

# Durant Bible College

## Numbers

### Introduction

The Book of Numbers is the story of the Israelites as they traveled through the wilderness to the Promised Land from Mount Sinai. Moses led the Israelite people from their bondage in the land of Egypt to the borders of Canaan. Along the way God tested the people in the wilderness to see if they would remain faithful. Numbers is an account of their successes and their failures along the way. In the book of Exodus we read of their disobedience with the Golden Calf but the Lord always showed a persistent patience with His people and the raising of a new generation. Within the stories found in this book we see an exposition of God's laws, an account of God's nature, His faithfulness to His covenant, and the unfolding of His plan for His people.

#### *Title*

The title of the book comes from the Greek and Latin word for Numbers. This title is based upon the attention to the numberings that are a major focus of chapters 1 through 4 and chapter 26. In the Hebrew language the title comes from the word "midbar" which means desert or wilderness. This word is more descriptive of the total contents of the book. The Book of Numbers gives an account of the 39 years of the wanderings of the Israelite people in the wilderness. Another title which was given to this book by the early Church fathers was from the Hebrew word "dabar." This word means to speak or to teach. This was also a favorable title as it reflected "And the LORD spoke unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai." For this book, as all scripture is a record of the Word of God.

#### *Author and Date*

The first five books of the Bible are known as the Pentateuch and are the books of law. The Book of Numbers is the fourth of the five books. Moses is believed to be the Author of all the first five books of the Bible. Two verses in this book ascribe to Moses as the author, 33:3 and 36:13.

It is said that the Book of Numbers was written in the last year of the Life of Moses. The events from chapter 20:1 to the end of the book occurred in the 40<sup>th</sup> year after the Israelites left Egypt. The Book of Numbers ends with the Israelite people poised on the eastern side of the Jordan River across from Jericho where the conquest of Canaan began. The date of this writing is around 1405 before the birth of Christ. Numbers is a foundational book to the fifth book Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy was written in the 11<sup>th</sup> month of the 40<sup>th</sup> year, (Deuteronomy 1:3)

#### *Background and Setting*

We find that most of the story takes place in the wilderness. We find the word "wilderness" 48 times in the Book of Numbers. The land is very sparse with little rainfall and therefore cannot be cultivated. The land was best used for the tending of flocks and was known as the wilderness of Sinai. It was at the Mount of Sinai that the people of God entered into covenant with God in what is called the Mosaic Covenant. (Exodus 19-24) From chapters

# Durant Bible College

10 through 12 the Israelites traveled from Sinai to Kadesh. In chapters 13 through 20 describes the events in and around Kadesh. Kadesh was located in the wilderness of Paran. From chapters 20 to 22 the Israelites traveled to the plains of Moab. From chapter 22 to 36 all of the events occurred north of Moab. That area was flat and was a fertile place in the middle of the wasteland.

All of the events recorded in the first 14 chapters probably occurred in the year after the Exodus. (1444) After chapter 20 is dated in 1406 and 1405 the 40<sup>th</sup> year after the Exodus. The missing events of the 37 years is probably due to the disobedience of the Israelite people and the judgments of God.

In the Book of Numbers we are dealing with two generations of God's people. The first generation are the ones who came out of Egypt during the Exodus. Their story begins in Exodus chapter 2 and follows through Leviticus into the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter of Numbers. They were numbered for their fighting men for the war of conquest to take the land of Canaan. But when they arrived upon the border of Canaan they refused to enter. Because of their rebellion against God all above the age of twenty, except Joshua and Caleb, were sentenced to die in the wilderness. The generations of course overlapped but as the second grew to adulthood the first died out. Again the warriors were numbered and this new generation did go into the Promised Land to conquer and possess it. Their story begins in chapter 26 and moves through the Book of Deuteronomy to the Book of Joshua.

There are three divisions in the Book of Numbers based on Israel's response to the Word of God. First is the obedience chapters, 1-10. Second the disobedience chapters, 11-25. And last the renewed obedience in chapters 26-36.

## Chapter 1

### *Verses 1-4*

In the second year after the Israelites had left Egypt on the first day of the second month Moses was sitting in the tent of meeting. It was there that the Lord spoke to Moses. This is important as Moses was chosen by the Lord to be the leader of the Israelite people. In the Book of Numbers this sentence appears eighty times. "The LORD spoke to Moses." The Lord spoke to Moses on behalf of His chosen people.

Moses was in the tent of meeting which was the God's Tent that God had instructed Moses and the people to build that He might dwell with them. (Exodus 25:8) Wherever the Israelites went they took the tent of meeting with them, as this was the place they worshiped the Lord God. The tent of meeting was God's way of showing the people that he was always with them.

The tent consisted of two separate rooms with a curtain between the two. The larger room was called the Holy Place and the smaller the Most Holy Place. It was inside this smaller room that the Ark of the Covenant was kept. Inside the Ark were two stones on which God had written His laws. (Exodus 34:1)

# Durant Bible College

The Lord told Moses to count all the men that were twenty years and older that were able to fight. This was a census of all the people and the purpose was to know that able men to fight for their nation. It also allows us to know that everyone matters to God. The Promised Land was in the land of Canaan and was not an empty land but filled with people who were not worshipful to God but served pagan gods. They would not give possession of the land to the Israelite people without a fight. Israel would need a strong army to defeat these people.

Every group of the people had to be counted. There were families that made up the clans which made up the tribes of the sons of Jacob. (Genesis 35:23-26) The Nation of Israel was made up of twelve tribes. It was an important responsibility to count all the people, a large task for Moses and Arron to accomplish. They would need help so the leaders of each tribe was to assist them.

*Verses 5-19*

| <b>Tribe</b>           | <b>Leader</b>                |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Reuben                 | Elizur son of Shedeur        |
| Simeon                 | Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai |
| Judah                  | Nahshon son of Amminadab     |
| Issachar               | Nethanel son of Zuar         |
| Zebulun                | Eliab son of Helon           |
| Ephraim son of Joseph  | Elishama son of Ammihud      |
| Manasseh son of Joseph | Gamaliel son of Pedahzur     |
| Benjamin               | Abidan son of Gideoni        |
| Dan                    | Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai   |
| Asher                  | Pagiel son of Ocran          |
| Gad                    | Eliasaph son of Deuel        |
| Naphtali               | Ahira son of Enan            |

These were the men that God chose as they were the leaders of their ancestral tribes of the nation of Israel. These were the leaders of Israel. In this list are the two sons of Joseph which and are considered as half tribes. The tribe of Levi was not counted as God had a special plan and responsibility for the Levite tribe discussed later.

In the Jewish culture the names given to people are very important. If one knows the meaning of the name given, then they will have an insight into their character. There are 24 names in the list of leaders. Many of these names have the letters EL associated with the name. El is the Hebrew name for God. An application of this is El Shaddai which would be God Almighty. Another would be El Zur meaning God the rock. In the list we find the name Elishama and that name would mean My God Listens. Another name from the list is Zurishaddai meaning the all-powerful God is my rock. In the list we find six names that contain Abi (father) or Ahi (brother). The names would make reference that God is like a father or a brother. Incorporating characteristics of God into their names show the significance of the importance of God to His people.

# Durant Bible College

## Verses 20-46

With the leaders of the tribes chosen they counted the men in each tribe who were twenty years old and older. These men would be able to fight in Israel's army.

| Tribe                  | Number |
|------------------------|--------|
| Reuben                 | 46,500 |
| Simeon                 | 59,300 |
| Judah                  | 74,600 |
| Issachar               | 54,400 |
| Zebulun                | 57,400 |
| Ephraim son of Joseph  | 40,500 |
| Manasseh son of Joseph | 32,200 |
| Benjamin               | 35,400 |
| Dan                    | 62,700 |
| Asher                  | 41,500 |
| Gad                    | 45,650 |
| Naphtali               | 53,400 |

Moses and Arron along with the twelve leaders of the tribes counted the numbers from each family and clan. After all had been registered there were 603,550 fighting men in the army of Israel. This number does not include the women and girls or the boys who were younger than twenty years of age. Neither did it include the old or the ill. And it also did not include the tribe of Levi as they were not to be soldiers. This would mean that there were between two and five million people in the Israelite nation.

## Verses 47-54

God had a different purpose for the people of the tribe of Levi. They were not to be soldiers as their responsibility was to care for God's Tent. The tribe of Levi came from the third son of Jacob. (Genesis 29:34) Levi had three sons and their names were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. (Genesis 46:11) Moses and Arron both were descendants of Levi's son Kohath. (Numbers 3:14-24) Arron became the first High Priest and the important duties of caring for the Tent of God were his responsibility. Arron's sons also became priests. The men of Levi's tribe were to help the priest in their duties for the care of the Tent of Meeting. Arron, who was the High Priest, was the leader of the tribe of Levi. When the Israelite nation moved it was the responsibility of the Levite tribe to move the tent and all of its furnishings.

The Tent of Meeting was the most important place in the Israelite camp. God is everywhere but He was present in the tent in a special way. It was there in the Tent of Meeting that the priest would worship God as this was the holy center, the holy place of the Israelite nation. The Israelite nation gave great respect to the Tent of Meeting and if they came to close to it they would die. The Lord God is holy and righteous and sin cannot be in His presence. All men are sinful and before coming to God their sins had to be atoned for through their sacrifices.

# Durant Bible College

It is different for the Christians that they can come close to God. It is not because the Christian is any better than the Israelite people but because they can approach God through His Son. Jesus became the ultimate sacrifice for sin. He suffered the punishment for sin which is death. Jesus died on the cross that the sin of the world would be paid for. Today there is no need to make animal sacrifices for the atonement of man's sin as the blood of Jesus has accomplished that and satisfied God's requirement. If man would but confess his sin to the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ man can be forgiven of his sin against God. Man must believe and accept that Jesus died on their behalf for the penalty of their sin. As we invite Jesus to come into our lives that we may have eternal life through Him we can approach God through Him at any time. (Hebrews 10)

As the tribe of Levi was special to God and served Him in His Tent the Christian can belong to God in a special way as His priest. (1 Peter 2:5)

## Chapter 2

In this chapter we see how God wanted the tribes of Israel to be placed when in camp. Each member of a tribe must camp under the flag of his tribe and by his own family tribe. God's tent was to be placed in the midst or in the middle of the nation of Israel. But the tribes must not camp too close to the Tent of Meeting. The Tribes were divided into groups of three each.

Judah's tribe must camp to the east of God's tent. The two tribes that walk with Judah are the tribe of Issachar and Zebulun. These two tribes are to camp on each side of Judah's.

| Tribe    | Leader                   | Number |
|----------|--------------------------|--------|
| Judah    | Nahshon son of Amminadab | 74,600 |
| Issachar | Nethanel son of Zuar     | 54,400 |
| Zebulun  | Eliab son of Helon       | 57,400 |

The Number of all three tribes of Judah's group were 186,400 men. Whenever the camp was to move Judah's group would lead.

Reuben's group must camp to the south of God's tent. The tribes that walk with Reuben were Simeon and Gad.

| Tribe  | Leader                       | Number |
|--------|------------------------------|--------|
| Reuben | Elizur son of Shedeur        | 46,500 |
| Simeon | Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai | 59,300 |
| Gad    | Eliasaph son of Deuel        | 45,650 |

The Total number of men in Reuben's group was 151 450 men. Reuben's group was the second in the line of march whenever the Israelite nation moved.

The tribe of Levi was to follow the first two groups of Judah and Reuben. They were to carry the Tent of Meeting and care for all of its belongings. They were to dismantle it when the Israelite nation moved and restore it when the Israelite nation camped.

# Durant Bible College

Ephraim's camp must camp to the west of the Tent of Meeting as well as the tribes that walked with them. These tribes were Manasseh's tribe and Benjamins.

| Tribe                  | Leader                   | Number |
|------------------------|--------------------------|--------|
| Ephraim son of Joseph  | Elishama son of Ammihud  | 40,500 |
| Manasseh son of Joseph | Gamaliel son of Pedahzur | 32,200 |
| Naphtali               | Ahira son of Enan        | 35,400 |

Ephraim's group totaled 108,100 men and their order of march was behind Reuben's group.

Dan's group made up the last and they were the tribes of Dan, Asher, and Naphtali. They were to make their camp to the north of the Tent of Meeting.

| Tribe    | Leader                     | Number |
|----------|----------------------------|--------|
| Dan      | Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai | 62,700 |
| Asher    | Pagiel son of Ocran        | 41,500 |
| Benjamin | Abidan son of Gideoni      | 53,400 |

Dan's group totaled 157,600 men and their order of march was last.

## Verses 32-34

The tribes of Israel formed a square when placed and God's Tent was placed in the middle. This was also the practice of the Army of Egypt in the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC. They would place their armies in a square with the king's tent in the middle. But in the Israelite's camp God's tent was in the middle and He was the King of Israel.

The tribe of Levi camped in the space between the other camps and the Tent of Meeting. They were responsible for it and did not allow the other tribes to come too close to it.

Each tribe camped beneath its own flag. There was an Israelite tradition that each flag bore the colors of one of the precious stones in the High Priest clothes. (Exodus 28:15-34) We find nothing in the bible to support this belief.

The tribes were aligned in the order of their importance. The most important position was to the east. It was the same as the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. So it was to this position that the largest and most important group was positioned which was Judah's.

## Chapter 3

### Verses 1-4

Nadab and Abuhu were burning incense in the Tent of Meeting when they died. The fire was called strange or unholy because God had not ordered it. The Lord was not pleased that they had done this and set fire upon them and they were consumed. (Leviticus 10:1-2) People who are living outside of the will of God can be consumed by this behavior.

Nadab and Abuhu were priest had had been ordained by their father Arron but they were not serving the Lord in obedience. This was dishonorable to God. God is the Creator of

# Durant Bible College

all that exist and is a holy and righteous God. He expects that we His creation should always honor Him.

## *Verses 5-13*

Arron and his two remaining sons were priest and the rest of the Levite tribe were their servants. The servants help the priest to look after and care for the Tent of Meeting. There were two main task to their duties. Whenever the Israelites moved the Levite tribe had to take down the tent and carry it to the next destination and set it back up. This was their responsibility and it was hard work.

They also had to attend to the tent. If any other than they came to close to the tent they would die. Not only that but because of their disobedience not only would they be punished by death but all of the Israelites would suffer. (Numbers 1:53; 16:40; 25:8)

The first born males of the animals and also the first born males of the people belonged to God. The Israelites had to redeem both their animals and their sons. (Exodus 13:1-2) Redemption was effected by means of a sacrifice or a payment of money.

During the time that God was giving Moses the law while he was up on Mount Sinai the Israelite people made an idol out of gold in the image of a calf. (Exodus 32) Only the Levite tribe remained loyal to God. God granted the privilege of serving Him to the Levite tribe. So the Levite tribe served God exclusively.

## *Verses 14-39*

God told Moses to take a census of the Levite tribe who were one month old or older. The men of the Levite tribe were to help the priest to do this. Moses did what God had told him to do and counted the Levite tribe by clan. Moses told each clan where to camp.

The priest camped on the east side of God's Tent and Kohath's clan camped on the south side. Kohath's clan was the biggest and they had the responsibility of the special furniture of God's Tent.

Gershon's clan camped on the west side of God's Tent and they were responsible for the covers, curtains and ropes. Merari's clan was the smallest and they camped on the north side of God's Tent. They looked after all the parts of the tents frame and the things in the yard surrounding the tent. Whenever the Israelites traveled the clans of the Levites had to carry the parts of God's Tent that they were responsible for.

## *Verses 40-51*

Moses was now told to count the first born male of all the Israelite people. He also had to collect five pieces of silver for each first born. Five pieces of silver was the price of a slave at that time and it was a lot of money. Many of the people earned less than one piece of silver in a month. We do not know who paid the five pieces of silver but it might have been the first born themselves. We don't know but Moses did as God had told him to do. Silver was the money of the day and a piece weighed about 11.5 grams. (Verse 47)

# Durant Bible College

## Chapter 4

### *Verses 1-20*

There are three groups or families in the Levite Tribe, the Gershon's clan, the Kohath's clan, and the Merari's clan. Each of these clans had different duties to perform. The priest told them what to do in their duties. Moses counted all the men in the tribe of Levi who were between 30 and 50 years of age. These men had to work in God's Tent and the grounds that surrounded it. They were also the ones who had to break the tent down and set it back up when the Israelite people moved.

Kohath's clan was counted first and they were responsible for most of the sacred objects of the tent. It was the priest that had to cover these objects before the Kohath's clan saw them. Only the priest could look at the sacred objects. Anyone else would die if they looked upon them. The most sacred of these objects was the Ark of the Covenant.

There were two rooms in the tent and a curtain separated the two. The larger room was called the holy place and the smaller the Most Holy Place. The curtain that was between the two rooms is what the priest would use to cover the Ark. It was made of leather but we do not know what animal it was that provided the skin for the leather. After the leather the priest would wrap the Ark in a blue cloth. It is possible that the blue color reminded them of heaven. (Exodus 24:10)

There were rings on the Ark and the priest would put poles through these rings. While traveling four men would rest these poles on their shoulders. The Ark was carried before the whole Israelite congregation and showed that the Lord God was leading them.

In the Holy Place there was a special table where twelve loaves of bread were placed. (Leviticus 24:5-9) The number twelve is the same as the tribes of Israel. The loaves of bread show that God was with all of the Israelites. On the Sabbath day the priest would take away the old loaves of bread and place new loaves on the table. It was in remembrance that God was with His people always.

The priest would cover the special table first. Then they would cover the stand for the lamps. Then they would cover the altar which was made of gold. Animals were not sacrifice upon this altar but it was for the burning of incense.

Next the priest covered the altar that they sacrifice animals upon. The priest wrapped all the things that they used for the table, the lamp stands, and the altars. All of this was done in preparation for Kohath's clan. The men of this clan had to carry all these objects on their shoulders. The poles did make it easier for the men to move the objects. Also they used the poles so that they would not touch the sacred objects.

The older son of Arron, Eleazar, had a very important job. It was his responsibility to make sure that everyone obeyed these instructions. Eleazar was responsible for what everybody did in God's Tent. Eleazar was also in charge of the oils, incense, and the grain for the sacrifices.

# Durant Bible College

God again warns Moses and Arron that only the priest could look at the sacred objects. Again Moses and Arron are warned that if anyone from Kohath's clan saw the sacred objects they would die. God is a holy God. When worshipping God we must remember this fact. We can only come near to God through His Son Jesus. Jesus is the only sacrifice for our sins that God will accept. When we have accepted and have faith in Jesus as our Savior we can come close to God through Him.

## *Verses 21-28*

It was the responsibility of the Gershon's clan to care for the curtains and the ropes in God's Tent. This also included the curtain that surrounded the Most Holy Place and the Holy Place. It also included the outer covers of leather.

Gershon's clan was also responsible for the equipment of the yard also. The men of Gershon's clan were allowed to touch these things by God. While doing this Ithamar and the priest watched them do this and gave them instruction.

## *Verses 29-33*

Merari's clan was the smallest clan in Levis tribe. Their duties may not seem as important as that of Kohath's and Gershon's but they were. Merari's clan was in charge of the equipment that supported God's Tent. These included the tent pegs that we hammered into the ground. Ropes were tied to each peg and attached to the other end of the rope at the corner of the tent. This held the tents cover in place over the frame.

If this was not done correctly the tent would fall down. The Israelites need all of it even the smallest parts. So the task of the Merari's clan was very important. The three clans worked together to serve their God. Christians must work together also in their service to God. Every task that the Christian does is very important in the service of our Lord. There is important work for every Christian to do.

## *Verses 34-49*

Moses and Arron along with the leaders obey the commands of the Lord God. They counted the clans of Levi's tribe. All the men who were between the age of 30 and 50 were registered. These men worked in God's Tent. From the clan of Kohath there were 2750 men, from Gershon 2630, and from Merari 3200. All totaled there were 8580 men to work on God's Tent.

## Chapter 5

### *Verses 1-5*

In the times of the Old Testament God dwelled with His people in the Tent of Meeting at the center of the camp. Therefor the camp was a holy place and people who were unclean could not be in the camp where the Lord dwelled. Neither was it acceptable for an unclean person to mix with other people. People were infectious if they had a disease that could spread to other people. Therefore people who were infectious had to live outside of the camp. Outside of the camp meant beyond the borders of the camp where they lived in caves or tents. At times everyone is unclean and there are many reasons why someone

# Durant Bible College

would be unclean. In Leviticus chapter 15 you can read the laws that describe how a person can be unclean. Example are:

- A disease of the skin would make a person unclean.
- Blood or liquid coming from the genital areas of the body would make a person unclean.
- If a person touched a dead human they would be unclean for a week.

Now that Jesus has come these rules do not apply as they did in the Old Testament times as man can approach God through Jesus. Jesus, the Son of God touched people who had diseases and healed them. Jesus touched dead people and raised them from the dead. (Luke 17:12-19; Luke8: 40-56)

People who do not believe in Jesus remain unclean because of their sin. These people cannot come near to God. The only way a man can come to God is through Jesus (John 14:6) People must believe that Jesus died as their sacrifice for the sin in their life. If they repent and turn away from their sin, then they receive forgiveness and their sin is washed away by His shed blood. (1 John 1:7) Only Jesus can make a man clean so that God will accept them.

*Verses 5-10*

When a person sins against another person and is not honest about it that person has also sinned against God. All sins against people are sins against God, as it is God's Law that has been broken. Here God is reminding Moses that all sin is against God.

The laws for the Israelite people were stricter than the law of other nations. When a law was broken the offender had to confess the law that he had not kept. Beyond that they had to repay the cost of their sin to the one who had suffered the loss or damage. The one who was guilty also had to pay up to one fifth beyond the amount that they owed.

It was God's way to teach the Israelite people that to sin was very costly. Also if a person was truly sorrowful for their sin they would be willing to pay more than the actual cost of their actions. This showed that they were truly sincere and the other person was bound to forgive them. Neither was this person to commit a wrong act against the offender.

*Verses 8-10*

Even if the one who had been sinned against had died the guilty person had to pay. The relatives of the deceased would receive the money and if there were no relatives then the priest would receive the money. The priest would receive the money as he was God's representative and the sin is actually against God. Also the guilty person would have to bring a male sheep that could be sacrificed for atonement.

These laws were very important as the Israelites were in preparation for marching into the Promised Land to conquer it. There was to be no division or conflicts between the people, as they were to be united. People who march together had to be loving and forgiving towards one another. As they forgave one another God could forgive them.

# Durant Bible College

## Verses 11-31

As in all nations the family structure was very important to the Israelite nation. The families keep precise record of their ancestors. Adultery was a serious crime in the Hebrew culture, as it should be in all cultures. If a man's wife had sexual relations with another man the husband could not be sure that he was the father of his children. The Law of God warns husbands and wives that they must be faithful towards one another. (Exodus 20:14) The punishment for adultery was death but there had to be evidence. There had to be evidence, the husband or wife had to prove that their spouse had been unfaithful. If there was no evidence, then these are the instructions that had to be followed and God would be the judge.

Even if the woman was innocent of the crime she would follow out through this ritual. She would express her faith that God would protect her. But if the woman was guilty she would be very afraid of God's Judgment. She would probably confess to her husband that she had committed adultery in the hope that her husband would forgive her. Or she might run away.

If the woman was not guilty of adultery then this ritual would prove her innocence to her husband and everyone else. The husband would have to take her back as his wife. God's protection provided safety for the innocent woman.

The husband and the wife went to the priest with a Barley offering. The Barley was to be free of oil or incense. (Leviticus 4:11-13) The water that the priest kept in God's Tent was Holy Water. The Holy Water was to be mixed with dust and the ink that he had used to write the curse. Both the water and the dust were symbolic. The dust may have been a reminder that the unclean snake ate the dust. (Genesis 3:14) Then it is also a reminder that man was created from the dust. (Genesis 2:7) The woman's hair had to be loose, it had to be untied.

If the woman was guilty of adultery, then the bitter water would bring a curse upon her. She would become barren and unable to have children. In the Jewish culture this was a very bad thing to happen to a woman and it would cause her to lose her happiness. If the woman was innocent then the water would cause her no harm, as she would be protected by God. It would also prove that she was innocent.

Adultery is a serious sin. God does not want Husbands and wives to be unfaithful to each other. Trust is a most valuable commodity and once broken it many never be repaired. Adultery hurts people and destroys families. Man hardly forgives and never forgets but we must remember that God forgives sin if people are sorry. Jesus forgave the adulterous woman and did not punish her, but He did tell her that she must not sin again. (John 8:2-11)

Paul warned the Church in Corinth that they must not continue to sin in this way. ***“But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler--not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with***

# Durant Bible College

***judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.***” (1 Corinthians 5:11-13)

## Chapter 6

### Verses 1-27

In the Hebrew language the word Nazirite is “nazir” and means to separate someone or something from everything else for a special purpose. It was the purpose of the Nazirite’s to be set aside for a special purpose, a giving of themselves to God completely for a season of time.

Nazirites were not priest as a person chose to become a Nazirite. Women as well as men could become Nazirite’s. A person did not have to commit his whole life to be a Nazirite but only for a period of time to be completely devoted to God. His time was not measured in certainty and when that time was finished he had to bring sacrifices to the Tent of Meeting. After that he was free from his purpose as a Nazirite.

For the Israelites to make promises to God was not unusual and it was usually a promise to give or do something for God. There are different reasons that people would chose to become a Nazirite. It could be that they had problems that made them completely dependent upon God. Becoming a Nazirite would show that their dependence was completely upon God. There were special rules that a Nazirite had to obey.

- They were not allowed to eat grapes either whole or dried. They could not drink wine or vinegar and could never become drunk on strong drunk.
- They could not cut their hair. There hair was a symbol of their life in service to God. During their time of complete commitment to God they could not cut their hair.
- They had to avoid dead bodies. When an ordinary Israelite touched a dead body they had to wash in a special way. (Numbers 19) But even if someone died near a Nazirite the Nazirite had to bring expensive offers to the Tent of Meeting. He had to shave of his hair and make his vows to God again.

Nazirites were holy unto God like the priest but they could not enter into God’s Tent. The Nazirites could not offer sacrifices unto God. The Priest wore special cloths but the Nazirites did not. The people would give offerings to the Priest but not to the Nazirites. The Nazirite’s themselves had to give offering to the priest. When their time as a Nazirite was over they had to offer the four main sacrifices to the Lord. (Leviticus chapters 1-4)

The Nazirite’s had to offer:

### A Burnt Offering

The offering had to be a perfect animal, without any spots or marks. The person put his hands of the animal to show that the animal represented him. He wanted to show that he had given himself to God completely. This offering showed that the Nazirite’s time of

# Durant Bible College

service was now over. The priest burned the whole animal at the altar. The smell of the offering pleased the Lord and showed the act of total sacrifice of the Nazirite.

## A Grain Offering

The types of grain offerings were flour, bread, and biscuits. Part of the grain offering was burned at the altar and the rest was a gift to the priest. The grain offering had to be the best that the person could give.

## A Peace Offering

This offering was similar to the burnt offering only that the priest burned the animal's fat only. The Israelites thought that this was the best part of the animal. This is what God had told them to offer at the sacrifice. It was usual for the person who brought the offering to share it with their family. The Priest received some of the meat as well. But for a Nazirite the priest received the shoulder, a loaf of bread and a biscuit. This offering showed that the person was at peace with God and that God had accepted that person.

## A Sin Offering

This offering was made so that God would forgive their sins.

### *Verses 22-27*

This prayer, Aarons Prayer is one of the most beautiful prayers in the Bible. It is used today by both the Christians and the Jews. It is a prayer that asks for the blessings of God upon His people. The greatest blessing is to have life with Him always. This blessing includes all that is needed to have that kind of life. All that is needed to help other people is included in the blessing. The blessing asks for God's strength to do all that He requires of us in our service to Him. It also includes a blessing of His protection from the evil of this world.

We are all deserving of God's punishment but His mercy endures forever. Because of God's kindness we can ask Him to forgive us and He will always answer that prayer if we are sincere. (1 John 1:9) Then we will have peace with God, as His Son died to make that possible for us. (John 3:16)

## Chapter 7

### *Verses 1-89*

In the original text the list of gifts are repeated 12 times one for each leader. These events happened 1 month before the census of Numbers 1:1-4. The listing is the same as the men and tribes of Numbers 2:1-34. Each leader of the tribes brought the same gifts and each tribe was equally important to God. By this listing we see a demonstration that each leader is known by God showing that every person is important to God.

The leaders of the tribes brought carts and oxen to transport God's Tent. They also brought objects for the priest to use in God's Tent. And they brought animals to offer as sacrifices.

# Durant Bible College

The gifts and offerings were expensive and the leaders were happy to give them to the Lord. The Hebrew word for offering means to “come near.” The leaders brought offerings to the Lord to bring them near to God.

In the Tent of Meeting God spoke to Moses when he stood by the Ark. God did not live in the Ark as verse 89 reminds us but when He spoke the voice came from above the Ark.

Gold covered the Ark on the inside and the outside. On top of the Ark there was a large piece of gold with two angels on each side. The Voice of God came from between these two angles.

Today we do not have to go to a certain place to meet with God. We can meet with God through His Son Jesus. When we pray to Jesus we are praying to God through Him. Jesus also brings God’s message to us through the Holy Spirit which dwells in the Christian. We can speak to Jesus when and wherever we are.

## Chapter 8

### *Verses 1-4*

In the Holy Place of the God’s Tent was where the stand for the lamps were to be placed. There was the table for the special bread to be placed on and also the altar of gold. They were built perfectly by the craftsmen as the Lord had instructed Moses. Their description can be found in Exodus 25:31-40. The lampstand was made from one piece of gold and hammered by the craftsman into a beautiful object. The lampstand was the shape of a tree and had six branches. Each branch had a model of a flower and each branch held one lamp. On the trunk of the tree there was the seventh lamp.

In God’s Tent there were no windows so the lamps provided the light needed so the priest could do their work. The priest looked after the lamps so that there would always be light. The table for the special bread was in front of the lamps so there would always be light on the table. On the table were twelve loaves of bread as a symbol of the twelve tribes of Israel. The light from the stands which shown on the bread was an example of God’s light. It was a reminder that God was watching over them to bless them.

This is also a reminder to us as Jesus describes Himself as the light of the world. (John 8:12) Jesus is a light to all people that they may know the way to live. Jesus guide us, blesses us, and judges us, as nothing can hide from the light. Jesus therefore knows everything about us.

The lampstand is also a symbol of Jesus as it is a tree with branches. Jesus said the He was the vine and we are the braches. (John 8:1-15) Jesus’ people are like the branches as they cannot live apart from Him. We cannot produce fruit for the Kingdom if were are not a part of the vine.

The craftsmen who made the stands made them from one piece of gold. It would have been easier if they could have made the stand from several pieces of gold. But they were instructed not to do this. This is how it should be as we are are one with Jesus. He is the

# Durant Bible College

vine and we are the branches and we are not able to do His work apart from Him (John 15:5)

## *Verses 5-26*

The tribe of Levi belonged to God in a special way. All male first born of man and beast belonged to the Lord. The Lord set all the tribes of the Israelites free from this except the tribe of Levi. The first born male of the Levites belonged to the Lord and were to serve Him. (Numbers 3:40-51) The tribe of Levi had remained loyal to God when all the other Israelites had rejected Him. (Exodus 32:25-29) Therefore the Lord chose the tribe of Levi to serve Him.

Before they could work on the God's Tent of the Lord they had to be made pure. Moses had to take special water and splash them that they would become pure by the water. They would be handling the special instruments of the Lord and therefore had to be clean. The camp of the Levites was to be near to God's Tent and they would have to be clean to be so close to God's dwelling.

The special water was made by water mixed with the ashes of the reddish brown cow that was hunted in a special ceremony. This water was also called the water of the sin offering. (Numbers 19:1-20)

True the water washed away the dirt from their bodies but it also was the symbol that their sins had been washed away too. Being clean physically and spiritually God could now accept them for their service unto Him.

In the book of Hebrews we can read an explanation of how the blood of Jesus cleans us, cleans our hearts to that we can serve God. (Hebrews 9-11) Jesus sacrificed Himself on the Cross and is the sin offering for all the people. His blood makes us clean so that we are acceptable to God and can serve Him. (Hebrews 9:13-14)

## *Verses 8-19*

The Levites also had to bring sacrifices and the Israelites had to place their hands upon them. This was in recognition of God's choice of the Levite tribe to serve Him. This was also a confirmation of the Levite tribes as God's choice. Then the Levites had to place their hand on the animals in order to transfer their sins to the animals. The animals died in place of the Levites. The wage of sin is death and the animals died for their sins instead of the Levites. (Romans 6:23)

There were two offerings. A burnt offering and a sin offering. The purpose of the burnt offering was to show that the Levite tribe was giving themselves completely to God's service. The sin offering made them clean for their service. It was an exchange that the Levites would serve God exclusively instead of the first born male child of the Israelite people.

Sin is a wall that separates people from God. In the Old Testament times people would have to offer sacrifices for their sins that they had committed accidentally. They could also offer sacrifices with a payment for some sins that they had committed on purpose.

# Durant Bible College

(Leviticus 6:1-7) But that was a general thing as if people sinned on purpose they would have to repent and ask God for forgiveness as King David had done. (Psalm 51)

Jesus died on the cross to pay for the sins of the world. Jesus received the punishment for all sin. Jesus received the punishment that we all deserve. His sacrifice was the one time sacrifice for all people. Jesus removed the wall that separates people from God. When we sin we must ask God to forgive us and He will if we are sincere.

The tribe of Levi belonged to God and they were a gift to the priest. The Levites could never become priest and were not allowed to serve God at the altar. God did not allow the Levites to wear the special clothes or to enter into the Holy Place. (Exodus 28:1; Exodus 29:8-9) They were to guard God's Tent so the people of the Israelites would not come to close.

## *Verse 20-26*

God had accepted the tribe of Levi instead of the first born males of the Israelite people. Aaron the High Priest offered them to God with a special ceremony. To make the Levite's clean Aaron offered the bulls as a sacrifice for their sins.

The Levites severed from the age of 25-50 and did all the work surrounding God's Tent. They could not help the priest inside of the God's Tent unto the age of 30. (Numbers 4:3) At the age of 50 they no longer had to work.

## Chapter 9

### *Verses 1-14*

This is the record of the second Passover before the census of Numbers 1:1. We can find a description of the first Passover in Exodus 12. We will look at the events found in Exodus chapters 7-11 to better understand why the Passover is so important.

In Egypt the Israelites had been enslaved and Moses asked the king to let his people go. The king refused so God sent the 10 plagues upon the Egyptian people. The king still refused and finally God had the death angel pass over the land killing all the first born male children. This happened on the night of the first Passover.

God had spoken to Moses and Aaron and gave them instructions that the Israelite people were to follow. Each of the Israelite families was to kill and eat a young sheep. They were to eat all of the sheep along with thin bread and bitter herbs. They would be reminded of their bitter life in Egypt by the taste of the bitter herbs. The bread was thin because there was no yeast in the bread because they could not wait for the bread to rise. The Israelites had to be ready to leave when told.

The blood of the sheep was to be placed around the door to their house. That night when the death angel came all the first born males were slain except at the homes that had the blood of the sheep on the door post. When the death angel saw the blood he would Passover that home. As a result the king on that very night let the Israelite people go.

# Durant Bible College

Now a year has passed and it was time to celebrate the second Passover. It has been celebrated every year since until this day. The Jewish people still today celebrate the Passover. It is very important for them to remember how God rescued them from the Egyptian people.

There was a problem with three groups of people. The people who were unclean could not eat meat from the sacrifices. (Leviticus 7:19-21) The people who were away from the camp, and the people who were not Israelites that had left Egypt with them. When this problem was brought to Moses he waited to hear what God wanted him to do.

God wanted everyone to celebrate the Passover so He made provision for the first two groups of people, the unclean and the absent. They were to celebrate the Passover one month later. The People who were not Israelites could celebrate the Passover with the Jewish people.

This eliminated any excuse for anyone from celebrating the Passover. If anyone refused to celebrate the Passover they were no longer belonging to God's people. In some cases we see in the Old Testament that people who refused to obey the rules of God's people would die or were killed. (Genesis 9:11; Isaiah 29:20) Sometimes the Israelite people sent them away and were no longer allowed to live with them. This was to cut them off and to punish them for not obeying God's command. (Genesis 17:14; Leviticus 7:20-27) Those who refused to obey the Passover were guilty of a crime against God's Word and were punished and sometimes put to death.

The people who were foreigners to the Israelite people were allowed to celebrate the Passover as long as they followed all the rules of the Jewish nation. This included circumcision as this was a sign of the covenant. (Exodus 12:48)

## *Verses 15-23*

After the Israelites had escaped from Egypt God led the people through the desert. (Exodus 13:21-22) They did not see God as a cloud or fire covered Him. When they set up God's Tent God would remain in the tent in the cover of the cloud or fire. On the first day of the second year they set up God's Tent. All was in preparation to travel to the Promise Land.

The tribe of Levi camped near to God's Tent and they watched day and night for the cloud or fire of God. When the cloud or fire moved they could tell the Israelite people about it. When the cloud or fire moved the people moved with it. When the cloud or fire stayed the people stayed.

## Chapter 10

### *Verses 1-10*

We have an idea of how these trumpets appeared from the historian Josephus and images on ancient coins. There are four reasons that the trumpets were to be sounded. One was to call the Israelite or their leaders together. Another was to give the signal when

# Durant Bible College

it was time for the Israelites to set out. The third reason was to ask God for help in battle and the last reason was to call the Israelites together for their festivals.

The priest would make different sounds with the trumpets for different occasions. It may be that they made long sounds to call the people together and short sounds to signal to set out and ask God for help. The trumpets were used for their festivals and also in times of war and peace.

In verse 10 God states that the trumpets were a reminder to the people of God. God is willing to help His people but His help must be asked for and the trumpets were used for that purpose. The trumpets also reminded the people that God had helped them before. Most notably God had helped the Israelites escape from the Egyptians and He would help them again against their enemies. But they must remember to ask Him.

Today when we need God to help us we must approach Him in prayer. God wants to help us but we must talk to Him first. It is the same as we talk to our friends and associates when trying times come upon us. If we ask other people for help, then it is only right that we should ask God for help.

## *Verses 11-28*

For nearly a year the Israelites had been in the Sinai desert. The cloud over God's Tent had lifted and the Israelites moved out according to the order of march in chapter 2. The tribes of Levite carried the Ark in front of the Israelite army to show that God was the leader of the nation. The clans of Levi marched separately so God's Tent could be put up and ready to receive the sacred objects.

## *Verses 29-36*

Moses invited Hobab to come with them to the land of Canaan even though he was not an Israelite. Hobab was a Midianite that lived in the desert next to Canaan and the desert was not strange to him. This was valuable to the Israelite nation as Hobab could give them good intelligence and practical information such as where to find water.

God guides His people by the power of the Holy Spirit but He also uses people to aid His people as well. We must allow the people that God places in our life to give us help. In this Scripture we do not see a definite answer from Hobab but we know that he went with the Israelite nation to Canaan. Hobab's descendants are mentioned in the book of Judges. (Judges 1:16; Judges 4:11)

Whenever the cloud moved Moses prayed for God to protect them. Whenever the cloud stopped Moses would pray that God would come to live with them. Every time the Israelites would move or rest Moses would pray. Moses knew that God was in control and that He was the commander of the Israelite army. The Israelite's moved under the protection of God from their enemies and Israel had many. They realized their dependence upon God.

# Durant Bible College

This dependence upon God is true for us also. If we commit our trust to God He will provide for us. As Christians, we are in a constant battle against evil spiritual forces and are in need of His provision.

This chapter has ended with the Israelites beginning their journey to the Promised Land.

## Chapter 11

### *Verses 1-3*

This verse is the first record of the Israelites complaining during their journey from the Sinai. Up until now the Israelites had obeyed the Lord completely. Now as they were journeying to the Promised Land the complaints began amongst the people. It was not just a single complaint but they complained often.

They were only into their journey for three days when the complaining had begun although we do not know what they were complaining about. For whatever reason there was it comes down to that they did not trust God to provide for them. They had become unthankful that the Lord was leading them to the Promise Land.

God became angry with the people and sent fire to their camps to show them that He was angry. The fire had made the people afraid and they asked Moses to speak to God on their behalf. Moses did pray for them and the fire stopped.

### *Verses 4-9*

The company that one keeps can affect the attitude that they have. When the Israelites had left Egypt there were foreigners that traveled with them from Egypt. Perhaps they had been slaves also and went with them to find freedom. These foreigners did not know God and therefore did not trust Him. They were used to meat in Egypt and now complained because there was no meat. Then the Israelites began to complain right along with them.

God provided food for them each day and it was called manna. The description of manna can be found in Exodus 16:14-16. There was sufficient supply of the manna and it is said to taste as honey. (Exodus 16:31) The people had grown weary of eating manna and wanted different foods. They missed the different foods that they had in Egypt. How quickly people can forget about the bad things that have happened to them.

The Israelites had lost their grateful attitude they had towards God for rescuing them from the hands of the Egyptians. They were not grateful for the manna that God was providing for them in the desert. They did not thank God for His provision for them. Instead they complained. The manna was good food but they did not want it because they thought of the food that they had in Egypt. It was not the manna that had changed but the people that changed. They had become greedy and selfish.

There is a lesson here for all that greed and selfishness can ruin the benefits that are given and rob them of their happiness. The truth is there is never satisfaction for the

# Durant Bible College

greedy. We must always be thankful for the things that God has given us and express our gratitude to Him for His provision.

## *Verses 10-15*

Moses was chosen by God to lead the Israelite people but now he did not want the burden that they had placed upon him. Moses felt that the responsibilities were too great for him to bear. Moses went to the Lord in prayer and told Him how he felt. Moses had been a faithful servant unto the Lord and had led the people out of the land of Egypt. But Moses felt that he could not do the work of the leader alone. He felt that he was failing to be an able leader of the people. In Moses' depression he asked God to let him die.

God did not let Moses die but He did answer his prayer for help. God did not expect Moses to do all the work of a leader without any help. The work that Moses was doing was God's work and He would help him. God told Moses what he must do.

## *Verses 16-17*

God did not answer Moses' prayer in the way that he asked but did answer his prayer in a way that he did not expect. God had given Moses His Spirit, the Holy Spirit. God told Moses to gather seventy elders from the people and God would give them His Spirit also. This would give the elders the authority to lead the people and the ability to do what God wanted them to do.

The Elders were not as the priest but had other special tasks to do. There are times in the Old Testament that God would give His Spirit to people to do special tasks for Him. God had given His Spirit to Moses and the people knew that he had the authority of God in the words that he spoke. God also gave the 70 elders His Spirit so the people would know that they had His authority also.

In the New Testament God gives His Spirit to the Christians. The Holy Spirit empowers Christians to do things for God that they could not do on their own. Whenever the Christian needs God's power and strength he can ask the Holy Spirit to help him.

## *Verses 18-23*

The people were crying for meat so God promised Moses that He would provide meat for the people. But also God was angry that the people preferred to live in Egypt as slaves so He promised to provide so much meat that they would grow tired of it.

But Moses showed a lack of faith in that he did not believe that God could provide enough meat to feed 600,000 people. Moses was only thinking in a natural way to solve such a great problem. But God was going to solve the problem in a supernatural way, God was going to work a miracle. God did not have anger towards Moses for his doubt but told him to wait and see what He would do.

God told Moses to tell the people to prepare themselves so they would be acceptable to the Lord. The people had to be prepared to receive this wonderful gift from God. The people should have known that God was capable to do what He had promised. They should have been humble and grateful that God had always taken care of them. But

# Durant Bible College

instead that were a complaining lot and filled with greed. So they needed to be prepared by changing their attitude. They needed to get their hearts right so God could accept them.

## *Verses 24-30*

When the Spirit entered into the elders they began to prophesize. This was not done by their own natural means but by the power of the Holy Spirit. This power also fell on Eldad and Medad who were back in the camp. We are not told why they stayed in the camp but when the Spirit came they began to prophesize too. A young man named Joshua went and told Moses what had happened with Eldad and Medad. Moses told Joshua that they were not doing anything wrong.

Even as Joshua was worried about these men prophesizing Moses was not as he was happy that these men had God's Spirit. Moses was happy that the people were not complaining but were happy also. These men were not foretelling the future or doing the work of a prophet but were praising God. They were speaking of God's wonders and this encouraged the people too. (1 Corinthians 14:3)

## *Verses 31-35*

The piles of quail were about a meter high. God provided what He had promised and there were piles of birds everywhere. The people gathered and dried the meat so it could be kept for a long time.

God had given the people what they had wanted but they had not changed their attitude. With the old attitude God could not accept them. God had given them an opportunity to get their hearts right but they had not. Still they were greedy and ungrateful. For this God punished them and many died of the plague. From there the people traveled to Hazeroth which means in Hebrew, "a place to make a home." This was a temporary home for the Israelites as they traveled to the Promised Land.

## Chapter 12

### *Verses 1-16*

Moses' brother Aaron and Miriam were siblings and were also leaders of the people. They helped Moses with his duties but they had become jealous of him. They accused Moses saying that he was not the only one who could speak for God. This effort was to take away some of Moses' authority. Aaron and Miriam were also upset because Moses had married a foreign woman. To falsely accuse someone is a serious thing to do. The name Satan means "the accuser." It is the devil's nature to go around and accuse people and it is a very wrong attitude for a person to have. (1 Timothy 3:11)

Aaron and Miriam also did important work for God. Aaron was the High Priest and Miriam was a prophet. (Exodus 15:20) Still they were jealous because Moses was God's special servant.

Moses was a very humble man and some say the most humble man in the Bible. Moses was not proud of His special position as a servant of God. Humility towards God means

# Durant Bible College

that one is completely dependent upon God for all that they do. Moses knew that God was the power and strength that Moses had to lead the people of the Israelite nation. Moses knew that it would be impossible for him to do the work without God's help. Moses talked to God often and asked Him what He wanted him to do.

In the eyes of God Moses was considered a great man and this was because he was humble towards God. God also considered people great when they served others above themselves. (Matthew 23:11) Jesus was a humble servant and He came to display that attitude that we could learn from Him and have the same attitude. (Philippians 2:5-11)

Now Aaron and Miriam were opposing Moses and saying wicked things against him. When the leaders of people sin this hurts the people that they are responsible for and they can pick up the same attitude. People who are in positions of leadership should remember that they are held to a higher accountability.

God came to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam and spoke to them in a poetic way. (Verse 6-8) God said that He spoke to prophets by dreams and visions. Then God told Aaron and Miriam that He spoke to Moses differently. God would speak to Moses as a person to person, this is what the words face to face mean in verse 8.

This was not Aaron and Miriam's business and they had no right to complain about this special relationship that God had with Moses. God placed judgment against Aaron and Miriam by punishing Miriam. Miriam was given a disease that affects the skin called leprosy. But God did not punish Aaron in the same way. It is probable that Miriam was the more guilty one in this offence. In verse 1 Miriam's name is listed first which is unusual because she is a woman. Which may point to the fact that she was the instigator of the sin.

Moses was upset that Miriam was punished in this way. Aaron asked Moses to help Miriam and he prayed immediately to God. It was a short prayer but it was sincere. God answered Moses and cured Miriam. Because of the law for unclean people who had leprosy they had to stay outside of the camp for a week. (Leviticus 13:1-6) All the people then knew that Miriam had done something bad in the eyes of God.

The camp was unable to travel further until Miriam was allowed back into the camp. People who had leprosy were not allowed to be around other people. And after the leprosy had gone they had to stay away for seven days before they could return amongst the people. People who had leprosy also had to purify themselves in a special ceremony. (Leviticus 14:1-32)

This shame that Miriam had to endure should have been a warning to the other people. They should have realized that it is wrong to say evil things about other people. This is what the devil does as he is the accuser of God's people. Also it is wrong to be jealous of other people's positions. We should be content to do the work that God has given us to do.

# Durant Bible College

## Chapter 13

### *Verses 1-24*

Moses led the Israelite people to the borders of the Promised Land and now the Lord spoke to him and told Moses to send spies into Canaan to search out the land. It is unfortunate that all but two of the spies came back and displayed a lack of faith and trust in the promises of God's Word. For this reason though they were on the border they would linger there for forty years until a new generation of Israelites were born and went forward in faith in their God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

It was not the Lord's desire that the land be spied out but the people of Israel. It was they who wanted to know what lie before them and the Lord allowed it. It was the purpose of the Lord for His people to go and take what He had promised them. (Deuteronomy 1:20-25) The Lord commanded Moses to allow the spies to go forth and learn of the land before conquering it. But when the spies came back their hearts were faint and would not go.

These men who went to spy out the land were leaders from each tribe. They were not the leaders from the census of chapters 1, 2, 7 and 10, but were the younger leaders of the tribes. Walking throughout the land of Canaan would have been very tedious and the older men would not have been as agile. They would not have been able to walk the long distances.

Of the twelve only two would eventually enter into the Promised Land, Joshua and Caleb. Only Joshua and Caleb had the faith to trust God that the conquest of Canaan would be accomplished according to the promise of God. It was Joshua who would be the leader of the Israelite people after the death of Moses. His name was Hoshea, which means God saves but Moses changed his name to Y'shua which means the Lord saves. This new name that Moses gave him includes part of the name of the Lord, Yahweh. (Exodus 6:3) In Exodus the Lord identifies Himself as Jehovah or Yehovah

The Lord gave instructions for the things that the spies were to learn of the land of Canaan. They were to learn how many people lived there and the strength of the people. This would tell them their need of their preparation necessary for battle. They also were to learn of the trees in the land as the wood would be useful for building. Other kinds of trees produced oils that would be useful for commerce.

It was also the time of the year that the fruits would be ripe. Such as the grapes and figs which tell us that the time of the year was near the end of the summer.

The 12 spies traveled through the land from the south to the north and visited a city called Hebron. It was here in this city that the graves of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were. But the spies made no mention of this and only reported that the people there were very tall. They compared the city of Hebron with an Egyptian city named Zoan. Possible because they noted that there were many strong buildings in Hebron.

# Durant Bible College

The spies also took note of the soil of Canaan and found it to be very good for raising crops. They even brought back a large bunch of grapes to show as proof. It truly was a land of milk and honey.

## *Verse 25-33*

The 12 spies returned and gave a report to Moses of the Promised Land. They began their report with the good news of the land of Canaan. They told of the good soil and showed the grapes that it produced and also some figs. It was a land that would produce good crops for the Israelite people.

Then they spoke of the negative things about the Promised Land. They told of how the people were strong and powerful. Of how the buildings were also very strong. These powerful people had strong buildings to protect them from attack. They also spoke of the different groups of people who lived in the land. All of this was true but their intentions were wrong in their testimony. Their testimony was in opposition to the promise of God that even as the land was good they would be unable to conquer it. They were advising Moses that they should not enter into the land of Canaan. They did not want to trust God that He would give them the land and were persuading the people not to obey God's Word.

Now we see that the sin of the Israelites was becoming worse as time was passing along. In chapter 11 they had become a greedy people and in chapter 12 Miriam and Aaron who spoke badly against Moses. Not in chapter 13 we see that the people no longer wanted to obey God. Now standing at the border of the Promised Land that God had given them they were refusing to accept His gift and obey His word.

Caleb one of the twelve did encourage the people to enter into the Promised Land. He was a humble man and trusted God at His word that He would give the land to the Israelite people. He believed that with their God all things were possible. The others had said bad things about the Promised Land that the land seemed to eat its inhabitants. A statement meaning that the land was a difficult and hazardous place. The others also told of the land being inhabited by the Nephilim who were giant people from the time before the great flood. (Genesis 6:4) This frightened the people even more as they felt very small and they forgot that their God was bigger than any of their problems.

When the problems of life come upon us it is easy for us to forget about the power of the God we serve and become afraid. We need, as the Israelites should have, remember that we serve a God that will care for us in the economy of His provision. We must believe and have faith that God will provide for our needs. We must be as Caleb and trust God and obey Him always.

## Chapter 14

### *Verses 1-10*

The people of Israel were afraid to enter into the land of Canaan as the Lord had commanded them. God wanted to give the land to His people but they were too afraid to

# Durant Bible College

take it. As they had done many times before the people began to complain. In the past they had been afraid of the Egyptian army when they left the land of Egypt. (Exodus 14:10-14) Again they complained in the desert when they had no water to drink. (Exodus 15:22-27) They complained at Taberah and God sent fire. (Numbers 11:1-3) They even complained about the manna. (Numbers 11:6)

There are two choices that we have when the trials of life come upon us. We can call upon the Lord or we can complain against the Lord. We can call upon Him and ask Him to lift our burdens or we can fight against Him and continue to suffer difficulties. It is the choice that the Israelites had and they choose to complain and fight against the Lord.

They did not trust God to give them the Promised Land and they no longer wished to follow Moses who had great faith in God's promises. They decided to choose a new leader who was weak and would lead them back to bondage in Egypt.

This rebellion of sorts greatly upset Moses and Aaron and they laid prostrate on the ground to show their humility towards God. They prayed to the Lord knowing that He was angry at the people of Israel and would have to punish them for their disobedience. Joshua and Caleb also tore their clothes to show their distress. This was a custom of the Israelite people to tear their clothing when they were unhappy. This expression is often seen when people had died. Joshua had agreed with Caleb when he gave his encouraging report of the Promised Land and now he tore his close to show that he supported Caleb. Moses, Aaron, Caleb, and Joshua had faith in God's promise and trusted Him to give the Promised Land to the Israelite people.

Even so Joshua and Caleb continued to encourage the people to trust God at His word. They repeated the positive point of the country that God wanted to give them. That if they would only trust their God, then He would lead them into the Promised Land. There were two things the people needed to do. Stop opposing God and not be afraid of the people of Canaan. God was with them and therefore the people of Canaan had no protection greater than the God they served. With God on their side the people of Canaan would not be able to stop them from possessing the land.

The people refused to believe what Joshua and Caleb were saying and became angrier. They wanted to kill all four of them, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb. Then God appeared in the cloud.

## *Verse 11-25*

Then the Lord spoke angrily to Moses of the wicked behavior of the Israelite people. His anger was because the people did not trust Him. They did not trust Him in spite of the many wonderful things that He had done for them. God had brought the ten plagues against the Egyptians so that they would allow the Israelite people go. God had separated the Red Sea so the people could walk across on dry land. God had provided food and water for them while in the desert. And still the Israelite people did not believe that God had the power to give them the land of Canaan.

# Durant Bible College

God then wanted to destroy the Israelite people and intended to let disease destroy them all. Then God would make a new nation from the seed of Moses and this was the second time that God wanted to do this. (Exodus 32:33) Then the people of this new nation would trust and obey God.

Moses did not want a new nation from his family as he was a humble man. Moses expressed to God what the people in the land of Egypt might say if He slaughtered the people of Israel. He felt that they would say bad things of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Other nations knew that the Israelite people were special to God and that He spoke to them. That is was God that looked after them and that if God killed them the other nations would not know the reason why. They might think that God was not powerful enough to do what He had promised. That God could not lead His people into the Promised Land. Moses was not worried what people might say about the people or about what they would say about Moses but what they would say about God.

Moses appealed to the attributes of God. Moses expressed that God is kind and forgiving towards people even when they do not deserve it. That He is slow to anger. That God is a Holy God. Thus meaning that even as He is forgiving that He is also just and must punish the sinner. (Exodus 34:6-7) Sin is a serious action and it can affect the whole family and even their descendants. (Exodus 20:3-5)

There are those who see God in the Old Testament as strict and angry. People who see this think that God is different in the New Testament but God does not change. His character is the same and God loves us always. But God is a just God and though He is always ready and willing to forgive He will not spare punishment for sin. This is why He sent His only begotten Son Jesus. Jesus bore the punishment that we so much deserve. God did this by sacrificing His Son Jesus to pay the wage of our sin which is death. (Romans 6:23) If we are sorry for our sins God will forgive us. God will not punish us because Jesus has already taken the punishment for us.

God had forgiven the Israelite people many times already and now Moses remembered that. Moses asked God to forgive them again. Moses knew that God was very angry but He also knew that God was always ready to forgive and had forgiven them before.

God listened to Moses and considered the prayer that he offered. This is an encouragement to us all that we should often offer our prayers to the Lord, especially when we have sinned against Him. It is not so much the words that we speak but the truth in our hearts. If we are humble before the Lord and speak to Him in truth, as Moses was, God will answer our prayers.

God forgave the Israelite people but they would still receive His judgment. God is a loving God and He is a just God. Their punishment was that they who showed a lack of faith and trust in God would not be allowed to enter the land that He had promised them. This privilege would be given to the next generation and none who left Egypt saw the Promised Land except Joshua and Caleb.

# Durant Bible College

Because of God's judgment God told the people to turn back towards the Red Sea. They would not have to fight the Amalekites or the Canaanites. The people had said that they wanted to return to Egypt and now it had seemed to the people that their request was to be granted. This was not the case as the Israelite people wondered in the desert for the next forty years until all their generation had died off.

## *Verses 26-38*

This was the judgment that God brought upon the Israelite people. They wanted to die in the desert and therefore they wondered in the desert until all of them had died. Only Joshua and Caleb would be allowed to enter into the Promised Land. The people were afraid to enter into the Promised Land because they believed the 10 spies that said it could not be done. They feared that many of their children would die in the military conquest. But God had promised that they would gain the victory and that He would give the land to them. Now, because of their unbelief they would wander in the wilderness for another 40 years until their generation had passed away.

God's judgment had decreed that they would all be killed for their disobedience but Moses had prayed for them and God let them live. There was an exception that the men who spoke adversely about the Promised Land died immediately. Of that generation only Joshua and Caleb were spared God's judgment, as they believed that God would lead them into the Promised Land.

## *Verses 39-45*

After hearing the judgment of God some of the people decided to attempt to enter in to the land that God had promised them. Moses warned them that God was not with them and they would not gain a victory.

These people who had complained against God now thought if they went on their own that God would forgive them. Disobedience never gains forgiveness. Still they went fearlessly into the hill country of Canaan. There they faced defeat because God was not with them and they were in disobedience to His word.

## Chapter 15

### *Verses 1-2*

We may think that it is strange that the story of the Israelites journey through the wilderness is now interrupted with yet another list of rules. The question may be what has happened that they need more law to govern them.

We remind ourselves here that God had promised the land of Canaan to the Israelite's children. So the laws are restated that the parents can teach their children that were to live in the Promised Land. They had to know the Law of God so that they could teach it to their children. God was punishing His people but He was also promising that their children would live in the land of Canaan.

The Israelites were the chosen people of God and they would have to live as His chosen. The rules and laws showed that the Israelites had to live under God's Law in the Promised

# Durant Bible College

Land. If they sinned against God then they would have to know how to make sacrifices to have their sin atoned for. For these sacrifices God would forgive them of their sins and bless them.

## *Verses 3-16*

Along with the animal sacrifice the people also had to offer grain, olive oil and wine. Only a portion of the grain offering was burned and the balance was given to the priest for their welfare. The wine was poured out over the altar. The smell of these offerings was pleasing to the Lord. (Verses 3, 6-7) The people willingly gave their sacrifices because they wanted to show God that they loved Him and were thankful for the blessings that He gave them. This also confirmed that they were His people.

## *Verses 17-21*

The Israelites would be going into a good land, a land of milk and honey, and they were to give to God the first fruits. They were to give God the first of their dough, a mixture of flour, oil and water. They were to give unto God the first of each harvest.

God was their provider and they had to return a portion back to Him to show their thankfulness. We must never forget that it is God who provides us with our food and we should always remember to thank Him for His provision.

## *Verses 22-29*

There were many laws that the Israelites had to obey. It is easy for man to be forgetful and break a law of God by accident. If the people or just one of them broke a law by accident they had to offer a sacrifice.

## *Verses 30-31*

There were those among the Israelites that remained rebellious towards God's Law. In their self-pride they became wicked and refused to obey the laws of God. They did as they wanted to do and this was a serious problem for all of the Israelite people. These people were not repentant and without repentance there can be no forgiveness. Since they had rejected God they were not under His protection. These people could not receive the benefits of God's promises to His people. Because of their refusal to become a part of His chosen people they would be separated for all time.

## *Verses 32-36*

In these verses we see an example of a person who was sinning defiantly to the Law of God. The Sabbath day is a day of rest and to be kept holy unto God. This was a special day for the Jewish people. On this day the people did not work because God told them it was to be a day of rest.

One of the Ten Commandments that was given to Moses spoke of the importance of the Sabbath day. (Deuteronomy 5:12) God told the Israelite people to always remember that the Sabbath was a holy day. God did not want His people to work on the Sabbath as it was a day of rest.

# Durant Bible College

For one to work on the Sabbath was a serious crime to the Jew. To work on the Sabbath, was a crime that was punished by death. (Exodus 31:15; Exodus 35:2-3) When the people discovered this man gathering wood on the Sabbath no one knew what to do with this man. Maybe he had made a mistake and did not know that it was the Sabbath. Maybe his sin was not done defiantly. He was guilty but only God would know if he broke the law on purpose. Only God would know if he committed blasphemy.

God told Moses that this man had to be punished according to the law. The man knew the rules and yet he disobeyed. For this reason the man was rebelling against God on purpose. This would be blasphemy against God and that was punished by death. (Leviticus 24:10-23) By His nature God wants to forgive but He is only able to forgive if we confess our sins and repent from them.

## *Verse 37-41*

God told the Israelite people to sow tassels on the hems of their clothes. The tassels were to have a cord of blue thread on them. These tassels were to be used to remind the people of God's Laws that they were to obey. Their obedience to His law would remind them that they were His people. As God's people that would be in remembrance of the special promises that God had made to them.

The color blue was special. It was blue cloth that covered the Ark. (Numbers 4:6) The curtains in God's tent were the color blue. Often the kings of the day wore blue clothes. The blue reminded the people that they belonged to God the King of kings.

## Chapter 16

### *Verses 1-3*

It is interesting that this story of Korah follows the passage about the tassels. As we have learned that the tassels were a reminder that the Israelite people were God's people. That He had given those laws for them to live by that they would be a witness to Him for all the nations to see. That this was His plan and purpose for His people to be a Holy Priesthood that other nations would be drawn to Him. Yet, as we often do, Korah and his followers were not content with the plan that God had for them. We often ourselves desire something different than what God has planned for us. We sometimes fail to realize that the station He has placed us in is the one that we are best equip to accomplish. We view others positions as grander than our own not realizing that each and every one of God's people has an important task to perform in service to the Lord. Instead of being servants of the Lord we become selfish and seek to achieve what promotes our own egos above what glorifies our God. As a result, Korah and his followers went to Moses and Aaron stating that all people belong to God but they thought they were better than all others. Excusing the fact that God had appointed Moses and Aaron as the leader of His people they felt that Moses and Aaron had made themselves better than the rest of the people.

Korah did not wish to look at the tassels or be reminded that he was God's servant but only thought about what he wanted and what was best for him. He didn't acknowledge that Moses and Aaron were the leaders that God had chosen and that they too were

# Durant Bible College

servants of the Lord. Korah did not want to serve God but the people that he would receive that power and prestige. So Korah and his group decided that they should lead the people and that he would be the leader.

Korah was from Levi's tribe and his duty was to help the priest in their duties to care for the God's Tent. Korah was from the clan of Kohath's clan and was responsible to take care of the sacred objects in God's Tent. (Numbers 4:1-15) This was an important enough job and as all service that God gives is a privilege to have. Korah was not content with his work and wanted to be a priest. But his reasons for wanting to be a priest was not the right intentions. Korah may have thought that the position of priest was a station of greater honor amongst the people and a position of authority. (Numbers 16:10)

Korah had persuaded 250 others to follow him and they went to Moses. Korah did not tell Moses that he wanted to be a priest but that all the Israelites were holy, they were all God's people. Korah told Moses and Arron that they were not more holy or more important than any of the other Israelites. He did not care the authority that Moses and Arron had come from God. Korah was jealous of the power that Moses and Arron had over the people of Israel. In Korah's selfish desire for power and authority he rebelled against Moses and Aaron.

## *Verses 4-7*

After Moses fell down and prayed to God he addressed Korah. Moses did not argue with Korah but trusted God to help him deal with this rebellion. When Moses spoke he did not speak his own words but the words that the Lord had given him. Moses knew that God had chosen him to lead the Israelite people and therefore God would prove that Moses was the leader.

Moses instructed Korah and his followers to fill some pans with coals and incense. This was a right that only priest had to do, carry pans of fire with incense in them. This was a challenge that Moses gave to Korah.

## *Verses 8-11*

Moses reminded Korah and his followers of the duties they had as members of the tribe of Levi. They were already appointed by God for special duties and responsibilities. But the flowers of Korah were not satisfied as Korah wanted to be a priest. Korah wanted a more important position for himself. Because Korah was not doing what God had chosen him and his followers to do they were enemies of God. By Korah and his followers opposing God's priest they were also opposing God.

## *Verses 12-14*

Dathan and Abiram did not come out with Korah but remained in their tents. Moses called them out but they refused to come. Instead they sent a message to Moses saying that Moses had not lead them to the Promised Land. They even said that the land of Egypt was better than were they we now at. It may have not been that they thought the land of Egypt was better but they were insulting God's Promised Land. They were angry with

# Durant Bible College

Moses because they and the people were still in the wilderness. In truth they were saying the Word of God was a lie which is blasphemy.

## *Verses 15-24*

Moses was a meek man, he had been very patient with these rebellious people but when Korah had insulted him he became angry. Moses had always been a faithful and responsible leader to God's people. Moses never had stolen from them or hurt them. Moses did not argue with them he just prayed to God.

Moses wanted to give proof that God had chosen who the priest should be. Only priest could offer incense to God. If Korah and his followers wanted to be priest then Moses told them to offer the incense to God at His God's Tent. Then they would learn if God would accept them as priest.

God who judges the heart of men would not allow them to offer the incense. What Korah and his followers wanted was not to please God but to have power and authority over the people. They were proud and selfish people. Because of this God would act against them.

God decided to kill all the people but Moses and Aaron asked God not to punish all the people because of Korah's rebellion against His word. Listening to Moses's plea God said that He would only punish Korah, Dathan, Abiram and their families.

## *Verses 25-35*

God answered the prayers of Moses and Aaron and all the people were saved from death. It seems that Korah had left his followers and was standing by Dathan and Abiram. Moses told the people to move away from the tents of these three wicked men, Korah, Dathan and Abiram.

Then came God's punishment and it was something new, something not before seen. The ground opened up and the wicked men and their families went down into the ground and went to Sheol. Sheol was a place where the dead would stay and never return. This was the judgment that God pronounced upon Korah, Dathan and Abiram and their families.

As bodies of the dead remain in the grave the spirits in the Old Testament times went to Sheol which is thought by the Hebrews to be a place of punishment. This is the place that the wicked will go, a place that is dark and far away from God. The Israelite people saw the ground open up and Korah, Dathan and Abiram and their families fell into Sheol. This sight frightened the Israelite people terribly. Then God sent fire to consume the 250 followers of Korah.

This is a sad story of what can happen when wicked men oppose God. These people had time to repent and return back to God and His Word but they continued to go in rebellion toward God. Therefore God punished them but because the sons of Korah did not follow him they were speared. (Numbers 26:11) The sons of Korah wrote many Psalms of praise and worship to God. (Psalm 84; Psalm 85; Psalm 87; Psalm 88) Korah himself is remembered as a wicked man by the Hebrew people. (Jude 1-11)

# Durant Bible College

## *Verses 36-40*

The fire from God had completely consumed the 250 followers of Korah. Then Eleazar, Arron's son, went and collected the pans that they had burned incense in. The pans were made of bronze and therefore did not burn in the fire. Because the pans had been used to burn incense to the Lord they were now holy. Eleazar beat the bronze till it was thin and covered the altar with the metal. This cover would remind the Israelite people of how God had punished the followers of Korah. The people would remember that only the priest could burn incense unto the Lord.

## *Verses 41-50*

Even after this lesson of what can happen when stepping out of the will of God the people again complained against Moses and Aaron. They blamed Moses and Aaron for the deaths of Korah's followers. Then the cloud appeared again over God's Tent. This was a testimony that God was pleased with the leadership of Moses and Aaron. This also showed that God was even still angry with the people for their opposition against Moses and Aaron. God again wanted to punish the people and told Moses and Aaron to move away from the people.

The people then became diseased and it spread quickly through the Israelite camps. It was as if an evil spirit had come over the people and brought disease upon them. Aaron then offered incense to God so that He would forgive the people and God accepted. God forgave the people for their sins and the disease stopped. From where Arron stood the disease stopped spreading. Arron stood between the dead who had died from the disease and the people who had not yet been affected.

## Chapter 17

### *Verses 1-13*

For the third time God must show the Israelite people that God had chosen Aaron to be His High Priest. These sticks were not sticks that the people collected from the trees but were sticks that the leaders of the tribes had already. They were dead sticks and therefore had no life in them.

Each elder wrote his name on the stick that was his so there could be no mistake about whose stick it was. Moses took each stick and put it close to the Ark and returned the next day to see the sticks. The stick that belonged to Aaron had leaves, flowers and nuts on it. The stick through the power of God had become alive again and produced fruit. Again this was proof that Aaron was God's choice to be His High Priest. No one could doubt that again. God told Moses to keep Aaron's stick in front of the Ark always.

The tassels on the Israelites' clothes reminded the people to obey God's law. (Numbers 15:37-41) The bronze cover on the altar reminded the people that they must never oppose God. (Numbers 16:36-40) Now Aaron's stick reminded the people that God had chosen Aaron to be His High Priest. God did not want His people to die and they would not die if they obeyed His Word.

# Durant Bible College

## Chapter 18

### *Verses 1-7*

God provided protection for His people. But the people could not go near to the God's Tent even by accident. The tribe of Levi was to guard God's Tent so that the people should not go near God's Tent. (Numbers 8:19)

God spoke to Aaron and told him these things. It was unusual for God to speak to Aaron alone. It was the custom that Moses gave Aaron God's instruction. But it was Aaron who had the special responsibilities as the High Priest. So God reminded Aaron of the special duties of the priest and also the duties of the Levite tribe. They belonged to God and this was their gift.

Levi's tribe was not allowed to do any of the priestly duties and if they came near to the sacred objects God would punish them and the priest and the people of Levies' tribe. It would be the fault of the priest if this happened. The Priest had to make sure that Levis tribe did only their own jobs.

### *Verses 8-20*

The priest were not allowed to own any property or land as God would provide for all their needs through the gifts of the people. These passages describe which parts of the sacrifices and offerings belonged to the priest and which parts belonged to God. There are two types of offerings.

There were the most holy things from verses 8-9. These were the sin offering, the guilt offering and the grain offering. From these offerings only the priest were allowed to eat. Then there were the holy things from verse 11-18. From these offerings the priest could share with their families. But anyone who ate of these offerings had to be clean. This was because the people had offered these offerings to God first. If the Israelites had taken spoils from war a portion was to be given unto God. (Leviticus 27:28-29; Joshua 6:18-19; 1 Samuel 15:21)

The priest also received money from the payments of the first born sons and also the first born male animals that were unclean. (Numbers 3:41) The people did not give their first born sons to the priest but paid 5 pieces of silver to redeem them. This was the amount of money that a person could earn in six months of labor. Unclean first born animals could not be sacrificed and so the priest would receive payment for these animals.

It was in this way that God provided everything that the priest and their families needed. By this means, God promised to provide everything that the priests and their families needed.

### *Verses 21-24*

The work that the Levi tribe did was important work and at times was dangerous. They looked after the sacred objects of God's Tent. When the Israelite people moved the Levites carried all the parts of God's Tent. They also guarded God's Tent so that other

# Durant Bible College

Israelites did not come near. If this happened the Levites were responsible and would be punished too.

God did not allow the priest to own property and neither did He allow the Levite tribe to own property. Instead God gave them part of what was given to Him by the Israelite people.

In ancient Israel the people gave one tenth of their crops and animals to God. Both Abraham and Jacob had done this for God. (Genesis 14:20; Genesis 28:22)

## *Verses 25-32*

Levite tribe was busy helping the priest in their God's Tent duties and they also were not allowed to have property. Their income was one tenth of the other Israelites food and drink. The other Israelites had to give the best part of their food and drink. Then the Levites had to give one tenth of what they received to God and the rest belonged to them.

## Chapter 19

### *Verses 1-10*

For the Jewish people there were three viewpoints towards sin. A person's sin could be committed with an unintentional heart, or that person's sin could have been intentional or there sin could have been done in a defiant way. There were many ways that a person could become unclean. (Leviticus 11 – 15) In the course of daily life it will be impossible for a person to not become unclean. This sin was considered to be unintentional. Because the punishment for Adam's sin was death, we his ancestors are also under that same punishment. In the Old Testament times when a person sinned they became unclean before the Lord and had to make themselves clean by a special ceremony and a sacrifice.

If a person sinned intentionally that person had sinned on purpose. An example would be to commit murder. That person knew that it was wrong to commit murder and yet went ahead and did the act anyway. That person would have to ask God to forgive them as there was no sacrifice for an intentional sin.

If a person sinned defiantly this was blasphemy towards God. God could not offer His forgiveness because that person would not repent and the punishment was death.

It is easy for us to understand why sins that are intentional and defiant are wrong. God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses and these laws are about these types of sin. (Exodus 20:1-17) These Ten Commandments are to be obeyed by all people at all times in their life. Unintentional sins are a little bit harder to understand because they do not have a natural explanation and were for the Jewish people exclusively.

An example of an unintentional sin would be that the Jew was not allowed to touch a dead body. To touch a dead body would make one unclean before the Lord and they had to make themselves clean before they could be in His presence. Chapter 19 describes what they would have to do if they became unclean by an unintentional sin. To become clean

# Durant Bible College

they had to perform a ceremony and a sacrifice. There are some differences in the procedures of the rituals.

Instead of a male animal the animal was female. The people killed the animal outside of the camp instead of in front of God's Tent. At a regular sacrifice the priest would kill the animal in front of God's Tent but here an ordinary person would kill the animal and do it outside of the camp. The blood was not collected and poured onto the altar but was burned with the rest of the animal.

The priest would put cedar wood, hyssop and red wool into the fire when they made their offering to God. These were the things that the people used to make themselves clean. (Leviticus 14:1-17; Leviticus 14:48-53) The ceremony was of great importance and the priest had to wash their bodies and their clothes afterward. This was because they too had to wash away the sins they had come into contact with. (Psalms 51:2; Jeremiah 2:22)

Then the ashes were placed outside of the camp and made ready for the people to mix with their water. They used the ashes in the ceremony as described in verses 11-12.

## *Verses 11-22*

The first part of this chapter has explained how to prepare the special water and ashes. If a person touched a dead body they would be unclean until they had purified themselves. It would not be possible for the Israelite people to not touch a dead body. There were thousands of people in their camps both young and old. In the course of life people die.

Once a person touched a dead body they would have to follow the instructions to become clean again. It was a very serious matter as an unclean person defiled God's Tent. Not following these instructions was not something that someone should do. Until they had cleaned themselves they were unclean and anything that they touched also became unclean and because of them the whole camp could become unclean. If one refused to follow the instructions for cleaning they would be put out of the camp and even put to death.

Even if they were people who were living in a tent when someone had died they too were unclean. And people who had touched the grave of a dead person was considered unclean. All these people had to follow the instructions to become clean again. And even the one who splashed the water on an unclean person became unclean and that person had to wash their clothes and body also and then in the evening they would be clean.

Today we do not have to wash ourselves in a special way to come near to God. Jesus made that sacrifice for all of us and these ceremonies are no longer necessary. The blood of Jesus makes us clean in our hearts and our spirit. But we must believe Jesus for who He is and trust Him as our Lord. Jesus died as our sacrifice and we must believe that truth and trust Him. We must confess our sins with a contrite heart, turn away from our sins and not want to sin again. And we must allow Jesus to come into our life and live through us.

# Durant Bible College

## Chapter 20

### *Verses 1-13*

In the first month the Israelites came into the wilderness of Zin. It was in the 40<sup>th</sup> year since their journey had begun and Miriam, Moses' sister was over 120 years old. Miriam died in Kadesh. It was Miriam who when Moses was a baby saved him from death when he was taken out of the Nile by Pharaoh's daughter. (Exodus 2) When the Israelites had crossed the Red Sea Miriam and the women gave thanks unto God for their deliverance. (Exodus 15) Miriam helped her brothers, Moses and Aaron, lead the Israelite people through the desert. Miriam had opposed Moses and suffered punishment from God as a result. (Numbers 12) Miriam was a great woman and we can be sure that Moses, Aaron, and the people were saddened by her death.

### *Verses 2-5*

At the wilderness of Zin the Israelites had no water for themselves or their flocks. Again they began to murmur against Moses and had wished they had died suddenly as some of the other Israelites. They feared a slow death by thirst.

### *Verse 6*

Moses did not argue with the people but He and Aaron went to God's Tent and prayed to God. God answered their prayer and told them what they must do. Moses was to take his rod, the same one that he had used to perform the miracles before the Egyptian people. (Exodus 7:20; Exodus 14:16; Exodus 17:6) But as before God did not tell Moses to hit the rock but to speak to it. If Moses would just order the rock to bring forth water the rock would obey.

### *Verses 7-13*

It was near time for the Israelite people to enter into the Promised Land but still they were having problems. Moses had grown tired in his older years and it seems as if he had become angry. It was not a question of faith that God would provide water but of patience. Moses had lost some of his patience and instead of doing what the Lord had told Him he struck the rock twice.

God provided the water but because of Moses' disobedience He punished Moses and Aaron. God told them that they would not be allowed to lead the people into the Promised Land. Because of Moses' impatient anger God did not receive the honor for the water coming from the rock. If Moses had spoken to the rock instead of hitting the rock the people would have more clearly seen the miracle performed by God.

God told Moses and Aaron they failed to believe Him and follow His instructions. This dishonored God before the people because Moses and Aaron did not do as God had told them. Instead of acting out of obedience to God's Word Moses acted out in anger. This action denied the people of being able to see the power of God.

Moses accepted the punishment of God without argument. Moses continued to serve the people as needed but the punishment had to be severe to Moses. Moses had led God's

# Durant Bible College

people for 40 years and now himself would be denied the goal of reaching the Promised Land. It also taught the people that they must obey the Lord's instruction, as Moses expressed this in Deuteronomy 3:26.

## *Verses 14-21*

The Israelite people were moving north to a land called Moab. (Numbers 33:48) It was from Moab that Moses would prepare the people to enter into the Promised Land. The most direct route was to travel through the land of Edom on a road called the king's highway. The king's highway was a major trading route and many people used it.

The people of Edom were the descendants of Esau. (Genesis 36) The Israelite people were descendants of Jacob Esau's brother. There should have been a strong relation between the Israelites and the Edomites.

Moses sent a letter to the king of the Edomites asking his permission for the Israelites to pass through their land. In his letter Moses reminded the king that they were relatives and that the Israelites were not his enemy. Moses did not want to make war with the Edomites nor to conquer them but only to pass through their land on the way to Moab. He reminded the king of the history of the Israelite people and how they had been in bondage in the land of Egypt. This was a testimony that God was helping the Israelite people on their journey to the Promised Land. The king of Edom should have wanted to help the Israelites because he would not have wanted to oppose God.

Moses made assurances that the Israelite people would stay on the king's highway and not take any of their crops or water. But the king of Edom refused and would not allow them passage through his land. Moses asked the king again and offered to pay for the water that the Israelites drank and that of their flocks. Still the king refused to allow them passage. The king also sent a large army to stop the Israelites from entering into his land. The Israelites could have fought this army as God had helped them before in battle but this was not God's plan. As a result the Israelites went another way.

Many centuries later the Edomites helped the enemies of the Jews. Those enemies attacked the city of Jerusalem and when the people of Jerusalem tried to escape the Edomites stopped them. (Psalm 137:7) God punished the Edomites and they were completely defeated and had to leave the country.

## *Verses 22-29*

God told Moses and Aaron to take Aaron's son Eleazar up to Mount Hor where Aaron would die. On the first day of the 5<sup>th</sup> month Aaron died at the age of 123 years. It has been nearly 40 years since the Israelites had left the land of Egypt.

God did not kill Aaron, he died of natural causes. At the age of 123 God had blessed him with a long life. A description of Aaron's character can be found in the book of Malachi. (Malachi 2:4-6) Aaron had a reverent fear for God and he taught the truth of God and he did not lie. Aaron led many people to turn away from their sin.

# Durant Bible College

Aaron's position was the High Priest and God wanted his son Eleazar to be the High Priest after him. Therefore Moses followed the instruction that God had given him. The High Priest wore special clothes. (Exodus 28:1-19) Moses had to take the clothes of Aaron and put them on Eleazar during a special ceremony. (Leviticus 8:7-9) Now Moses had to remove the clothes from Aaron and put them on Eleazar. This would show the people that Eleazar was the High Priest. After that Aaron died.

Moses and Eleazar then came down from Mount Hor and the people saw that Eleazar was wearing the High Priest clothes. They knew now that Aaron was dead and the Israelites mourned for 30 days.

## Chapter 21

We are now entering the third section of the Book of Numbers with this chapter. The events that follow are in preparation for the Israelites entry into the Promised Land.

### *Verses 1-3*

There were several kings in the land of Canaan and these kings had to be defeated before the Israelites could live in the Promised Land. The time that it took the Israelites to do this was seven years.

This chapter opens up with a battle between the Israelites and the town of Arad. The king of Arad attacked the Israelites as they were traveling to the Promised Land. It was most likely a surprise to them as the king was able to carry some of them away as captives. The Israelites did not try to rescue the prisoners by military force only but first asked God to help them. In doing so they made a promise to God that they would destroy the Canaanite towns completely. The only way to do this was to defeat the Canaanites completely.

To completely destroy something is to give it to God completely. (Leviticus 27:28-29; Deuteronomy 7:2-6) As a result there would be no spoils that the Israelites could keep from their victory in battle. The Canaanites were very wicked people as a result of their wicked religion. An example was that they made human sacrifices to their gods. If the Israelites did not destroy these nations completely these wicked acts would continue. And if the Israelites lived in the same country with the Canaanites they themselves might start sharing in their practices.

God helped the Israelite people to gain the victory over the Canaanites. The Israelites kept their promise to God and destroyed everything to show that it belonged to God.

### *Verses 4-9*

The king of Edom had refused to allow the Israelites to travel through his land and so they had to go around it. This caused them to be delayed in their journey to the Promised Land. It was also a more difficult trip because they could not travel on the king's highway. The people once again became impatient and they became angry. As before the people complained to Moses saying the same things that they had said before. But they were not actually telling the truth as they did have food. They had the Manna that God provided to

# Durant Bible College

them each day. But they were not thankful for this gift of provision from God. In Psalms we read that it was the food of angels. (Psalm 78:25) In an insulting way the Israelites rejected the food that God was giving them. They also rejected the plan that God had for them to enter into the Promised Land.

Again God punished the people and sent poisonous snakes to bite them. It is interesting that the Hebrew word for poisonous means “something that is burning.” This may have referred to the feeling of the snake bite but it may also refer to the angels that serve God in heaven. (Isaiah 6:2) One of the duties of the angels is to deliver the message from God to His people so this implies that God sent these snakes as a punishment.

The people realizing that they once again had dishonored God apologized because they were sorry for what they had done. They asked Moses to pray for them that God would remove the snakes.

God did not remove the snakes but provided a way that the people that had been bitten could be cured. The cure required the people to look up to a bronze snake that Moses was told by God to erect. If the people looked up to the bronze snake they lived and if they did not they died.

For the Christian this is a very important story. Jesus made a reference to this event when He was talking about death. (John 3:14) As the people lifted up Jesus on the cross Jesus is comparing Himself here with the bronze snake that Moses lifted up. Sin is like poison same as the snake bit and everyone is born with the desire to sin as a result of Adam. (Genesis 3) Sin causes death to the spirit of a person and this is not how God intended for people to live.

God did not remove the snakes and neither did He remove the sin in the world. Instead He provided a way of cure for every person from the result of sin. Just as the Israelites we have to do something to receive the cure. We have to look to the cross and believe that Jesus died on our behalf. Then God will forgive us of all our sins. Jesus suffered the punishment that we deserve.

Every Israelite had to look at the bronze snake and no one else could do it for them. In the same way every person must believe on the name of Jesus and none other can do it on their behalf.

## *Verses 10-20*

The Israelites continued to travel north between the land of the Moabites and the Amorites. Today we do not have a copy of “The Book of the Wars of the Lord” which is an ancient record of the battles the Israelite people fought. They traveled to a place named Beer which means well. Here God provided water for His people. God may have showed Moses where the people were to dig to find the water.

It had been 40 years since the last recorded song that the Israelite people had sung. (Exodus 15) This time they were not complaining, instead they were happy and expressing their gratitude towards God.

# Durant Bible College

Over the 40 years of their journey God had been their provider.

God provided manna while they were in the desert which nourished their bodies. And God also provided His Son, Jesus, who is the bread of life. (John 6) This is because only Jesus can satisfy our spiritual hunger.

God also provided the cure for the snake bites that the people received. And God gave us the cure for our sin in the death of His Son on the cross of Calvary. (John 3:14-15)

God also provided water for the Israelite people. And Jesus gives us water that gives us life. (John 4:1-13; John 7:37-39) This is not the water that we need for our bodies. In the Bible water is the symbol for the Holy Spirit and every believer receives the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that make our spirits come to life. The Holy Spirit helps us to live in the way that God wants us to live.

The Israelite people reach the top of Pisgah Mountain which is in the Moabite land. From the top of this mountain they could see the Promised Land.

## *Verses 21-31*

The Amorite people were descendants of Noah's grandson Canaan. (Genesis 10:6-15) They were very powerful people and ruled much territory. But at this time their territory was much smaller that it had been and they lived near the Dead Sea. Moses sent a message to the king of the Amorites much the same as he had sent to the king of the Moabites. Without delay the king Sihon attacked the Israelites people but they were defeated. God had promised Moses that this would happen. (Exodus 23:23)

The Israelites now occupied the land east of the Jordan River and before the Israelites entered into the Promised Land Moses gave this land to Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh's tribe.

The story of how the Israelites defeated the Amorites was a favored story. (Psalm 136:19) The Amorites had written a song about how they had defeated the Moabites. But the Israelites were even more powerful that the Amorites and the Moabites and they used the song of the Amorites to show this. The first six lines describe how king Sihon defeated the Moabites. (Verses 27-28) the last two lines describe how the Israelites defeated king Sihon. (Verse 30)

## *Verses 32-35*

Moses sent some men to the town of Jazer in order to find the best way to defeat it. Soon the Israelites defeated the town of Jazer and the surrounding villages and drove the remaining Amorites out.

Then the Israelites went to the land of Bashan where their king was named Og. The king led his whole army out to meet the Israelites. King Og wanted to attack the Israelites at the town of Edrei. God had promised Moses that they would defeat king Og's army and they did completely. This was an important battle for the Israelites as the news of Og's

# Durant Bible College

defeat spread as far as the city of Jericho. (Joshua 2:10) The people who lived in Jericho were very afraid because of the power of the Israelite people and their God. As a result of these victories the Israelites controlled the land east of the Jordan in the land of Canaan.

## Chapter 22

In chapters 22-24 we read the story of Balaam. Balaam was not an Israelite and much of what is known of him describes him as an enemy of Israel. The twist of Balaam is that he was a prophet of God, yet he was wicked. Even though he was a wicked man his prophecies were not false. God did speak to Balaam and the prophecies that he spoke were true. But Balaam's heart was not right with God and he had a love of money which took preeminence in his priorities. In the end we see the wickedness of Balaam in his use of magic. (Jude 11; 2 Peter 2:15). In the end, he became a wicked man who used magic (Joshua 13:22).

The story of Balaam is an important one as it puts forth the emphases that Balaam spoke only the words of God. Balaam spoke against the messengers of Balak that he could not curse Israel because God had blessed them. He could not curse them because the Israelites were under God's protection. God had made a covenant with the sons of Abraham and God is faithful and true. (Genesis 12:1-3) God had promised Abraham that he would have his own land and be the father of many descendants.

### *Verses 1-7*

Balak was the king of Moab and he had heard of all that the Israelite people had done in the land. Because God had strengthened them Balak was very afraid of the Israelite people. Balak knew that his army could not defeat the Israelite people on the battlefield. Balak spoke to the Midianites who lived in tribes in the Sinai desert and the deserts east of the Jordan River. They united together to defeat the Israelite nation. They resulted to the use of evil spiritual powers.

They sent their representatives to speak with the Prophet Balaam thinking that they could get him to curse the Israelite people. Apparently Balak did not realize that Balaam was a prophet of God. Perhaps Balak thought that Balaam was a magician. Balak was looking for stronger powers than his magicians had.

The officials took money and a message from Balak with them to seek Balaam to curse the Israelites people. Balak mentioned in his message that the Israelites were a large group of people who had come out of the land of Egypt. Balak did not mention that it was God who had rescued them from Egypt but he did know because of their military activity that they were a very powerful people. Balak thought that he needed the help of a diviner to defeat them.

### *Verses 8-14*

Balaam did seek the Lord in what he should do in this matter, telling the officials to spend the night and he would give answer in the morning. Balaam spent the night in prayer to

# Durant Bible College

God so that he would know the proper way to go. This does tell us that Balaam did have the proper character of a prophet.

God did speak to Balaam during the night and told him that he should not go with the officials back to see Balak. God also told Balaam that he could not curse his people because God had blessed the Israelites. God would not allow Balaam to do anything that would bring harm to His people.

Balaam did not tell the officials the complete truth of what God had said to him. He only said that God would not allow him to return with the officials to see Balak. Maybe Balaam thought that he could later persuade God to let him go where he could receive the money that was offered. Already sin was crouching at the door to Balaam's heart. The Truth is that Balaam could not have cursed the Israelite people because God was blessing them, as they were His people. So Balaam sent the officials back to Balak.

## *Verses 15-21*

Because Balaam did not speak fully the words of God to the officials Balak may have thought that He had only wanted more money and prestige. As a result Balak sent a larger and more important group of officials back to see Balaam a second time. Even so God had clearly given His answer to Balaam's prayer to God. But again Balaam told the officials to spend the night and he would pray to God again. Maybe Balaam thought that God would change His mind.

God did not change His mind but did tell Balaam that he could return with the officials to Balak. Balaam would still have to obey the words of God.

## *Verse 22*

Balaam went with the officials to see Balak. Balaam was aware with spiritual matters. He knew how to approach God in prayer and God had answered him. In this story of Balaam's donkey God cause the donkey to be able to see the angel of the Lord and had blinded Balaam to the spiritual things. We also see that the message has a greater value than the messenger. God can use a donkey to deliver his message when a man will not. When God uses us to deliver His message it is not a time to be proud but a time to be humble as we have received His word as a privilege.

The angels deliver God's message to people but the Lord's angel did more than this. In the Old Testament when God wanted to give a message to His people He would send an angel on His behalf. The Lord's angel came to Balaam because he was entering into sin and the angel was bringing judgment to Balaam.

God judges the heart and He knew that Balaam did not want to do what was pleasing to God but was more interested in receiving the money that Balak had offered. Balaam may have thought that he could persuade God to allow him to curse the Israelite people. For this he would be well payed. God had allowed Balaam to go to Balak but his intention for going was evil. God wanted Balaam to know this and that Balaam could only bless God's

# Durant Bible College

people and not curse them. God was not wanting to punish Balaam but to convince him to do the right thing.

## *Verses 23-33*

It was Balaam's donkey that saw the angel of the Lord for three times when the angel stood in the path. And for three times the donkey refused to pass and Balaam became angry and struck the donkey each time. Then God caused the donkey to speak to remind Balaam that it had never done such a thing before. Thus, there had to be a good reason that the donkey was behaving this way.

Then God opened the eyes of Balaam so that he too could see the angel of the Lord. When Balaam saw the angel standing there with a sword he became very afraid and he fell down to the ground. Then the angel spoke and told Balaam that the donkey had saved his life. The angel told Balaam that his attitude was wrong and he was behaving in a way that made God angry.

## *Verses 34-35*

Immediately Balaam knew that he had sinned against the Lord and confessed and said that he would return to his home. But God told Balaam to continue on to Moab and see Balak and to speak with Him only the words that God gives him.

## *Verses 36-41*

Balak could not wait to see Balaam and went to the border to meet him. But Balak was a little annoyed that Balaam had not come sooner. Balak was a rich and powerful king and perhaps he did not think that Balaam knew this. So he asked Balaam if he did not think that he could reward him well.

Balak did not truly know about prophets. Prophets can only speak that which God gives them to speak and they can only bless those who God blesses and curse those whom God curses. Balak did not know that it is God who blesses and curses and not the prophet. People who have been cursed by God can repent from their evil ways and God will free them from His curse. But Balak did not understand any of these facts. Neither did Balak realize that all spiritual powers are not the same. Balak thought that magic was the same as God's spiritual power.

Balaam wanted to be obedience to the angel of the Lord and he told Balak that he could only speak the words that God would give him. True prophecy is only the Word of God that is given to the prophet. Words of a prophet have no power, as the power comes from God.

Balak made a sacrifice to his god and offered a portion to Balaam and his followers. Then Balak took Balaam to the high place of his god Baal, as they worshiped Baal in the high places of the hills. Balak took Balaam there also thinking that the curse would have a greater effect from a place of worship.

# Durant Bible College

## Chapter 23

### *Verses 1-2*

Balaam and Balak sacrificed bulls and male sheep on seven altars. The sacrificial offerings are detailed in the book of Genesis. Balaam's home was in the east and is the land that Israel's ancestors had come from. It is possible that Balaam is a descendant of Laban, a relative of Abraham. (Genesis 24:24-27) Considering that this is the type of offering that we would expect Balaam to offer.

This worship ceremony was a mixture of a truthful way of worship and that of the pagans. The place chosen for this ceremony was that of where the pagan god Baal was worshiped by Balak. But Balak already knew that his god was too weak to overcome the Israelites and their God. Also there were parts of the ceremony that represented idol worship. For example the special number seven for the altars. For Balaam's part the ceremony was that of his Israelite ancestors. His offering was that of clean animals which would be pleasing to God. In pagan worship pigs were used to sacrifice. But Balaam offered clean animals and whether Balak realized it or not the sacrifices were made to God.

Balaam wanted to go off to be alone so that God could speak to him. God did speak to Balaam and gave him a message to give to Balak and his officials. The message was given in the style of Hebrew poetry where there are pairs of lines. Here the first and second lines of each pair are similar. Sometimes the second line will complete the first line or the second line may emphasize the first line. Or it may say the same thing but in a different way.

### *Verses 3-10*

It is important for us to remember that Balaam was speaking prophecy and were not his words but Gods. First it was not Balaam's idea to curse Israel. It was Barak's idea and he had brought Balaam from his own country to Moab. Then Balaam told Barak that he was not able to curse Israel because God had not cursed Israel.

Israel is not a lonely nation but a nation that is set apart from the other nations. They are God's people. It was the Israelite people that God had chosen to know Him, to speak to them, to guide them, and to protect them.

No one can count the Israelites and this reminds us of the promise that God made to Abraham's grandson Jacob. God had promised that the descendants of Jacob would be more than man could count. (Genesis 15:5; Genesis 22:17; Genesis 28:14)

People who die in the peace of the Lord will go to a rest of peace and Balaam knew this, and wanted to die in such peace.

### *Verses 11-12*

Balak was angry because Balaam had not done what he wanted him to do. Balaam had not cursed Balak's enemies the Israelites. Balaam had spoken of the blessings that the Israelites had received. Balaam told Balak that he had to speak the words that God had given him to speak.

# Durant Bible College

## *Verses 13-24*

Balak asks Balaam to go to another place and to try again to curse Israel. Balak and Balaam went to yet another place that the Moabites worship their pagan god. As they had done before they made the same preparations for sacrifice. The people of pagan gods knew that their gods lied and were not honest with the people. They did not understand that the Lord was the only true and just God

God again gave Balaam another prophecy. The first prophecy was that the Israelites were a special people and God had chosen them to belong to Him. The second prophecy was that the Israelites had defeated all their enemies because God was on their side.

Balak wanted God to change his mind about His people but God is not like people are. Neither is He like the false gods of other nations. When the God of the Israelite people promises to do something He does it because His promises are always true. God ordered Balaam to once again bless the Israelite people. Balak could not make God change His mind. No one can make God change His mind, as no one is greater than God.

Balaam then reminded Balak that God had rescued the Israelites from the land of Egypt by the power of His hand. Egypt was a very powerful nation and the Israelites had been slaves in that country. God had led them out of Egyptian bondage and He had defeated their enemies. God was like a king who led an all-powerful army.

Unlike other nations Israel would not need the uses of magic. Only from God did the Israelites receive their help, protection, and instruction. In God's perfect plan things for the Israelites would happen at the proper time.

With God giving the Israelites strength they were fighting their enemies. They were fierce like strong lions and they had power to destroy their enemies completely. There were none who could stop God's people.

## *Verses 25-30*

Balaam had told Balak that the Israelites were as lions and able to destroy their enemies as a lion, they would devour them. It was for this reason that Balak was afraid of the Israelites. And this is why Balak was so persistent that Balaam curse them. But Balaam was unable because God had told him not to curse the Israelites.

Now Balak had become angry with Balaam because instead of cursing the Israelite he was blessing them. Balaam would not curse them and Balak did not want him to bless them. Balaam continued to emphasize that he had to obey God.

## *Verses 27-30*

Balak was in desperation because his armies would not be able to defeat the Israelites, as God was protecting them. Balak had hoped that Balaam would curse the Israelites but in fact he was blessing them. If God did not oppose His people then the situation for Balak was hopeless.

# Durant Bible College

Then Balak took Balaam to another place that was high and he prepared the same ceremony. Seven altars were built to sacrifice seven bulls and seven sheep. Balak still hoped that God's mind would change and Balaam would be able to curse the Israelites.

## Chapter 24

### *Verses 1-14*

Balaam was unable to oppose God and therefore he was giving the Israelites God's blessing. It was not possible for Balaam to curse the Israelite people against God's will. Balak still wanted Balaam to try once more to curse God's people. Balak was unable to tell the difference between magic and God's power.

No power, not even the power of false gods could overcome the power of God. The prophets of the pagan gods worked magic in several ways. They often tried to discern the future events. They would study the movements of the stars or examine the inner parts of animals that they had sacrificed to their gods. God hates magic and forbids people to practice it. (Deuteronomy 18:10-12)

As the before occasions Balaam had gone off by himself to seek God. It was on those occasions that he had tried to persuade God to curse His people. There were customs that Balaam would follow when he prayed to God. What these customs were we do not know. But on this last try Balaam did not follow these customs and he did not pray privately. Balaam already knew that God wanted to bless the Israelites. God by means of His Holy Spirit spoke to Balaam and gave him the words to say.

God gave Balaam a vision of the future when the Israelites were living in the Promised Land. Balaam spoke of the beautiful homes that the Israelites would have with beautiful gardens and strong trees. Balaam even spoke of the plentiful water that the Israelites would have in the Promised Land. Water was a very precious commodity in the land. Water was needed to drink and to grow crops. The Israelites would have all the water that they needed. This would be a great blessing to the people of God and they would be content.

Balaam also told of the military power that the Israelites would have and he prophesied about a future king who would be greater than all of Israel's enemies. Israel's first king Saul defeated the king Agag of the Amalekites. (1 Samuel 15:8)

Balaam again reminded Balak that God had brought the Israelites out of the land of the Egyptians. And along the way of their journey they had defeated all of their enemies. Balaam told Balak that the Israelites were as a strong lion.

Balak was angry and he struck his hands together which was an insult towards Balaam. Balak was through with Balaam and sent Balaam away and told Balaam that he would not receive payment for his efforts. Then Balak blamed God before Balaam as the reason that he would not receive any payment.

# Durant Bible College

Balaam had not lied to Balak and told his officials that he would obey what God told him to say. (Numbers 22:18-20) Balaam reminded Balak that he could only say what God gave him to say. With that done Balaam agreed to return to his home but he had not finished his prophecies and had more to say about things to come.

## *Verses 15-19*

At the beginning of this prophecy the words spoken are near to the words spoken before his third prophecy. (Numbers 24:3-4) But this was a far reaching prophecy telling of events that would happen a long time in the future.

Balaam spoke of a future king that would come from Israel and this king would defeat the Moabites. The sons of Sheth might be a neighboring tribe or it might be another name for the Moabites. This coming king would defeat the enemies of Israel in the land of Edom. This king would destroy them all. This prophecy spoke of a time 300 years in the future, King David Israel's most popular king who ruled after Saul was a great military leader. It was King David that defeated the Moabites and the Edomites. (2 Samuel 8:2; 2 Samuel 8:13-14; 1 Kings 11:15-16)

Some commentators also refer these prophecies to the Messiah. The Messiah was the great king and leader that would come in the future. It was the belief of the Jewish people that the Messiah would defeat all enemies of the Jewish nation.

Jesus was the Messiah. Jesus came to save people from the results of their sin. His message was that of love and not of military power. But Jesus did defeat our greatest enemy Satan. His death on the cross took away the power of sin over the lives of the people. By His resurrection He also overcame the power of death and in the future He will return again and rule everlastingly.

## *Verses 20-25*

At the end of Balaam's prophecies he speaks of the fate of other nations.

Amalek was not the most powerful nation or the oldest nation in the land but it was the first to attack Israel. (Exodus 17:8-15) From that time on the Amalekites were always an enemy to the Israelite people.

Near to the Amalekites lived the Kenites who lived among the hills south west of the Dead Sea. They were not enemies of Israel as Hobab was a relative of Moses. (Judges 1:16; Judges 4:11) The Kenites felt that they were safe living in the hills but in the future they would be defeated too.

The land that is called Assyria would become a powerful nation and conquer many others. But Assyria would not rule other nations forever as they were eventually defeated too. The word for Assyria is translated to "Asshur" and is a tribe that lived near to the Kenites. Historians also say that the people from Cyprus were the Philistines who would become a great enemy of the Israelites. King David did defeat the Philistines. (1 Samuel 17; 2 Samuel 5:17-25)

# Durant Bible College

The point that Balaam was making with his prophecy was that God controls all the events of the earth. The nation's only become strong and powerful if God allows them to. God uses these nations to accomplish His purposes.

When Balaam finished his prophecy he began his journey to his home. Balaam could not do what Balak wanted him to do. Balaam could not curse the nation that God had blessed. Balaam did have another plan to defeat the Israelite people and we will read about his plan in chapter 31.

## Chapter 25

### *Verses 1-18*

Even as Balaam was unable to curse the Israelites but only prophesize the words of God, still he wanted to be paid. Balaam made a plan which would cause God to act against the Israelites. The Lord God is a jealous God and would not allow the Israelite people to worship false God's. (Exodus 20:5) The Moabites and the Midianites came together and tempted the Israelites to worship their gods. It was Balaam who gave the plan to the Moabites and the Midianites to draw the Israelites into worshipping their gods. Balaam devised this plan in order to receive his pay and satisfy his greed. (Numbers 31:16; 2 Peter 2:15, Jude 1:11; Revelation 2:14).

### *Verses 1-3*

Before entering into the Promised Land the Israelites camped in a valley named Shittim. The Hebrew word for Shittim means acacia which is a type of tree. The valley then with its tress was probably a pleasant place for their camp. It was there that the people committed their sin which was the first of the Ten Commandments. (Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 5:7)

This was a result of the male Israelites having relations with the female Moabites from that area. The Moabites were enemies of the Israelites and the Moabites offer of their woman was to entice the Israelites to break their covenant with God. They hoped that this would cause their God to become angry and not help them.

The Moabites were cunning in that they used sexual immorality, food, and special ceremonies to attract the Israelite men to their camp. The Israelite men joined with the Moabite women in the ceremonies of worship to their god Baal. Baal was the god of their religion. The Israelites had fallen to the treachery of the Moabites and entered into serious sin against their God. This showed that they were not loyal to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. To stop this behavior God had to punish them.

### *Verses 4-5*

God sent a plaque upon the people to punish them. (Verse 8) God also told Moses to execute the leaders who lead the Israelite men into this sinful behavior. It would have been the leader's responsibility to stop the men from their sin but they did not. Moses called upon the judges to execute the leaders.

# Durant Bible College

## *Verse 6*

Moses and the people were crying because they were sorry for the sins they had committed against their God. While they were in their grief a male Israelite brought a female Midianite into the camp and his tent. In front of those who were crying in grief for their sin this Israelite man brought this Midianites women. He did not care that God was angry at the people and he did not care that he was still sinning. Neither was he sorry for what he was doing. He could see that others were grieving over their sin yet he continued to sin in front of them. This man showed that he had no respect for God or the other Israelite people or their leaders.

## *Verses 7-9*

The seriousness of their sin was that it leads them away from God. It had the same effect upon us that when we sin it places a cloud between us and God. They had joined in with the Moabites in their worship of the false god Baal. It is likely that the Mediante's worshiped Baal too. Phinehas who was the son of the High Priest Eleazar, was loyal to God and became jealous that this man and the Midianite woman would sin before God and the people. Phinehas then killed the man and the woman. This not only stopped their sin but it also stopped the plague that God had sent to punish the Israelites. The punishment that the Israelites endured showed them that God would not allow this kind of sin with His people. It also was a warning that the Israelite people should never worship false gods.

## *Verses 10-13*

Phinehas' loyalty to God pleased God and God promised him that his descendants would be priest always.

## *Verses 14-15*

Here we learn the names of the male Israelite and the female Midianites that Phinehas had slain. This man was from the tribe of Simeon. Moses was from the tribe of Levi. Reuben and Simeon were born to Jacob before Levi. Therefore the leaders of the tribes of Reuben and Simeon had a right to lead the Israelites. In Numbers 16:1 the leaders of the tribe of Reuben came against Moses, and therefore God. As a result we saw that many of them died. Zimri, a member of the Simeon tribe, by his sinful behavior was opposing Moses, and therefore God.

Zimri was a leader of the tribe of Simeon and therefore was an important man. Zimri was supposed to lead his people in the right way to go. But because of his sinful ways he was leading his people into sin against God. It is true that the sins of one family member has an ill effect upon the whole family.

The woman was a Midianites which means that this sin had also spread amongst the local people too. She was a member of Midianite royalty and was sent to cause a leader of the Israelites to sin. This was their plan.

Zimri was a defiant man. (Numbers 15:30-31) By taking the woman into his tent it was an act of rebellion against Moses' authority and therefore God's authority. It can only be said

# Durant Bible College

the Zimri was trying to persuade the other people to disobey God. Zimri did not want to have God leading them and felt that the people should be able to do what they wanted to do. This is the message he presented by his actions of sinning against God.

## *Verses 16-18*

The plan and tempting by the Midianite people against the Israelites had caused the Israelites to sin against God. They had raised the anger of God against His own people. Now God is warning Moses about them that they shall be Israelites' enemy. It is important that God's people obey Him and that they worship Him only. Zimri and Cozbi had sinned in a defiant manner against God. The punishment for defiant sin is death. (Numbers 15:30-31)

God is a holy God and only He is worthy to be worshiped. Man is only able to please Him through the work of His Son Jesus. We must believe that Jesus died on our behalf and when we sin we must repent so God can forgive us.

## Chapter 26

### *Verses 1-65*

Numbers began with a census of the people. (Numbers 1-4) Now after forty years there was to be another census taken. This census had the same purpose as the first that it was to count all the men who could be soldiers in the army of Israel. The Israelites were preparing to enter into the Promised Land. They would have to fight the Midianites and then the people who lived in the land of Canaan. They would need a strong army to do this.

There was another reason for the census. When the people settled in the Promised Land Moses would have to divide the land between the tribes. Moses would need to know the size of each tribe. God would order Moses to do this in verses 52-56.

With the exception of Caleb and Joshua all the Israelites from the first census had died. Those people were young when they had left Egypt but they had not been grateful to God for the mighty things He had done for them. They were complainers and disobedient and they had not trusted Him when He told them to go into the Promised Land. God said that they would die in the desert and their offspring would inherit the Promised Land.

We can look at the numbers from the first census and compare them to this census and see the difference between the tribes. We can see which tribes became larger and which became smaller over the 40 years that had passed.

Most of the tribes had increased throughout the years. Reuben's, Gad's, Ephraim's, and Simeon's tribes had become smaller. In verses 8-11 we see two possible events mentioned that may be the reason that their tribes became smaller. We see these events in Numbers Chapter 16.

We also know why Simeon's tribe became smaller because of the actions of Zimri who was one of the leaders. He led many astray and they sinned and they sinned in the same

# Durant Bible College

way that he did. It may also be that many more of his tribe died of the plaque as a result of their sin. Also Simeon, Gad, and Reuben were camped to the south and closer to the Moabites. So when the plaque came it would have effected them first and this plaque spread until Phinehas killed Zimri and Cozbi.

God wanted Moses to divide the land fairly between the tribes and this made a couple decisions to be made. One decision was how much each tribe needed based upon their size and which part of Canaan would their land be located.

God told Moses how to make these decisions. The bigger tribes receive more land than the smaller tribes. Second they would cast lots to decide the position of the tribe's territory. The uses of lots would give each one an equal opportunity. It is not clear exactly how the lots were cast. The belief was that God controlled the outcome and not just the luck of the draw.

Levi's tribe was not given a share of the land and neither were they allowed to join the army. Moses counted them separately as He had done in the first census.

## Chapter 27

### *Verses 1-4*

As in many societies there were mostly male leaders. When a man died his possessions would be given to his first born son as an inheritance. By custom the daughter would not receive a portion of the father's land or property. People would expect that the daughter would marry and share her husband's land. Until she married the other men in her family would be responsible for her welfare.

Also the records of the family line usually only records the male members of the family. As we see the example of that in the first verse of this chapter. Zelophehad did not have any sons and his daughters felt that it was unfair that their father's name would be withdrawn from the record and that they would not receive an inheritance from their father's land and property. So they went before Moses and the leaders to express their grievance. This was a brave act on their part as the women were expected to follow the customs obediently. They believed that the promise of God for the Promised Land was for both man and woman. Even the descendants of the rebellious Korah had a portion of land that was to be theirs. The daughters went to Moses to ask if it was not right for them to receive their father's inheritance.

### *Verses 5-7*

Moses believed that their request was important to the daughters and if he was to give them some land then the traditional rules would have to be changed. A decision like this would reach forward to the following generations so Moses went in prayer to ask God how He would decide in the matter.

### *Verses 8-11*

God told Moses to grant the request of the daughters of Zelophehad and allot them some land. God also gave Moses knew rules to deal with the inheritance of the father's property

# Durant Bible College

and possession in the future. This was so that the future generations would know what to do in this type of circumstance. These new laws would protect the names and property of future generations. Thus the property of a family would not be lost and the family name would be protected.

This showed that each family's share of the Promised Land was important to God. This also demonstrates the relationship between each families land and the covenant that God had made with Israel. Now each family would be protected from the loss of the family name and property.

## *Verses 12-23*

Moses because of his disobedience to God was not allowed to enter into the Promised Land. (Number 20-12) Here God reminds Moses of why he will not be allowed to enter, as well the rest of his generation. But did take Moses up to a high mountain top where he could look at the Promised Land.

Then Moses asked God to appoint a new leader for the nation of Israel. Moses knew that to take possession of the Promised Land that they would have to fight the people who were there now living in the land. They needed not only a strong leader but one who would care for them.

Often the comparison is made in the Old Testament that a leader is like a shepherd. The leader leads and guides his people. He provides for their needs and protects them from their enemies. This is what a good leader does for his people.

God told Moses to choose Joshua as the new leader of the Israelite people after the death of Moses. For many years now Joshua had been Moses' assistant. (Numbers 11:28) Joshua had already led the Israelite army in battle. (Exodus 17:9-13) And Joshua had already been in the land of Canaan along with eleven others to spy out the land. (Numbers 11:26-30) Joshua and Caleb were the only two men of Moses' generation that God would allow to enter the Promised Land. So God told Moses to place his hand on Joshua in front of Eleazar and the people to show them that Joshua would be their new leader.

Moses then did as the Lord had commanded him and placed his authority upon Joshua before Eleazar and the people of Israel. Israel would never have another leader like Moses. (Deuteronomy 34:9-12) The people of Israel would now have to respect and obey Joshua. Joshua would not have the same privilege as Moses and could not speak to God directly. Joshua would have to go to Eleazar the High Priest. Eleazar would not be allowed to speak to God either but would have to use the Urim and the Thummim. We are not exactly sure what these objects were or how they worked. The words "Urim and Thummim" mean perfect lights. So they may be two precious stones that the priest would use to ask God about important matters. Through this method God would guide Joshua in all his military decisions. This would be important as they took possession of the Promised Land. We learn and see here that Moses was a very humble man, he was unselfish and very generous. Moses was not thinking about his own death but concerned about what would happen to the Israelite people after his death. He knew that for them to

# Durant Bible College

take the Promised Land they would need a holy and strong leader. Moses was not jealous that it would not be he that would lead the people into the Promised Land but faithfully obeyed God. Moses wanted God to choose the new leader and he was glad to let the people know that it was Joshua who was God's choice.

## Chapter 28

In the next three chapters we see more rules and instructions from God. This may be a surprise to us as the Israelites were preparing to enter into the Promised Land. We would have expected the narrative to tell us how they went about doing that. Instead we are given a description of laws.

It may be another reminder that the new generation of Israelites must worship God daily. It is always important to remember what God has done for us. To thank God for the good gifts that He has given to us and for the Israelites the gift of the Promised Land. Their worship was not to be just before or during the taking of the Promised Land but that they were to always worship Him. They were God's people and they should never forget that.

### *Verses 1-8*

These first verses are for daily offerings to God. God did not want the people to worship Him on special occasions only but wanted to be worshiped daily. God is a full time God and expects full time worship. They would do this by daily sacrifices.

God does not change, He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. God wants us to worship Him every day not just on Sunday or special occasions. We no longer need to sacrifice animals in our worship as Jesus was our sacrifice on the cross for our benefit. But we need to please God and to please Him we must believe that Jesus died as our sacrifice to God for us. We must accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior and obey His commands. And we must put off the old sinful self and strive to become a new person through Jesus Christ. We are to grow into a likeness of Him. This is not something that we can do on our own, we must allow the Holy Spirit to control our thoughts and actions.

### *Verses 9-10*

The next two verses describe the offerings that they had to make on the Sabbath. The Sabbath was a special day when the people had to rest from their labors and keep the day holy. (Exodus 20:8-11)

### *Verses 11-15*

The calendar of the Israelites was divided into months. A new month occurred on the day of the new moon. (Leviticus 23) For the people this was a happy occasion. The Priest had to make special offerings and sacrifices to the Lord. These sacrifices were in addition to the daily sacrifices. They had to make a sin offering of a male goat that was used to make the people clean from their sin.

### *Verses 16-25*

The Passover was a very important festival for the Israelites. This was done to remind the people of how God had rescued them from the bondage of the Egyptian people. The

# Durant Bible College

Israelites were slaves in the land of Egypt and God had delivered them out of the land. This happened during the first month of the Jewish calendar. On the modern calendar this would be in the month of March or April.

The Festival of Unleavened Bread lasted for seven days and this was to remind them of the time they left Egypt. When they left Egypt they had to leave in a hurry and had no time to make bread with yeast in it.

The priest would offer the same sacrifices that they offered at the beginning of each month. They would also offer daily sacrifices for seven days of the festival. During the first and last day of the festival the people would meet together and worship God.

## *Verses 26-31*

Fifty days after the Passover the Israelites would celebrate the Harvest Festival. God had told the Israelites that the first of the harvest was His. The tribe of Levi would be allowed to eat this. (Numbers 8:12) The people would offer extra sacrifices to God for the harvest in the New Testament and this was called Pentecost. This is the day that God gave His Holy Spirit to the New Testament Church of Jesus Christ. (Acts 2:1-13)

The Harvest Festival was an opportunity for the people to thank God for the grain harvest. This festival happened before the fruit harvest. There was another festival at the end of the harvest. This festival was called "Festival of Tabernacles. (Numbers 29:12-13)

## *Chapter 29*

### *Verses 1-6*

Even though it is the seventh calendar month of the year the Israelites considered it the beginning of New Year. During this seventh month the Israelites would ask God to forgive them of their sins. (Verse 7)

On this special day the Israelites would sound their trumpets. On this day they did not work, they gathered together to worship God and to offer extra sacrifices.

### *Verses 7-11*

The tenth day of this seventh month was another special day and a day in which the people did not eat anything. They did not eat to express their sorrow from their sins against God. They humbled themselves before the Lord and did nothing in order to please themselves. It was a day in which no work was done but they gathered together to worship God.

In these verses we see the special sacrifices that they made to the Lord. It also shows that on this day their ceremonies were also special. This ceremony happened annually and only on this day. This was the day that the High Priest would enter into the Most Holy Place alone to splash the blood that had been offered from the sacrifices. The High Priest would also splash the blood outside of God's Tent and on the altar. He would then lay his hands on a live goat's head. He then would tell God of all the sins that the people had done throughout the year. The sins of the people would be placed upon the goat. After

# Durant Bible College

that a man would take the goat out into the desert and leave him there. By this special ceremony and sacrifices God would be able to forgive their sins. (Leviticus 16)

The Jews today still consider this festival to be an important event. It is also a reminder for the Christians that Jesus died as our sacrifice for sin. Jesus offered His own blood before His Father in Heaven for our atonement. There is no need for any other sacrifice. (Hebrews 9 and 10) Jesus paid the price for all sin and to receive forgiveness we must confess our sin and trust Jesus as our Lord and Savior. God then will forgive us completely.

## *Verses 12-40*

The Festival of Shelters was a time to celebrate the harvest of the grapes and olives. This is the greatest of the Jewish festivals and the instructions to the people can be found in Leviticus. (Leviticus 23:41) Also in Leviticus we find the instructions of how the Israelites were to live in shelters for the seven days of this festival. (Leviticus 23:39-43) This was a reminder to the people of their journey to the Promised Land when they had to live in tents and did not have structured buildings for houses.

During this Festival more male bulls and male sheep were sacrificed by the priest than all the other occasions. The most valuable animals that the Israelites had were the bulls and sheep. This was a time of great expense to the people because of the sacrifices but the people were happy to offer them to the Lord. The people want to express their gratefulness.

In addition to these offers the people could also give their own private offerings unto the Lord. They may be offerings for a particular reason or just to show their thankfulness for the blessing that the Lord had given to them.

## Chapter 30

### *Verses 1-16*

When we make a covenant with God it is a very serious matter to enter into. It would be better for a man not to make a promised to God than to make one and not keep it. (Ecclesiastes 5:5)

The Israelites would make a promise to God that they would do particular things. And sometimes they would make a promise not to do a particular thing. Sometimes they would promises a special sacrifice to God or a person would promise to fast for a certain time. If a man made a promise, then he was bound to that promise. But there were different rules for the women, because they lived under the authority of men. The Father had authority over his unmarried daughter and the husband had authority over his wife.

If an unmarried daughter made a promise, then the Father could cancel that promise. Likewise if a wife mad a promise, then the husband could cancel that promise. Even a promise that she had made before they were married. If a father or husband did not hear the woman make the promise, then when hearing about it he would either have to confirm or cancel it. This cancelation had to be made on the day that he heard of the promise.

# Durant Bible College

The father or the husband might not have known about the promise. Other people might have told them about it. But when they heard about it, they could cancel it. However, they had to cancel it quickly, on the same day when they heard about it first.

It is important for us to give a lot of consideration before we make a promise to God. We should never make a promise to God if we do not intend to keep it.

## Chapter 31

### *Verses 1-2*

In the 25<sup>th</sup> chapter of Numbers we read how the Midianites had caused the Israelites to worship their god Baal. The worship of false gods is forbidden by the Lord God Almighty and it is a very serious sin. The Midianites were coupled with the Moabites the same as they were in chapter 22.

God then commanded Moses to form an army and defeat the Midianites. These were the Midianites that lived in the area near to the Moabites. God had already told Moses that the Israelites were to oppose the Midianites and now was the right time to carry out that command from God. This would be the last time that Moses would lead God's people into battle.

### *Verses 3-6*

Each tribe of Israel was to choose 1000 men to fight in the war with the Midians. Some of the tribes were larger than others but each was to provide 1000 men. This would make the burden equal but Israel would be united in the effort. This war was ordained by God as He had commanded it. Therefore it was a holy war. The priest Phinehas was to lead the people into battle. Phinehas brought sacred items from God's Tent to show that God was with His people.

### *Verse 7*

A holy war had special rules that had to be followed. The Israelite army would have to kill all the male soldiers of the Midianites army. These Midianites were only the ones who lived near Moab but there were Midianites who lived in other areas. We see in later times that the Israelites and Midianites would face each other again in battle. (Judges 6-6)

### *Verse 8*

The five kings of the Midianites were probably the leaders that Balak had contacted in Numbers 22:4. Zur may have been Cozbi's father. (Numbers 25:15) The Prophet Balaam died in the war too. This was his punishment because it was he that had plotted against the Israelites. (Numbers 25) It was Balaam that had brought the Moabites and Midianites together in a plan against the Israelites. To die by the sword was not the way that Balaam had wanted, he did not wish to die in punishment. (Numbers 23:10)

### *Verses 9-12*

The army of Israel brought complete destruction to the Midianite towns and camps. They took all their possessions and all their animals. They took captive all their women and children. They gathered it all together and took it back to their camp. They may have

# Durant Bible College

intended that the women would become wives to them or would work them as slaves. Or perhaps they just wanted to have relations with them.

## *Verse 13-18*

The soldiers of Israel when they returned victorious thought that Moses would praise them. But Moses was angry with them because they had brought back the Midianite women with them. It was the very women that had caused the Israelites to sin against God and worship the Midianites god Baal. (Numbers 25:16-18) It seems that before the battle Moses had ordered that the soldiers were to kill all the people of Midian.

The soldiers did not do this and now Moses ordered them to kill all the women and their sons right away. Moses allowed the young virgin girls to live. They were not responsible for the sins committed at Peor. These girls were allowed to marry the Israelite men or they could be used as labor. They would be taught to follow the Israelites and to worship the One true God.

This may seem cruel to us now in this day but we must remember that this was a holy war and God had ordered the Israelites to punish the Midianites. The Midianites were being judged because they had persuaded the Israelites to reject God. The Israelites were God's people and they had to keep themselves clean and holy because God is a holy God.

It is a serious sin to worship a false god and the Midianites had caused the Israelites to do this. For this the Midianites were being punished by God in a holy war. This is why the Midianite women had to die also. This was the reason for the war that they would be punished for what they did at Peor. The Israelites had been punished as well. (Numbers 25:9)

Today we must remember that Jesus taught us to love our enemies. This was the practice of Jesus that He showed love towards His enemies. An example is that from the cross He asked His Father to forgive them. Jesus did not conquer with the sword but with love. So we must not practice the rules of a holy war today. The rules of holy war ceased for the Israelites after they had taken possession of the Promised Land.

## *Verses 19-24*

Earlier in Numbers we had read that anyone who touched a dead body was unclean. (Numbers 19:11-13) All the soldiers and their prisoners had to remain outside of the camp for seven days. On the third and seventh day the soldiers and their prisoners had to wash themselves/ they also had to wash their clothes and anything they had used during the battle. Eleazar told them to take all the metal objects and place them in the fire and then wash them with special water. This process made the object clean and after the seven day period they could enter into the camp.

## *Verses 25-47*

It is the custom to share the spoils of war with the people and the army that won the battles. There were only 12,000 soldiers in the Israelite army but there were 601,730 men

# Durant Bible College

who were capable to fight as an army. (Numbers 26:51) The fighting men should and deserve to be rewarded for their sacrifices. But also the people who support them need to benefit from the war efforts as well.

God told Moses to share the spoils equally between the people and the soldiers. Also from the share of the spoils would be a portion to go to the priest and to the Levite tribe. In reality what that portion was to the priest and Levites was the portion given to God.

God's portion was divided in this way. The priest received one five-hundredth of the portion that the soldiers received. The tribe of Levi received one fiftieth of the people's portion. When the people and the soldiers were giving their gifts from their portion of the spoils that were expressing their thanks to God. God had helped them defeat their enemies and protected them during the conflict.

## *Verses 48-54*

It seems here that the soldiers had kept all the gold and precious things for themselves and that which was shared with the people and the soldiers was the animals and the prisoners. But the soldiers brought to Moses all the gold and precious things they had taken. God had kept every soldier safe and not one was lost in the war. For this blessing it was essential to make a payment to God for His protection. (Exodus 30:11-16)

It was the soldiers who had fought the battles and had to kill the enemy. They were fighting under the order of God but still this act made the soldiers unclean. They had to make a special payment to God called the atonement payment. During the battle the soldiers had receive mercy from God which they did not deserve. God had allowed them to live through the war and they must make payment to show that they appreciated this.

Moses and Eleazar put this gold and precious metals in God's Tent as a memorial. God would remember the atonement payment from the soldiers. They had spilled human blood when they killed the Midianites. But they had paid the atonement payment and now God would have mercy on the Israelites.

## Chapter 32

### *Verses 1-5*

The Israelites were approaching the Promised Land from the south-east. They already controlled much of the land on the east side of the Jordan River. They were now preparing to cross over the Jordan and take possession of the Promised Land.

The tribes of Reuben and Gad wanted to settle on the east side of the Jordan River because it was good land for rising their livestock. So the leaders of Reuben and Gad went to Moses and the other leaders with their request to settle on the east side of the river.

### *Verses 6-15*

Moses became angry because these two tribes did not want to cross the river with the rest of Israel. Moses did not want to let them have their request. Moses was afraid that if

# Durant Bible College

their tribes did not cross over with the rest of Israel the others would not go either. Moses wanted all the tribes to cross the Jordan River together. Moses may have thought that the tribes of Reuben and Gad were afraid as their fathers were forty years earlier. Therefore, Moses, reminded the leaders of Reuben and Gad that their fathers had refused to enter the Promised Land and God punished them by not allowing them to ever enter the Promised Land. Moses did not want to see this happen again, he did not want to make God angry again at the Israelite people. So Moses refused to let them settle on the eastern side of the Jordan.

## *Verses 16-19*

Reuben and Gad's tribes promised that they would cross the Jordan and enter into the Promised Land with the rest of the tribes. That they were not afraid of the people who lived in Canaan. They promised to fight and defeat the people of Canaan along with the rest of Israel. But they wanted to build towns first on the east side of the Jordan and pens for their livestock. Then after they had helped defeat the Canaanites they wanted to return to the country on the eastside of the Jordan to live.

## *Verses 20-27*

Moses agreed with the tribes of Reuben and Gad and then reminded them that if they did not keep their promise that God would punish them. They would also have to live in the land of Canaan.

## *Verses 28-32*

Moses knew that he would die before the Israelites entered the Promised Land. (Numbers 27:12-14) So Moses gave instructions to Eleazar, Joshua and the other leaders about the agreement of the tribes of Reuben and Gad.

## *Verses 33-41*

Each of the tribes of Reuben and Gad built towns east of the Jordan River. Half of the tribes of Manasseh had land their also. Reuben settled in the land to the south and Gad to the north of Reuben and Manasseh to the north of Gad on the eastside of the Jordan River. (Joshua 13:15-33)

Reuben and Gad kept their promise and helped the other tribes defeat the people of Canaan. Once the Israelite nation had taken possession of the Promised Land Reuben and Gad returned to the eastside of the Jordan River. (Joshua 22)

## Chapter 33

### *Verses 1-49*

These verses mention 40 places that the Israelites camped on their way from Egypt to Moab before crossing the Jordan River. It does not included all the places that are recorded in the book of Exodus.

For the Israelites it was more than just a list of places it was a reminder that God had guided them on their journey. They had escaped from Egypt and for 40 years had traveled through the wilderness to the Promised Land. They were able to achieve this because it

# Durant Bible College

was God's plan for them, His people. Throughout their journey God had provided for them and protected them from their enemies. The Israelite people knew that God was with them always.

## *Verses 50-56*

The Israelites were on the border of the Promised Land across from the town of Jericho. They were making preparations to cross over. God now gave Moses the exact instructions as to how they were to do this.

The Israelites were to force the Canaanites to leave. The Israelites had to destroy all the idols that were in Canaan. Altars were built to the Canaanites false gods and they were to be destroyed too. This was important so that the Israelite people would not fall into idol worship. The Moabites had persuaded the Israelites to worship their false gods before and God did not want this to happen again. Therefore the Canaanites had to leave and all altars and false gods had to be destroyed. Then the land had to be divided amongst the tribes as God had ordered them. (Numbers 26:53-56)

The Israelites did not obey God completely. They did not force all the inhabitants of the land of Canaan to leave. And they eventually persuaded the Israelites to worship their gods. Many centuries later God punished them by allowing their enemies to take them as prisoners to a land far away called Babylon.

## Chapter 34

### *Verses 1-15*

In these passages we learn the actual borders of the Promised Land, the land that God had given to His people. This land that God had given them the Israelites controlled for only a short period of time. The time that they had the most control was several centuries later when King David and Solomon ruled. The land is more than political borders as it is the land that God gave to His chosen people. God had also told them how the land was to be divided between the tribes. As we read in the last Chapter Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh had settled on the east side of the Jordan outside of the Promised Land.

### *Verses 16-29*

The land was to be divided fairly between the tribes as God was a just God. God appointed leaders from each tribe to help Eleazar the High Priest and Joshua to distribute that land.

## Chapter 35

### *Verses 1-8*

When the land was to be divided between the tribes the Levite tribe was not to receive a portion in any particular area. God had ordered this in Numbers 18:20-24. (Deuteronomy 10:8-9) The tribe of Levi was special because they had special work to do. Instead of land they were allotted 48 towns to live in. the Levites were not the owners of the towns, as the tribes who gave them were. But they were towns in which they could live. The towns

# Durant Bible College

that were made available for the Levites to live had to have good pasture land around them. This was so the Levites could care for their cows and sheep. They could be used for their food as well as the food they received from the offerings. (Numbers 18:8-32)

These 48 towns were to be spread out through the Promised Land. The tribes which had received more land had to give more towns to the Levites. This demonstrates the justness of God in that He is concerned in all practical matters. Just as He cares about every part of our lives.

## *Verses 9-34*

Of the 48 towns that the Levites were given 6 of them were to be “safe towns.” If a person had killed another person he could flee to one of the safe towns to take refuge. The redeemer of blood had a right to kill the person who had killed. This was a law and the people expected it to happen (Genesis 9:6) Even if the killing was an accident the people still expected the blood redeemer to avenge the death.

Most of the time the redeemer of blood was a close relative of the person who had been killed. There were certain rights and duties for the blood redeemer. He could buy the land that belonged to the family and he could buy their slaves as well. The blood redeemer also had the right and the responsibility to kill the person’s murderer.

In these verses God has given the people a new law. Here God is allowing any person who has killed by accident to take refuge in a safe town. In the Safe town the people would arrange for a fair trial of the fugitive. At the trial it would be determined if the killing was an accident or intentional. If the killing was not intentional then the fugitive was not guilty of murder.

## *Verses 16-24*

In these verses the difference is given between murder and a death by accident. If the death was an accident then the redeemer of blood could not kill him. But the one who killed by accident would have to remain in the safe town until the High Priest had died. The death of the High Priest removed the uncleanness of the one who did the killing by accident. Once the High Priest had died then that person could return to his home. But, if he did this the redeemer of blood had a right to kill him.

If the one caused the death on purpose then he was judged as a murderer. This being the case the redeemer of blood would have to kill him. The redeemer of blood was carrying out the judgement of God.

If one was to be declared guilty of murder, then there had to be two witnesses to testify that the man had killed with intention. There had to be clear evidence that a murder had occurred. These were not rules that gave a person the right to take revenge. The purpose of the rules was to protect innocent people who had not killed with intent to commit murder. The redeemer of blood could not kill a person unless he was judged guilty or he would be judged a murderer. This new law protected a person who had caused a

# Durant Bible College

death by accident. It also showed that death was a serious matter even if caused by accident.

God also made it clear that blood also makes the land unclean, therefore, any death, accident or of murder, made Israel's land unclean. Therefore the Israelites had to punish anyone who caused a murder. This would deter people from killing and the land of Israel would be clean.

This new law did not allow the family of a dead person to take revenge. With the law there was a proper arrangement for a trial. There had to be witnesses at that trial. And there were safe towns that would protect the person until their trial. There was also proper punishment for one who was guilty of murder.

## Chapter 36

### *Verses 1-4*

God had made a change of the law for property rights of the women in a previous chapter. The change was made because the daughters of Zelophehad and no sons and his daughters would not receive an inheritance. The law was changed that if a father had no sons his daughters would receive an inheritance from the father's property. (Numbers 27)

Now there was a problem that if a women received an inheritance and then married outside of her father's family the inherence would follow to another family and tribe. Because of this the leaders of the Gilead's clan and Manasseh's tribe went to Moses and the other leaders.

Also in the year of Jubilee the land being able to be bought back would not work properly. Married women could not own property so the land would belong to the husband and be a part of his tribe's inheritance. It could not be bought back by the tribe of the wife.

### *Verses 5-12*

Moses gave God's answer to the leaders of Gilead. God gave the rule that daughters who had an inheritance had to marry within their own tribes. This would solve the problem as the land would remain in the tribe.

### *Verse 13*

The Israelites had lived in the desert for 40 years and now were preparing to enter into the Promised Land. During the 40 years God had protected and provided for His people and had lead His people to the land that He was going to give them.

When the Israelites left the land of Egypt that had no land that was their own. Now at the end of their journey they still were living in camps and housed in tents in a country called Moab. Through their obedience to God they would possess their own land in Canaan. This was their Promised Land from God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God always keeps His promises.

For all the years that the Israelites traveled through the wilderness to the Promised Land God guided, protected, and cared for them. God wants to guide us through our lives too.

# Durant Bible College

He wants to lead us to the Promised Land of our heavenly home in His Kingdom. When we learn God's Word and make application to our lives we learn more about Him and ourselves. When we live in obedience to God He can make His plans happen for us. God will guide us through this world if we will follow His lead. God will protect us and He will provide for us. When we place our trust in Him completely He will be with us. (Joshua 1:5; Matthew 28:20) God always keeps His promises.