire in his presence in the Desert of Sinai. **Leviticus 10:1-2** They had no children. So only Eleazar and Ithamar served as priests during the lifetime of their father Aaron.

⁵The **LORD** said to Moses: ⁶"Bring the tribe of Levi and have them stand in front of the priest Aaron to assist him. ⁷They will work for him and the whole community in front of the Tent of Meeting doing what needs to be done for the inner tent. ⁸They will take care of all the furnishings in the Tent of Meeting and work for the Israelites doing what needs to be done for the inner tent.

⁹Give the Levites to Aaron and his sons. The Levites will be the only Israelites given to them. ¹⁰Appoint Aaron and his sons to serve as priests. Anyone else who tries to do the priests' duties must be put to death.

[Out of all the Israelites, bring your brother Aaron and his sons Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar to you. They will serve me as priests. **Exodus 28:1**]

[Have his sons come forward. Dress them in their linen robes and put turbans on them. Tie belts around the waists of Aaron and his sons. They alone are to be priests. This is a permanent law. In this way you will ordain Aaron and his sons. **Exodus 29:8**]

¹¹The **LORD** said to Moses: ¹²Out of all the Israelites, I have taken the Levites to be substitutes for every firstborn male offspring among them. The Levites are mine ¹³because every firstborn is mine. The day I killed every firstborn male in Egypt, I set apart as holy every firstborn in Israel whether human or animal. They will be mine. I am the **LORD**.

¹⁴The **LORD** said to Moses in the Desert of Sinai: ¹⁵Count the Levites by households and families. Count every male who is at least one month old.

¹⁶So Moses did what the **LORD** said and registered them as he had been commanded.

¹⁷**Gershon, Kohath, and Merari** were the sons of Levi. ¹⁸Libni and Shimei were the sons of Gershon. Their families were named after them. ¹⁹Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel were the sons of Kohath. Their families were named after them. ²⁰Mahli and Mushi were the sons of Merari. Their families were named after them.

These were the households of Levite families.

²¹To **Gershon** belonged the families descended from Libni and Shimei. These were the families descended from **Gershon**. ²²The total number of all the males at least one month old was **7,500**. ²³The families descended from Gershon put up their tents on the west side behind the Tent of Meeting. ²⁴The leader of the Gershonite households was Eliasaph, son of Lael.

²⁵At the Tent of Meeting the Geshurites were in charge of the inner tent, the outer tent and cover, the screen for the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, ²⁶the curtains for the courtyard, the screen for the entrance to the courtyard that surrounds the inner tent and the altar, and the ropes. They took care of all these things.

²⁷To **Kohath** belonged the families descended from Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. These were the families descended from Kohath. ²⁸The number of all the males at least one month old was **8,600**. They were in charge of the Holy Place. ²⁹The families descended from Kohath put up their tents on the south side of the Tent of Meeting. ³⁰The leader of the Kohathite families and households was Elizaphan, son of Uzziel.

³¹They were in charge of the Ark, the Table, the Lamp Stand, the Altars, the utensils used in the Holy Place, and the screen. They took care of all these things.

³²The chief leader of the Levites was Eleazar, son of the priest Aaron. It was Eleazar's duty to supervise those who were in charge of the Holy Place.

³³To **Merari** belonged the families descended from Mahli and Mushi. These were the families descended from Merari. ³⁴The total number of all the males at least one month old was **6,200**. ³⁵The leader of the Merarite families and households was Zuriel, son of Abihail. They put up their tents on the north side of the Tent of Meeting. ³⁶It was the duty of the Merarites to be in charge of the framework of the inner tent, the crossbars, post ³⁷They also took care of the posts for the surrounding courtyard, the bases, pegs, and ropes.

³⁸Moses, Aaron, and his sons put up their tents on the east side in front of the Tent of Meeting. They were in charge of the Holy Place on behalf of the Israelites. Anyone else who tried to do the Levites' duties had to be put to death.

³⁹The grand total of Levites that Moses and Aaron counted at the **LORD's** command, by families, every male who was at least one month old, was **22,000**.

The LORD Commands Redemption of the First Born Males

⁴⁰The **LORD** said to Moses: Register every firstborn male of the Israelites who is at least one month old, and make a list of their names. ⁴¹I am the **LORD**. Take the Levites for me to be substitutes for all firstborn Israelites. Also take the animals of the Levites to be substitutes for all firstborn animals of the Israelites. ⁴²So Moses registered all the firstborn Israelites as the **LORD** commanded him. ⁴³The total of all the firstborn males at least one month old was **22,273**. They were listed by name.

⁴⁴The **LORD** said to Moses: ⁴⁵Take the Levites to be substitutes for all the firstborn Israelites and the animals of the Levites to be substitutes for their animals. The Levites will be mine. I am the **LORD**. ⁴⁶There are 273 more firstborn male Israelites than there are Levites. ⁴⁷It will cost you two ounces of silver per person using the standard weight of the Holy Place to buy them back. ⁴⁸Give the silver to Aaron and his sons. It will buy back those Israelites who outnumber the Levites.

⁴⁹ So Moses took this ransom money from the Israelites who outnumbered the Levites. ⁵⁰ The silver Moses collected for the firstborn Israelites weighed 34 pounds using the standard weight of the Holy Place. ⁵¹ Then Moses did what the **LORD** said and gave Aaron and his sons this ransom money as he had been commanded.

This ceremony is commanded in **Exodus 13:1-16**.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

We begin with the **LORD** commanding Moses to take a census of all the warriors in the Israelite camp. This was not a census of all the people, just the men physically fit to be warriors. Remember there were also Gentiles in the camp as well and they were not counted.

The count was taken by the twelve tribes substituting Ephraim and Manasseh for what would have been Joseph and Levi. Notice how orderly the account is. In a way, it is kind of boring, but it is accurate. Everything is done exactly as the **LORD** commanded Moses. This is a constant theme in these last four books of the Towrah.

Then the Levities are counted. The sons of Aaron only are priests but the other Levities, divided into three groups assist with the taking down and setting up to the Wilderness Tabernacle variously called the Tent, the Tabernacle of Testimony or the Tent of Meeting. It is a holy place where the **LORD** symbolically resides so everything must be free from pollution. Moreover, only the priests are allowed inside the Tent itself, The Levites who assist them only work outside of the Tent itself.

The Tent itself is covered with a canopy and has two parts divided by a curtain. There is an inner Tent and an outer Tent called the Most Holy Place or Holy of Holies where God resides symbolically above the Ark of the Covenant and an outer Tent called the Holy Place. In the inner Tent, only Moses can enter to speak with God. However, once a year, on the Day of Atonement, Aaron, the High Priest can enter to pour blood on the Ark of the Covenant.

It is in the outer Tent where the priest serve at the Golden Altar of Incense, the Table of Showbread where the Bread of the Presence is laid, and the Menorah, the seven branch lampstand that provides light in the Outer Tent.

The camp is arranged in an orderly manner. The entrance to the Wilderness Tabernacle faces east – the most holy direction. Moses' and Aaron's tents are placed at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. Then the tribes of Judah protect the Tent. Surrounding the Tent are the tents of the Levites. Beyond them are the tents of the other tribes and apparently beyond them are the

tents of the accompanying Gentiles. Each of the twelve tribes is divided into an army led by one tribe making four groups.

When the camp is broken, there is a specific order to the march. When the Tent of Meeting is moved, the Levites stay in the middle of the groups. Each person knew exactly where they were to set up their tents at the encampment and the order in which they were to march. It was a very organized life.

The tribe of Levi is assigned special duties. Aaron's sons were priests and had overall responsibility at all times for the Tent of Meeting and its furnishings. Everything associated with the Tent was managed carefully and according to detailed instructions. Only the Levites were allowed to set up and take down the Tent. Anyone else who attempted to perform the priests' duties was to be put to death.

Every firstborn Israelite at least one month old was registered. There were 22,273 firstborn sons. The total number of Levites at least one month old were 22,000. These belonged to the **LORD** as his death angel did not kill them at the Passover in Egypt. Instead, the death angel killed the firstborn sons of the Egyptians.

The **LORD** will go throughout Egypt to kill the Egyptians. When he sees the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe, he will pass over that doorway, and he will not let the Destroyer come into your home to kill you. **Exodus 12:23**

Because there was an excess of firstborn sons over the number of Levites, this excess had to be redeemed from the **LORD**. Two ounces of silver was collected from the congregation and given to Aaron and his sons as a ransom from death.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. The Israelites left Egypt in organized family groups *saba* hosts, armies. **Exodus 12:41**. What does this mean?
2. How does Moses organize the camp of Israel in order to be ready to conquer the Land of Canaan?
3. There was a mixed multitude of Gentiles that left Egypt with the Israelites. Where was their portion of the Israelite camp.

Session Two

God Commands the Organization of the Israelite Camp

The Duties of the Three Families Descended from Levi's Sons

4:1 The **LORD** said to Moses and Aaron: ²Take a census of the Levites who are descended from Kohath. List them by families and households. ³Register all the men between the ages of 30 and 50 who are qualified to work at the Tent of Meeting.

⁴This is the work the **Kohathites** will do in the Tent of Meeting: They will take care of the Most Holy Things.

First the Priests Cover All the Most Holy Things

⁵When the camp is supposed to move, Aaron and his sons will go in and take down the canopy that hangs over the **Ark of the Covenant** containing the Words of God's Covenant.

First they will cover the Ark with the canopy. ⁶Over this they will put a covering of fine leather. On top of that they will spread a cloth made entirely of violet material. Then they will put the poles in place.

⁷They will spread a violet cloth over the Table of the Presence Table of Showbread and put on it the plates, dishes, bowls, and pitchers for the wine offerings. The bread that is always in the **LORD's** presence will also be on it. ⁸They will spread a bright red cloth over everything on the table. They will cover all this with fine leather. Then they will put the poles in place.

⁹They will take a violet cloth and cover the lamp stand, as well as the lamps, tongs, trays, and all the containers for the olive oil used in the lamps. ¹⁰Then they will put the lamp stand and all its utensils under a covering of fine leather and put them on a frame to carry them.

¹¹They will spread a violet cloth over the gold incense altar and cover the cloth with fine leather. Then they will put the poles in place.

¹²They will take all the articles that are used in the Holy Place, put them in a violet cloth, cover that with fine leather, and put them on a frame to carry them.

¹³After they take the ashes away, they will spread a purple cloth over the altar.

¹⁴Next, they will put all the accessories used at the altar on it. These are the trays, forks, shovels, and bowls—all the altar's accessories. They will spread a covering of fine leather over all this. Then they will put the poles in place.

The Kohathites Now Load and Carry the Holy Articles

¹⁵When Aaron and his sons have finished covering the holy things and the camp is ready to move, the Kohathites will come to carry all the holy articles. They must never touch the holy things, or they will die. The Kohathites will carry all the things from the Tent of Meeting.

¹⁶Eleazar, son of the priest Aaron, will be in charge of the oil for the lamps, the sweet-smelling incense, the daily grain offering, and the anointing oil. He is in charge of the whole Tent and everything in it, the Holy Place and its contents.

¹⁷The **LORD** said to Moses and Aaron: ¹⁸“Don't let the Kohathite families from Levi's tribe be destroyed. ¹⁹This is what you must do so that they won't die when they come near the most holy things: Aaron and his sons will go into the Holy Place and tell each man what he will do and what he will carry.

²⁰But the Kohathites must not go in to look at the holy things, even for a moment, or they will die.

The Work of the Gershonites

²¹The **LORD** said to Moses: ²²Also take a census of the Gershonites. List them by households and families. ²³Register all the men between the ages of 30 and 50 who are qualified to serve at the Tent of Meeting.

²⁴This is what the Gershonite families will do and what they will carry:

²⁵They will carry the sheets that are part of the inner tent and the Tent of Meeting. They will also carry the inner cover for the Tent of Meeting, the

outer cover of fine leather that goes over it, the screen for the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, ²⁶the curtains for the courtyard around the Tent and the altar, the screen for the entrance to the courtyard, the ropes, and all the equipment used to set up the curtains. The Gershonites will do everything that needs to be done with these things.

²⁷All their work, whatever they carry and all their duties, will be done under the direction of Aaron and his sons. You are in charge of telling them everything they're supposed to carry. ²⁸This is the work of the Gershonite families in the Tent of Meeting. Ithamar, son of the priest Aaron, will be in charge of them.

The Work of the Merarites

²⁹Register the Merarites by families and households. ³⁰Register all the men between the ages of 30 and 50 who are qualified to serve at the Tent of Meeting. ³¹These are their duties as they work at the Tent of Meeting: They will carry the framework for the inner tent, the crossbars, posts, and sockets, ³²the posts for the surrounding courtyard, the bases, pegs, and ropes. They must take care of all this equipment. Tell each man by name the things he will carry. ³³This is what the Merarite families will do as they work at the Tent of Meeting. Ithamar, son of the priest Aaron, will be in charge of them.

Levites in These Three Families Are Registered.

³⁴Moses, Aaron, and the leaders of the community registered the **Kohathites** by their families and households. ³⁵They registered all the men between the ages of 30 and 50 who were qualified to work at the Tent of Meeting. ³⁶The total of those who were registered was **2,750**. They were listed by families. ³⁷This was the total of all those in the Kohathite families who served at the Tent of Meeting. Moses and Aaron did as the **LORD** had commanded Moses and registered the Kohathites.

³⁸The **Gershonites** were registered by families and households. ³⁹All the men between the ages of 30 and 50 who were qualified to serve at the Tent of Meeting were registered. ⁴⁰The total of those who were registered was

2,630. They were listed by families and households. ⁴¹This was the total of all those in the Gershonite families who worked at the Tent of Meeting. Moses and Aaron did as the **LORD** had commanded Moses and registered the Gershonites.

⁴²The **Merarites** were registered by families and households. ⁴³All the men between the ages of 30 and 50 who were qualified to serve at the Tent of Meeting were registered. ⁴⁴The total of all those who were registered was 3,200. They were listed by families. ⁴⁵This was the total of those registered in the Merarite families. Moses and Aaron did as the **LORD** had commanded Moses and registered the Merarites.

⁴⁶The grand total of all the Levites whom Moses, Aaron, and the leaders of Israel registered was 8,580. They were listed by families and households. ⁴⁷These were the men between the ages of 30 and 50 who were qualified to do the work of serving and who carried the Tent of Meeting. ⁴⁹At the **LORD's** command through Moses each man was registered and told what to do and what to carry.

So they were registered as the **LORD** commanded Moses.

Removing Unclean People from the Camp

5:1 The **LORD** said to Moses: ²Command the Israelites to send outside the camp anyone who has a serious skin disease or a discharge or anyone who is unclean from touching a dead body. ³Send all of these unclean men and women outside the camp. They must not make this camp where I live among you unclean. ⁴So the Israelites did as the **LORD** had told Moses. They sent these unclean people outside the camp.

Confessing and Paying for Sins

⁵The **LORD** said to Moses: ⁶Tell the Israelites: If you do something wrong to another person, you have been unfaithful to the **LORD**. When you realize your guilt, ⁷you must confess your sin, pay in full for what you did wrong, add one-fifth to it, and give it to the person who was wronged. ⁸But there may

be no heir to whom the payment can be made. In that case, the payment for what you did wrong must be given to the **LORD** for the priest to use. This payment is in addition to the ram which makes peace with the **LORD**.

⁹Any contribution over and above the holy offerings that the Israelites bring to the priest will belong to the priest. ¹⁰Each person's holy offerings will belong to that person but whatever is given to the priest will belong to the priest.

When a Husband Suspects That His Wife Has Been Unfaithful

¹¹The **LORD** said to Moses: ¹²Speak to the Israelites and tell them: A man's wife may have been unfaithful to him¹³ and may have had sexual intercourse with another man without her husband's knowledge. She may have kept it secret if there were no witnesses to accuse her and she wasn't caught in the act.

¹⁴ A husband may have a fit of jealousy and suspect his wife, whether she was actually unfaithful or not. ¹⁵He must then take his wife to the priest along with eight cups of barley flour as an offering for her. He must not pour olive oil on the flour or put frankincense on it, since it is a grain offering brought because of the husband's jealousy, an offering used for a confession — to remind someone of a sin that was committed.

¹⁶ The priest will have the woman come forward and stand in the **LORD**'s presence. ¹⁷Then the priest will take holy water in a piece of pottery and put some dust from the floor of the Tent into the water ¹⁸The priest will bring the woman into the **LORD**'s presence and loosen her hair. In her hands he will put the offering used for a confession, that is, the grain offering brought because of the husband's jealousy. The priest will hold in his hands the bitter water that can bring a curse.

¹⁹ Then the priest will say to her: If no other man has had sexual intercourse with you and you haven't been unfaithful to your husband, you're not guilty. This bitter water that can bring a curse will not harm you. ²⁰If in fact you have been unfaithful and have had sexual intercourse with another man,

²¹ may the **LORD** make you an example for your people to see what happens when the curse of this oath comes true. The **LORD** will make your uterus drop and your stomach swell.

Then the priest will administer the oath and the curse by saying: ²² May this water that can bring a curse go into your body and make your stomach swell and your uterus drop. Then the woman will say: Amen, amen. May this be so.

²³ The priest will write these curses on a scroll and wash them off into the bitter water. ²⁴ Then he will have the woman drink the bitter water that can bring the curse. This water will go into her and become bitter.

²⁵ The priest will take the grain offering she was holding, present it to the **LORD** and bring it to the altar. ²⁶ The priest will take a handful of the grain offering as a memorial portion and burn it on the altar. Then he will have the woman drink the water .

²⁷ If she has become unclean by being unfaithful to her husband, the water that can bring the curse will go into her and become bitter. Her stomach will swell, her uterus will drop, and she will become cursed among her people. ²⁸ But if the woman is not unclean and is pure, she is not guilty and will be able to have children.

²⁹ These are the instructions for how to deal with jealousy. They tell you what to do when a woman is unfaithful to her husband and becomes unclean.

³⁰ They also tell you what to do when a husband has a fit of jealousy and is suspicious of his wife. He will make his wife stand in the **LORD**'s presence and the priest will do everything these instructions tell him to do. ³¹ The husband isn't guilty of doing anything wrong but the woman will suffer the consequences of her sin.

Taking a Special Vow as a Nazarite

6:I The **LORD** said to Moses: ² Speak to the Israelites and tell them: A man or a woman may make a special vow to live as a Nazarite dedicated to the

LORD. ³Nazarites must never drink wine, liquor, vinegar made from wine or liquor, or any kind of grape juice, and they must never eat fresh grapes or raisins. ⁴As long as they are Nazarites, they must never eat anything that comes from a grapevine, not even grape seeds or skins.

⁵“As long as they are under the Nazarite vow, no razor may touch their heads. During the entire time that they are dedicated to the **LORD** as Nazarites, they will be holy. They must let their hair grow long. ⁶While they are dedicated to the **LORD** as Nazarites, they must never go near a dead body. ⁷Even if their own father, mother, brother, or sister dies, they must not make themselves unclean by going near them. Nazarites show their vow to God with their long hair. ⁸As long as they are Nazarites, they will be holy to the **LORD**.

⁹“Someone might suddenly drop dead next to a Nazarite and make the Nazarite’s hair unclean. Seven days later he must shave his head in order to be declared clean. ¹⁰On the eighth day he must bring two mourning doves or two young pigeons to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. ¹¹The priest will sacrifice one as an offering for sin and the other one as a burnt offering. The priest will make peace with the **LORD** for the person who touched the dead body.

That same day the person must dedicate his head again. ¹²Once again he will dedicate himself to the **LORD** as a Nazarite for the same length of time as before. He must bring a one-year-old male lamb as an offering for guilt. The first time period won’t count. He has to start over from when he became unclean.

¹³These are the instructions for Nazarites who complete their vows: They must come to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. ¹⁴They must bring these offerings to the **LORD**: a one-year-old male lamb as a burnt offering, a one-year-old female lamb as an offering for sin, and a ram as a fellowship offering. All of these animals must have no defects. ¹⁵They must also bring a basket of unleavened bread containing some rings of bread made with olive oil and

wafers of unleavened bread brushed with olive oil, along with other grain offerings and wine offerings.

¹⁶The priest will bring these offerings to the **LORD** and make the offering for sin and the burnt offering. ¹⁷He will sacrifice the ram as a fellowship offering to the **LORD**, offer the basket of unleavened bread along with it and make the grain offerings and wine offerings.

¹⁸Then the Nazarites will shave their heads at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, take the hair as proof that they had made this vow, and put it on the fire under the fellowship offering.

¹⁹Then the priest will take one of the shoulders from a boiled ram, one ring of unleavened bread from the basket, and one wafer of unleavened bread and hand them to the Nazarites after they have shaved off their hair. ²⁰The priest will present them as an offering to the **LORD**. They are holy and belong to the priest, along with the ram's breast that is presented and the thigh that is given. After that, the Nazarites may drink wine.

²¹ These are the instructions for those who have vowed to bring their offerings to the **LORD** because they were Nazarites. They must bring these offerings in addition to anything else they can afford. They must fulfill the requirements of these instructions for Nazarites and finish whatever they vowed to do.

How Aaron and His Sons Will Bless the Israelites

²²The **LORD** said to Moses: ²³Tell Aaron and his sons: This is how you will bless the Israelites. Say to them: ²⁴The **LORD** will bless you and watch over you. ²⁵The **LORD** will smile on you and be kind to you. ²⁶The **LORD** will look on you with favor and give you peace

²⁷ So whenever they use my name to bless the Israelites, I will bless them.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

This section describes how the priests will first cover the most holy things and then allow the three families of the sons of Levi to load and transport them. All this must be done carefully according to the instructions given by Aaron and his sons. This work is done carefully so no person will die by breaking a holy rule.

2,750 men of the family of Kohath carry the most holy things. 2,630 men of the family of Gershon and 3,200 men of the family Merari carry the structure of the Tent of Meeting probably in wagons. The total number of workers in these families was 8,580 men. Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar must supervise all their work.

The **LORD** commands people who have a serious skin disease, a discharge, or has touched a dead body to live outside the camp. God lives symbolically in the Israelite camp. It must not be polluted.

The **LORD** commands what must be done when a person inadvertently sins. Deliberate sins are discussed in Chapter 15.

The **LORD** commands a procedure when a husband accuses his wife of being unfaithful. This procedure will make an unfaithful wife's uterus to drop and her stomach to swell. If the woman passes the test, her husband who accused her isn't guilty of doing anything wrong. **Numbers 5:31**

This section closes by discussing the procedures for a person taking a vow as a Nazarite and then giving the blessing the priests are to give the people.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. An extraordinary amount of time and detail is spent describing who will do what to set up and take down the Tent of Meeting. What is this emphasized?
2. A census was done of male Levites between the ages of 30-50 years old. The total number of these was 8,580 men. What did these men do when they were not setting up and taking down the Tent of Meeting?
3. Males over the age of 20 were considered warriors. Why isn't there any mention of military training?
4. Unclean people were kept outside the camp. Were they then camping with the Gentiles of the mixed multitude? Who administered this camp?
5. Why is the trial of an unfaithful wife mentioned so early in this book?

6. Why is the Nazarite vow mentioned? What purpose does this contribute to the camp?
7. When do Aaron and his sons bless the Israelites?

Session Three

Moses Commands Dedication of the Tent of Meeting

Moses set up the Tent of Meeting as described in **Exodus 40:33**. This section continues after that.

Offerings for the Dedication of the Altar

7:1 When Moses finished setting up the Tent of Meeting, he anointed it and dedicated it and all the furnishings. He also anointed and dedicated the altar and all the utensils.

[Take the anointing oil and anoint the Tent and everything in it. In this way you will dedicate it and all your furnishings. Then it will be holy. Anoint the altar for burnt offerings and all the utensils. In this way you will dedicate the altar and it will be most holy. Anoint the basin and stand and they will be dedicated. **Exodus 40:9-11**]

Then the leaders of Israel, the heads of the households — those tribal leaders who helped in the census — came to give their offerings. ³They brought these gifts to the **LORD**: six freight *tsab*-covered ^{3x} wagons *agalah* and twelve oxen, one wagon from every two leaders and one ox from each leader. They brought them in front of the Tent.

This is the same word used for the Egyptian wagons given to Jacob to ride in from Canaan to Egypt. **Genesis 45:19, 21, 27; 46:5**

⁴The **LORD** said to Moses: ⁵Accept these gifts from them to use in the work done for the Tent of Meeting. Give them to the Levites to use wherever they need these gifts for their work

⁶Moses took the wagons and the oxen and gave them to the Levites. ⁷He gave two wagons and four oxen to the Gershonites for the work they had to do. ⁸He gave four wagons and eight oxen to the Merarites for the work they had to do under the direction of Ithamar, son of the priest Aaron.

⁹But Moses gave none of these gifts to the Kohathites because they took care of the holy things. They had to carry the holy things on their own shoulders.

The Twelve Tribal Leaders Bring Offerings to Dedicate the Altar

¹⁰The leaders *nasiy*²prince also brought offerings for the dedication of the altar when it was anointed. They presented their gifts in front of the altar. ¹¹The **LORD** said to Moses: Each day a different leader will bring his gift for the dedication of the altar.

The Prince from Judah Brings His Gift

¹²The one who brought his gifts on the first day was Nahshon, son of Amminadab, from the tribe of **Judah**. ¹³He brought a silver plate that weighed $3\frac{1}{4}$ pounds and a silver bowl that weighed $1\frac{3}{4}$ pounds, using the standard weight of the Holy Place. Each dish was filled with flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering. ¹⁴He also brought a gold dish that weighed 4 ounces, filled with incense, ¹⁵a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb as a burnt offering; ¹⁶a male goat as an offering for sin; ¹⁷and two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five one-year-old male lambs as a fellowship offering. These were the gifts from Nahshon, son of Amminadab.

The Prince from Issachar Brings His Gift

¹⁸On the second day Nethanel, son of Zuar, the leader from the tribe of **Issachar**, brought his gifts. ¹⁹He brought a silver plate that weighed $3\frac{1}{4}$ pounds and a silver bowl that weighed $1\frac{3}{4}$ pounds using the standard weight of the Holy Place. Each dish was filled with flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering. ²⁰He also brought a gold dish that weighed 4 ounces, filled with incense; ²¹a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb as a burnt offering; ²²a male goat as an offering for sin; ²³and two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five one-year-old male lambs as a fellowship offering. These were the gifts from Nethanel, son of Zuar.

The Prince from Zebulun Brings His Gift

²⁴On the third day the leader of the descendants of **Zebulun**, Eliab, son of Helon, ²⁵brought his gifts: a silver plate that weighed $3\frac{1}{4}$ pounds and a silver bowl that weighed $1\frac{3}{4}$ pounds using the standard weight of the Holy Place. Each dish was filled with flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering. ²⁶He also brought a gold dish that weighed 4 ounces, filled with incense; ²⁷a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb as a burnt offering; ²⁸a male goat as an offering for sin; ²⁹and two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five one-year-old male lambs as a fellowship offering. These were the gifts from Eliab, son of Helon.

The Prince from Reuben Brings His Gift

³⁰On the fourth day the leader of the descendants of **Reuben**, Elizur, son of Shedeur, ³¹brought his gifts: a silver plate that weighed $3\frac{1}{4}$ pounds and a silver bowl that weighed $1\frac{3}{4}$ pounds using the standard weight of the Holy Place. Each dish was filled with flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering. ³²He also brought a gold dish that weighed 4 ounces, filled with incense; ³³a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb as a burnt offering; ³⁴a male goat as an offering for sin; ³⁵and two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five one-year-old male lambs as a fellowship offering. These were the gifts from Elizur, son of Shedeur.

The Prince from Simeon Brings His Gift

³⁶On the fifth day the leader of the descendants of **Simeon**, Shelumiel, son of Zurishaddai, ³⁷brought his gifts: a silver plate that weighed $3\frac{1}{4}$ pounds and a silver bowl that weighed $1\frac{3}{4}$ pounds using the standard weight of the Holy Place. Each dish was filled with flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering. ³⁸He also brought a gold dish that weighed 4 ounces, filled with incense; ³⁹a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb as a burnt offering; ⁴⁰a male goat as an offering for sin; ⁴¹and two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five one-year-old male lambs as a fellowship offering. These were the gifts from Shelumiel, son of Zurishaddai.

The Prince from Gad Brings His Gift

⁴²On the sixth day the leader of the descendants of **Gad**, Eliasaph, son of Deuel, ⁴³brought his gifts: a silver plate that weighed $3\frac{1}{4}$ pounds and a silver bowl that weighed $1\frac{3}{4}$ pounds using the standard weight of the Holy Place. Each dish was filled with flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering. ⁴⁴He also brought a gold dish that weighed 4 ounces, filled with incense; ⁴⁵a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb as a burnt offering; ⁴⁶a male goat as an offering for sin; ⁴⁷and two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five one-year-old male lambs as a fellowship offering. These were the gifts from Eliasaph, son of Deuel.

The Prince from Ephraim Brings His Gift

⁴⁸On the seventh day the leader of the descendants of **Ephraim**, Elishama, son of Ammihud, ⁴⁹brought his gifts: a silver plate that weighed $3\frac{1}{4}$ pounds and a silver bowl that weighed $1\frac{3}{4}$ pounds using the standard weight of the Holy Place. Each dish was filled with flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering. ⁵⁰He also brought a gold dish that weighed 4 ounces, filled with incense; ⁵¹a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb as a burnt offering; ⁵²a male goat as an offering for sin; ⁵³and two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five one-year-old male lambs as a fellowship offering. These were the gifts from Elishama, son of Ammihud.

The Prince from Manasseh Brings His Gift

⁵⁴On the eighth day the leader of the descendants of **Manasseh**, Gamaliel, son of Pedahzur, ⁵⁵brought his gifts: a silver plate that weighed $3\frac{1}{4}$ pounds and a silver bowl that weighed $1\frac{3}{4}$ pounds using the standard weight of the Holy Place. Each dish was filled with flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering. ⁵⁶He also brought a gold dish that weighed 4 ounces, filled with incense; ⁵⁷a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb as a burnt offering; ⁵⁸a male goat as an offering for sin; ⁵⁹and two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five one-year-old male lambs as a fellowship offering. These were the gifts from Gamaliel, son of Pedahzur.

The Prince from Benjamin Brings His Gift

⁶⁰On the ninth day the leader of the descendants of **Benjamin**, Abidan, son of Gideoni, ⁶¹brought his gifts: a silver plate that weighed $3\frac{1}{4}$ pounds and a silver bowl that weighed $1\frac{3}{4}$ pounds using the standard weight of the Holy Place. Each dish was filled with flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering. ⁶²He also brought a gold dish that weighed 4 ounces, filled with incense; ⁶³a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb as a burnt offering; ⁶⁴a male goat as an offering for sin; ⁶⁵and two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five one-year-old male lambs as a fellowship offering. These were the gifts from Abidan, son of Gideoni.

The Prince from Dan Brings His Gift

⁶⁶On the tenth day the leader of the descendants of **Dan**, Ahiezer, son of Amishaddai, ⁶⁷brought his gifts: a silver plate that weighed $3\frac{1}{4}$ pounds and a silver bowl that weighed $1\frac{3}{4}$ pounds using the standard weight of the Holy Place. Each dish was filled with flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering. ⁶⁸He also brought a gold dish that weighed 4 ounces, filled with incense; ⁶⁹a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb as a burnt offering; ⁷⁰a male goat as an offering for sin; ⁷¹and two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five one-year-old male lambs as a fellowship offering. These were the gifts from Ahiezer, son of Amishaddai.

The Prince from Asher Brings His Gift

⁷²On the eleventh day the leader of the descendants of **Asher**, Pagiel, son of Ochran, ⁷³brought his gifts: a silver plate that weighed $3\frac{1}{4}$ pounds and a silver bowl that weighed $1\frac{3}{4}$ pounds using the standard weight of the Holy Place. Each dish was filled with flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering. ⁷⁴He also brought a gold dish that weighed 4 ounces, filled with incense; ⁷⁵a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb as a burnt offering; ⁷⁶a male goat as an offering for sin; ⁷⁷and two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five one-year-old male lambs as a fellowship offering. These were the gifts from Pagiel, son of Ochran.

The Prince from Naphtali Brings His Gift

⁷⁸On the twelfth day the leader of the descendants of **Naphtali**, Ahira, son of Enan, ⁷⁹brought his gifts: a silver plate that weighed $3\frac{1}{4}$ pounds and a silver bowl that weighed $1\frac{3}{4}$ pounds using the standard weight of the Holy Place. Each dish was filled with flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering. ⁸⁰He also brought a gold dish that weighed 4 ounces, filled with incense; ⁸¹a young bull, a ram, and a one-year-old male lamb as a burnt offering; ⁸²a male goat as an offering for sin. ⁸³and two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five one-year-old male lambs as a fellowship offering. These were the gifts from Ahira, son of Enan.

A Summary of the Gifts Brought by the Tribal Elders for the Dedication of the Altar

⁸⁴These were the gifts from the leaders of Israel for the dedication of the altar when it was anointed: 12 silver plates, 12 silver bowls, and 12 gold dishes. ⁸⁵Each silver plate weighed $3\frac{1}{4}$ pounds, and each bowl weighed $1\frac{3}{4}$ pounds. Together all the silver dishes weighed 60 pounds, using the standard weight of the Holy Place. ⁸⁶The 12 gold dishes filled with incense weighed 4 ounces each, using the standard weight of the Holy Place. Together all the gold dishes weighed about 3 pounds.

⁸⁷The total number of animals for the burnt offerings was 12 young bulls, 12 rams, 12 one-year-old male lambs, along with their grain offerings. Twelve male goats were used as offerings for sin. ⁸⁸The total number of animals for fellowship offerings was 24 bulls, 60 rams, 60 male goats, and 60 one-year-old male lambs. These were the gifts for the dedication of the altar after it was anointed.

Notice how detailed and exact and solemn this is. This ceremony is designed to honor God's holiness. Everything is done as it was commanded. Truly, this is the Book of Numbers.

Moses Met With God in the Tent of Meeting

⁸⁹Whenever Moses went into the Tent of Meeting to speak with the **LORD**, he heard the voice speaking to him from above the throne of mercy on the Ark containing the Words of God's Covenant from between the two angels.

This is how the **LORD** spoke with Moses.

The Lamp Stand in the Tent

8:1 The **LORD** said to Moses ²Speak to Aaron and tell him: When you set up the seven lamps on the lamp stand, they should light up the area in front of it. ³So Aaron set up the lamps on the lamp stand to light up the area in front of it, as the **LORD** commanded Moses.

⁴This is how the lamp stand was made: The whole lamp stand, from top to bottom, was hammered out of gold. It was made exactly like the one the **LORD** had shown Moses.

God gave Moses instructions for making the lamp stand. Then he said:

[Be sure to make them according to the plans you were shown on the mountain. **Exodus 25:40**]

The Levites Are Made Ready to Do the LORD's Work

⁵The **LORD** said to Moses: ⁶Separate the Levites from the rest of the Israelites and make them clean.

⁷This is what you must do to make them clean: Sprinkle them with water to take away their sins. Make them shave their whole bodies and wash their clothes. Then they will be clean. ⁸Next, they must take a young bull and the grain offering of flour mixed with olive oil that is offered with it. You must take a second young bull as an offering for sin.

⁹Bring the Levites to the front of the Tent of Meeting and assemble the whole community of Israel. ¹⁰Then bring the Levites into the **LORD's** presence and the Israelites will place their hands on them. ¹¹Aaron will present the Levites to the **LORD** as an offering from the Israelites. Then they will be ready to do the **LORD's** work.

¹²The Levites will place their hands on the heads of the young bulls. Sacrifice one of them as an offering for sin and the other one as a burnt offering to the **LORD**. These sacrifices will make peace with the **LORD** for the Levites.

¹³ Make the Levites stand in front of Aaron and his sons and present them as an offering to the **LORD**. ¹⁴ In this way you will separate the Levites from the other Israelites and the Levites will be mine.

¹⁵ Once you have made them clean and presented them as an offering, the Levites may come and do their work at the Tent of Meeting.

¹⁶ They will be the only Israelites given to me. I have taken them to be mine as substitutes for every firstborn male offspring of the Israelites. ¹⁷ Every firstborn in Israel, whether human or animal, is mine. The day I killed every firstborn male in Egypt, I set them apart as holy to me. ¹⁸ So I have taken the Levites as substitutes for all the firstborn sons of the Israelites.

¹⁹ The Levites will be the only Israelites I give to Aaron and his sons. They will work for the Israelites at the Tent of Meeting. They will make peace with the **LORD** for the Israelites. Then no plague will strike the Israelites when they come near the Holy Place.

²⁰ Moses, Aaron, and the whole community of Israel did what the **LORD** commanded Moses to do to the Levites. ²¹ The Levites performed the ceremonies to take away their sins and washed their clothes. Aaron presented them as an offering to the **LORD** and made peace with the **LORD** for them in order to make them clean. ²² After that, the Levites came and did their work at the Tent of Meeting in the presence of Aaron and his sons. They did as the **LORD** had commanded Moses.

God Gives Age Limits for Levites Serving in the Tent of Meeting

²³ The **LORD** said to Moses: ²⁴ “These are the instructions for the Levites: Men 25 years old or older are eligible to serve at the Tent of Meeting. ²⁵ But when they’re 50 years old, they must retire from active service and not work anymore. ²⁶ They may assist the other Levites in their duties at the Tent of Meeting, but they may not do any regular work. This is how you will handle the Levites’ duties.

A Second Passover Is Celebrated

⁹:**I** In the first month of the second year after the Israelites left Egypt, the **LORD** spoke to Moses in the Desert of Sinai. He said ²The Israelites must celebrate the Passover at the same time every year. ³You must celebrate it on the fourteenth day of this month at dusk. Follow all the rules and regulations for the celebration of the Passover.

⁴So Moses told the Israelites to celebrate the Passover ⁵and they celebrated it on the fourteenth day of the first month at dusk while they were in the Desert of Sinai. The Israelites did everything as the **LORD** had commanded Moses.

You can read about the first Passover in **Exodus 12:1-30**.

⁶But there were some men who had become unclean from touching a dead body and they couldn't celebrate the Passover that day. They came to Moses and Aaron ⁷and said: We are unclean because we touched a dead body. Why won't you let us bring our offerings to the **LORD** at the same time the rest of the Israelites bring their offerings? ⁸Moses answered them: Wait here until I find out what the **LORD** commands you to do.

God's Commands for an Alternate Passover

⁹Then the **LORD** said to Moses: Tell the Israelites: ¹⁰Suppose you or any of your descendants is unclean from touching a dead body or is away on a long trip. You may still celebrate the Passover.

¹¹You will celebrate it on the fourteenth day of the second month at dusk. You must eat the Passover animal along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. ¹²You must never leave any of the meat until morning or break any of the animal's bones. You must follow all the rules for the Passover when you celebrate it.

¹³But if you are clean and not on a trip and yet don't bother to celebrate the Passover, you must be excluded *karath*-cut off from the people. You didn't bring

your offering to the **LORD** at the right time. You must suffer the consequences for your sin.

Persons who are *cut off from the people* must live outside the boundaries of the camp with no protection from people in the camp. Their living there is very precarious as wild animals or roving tribes of enemies could kill them. The word *karath* appears 8x in Genesis, 14x in Exodus, 20x in Leviticus, 9x in Numbers, and 16x in Deuteronomy. In a hostile environment, it is the same as putting someone to death.

¹⁴“Foreigners living with you may want to celebrate the **LORD**’s Passover. They must follow these same rules and regulations. The same rules will apply to foreigners and native-born Israelites.

After Moses First Set Up the Tent of Meeting, God’s Glory Covered It

¹⁵On the day the Tent of the Words of God’s Covenant was set up, the column of smoke covered it.

[Finally Moses finished the work. Then the column of smoke covered the Tent of Meeting. Moses couldn’t go into the Tent of Meeting because the smoke settled on it and the glory of the **LORD** filled the Tent. Exodus 40:33-35]

From evening until morning, the smoke over the Tent glowed like fire. ¹⁶The smoke always glowed this way. At night the smoke covering the tent glowed like fire.

The Smoke Led the Israelites Through the Wilderness

¹⁷Whenever the smoke moved from the Tent, the Israelites would break camp, and wherever it stopped, the Israelites would set up camp. ¹⁸At the **LORD**’s command the Israelites would break camp, and at his command they would set up camp.

As long as the column of smoke stayed over the Tent, they would stay in the same place. ¹⁹When the smoke stayed over the Tent for a long time, the Israelites obeyed the **LORD**’s command and wouldn’t break camp. ²⁰The same thing happened when the smoke stayed only a few days over the Tent.

At the **LORD's** command they would set up camp, and at his command they would break camp. ²¹Sometimes the column of smoke stayed only from evening until morning. When the smoke moved in the morning, they broke camp. day or night, when the smoke moved, they broke camp.

²²Whether it was two days, a month, or a year, as long as the column of smoke stayed over the Tent, the Israelites would stay in the same place and not break camp. But when the smoke moved, they would break camp. ²³At the **LORD's** command they set up camp and at his command they broke camp. They obeyed the command that the **LORD** had given through Moses.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

Now that Moses has initially set up the Tent of Meeting and its courtyard, anointed it with oil and dedicated it to the **LORD**, tribal elders bring gifts of wagons to transport the structure of the Tent of Meeting on their journey. They have built wagons like those used in Egypt. They give these wagons and oxen to transport them. Moses gave them to the Gershonites and Merarites who transport the structure of the Tent. But he did not give any to the Kohathites because they were required to carry the holy things by their poles or on their shoulders.

Now there is a solemn ceremony for the dedication of the altar in which the princes of the tribes bring gifts to the **LORD**. It is a very solemn ceremony with each of the tribal leaders taking a full day to present his gifts.

Once the Wilderness Tabernacle is dedicated, Moses enters the Holies of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant is located to talk to the **LORD**.

God commands that the Levites be separated from the rest of the people to do the holy work they perform in the courtyard of the Wilderness Tabernacle. They go through a solemn ordination ceremony like the priests. But in this ceremony, the people themselves lay hands on them. Then the Levites stand in front of the priests and are presented as an offering to the **LORD**. This is a very solemn ceremony for the life of the community depends upon the **LORD's** approval of them.

After this, the entire community celebrates a second Passover Ceremony. This again is a ceremony commanded by the **LORD**. God had said:

This day will be one for you to remember. This is a permanent law for generations to come. You will celebrate this day as a pilgrimage festival in the **LORD's** honor. **Exodus 12:14**

This ceremony remembered the **LORD's** deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. God didn't want any Israelite to forget what he had done for them.

This session closes with a reminder that God's presence was always visible in the Israelite camp with the pillar of smoke during the day and the pillar of fire at night. It began before they crossed the Red Sea and continued until they crossed the Jordan River into Canaan. God told them when to move the camp and when to stay put. Moses obeyed God.

All of these solemn ritual laws were designed to put the fear of God into the hearts of God's people. God wanted to be close to his people but he wanted them to respect him. These rituals were designed to teach God's people who was in charge of their lives. In Egypt the Israelites served the Pharaoh. Now the Israelites served their God.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Why is dedicating the altar such an important event.
2. Copying the scrolls by hand is a difficult job. Why is there so much repetition of words in this dedication ceremony?
3. Who are the priestly duties restricted to?
4. Why must Levites who are not priests be cleansed. They are not even allowed in the Holy Place.
5. Look at the places where the Most Holy Place is distinguished from the Holy Place and a holy place. Define each.
6. What was the pillar of cloud and fire constantly reminding the Israelites of?
7. When the pillar of smoke moved, who gave the command to break camp?

Session Four

Israel Prepares to Leave Mount Sinai for Canaan

God Commands Two Silver Signal Trumpets Be Made

10:1 The **LORD** said to Moses: ²Make two trumpets out of hammered silver. Use them to call the community together and as a signal to break camp. ³When you blow both trumpets, the whole community will meet with you at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.

⁴If only one trumpet blows, the leaders, the heads of the divisions of Israel, will meet with you. ⁵When they hear the trumpet fanfare, the tribes that are camped on the east side will break camp first. ⁶When the trumpets sound a second fanfare, the tribes that are camped on the south will break camp. The fanfare is the signal to break camp.

⁷But when you gather the assembly, the trumpets will blow without sounding a fanfare. ⁸The sons of Aaron, the priests, will blow the trumpets. This will be a permanent law for you and your descendants.

⁹“When you go to war in your own country against an enemy who is oppressing you, the trumpets will sound a fanfare. Then the **LORD** your God will remember you and rescue you from your enemies.

¹⁰Also, on your festival days and on the first day of the month Rosh Hashanah, blow the trumpets when you sacrifice your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. The trumpets will be a reminder for you in God’s presence. I am the **LORD** your God.

Israel Leaves Mount Sinai

¹¹On the twentieth day of the second month of the second year, the column of smoke left the Tent *mishkan* of the Words of God’s Covenant ‘*eduwth*’ testimony.

¹²So the Israelites moved from the Desert of Sinai and traveled from place to place until the column of smoke stopped in the Desert of Paran.

The Order of March

¹³This was the first time they moved following the command that the **LORD** had given through Moses. ¹⁴With their flag in front, the armies led by **Judah's** descendants broke camp first. Nahshon, son of Amminadab, was in command. ¹⁵Nethanel, son of Zuar, commanded the army of **Issachar**. ¹⁶Eliab, son of Helon, commanded the army of **Zebulun**. ¹⁷Then the Tent *mishkan* of Meeting was taken down and the Gershonites and Merarites who carried it broke camp.

¹⁸With their flag in front, the armies led by **Reuben's** descendants broke camp next. Elizur, son of Shedeur, was in command. ¹⁹Shelumiel, son of Zurishaddai, commanded the army of **Simeon**. ²⁰Eliasaph, son of Deuel, commanded the army of **Gad**. ²¹Then the Kohathites, who carried the holy things, broke camp. By the time they arrived, the Tent of Meeting would already be set up.

²²With their flag in front, the armies led by **Ephraim's** descendants broke camp next. Elisha, son of Ammihud, was in command. ²³Gamaliel, son of Pedahzur, commanded the army of **Manasseh**. ²⁴Abidan, son of Gideoni, commanded the army of **Benjamin**.

²⁵As a rear guard for the whole camp, the armies led by **Dan's** descendants broke camp last with their flag in front. Ahiezer, son of Ammishaddai, was in command. ²⁶Pagiel, son of Ocran, commanded the army of **Asher**. ²⁷Ahira, son of Enan, commanded the army of **Naphtali**.

²⁸This was the order in which the Israelite armies broke camp when they went from place to place.

Moses Asks His Brother-in-Law Reuel to Help Guide Them

²⁹Moses said to his brother-in-law Hobab, son of Reuel the Midianite: We are going to the place the **LORD** covenanted to give us. Come with us. We will be good to you, because the **LORD** has covenanted good things to

Israel. ³⁰ Hobab answered: No, I won't go. I want to go back to my own country where my relatives are.

³¹ But Moses said: Please don't leave us. You know where we can set up camp in the desert and you could be our guide. ³² If you come with us, we will share with you all the good things the **LORD** gives us.

The Ark of the Covenant Led Them by Three Days

³³ So they left the mountain of the **LORD** and traveled for three days. The Ark of the **LORD's** Covenant went ahead of them a distance of three days' journey to find them a place to rest. ³⁴ The **LORD's** column of smoke was over them by day when they moved the camp.

³⁵ Whenever the Ark started to move, Moses would say: Arise O **LORD**. Scatter your enemies. Make those who hate you run away from you. ³⁶ And whenever it stopped, he would say: Return O **LORD** to the countless thousands of Israel.

The People Complain of the Manna and Demand Meat to Eat

11:1 The people began complaining out loud *'anan*-murmur ^{2x} to the **LORD** about their troubles. When the **LORD** heard them, he became angry and fire from the **LORD** began to burn among them. It destroyed some people on the outskirts of the camp. The people cried out to Moses. Moses prayed to the **LORD**, and the fire died down. ³ That place was called Taberah *meaning Fire* because fire from the **LORD** burned among them there.

⁴ Some foreigners *'acpecuph*-mixed multitude ^{1x} among the Israelites had a strong craving for other kinds of food. Even the Israelites started crying again and said: If only we had meat to eat. ⁵ Remember all the free fish we ate in Egypt and the cucumbers, watermelons, leeks, onions, and garlic we had? ⁶ But now we've lost our appetite *nepeshh*-soul *yabeshh*-dried up ^{9x}. Everywhere we look there's nothing but manna.

⁷ Manna was small like coriander seeds and looked like resin. ⁸ The people would go around and gather it, then grind it in a hand mill or crush it in a

mortar. They would cook it in a pot or make round loaves of bread out of it. It tasted like rich pastry made with olive oil. ⁹When dew fell on the camp at night, manna fell with it.

The Israelites had been given manna by God when they arrived at the Desert of Sin (Resting Place 8) on the 15th day of the second month after they left Egypt. **Exodus 1:1, 14-15**

Moses Complains to God

¹⁰ Moses heard people from every family crying *bakah*-wail at the entrance to their tents. The **LORD** became very angry *'aph* and Moses didn't like it either *ra'a'ayin*-displeased with. ¹¹ So he asked:

LORD, why have you brought me this trouble? How have I displeased you that you put the burden *massa*'of all these people on me? ¹² Am I their mother? Did I give birth to them? Are you really asking me to carry them in my arms — as a nurse carries a baby—all the way to the land you covenanted their ancestors with an oath?

¹³ Where can I get meat for all these people? They keep crying for me to give them meat to eat. ¹⁴ I can't take care of all these people by myself. This is too much work for me. ¹⁵ If this is how you're going to treat me, why don't you just kill *harag* me? I can't face this trouble anymore *ra'ah*-see *ra'*-wretchedness.

Moses sounds really desperate here, almost the most desperate he seems to be in the Bible. But really he is magnifying his own performance. God is doing most of the work. And God will continue to do most of the work if Moses will trust him.

¹⁶ The **LORD** answered Moses:

God Offers to Give the Holy Spirit to 70 Elders

Bring me 70 Israelite men who you know are leaders and officers of the people. Take them to the Tent of Meeting, and have them stand with you. ¹⁷ I'll come down and speak with you there. I'll take some of the Holy Spirit that is on you and put it on them. They will help you take care of the people. You won't have to take care of the people alone.

We read of 70 elders accompanying Moses, Aaron and Aaron's sons going up Mount Sinai. **Exodus 24:1.** Later in the time of Jesus, there will be seventy members of the Sanhedrin – the High Court of Israel – led by the High Priest.

God Offers to Give the People Meat

¹⁸Tell the people to get ready for tomorrow. They must be set apart as holy. Then they will eat meat. I, the **LORD**, heard them crying and saying: If only we had meat to eat. We were better off in Egypt. So I will give them meat. ¹⁹They won't eat it just for one or two days, or five, or ten, or twenty days, ²⁰but for a whole month until it comes out of their ears and they're sick of it. This is because they rejected the **LORD** who is here among them and cried in front of him asking: Why did we ever leave Egypt?

Moses Doubts God Can Give Meat to All These People

²¹But Moses said: Here I am with 600,000 foot soldiers around me. Yet, you say: I will give them meat to eat for a whole month. ²²Would they have enough if all the flocks and herds were butchered for them? Would they have enough if all the fish in the sea were caught for them?

²³The **LORD** asked Moses: Is there a limit to the **LORD's** power? Now you will see whether or not my Words come true.

God Gives the Holy Spirit to the 70 Leaders for a Moment

²⁴Moses went out and told the people what the **LORD** said. He gathered 70 of the leaders of the people and had them stand around the Tent. ²⁵Then the **LORD** came down in the column of smoke and spoke with him. He took some of the Spirit that was on Moses and put it on the 70 leaders. When the Spirit came to rest on them, they prophesied, but they never prophesied again.

²⁶Two men, named Eldad and Medad, had stayed in the camp. They were on the list with the other leaders but hadn't gone with them to the tent. The Spirit came to rest on them too and they prophesied in the camp. ²⁷Then a young man ran and told Moses: Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the

camp. ²⁸ So Joshua, son of Nun, who had been Moses' assistant ever since he was a young man, spoke up and said: Stop them sir.

Moses Desires All the People Are Prophets and Given the Holy Spirit

²⁹ But Moses asked him: Do you think you need to stand up for me? I wish all the **LORD's** people were prophets and that the **LORD** would put his Spirit on them.

³⁰ Then Moses and the leaders went back to the camp.

Moses' wish was answered by God on Pentecost when Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit on all believers. **Acts 2**

God Sends Quails to the Camp So the People Have Meat

³¹ The **LORD** sent a wind from the sea that brought quails and dropped them all around the camp. There were quails on the ground about three feet deep as far as you could walk in a day in any direction. ³² All that day and night and all the next day the people went out and gathered the quails. No one gathered less than 60 bushels. Then they spread the quails out all around the camp.

³³ While the meat was still in their mouths — before they had even had a chance to chew it — the **LORD** became angry with the people and struck them with a severe plague. ³⁴ That place was called Kibroth Hattaavah *meaning Graves of Those Who Craved Meat* because there they buried the people who had a strong craving for meat. (Resting Place 13)

³⁵ From Kibroth Hattaavah the people moved to Hazeroth, and they stayed there. (Resting Place 14)

Miriam and Aaron Oppose Moses

12:1 Miriam and Aaron began to criticize Moses because he was married to a woman from Sudan. ² They asked: Did the **LORD** speak only through Moses? Didn't he also speak through us? The **LORD** heard their complaint.

³Moses was a very humble *'anav* man, more humble than anyone else on earth.

⁴Suddenly, the **LORD** said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam: All three of you come to the Tent of Meeting. So all three of them came. ⁵Then the **LORD** came down in the column of smoke and stood at the entrance to the Tent. He called to Aaron and Miriam and they both came forward.

⁶He said: Listen to my words: When there are prophets of the **LORD** among you, I make myself known to them in visions or speak to them in dreams. ⁷But this is not the way I treat my servant Moses. He is the most faithful *'aman* person in my household. ⁸I speak with him face *peh*-mouth to face *peh*, plainly and not in riddles. He even sees the form of the **LORD**. Why weren't you afraid to criticize my servant Moses?

⁹The **LORD** was angry with them so he left.

God Gives Miriam Leprosy

¹⁰When the smoke left the Tent, Miriam was covered with an infectious skin disease. She was as white as snow. Aaron turned to her and saw she was covered with the disease. ¹¹So he said to Moses: Please, sir, don't punish us for this foolish sin we committed. ¹²Don't let her be like a stillborn baby that's not completely developed. ¹³So Moses cried to the **LORD**: Please, God. Heal her.

¹⁴The **LORD** replied to Moses: If her own father had spit in her face, wouldn't she be excluded from the community for seven days? She must be put in isolation outside the camp for seven days. Then she can be brought back. ¹⁵So Miriam was put in isolation outside the camp for seven days. The people didn't break camp until she was brought back.

¹⁶After that, the people moved from Hazeroth and set up camp in the Desert of Paran.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

The people of Israel have now begun their journey. Having been taught by God for a year at Mount Sinai the right way to live in his Creation and having built the Wilderness Tabernacle to make possible God himself living among them, they were also taught how to worship their God rightly. In a parallel way, Jesus taught his disciples the right way of living in relationship with God.

There is a lot of detailed legislation and we wonder why all the detail. Much of it seems unnecessary. But it is a way of showing respect for God by doing things exactly the way he commanded. He is sovereign, holy, and just and he must be feared or respected.

The congregation travels for three days until the pillar of cloud tells them where to rest and pitch camp. But after only three days in the wilderness, the people murmur, grumble, and complain that they have no meat to eat. Of course, they could have butchered their animals but they don't talk about doing that. God is angry with them and sends fire destroying some people on the outskirts of the camp. So the place is called Taberah. It is not mentioned as one of the 42 resting places.

The peoples' loud complaining upset Moses. He told God that if the tension wasn't relieved, please kill him. God is compassionate, tells Moses to bring the 70 elders of Israel and God will give them some of the Spirit he has already given Moses.

Then God says he will give the people meat. But Moses questions whether this can be done? God asks: Why do you question me? You will soon see if my promise is fulfilled. So early in the journey, Moses becomes quite discouraged. Will he be able to continue to lead the people?

God then gives the 70 leaders the Holy Spirit. We are not told how this has affected them. Two men are not with the others at the Wilderness Tabernacle when God gives the Spirit to the leaders. Joshua learns of this and asks Moses to stop these two from prophesying. Moses then expresses a wish that all God's people would be given the Holy Spirit.

Then the **LORD** sends quails – lots of them. As the people were eating the quails, the **LORD** struck the people with a severe plague. Many died so the place was called Kibroth Hattaavah. Then the people moved on to Hazereth.

Here Aaron and Miriam begin to oppose Moses. It seems Moses has little support except from Joshua. Why did these two family members oppose their brother? Their excuse was that Moses had married a woman from Cush. What had happened to Moses first wife Zipporah and his two children? The first son was named Gershom. The second son was named Eliezer. **Exodus 18:3-4**. We haven't heard about them for a year:

Moses' father-in-law Jethro brought Moses' sons and wife to Moses in the desert where he was camped near the mountain of God. Jethro had sent word to Moses: I'm coming to visit you and I'm bringing you your wife and her two sons. **Exodus 18:5-6**

While they were complaining about Moses, suddenly, the **LORD** appeared at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. He called to Aaron and Miriam and asked why they weren't afraid to criticize Moses? The **LORD** was angry and left. When he was gone, Miriam was covered with leprosy.

Aaron was not disciplined as he was not disciplined when he had made the Golden Calf idol. Apparently, the High Priest can do no wrong. Aaron, however, pleaded with Moses to pray to God for his sister. Moses prayed and God said that after Miriam was put outside the camp for seven days, the leprosy would be removed.

The people moved from Hazeroth and set up camp in the desert of Paran at the edge of the land God promised to give to the descendants of Abraham. This is Kadesh Barnea **Numbers 13:25** – the first oasis coming up from the south. Surprisingly, Kadesh is not listed here on the list of resting places in Chapter 33. It is only mentioned much later in the journey.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. The tribe of Judah leads the march. Why is this?
2. Moses asks Hobab, the brother-in-law of Reuel or Jethro to accompany them. But we are not told if he joins them or not. Why is this incident even presented?
3. In Exodus we learn that God gave the Israelite quails along with the manna. Apparently the manna continued but not the quails. Isn't it reasonable the quail's continue? Yet God punished the Israelites because they complained at not having meat.
4. Moses prayed that the Holy Spirit would rest on all of God's people. Why didn't God grant that request?
5. Moses frustration is shown when Miriam and Aaron begin to criticize Moses. What is their complaint? How does God resolve the issue? How is Aaron disciplined for his rebellion?

Session Five

Israel Refuses to Enter God's Promised Land

Moses Sends Out 12 Spies

13:1 The **LORD** said to Moses: ²Send men to explore Canaan which I'm giving to the Israelites. Send one leader from each of their ancestors' tribes. ³So at the **LORD's** command, Moses sent these men from the Desert of Paran. All of them were leaders of the Israelites.

The Names of the Twelve Spies

⁴These are their names: Shammua, son of Zaccur, from the tribe of **Reuben**; ⁵Shaphat, son of Hori, from the tribe of **Simeon**; ⁶Caleb, son of Jephunneh, from the tribe of **Judah**; ⁷Igal, son of Joseph, from the tribe of **Issachar**; Hoshea Joshua son of Nun, from the tribe of **Ephraim**; ⁹Palti, son of Raphu, from the tribe of **Benjamin**; ¹⁰Gaddiel, son of Sodi, from the tribe of **Zebulun**;

¹¹Gaddi, son of Susi, from the tribe of Joseph, that is, the tribe of **Manasseh**; ¹²Ammiel, son of Gemalli, from the tribe of **Dan**; ¹³Sethur, son of Michael, from the tribe of **Asher**; ¹⁴Nahbi, son of Vophsi, from the tribe of **Naphtali**; ¹⁵Geuel, son of Machi, from the tribe of **Gad**. ¹

⁶These are the names of the men Moses sent to explore the land. But Moses gave Hoshea, son of Nun, the name Joshua.

¹⁷When Moses sent them to explore Canaan, he told them: Go through the Negev and then into the mountain region. ¹⁸See what the Land is like and whether the people living there are strong or weak, few or many. ¹⁹Is the Land they live in good or bad? Do their cities have walls around them or not? ²⁰Is the soil rich or poor? Does the Land have trees or not? Do your best to bring back some fruit from the Land. It was the season when grapes were beginning to ripen.

²¹So the men explored the land from the Desert of Zin to the border of Hamath far in the north. ²²They went through the Negev and came to Hebron, where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi lived. They are descendants of Anak. Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.

²³When they came to the Eshcol Valley, they cut off a branch with only one bunch of grapes on it. They carried it on a pole between two of them. They also brought some pomegranates and figs. ²⁴So they called that valley Eshcol meaning Bunch of Grapes because of the bunch of grapes the Israelites cut off there.

²⁵Forty days later, they came back from exploring the Land. ²⁶They came back to Moses, Aaron, and the whole community of Israel at Kadesh in the Desert of Paran. They gave their report and showed them the fruit from the Land.

²⁷This is what they reported to Moses: We went to the Land where you sent us. It really is a land flowing with milk and honey. Here's some of its fruit.

God had first told Moses Canaan was *a land of milk and honey* when he met God at the burning bush:

[The **LORD** said: I have seen the misery of my people in Egypt and I have heard them crying because of the slave drivers. I know how much they're suffering. I have come to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians and to bring them from that land to a Good Land with plenty of room for everyone. It is a land flowing with milk and honey where the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. **Exodus 3:7-8**]

But the Spies Report the People in Canaan are Giants – Very Tall

²⁸ But the people who live there are strong and the cities have walls and are very large. We even saw the descendants of Anak there.

²⁹The Amalekites live in the Negev. The Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites live in the mountain region. And the Canaanites live along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea and all along the Jordan River.

³⁰Caleb told the people to be quiet and listen to Moses. Caleb said: Let's go now and take possession of the Land. We should be more than able to conquer it.

The Spies Discourage the People from Entering the Promised Land

³¹ But the men who had gone with him said: We can't attack those people. They are too strong for us. ³² So they began to spread lies among the Israelites about the land they had explored. They said: The Land we explored is one that devours those who live there. All the people we saw there are very tall. ³³ We saw Nephilim there. The descendants of Anak are Nephilim. We felt as small as grasshoppers and that's how we must have looked to them.

[The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, as well as later, when the sons of God slept with the daughters of other humans and had children by them., These children were famous long ago. **Genesis 6:3**]

The People Decide to Desert Moses and Return to Egypt

14:1 Then all the people in the Israelite community raised their voices and cried out loud all that night ²They complained to Moses and Aaron: If only we had died in Egypt or this desert. ³Why is the **LORD** bringing us to this Land —just to have us die in battle? Our wives and children will be taken as prisoners of war. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt? ⁴They said to each other: Let's choose a new leader and go back to Egypt.

Moses and Aaron Immediately Pray to God for Help

⁵Immediately, Moses and Aaron bowed with their faces touching the ground in front of the whole community of Israel assembled there.

⁶At the same time, two of those who had explored the land, Joshua, son of Nun, and Caleb, son of Jephunneh, tore their clothes in despair. ⁷They said to the whole community of Israel: The Land we explored is very good. ⁸If the **LORD** is pleased with us, he will bring us into this Land and give it to us. This is a Land flowing with milk and honey. ⁹Don't rebel against the **LORD** and don't be afraid of the people of the Land. We will devour them like bread. They have no protection and the **LORD** is with us. So don't be afraid of them.

¹⁰But when the whole community of Israel talked about stoning Moses and Aaron to death, they all saw the glory *kabowd* of the **LORD** shining *ra'ah* at the Tent of Meeting.

God Appears and Says He Will Destroy the People

¹¹The **LORD** said to Moses: How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to trust me in spite of all the miraculous signs I have done among them? ¹²I'll strike them with a plague, I'll destroy them and I'll make you into a nation larger and stronger than they are.

Moses Intercedes for the People

¹³But Moses said to the **LORD**: What if the Egyptians hear about it? You used your power to take these people away from them. ¹⁴What if the Egyptians tell the people who live in this Land? **LORD**, they have already heard that you are with these people, that they have seen you with their own eyes that your column of smoke stays over them and that you go ahead of them in a column of smoke by day and in a column of fire by night.

¹⁵But if you kill all these people at the same time, then the nations who have heard these reports about you will say: ¹⁶The **LORD** wasn't able to bring these people into the Land he covenanted with them so he slaughtered them in the desert.

¹⁷**LORD**, let your power be as great as when you said: ¹⁸The **LORD** . . . patient, forever loving. . . He forgives wrongdoing and disobedience. . .

He never lets the guilty go unpunished, punishing children . . . for their parents' sins to the third and fourth generation. . . . **Exodus 34:6-7**

¹⁹ By your great love *cheeced*, please forgive these people's sins, as you have been forgiving them from the time they left Egypt until now.

Moses appeals to God's *cheeced*, his loving kindness, the attribute he himself says is his greatest attribute, mentioning only *cheeced* twice .

[The **LORD** came down in a cloud and stood there with him and called out his name: The **LORD**. Then he passed in front of Moses calling out: The **LORD**, the **LORD**, a compassionate *rachuwm* and merciful *channuwm* God, patient *arek 'aph*, always faithful *emeth*, and ready to forgive *rab cheeced*. He continues to show his love *cheeced* to thousands of generations forgiving wrongdoing, disobedience and sin. **Exodus 34:5-7**

God Decrees Death for the Peoples' Rebellion Against Him

²⁰ The **LORD** said: I forgive *calach* them, as you have asked.

²¹ But as I live and as the glory of the **LORD** fills the whole earth, I solemnly swear that ²² none of the people who saw my glory and the miraculous signs I did in Egypt and in the desert will see the Land which I covenanted with their ancestors. They have tested me now ten times and refused to obey me.

²³ None of those who treat me with contempt will see it.

Perhaps these are the ten times God refers to:

1. **Exodus 14:10-12** At the Red Sea when the Egyptian Army seemed read to destroy them.
2. **Exodus 15:22-24** At Marah where they found bitter water
3. **Exodus 16:1-3** At the Desert of Sin where they hungered
4. **Exodus 16:19-20** In the Desert of Sin where they attempted to store manna and it had worms
5. **Exodus 16:27-30** In the Desert of Sin where they attempted to gather manna on the seventh day

6. **Exodus 17:1-4** At Rephidim where they complained they lacked water.
7. **Exodus 32:1-35** At Mount Sinai where they worshiped the Golden Calf idol.
8. **Numbers 11:1-3** At Taberah where they raged against the **LORD**.
9. **Numbers 11:4-3** At Kibroth Hattaavah where they lusted for meat
10. **Numbers 14:1-3** At Kadesh where the people wanted to return to Egypt.

²⁴But because my servant Caleb has a different attitude and has wholeheartedly followed me, I'll bring him to the Land he already explored. His descendants will possess it.

God Says His People Will Not Enter the Promised Land for Forty Years

²⁵The Amalekites and Canaanites are living in the valleys. Tomorrow you must turn around, go back into the desert and follow the road that goes to the Red Sea.

²⁶Then the **LORD** said to Moses and Aaron: ²⁷“How long must I put up with this wicked community that keeps complaining about me? I've heard the complaints the Israelites are making about me.

²⁸So tell them: As I live, declares the **LORD**, I solemnly swear I will do everything to you that you said I would do. ²⁹Your bodies will drop dead in this desert. All of you who are at least 20 years old, who were registered and listed, and who complained about me will die. ³⁰I raised my hand and swore an oath to give you this Land to live in. But none of you will enter it except Caleb, son of Jephunneh, and Joshua, son of Nun.

³¹You said your children would be taken as prisoners of war. Instead, I will bring them into the Land you rejected, and they will enjoy it. ³²However, your bodies will drop dead in this desert. ³³Your children will be shepherds in the desert for 40 years. They will suffer for your unfaithfulness until the last of your bodies lies dead in the desert.

³⁴For 40 days you explored the Land. So for 40 years — one year for each day — you will suffer for your sins and know what it means for me to be

against you. ³⁵I, the **LORD**, have spoken. I swear I will do these things to all the people in this whole wicked community who have joined forces against me. They will meet their end in this desert. Here they will die.

God Kills the Ten Spies Who Lied about the Land

³⁶So the men Moses sent to explore the Land died in front of the **LORD** from a plague. ³⁷They died because they had returned and made the whole community complain about Moses by spreading lies about the Land. ³⁸Of all the men who went to explore the land, only Joshua, son of Nun, and Caleb, son of Jephunneh, survived.

The Israelites Rebel Again So Amalekites and Canaanites Defeat Israel

³⁹When Moses told these things to all the Israelites, the people mourned bitterly, as if someone had died.

⁴⁰Early the next morning they headed into the mountain region. They said: We have sinned. Now we'll go to the place the **LORD** promised.

⁴¹But Moses asked: Why are you again disobeying the **LORD's** command? Your plan won't work. ⁴²Don't go. You will be defeated by your enemies because the **LORD** is not with you. ⁴³The Amalekites and Canaanites are there and you will die in battle. Now that you have turned away from the **LORD**, the **LORD** will not be with you.

⁴⁴But they headed into the mountain region anyway, even though the Ark of the **LORD's** Covenant and Moses stayed in the camp. ⁴⁵The Amalekites and Canaanites who lived there came down from those mountains, attacked the Israelites, and defeated them at Hormah.

God and Moses call Israel *a stiff-necked qashah 'oreph people* in **Exodus 33:3-5; 34:9; Deuteronomy 9:6, 13; 10:16**. We might call them bull-headed – intent on doing only their own way.

Commands Regarding Sacrifices to the LORD

God previously said he would pardon the people. To demonstrate this reconciliation, God repeats some of the commands he had given previously in Leviticus.

15:1 The **LORD** said to Moses: ²Speak to the Israelites and tell them: Once you're settled in the Land I'm giving you ³you may bring offerings by fire to the **LORD**. They may be burnt offerings or any other kind of sacrifice. They may be offered to fulfill a vow, as a freewill offering, or as one of your festival offerings. They may be cattle, sheep, or goats—offerings that are a soothing aroma to the **LORD**.

⁴Whoever brings the offering must also give the **LORD** a grain offering of eight cups of flour mixed with one quart of olive oil. ⁵With each sheep or goat for the burnt offering or any other sacrifice, also give an offering of one quart of wine.

⁶With a ram, give a grain offering of 16 cups of flour mixed with $1\frac{1}{4}$ quarts of oil ⁷and an offering of $1\frac{1}{4}$ quarts of wine. Offer them as a soothing aroma to the **LORD**.

⁸Suppose you sacrifice a young bull as a burnt offering to the **LORD** or make any other kind of sacrifice—to keep a vow or as a fellowship offering. ⁹Offer with the young bull a grain offering of 24 cups of flour mixed with two quarts of olive oil. ¹⁰Also give an offering of two quarts of wine. It is an offering by fire, a soothing aroma to the **LORD**. ¹¹Do this for each bull, each ram, and each sheep or goat. ¹²Do it for each animal, however many you sacrifice.

¹³All native-born Israelites must do it this way when they bring an offering by fire, a soothing aroma to the **LORD**.

God Says that Foreigners Are to Obey These Laws While Living Among the People

¹⁴Suppose foreigners *ger* are visiting you or living among you in future generations. If they bring an offering by fire, a soothing aroma to the **LORD**, they must do as you do. ¹⁵There is one law for the whole assembly:

for you and foreigners who are living with you. It is a permanent law for future generations.

As far as the **LORD** is concerned, you and foreigners are the same. ¹⁶The instructions and rules are the same for you as well as foreigners who are living with you.

Unfortunately, this isn't always true. In Leviticus, God says that when Israelites buy foreigners as slaves, they may keep them permanently. But Hebrew slaves are subject to the Law of the Jubilee. **Leviticus 25:44-46**

Offering the First Bread Dough to the LORD

¹⁷The **LORD** said to Moses: ¹⁸“Speak to the Israelites and tell them: When you enter the Land where I'm taking you ¹⁹and eat any of the food from the Land, give some of it as a contribution to the **LORD**. ²⁰Shape one part of your dough into a ring the same way you do with the contribution you make from the threshing floor. ²¹For generations to come, you must give one part of your dough as a contribution to the **LORD**.”

What Is to Be Done about Unintentional and Intentional Wrongdoings

²²“Suppose you unintentionally do something wrong by not obeying all these commands the **LORD** gave Moses. ²³Everything the **LORD** commanded you through Moses holds as true for generations to come as it did the day the **LORD** gave the commands. ²⁴If it was unintentional and no one else knows about it, the whole community must sacrifice a young bull as a burnt offering, a soothing aroma to the **LORD**, along with the proper grain and wine offerings, and a male goat as an offering for sin.

²⁵The priest will make peace with the **LORD** for the whole community of Israel. Then they will be forgiven because the wrongdoing was unintentional and they brought these two offerings to the **LORD** for their sin: an offering by fire and an offering for sin. ²⁶So the whole community of Israel will be forgiven including foreigners who are living among them since all the people were involved in the unintentional wrongdoing.

The Offering for Sin for Unintentional Sins

²⁷If one person unintentionally does something wrong, a one-year-old female goat must be sacrificed as an offering for sin. ²⁸The priest will offer the sacrifice to make peace with the **LORD** for that person, and that person will be forgiven. ²⁹You must give the same instructions to everyone who does something wrong unintentionally, whether they are native-born Israelites or not.

There Is No Sin Offering for Intentional Sin. The Person Must Be Cut Off from the People

³⁰“But any native-born Israelite or foreigner who deliberately *yad*—hand *rama*’—deceiving does something wrong insults the **LORD** and must be excluded from the people. ³¹That person has despised the **LORD**’s Word and broken the **LORD**’s command. He must be excluded completely. He remains guilty.

The Penalty for Breaking the Sabbath Commandment

³²While the Israelites were in the desert, they found a man gathering wood on the Day of Rest—a Holy Day. ³³Those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron and the whole community. ³⁴They kept him in custody until they decided what to do with him.

³⁵Then the **LORD** said to Moses: This man must be put to death. The whole community must take him outside the camp and stone him. ³⁶So the whole community took him outside the camp and stoned him to death, as the **LORD** commanded Moses.

The Israelites Are Commanded to Wear Tassels

³⁷The **LORD** said to Moses: ³⁸“Speak to the Israelites and tell them: For generations to come they must wear tassels on the corners of their clothes with violet threads in each tassel ³⁹Whenever you look at the threads in the tassel, you will remember all the **LORD**’s commands and obey them. Then

you won't do whatever you want and go after whatever you see, as if you were chasing after prostitutes.

⁴⁰You will remember to obey all my commands and you will be holy to your God. ⁴¹I am the **LORD** your God, who brought you out of Egypt to be your God. I am the **LORD** your God.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

This is a very sad section, second only to the Golden Calf Idol incident at Mount Sinai in **Exodus 32:1-6**. God promises to give Abraham's descendants the Land of Canaan as his Promised Land but when they arrive at the Land, they refuse to enter it. These two incidents are the saddest in all of Israel's history. In both incidents, they dishonor the God who has selected them as his Chosen People.

After the 12 spies enter the Land exploring it from north to south, they return with an extraordinary large bunch of grapes. It truly is a land of milk and honey as Moses told us, they said. But ten of the spies spoke mostly of the giant people inhabiting the Land living in cities with huge walls. These people will look at us like grasshoppers and destroy us, they said. Two of the spies, Caleb and Joshua however trusted that God would protect them as he had so far in their journey.

But the people wouldn't listen to them and discussed choosing a new leader, stoning Moses and Aaron to death, and returning to Egypt. When told this, Moses and Aaron promptly fell flat on their faces on the ground. They knew immediately that God would appear.

The glory of God appeared at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. God told Moses: I will destroy this people and make you into an even greater nation. These people have showed contempt for me ten times. Moses immediately pleaded with God interceding for the people. You are a merciful God. Please do not do this.

God immediately then said: I pardon them. But this entire generation of warriors over 20 years old will die in the next forty years as they wander in the wilderness. Only the next generation of warriors over 20 years old will be able to enter the Promised Land. Now return to the Red Sea.

Moses told the people and they mourned all night. However the next morning, they decided to now enter the Land. Moses warned them not to disobey God again but they didn't listen. They went up against Amalekites and Canaanites. Moses and the Ark of the Covenant stayed in the camp. The Israelites were defeated,

Now to demonstrate his reconciliation with the rebellious Israelites, God commands details of sacrifices to be made to him. At the end, he commands that first of their bread made from wheat from the harvest be offered as first fruits to the **LORD**.

Then God describes how offerings for unintentional sin are to be made. The whole community must offer a young bull together with wine and grain offering and a male goat. In this way, the priest will make peace for the community.

If one person unintentionally sins, a one-year-old female goat must be offered. This applies to foreigners as well as native-born Israelites.

However, if a native-born Israelite sins intentionally they must be cut off from the people. He must be excluded completely as he remains guilty.

Then follows an example of deliberate sin. A man was seen gathering wood on the Sabbath. He was brought before Moses and Aaron. Moses sought the **LORD's** command about him. God said: This man must be put to death. So he was taken outside the camp and stoned to death. God is serious about sin.

To assist his people to remember him, God commanded that all generations must wear tassels *tsiytsith* on the corners of their clothes. In this way, Israelites will remember that they are to live in God's Creation as God commanded and be holy to their God. God reminded them:

I am the **LORD** your God, who brought you out of Egypt to be your God. I am the **LORD** your God. **Numbers 15:41**

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. What were the reasons most of the spies did not want to enter Canaan?
2. Since the Levites did not have a representative among the 12 spies, did Levites also die in the first generation? God says: None of the people who saw my glory and the miraculous signs I did in Egypt and in the desert will see the Land I promised to their ancestors. **Numbers 14:21**
3. After the Lord decreed the 40 year punishment, the people headed into Canaan. Who was leading them?
4. Moses says that anyone who deliberately sins is to be excluded from the people. Does this mean they have to live with the mixed multitude in their camp?
5. We now learn that a man is stoned to death for working on the Sabbath. The Sabbath is mentioned 18x in Exodus, 31x in Leviticus, 4x in Numbers, and 3x in Deuteronomy. Why is there such a strict penalty for breaking the Sabbath?

Session Six

Moses and Aaron's Authority Is Challenged

Moses is Told: You've Gone Far Enough

16:1 Korah, son of Izhar, **Dathan** and **Abiram**, sons of Eliab, and **On**, son of Peleth dared to challenge Moses. Korah was a descendant of **Kohath** and **Levi**. Dathan, Abiram, and On were descendants of **Reuben**. ²These four men were joined by **250** Israelite men, well-known leaders of the community, chosen by the assembly.

³They came together to confront Moses and Aaron and said to them: You've gone far enough *rab*. Everyone in the whole community is holy and the **LORD** is among them. Why do you set yourselves above the **LORD's** assembly?

⁴As soon as Moses heard this, he bowed with his face touching the ground. ⁵Then he said to Korah and all his followers: In the morning the **LORD** will show who belongs to him, who is holy, and who it is that he will allow to come near him. Only the person the **LORD** chooses will be allowed to come near him.

⁶Korah, you and all your followers must do this tomorrow: Take incense burners,⁷and put burning coals and incense in them in the **LORD's** presence. Then the **LORD** will choose the man who is holy. You've gone far enough.

⁸Moses also said to Korah: Listen, you Levites. ⁹Isn't it enough for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the rest of the community of Israel? The **LORD** has brought you near himself to do the work for his Tent and stand in front of the community to serve them. ¹⁰He has brought you and all the other Levites near himself, but now you demand to be priests.

[Have Aaron's sons come forward. Dress them in their linen robes and put turbans on them. Tie belts around the waists of Aaron and his sons. They *alone* are to be priests. [The priesthood shall be theirs. KJV] This is

a permanent law. In this way you will ordain Aaron and his sons. **Exodus 29:8-9**]

¹¹ So you and all your followers have joined forces against the **LORD**. Who is Aaron that you should complain about him?

¹² Then Moses sent for Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab. But they said: We won't come. ¹³ Isn't it enough that you brought us out of a land flowing with milk and honey only to kill us in the desert? Do you also have to order us around? ¹⁴ Certainly you haven't brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey or given us any fields and vineyards to own. Do you think you can still pull the wool over our eyes? We won't come.

¹⁵ Moses became angry and said to the **LORD**: Don't accept their offering. I haven't taken anything from them, not even a donkey. And I haven't mistreated any of them.

¹⁶ Moses said to Korah: Tomorrow you and all your followers must come into the **LORD's** presence. Aaron will also be there with you. ¹⁷ Each man will take his incense burner and put incense in it. They will offer all **250** incense burners to the **LORD**. Then you and Aaron offer your incense burners.

The Test of the Levites Before God

¹⁸ So each man took his incense burner, put burning coals and incense in it, and stood with Moses and Aaron at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. ¹⁹ When Korah had gathered all his followers— those who opposed Moses and Aaron — at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, the glory *kabowd* of the **LORD** appeared to the whole group.

²⁰ The **LORD** said to Moses and Aaron: ²¹ Move away from these men, and I'll destroy them in an instant. ²² Immediately, they bowed with their faces touching the ground and said: O God, you are the God who gives the breath of life to everyone. If one man sins, will you be angry with the whole community?

God Tells the People to Isolate the Rebels

²³Then the **LORD** said to Moses: ²⁴Tell the community: Move away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

²⁵Moses got up and went to Dathan and Abiram and the leaders of Israel followed him. ²⁶He said to the community: Move away from the tents of these wicked men. Don't touch anything that belongs to them or you'll be swept away because of all their sins. ²⁷So they moved away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Dathan and Abiram had come out and were standing at the entrances to their tents with their wives and children.

²⁸Moses said: This is how you will know *yada'* that the **LORD** sent *shalach* me to do all these things and that it wasn't my idea. ²⁹If these men die like all other people — if they die a natural death — then the **LORD** hasn't sent me. ³⁰But if the **LORD** does something totally new — if the ground opens up, swallows them and everything that belongs to them, and they go down alive to their graves— then you'll know that these men have treated the **LORD** with contempt.

God Makes the Ground Open and the Rebels Are Swallowed up

³¹As soon as he had finished saying all this, the ground under them split, ³²and the earth opened up to swallow them, their families, the followers of Korah, and all their property. ³³They went down alive to their graves with everything that belonged to them. The ground covered them and so they disappeared from the assembly.

³⁴All the Israelites around them ran away when they heard their screams. They thought the ground would swallow them, too.

God Brings Fire and Destroys the 250 Rebels

³⁵Fire came from the **LORD** and consumed the 250 men who were offering incense

God Commands the Altar of Sacrifice Be Covered with Bronze as a Memorial

³⁶Then the **LORD** said to Moses: ³⁷Tell Eleazar, son of the priest Aaron, to take the incense burners out of the fire and scatter the coals and incense somewhere else because the incense burners have become holy. ³⁸The incense burners of these men who sinned and lost their lives are holy because they were offered to the **LORD**. Hammer them into thin metal sheets to cover the altar. This will be a sign to the Israelites.

³⁹So the priest Eleazar took the bronze incense burners which had been brought by those who had been burned to death. The incense burners were then hammered into thin metal sheets to cover the altar, ⁴⁰following the command that the **LORD** had given through Moses.

The bronze-covered altar will remind Israel that no one but a descendant of Aaron can come near to burn incense to the **LORD**. Everyone else will die like Korah and his followers.

The LORD Again Threatens to Destroy the People

⁴¹The next day the whole community of Israel complained to Moses and Aaron. They said: You have killed the **LORD**'s people. ⁴²The community came together to confront Moses and Aaron. When they turned toward the Tent of Meeting, they saw the smoke covering it, and the glory *kabowd* of the **LORD** appeared.

⁴³Then Moses and Aaron went to the front of the Tent of Meeting. ⁴⁴The **LORD** said to Moses: ⁴⁵Get away from these people, and let me destroy them in an instant. Immediately, they bowed with their faces touching the ground.

⁴⁶Moses said to Aaron: Take your incense burner, put burning coals from the altar and incense in it and go quickly into the community to make peace with the **LORD** for the people. The **LORD** is showing his anger. A plague has started.

⁴⁷ Aaron took his incense burner as Moses told him and ran into the middle of the assembly because the plague had already begun among the people. He put incense on the incense burner to make peace with the **LORD** for the people. ⁴⁸ He stood between those who had died and those who were still alive and the plague stopped.

⁴⁹ Still, 14,700 died from the plague in addition to those who had died because of Korah. ⁵⁰ By the time Aaron came back to Moses at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, the plague had stopped.

Fortunately, Aaron interceded for the people. Only 14,700 died.

God Demonstrates the Authority He Has Given Aaron

17:1 The **LORD** said to Moses: ² Speak to the Israelites and get 12 staffs from them, one from the leader of each of their tribes. Write each man's name on his staff. ³ Write Aaron's name on the staff for **Levi** because there must be one staff for the head of each tribe.

⁴ Put them in the Tent of Meeting where I meet with you, in front of the Words of my Covenant. ⁵ The staff from the man I choose will begin to grow. In this way I will silence the frequent complaints the Israelites make against you and Aaron.

⁶ So Moses spoke to the Israelites. Their leaders gave him 12 staffs, one from the leader of each of their tribes. Aaron's staff was among them. ⁷ Moses put the staffs in the **LORD's** presence in the Tent of the Words of God's Covenant.

⁸ The next day Moses went into the Tent. He found that Aaron's staff for the tribe of **Levi** had not only begun to grow, but it had also blossomed and produced ripe almonds. ⁹ Moses brought out the staffs from the **LORD's** presence and showed them to all the Israelites. They looked at them and each man took his staff.

¹⁰The **LORD** said to Moses: Put Aaron's staff back in front of the Words of my Covenant and keep it there as a sign to warn any other rebels. Then you will stop their complaints about me and they won't die.

¹¹Moses did exactly what the **LORD** commanded him to do.

¹²The Israelites said to Moses: Now we're going to die *gava'*. We're lost *'abad*. We're all lost *'abad*. ¹³Anyone who comes near the **LORD**'s Tent will die *muwth*. Are we all going to die *gava'*?

What are the people expressing with their cries. Are they being resentful of God's sovereignty and power? Will they will obey God now only because they cannot do anything else and live? Or are they truly repenting of their rebellion against God? Will they look to Moses to help them obey God from then on?

The Duties of the Priests and the Duties of the Levites

18:1 The **LORD** said to Aaron: You, your sons, and your family will be responsible for any sins against the Holy Place. You and your sons will also be responsible for any sins you commit when you work as priests.

²Bring the other Levites from your ancestor's tribe to join you and help you and your sons serve in front of the Tent of the Words of my Covenant. ³They will work for you, doing whatever work is necessary for the whole Tent. But they must not come near the golden incense altar or the furnishings in the Holy Place or they will die *muwth* and you will die, too.

⁴They will join you and do whatever work is necessary for the Tent of Meeting including all the maintenance work for the Tent. But no one else may come near you.

⁵ You must be in charge of the work done at the Holy Place and at the altar. Then I won't show my anger *qetseph*-wrath against the Israelites again. ⁶I have chosen the other Levites from among the Israelites to help you. They are a gift given to the **LORD** to do whatever work is necessary at the Tent of Meeting.

⁷Only you and your sons may do the work of priests — everything done at the altar and under the canopy. This is my gift to you: You may serve me as priests. Anyone else who comes near the Holy Place to do this work must die *muwth*.

Only the priests can enter the Tent of Meeting. The Levites must do all their work outside of the Tent. And people cannot even come into the courtyard. They can only come to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.

Contributions for the Levites and Priests

⁸The **LORD** said to Aaron: I am putting you in charge of all the contributions given to me. I am giving you and your descendants all the holy gifts from the Israelites as your share. These contributions will always be yours.

⁹That part of the most holy offerings which is not burned belongs to you. It may come from a grain offering, an offering for sin, or a guilt offering. Whatever is brought to me as a most holy offering will belong to you and your sons. ¹⁰Eat it in a Most Holy Place. Any male may eat it. You must consider it holy.

¹¹ The contributions that come as gifts taken from the offerings presented by the Israelites are also yours. I am giving these to you, your sons, and your daughters. They will always be yours. Anyone in your household who is clean may eat them.

¹² I am also giving you the first of the produce they give the **LORD** —the best of all the olive oil and the best of the new wine and fresh grain. ¹³The first of all produce harvested in their land that they bring to the **LORD** is yours. Anyone in your household who is clean may eat it.

¹⁴ Anything in Israel that is claimed by the **LORD** is yours. ¹⁵Every firstborn male, human or animal, that is brought to the **LORD** is yours. But you must buy back every firstborn son and the firstborn male of any unclean animal.

¹⁶When they are one month old, you must buy them back at the fixed price of two ounces of silver, using the standard weight of the Holy Place.

¹⁷ But you must never buy back a firstborn ox, sheep, or goat. They are holy. Throw the blood from these animals against the altar and burn the fat as an offering by fire, a soothing aroma to the **LORD**. ¹⁸ But the meat is yours, like the breast and the right thigh that are presented.

¹⁹ I am giving you, your sons, and your daughters all the holy contributions the Israelites bring to the **LORD**. These contributions will always be yours. It is an everlasting Covenant of salt in the **LORD**'s presence for you and your descendants.

[Also put salt on each of your grain offerings. The salt of the **LORD**'s Covenant must never be left out of grain offerings. Put salt on all your offerings. **Leviticus 2:13**]

[A Covenant of Salt is a perpetual agreement, an ordinance forever. **2 Chronicles 13:5**]

²⁰The **LORD** said to Aaron: You will have no land or property of your own as the other Israelites will have. I am your possession and your property among the Israelites.

²¹"I am giving the Levites one-tenth of every Israelite's income. This is in return for the work they do at the Tent of Meeting. ²²The other Israelites must never again come near the Tent of Meeting. Otherwise, they'll suffer the consequences of their sin and die *muwth*. ²³Only the Levites will do the work at the Tent of Meeting. They will be responsible for their own sins. This is a permanent law for future generations.

They will own no property as the other Israelites will. ²⁴Instead, I will give the Levites what the Israelites contribute to the **LORD** — one-tenth of the Israelites' income. This is why I said about them: They will own no property as the other Israelites do.

²⁵The **LORD** said to Moses: ²⁶Speak to the Levites and say to them: You will take one-tenth of the Israelites' income which I'm giving you as your property. When you do, you must contribute one-tenth of that income as your contribution to the **LORD**.

²⁷Your contribution will be considered to be grain from the threshing floor or juice from the winepress. ²⁸So you, too, will contribute one-tenth of your income to the **LORD** out of all that you receive from the Israelites' income. You will give the **LORD's** contribution to the priest Aaron. ²⁹Out of all the gifts you receive, you must contribute the best and holiest parts to the **LORD**.

³⁰“Also tell them: When you contribute the best part, your contribution will be considered to be produce from the threshing floor or winepress. ³¹So you and your households may eat it anywhere because it's the wages you receive for your work at the Tent of Meeting. ³²When you contribute the best part, you won't suffer the consequences of any sin. You won't be dishonoring the holy offerings given by the Israelites, and you won't die *muwth*.

The Sacrifice of the Red Heifer

19:1 The **LORD** said to Moses and Aaron: ²This is what the **LORD's** teachings have commanded: Tell the Israelites to bring you a red *adom* cow *parah*-heifer that is perfect with no defects. Also, it must never have worn a yoke. ³Give it to the priest Eleazar. It must be taken outside the camp and slaughtered in his presence.

⁴The priest Eleazar will take some of the blood with his finger and sprinkle it seven times toward the front of the Tent of Meeting. ⁵Then the entire cow, the skin, meat, blood, and excrement, will be burned while he watches. ⁶The priest will take some cedar wood, a hyssop sprig, and some red yarn and throw them onto the burning cow.

⁷The priest must then wash his clothes and his body. After that, he may go into the camp. But he will be unclean until evening. ⁸The person who

burned the calf must also wash his clothes and his body. He too will be unclean until evening.

⁹A man who is clean will collect the ashes from the cow and put them in a clean place outside the camp. They will be kept by the community of Israel and used in the water that takes away uncleanness. The cow is an offering for sin. ¹⁰The person who collected the ashes from the cow must also wash his clothes. He will be unclean until evening. This will be a permanent law for the Israelites and for the foreigners who live with them.

The Water from the Sacrifice of the Red Heifer Cleanses a Person Who Touches the Body of a Dead Human Being

¹¹Whoever touches the dead *muwth* body of any human being will be unclean for seven days. ¹²The unclean person must use this water on the third day and the seventh day to take away his sin. Then he will be clean. But if he doesn't use this water on the third day and the seventh day, he will not be clean. ¹³Whoever touches the dead *muwth* body of a human being and doesn't use this water to take away his sin makes the **LORD's** Tent unclean. That person must be excluded *karath* from Israel, because the water that takes away uncleanness wasn't sprinkled on him. He is unclean. His uncleanness stays with him.

Procedure to Be Followed When a Person Dies

¹⁴These are your instructions for when a person dies *muwth* in a tent: Everyone who goes into the tent and everyone who is in the tent will be unclean for seven days. ¹⁵Every container without a lid fastened on it is unclean.

¹⁶Whoever is outdoors and touches someone who was killed *chalal* or has died *muwth* naturally or anyone who touches a human bone or a grave will be unclean for seven days.

¹⁷This is what you must do for people who become unclean from touching a dead *muwth* body. Put some of the ashes from the red cow that was burned as an offering for sin into a container. Then pour fresh water on them ¹⁸A

person who is clean will take a sprig of hyssop, dip it in the water and sprinkle the tent, all the furnishings, and all the people who were in the tent with the dead *muwth* body.

He must also sprinkle any person who has touched a human bone or a grave and any person who has touched someone who has been killed or who has died naturally. ¹⁹A person who is clean will sprinkle these types of unclean people on the third day and the seventh day. On the seventh day the clean person will finish taking away their sins. Then they must wash their clothes and bodies, and in the evening they will be clean.

²⁰But if the person who becomes unclean doesn't have his sin taken away, that person must be excluded *karath* from the assembly. He has made the Holy Place *miqdash*-sanctuary of the **LORD** unclean. The water to take away uncleanness wasn't sprinkled on him. He is unclean. ²¹This will be a permanent law for them.

Whoever sprinkles the water to take away uncleanness must wash his clothes. And whoever touches this water will be unclean until evening. ²²Anything that an unclean person touches becomes unclean, and the person who touches it will be unclean until evening.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

In this session there is more rebellion. It isn't enough the Israelites have rebelled against the **LORD** ten times. Now they rebel more. And it is serious. Many people are killed by God for their rebellion.

Korah, a Levite but who is not a priest, accuses Moses and Aaron of being uppity, of appointing himself greater than other Levites. Why is only their family priests and not all those who are descended from Levi? Three members of the tribe of Reuben also rebel against Aaron. However, one of these three is only mentioned *once*-- On.

Unfortunately, 250 other Israelites join them. This is a large rebellion against Moses and Aaron and God. Moses says he will leave it up to God to show Korah and his followers God's authority. Korah is told to bring incense burners and burn incense in the **LORD**'s presence. Then he will see if God accepts his offering or not. Then Moses sent for Dathan and Abiram but they wouldn't come to him.

The next day, the men stood with their incense burners at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. The glory of the **LORD** then appeared. God said: Move away from them and I will destroy all of them. Moses interceded: If one man sins, will you destroy the entire community? God answered: Tell the community to get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. God doesn't mention On.

Moses told the community: Move away. This is how you will know the LORD sent me to lead you. If God opens up the ground, you will know it is him who sent me. When Moses said this the earth opened up and swallowed up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, their families, the followers of Korah and all their property. All the people ran away thinking the earth would swallow them too. Then fire came down from Heaven and killed the 250 leaders who were offering incense.

Then God told Moses: Tell Aaron's son Eliezer to gather the incense burners, remove the coals from them, and hammer them into a covering for the Altar of Incense. This will be a memory that only priests may offer incense to the **LORD**.

The Community is Outraged Moses Allowed God to Kill So Many People

The community comes to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting to confront Moses and Aaron. They said: You have killed the LORD's people. Then the glory of the **LORD** appeared. God said to Moses: Get away from these people and let me destroy them instantly. Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before the **LORD**.

Then Moses said to Aaron: Take your incense burner and stand among the people for the **LORD** has begun a plague. Aaron stood between those who had already died and the people still alive. Still, 14,700 people died from the plague.

It seemed that death is very prevalent in the Book of Numbers. But death appears 11x in Exodus, 15x in Leviticus, 16x in Numbers, and 13x in Deuteronomy. Death appears most in Psalms 27x in Jeremiah 20x, and 372x in the entire Bible.

God Reinforces the Authority of Aaron as High Priest

God commands Moses to get 12 staffs from the leaders of the 12 tribes. Then write each man's name on the staff. Write Aaron's name on the staff for Levi. Then put them in the Tent of Meeting. Only Aaron's staff will grow. This will be a sign that I am with him.

The next day Moses went into the Tent and saw that only Aaron's staff had almond buds on it. Then this staff was placed in the chest of the Ark of the Covenant. But the Israelites said: Now we're going to die. We are lost. We are lost. Was this statement hopeless despair or a sign of repentance?

God Now Gives Detailed Instructions for the Priests and the Levites Who Assist Them.

God states clearly only Aaron and his sons may do the work of priests at the Golden Incense Altar and under the canopy – that is, the Holy Place. Anyone else who attempts to do this work will die.

In further legislation, God decrees the contributions for the Priests and Levites.

Because Death is So Prevalent in the Israelite Camp, God Decrees How Anyone Touching a Dead Body Will Be Cleansed.

God commands that a red heifer with no defects be slaughtered outside the camp. The entire cow must then be burned. Both the priest and the man who burned the cow will be unclean so they must wash their clothes and body and stay outside the camp until evening. Then they may enter the camp.

The man who burned the cow must place the burned ashes of the cow in a clean place outside the camp. Whoever touches a dead body is unclean and must remain outside the camp for seven days. On the third and seventh day he must wash with this dead cow's water so he will be clean and reenter the camp.

Any person in a tent when a person dies will be unclean. Every container in the tent without a lid will be unclean. A clean person must sprinkle the tent, all the furnishings, and anyone who was in the tent with the dead body must be sprinkled. Anyone who touches a dead body will be unclean for seven days. Anyone who doesn't go through his procedure must be excluded from the people

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. The rebellion of Korah is serious. There are cleansed Levites. They were joined by 250 well-known leaders of the community. What was their complaint? Could Moses have even solved their complaint?
2. Yet the people sided with the rebels. God killed 14,700 despite Aaron attempting to make peace with the Lord. Why did the people feel the complaint of Korah was justified?
3. Describe the procedure for cleansing if a death body is touched.

Session Seven

Moses Disobeys God

The Community Complains Loudly to Moses and Aaron

20:1 In the first month the whole community of Israel came into the Desert of Zin, and they stayed at Kadesh. Miriam died and was buried there.

2Since the community was without water, they came together to confront Moses and Aaron. **3**The people complained to Moses and said: If only we had died when the other Israelites died in the **LORD's** presence.

4Did you bring the **LORD's** assembly into this desert just to have us and our animals die here? **5**Why did you make us leave Egypt and bring us into this terrible place? This is no place to plant crops. Even figs, grapes, and pomegranates won't grow here. And there's no water to drink,

Moses and Aaron are appalled at the people's continued lack of reverence for God. In fact, both of them get quite angry.

6Moses and Aaron went from the assembly to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. Immediately, they bowed with their faces touching the ground, and the glory *kabowd* of the **LORD** appeared to them.

7The **LORD** said to Moses: **8**Take your staff, then you and your brother Aaron gather the community. Right before their eyes, tell the rock to give up its water. In this way you will give the community water from the rock for them and their animals to drink.

An Angry Moses Chastises the Crowd and Disobeys God

9Moses took his staff out of the Tent in the **LORD's** presence as he had been commanded. **10**Then Moses and Aaron assembled the community in front of the rock and said to them: Listen, you rebels, must we bring water out of this rock for you?

¹¹ Moses raised his hand and hit the rock twice with the staff. Water came pouring out and all the people and their animals drank.

God Tells Moses and Aaron Because of Their Disobedience They Will Not Enter the Promised Land

¹² But the **LORD** said to Moses and Aaron: You didn't trust me. You didn't show the Israelites how holy I am. So you will not bring this congregation into the land I'm giving them.

Moses and Aaron could not restrain their anger at the peoples' continued murmuring. So they both exploded at the people with angry words. Yet God was patient with the people here. Yet God is sovereign. He is in charge –all the time. But both Moses and Aaron did not follow his example at this time. So God punishes both of them severely. Neither one will be able to enter the Promised Land.

¹³ This was the oasis of Meribah meaning complaining where the Israelites complained about the **LORD** and where he showed them he was holy.

Edom Refuses to Allow Israel to Pass through Its Territory

¹⁴ Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the King of Edom. He said: This is what your brother Israel says: You know all the hardships we've had. ¹⁵ Our ancestors went to Egypt and we lived there for many years. The Egyptians mistreated us and our ancestors. ¹⁶ When we cried out to the **LORD**, he heard us, sent a messenger and brought us out of Egypt.

“Now we're here in Kadesh, a city on the edge of your territory. ¹⁷ Please let us go through your country. We won't go through any of your fields or vineyards, or drink any of the water from your wells. We'll stay on the King's Highway and never leave it until we've passed through your territory.

¹⁸ But the Edomites answered: You may not pass through our country. If you try, we'll come out and attack you. ¹⁹ The Israelites replied: We'll stay on the main road and if we or our livestock drink any of your water, we'll pay for it. We want to pass through on foot. That's all. ²⁰ But the Edomites said: You may not pass through. Then they came out and attacked with many well-armed troops.

²¹Since the Edomites refused to let Israel go through their territory, the Israelites turned around and went a different way.

The Edomites were descended from Esau, the older brother of Jacob. Because they were not kind to the Israelites here, Edom has become a symbol for opposition to Israel through the rest of the Bible. Israel had to go the east of Edom into the Arabian Desert to get around their country.

Aaron, the High Priest of Israel, Dies

²²The whole community of Israel left Kadesh (Resting Place 33) and came to Mount Hor (Resting Place 34). ²³At Mount Hor, near the border of Edom, the **LORD** said to Moses and Aaron: ²⁴Aaron must now join his ancestors in death since he cannot enter the Land I'm giving the Israelites. This is because you both rebelled against my command at the oasis of Meribah

²⁵Bring Aaron and his son Eleazar up on Mount Hor. ²⁶Take off Aaron's priestly clothes and put them on his son Eleazar. Then Aaron will die there and join his ancestors.

²⁷Moses did as the **LORD** commanded. The whole community saw them go up on Mount Hor. ²⁸Moses took off Aaron's priestly clothes and put them on his son Eleazar. Aaron died there on top of the mountain. Then Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain. ²⁹The whole community saw that Aaron had died, and all the Israelites mourned for Aaron 30 days.

Aaron was 123 years old when he died on Mount Hor. **Numbers 33:39**

The King of Arad Is Defeated

21:I When the Canaanite King of Arad, who lived in the Negev on the west side of the Jordan River heard that the Israelites were coming on the road to Atharim, he fought them and took some of them as prisoners. ²Then the Israelites made this vow to the **LORD**: If you will hand these people over to us, we'll destroy their cities because you've claimed them.

³The **LORD** listened to the Israelites and handed the Canaanites over to them. They destroyed the Canaanites and their cities. So they called the place Hormah meaning Claimed for Destruction .

[The Canaanite King of Arad, who lived in the Negev, which was in Canaan, heard that the Israelites were coming. Numbers 33:40]

The People Again Complain Against Moses

⁴Then they moved from Mount Hor, following the road that goes to the Red Sea, in order to get around Edom. The people became impatient on the trip ⁵and criticized God and Moses. They said: Why did you make us leave Egypt — just to let us die in the desert? There's no bread or water and we can't stand this awful food.

Moses Sets Up a Bronze Serpent on a Pole at God's Command

⁶So the **LORD** sent poisonous snakes among the people. They bit the people and many of the Israelites died. ⁷The people came to Moses and said: We sinned when we criticized the **LORD** and you. Pray to the **LORD** so that he will take the snakes away from us. So Moses prayed for the people.

⁸The **LORD** said to Moses: Make a snake and put it on a pole. Anyone who is bitten can look at it and live. ⁹So Moses made a bronze snake and put it on a pole. People looked at the bronze snake after they were bitten, and they lived.

[King Hezekiah even crushed the bronze snake that Moses had made because up to that time ⁷¹⁵BC, the Israelites had been burning incense to it. They called it Nehushtan. 2 Kings 18:4]

Israel Travels Past Edom to Moab

¹⁰The Israelites moved and set up camp at Oboth (Resting Place 37). Next they moved from Oboth and set up camp at Iye Abarim (Resting Place 38) in the desert west of Moab. ¹²From there they moved and set up camp at the

Zered River. ¹³They moved from there and set up camp on the other side of the Arnon Valley in the desert that extends into Amorite territory.

The Arnon Valley is the border between Moab and the Amorites. ¹⁴This is how it's described in the Book of the Wars of the LORD:

Waheb in Suphah and the valleys
¹⁵Arnon and the slopes of the valleys
that go down to the site of Ar
and lie along the border of Moab.

¹⁶From there they went to Beer meaning Well. This is the well where the LORD said to Moses: Gather the people and I will give them water. ¹⁷Then Israel sang this song about the well:

Make your water spring up.

Sing to the well,
¹⁸the well dug by princes,
dug out by the nobles of the people
with their scepters and staffs.

From the desert they went to Mattanah, ¹⁹and from Mattanah to Nahaliel, and from Nahaliel to Bamoth, ²⁰and from Bamoth to the valley in Moab where Mount Pisgah overlooks Jeshimon.

King Sihon and King Og Are Defeated

King Og's Kingdom is where the tribes of East Manasseh located. Sihon's Kingdom is where Reuben and Gad located.

²¹Then Israel sent messengers to say to King Sihon of the Amorites, ²²"Let us go through your country. We won't go through any of your fields or vineyards or drink any of the water from your wells. We'll stay on the King's Highway until we've passed through your territory.

²³Sihon wouldn't let Israel pass through his territory. Sihon gathered all his troops and came out into the desert to attack Israel. When Sihon's troops

came to Jahaz, they fought against Israel. ²⁴ But Israel defeated them in battle and took possession of their land from the Arnon Valley to the Jabbok River.

They stopped at the border of the Ammon because it was fortified. ²⁵ Israel took all those Amorite cities including Heshbon and all its villages and lived in them. ²⁶ Heshbon was the city of King Sihon of the Amorites. He had fought the former King of Moab and had taken all his land up to the Arnon Valley.

²⁷ This is why the poets say:

Come to Heshbon. Rebuild it.
Restore Sihon's city.

²⁸ Fire came out of Heshbon,
flames from Sihon's city.
They destroyed Ar of Moab,
the rulers of Arnon's worship sites.

²⁹ How horrible it is for you, Moab.
You are destroyed,
you people of the god Chemosh.

Chemosh let his sons become refugees
and he let his daughters become prisoners
of King Sihon of the Amorites.

³⁰ But we shot the Amorites full of arrows.
From Heshbon to Dibon they all died.
We destroyed everyone and everything
between Nophah and Medeba.

³¹ So Israel settled in the land of the Amorites. ³² After Moses sent spies to Jazer, the Israelites captured its cities and villages and forced out the Amorites who were there. ³³ Then they turned and followed the road that goes to Bashan.

King Og of Bashan and all his troops came out to fight the Israelites at Edrei.

³⁴The **LORD** said to Moses: Don't be afraid of him. I'll hand him, all his troops, and his land over to you. Do to him what you did to King Sihon of the Amorites, who ruled in Heshbon ³⁵The Israelites defeated him, his sons, and all his troops, leaving no survivors. And they took possession of his land.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

We can see by this time that Moses and Aaron very tired of the Israelite complaining. That is all they seem to do. This journey is wearing on both of them and it has been going on for almost 40 years.

Moses' attitude shows in the month long speech Moses makes to the Israelites on the Plains of Moab recorded in the Book of Deuteronomy beginning on the first day of the eleventh month of the fortieth year after they left Canaan.

The **LORD** became angry with me because of you. He said: You won't go there either. But your assistant Joshua will go there. Encourage him, because he will help Israel take possession of the Land. **Deuteronomy 1:37-38**

Then I pleaded with the **LORD**: Almighty **LORD**, you have only begun to show me how great and powerful you are. What kind of god is there in Heaven or on earth that can do the deeds and the mighty acts you have done? Please let me go over and see the Beautiful Land on the other side of the Jordan River – those beautiful mountains in Lebanon.

The **LORD** was angry with me because of you, so he wouldn't listen to me. He said: That's enough out of you. Don't talk to me anymore about this. Go to the top of Mount Pisgah and look west, north, south, and east. You may look at the Land but you will never cross the Jordan River. Give instructions to Joshua. Encourage and strengthen him because he will lead these people across the Jordan River and he will help them take possession of the Land you see. **Deuteronomy 3:23-28**

The **LORD** was angry with me because of you. So the **LORD** your God took an oath that I wouldn't cross the Jordan River and enter the Good Land he is giving to you as your property. I'm going to die in this land and not

cross the Jordan River but you're going to go across and take possession of this Good Land. **Deuteronomy 4:21-22**

How sad it is that Moses could not enter the Promised Land after all he endured. However, God has very high standards for the shepherds of his people. If a shepherd disobeys God, the sheep will stray also.

Moses now sends messages to Edom to cross their land. The Edomites refuse. This refusal has been remembered by Jews ever since. Edom become as symbol for all the enemies of Israel. See **Isaiah 34:1-17**.

Aaron, the High Priest, now die and is buried on Mount Hor. His son Eliezer becomes High Priest. The Israelites mourned the death of Aaron for 30 days. The Israelites then defeat the King of Arad who was living in the Negev.

The Israelites moved east following a road that goes to the Red Sea to get around Edom. This was a difficult journey and the people complained bitterly. Like Moses, they were tired. So God sent poisonous snakes among the people and many of the Israelites died. The people asked Moses to intercede for them. Moses prayed and God commanded Moses set up a bronze snake. Whenever an Israelite who was bitten by a serpent looked at the bronze snake and believed God would cure him, he was cured.

But we learn later that the Israelites kept this bronze snake. More than 400 years later in 715 BC, the bronze snake named Nehushtan was kept in the Temple at Jerusalem and people prayed to it. King Hezekiah destroyed it because the people were using it as an idol burning incense to it. **2 Kings 18:4**

The Israelites then moved their camp to the valley where Mount Pisgah overlooks the wasteland called Jeshimon. They sent messengers to King Sihon of the Amorites asking to pass through his territory. He refused so the Israelites conquered his Kingdom. Then they followed the road that leads to Bashan. King Og of Bashan came out and fought but was defeated.

Now Israel moved the Plains of Moab (Resting Place 42 - the final one). Here they would remain for two months. In the eleventh month Moses would begin his speech. Then Moses would die and the Israelites would mourn his death for 30 days.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. What specifically did Moses do that dishonored God? What did Aaron do?
2. Why did the Edomites refuse to allow Israel to pass through their territory?

3. Why is there even mention of the King of Arad? Did the Israelites recover the prisoners taken by this King who lived in the Negev in the Land of Canaan?
4. Why did looking at the bronze snake on a pole heal the people?
5. Read **Deuteronomy 2:24-3:22**. Why did God want the Israelites to defeat King Sihon and King Og before entering Canaan?

Session Eight

The King of Moab Hires the Prophet Balaam to Curse Israel

22:1 Then the Israelites moved south and set up camp across from Jericho, on the plains of Moab east of the Jordan River.

²Balak, son of Zippor, saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. ³The Moabites were very afraid because there were so many Israelites. Besides, the Moabites couldn't stand these people. ⁴So the Moabites said to the leaders of Midian: All those people will eventually eat up everything around us the same way an ox eats up the grass in a field.

The Midianites were a confederation of Bedouin tribes. Midian was the son of Abraham and Keturah. Moses had married Zipporah, the daughter of the Midianite priest Jethro. **Genesis 25:1-2; Exodus 2:16-21.** The Moabites and Midianites were allies.

At that time Balak, son of Zippor, was King of Moab. ⁵He sent messengers to summon Balaam, son of Beor, who was at Pethor, on the Euphrates River in the land where his people lived. Balak's message was:

A nation has just come here from Egypt. They've spread out all over the countryside and are setting up their camp here in front of me. ⁶Please come and curse these people for me because they are too strong for me. Maybe then I'll be able to defeat them and force them out of the country. I know that whomever you bless is blessed and whomever you curse is cursed.

⁷The leaders of Moab and Midian left taking money with them to pay for Balaam's services. They came to Balaam and told him what Balak had said. ⁸Spend the night here, Balaam said to them and I'll report to you what the **LORD** tells me. So the princes of Moab stayed with Balaam.

⁹God came to Balaam and asked: Who are these men with you? ¹⁰Balaam answered: Balak, son of King Zippor of Moab, sent them with this message: ¹¹"Some people have just come from Egypt and are spreading out all over the countryside. Now come and curse them for me. Maybe I'll be able to fight

them and force them out. ¹²But God said to Balaam: Don't go with them. Don't curse these people because they are blessed.

¹³When Balaam got up in the morning, he said to Balak's princes: Go back to your own country because the **LORD** has refused to let me go with you. ¹⁴So the Moabite princes went back to Balak and said: Balaam refused to come with us."

¹⁵Balak sent a larger group of more highly respected princes. ¹⁶When they came to Balaam, they said to him: This is what Balak, son of Zippor says: Don't let anything keep you from coming to me. ¹⁷I will make sure you are richly rewarded and I will do whatever you ask. Please come and curse these people for me.

¹⁸But Balaam answered Balak's servants: Even if Balak gave me his palace filled with silver and gold, I couldn't disobey the command of the **LORD** my God no matter whether the request was important or not. ¹⁹Now why don't you stay here tonight as the others did and I'll find out what else the **LORD** may have to tell me.

²⁰That night God came to Balaam and said: If these men have come to summon you, go with them, but do only what I tell you.

Balaam's Journey to Moab – A Journey He Will Never Forget

²¹When Balaam got up in the morning, he saddled his donkey and left with the Moabite princes.

²²God became angry that he was going. So the Messenger of the **LORD** stood in the road to stop him. Balaam was riding on his donkey accompanied by his two servants. ²³When the donkey saw the Messenger of the **LORD** standing in the road with his sword drawn, the donkey turned off the road into a field. Balaam hit the donkey to get it back on the road.

²⁴Where the road went through the vineyards it was narrow with stone walls on both sides. Now the Messenger of the **LORD** stood there. ²⁵When the

donkey saw the Messenger of the **LORD**, it moved over and pinned Balaam's foot against the wall. So Balaam hit the donkey again.

²⁶Then the Messenger of the **LORD** moved ahead and stood in a narrower place where there was no room to turn to the right or the left. ²⁷When the donkey saw the Messenger of the **LORD**, it lay down under Balaam. Balaam became so angry he hit the donkey with his stick.

²⁸Then the **LORD** made the donkey speak and it asked Balaam: What have I done to make you hit me three times? ²⁹Balaam answered: You've made a fool of me. If I had a sword in my hand, I'd kill you right now. ³⁰The donkey said to Balaam: I'm your own donkey. You've always ridden me. Have I ever done this to you before? No, he answered.

³¹Then the **LORD** let Balaam see the Messenger of the **LORD** who was standing in the road with his sword drawn. So Balaam knelt, bowing with his face touching the ground.

³²The Messenger of the **LORD** asked him: Why have you hit your donkey three times like this? I've come here to stop you because the trip you're taking is evil, ³³The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If it had not turned away from me, I would certainly have killed you by now but spared the donkey.

³⁴Balaam said to the Messenger of the **LORD**: I've sinned. I didn't know you were standing there in the road to stop me. If you still think this trip is evil, I'll go back. ³⁵The Messenger of the **LORD** said to Balaam: Go with the men but say only what I tell you. So Balaam went with Balak's princes.

³⁶When Balak heard that Balaam had come, he went out to meet him at Ir Moab in the region of the Arnon Valley right on the border of Moab. ³⁷Balak said to Balaam: Why didn't you come when I summoned you? You knew I'd be able to reward you. ³⁸Balaam replied: Well I've come to you now. But I can't say whatever I want to. I can only say what God tells me to say.

³⁹Balaam went with Balak to Kiriath Huzoth. ⁴⁰Balak sacrificed cattle, sheep, and goats, and sent some of the meat to Balaam and the princes who were with him.

⁴¹The next morning Balak took Balaam up to Bamoth Baal. From there he could see the outskirts of the Israelites' camp.

Balaam's First Prophecy

23:1 Balaam said to Balak: Build seven altars here and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me. ²Balak did what Balaam told him, and the two of them offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

³Balaam said to Balak: Stay here beside your burnt offering while I'm gone. Maybe the **LORD** will come and meet with me. I will tell you whatever he reveals to me. Then Balaam went off to a higher place where there were no trees. ⁴God came to him and Balaam said: I have set up seven altars and I offered a bull and a ram on each altar. ⁵The **LORD** told Balaam: Go back to Balak, and give him my message.

⁶So he went back to Balak and found him standing beside his burnt offering with all the princes of Moab. ⁷Then Balaam delivered this message:

Balak brought me from Aram.
The King of Moab summoned me
from the eastern mountains.

Come, curse Jacob for me, he said.
'Come, condemn Israel.

⁸How can I curse those whom God hasn't cursed?
How can I condemn those whom the **LORD** hasn't condemned?

⁹I see them from the top of rocky cliffs,
I look at them from the hills.
I see a nation that lives by itself,
people who do not consider themselves
to be like other nations.

¹⁰The descendants of Jacob are like specks of dust.
Who can count them
or number even one-fourth of the people of Israel?

Let me die the death of innocent people.
Let my end be like theirs

¹¹Balak said to Balaam: What have you done to me? I brought you here to curse my enemies but all you've done is bless them. ¹²Balaam answered: I must say what the **LORD** tells me to say.

Balaam's Second Prophecy

¹³Then Balak said to him: Please come with me to another place, where you can see the Israelites. You will see only some of them, not all of them. Curse them for me from there.

¹⁴So he took him to the Field of Zophim on top of Mount Pisgah where he built seven altars. He offered a bull and a ram on each altar. ¹⁵Then Balaam said to Balak: Stay here beside your burnt offering while I meet with God over there. ¹⁶The **LORD** came to Balaam and told him: Go back to Balak and give him my message.

¹⁷He came to Balak and found him standing beside his burnt offering with the princes of Moab. Balak asked him: What did the **LORD** say? ¹⁸Then Balaam delivered this message:

Stand up, Balak, and listen.
Hear me, son of Zippor.

¹⁹God is not like people.
He tells no lies.
He is not like humans.
He doesn't change his mind.

When he says something,
he does it.

When he makes a Covenant,
he keeps it.

²⁰I have received a command to bless.
He has blessed, and I can't change it.

²¹He doesn't want any trouble for the descendants of Jacob.
He sees no misfortune for the people of Israel.
The **LORD** their God is with them,
praised as their King.

²²The God who brought them out of Egypt
has the strength of a wild bull.

²³No spell can curse the descendants of Jacob.
No magic can harm the people of Israel.
Now it will be said of Jacob and Israel:
'See what God has done!

²⁴Here is a nation that attacks like a lioness
and is as ferocious as a lion.
It doesn't lie down until it eats its prey
and drinks the blood of its victim.

²⁵Balak said to Balaam: If you won't curse them, then at least don't bless them. ²⁶Balaam answered: Didn't I tell you that I must do whatever the **LORD** says?

²⁷Balak said to Balaam: Come let me take you to another place. Maybe God wants you to curse them for me from there. ²⁸So Balak took Balaam to the top of Mount Peor which overlooks Jeshimon. ²⁹Balaam said to Balak: Build seven altars here and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me. ³⁰Balak did what Balaam told him, and he offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

Balaam's Third Prophecy

24:1 When Balaam saw that the **LORD** wanted to bless Israel, he didn't look for omens as he had done before. He turned toward the desert, ²looked up, and saw Israel's camp grouped by tribes. The Spirit of God entered him ³and he delivered this message:

This is the message of Balaam, son of Beor.

This is the message of the man whose eyesight is clear.

⁴This is the message of the one who hears God's words,
has a vision from the Almighty,
and falls into a trance with his eyes open.

⁵How beautiful are your tents, Jacob,
and the places where you live, Israel.

⁶Your tents spread out like rivers,
like gardens by a river,
like aloes planted by the **LORD**,
like cedars by the water.

⁷Water will flow from their buckets,
and their crops will have plenty of water.
Their King will be greater than Agag the King of the Amalekites,
and their kingdom will be considered the best.

⁸The God who brought them out of Egypt
has the strength of a wild bull.

He will devour nations that are his enemies,
crush their bones,
and pierce them with arrows.

⁹His people lie down and rest like a lion.
They are like a lioness.
Who dares to disturb them?

Those who bless you will be blessed.
Those who curse you will be cursed.

Balaam is quoting God's prophecy to Abram:

[The **LORD** said to Abram: Leave your land, your relatives, and your father's home. Go to the Lnd that I will show you. I will make you a great nation. I will bless you. I will make your name great and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you, I will curse. Through you every family on earth will be blessed. **Genesis 12:1-3**]

Balaam's Fourth Prophecy

¹⁰Balak became angry with Balaam. He clapped his hands and said: I summoned you to curse my enemies and now you have blessed them three times. ¹¹Get out of here. Go home. I said I'd reward you richly, but the **LORD** has made you lose your reward.

¹²Balaam answered Balak: I told the messengers you sent me: ¹³Even if Balak would give me his palace filled with silver and gold, I couldn't disobey the **LORD's** command no matter how good or bad the request might seem to me. I must say only what the **LORD** says.

¹⁴Even though I'm going back to my people, I'll give you some advice. I'll tell you what these people will do to your people in the days to come.

¹⁵Then Balaam delivered this message:

This is the message of Balaam, son of Beor.

This is the message of the man whose eyesight is clear.

¹⁶This is the message of the one who hears God's words,
receives knowledge from the Most High,
has a vision from the Almighty,
and falls into a trance with his eyes open:

¹⁷I see someone who is not here now.
I look at someone who is not nearby.

A star will come from Jacob.

A scepter will rise from Israel.

He will crush the heads of the Moabites
and destroy all the people of Sheth

Here is a prophesy of the Messiah of Israel.

¹⁸Edom will be conquered,
and Seir, his enemy, will be conquered.
So Israel will become wealthy.

¹⁹He will rule from Jacob
and destroy whoever is left in their cities.

²⁰Then Balaam saw the Amalekites and delivered this message:

Amalek was first among the nations,
but in the end it will be destroyed.

²¹Then he saw the Kenites and delivered this message:

“You have a permanent place to live.
Your nest is built in a rock

²²But it is destined to be burned,
you descendants of Cain,
when Assyria takes you as prisoners of war.

²³He delivered this message:

O no.
Who will live when God decides to do this?

²⁴Ships will come from the shores of Cyprus.
They will conquer Assyria and Eber.
But they too will be totally destroyed.

²⁵Then Balaam got up and went back home and Balak also went on his way.

Israel Commits A Final Apostasy Against God Before Entering the Promised Land

Balaam left the King of Moab but he told him how to curse the Israelites and thus earning his reward. We read in a later book of the New Testament:

[You have among you those who follow what Balaam taught Balak. Balak trapped the people of Israel by encouraging them to eat food sacrificed to idols and to sin sexually. **Revelation 2:14**]

Israel Men Worship the Idol Baal of Peor

25:1 While Israel was staying at Shittim, the men began to have sex with Moabite women ²who invited the people to the sacrifices offered to their gods. The people ate the meat from the sacrifices and worshiped these gods. ³Since the Israelites joined in worshiping the god Baal of Peor, the **LORD** became angry with Israel.

⁴The **LORD** said to Moses: Take all the leaders *rosh* heads of the people and execute them in broad daylight in the **LORD**'s presence. This will turn the **LORD**'s anger away from Israel. ⁵So Moses said to the judges of Israel: Each of you must kill the men who have joined in worshiping the god Baal of Peor.

Did Moses do what God commanded?

⁶One of the Israelite men brought a Midianite woman to his brothers. He did this right in front of Moses and the whole community of Israel while they were crying at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.

Phinehas Stopped the Plague as He Honored God While Moses Didn't Obey God

⁷Phinehas, son of Eleazar and grandson of the priest Aaron, saw this. So he left the assembly, took a spear in his hand, ⁸and went into the tent after the Israelite man. He drove the spear through the man and into the woman's body. Because of this, the plague that the Israelites were experiencing stopped. ⁹However, **24,000** people died from that plague.

¹⁰Then the **LORD** said to Moses: ¹¹Phinehas, son of Eleazar and grandson of the priest Aaron, turned my fury *hema*—wrath away from the Israelites. Since he stood up for me, I didn't have *chemah*—wrath to stand up for myself and destroy them.

God Rewards Phinehas With a Covenant of Peace

¹²So tell Phinehas that I'm making a Covenant of Peace with him. ¹³My Covenant is that he and his descendants will be priests permanently because he stood up for his God and he made peace with the **LORD** for the Israelites.”

¹⁴The name of the Israelite man who was killed with the Midianite woman was Zimri, son of Salu. Salu was the leader of a family from **Simeon**. ¹⁵The name of the Midianite woman who was killed was Cozbi, daughter of Zur. Zur was the head of a family from the Midianite tribes.

¹⁶The **LORD** said to Moses: ¹⁷Treat the Midianites as your enemies and kill them ¹⁸because they treated you as enemies. They plotted to trick you in the incident that took place at Peor. They used their sister Cozbi, daughter of a Midianite leader, who was killed on the day of the plague caused by the incident at Peor.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

This is a most interesting story for Israel doesn't know what is going on. How did they find out?

When the Israelites move to the Plains of Moab on the east side of the Jordan River across from Jericho, the King of Moab is alarmed. When 600,000 warriors pitch camp on your land with their families, one becomes very anxious. What is this army going to do next? Balak must have sent spies to the camp of Israel to find out.

In any event, Balak, the King of Moab, knows that he needs all the help he can get. This prophet could curse Israel and make them weak so that Moab can defeat them. So he sends messengers 600 miles up to the Euphrates River where a prophet named Balaam lived. How did Balaam learn of the God of Israel? We are not told.

Balak sends messengers to Balaam. He tells them to spend the night while he talks to God. God tells Balaam. Don't go to Moab. Don't curse these people because they are blessed. The messengers leave and tell King Balak.

Balak sends more messengers. Yet Balaam tells them no amount of money would be sufficient but he says: Spend the night and I'll talk to God. God tells Balaam: You may go but you may only say I tell you. Balaam saddles his donkey and goes to Moab accompanied by two servants.

But God was angry that he was going so he sent a Messenger of the **LORD** to stop him. The Messenger stood in the road so the donkey turned off the road into a field. Balaam hit the donkey and it returned to the road.

The road became narrow with stone walls on both sides. The Messenger of the **LORD** stood on the road so the donkey turned and pinned Balaam's foot against the stone wall. So Balaam hit the donkey again.

The road became narrower still so the donkey lay down under Balaam. Balaam again became angry and hit the donkey with his stick. Then God enabled the donkey to speak. It asked Balaam: What have I done to make you hit me three times? You've embarrassed me. I'm so angry. If I had a sword I would kill you immediately. The donkey replied: I'm your own donkey. Have I ever done anything like this before? Balaam answered: No.

Then God allowed Balaam to see the Messenger of the **LORD** in all his glory. His sword was drawn. He said to Balaam: Why have you struck your donkey? He prevented me from killing you. Balaam replied. I've sinned against my donkey. If you still think this trip is evil, I return home. The messenger of the **LORD** replied: Only say what I tell you.

King Balak went out to meet Balaam. Why did you take so long? Balaam said: I can only say what the **LORD** tells me to say. The King then took Balaam to Kiriath Huzoth and sacrificed and gave some meat to Balaam.

Balaam's First Prophecy

The next morning Balak took Balaam to Bamoth Baal where Balaam could only see the outskirts of Israel's camp. Balaam said: Build seven altars and offer a bull and a ram on each altar. Balaam left Balak and went to a higher place where there were not trees. Balaam went back and give his first message. How many Israelites there are like specs of dust. Let my end be like theirs. Balak was furious. I brought you here to curse them but all you've done is bless them. Balaam said: I can only say what the **LORD** tells me to say.

Balaam's Second Prophecy

The next morning Balak took Balaam to the Field of Zophim on top of Mount Pisgah where he would see all the Israelites. Again the sacrifices were offered. Balaam went off by himself and talked to God. Then he came back and said: No spell can curse Jacob or magic harm the people of Israel. Here is a nation as ferocious as a lion. It doesn't lie down until it eats its victim and drinks the blood of its victim. Balak again was furious.

Balaam's Third Prophecy

Balak then took Balaam to the top of Mount Peor which overlooks Jeshimon. Again the sacrifices were made. Balaam saw Israel's camp organized by tribes. The Spirit of God entered him and he said: How beautiful are your tents Jacob and the places where you dwell, Israel. Your Kingdom will be greater than that of King Agag of Amalek – a Kingdom that is the best. Those who bless you will be blessed and those who curse you will be cursed. This is the same prophecy God gave Abraham. **Genesis 12:1-3**

Balaam's Fourth Prophecy

Balak became very, very angry. Go home prophet. You have lost your reward. Balaam said: I told you I could only say what God told me to say. Now, I give you some advice freely. Then Balaam gave a Messianic prophecy:

I see someone who is not here now. I look at someone who is not nearby. A star will come from Jacob. A scepter will rise from Israel. He will crush the heads of the Moabites and destroy all the people of Sheth. **Numbers 24:17**

There is no agreement on who the people of Sheth are. Then Balaam went on to deliver curses on the Amalekites, the Kenites, and the Assyrians.

But then Balaam earned his reward from King Balak by suggesting that he send Moabite women to induce the Israelites to worship the Baal of Peor. This strategy worked. God sent a plague on Israel and 24,000 Israelites died, perhaps the last of the first generation of Israelite warriors. Perhaps at this time only Caleb and Joshua still lived. Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron and son of Eleazar, was furious at a couple having sex openly at the entrance to the Wilderness Tabernacle. He took a spear and drove it through both of their bodies. The woman was a Midianite. God then told Israel to treat the Midianites as their enemies

Because of this act, God stopped the plague. God then made a Covenant of Peace with all the descendants of Phinehas.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Was Balaam a true prophet of God? How can you tell?
2. What was Balaam supposed to learn about God from his talking donkey?
3. What was the message to Balaam's first and second prophecy to King Balak?
4. In Balaam's third prophecy, the Spirit of God entered into him. How was this prophecy different?
5. Did Balaam's fourth prophecy contain a prophecy of the Messiah? What is it?
6. It was Moabite women who seduced the Israelites to worship Baal Peor. **Numbers 25:1**. In **Numbers 25:15** the woman is a Midianite. Yet in **Numbers 31:16** it says these were Amalekite women. Which were they?
7. Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the High Priest, killed a couple having sex at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. By this he stopped a plague. But 24,000 men died from the plague. Why was this the final apostasy before the Israelites entered Canaan. Was this fulfilling God's command that all the first generation warriors would die? How did the second generation men avoid this?

Session Nine

God Commands a Second Census of Israel's Warriors

^{26:1} After the plague had ended the **LORD** said to Moses and Eleazar, son of the priest Aaron: ²Take a census of the whole community of Israel by households. List those who are at least 20 years old and eligible for military duty.

³So Moses and the priest Eleazar spoke to the Israelites on the plains of Moab near the Jordan River across from Jericho. They said: ⁴Take a census of those at least 20 years old as the **LORD** commanded Moses. These are the Israelites who came from Egypt:

Warriors from the Tribe of Reuben Decreased from 46,500 to 45,730

⁵**Reuben** was Israel's firstborn. The descendants of Reuben were the family of Hanoch, the family of Pallu, ⁶the family of Hezron and the family of Carmi. ⁷These were the families of Reuben. The total number of men was 43,730. ⁸Eliab was the son of Pallu ⁹and Nemuel, Dathan, and Abiram were the sons of Eliab.

It was Dathan and Abiram, men chosen by the community, who defied Moses and Aaron's authority. They joined Korah's followers when they defied the **LORD's** authority. ¹⁰The ground opened up and swallowed them along with Korah. They and their followers died when the fire consumed the 250 men. This was a warning. Numbers 16:1-33. ¹¹But the descendants of Korah didn't die.

Warriors from the Tribe of Simeon Decreased from 59,300 to 22,200

¹²The families descended from **Simeon** were the family of Nemuel, the family of Jamin, the family of Jakin, ¹³the family of Zerah, and the family of Shaul. ¹⁴These were the families of Simeon. The total number of men was 22,200.

Warriors from the Tribe of Gad Decreased from 45,650 to 40,500

¹⁵The families descended from **Gad** were the family of Zephon, the family of Haggi, the family of Shuni, ¹⁶the family of Ozni, the family of Eri, ¹⁷the family of Arodi, and the family of Areli. ¹⁸These were the families of Gad's descendants. The total number of men was 40,500.

Warriors from the Tribe of Judah Increased from 74,600 to 76,500

¹⁹Er and Onan were sons of **Judah**, but they died in Canaan. **Genesis 38:1-11**
²⁰The families descended from Judah were the family of Shelah, the family of Perez, and the family of Zerah. ²¹The descendants of Perez were the family of Hezron and the family of Hamul. ²²These were the families of Judah. The total number of men was 76,500.

Warriors from the Tribe of Issachar Increased from 54,400 to 64,300

²³The families descended from **Issachar** were the family of Tola, the family of Puah, ²⁴the family of Jashub, and the family of Shimron. ²⁵These were the families of Issachar. The total number of men was 64,300.

Warriors from the Tribe of Zebulun Increased from 57,400 to 60,500

²⁶The families descended from **Zebulun** were the family of Sered, the family of Elon, and the family of Jahleel. ²⁷These were the families of Zebulun. The total number of men was 60,500.

Warriors from the Tribe of Manasseh Increased from 32,200 to 52,700

²⁸The families descended from Joseph through Manasseh and Ephraim were ²⁹from **Manasseh** the family of Machir. Machir was the father of Gilead and the family of Gilead. ³⁰The descendants of Gilead were the family of Iezer, the family of Helek, ³¹the family of Asriel, the family of Shechem, ³²the family of Shemida, and the family of Hopher.

³³Zelophehad, son of Hopher, had no sons — only daughters. Their names were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. ³⁴These were the families of Manasseh. The total number of men was 52,700.

Warriors from the Tribe of Ephraim Decreased from 40,500 to 32,500

³⁵The families descended from Ephraim were the family of Shuthelah, the family of Beker, and the family of Tahan. ³⁶The descendants of Shuthelah were the family of Eran. ³⁷These were the families of Ephraim's descendants. The total number of men was 32,500. These were the families descended from Joseph.

Warriors from the Tribe of Benjamin Increased from 35,400 to 45,600

³⁸The families descended from **Benjamin** were the family of Bela, the family of Ashbel, the family of Ahiram, ³⁹the family of Shupham and the family of Hupham. ⁴⁰The descendants of Bela through Ard and Naaman were the family of Ard and the family of Naaman. ⁴¹These were the families descended from Benjamin. The total number of men was 45,600.

Warriors from the Tribe of Dan Increased from 62,700 to 64,400

⁴²The family descended from **Dan** was the family of Shuham. This was the family descended from Dan. ⁴³The total number of men in all the family of Shuham was 64,400.

Warriors from the Tribe of Asher Increased from 41,500 to 53,400

⁴⁴The families descended from **Asher** were the family of Imnah, the family of Ishvi, and the family of Beriah. ⁴⁵The descendants Beriah were the family of Heber and the family of Malchiel. ⁴⁶Asher had a daughter named Serah. ⁴⁷These were the families of Asher's descendants. The total number of men was 53,400.

Warriors from the Tribe of Naphtali Decreased from 53,400 to 45,400

⁴⁸The families descended from **Naphtali** were the family of Jahzeel, the family of Guni, ⁴⁹the family of Jezer, and the family of Shillem. ⁵⁰These were the families of Naphtali. The total number of men was 45,400.

The Total Number of Israelite Warriors Decreased from 603,500 to 601,730

⁵¹The total number of Israelite men was 601,730.

God Commands Moses to Divide the Land According to the Census

⁵²Then the **LORD** said to Moses: ⁵³The Land these people will possess must be divided using the list of names from the census. ⁵⁴Give more land to larger tribes and less land to smaller ones. Use the totals from the census in giving land to each tribe. ⁵⁵But the Land must be divided by drawing lots. The tribes will receive their Land based on the names of their ancestors. ⁵⁶Whether the tribes are large or small, the Land must be divided by drawing lots.

The Families of Levi Are Counted Separately

⁵⁷The families descended from **Levi** were listed as the family of **Gershon**, the family of **Kohath**, and the family of Merari. ⁵⁸These were the families of Levi: the Libnite family, the Hebronite family, the Mahlite family, the Mushite family, and the Korahite family.

Kohath was the ancestor of Amram. ⁵⁹The name of Amram's wife was Jochebed, a descendant of Levi, who was born in Egypt. She gave birth to Amram's children: **Aaron**, **Moses**, and their sister **Miriam**. ⁶⁰Aaron was the father of Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. ⁶¹But Nadab and Abihu had died because they offered unauthorized fire in the **LORD**'s presence.

The Total Number of Levites Registered Grew from 22,273 to 23,000

⁶²The total number of all the Levite males at least one month old was 23,000. They were not counted along with the other Israelites, because they were given no land of their own.

⁶³Moses and the priest Eleazar added up the total number of Israelites on the plains of Moab near the Jordan River across from Jericho. ⁶⁴Among them there wasn't a single one of the Israelites Moses and the priest Aaron had counted in the Desert of Sinai. ⁶⁵The **LORD** had said: They must all

die in the desert. The only ones left were Caleb, son of Jephunneh and Joshua, son of Nun.

A Request from Zelophehad's Daughters

27:1 The daughters of Zelophehad, son of Hopher, grandson of Gilead, descendant of Machir, whose father was Manasseh, belonged to the families of **Manasseh**, son of Joseph. Their names were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.

They came ²to Moses and stood in front of him, the priest Eleazar, the leaders, and the whole community at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. They said: ³Our father died in the desert. He was not a part of Korah's followers who joined forces against the **LORD**. He died for his own sin and left no sons. ⁴Why should our father's name be allowed to die out in his family because he had no son? Give us property among our father's relatives.

⁵So Moses brought their case to the **LORD** ⁶and the **LORD** said to him: ⁷ Zelophehad's daughters are right. You must give them property of their own among their father's relatives. Turn their father's property over to them.

⁸“Tell the Israelites: If a man dies and leaves no sons, turn his property over to his daughters. ⁹If he has no daughters, give his property to his brothers. ¹⁰If he has no brothers, give his property to his uncles on his father's side of the family. ¹¹If he has no uncles, give his property to the nearest relative in his family, and that relative will take possession of it. This will be a rule for the Israelites, as the **LORD** commanded Moses.

The LORD Tells Moses He Will Die Without Entering the Promised Land

¹²The **LORD** said to Moses: Go up into the Abarim Mountains and take a look at the land I will give the Israelites. ¹³After you see it, you, too, will join your ancestors in death, as your brother Aaron did.

¹⁴You both rebelled against my command in the Desert of Zin. You didn't show the people how holy I am when they were complaining at the oasis. This was the oasis of Meribah at Kadesh in the Desert of Zin.

¹⁵ Moses said to the **LORD**: ¹⁶ **LORD**, you are the God who gives the breath of life to everyone. Please appoint someone over the community ¹⁷ who will lead them in and out of battle so that the **LORD**'s community will not be like sheep without a shepherd.

The Lord Tells Moses to Lay Hands on Joshua, Israel's Next Leader

¹⁸ So the **LORD** said to Moses: Take Joshua, son of Nun, a man who has the Spirit and place your hand on him. ¹⁹ Make him stand in front of the priest Eleazar and the whole community, and give him his instructions in their presence. ²⁰ Give him some of your authority so that the whole community of Israel will obey him.

²¹ He will stand in front of the priest Eleazar, who will use the Urim to make decisions in the **LORD**'s presence. At his command Joshua and the whole community of Israel will go into battle. And at his command they will return.

²² Moses did as the **LORD** commanded him. He took Joshua and made him stand in front of the priest Eleazar and the whole community. ²³ Moses placed his hands on Joshua and gave him his instructions as the **LORD** had told him.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

In the second census the number of warriors in seven tribes increased while the number of warriors in five tribes decreased. The number of Levites increased.

Commentators attempt to discern the reason for the increase or decrease of warriors in the various tribes but most of this is conjecture. Simeon is reduced the most from 59,200 to 22,200. Remember that Zimri, the son of Salu, Prince of Simeon was the man who consorted with the Midianite woman in front of the entrance to the Tent of Meeting was the man who was killed by Phinehas. **Numbers 25:14**. But that is hardly a reason for the population of the entire tribe to decrease so much. However, Moses does not bless Simeon in his blessings of the tribes in Deuteronomy. There is much we are not told.

The Levites, one of the smallest tribes, apparently were not included in the decision of God for those to enter Canaan as the priests Eleazar and Ithamar who became High Priests after the death of Aaron were apparently over 20 years old at the time. But the Levites were not warriors and apparently did not participate in the rebellion not to enter Canaan.

We wonder whether the 40 years of wilderness wandering seasoned these warriors so that they were better prepared to enter Canaan with its many temptations to idolatry than were their ancestors. They were certainly hardened in survival in the wilderness and they had close contact with God in their camp seeing how God reacted to any rebellion. Did they learn?

The decision to allow the daughters of Zelophehad from the tribe of Manasseh to inherit land was left to God. God approved their petition.

Now God deals with Moses. He is allowed to look at the Promised Land but not to enter it. God makes no apologies to Moses. Both Moses and Aaron rebelled against God even if they were in a fit of temper against the Israelites' murmuring. God's leaders are held to very strict standards. Yet even knowing he will die because of the people tormenting him, Moses still is concerned for these same people. He tells God *they are sheep without a shepherd*. Jesus will later quote this saying of Moses which was well remembered. **Mark 6:34; Matthew 9:36**. So he asks God to provide a good leader to succeed him.

God immediately selects Joshua, son of Nun, who has been Moses' assistant since the time at Mount Sinai. God asks Moses to appoint Joshua with the High Priest Eliezer giving him some of his authority in front of the people by laying his hands on him so they will follow him. God also acknowledges that Joshua, like Moses, has been given the Holy Spirit.

Joshua has two hard tasks ahead of him: To govern the people and to lead them to conquer Canaan.

We wonder what became of the children Moses conceived with his first wife Zipporah and his second wife from Cush. There is no mention of them in the Bible except for his grandson Jonathan:

The people of Dan set up a carved idol for themselves. Jonathan, son of Gershom and grandson of Moses and his descendants were priests for Dan's tribe until the people living in that land were taken captive. **Judges 18:30**

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. In the second census the number of Levite males at least one month old increased from 7,500 **Numbers 3:22** to 23,000 **Numbers 26:62**. Why this dramatic increase?
2. The totals to warriors decreased from 603,550 in the first census **Numbers 1:45-46** to 601,730 in the second census **Numbers 26:51**. What was the reason for this decrease?

Session Ten

God Commands Sacrifices to Him on a Regular Basis

Daily Sacrifices Morning and Evening

28:1 The **LORD** said to Moses: ²Give this command to the Israelites: Be sure to bring me my offerings at the right times. They are my food. They are offerings by fire a soothing aroma.

³These are the offerings by fire that you must bring to the **LORD**. Every day you must bring as a daily burnt offering two one-year-old lambs that have no defects. ⁴Offer one in the morning and the other at dusk. ⁵With each of them also bring a grain offering of eight cups of flour mixed with one quart of virgin olive oil.

⁶This is the daily burnt offering which was established on Mount Sinai. This offering is a soothing aroma, an offering by fire to the **LORD**

⁷Also bring a wine offering of one quart of wine for each lamb. Pour it out to the **LORD** in a holy place. ⁸Offer the other lamb at dusk along with the same grain offering and wine offering as you brought in the morning. This is an offering by fire, a soothing aroma to the **LORD**.

Weekly Sacrifices Made on the Sabbath

⁹On the Day of Rest—a Holy Day, offer two one-year-old lambs that have no defects, a grain offering of 16 cups of flour mixed with olive oil, and the wine offering that goes with it. ¹⁰This burnt offering is for every Day of Rest—a Holy Day, in addition to the daily burnt offerings and the wine offerings that go with them.

Monthly Sacrifices – New Moon Festivals

¹¹On the first of every month bring the **LORD** a burnt offering of two young bulls, one ram, and seven one-year-old lambs that have no defects. ¹²With each bull there will be a grain offering of 24 cups of flour mixed with olive oil,

with each ram a grain offering of 16 cups of flour mixed with olive oil, ¹³and with each one-year-old lamb a grain offering of 8 cups of flour mixed with olive oil. This is a burnt offering, a soothing aroma, an offering by fire to the **LORD**.

¹⁴The wine offering that goes with each bull will be 2 quarts of wine, with each ram $1\frac{1}{2}$ quarts of wine, and with each lamb 1 quart of wine. This will be the monthly burnt offering for every month of the year. ¹⁵In addition to the daily burnt offering with its wine offering, one male goat must be offered to the **LORD** as an offering for sin.

Annual Sacrifices

The Passover and Festival of Unleavened Bread

¹⁶The fourteenth day of the first month is the **LORD's** Passover. ¹⁷The fifteenth of this same month is a pilgrimage festival. For seven days you must eat only unleavened bread. ¹⁸On the first day there will be a holy assembly. Don't do any regular work.

¹⁹Instead, bring the **LORD** an offering by fire, a burnt offering of two young bulls, one ram, and seven one-year-old lambs, all of them without defects. ²⁰Along with them bring grain offerings of flour mixed with olive oil. Bring 24 cups for each bull, 16 cups for each ram, ²¹and 8 cups for each of the seven lambs. ²²Also bring one male goat as an offering for sin to make peace with the **LORD**. ²³Offer these in addition to the morning burnt offering.

²⁴Bring all these offerings on each of the seven days. They are food. They are offerings by fire, a soothing aroma to the **LORD**. They will be offered in addition to the daily burnt offering and the wine offering that goes with it.

²⁵On the seventh day you must have a holy assembly. You must not do any regular work.

The Festival of Weeks or Pentecost

²⁶ During the Festival of Weeks, you must have a holy assembly. On that day you must not do any regular work. Bring the **LORD** your new grain offering, the first produce harvested from your fields.

²⁷ Bring a burnt offering as a soothing aroma to the **LORD** – two young bulls, one ram, and seven one-year-old lambs. ²⁸ Along with them bring grain offerings of flour mixed with olive oil. Bring 24 cups for each bull, 16 cups for each ram, ²⁹ and 8 cups for each of the seven lambs. ³⁰ Also bring one male goat to make peace with the **LORD**. ³¹ Offer these animals that have no defects along with their wine offerings, in addition to the daily burnt offerings and their grain offerings.

Sacrifices for Rosh Hashanah – New Year’s Day

29:I On the first day of the seventh month you must have a holy assembly. You must not do any regular work. It is a day for the trumpets to sound a fanfare.

² As a burnt offering, a soothing aroma to the **LORD**, bring one young bull, one ram, and seven one-year-old lambs that have no defects. ³ Along with them bring grain offerings of flour mixed with olive oil. Bring 24 cups for each bull, 16 cups for each ram, ⁴ and eight cups for each of the seven lambs. ⁵ Also bring one male goat as an offering for sin to make peace with the **LORD**

⁶ Offer these in addition to the monthly burnt offering with its grain offering and the daily burnt offerings with their proper grain offerings and wine offerings. They are a soothing aroma, an offering by fire to the **LORD**.

Sacrifices for the Day of Atonement – Yom Kippur

⁷ On the tenth day of the seventh month you must have a holy assembly. You must humble yourselves *’ana*-afflict *nepes*-souls. This means to fast. You must not do any work.

⁸As a burnt offering, a soothing aroma, bring one young bull, one ram, and seven one-year-old lambs, all of them without defects. ⁹Along with them bring grain offerings of flour mixed with olive oil. Bring 24 cups for each bull, 16 cups for each ram, ¹⁰and 8 cups for each of the seven lambs. ¹¹Also bring one male goat as an offering for sin in addition to the other offering for sin to make peace with the **LORD** and the daily burnt offerings with their grain offerings and wine offerings.

Sacrifices for the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles

¹²On the fifteenth day of the seventh month you must have a holy assembly. You must not do any regular work. Instead, celebrate a festival to the **LORD** for seven days.

¹³As a burnt offering, an offering by fire, a soothing aroma to the **LORD**, on the first day bring 13 young bulls, 2 rams, and 14 one-year-old lambs, all of them without defects. ¹⁴Along with them bring grain offerings of flour mixed with olive oil. Bring 24 cups for each of the 13 bulls, 16 cups for each of the 2 rams, ¹⁵and eight cups for each of the 14 one-year-old lambs. ¹⁶Also bring one male goat as an offering for sin in addition to the daily burnt offerings with their grain offerings and wine offerings.

¹⁷On the second day bring 12 young bulls, 2 rams, and 14 one-year-old lambs that have no defects. ¹⁸Along with them bring the proper amount of grain offerings and wine offerings for each of the bulls, rams, and lambs. ¹⁹Also bring one male goat as an offering for sin in addition to the daily burnt offerings with their grain offerings and wine offerings.

²⁰On the third day bring 11 bulls, 2 rams, and 14 one-year-old lambs that have no defects. ²¹Along with them bring the proper amount of grain offerings and wine offerings for each of the bulls, rams, and lambs. ²²Also bring one male goat as an offering for sin in addition to the daily burnt offerings with their grain offerings and wine offerings.

²³On the fourth day bring 10 bulls, 2 rams, and 14 one-year-old lambs that have no defects. ²⁴Along with them bring the proper amount of grain

offerings and wine offerings for each of the bulls, rams, and lambs. ²⁵ Also bring one male goat as an offering for sin in addition to the daily burnt offerings with their grain offerings and wine offerings.

²⁶ On the fifth day bring 9 bulls, 2 rams, and 14 one-year-old lambs that have no defects. ²⁷ Along with them bring the proper amount of grain offerings and wine offerings for each of the bulls, rams, and lambs. ²⁸ Also bring one male goat as an offering for sin in addition to the daily burnt offerings with their grain offerings and wine offerings.

²⁹ On the sixth day bring 8 bulls, 2 rams, and 14 one-year-old lambs that have no defects. ³⁰ Along with them bring the proper amount of grain offerings and wine offerings for each of the bulls, rams, and lambs. ³¹ Also bring one male goat as an offering for sin in addition to the daily burnt offerings with their grain offerings and wine offerings.

³² On the seventh day bring 7 bulls, 2 rams, and 14 one-year-old lambs that have no defects. ³³ Along with them bring the proper amount of grain offerings and wine offerings for each of the bulls, rams, and lambs. ³⁴ Also bring one male goat as an offering for sin in addition to the daily burnt offerings with their grain offerings and wine offerings.

³⁵ On the eighth day you must hold a religious assembly. You must not do any daily work. ³⁶ As a burnt offering, an offering by fire, a soothing aroma to the **LORD**, bring 1 bull, one ram, and seven one-year-old lambs that have no defects. ³⁷ Along with them bring the proper amount of grain offerings and wine offerings for the bull, the ram, and the lambs. ³⁸ Also bring one male goat as an offering for sin in addition to the daily burnt offerings with their grain offerings and wine offerings.

³⁹ These are the offerings you must bring to the **LORD** at your festivals. They are the offerings you must bring in addition to the offerings for anything you vowed to give to the **LORD**, your freewill offerings, your burnt offerings, your grain offerings, your wine offerings, and your fellowship offerings.

⁴⁰ Moses told the Israelites everything the **LORD** had commanded him.

Teachings about Vows

30:1 Moses said to the heads of the tribes of Israel: This is what the **LORD** has commanded about vows: ² If a man makes a vow to the **LORD** that he will do something or swears an oath that he won't do something, he must not break his word. He must do everything he said he would do.

³ A young girl, who still lives in her father's house, might make a vow to the **LORD** that she will do something or swear an oath that she won't do something. ⁴ If her father says nothing to her when he hears about it, her vow or oath must be kept. ⁵ But if her father objects when he hears about it, her vow or oath doesn't have to be kept. The **LORD** will free her from this vow or oath because her father objected.

⁶ An unmarried woman might make a vow that she will do something or carelessly promise that she won't do something. When she marries, ⁷ her husband may hear about it but say nothing to her. Then her vow or oath must be kept. ⁸ But if her husband objects when he hears about it, he can cancel the vow or promise she made. The **LORD** will free her from this vow or promise. ⁹ But a widow or a divorced woman must keep her vow or her promise

¹⁰ A married woman might make a vow that she will do something or swear an oath that she won't do something. ¹¹ Her husband may hear about it but may say nothing and not object. Then her vow or oath must be kept. ¹² But if her husband cancels it when he hears about it, nothing she said in her vow or oath has to be kept. Her husband has canceled it, and the **LORD** will free her from this vow or oath.

¹³ A husband decides whether or not his wife has to keep any vow to do something or any oath to do without something. ¹⁴ If he says nothing to her about it day after day, this means he's decided that she must keep her vow or oath. She must keep it because he said nothing to her when he heard about it. ¹⁵ But if he cancels it later, he will suffer the consequences.

¹⁶These are the laws the **LORD** gave Moses for husbands and wives, and for fathers with young daughters still living at home.

The **LORD** Commands Israel to Defeat Midian in a Holy War

31:1 The **LORD** said to Moses: ²Get even with the Midianites for what they did to the Israelites. After that you will join your ancestors in death.

The Midianites had conspired with the Moabites by sending their women to induce the Israelites to worship the god of Baal Peor. **Numbers 25**

³Moses said to the people: Some of your men must get ready to go to war against the Midianites. The **LORD** will use them to get even with Midian.

⁴Send 1,000 men from each of the tribes of Israel.

⁵So 1,000 men from each tribe were supplied from the divisions of Israel — 12,000 men ready for war. ⁶Then Moses sent them off to war, 1,000 men from each tribe along with Phinehas, son of the priest Eleazar. Phinehas took with him the holy articles and the trumpets for the fanfare.

⁷They went to war against Midian as the **LORD** commanded Moses, and killed every man. ⁸Among those killed were the five kings of Midian—Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba. They also killed Balaam, son of Beor, in battle.

⁹The Israelites took the Midianite women and children as prisoners of war. They also took all their animals, their livestock, and their valuables as loot.

¹⁰They burned all the cities where the Midianites lived and all their settlements.

¹¹Then they took everything as loot, including all the people and animals ¹²and brought the prisoners of war, the loot, and everything to Moses, the priest Eleazar, and the community of Israel at the camp on the plains of Moab near the Jordan River across from Jericho.

¹³Moses, the priest Eleazar, and all the leaders of the community went outside the camp to meet them. ¹⁴Moses was angry with the officers of the

army, the commanders of the companies and battalions, who were returning from battle.

Moses Criticizes Their Disobedience and Gives Further Orders

¹⁵Why did you let all the women live? he asked them. ¹⁶Remember, they were the ones who followed Balaam's advice and caused the Israelites to be unfaithful to the **LORD** in the incident that took place at Peor. The **LORD's** community experienced a plague at that time.

[Remember that 24,000 people died from that plague. Numbers 25:9]

¹⁷So kill all the Midianite boys and every Midianite woman who has gone to bed with a man. ¹⁸But save for yourselves every girl who has never gone to bed with a man.

¹⁹“Everyone who killed a person or touched a dead body must stay outside the camp seven days. You and your prisoners of war must use the ritual water on the third and seventh days in order to take away your sin. Numbers 19:1-22. ²⁰Do the same for all the clothes and everything made of leather, goats' hair, or wood.”

²¹Then the priest Eleazar said to the soldiers who had gone into battle: This is what the **LORD's** Teachings told Moses to do ²²Any gold, silver, bronze, iron, tin, or lead— ²³anything that won't burn — must be put through fire in order to make it clean. Then it must also be put through the ritual water in order to take away its sin. Whatever might burn must only be put through the ritual water. ²⁴On the seventh day wash your clothes and you will be clean. Then you may come into the camp.

²⁵The **LORD** said to Moses: ²⁶You, the priest Eleazar, and the heads of the families of the community need to count all the loot, including the people and animals you captured. ²⁷Divide the loot between the soldiers who served in the war and the rest of the community.

²⁸Collect a tax for the **LORD**. From the soldiers who served in the war collect one out of every 500 things. This includes people, cattle, donkeys,

sheep, and goats. ²⁹ Collect all these things from the soldiers' half of the loot, and give them to the priest Eleazar as a contribution to the **LORD**.

³⁰ From the Israelites' half of the loot, collect one out of every 50 things. This includes people, cattle, donkeys, sheep, goats, and every other kind of animal. Give them to the Levites who are in charge of the work done at the **LORD**'s Tent. ³¹ Moses and the priest Eleazar did as the **LORD** commanded Moses.

³² This is the loot that was left from everything that the troops took: 675,000 sheep and goats, ³³ 72,000 cattle, ³⁴ 61,000 donkeys, and ³⁵ 32,000 women who had never gone to bed with a man.

³⁶ Half of it went to the soldiers who served in the war. Of the 337,500 sheep and goats they received, ³⁷ 675 went to the **LORD** as taxes. ³⁸ Of the 36,000 cattle they received, 72 went to the **LORD** as taxes. ³⁹ Of the 30,500 donkeys they received, 61 went to the **LORD** as taxes. ⁴⁰ Of the 16,000 people they received, 32 went to the **LORD** as taxes. ⁴¹ Moses gave the **LORD**'s taxes to the priest Eleazar, as the **LORD** had commanded him.

⁴² Moses took the Israelites' half of the loot from the soldiers. ⁴³ The community received 337,500 sheep and goats, ⁴⁴ 36,000 cattle, ⁴⁵ 30,500 donkeys, ⁴⁶ and 16,000 people. ⁴⁷ From the Israelites' half Moses collected one out of every 50 things, including people and animals, as the **LORD** commanded him. Then he gave all this to the Levites who were in charge of the work done at the **LORD**'s Tent.

⁴⁸ Then the officers from the military divisions, the commanders of the companies and battalions of men, came to Moses. ⁴⁹ They said to him: Sir, we have counted all the soldiers under our command, and not one of them is missing. ⁵⁰ So we have brought as gifts to the **LORD** the gold jewelry that each of us found — arm bands, bracelets, signet rings, earrings, and pendants. We offer them to make peace with the **LORD**.

⁵¹ Moses and the priest Eleazar took all the hand-crafted gold articles from them. ⁵² All the gold contributed to the **LORD** by the commanders weighed about 420 pounds. ⁵³ Each soldier kept his own loot. ⁵⁴ Moses and the priest

Eleazar took the gold from the commanders and brought it into the LORD's presence at the Tent of Meeting as a reminder to the Israelites.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

The session begins with the sacrifices to be given in the seventh month. This month is the vacation time between planting and harvest so there is time to do this. We begin the seventh month on the first day with Rosh Hashanah or New Year's Day, the Feast of Trumpets. On the tenth day is Yom Kippur or the Day of Atonement, the Most Holy Day of the Year when sacrifices are offered for all the sins of the nation. Finally on the fifteenth day begins the Feast of Tabernacles or Booth which is the most joyous festival of the year.

The keeping of vows is covered in the next chapter. People do not have to make vows to God but if they are made, they must be kept.

Chapter 31 describes God's command to punish Midian for what they did to tempt the Israelites to worship the Baal of Peor. Apparently they were led by Joshua with 12,000 warriors – 1,000 from each tribe. They were accompanied by Phinehas, the son of the priest Eleazar. Every man was killed. But they failed to kill the women and children. Moses was angry as he ordered that all Midianite boys be killed and all woman except those that were virgins.

Each warrior who killed a person or touched a body must remain outside the camp for seven days and use the ritual water of the red heifer on the third and seventh day. The same water is used for all clothes and anything made of leather, goat's hair or wood.

Detailed additional instructions were given. The chapter goes on to described in detailed numbers the loot taken and how it was distributed.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Why are the detailed instructions for sacrifices described here?
2. Why did God want Israel to battle against the Midianites. HINT: Read **Numbers 22:7**.
3. Why did Moses command that the Midianite boys be killed?
4. Why is the Midianite loot so carefully described in detail?

Session Eleven

The Tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Some from Manasseh Refuse to Enter the Promised Land

The Tribes of Reuben and Gad Request Land East of the Jordan River but Moses Refuses Them

32:1 The tribes of Reuben and Gad had a large number of livestock. They saw that the regions of Jazer and Gilead were a good place for livestock. ² So they came to Moses, the priest Eleazar, and the leaders of the community, and they said to them:

Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam, Nebo, and Beon, ⁴ the land that the **LORD** won for the community of Israel, is a good place for livestock. Gentlemen, we have livestock. ⁵ Please give us this land as our property. Don't make us cross the Jordan River.

⁶ Moses asked the tribes of Gad and Reuben: Are you going to stay here while the rest of the Israelites go to war? ⁷ That might discourage them from entering the Land the **LORD** has given them.

⁸ That's what your ancestors did when I sent them from Kadesh Barnea to take a look at the Land. ⁹ They went as far as the Eshcol Valley and saw the Land. But then they discouraged the rest of the Israelites from entering the Land that the **LORD** had given them.

¹⁰ That day the **LORD** became angry and swore this oath: ¹¹ "None of the people 20 years old or older, who came from Egypt, will see the Land I covenanted with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob with an oath.

This is because they didn't wholeheartedly follow me. ¹² Only Caleb, son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite, and Joshua, son of Nun, will get to see the Land. This is because they wholeheartedly followed the **LORD**. ¹³ Since the **LORD** was angry with the Israelites, he made them wander in the desert for

40 years until the whole generation of those who had done evil in the **LORD's** presence was gone.

¹⁴[Moses said:] You're just like your parents! You're a bunch of sinners trying to make the **LORD** angry with Israel again. ¹⁵If you turn away from him, he will abandon all these people in the desert. You would be responsible for their destruction.

The Tribes Agree to Lead the Battle Formation in War Across the Jordan

¹⁶Then the tribes of Gad and Reuben came up to Moses and said: Allow us to build stone fences for our livestock and cities for our families here. ¹⁷Then we'll be ready to march in battle formation ahead of the other Israelites until we have brought them to their Land.

Meanwhile our families will live in walled cities, safe from the other people who live here. ¹⁸We will not return to our homes until every Israelite has received his own land. ¹⁹We won't take possession of any land on the other side of the Jordan River to the west and beyond. We already have our land here, east of the Jordan

Moses Agrees These Israelites Will Not Have to Live in the Promised Land

²⁰Moses answered: Do what you have said. In the **LORD's** presence have all your armed men get ready for battle. ²¹Have them cross the Jordan, and fight until the **LORD** forces out his enemies ²²and the Land is conquered. Then you may come back. You will have fulfilled your military duty to the **LORD** and Israel. This land will be your own property in the **LORD's** presence.

²³If you don't do all these things, you will be sinning against the **LORD**. You can be sure that you will be punished for your sin. ²⁴Build cities for your families and stone fences for your flocks, but do what you have covenanted.

²⁵Then the tribes of Gad and Reuben said to Moses: Sir, we will do as you command. ²⁶Our children, our wives, our livestock, and all our other animals

will stay here in the cities of Gilead. ⁷But in the **LORD's** presence we will all get ready for battle and go with you as you have said.

²⁸So Moses gave orders about them to the priest Eleazar, Joshua, son of Nun, and the family heads of the tribes of Israel. ²⁹Moses told them: If the tribes of Gad and Reuben get ready for battle in the **LORD's** presence and cross the Jordan River with you and you conquer the Land, give them Gilead as their own property. ³⁰If they don't get ready for battle and go with you, the land they will take possession of must be in Canaan with yours.

³¹The tribes of Gad and Reuben answered: Sir, we will do as the **LORD** has said. ³²We will enter Canaan as armed troops in the **LORD's** presence, but the land we will take possession of is here, east of the Jordan.

³³So Moses gave the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and half of the tribe of Manasseh, son of Joseph, the kingdoms of King Sihon of the Amorites and King Og of Bashan — the whole land with its cities and its surrounding territory.

³⁴The tribe of Gad rebuilt the cities of Dibon, Ataroth, Aroer, ³⁵Atroth Shophan, Jazer, Jogbehah, ³⁶Beth Nimrah, and Beth Haran as walled cities. They also built stone fences for their flocks.

³⁷The tribe of Reuben rebuilt the cities of Heshbon, Elealeh, Kiriathaim, ³⁸Nebo, Baal Meon whose names were changed, and Sibmah. These are the names they gave the cities they rebuilt.

Some From the Tribe of Manasseh Joined Them

³⁹The descendants of Machir, son of Manasseh, went to Gilead, captured it and forced out the Amorites who were there. ⁴⁰So Moses gave Gilead to the people of Machir, the descendants of **Manasseh**, and they lived there. ⁴¹Then Jair, a descendant of Manasseh, captured the settlements in Gilead. He called them Havvoth Jair or Settlements of Jair. ⁴²Nobah captured Kenath and its villages. He named it Nobah after himself.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

This is a very difficult chapter. Why does Moses allow some of God's people to live outside the Promised Land? Doesn't this defeat the concept of God's people living united in God's land?

Moses' anger at the initial proposal of these two tribes' proposal is very understandable. Why would these tribes disturb the unity of the twelve tribes? God wants these people to worship together under his leadership. Breaking off and going their own way is disruptive and the nation does not need this conflict just as they are about to enter into conquering the land. This is demoralizing.

Moreover, God has planned the number of warriors needed to successfully conquer the land. Reuben and Gad are disrupting God's plan. Although they cannot defeat God's plan, perhaps more warriors will die because of their reduced number of warriors or there could be other more unfortunate consequences. God has already determined where each tribe will be located.

The tribe of Reuben's warriors has already been reduced in number from 46,500 to 43,730. Gad's warriors have been reduced to 45,650 to 40,500. Has God already seen this disloyalty and punished these tribes?

The elders of Reuben and Gad then make what they think is a generous offer.

After they build stone fences for their livestock and cities, they will march their troops in the front lines ahead of the other tribes to help the other tribes conquer the land. Their troops will remain until the land has been conquered as their families will be living in walled cities safe from the other people who live there. Some from the tribe of Manasseh also joined them in living there.

The land of Gilead is mountainous land north and south of the Jabbok River approximately 20 by 60 miles in area. It is bounded on the north by Bashan and on the south by Moab and Ammon.

Since no natural borders surrounded this land, the tribes had to build stone fences to keep out other people. This land was apparently the Wild West as there were three Cities of Refuge just in this land and only three more Cities of Refuge in all the land of Israel west of the Jordan River. The land was suitable for cattle raising rather than farming.

Later, after Israel had settled the land, the tribes built a huge visible altar to God on the east side of the Jordan River.

The rest of Israel heard about it and said: See there. Reuben, Gad, and $\frac{1}{2}$ the tribe of Manasseh have built an altar at the border of Canaan. It's in the region near the Jordan River on Israel's side. When the people of Israel heard about it, the whole congregation of Israel gathered at Shiloh. They intended to wage war against them. **Joshua 20:11-12**

The tribes sent Phinehas the priest and one man from each tribe to consult with them. They were angry but the elders of Reuben and Gad came to an agreement saying the altar would only stand there and not be used for sacrifices.

The tribes of Reuben and Gad gave the altar a name: Witness Between us that the **LORD** Is the Only True God. **Joshua 20:34**

It appears to me that by erecting this altar these tribes were admitting their guilt in disobeying God by choosing to live outside of the Promised Land.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Why does God allow Moses to authorize $2\frac{1}{2}$ tribes of the Holy People of God to live outside the Promised Land?
2. This will be a very troubled land for they will have to built stone fences for their livestock. Who will be attempting to steal their cattle?
3. How many cities of refuge will be assigned to this territory and how many cities of refuge to the entire Holy Land. HINT: Read **Numbers 35:13**. What does this say about the safety of this land?

Session Twelve

A Summary of Israel's Journey Back to Canaan

Israel's 42 Resting Places after Leaving Egypt

33:1 This is a list of all the places where the Israelites set up camp after they left Egypt in organized groups under the leadership of Moses and Aaron
2 At the **LORD**'s command Moses wrote down the places where they went as they traveled.

This is the list: **3** They moved from **Rameses (1)** on the fifteenth day of the first month, the day after the Passover. The Israelites boldly left in full view of all the Egyptians. **4** The Egyptians were burying all their firstborn sons, whom the **LORD** had killed in a mighty act of judgment on their gods.

5 The Israelites moved from Rameses and set up camp at **Succoth (2)** **6** They moved from Succoth and set up camp at **Etham (3)** on the edge of the desert. **7** They moved from Etham and turned back to **Pi Hahiroth (4)**, east of Baal Zephon and set up camp near Migdol.

8 They moved from Pi Hahiroth and went through the middle of the sea into the desert. After they traveled for three days in the Desert of Etham, they set up camp at **Marah (5)**. **9** They moved from Marah and came to **Elim (6)**. Elim had 12 springs and 70 palm trees so they set up camp there.

10 They moved from Elim and set up camp by the **Red Sea (7)**. **11** They moved from the Red Sea and set up camp in the **Desert of Sin (8)**. **12** They moved from the Desert of Sin and set up camp at **Dophkah (9)**. **13** They moved from Dophkah and set up camp at **Alush (10)** **14** They moved from Alush and set up camp at **Rephidim (11)** where there was no water for the people to drink.

15 They moved from Rephidim and set up camp in the **Desert of Sinai (12)**. **16** They moved from the Desert of Sinai and set up camp at **Kibroth Hattaavah (13)**. **17** They moved from Kibroth Hattaavah and set up camp at **HazerOTH (14)**. **18** They moved from HazerOTH and set up camp at **Rithmah (15)**. **19** They moved from Rithmah and set up camp at **Rimmon Perez (16)**.

²⁰They moved from Rimmon Perez and set up camp at **Libnah** (17). ²¹They moved from Libnah and set up camp at **Rissah** (18). ²²They moved from Rissah and set up camp at Kehelathah (19). ²³They moved from Kehelathah and set up camp at Mount Shepher (20). ²⁴They moved from Mount Shepher and set up camp at **Haradah** (21).

²⁵They moved from Haradah and set up camp at **Makheloth** (22). ²⁶They moved from Makheloth and set up camp at **Tahath** (23). ²⁷They moved from Tahath and set up camp at **Terah** (24). ²⁸They moved from Terah and set up camp at **Mithcah** (25). ²⁹They moved from Mithcah and set up camp at **Hashmonah** (26).

³⁰They moved from Hashmonah and set up camp at **Moseroth** (27). ³¹They moved from Moseroth and set up camp at **Bene Jaakan** (28). ³²They moved from Bene Jaakan and set up camp at **Hor Haggidgad** (29). ³³They moved from Hor Haggidgad and set up camp at **Jotbathah** (30). ³⁴They moved from Jotbathah and set up camp at **Abronah** (31).

³⁵They moved from Abronah and set up camp at **Ezion Geber** (32). ³⁶They moved from Ezion Geber and set up camp at **Kadesh in the Desert of Zin**. (33)

³⁷They moved from Kadesh and set up camp at **Mount Hor** (34) on the border of Edom. ³⁸At the **LORD's** command the priest Aaron went up on Mount Hor. He died there on the first day of the fifth month in the fortieth year after the Israelites had left Egypt. ³⁹Aaron was 123 years old when he died on Mount Hor.

⁴⁰The Canaanite King of Arad, who lived in the Negev, which was in Canaan, heard that the Israelites were coming.

⁴¹They moved from Mount Hor and set up camp at **Zalmonah** (35). ⁴²They moved from Zalmonah and set up camp at **Punon** (36). ⁴³They moved from Punon and set up camp at **Oboth** (37). ⁴⁴They moved from Oboth and set up camp at **Iye Abarim** (38) on the border of Moab.

⁴⁵They moved from Iyim and set up camp at **Dibon Gad** (39). ⁴⁶They moved from Dibon Gad and set up camp at **Almon Diblathaim** (40). ⁴⁷They moved from Almon Diblathaim and set up camp in the **Abarim Mountains** (41) east of Mount Nebo.

⁴⁸They moved from the Abarim Mountains and set up camp on the **plains of Moab** (42) near the Jordan River across from Jericho. ⁴⁹They set up camp on the plains of Moab along the Jordan. Their camp extended from Beth Jeshimoth to Abel Shittim.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

1. Moses commands the Israelites destroy all the idols of the Canaanites and their places of worship. Why does Moses emphasize this?
2. Moses says that the land will be divided by family by drawing lots. How exactly was this done?
3. Moses says they must force out all the Canaanites. Yet they don't. What people cause them the most trouble by not having been driven out? HINT: They live on the seacoast.
4. Moses appoints men from only ten tribes to divide the Land. What two does he leave out and why?
5. The Levites will be given 48 cities. Six of these will be cities of refuge. Define a city of refuge and why it should be a Levitical city.
6. Why may no land pass from one tribe to another?

EPILOGUE

The five Books of Moses are called the Pentateuch for the five fit together in chronological sequence: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

Genesis begins with a pre-history from the time **YHWH** created Creation to God's call to Abram later called Abraham about 2,000 BC. God made a Covenant with Abraham that his descendants were to be given the Holy Land then called Canaan. We are then given the story of the patriarchs, Abraham's sons Ishmael, and then we are given the stories of Isaac's sons Esau and Jacob, later re-named Israel by God.

Israel had twelve sons **Reuben**, **Simeon**, **Levi**, **Judah**, **Issachar**, **Zebulun**, **Joseph**, **Benjamin**, **Dan**, **Naphtali**, **Gad**, and **Asher**. Then we are given the story of Israel's son Joseph. He had two sons **Ephraim** and **Manasseh** who were adopted by Jacob. They were made equal to the other as Levi was not given any Land but only cities within the tribes.

Because of a famine in Canaan, the Israelites went to Egypt where Joseph had been made Prime Minister of Egypt. Here they lived 400 years from about 1,700-1,300 BC. God raised up Moses to lead the tribes of Israel out of Egypt to Mount Sinai where they spent one year. The story of God's deliverance from Egypt, the journey to Mount Sinai, and that year at Mount Sinai is told in the Book of Exodus including the peoples' rebellion against God by building a Golden Calf idol. The last month at Sinai is told in the Book of Leviticus.

The Book of Numbers begins in the first day of the second month in the second year after the Israelites had left Egypt. Moses takes a census and identifies 603,550 warriors over 20 years old. On the 20th day of the second month of the second year, Israel leaves for Canaan following God's cloud of smoke. They arrive at Kadesh Barnea and send spies to scout out the Land.

However, ten of the spies give a bad report and the people decide to stone Moses, choose a new leader, and return to Egypt. God then tells Moses he will destroy the people. Moses intercedes for the people and God agrees to lead the people in the desert for the next forty years until the entire first generation of warriors in the census dies, except two – Joshua and Caleb.

The people now arrive at the Plains of Moab on the east side of the Jordan River in the 11th month of the 40th year after they had left Egypt. There, for one month, Moses summarizes the last forty years. This summary is recorded in the Book of Deuteronomy. Moses died and the people mourn his passing for one month.

On the tenth day of the first month of the 41st year, the people crossed west across the Jordan River into Canaan. The story of the conquest of the Promised Land is told in the Book of Joshua, Moses' successor.

The journey from Mount Sinai to Canaan took 11 days. But there was a detour because of Israel's rebellion against God. Still, God continued to lead them. So instead of entering the Promised Land on the 1st day of the 3rd month of the 2nd year after having left Egypt, they enter Canaan on the 10th day of the 1st month of the 4th year.

The Book of Numbers describes God and Moses working to change the slave mentality of the Israelites to that of a free people. Yet, while the Israelites were forced to serve *'abad* the Egyptians, they now are given the opportunity to serve *'abad* YHWH voluntarily. But there are consequences as Moses tells the people:

I call on Heaven and earth as witnesses today that I have offered you life or death, God's blessings or curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants will live. Love the **LORD** your God, obey him, and be loyal to him. This will be your way of life, and it will be a long life for you in the land that the Lord swore to give to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
Deuteronomy 30:19-20