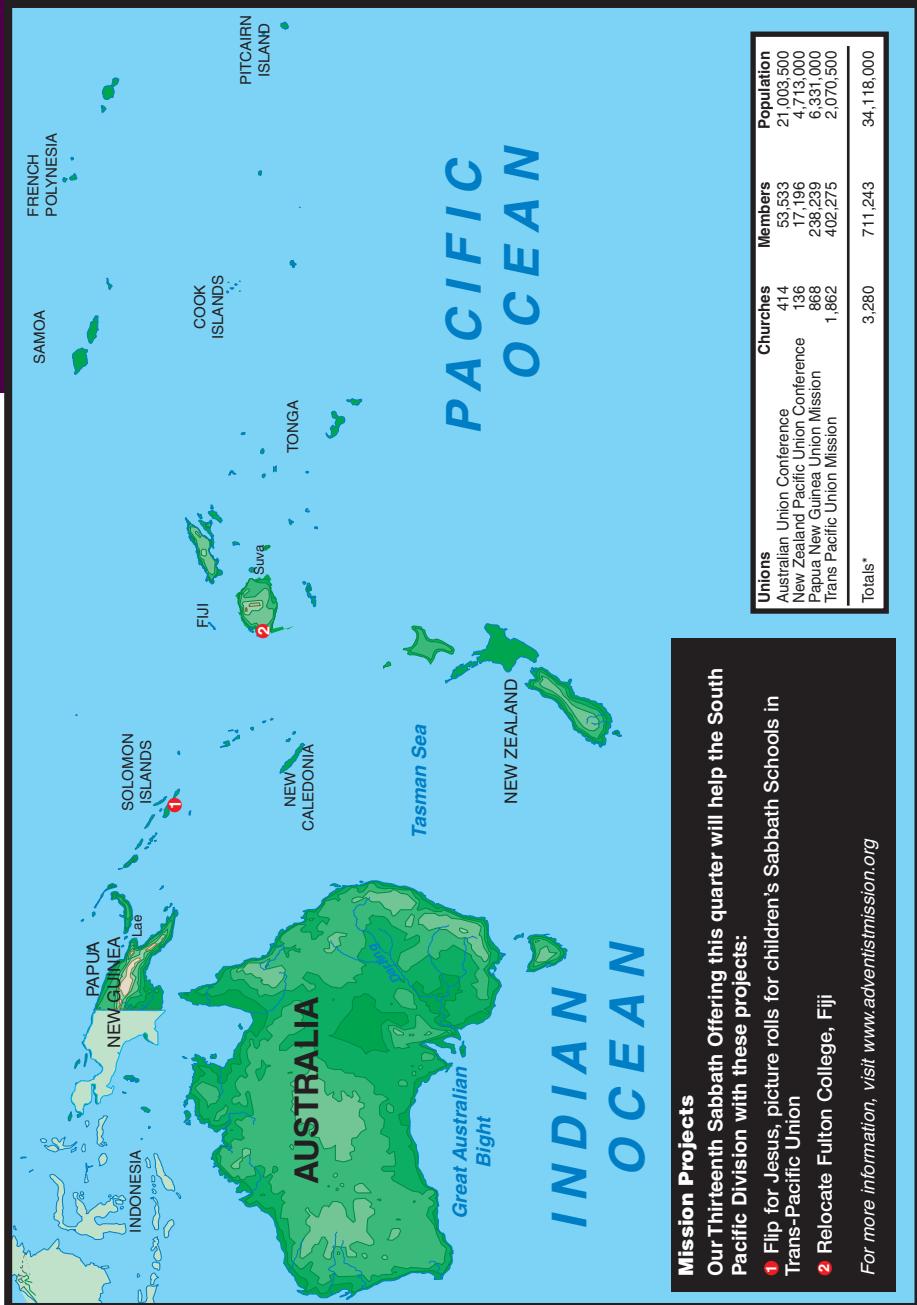


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ADULT
SABBATH SCHOOL
BIBLE STUDY GUIDE
Oct • Nov • Dec 2009

People *on the Move:* *The Book of* Numbers

ADULT SABBATH SCHOOL BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE: THE BOOK OF NUMBERS Oct • Nov • Dec 2009



SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH

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Editorial Office 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904
Come visit us at our Web site: <http://www.absg.adventist.org>

Principal Contributor
Frank B. Holbrook

Editor
Clifford R. Goldstein

Associate Editor
Soraya Homayouni

Publication Manager
Lea Alexander Greve

Editorial Assistant
Sharon Thomas-Crews

Pacific Press® Coordinator
Paul A. Hey

Art Director and Illustrator
Lars Justinen

Concept Design
Dever Designs

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People on the Move:

In the book of Exodus, the Lord described the birth of a nation. Exodus and Leviticus detailed the rules and laws for this nation. In the book of Numbers (the topic for our quarter), we see another dimension of this nation, that of God's people on the move.

But not just moving anywhere. They are to go and take possession of the land promised to them—promised not because of their inherent holiness, not because of their inherent goodness, but because of God's words to their father Abraham centuries earlier: "For all the land which

"Perhaps the most important lesson in Numbers is that God will fulfill His promises."

thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee" (*Gen. 13:15–17*).

Directly tied to this promise is another aspect of this nation, that of the nation as an army, a mighty army of God, a conquering army that cannot be defeated by external enemies because the Lord, the Creator of heaven and earth, is in their midst.

And because of God's presence, they were not only an army, they were a holy army and thus were expected to act like one, as well.

Unfortunately, that isn't exactly what happened. This mighty, powerful, and conquering army, hovering on the edges of the Promised Land, was defeated, not by the Canaanites but from within. Satan knew that as long as they obeyed the Lord, as long as they trusted in God and lived by faith and obedience to His commandments, he would be helpless against them. All he could do, therefore, was use them against themselves.

And it worked. No wonder Ellen White warned: "We have far more to fear from within than from without. The hindrances to strength and success are far greater from the church itself than from the world."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 122.

The Book of Numbers

Hence, it should be obvious that, as a people on the move, as a people seeking to reach the Promised Land, as a people called out by God, we can learn from the book of Numbers. We can learn from how God organized the camp and assigned duties to the priests and the Levites. We can learn from the festivals and ordinances of the sanctuary service. We can learn from their cries about returning to Egypt, which they called “a land that floweth with milk and honey.” We can learn from Miriam’s leprosy, from the twelve spies, from Caleb’s faith, from the intercession of Moses, from Korah’s rebellion, and even from Balaam’s recalcitrant donkey.

“These things happened to them as an example, and they have been written down as a warning to us, upon whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore, whoever thinks he is standing secure should take care not to fall. No trial has come to you but what is human. God is faithful and will not let you be tried beyond your strength; but with the trial he will also provide a way out, so that you may be able to bear it” (*1 Cor. 10:11–13, NAB*). These words contain not just a warning but a promise, as well.

Despite the setbacks, the delays, and the devastating judgments, perhaps the most important lesson in Numbers is that God will fulfill His promises. Whether He will fulfill them through us, despite us, or without us at all is, indeed, another question entirely. But they will be fulfilled, and that’s for sure.

In the context of the Cross and the New Covenant, the book of Numbers reveals that God has already made His choice regarding us. The only question left is, What will be our choice regarding Him?

From 1981 to 1990 the late Frank B. Holbrook was an associate director of the Biblical Research Institute at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A.

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A New Order



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: Gen. 15:14–16; Lev. 10:1–11; Numbers 1–4; Jer. 23:23, 24; John 14:15–18, 23.

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

A Christian struck up a conversation with another man, a professional biologist. Looking for a way to witness, the Christian asked, “Don’t you see the hand of a Creator when you study the things that you do?”

Without missing a beat, the biologist answered, “Wherever you look, either outwardly or inwardly, you see order.”

However much our world has been damaged by sin, we still can see the working of our Creator in the design and order of the natural world. Even one fanatical Darwinist was forced to admit that nature is something that gives “the illusion of design.”

Illusion? Please. Design and order are real, and they represent the hand of our Maker.

But God’s order doesn’t end merely with nature. It is seen also in His dealing with His covenant people, the Israelites, even as they wandered in the wilderness. This week we’ll look, firsthand, at how God organized His people for their sacred calling, and we’ll draw some lessons for ourselves today.

*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 3.

Organizing the Army

Having miraculously escaped from Egypt, the multitudes of Israel flowed into the wilderness of Sinai. Encamped around the mountain, they heard the voice of God proclaiming His will (*Exodus 20*). Despite such an incredible manifestation of God's power, some fell away and worshiped the golden calf (*Exodus 32*). After that debacle, the repentant nation spent time building a portable sanctuary (*Exod. 25:8*). The work was completed on the first day of the first month in the second year (*Exod. 40:17*).

It was in the following month that the Lord proceeded to organize the nation more thoroughly (*Num. 1:1*) than it previously had been. And it's at this point, with the new organization, with this new order, that the book of Numbers picks up the sacred story of God's working with His covenant people.

What kind of census did the Lord ask Moses and Aaron to draw up, and why? *Num. 1:2, 3.*

The Israelites were not a warlike nation. Their occupation had been that of shepherds, cattle herding (*Gen. 47:3*). Furthermore, at this point they were recently freed slaves, without weapons or training for war. It may seem strange for the Lord now to organize them into troops. But it must be remembered that their task involved the displacement of several nations of the most wicked and corrupt people in the Near East, including the Amorites and Canaanites. Israel would serve as God's executioners of these nations who had filled the cup of their transgressions (*Gen. 15:14–16*). Israel was now a theocracy, directed by God Himself, and they were a people, a mighty army, on the move.

Read Genesis 15:14–16 (see also Deut. 9:5). What's implied here? How can these texts help us understand Israel's wars with the Amorites?

At the time of Abraham, God would not allow the Amorites to be destroyed. Here God revealed His long-suffering. "The Amorites were at enmity against His law; they believed not in Him as the true and living God; but among them were a few good persons, and for the sake of these few, He forbore long."—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1093.

Many folk are troubled by the Israelite destruction of these people, and understandably so. Why, in cases such as this, in which there is much we don't understand, do we simply need to go by faith, trusting in the goodness of God, who has revealed Himself to us in Jesus? *John 14:9.*

The Presence of the Lord

To what task was the tribe of the Levites appointed? *Num. 1:50–54.*

Moses pitched the portable tabernacle in the middle of Israel's encampment. The Levites pitched their tents around it, on all four sides. Their presence acted as a kind of barrier, protecting the place where God manifested His presence.

Why was it set up this way? The Bible doesn't come right out and say, yet some important lessons can be learned from this arrangement.

Yahweh, the living God, was in their midst. He, the Creator, was among His people—so what could overcome them if they remained faithful? And yet, at the same time, they pitched their tents at a distance from the tabernacle (*Num. 2:2*), and that was because He was holy, and so they, as sinners, as fallen beings, could come only so close. Thus, on one hand, they had the reality of God's closeness and compassionate care; at the same time, they constantly were reminded of His greatness and holiness and that only through mediation could they, as sinners, approach a holy God.

What do other Bible writers say about God's distance (transcendence) and nearness (immanence) to humanity? *Ps. 139:1–10; Isa. 57:15; Jer. 23:23, 24; John 14:15–18, 23.*

"At all times and in all places, in all sorrows and in all afflictions, when the outlook seems dark and the future perplexing, and we feel helpless and alone, the Comforter will be sent in answer to the prayer of faith. Circumstances may separate us from every earthly friend; but no circumstance, no distance, can separate us from the heavenly Comforter. Wherever we are, wherever we may go, He is always at our right hand to support, sustain, uphold, and cheer."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 669, 670.

In what ways have you experienced the reality of God's presence, His compassionate care, and closeness? On the other hand, what things are you doing that keep you from an even deeper intimacy with God?

Under the Standards

“So the Israelites did everything the Lord commanded Moses; that is the way they encamped under their standards, and that is the way they set out, each with his clan and family” (*Num. 2:34, NIV*).

Read Numbers 2. Talk about organized religion! What is one thing that becomes apparent about how the Israelites were supposed to live?

The government of Israel was characterized by a very precise organizational structure, seen, for example, in how the Lord had arranged for the camp itself to be ordered and where the people were to pitch their tents. The Hebrew camp was separated into three great divisions, each having its appointed position in the encampment, all based on family and tribal ties.

The position of each tribe in the camp also was specified. Each was to march and to encamp beside its own standard. Nothing was left to chance. The Lord carefully and precisely had organized the nation. And though they were one people, their distinctive family connections were not broken.

Read Numbers 2:34. What does this tell us about how, despite the clear organizational pattern, the Lord left room for the distinctness and uniqueness of the various tribes? What lessons can we draw from that for ourselves?

Why is it so important for the church today to be organized, as well? What happens when folks are left to do their own thing? Why is that so often a recipe for chaos and deception? How has belonging to an organized body helped you in your spiritual walk?

Call to Ministry

In memory of their deliverance from Egyptian slavery, the death of the Egyptian firstborn, and the deliverance of their own under the sign of the blood, God requested Israel's firstborn to be dedicated to Him (*Exod. 13:2, 12–15*).

Giving God our firstborn? That's very intense. What powerful lesson should we take from this about how much we owe the Lord for our redemption and deliverance? Why, in this context, are pride and self-sufficiency so sinful?

At Mount Sinai, the Lord did an exchange for the firstborn of all Israelites. Instead of them, He would take the Levites in their place (*Num. 3:12, 13*). This act, then, required the numbering of the Levites, who until that point had not been numbered with the rest of Israel. Moses is told to number the Levite males from a month upward (*vss. 14, 15*). To make the exchange, Moses then counted the male firstborn Israelite children of a month old and older. Their total came to 22,273—that is, 273 more firstborn Israelites than there were Levites (*vss. 39, 43*).

What were the extra Israelites to do for their redemption? To whom was it given? *Num. 3:46–51*.

The Lord also dedicated the Levites to Aaron and his priestly sons and descendants; they were to assist in the worship of God and the care of the tabernacle. In a sense, they were called to the ministry of the church in the wilderness.

Once the Hebrews reached the Promised Land, the Levites continued to be attached to the sanctuary in a variety of tasks (*1 Chron. 23:27–32*). Scattered through the tribal areas, some became teaching Levites (*2 Chron. 17:7–9*); others became judges (*2 Chron. 19:8–11*), instructing the people in the ways of God.

In what ways can you see the Cross, the substitutionary death of Jesus (*John 3:16*), prefigured in these substitutionary rituals? What does it mean that Jesus substituted Himself for you? How should knowledge of this reality change your life?

Protecting the Sacred

In establishing the system of worship at Sinai, God selected one family of the Levites to function as priests. This work is laid out in Numbers 4. Moses consecrated Aaron as high priest and his four sons—Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar—as assistant priests. The rest of the tribe of Levi would help the others but would not function as priests. It is obvious that every working Levite had his place and service, harmoniously working together to preserve and protect the sacredness of Israel's worship system.

No question, the Levites had been given a solemn responsibility. The same with the sons of Aaron, who would function as priests before the Lord in the tabernacle. Think about what they were called to do. The Lord Himself, the Creator, revealed His presence among them in the sanctuary (*Num. 14:10, 11*), a powerful reminder to them that their safety and security existed only in Him, the One who had redeemed them from Egypt. These priests were the mediators between a Holy God and a fallen people. In their roles, too, of course, they were symbols of Jesus, our true High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary (*Hebrews 8*).

Read Leviticus 10:1–11. What happened, and what lessons are there for us today?

It is hard to imagine that these young men, given such a sacred responsibility and who already had been given so much (*see Exod. 24:9–11*), would violate so openly an express command of God. However hard and harsh their punishment might seem to us, it only underscores the reality of just how sacred the responsibility given them was. No doubt others got the message about how seriously the Lord expected His commandments regarding the sanctuary to be carried out.

“To handle sacred things as we would common matters is an offense to God; for that which God has set apart to do His service in giving light to this world is holy. Those who have any connection with the work of God are not to walk in the vanity of their own wisdom, but in the wisdom of God, or they will be in danger of placing sacred and common things on the same level, and thus separate themselves from God.”—Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 639.

Read carefully Leviticus 10:10. How can we today distinguish between the holy and the common, between the clean and unclean? Bring your answer to class on Sabbath.

Further Study: The theme of God's holiness runs like a silver thread throughout Scripture. Define it. What relation does it have to the believer? *Exod. 28:36; Lev. 11:44, 45; Isa. 6:1–7; Heb. 12:14; 1 Pet. 1:15, 16.*

"Angels work harmoniously. Perfect order characterizes all their movements. The more closely we imitate the harmony and order of the angelic host, the more successful will be the efforts of these heavenly agents in our behalf. If we see no necessity for harmonious action, and are disorderly, undisciplined, and disorganized in our course of action, angels, who are thoroughly organized and move in perfect order, cannot work for us successfully. They turn away in grief, for they are not authorized to bless confusion, distraction, and disorganization. All who desire the cooperation of the heavenly messengers must work in unison with them. Those who have the unction from on high will in all their efforts encourage order, discipline, and union of action, and then the angels of God can cooperate with them."—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 28.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Talk about the idea of organized religion. Why are some people so hostile to it? Why, though, is it necessary? At the same time, what are the potential problems that it brings? How can we learn to work better with the church system, despite the problems that arise?
- ❷ Talk about your answer to Thursday's question. In class, make a list of what is holy and what is common. How can we know the difference? In what ways does our culture impact our understanding of these things? Or our education? How, for instance, might the idea of melding Darwinian natural selection with our faith be a mixture of the sacred with the profane? What other examples can you think of?
- ❸ Dwell more on the idea of substitution, as revealed in Wednesday's lesson study. Why is this concept so central to the whole plan of salvation? How did, and still does, Jesus function as our Substitute, and why is that so important?

Summary: God is a God of order. Once the tribes were assembled in the wilderness before Mount Sinai, He began to organize them around the tabernacle. First, Israel's armies were organized, and the encampment of each tribe was selected, as was their order of march. The Levites encamped as a barrier around the tabernacle and were given specific directions regarding their service in transporting it and erecting it. The Holy God was in their midst as Israel was on the move.

The Eager Student

by CHARLOTTE ISHKANIAN

Lijalem grew up as a farmer's son in Ethiopia. He was very bright, but his parents saw no need to send him to high school. After all, why would a farmer need so much education? But Lijalem had a burning desire to study, and because his parents recognized his special gifts, they allowed him to enter secondary school. He was older than most students in high school, but he was determined to do well.

The secondary school was some distance from home, so Lijalem rented a small house in which to live. Every weekend he returned home to see his parents, to serve in his local church, and to help on the farm. When he returned to school, his mother made sure that he had enough food to last a week.

Lijalem noticed that many students at the secondary school were Seventh-day Adventists. He had seen Adventist churches in his neighborhood and wondered what these people believed. He listened as students shared their beliefs with him. He was curious about the Sabbath, for traditionally his church also worshiped on the Sabbath. But over the years the tradition was set aside in most congregations. Only a few old priests remembered worshiping on Sabbath.

Lijalem's Adventist friends invited him to visit the Adventist church in town, and he accepted the invitation. Soon he was attending regularly. His friends taught him how to keep the Sabbath, and in time he joined the baptismal class.

He began telling his family and friends what he had discovered. Some, including his father, thought he was crazy; but others listened to what he said. However, when he was baptized, his parents sent him away from his home.

His friends saw how he was treated and noticed that he did not retaliate when treated badly. One by one those with whom he had shared his faith followed him to the Adventist Church. Today 18 former members of his former church have joined the Adventist Church. All of these have experienced difficulties similar to Lijalem. But they are not discouraged.

Lijalem says that it was the youth of the secondary school that he attended who prepared the way for him to become an Adventist. After finishing high school, Lijalem became a lay evangelist. Because of his love for sharing the gospel, he has been assigned to serve as a Global Mission pioneer in western Ethiopia. In the first nine months in the field, Lijalem led 15 people to the Lord.

Some 85 percent of the Adventists in western Ethiopia are young people. Adventist youth are reaching out to their friends and bringing them to Christ. Our mission offering helps provide materials and support for these young people as they share their faith. Thank you!

CHARLOTTE ISHKANIAN is editor of Adventist Mission.

Preparing a People



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: Numbers 5; 6; Ezek. 33:15; Luke 19:8, 9; Acts 17:28; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20.

Memory Text: “Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth” (3 John 2).

Unless you have been a refugee, you're probably not going to relate completely to the situation of the children of Israel. Of course, unlike many refugees today, the children of Israel wanted to leave Egypt, as opposed to being driven out. Yet still, it must have been disconcerting to have left the only land they knew and to be wandering in a hostile desert.

It's in this context that we better can understand some of the rules and regulations given to these people, rules that would help them survive in the wilderness. At the same time, though some things were ended after they finally entered the Promised Land (such as the manna), many regulations remained because in them were principles that, if followed, greatly would have blessed their lives in a world filled with sin and idolatry.

This week we'll look at some of the provisions that the Lord instituted for His ancient people, which includes such things as how to deal with some sickness and disease, how to deal with marital infidelity (or the fear of it), and how to deal with the personal clashes that inevitably arise when people live together.

*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 10.

Disease Control

Imagine the scene of ancient Israel in the wilderness desert before Mount Sinai. Thousands upon thousands of nomads with their cattle, miles away from any kind of civilization. What kind of medical facilities did they have at their disposal? None. And considering how medicine often was practiced back then, they might have been better off anyway. Nevertheless, in such an environment, how easily an epidemic of one sort or another could spread.

What three classes of people did the Lord command Moses to “put out of the encampment”? *Num. 5:1–4.*

Apparently, anyone with a serious skin disease might be designated a leper. True leprosy (now called Hansen’s disease) also was included in this class. Any infectious skin disease would be regarded as a danger to the community. So, also a bloody flux or discharge or the handling of a decaying corpse in the desert heat might spread disease of epidemic proportions through the camp. Both men and women were expelled until, if possible, they improved in health. The Lord didn’t hate these physically impaired persons, but for the sake of the health of the nation, He separated them to an area outside the camp, a kind of quarantine. Even in modern times we have special wards in hospitals for persons with infectious diseases.

For what theological reason were these impaired persons removed for a time from the nation’s encampment? *Num. 5:3, last phrase.* What spiritual message can we take away from this for ourselves?

Look at this whole thing from a spiritual perspective, from the idea of defilement, of sin, and of what sin does to us. What believer hasn’t experienced the reality of how sin separates a person from the sense of God’s presence? Who hasn’t experienced the sense of spiritual isolation that comes from being defiled before God?

What things are we watching, reading, eating, doing, or even thinking that make us feel as if we are exiled spiritually out of the camp? More important, what’s the only solution to this problem? *1 John 1:8, 9.*

Social Control

It is difficult for us today to grasp the enormous problems entailed in the migration of thousands of people together with herds and flocks of cattle and sheep. Now they are packed into the wilderness before Mount Sinai. The physically impaired had been removed for the sake of the nation's health. But another serious problem needed to be addressed. Although they were being instructed to "love" one another (*Lev. 19:18*), as anyone who lives in a community knows, that's not always so easy. Even in the best of times, conflicts arise.

When an Israelite sinned against a person in the camp, whom did he or she really sin against? *Num. 5:6; see also Ps. 51:3, 4.* **How do we understand this concept?**

To wrong our neighbor is to sin against God Himself. In one sense this shouldn't be that hard to understand. We all belong to God; we are all His property, both by creation and by redemption (*1 Cor. 6:19, 20; Acts 17:28*). If someone were to come onto your property and damage it, the sin wouldn't be just against the property itself as much as against you, the one who owns it. It works the same way when we sin against someone else; we are sinning against the One who created that person and who, at the cross, bought that person back with His own blood. No wonder, then, that the Bible expresses this idea that by sinning against others we are sinning against God Himself.

What was the guilty person to do? *Num. 5:6–8; see also Ezek. 33:15 and Luke 19:8, 9.*

Though the principle of righting wrongs with other people still applies today, how do we right the wrong we have done to God, against whom we've sinned, as well? The fact is, we can't. It's way too late for us to make ourselves right with God. That's, of course, why Jesus came: to set us right with God, not through anything we could do but only through what Jesus has done for us (*Col. 1:20*).

Keeping in mind what Jesus has done to make things right between you and God, what do you need to do to make things right with someone whom you might be in conflict with?

Marital Fidelity

The Creator established the marriage bond in Eden by creating humankind in two sexes and celebrating the first union (*Gen. 1:26–28, 2:21–24*). Two precepts of the Decalogue, the seventh and the tenth, protected the institution of marriage. In the theocracy, infidelity was punishable by the death of both parties (*Lev. 20:10*).

Read Numbers 5:11–31. How are we to understand this today?

The Lord, obviously, wanted to stress how seriously He took the whole question of marital infidelity, which is by far the greatest threat to family stability.

In this procedure, which obviously included a supernatural element—the focus was on the drink. The water was holy; so was the ground from which the priest took a pinch of dust. Holy water and dust didn't embitter the water; it simply underscored its holiness. The written judgments/curses that were washed off into the water symbolized its potential bitterness. “Everything depended on whether the woman was holy (guiltless) or unholy (guilty). If the holy met the unholy, judgment was inevitable. If the holy met the guiltless, harmony prevailed.”—Raymond Brown, *The Message of Numbers* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 2002), p. 46.

This procedure (strange to us) was not an instance of magic. Rather, it was a concrete visual aid that ex-slaves could grasp. It was not the water but the Lord who read the wife's heart and who punished or cleared her.

How was this procedure also a protection for the woman, who could be the victim of a husband's unwarranted jealousy?

However strange this whole thing seems to us today, the point it brings out is how important the marriage vow is in the eyes of God. God alone knows just how much pain, suffering, and damage has been caused by marital infidelity by one partner or another. What a tragedy that in so many societies marriage vows seem to hold about as much sanctity as a handshake.

What things can you do, what choices can you make, to enable you to have a pure heart?

Consecrated Commoners

God purposed to organize Israel in the broadest sense to be for Him “a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (*Exod. 19:6*). They would thus witness to the nations far and near about the truths concerning the living God and the Creator of all things. However, at Sinai the Lord especially appointed priests and Levites to serve Him in connection with the sanctuary-tabernacle worship.

What vow could a commoner (woman or man) take to devote a specific period of time to the Lord? *Num. 6:1–21*. What spiritual lessons can we take from this for ourselves today, in the context of deepening our own spirituality and our commitment to the Lord?

A Nazirite was a “consecrated one” who purposed to dedicate himself or herself to the Lord for a varying length of time. A parent could dedicate a child to be a lifetime Nazirite. For example, Samson’s mother dedicated her son according to the instruction of an angel, with the intent that he would begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines (*Judg. 13:2–5, 16:17*). Likewise, the angel Gabriel instructed Zacharias to rear John (the Baptist) as a Nazirite for his service as the forerunner of the Messiah (*Luke 1:15*). Hannah also vowed Samuel to be a lifelong Nazirite (*1 Sam. 1:10, 11*).

Interesting, too, is the injunction about drink. The vineyard, and its products of juice, wine, and grapes represented to the ancient mind a cultivated land of farms and homesteads. When the Nazirites wouldn’t drink from the vineyard, they were expressing in a concrete way their belief that they were heading to a better land. The vineyard symbolized the settled life; the Nazirite, however, by the way he lived, showed in a concrete way a desire for “a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city” (*Heb. 11:16*).

How do we, as Seventh-day Adventists, live in anticipation of a better country, regardless of whatever country we are living in now? What are concrete ways that we can protect ourselves from getting so caught up with our vineyards here that we lose sight of our final destination?

The Aaronic Prayer

“The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace” (*Num. 6:24–26*).

After reading carefully the above blessing, answer the following questions:

- How is the nature of the Godhead hinted at here? *Matt. 28:19.*

- How does this prayer reveal Israel’s total dependence upon God? *John 15:5.*

- What significance is there to the fact that the priests themselves were the ones to pray this prayer on behalf of the people? *Heb. 7:25.*

There are several points of interest here. Each of the lines begins with God’s personal, covenant name (Yahweh, Lord). The congregation addressed is in the singular number. That is, each person was talked to as an individual. Each person could know what the blessing meant personally, individually. That is, no matter how much of a community Israel was, each one could have a personal relationship with the Lord.

Israel had no Scriptures at this time. The Lord’s blessings would be seen in their deliverance from slavery, the crossing of the Red Sea, and the provisions made for their food and water. His keeping power would have been seen by His presence in the sanctuary, whose ritual—burnt offering, incense, and menorah—always burned day and night.

Here is clear evidence that Old Testament religion was all of grace (*Gal. 3:7–14; Heb. 4:1, 2*). The third line assures the believer of God’s smile and peace (see *Matt. 11:28–30*).

How have you experienced the blessings listed above in your own life? What things might you be doing that are making it difficult to see these things realized in your walk with God? What changes, no matter how painful, must you make?

Further Study: “Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, ‘Take me, O Lord, as wholly Thine. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service. Abide with me, and let all my work be wrought in Thee.’ This is a daily matter. Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day. Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 70.

“Circumstances may separate friends; the restless waters of the wide sea may roll between us and them. But no circumstances, no distance, can separate us from the Saviour. Wherever we may be, He is at our right hand, to support, maintain, uphold, and cheer. Greater than the love of a mother for her child is Christ’s love for His redeemed. It is our privilege to rest in His love, to say, ‘I will trust Him; for He gave His life for me.’”—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 72.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Though we all know the dangers of getting too caught up in the things of this world, and losing sight of our real home, is it possible to be so wrapped up in our desire for heaven that we shirk our responsibilities here? If so, how? How can we strike the right balance in this important topic? What examples can you think of in which people have gone too far in their anticipation of heaven at the expense of their responsibilities here?

- ❷ What are some of the stresses and strains that your particular society places on marriage? How can your church, in that society, deal with these challenges in a way that protects the God-given sanctity of marriage?

- ❸ In class, talk about situations in which you were wrong, or wronged someone else, and how you were able to resolve the problems. What lessons did you learn from these experiences? How do you deal with situations in which it appears that the wrongs are all but unforgivable?

Summary: The Lord would have His people happy and at peace. Physical and spiritual wholeness are obtained by loving obedience to His laws of life, kind relationships with spouse and neighbors, and daily consecration of the will to the Father. This doesn’t mean that life is always easy in this sin-cursed earth, but it can be improved greatly if we seek to walk in His paths.

God's Thousand Ways

by SUMIKO SAKAMOTO

God has a thousand ways to lead someone to Jesus. I know because He used several ways to lead me to Him.

Like most people in Japan, I was not a Christian. In university my shorthand teacher encouraged us to attend lectures and take shorthand notes to practice. So when I saw an advertisement about a seminar in town, I decided to go. I didn't know that the meetings were religious meetings. I simply sat down and waited for the speaker to begin.

I found the lectures interesting and attended every night. After all, it was homework. When a girl my age asked if I would like to study the Bible, I agreed. As I studied the Voice of Prophecy correspondence course I became convinced that God exists and that He loves me and wants a relationship with me. The Bible course led me to the Adventist church, and I was baptized.

It was easy to be a Christian in church, but outside of church I had problems and began to doubt whether I really was a Christian. Eventually I stopped attending church, but I never stopped believing in God.

After university I found a job. A colleague, a young man, visited my home and saw the Voice of Prophecy course on my bookshelf. He looked through the lessons and asked if what they said was true. I assured him that it was true, and he asked if he could study the Bible lessons. I offered to take him to evangelistic meetings, and because he wanted to attend all of them, I felt obligated to go as well. Once more I was grounded in my faith. My friend asked to be baptized.

I attended the church because my friend wanted to go. We found the young people's class enjoyable. As we grew in faith, we also discovered we were more than friends. Eventually we married.

My husband was active in the church in addition to his heavy work schedule. One day he suddenly became seriously ill and was rushed to the hospital. I rushed to the hospital, praying all the way that he would be alive when I arrived. He was, but the doctors said he was critically ill.

During the next few weeks I prayed constantly for him. Prayer strengthened my faith and expanded to include family, friends, and colleagues. I realized how fragile life is, and daily I committed my life and my family to God.

I realize that God turned my husband's illness into a blessing. We have learned that our lives are in God's hands. Now we host a small-group meeting in our home where others can learn God's precious message of love. Thank you for giving your mission offerings so that people such as we can experience and share God's love.

SUMIKO SAKAMOTO *lives in Osaka, Japan.*

Worship and Dedication



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: Exod. 25:22; Numbers 7; 8; Zech. 4:1–6, 11–14; Rev. 4:2, 5; 11:4.

Memory Text: “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).

No question, the children of Israel are separated from our modern world through the vast gaps of time and culture. Their world is, in many ways, as incomprehensible to us as ours would be to them.

Nevertheless, the unifying factor is the Lord, the One who created and redeemed them, as well as us. Whatever the gaps in culture, language, and history, we worship the same God, no matter the differences in our forms and expressions. Indeed, the basic truths taught to them through their rites and rituals are, in principle, the same ones we are to learn today.

This week we'll continue to follow our spiritual ancestors on their journey of faith. We'll examine more of the rituals, laws, and commands that God gave His people at that time. Among other things, we'll look at the dedication of the altar of burnt offering, at the menorah (lampstand) in the earthly sanctuary, as well as the ordination of the Levites to their sacred calling of working with the priests in their ministration of the sanctuary in the wilderness.

*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 17.

Altar Dedication

In the wilderness sanctuary, the sacrifices centered on the altar of burnt offering. Constructed of acacia wood overlaid with bronze, the altar stood within the courtyard near the entrance to the two-apartment sanctuary. The golden altar before the veil of the Most Holy Place served only for the burning of incense.

Read Numbers 7. What thoughts come to your mind as you read about the offerings given during this solemn ritual? What spiritual points from this account can be applied to ourselves today? For instance, where do you see the Cross represented here?

The altar already had been consecrated for seven days (*Exod. 29:37*). Now the princes—as representatives of the full nation—brought offerings to celebrate the dedication of the altar over a period of 12 days. Each prince and his tribe had their special day. All the gifts were identical; perhaps this was a way of showing that no matter who we are or our station in life, we all stand before God in the same position, that of sinners needing grace.

“The Jews saw in the sacrificial offerings the symbol of Christ whose blood was shed for the salvation of the world. All these offerings were to typify Christ and to rivet the great truth in their hearts that the blood of Jesus Christ alone cleanseth from all sin.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 106, 107.

It's so easy to get caught up in the things of the world, isn't it? What can you do each day to help keep the reality of the Cross, and what was done for you there, first and foremost in your mind?

Communion With God

As a symbol, the ark was at the hub of Israelite worship. It symbolized God's heavenly throne. "The Lord of hosts . . . sits enthroned on the cherubim" (*2 Sam. 6:2, RSV*). In the Most Holy Place, the visible Shekinah glory, hovering between the cherubim, represented the Lord's presence. The Ten Commandments beneath the cherubim throne attested to the Divine will, the foundation of the covenant between God and His people—and the moral basis for His universal rule and government. The law provided the worshipers an insight into the character of God, in addition to stipulating His righteous requirements.

Read Exodus 25:22 and Numbers 7:89. Try to imagine what kind of an experience this would be. How would you like to have that kind of close encounter with God? What makes you think that you wouldn't be destroyed completely were you to get too close to Him? See *Exod. 20:19*.

In what sense can you today get even closer to the presence of God? See *Heb. 4:14–16*. How has Jesus made this approach possible?

Notice, too, how Moses had gone into the sanctuary to speak to the Lord. Yet, according to the text, the Lord spoke to Moses instead. The point is, most of us know how to pray, most of us know how to speak to the Lord, to plead our case, to ask for this or that.

But communion isn't just one way. In most relationships, each party will communicate with the other. Should it be any different between us and our Maker? Of course not.

The question for us, then, is, How open are we to hearing the voice of God when He is speaking to us?

What have your experiences in communion with God been like? How has the Lord communicated His will to you? How open are you to hearing His voice? What things in your life might be keeping you from a fuller communion with the Lord?

Light in the Sanctuary

When Moses entered the sanctuary after the 12 days devoted to the dedication of the altar in the court, we may assume that it was dark inside the Holy Place. In that conversation, the Lord directed that Aaron should light the seven lamps of the “candlestick,” known in Hebrew as the menorah, based on the Hebrew word *or*; for light (*Num. 8:1–4*).

The menorah (or candlestick) with its main shaft and six branches (three on either side) was hammered from a single talent of gold. It was in the form of a stylized almond branch (*Exod. 25:31–40*). The oil lamps, resting atop each branch, were attended by the priests twice a day—morning and evening (*Exod. 30:7, 8*). “[Aaron] shall keep the lamps in order upon the lampstand of pure gold before the Lord continually” (*Lev. 24:4, RSV*; emphasis added).

What insights do the following texts give as to the meaning of the menorah?

Zech. 4:1–6, 11–14

Rev. 4:2, 5; 11:4

Zechariah’s vision implies that the oil piped to the menorah lamps, enabling them to burn, is God’s Spirit (vss. 5, 6). The Hebrew word for the almond (*Jer. 1:11, 12*) means “to watch” or “to wake.” The almond literally was named the “wake tree” or “watch tree” because it was the earliest tree “to waken” and flower. John sees in the heavenly representation of the sanctuary a menorah of seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are identified as “seven Spirits of God”—John’s mode of referring to the Holy Spirit in His multiple operations.

Thus, Israel in the wilderness was assured day and night of God’s presence in the first apartment, as well as in the second.

How has the Lord shown you the reality of His presence in your own life? Go back over those times when clearly you’ve experienced God’s presence in a remarkable manner. How can revisiting these experiences help you to stay firm in times that you feel yourself wallowing in fear and darkness? See Psalm 23.

Dedication of the Levites: Part 1

Read Numbers 8:6–26, describing the dedication of the Levites to their special work in the service of God. What points impress you regarding this service? What does this teach us about holiness, about sin, about purification, and about dedication to God? What principles can we take away from this for our lives today, regardless of whatever role we play in the Lord’s service?

The families of the three divisions of the Levites were encamped around the sanctuary. Because they numbered more than 20,000 (*Num. 3:39*), it is obvious that some parts of their dedication were done by symbolic representation. That is, only certain ones, representatives, as opposed to all the Levites, were involved directly and immediately.

What’s fascinating here, too, is the idea that the Levites—after they were cleansed and shaven, and after they offered a sin offering (*Num. 8:7, 8*)—were called an “offering” or a “wave-offering” (*vs. 11*). This certainly wasn’t anything related to human sacrifice. Instead, it gave the idea of dedication, of consecration, and of acknowledgment that these Levites were going to be doing a work in behalf of Israel, doing for them what they couldn’t be doing for themselves.

This is seen even more when Moses said that “the children of Israel shall put their hands upon the Levites” (*vs. 10*), acknowledging that these responsibilities had been passed on to the Levites. The tribe as a whole was offered as a living sacrifice to God, who in turn gave them as a gift this special ministry in the sanctuary in place of the firstborn, whom they now represented.

Keeping the principles in mind seen in this ceremony, how do we understand what Paul says in Romans 12:1? How can we be a “living sacrifice”? What does that mean in our daily lives?

Dedication of the Levites: Part 2

“For they are wholly given unto me from among the children of Israel; instead of such as open every womb, even instead of the firstborn of all the children of Israel, have I taken them unto me” (*Num. 8:16*).

Notice how emphatic the Lord was regarding the special calling of the Levites. They were “wholly given” to Him. The Hebrew reads more literally that they are “given given to me,” emphasizing by repetition just how serious their calling was.

Read Numbers 8:19. What is meant by the phrase that the Levites were to “make an atonement for the children of Israel”? How are we to understand this in light of the Cross? *Rom. 5:11, Heb. 9:25–28.*

Scholars are divided on the precise meaning of the phrase here. Obviously, it does not mean “to make atonement” in the sense of dying for the sins of others. The verb translated “make atonement” in this context has a broader meaning than how it’s commonly used. In this case, the answer could be found in the same verse, in which it says that the Levites, by doing their service on behalf of Israel, would spare them from the plague. That is, in their work of ministry, they were helping protect the children of Israel from the Divine wrath that they would face were they to come “nigh unto the sanctuary” (*Num. 8:19*).

Thus the Levites, like the priests themselves, were doing something on behalf of the people that they couldn’t do themselves. In this looser sense, then, they were said to “make an atonement” for the people.

Though certainly nothing we do can make any kind of atonement, how can we, by faithfully doing our duties, work as the Levities did on behalf of the people? What are you doing in your local church for the betterment of the church and its mission?

Further Study: Trace the ancient Jewish custom of “laying on hands.” What seems to be its essential significance? *Gen. 48:8, 9, 13, 14, 17–20; Num. 27:18–23; Matt. 19:13–15; Acts 13:1–3.*

“To the Jew this form was a significant one. When a Jewish father blessed his children, he laid his hands reverently upon their heads. When an animal was devoted to sacrifice, the hand of the one invested with priestly authority was laid upon the head of the victim. And when the ministers of the church of believers in Antioch laid their hands upon Paul and Barnabas, they, by that action, asked God to bestow His blessing upon the chosen apostles in their devotion to the specific work to which they had been appointed.

“At a later date the rite of ordination by the laying on of hands was greatly abused; unwarrantable importance was attached to the act, as if a power came at once upon those who received such ordination, which immediately qualified them for any and all ministerial work. But in the setting apart of these two apostles, there is no record indicating that any virtue was imparted by the mere act of laying on of hands.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 162.

Discussion Questions:

① In what way does the local pastor today function in the role of the Levite? What can we do to support the pastor in this role?

② How does the act of giving impact our relationship with God? How is giving from our income an act of worship, of faith? Why is it so important to give generously?

③ What is our understanding of what Jesus did on the cross for us that we could not do for ourselves? Why did Jesus have to die? Couldn’t just reforming our lives and obeying the law and loving others unconditionally be enough to make us right with God?

Summary: The forms of ancient Israel’s worship differ from that of the modern church in the world’s wilderness, but its substance is the same. Dedication of our material goods, contemplation of the meaning of the Cross, prayer, reflecting the light of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and total dedication to the Lord all spell out the same biblical faith.

Mom's Powerful Prayers

by NASTYA BYKOVA

I am the youngest child and the only girl in my family. When I was growing up, I remember that my mother had an overpowering fear that I would die. Her fears were so immobilizing that she couldn't even sleep at night. Although we were not a religious family, my mother's fears drove her to pray and beg God to save my life.

She decided she would do anything to keep me safe, so she started going to different churches and even to magicians, looking for help. Then an Adventist pastor came to hold meetings in our town. Mother went and listened intently. She was amazed at what the preacher said. She asked the pastor to pray for her, and her fears disappeared. She devoted her life to Jesus from that day.

My mother had enjoyed a career as a professional dancer, but she laid it aside when she met Jesus. Her actions shocked my father, but he never complained. My brothers, who also were dancers, found it hard to give up dancing to follow Christ, but Mother never stopped praying for them until they all had given their lives to Christ.

With Mom no longer dancing, we lived on Father's income. Money was tight, and often we could barely pay the bills. One day we had only some stale bread in the house. Mother gathered us around and prayed, asking God to provide. That evening we heard a knock on the door. It was the pastor, holding two large bags of groceries and soap. My father was so surprised when he learned that God had answered our prayer for food.

God has continued to answer our prayers. He made a way for me to study at Zaoksky Adventist University when my parents couldn't possibly afford to send me. After I graduated from high school I received an e-mail from some people I had translated for. They wanted to pay my school fees for one year. After that God provided translating jobs that paid my school fees until I finished my studies.

My mother's fear drove her to God, who took away the fear and replaced it with great faith. Since then her prayers have kept us all close to Him. I believe that God has a special purpose for my life, and I am happy to follow Him and to live my life by prayer.

Thank you for giving your mission offerings. They lead thousands like my mother to Christ every year.



NASTYA BYKOVA, 22, is the children's ministries director for her local conference in Krasnodar, Russia.

Trumpets, Blood, Cloud, and Fire



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Exod. 12:1–29; Numbers 9; 10; Matt. 26:36–43; Luke 22:15, 19, 20; 1 Cor. 15:52.*

Memory Text: “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” (*1 Corinthians 5:7*).

At the last Passover that Jesus ate with His disciples, He instituted the Lord’s Supper. Taking some of the same elements of the Passover meal, Jesus said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” And of the cup, He said, “This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (*Matt. 26:26–29*). And Paul wrote: “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come” (*1 Cor. 11:26*).

The Lord’s Supper is the Christian Passover, the New Testament parallel to Israel’s deliverance from Egypt. This week we’ll look at Israel’s first anniversary of that deliverance. We’ll look also at the Lord’s guiding presence among the camp of the Israelites, as well as the silver trumpets that were blown at certain times, and a few other accounts that reveal the situation of God’s ancient people in their unique circumstances.

As always, we’ll look for lessons that we can take for ourselves as we face, in our time and context, some of the same kinds of trials and temptations that they did, no matter how radically different the circumstances.

*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 24.

In Remembrance of Me

Read Numbers 9:1–5 and Exodus 12:1–29. What spiritual truths can we take away from these accounts for ourselves? As you read, think, for example, about such things as obedience, grace, redemption, faith, and judgment.

This was the first anniversary of the amazing night in Egypt when the Lord's angel slew the firstborn of the Egyptians but "passed over" (hence the name Passover) the dwellings of Israel marked by the blood of the sacrificial lamb. Now, in what was to be an annual ritual, they were to remember the night of their special deliverance from Egypt and the salvation that God had wrought in their behalf.

How are the followers of Jesus to commemorate the Passover today? Luke 22:15, 19, 20. What is this service to remind us of?

"Christ was standing at the point of transition between two economies and their two great festivals. He, the spotless Lamb of God, was about to present Himself as a sin offering, that He would thus bring to an end the system of types and ceremonies that for four thousand years had pointed to His death. As He ate the Passover with His disciples, He instituted in its place the service that was to be the memorial of His great sacrifice. The national festival of the Jews was to pass away forever. The service which Christ established was to be observed by His followers in all lands and through all ages. . . .

"The ordinance of the Lord's Supper was given to commemorate the great deliverance wrought out as the result of the death of Christ. . . . It is the means by which His great work for us is to be kept fresh in our minds."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 652, 653.

The Guiding Presence

One of the most wonderful assurances that Israel had in the wilderness was the visible sign of God's presence, as manifested in the most remarkable way: the cloud by day and the fire by night.

Think about it. Composed of perhaps two million people living in a barren and dangerous wilderness, the camp must have spread out for many miles in all directions. With no means of instant and direct communication (no radio, telephone, Internet), there had to be some way of letting them know when and where they were to go.

Read Numbers 9:15–23. How did this manifestation of God's presence reveal to them God's will, at least in terms of their movement?

The Lord's leading of Israel by means of the visible cloud was not always through easily traveled highways. Jeremiah records that He led them "through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt" (*Jer. 2:6*).

But there's a deeper issue here than just where and when to go. The existence of the cloud by day and the fire by night was also a very powerful reminder to them of God's abiding presence. According to Numbers 9:16, "So it was alway: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night." No matter where they were, what trials they would face, what foes they would meet, there—hovering in the sky—was a visible marker of God's presence among them.

It must have been nice to have had that. This cloud and fire certainly would have been more than enough to keep them faithful, trusting, and obedient to God, right?

When seeking to make a decision about where to go, how often have you wished you had a cloud by day and a fire by night to guide you? What promises, though, can you find in the Bible of God's willingness to lead us, and to be present among us even today? What choices can you make that will enable you to be more open to God's leading and more aware of His presence?

Silver Signals

Ancient Israel had two kinds of horns: the common ram's horn (the shofar), and the two silver metal horns that essentially belonged to the sanctuary and were blown only by the priests (*Num. 10:8*). The latter were made of hammered work, each wrought from one piece of metal. The silver horn was like a long tube, flared on one end.

Read Numbers 10:1–10. What was the purpose of the blowing of these trumpets? What kind of spiritual lessons can be drawn from the use of these trumpets?

The blowing of these silver trumpets carried a meaning in addition to their more practical applications. Their blowing was to be considered an “ordinance.” In war it assured them that they would “be remembered before the Lord your God,” and they would be saved from their enemies (*vs. 9*). Thus, the sounding of these horns served as “a memorial before your God: I am the Lord your God” (*vs. 10*).

How interesting, then, that even with all the manifestations of God’s leading, guiding, and presence, the Lord used these trumpets, too, in order to remind Israel of His presence and care. Both by sight (the cloud and the fire) and by sound (the trumpets) they were given special reminders of God’s guidance and presence among them.

Today, we don’t have the cloud, the fire, or the silver trumpets to remind us of God’s guidance and presence. We do, though, have the New Testament revelation of what God has done for us through Jesus, which gives us an assurance of His love and care that ancient Israel couldn’t have appreciated fully. They knew, only in types and shadows, what we now have in reality, and that is the knowledge of God’s love as revealed through the Cross.

What would you rather have: a silver trumpet bellowing in your ears or the knowledge of the love, the character, and care of the One who, “being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”? *Phil. 2:6–8*.

What one trumpet sound do you really want to hear, and why?
1 Cor. 15:52.

“Be to Us Eyes”

After Sarah’s death, Abraham remarried. Keturah bore him a number of sons, one named Midian (*Gen. 25:1–6*). Jethro (also named Reuel [*Exod. 2:18*], friend of God) became Moses’ father-in-law when Moses married his daughter, Zipporah. Jethro is designated “the priest of Midian” (*Exod. 18:1*) and worshiped the true God (*vs. 12*). Other descendants of Midian turned away from the faith of Abraham to pagan gods; these were often enemies of Israel.

What request did Moses make of Hobab, Jethro’s son? What was his response? *Num. 10:29–32.*

Moses didn’t consult God before he tried to persuade Hobab to accompany Israel. Was not the presence of God in the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night more than sufficient to guide the migrating nation through the wilderness? Here we see Moses’ humanity waffling before the challenge that faced him, and failing to remember that the God who opened the Red Sea also could open a path through the deserts and provide both food and water.

Read Matthew 26:36–43. What does this tell us about Jesus in His humanity?

Even our Savior felt at times the need for human sympathy and support. While He loved all the disciples, He was especially close to Peter, James, and John. In Gethsemane He solicited their prayers. On the mount of transfiguration the same trio slept instead of praying. But Heaven sent Moses and Elijah to encourage Christ to go forward with His atoning death (*Luke 9:28–31*). “Now heaven had sent its messengers to Jesus; not angels, but men who had endured suffering and sorrow, and who could sympathize with the Saviour in the trial of His earthly life. Moses and Elijah had been collaborators with Christ. They had shared His longing for the salvation of men. . . . The hope of the world, the salvation of every human being, was the burden of their interview.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 422, 425.

Though we are to lean on the Lord, how often we find human sympathy so comforting and helpful. Go over times when you especially have been blessed by someone who gave you comfort and sympathy in time of need. What made it so helpful? How might you now provide comfort and encouragement to someone in need?

Heading Home?

Read the account in Numbers 10:11–36 of the Israelites' first journey as God's organized, covenant people. What's the one thing that stands out regarding the manner in which they moved? Why would that be so important?

According to Moses, it was only an 11-day journey from Mount Sinai (Horeb) to Kadesh-Barnea, a city or area near to what eventually would become the southern border of Judah.

Note the order. Three tribal armies followed the cloud and the ark. Then the Levites with their wagons carried the various parts of the portable sanctuary. Three more tribal armies followed. Then came the Kohathites, bearing the sanctuary furnishings. Six armies followed, protecting the rear from attack. Everything was done in a very orderly manner. Considering what was going on, if it were done haphazardly at all, it would have been an incredible disaster just waiting to happen.

The quickest way to Canaan from Egypt lay through the coastal area along “the way of the land of the Philistines.” But God knew Israel was not ready for war (*Exod. 13:17*). Consequently, when the pillar of cloud signaled the tribal march, it led the nation east and north into the wilderness of Paran (*Num. 10:11, 12*), a journey of three days (*vs. 33*).

“As they advanced, the way became more difficult. Their route lay through stony ravine and barren waste. All around them was the great wilderness. . . . The rocky gorges, far and near, were thronged with men, women, and children, with beasts and wagons, and long lines of flocks and herds. Their progress was necessarily slow and toilsome; and the multitudes, after their long encampment, were not prepared to endure the perils and discomforts of the way.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 377.

Read Numbers 10:35, 36. How could you apply the principles there today in your struggles and battles in the faith? Also, ask yourself this question: why didn't God, using His awesome power, just automatically make the way clear and easy for them? Couldn't He just have done that? If so, why didn't He just do it for them instead of putting them through such a severe trial? How can your answer here, perhaps, help you understand why He simply doesn't make your paths and journey simple and obstacle-free? Bring your answer to class on Sabbath.

Further Study: We face decisions every day—some more serious than others. Contemplate the following promises regarding God's guidance: *Ps. 31:3; 32:8; 48:14; 78:52; Isa. 58:10, 11.*

"If you have given yourself to God, to do His work, you have no need to be anxious for tomorrow. He whose servant you are, knows the end from the beginning. The events of tomorrow, which are hidden from your view, are open to the eyes of Him who is omnipotent.

"When we take into our hands the management of things with which we have to do, and depend upon our own wisdom for success, we are taking a burden which God has not given us, and are trying to bear it without His aid. We are taking upon ourselves the responsibility that belongs to God, and thus are really putting ourselves in His place. . . . But when we really believe that God loves us and means to do us good we shall cease to worry about the future. We shall trust God as a child trusts a loving parent. Then our troubles and torments will disappear, for our will is swallowed up in the will of God."

—Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 100, 101.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ As a class, share your answers to Thursday's final question. Why do we face the trials we face when God could, it would seem, take all the obstacles away? How does our understanding of the great controversy help us, at least partially, answer this question? See Job 1 and 2.
- ❷ Discuss more this question of human support. What are other examples you can find in the Bible of how human support was so crucial and helpful to some of God's faithful people? In what ways does God minister to the needs of people through human support? How well does your local church do in this area?
- ❸ When we partake of the Lord's Supper, how can we better appreciate exactly what it means? Go over in your mind the great truth of salvation by faith alone and how through faith in Jesus' death for us we have the promise of eternal life.

Summary: Before leaving their year-long encampment at Sinai, Israel celebrated their first Passover anniversary in freedom. God would not have them forget their marvelous redemption from Egyptian slavery. On their tribal march of three days, the nation was led by God in the pillar of cloud and fire. The march took place in an orderly manner at the signals of the silver trumpets and the priests bearing the ark in the forefront. The cloud led eastward and northward in the wilderness of Paran. In the same way, God's leading sometimes seems hard to us. But the key is to trust Him, our all-wise Father.

Making Up for Lost Time

by OSVALDO FERREIRA DE SOUSA

I was born into an Angolan family who claimed to be Christian. But no one ever told me what the Bible says or what it means to follow God.

During Angola's long civil war, I was drafted into the military. I married a wonderful woman. But shortly after our marriage, she began attending the Adventist church. Although she didn't join the church, she attended faithfully and often talked to me about the pastor's messages and invited me to worship with her. But I rudely refused. I troubled her over religion and told her that I wasn't interested in her church—or any church. Even special events that she invited me to attend received a cold shoulder.

Then in 2002 she invited me to attend a large camp meeting-like conference that the church was sponsoring. She said that she wanted to be baptized at this meeting. I didn't object to her being baptized, and I agreed to go with her. I had no idea that God had a special appointment with me at that conference.

While witnessing my wife's baptism, God spoke to me, inviting me—the doubter, the antagonist—to give Him a chance and to attend church with my wife. I accepted God's invitation, and the following week I surprised my wife by going to church with her. And when I continued to attend worship services with her, she asked the pastor to put my name on the list of potential baptismal candidates. In March of 2007, I was baptized.

I am no longer the stubborn husband I once was. I know now that the Holy Spirit used my wife's persistent faith to touch my heart. I thank God—and my wife—for being patient with me all those years when I refused to listen to the Spirit's urging.

Today I love to share God's love with anyone who will listen. I tell them how wonderful it is to surrender their lives to Jesus. Many refuse to listen, even as I refused. But I am not discouraged. God has blessed my efforts, and two of my colleagues from work now study the Bible with me.

I want everyone in my city to know this wonderful Jesus and His message for these last days of history. I wasted a lot of time refusing to listen, but I want to make the most of the time I have left and share God's love. This work cannot stop until Jesus comes.

Thank you for your support of mission through your prayers and offerings. You helped bring me to Jesus.

OSVALDO FERREIRA DE SOUSA shares his faith in Lubango, Angola.

From Complaints to Apostasy



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Numbers 11–14.*

Memory Text: “Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (*Philippians 2:14, 15*).

When the pillar of cloud lifted from the tabernacle in Sinai and the priests set forward with the ark, Moses proclaimed: “Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee” (*Num. 10:35*). It was like a victory cry, and the vast hosts of Israel took to their journey with good cheer. At last they were on their way to the Promised Land!

Imagine what it would be like having such a visible presence of God in your midst! One would think that with something so clear and obvious before them, they so readily and willingly would have obeyed His every command as they journeyed toward the fulfillment of the promise made to their fathers long ago.

Of course, that's not quite how things tend to work, even with God's people. This week we'll look at one mess after another, one expression of doubt, disbelief, and ingratitude after another. As we study, let's keep in mind whatever relevant parallels there might be to us, today, as we await the fulfillment of an even greater promise (*Heb. 11:40*).

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 31.*

The Sin of Ingratitude

Read Numbers 11 and ask yourself the following questions:

- What does this incident tell us about the importance of not forgetting how the Lord has led us in the past?

- How do we understand the Lord's reaction to the Israelites?

- What can we learn from this account about the importance of controlling our appetites?

Literally, the Hebrew describes these discontented persons as “murmurers of evil.” We only can imagine what “evils” they complained about. Perhaps they felt that God had led the nation into a death trap in the wilderness—and not to the Promised Land of “milk and honey.” After all the miracles they had witnessed in Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea, their murmuring was rebellious. Their influence could have been contagious and destructive to the young nation. And fire from the Lord destroyed them in “the uttermost parts of the camp” (*vs. 1*). Only the intercession of Moses quenched the fire.

The people really had no true basis to complain about their diet. The manna could be prepared in various ways—ground in a mill, or beaten in a mortar; it could be baked or boiled (*Exod. 16:23, Num. 11:8*). Certainly the God who created so many tasty wonders for all humans wasn’t going to make His covenant people eat something unpalatable. Furthermore, they had milk from the goats, sheep, and cattle. From this they also made curds (“butter,” *Deut. 32:14*). As for flesh foods, the various “peace sacrifices”—vows, thank offerings, and freewill offerings—all ended with a communal meal in which the priest, the offerer, his family and servants, and invited Levites partook of the sacrifice. No question, they weren’t going to go hungry.

There’s a saying, “Be careful what you ask for or pray for; you might get it.” What does that mean, and what can we learn from it for ourselves?

Pressures on Leadership

When Israel so quickly reverted to idolatry and worshiped the golden calf, Moses pleaded with God to forgive them, but “if not,” he prayed, “blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written” (*Exod. 32:32*).

Later, when Moses heard and saw the people “weeping” at the door of their tents and crying out, “Who shall give us flesh to eat?” (*Num. 11:4*), how did he react? Why was his attitude unjustified? Where do we see the flawed humanity of this great man of God coming through? *Vss. 10–15.*

Read Numbers 11:21–23. How again does the humanity of Moses come through?

Despite the mistakes of Moses, and his lack of trust, the Lord did help ease the burden that Moses felt himself under, and that was by appointing 70 elders to assist Moses in his work (*vss. 16, 17*). The experience of the 70 was similar to the Spirit’s descent upon Christ’s disciples at Pentecost, except that they “prophesied.” Thus, they were honored by God before all the people.

“They would never have been chosen had Moses manifested faith corresponding to the evidences he had witnessed of God’s power and goodness. But he had magnified his own burdens and services, almost losing sight of the fact that he was only the instrument by which God had wrought. He was not excusable in indulging, in the slightest degree, the spirit of murmuring that was the curse of Israel.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 380.

Read carefully Numbers 11:20. They had “rejected the Lord, who is among you” (*NIV*). Rejecting the Lord, then, doesn’t mean outright apostasy, denial of God’s existence, or taking one’s name off the church books. What can we learn from this incident about how easy it is to deceive ourselves regarding our relationship to God?

Family Nastiness

Zipporah, Moses' wife, and their two sons had stayed with her father, "the priest of Midian," during the plagues on Egypt. After Israel had become settled in Sinai, Jethro brought Zipporah and the children to Moses. Zipporah noticed how wearied her husband appeared and informed Jethro, who took a closer look at Moses' method of administration and suggested a reorganization by appointing rulers of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. He suggested that they could judge the small matters. Moses would bring the larger cases to God. Moses agreed, and these chosen men "judged the people at all seasons" (*Exod. 18:13–26*). This move on the part of Moses was eventually to excite the jealousy and envy of Miriam and Aaron.

Read Numbers 12. What wretched human traits are being revealed here by Miriam and Aaron? How is their sin contrasted with the attitude and character of Moses? What should this sordid story tell us about how God views the bad attitudes revealed by these people?

The verb *spake* (vs. 1, *KJV*), or "began to talk" (*NIV*), is feminine singular, indicating that it was Miriam who initiated the charge following verse 1. She was jealous of Zipporah and blamed her for influencing Moses to appoint the judges Jethro had suggested. She called Zipporah a Cushite, probably because she may have been dark-complexioned. Actually, Zipporah was a Midianite, a descendant of Abraham through his son Midian by Keturah, and a worshiper of the same true God. Also, the sneer may have been picked up from the fact that some of the Cushite tribes lived among the Midianites in the territory east of Sinai and east of the Gulf of Aqabah in Arabia. She could have been designated by either term. For example, a person of German descent born in the United States could be called a German or an American. But most likely the term was used in a slanderous manner.

Despite the powerful manifestations of God's power among them, these two faithful people displayed some very bad attitudes. Examine your own heart: What bad attitudes need to be purged from you before they lead to your own spiritual ruin?

At the Borders

The time was probably about September; the vineyards were ripening and the second crop of figs had matured. It took the Israelite migration only about 11 days to reach Kadesh-Barnea, near the southern border of Canaan. We only can imagine the tremendous waves of joy and happiness that rippled through the immense throng as it approached the cherished object of their dreams.

Read Deuteronomy 1:19–23. What mistake was made here?

Read Numbers 13 and answer the following questions:

- Though the Lord agreed to let them send spies, why was that a compromise? What were the fruits of that compromise?
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- What did the reaction of most of the people reveal about them, even after all the manifestations of divine power?
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The people no doubt rejoiced to hear about the productivity of their new home-to-be. They marveled at the huge cluster of grapes carried between two men. This truly was going to be as good as, or even better than, they had imagined.

As usual, with anything in this sinful world, there always are problems, even when God leads us. Of course, the Lord knew those pagan people were there. Did not the Hebrews think that the Lord could have taken care of the situation for them? After all, look what He had done to the Egyptians!

Nevertheless, forgetting about the power and promises of God, they saw the obstacles set before them and, despite the pleadings of Caleb and Joshua, the other spies filled the ears of the Israelites with gloom and doom.

How can you learn to trust God despite the seemingly impossible obstacles in your path? What choices are you making today that will determine how you will respond to what you face tomorrow?

Back to Egypt

Read Numbers 14. What's the most powerful and important spiritual lesson you can take away from this story? In what ways have you ever done the same thing?

Of all the horrible things they said, perhaps the worst was saying that they wanted a captain to take them back to Egypt (*vss. 3, 4*). When we consider that Egypt symbolized the bondage and slavery of sin, of death, of alienation from God, for these people to act as they did, after having had such an incredible deliverance, was inexcusable.

"The unfaithful spies were loud in denunciation of Caleb and Joshua, and the cry was raised to stone them. The insane mob seized missiles with which to slay those faithful men. They rushed forward with yells of madness, when suddenly the stones dropped from their hands, a hush fell upon them, and they shook with fear. God had interposed to check their murderous design. The glory of His presence, like a flaming light, illuminated the tabernacle . . . and none dared continue their resistance."—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 390.

How do we see the mercy and grace of God revealed even here with these people who openly rebelled against Him?

Look at their reaction to the punishment that they had received. In a sense, having rejected what God would have done for them, they decided to try to do it themselves, which, of course, resulted in disaster. If only they had trusted in God, who already had done so much for them, their disaster could have been averted. Sad, too, as is always the case with sin, many innocents—who had nothing to do with the rebellion—suffered for the sins of others.

Further Study: Read Ellen G. White, “From Sinai to Kadesh,” pp. 376–386; “The Twelve Spies,” pp. 387–394, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

“These men, having entered upon a wrong course, stubbornly set themselves against Caleb and Joshua, against Moses, and against God. Every advance step rendered them the more determined. They were resolved to discourage all effort to gain possession of Canaan. They distorted the truth in order to sustain their baleful influence. It ‘is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof,’ they said. This was not only an evil report, but it was also a lying one. It was inconsistent with itself. The spies had declared the country to be fruitful and prosperous, and the people of giant stature, all of which would be impossible if the climate were so unhealthful that the land could be said to ‘eat up the inhabitants.’ But when men yield their hearts to unbelief they place themselves under the control of Satan, and none can tell to what lengths he will lead them.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 389.

Discussion Questions:

① Why is it so important to cultivate, in whatever situation we face, an attitude of praise and gratitude toward the Lord? No matter our circumstances, don’t we all have things to be thankful for? Why is it so important to dwell on them, as opposed to the troubles that come upon us all? Why is gratitude and praise so important for keeping our faith strong?

② Have you ever noticed how contagious criticism and murmuring can be, and how easily those attitudes in others can spread to you? What should this tell us, then, about how careful we need to be regarding the words that come out of our mouths?

③ In what ways, even subtly, as we await the Second Coming (which seems to be taking so long), could we be in danger of displaying the same attitudes we find so repugnant as manifested by the Hebrews here?

Summary: The 11 days between Sinai and Kadesh-Barnea on the borders of Canaan were some of Israel’s worst wilderness times. There was an outcry against the manna that was so overwhelming that Moses begged God to let him die right then. Miriam and Aaron’s sharp challenge of Moses’ leadership was another low blow. Finally, after the evil report of the spies, the nation crossed a line, which resulted in 40 years of wandering in the wilderness.

Before I Knew Him

by ANTHONY BARTHOLOMEW

God had His hand on my life long before I knew Him. I live on the island of Grenada in the Caribbean. I dropped out of school when I was 15 and sold drugs to earn big money. I didn't use the drugs; I just wanted the money. But life was hard, and I had lots of problems. Sometimes I just wanted to die.

Then I got sick and was admitted to the hospital. While there, my roommate gave me a Bible to read. I started reading it and realized that I was living far from God's will. The Bible gave me hope, and I wanted to pray, but I didn't know how. I just talked to God as I thought I should.

I recovered and returned home. I attended my mother's church, but I also kept reading the Bible on my own. I saw things in the church that didn't match what I was reading, and I asked some church leaders about it. They didn't have answers, so I searched for another church.

I talked to my sister about God. She was not a Christian, but she told me about some evangelistic meetings she had heard about. I went, and there I learned the real truths of the Bible and accepted Jesus as my Savior.

I had stopped selling drugs, and God took away my cravings for tobacco, alcohol, and gambling. I started telling my former friends about my faith. "You're liming!" they said, meaning I was faking my religion. But I assured them I was serious. With time they became convinced that my faith was real.

I told them how God took me from the gutter and cleaned me up. I urged them to try Jesus, and a few visited the church, but no one became a Christian.

I moved to another area of Grenada, where I preach in open air meetings and have seen dozens give their lives to God, but my former friends would not surrender to Jesus. That's pretty amazing to me.

A few church members, including a drug dealer who was recently baptized, have formed a group that goes out and intervenes with gang members who fight each other. We urge them to consider accepting Jesus into their lives to break the bonds of anger and violence. We hope to teach them how to lead productive, healthful lives.

My sister who told me about the evangelistic meetings has since been baptized, and an adopted sister also has given her life to Christ. I praise God for leading me into a life of peace-making, of building people up instead of tearing them down.

When we share our mission offerings, we support ministries that reach out to people in all walks of life.



ANTHONY BARTHOLOMEW shares his faith in Grenada, West Indies.

Planning Ahead



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: Numbers 15; 2 Cor. 2:15, 16; Gal. 3:26–29; Eph. 5:2; Col. 3:11.

Memory Text: “But I said unto their children in the wilderness, Walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers, neither observe their judgments, nor defile yourselves with their idols: I am the Lord your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them” (Ezekiel 20:18, 19).

At the beginning of Numbers 15, the scenes of tumult and rebellion, of shame and defeat (at the hands of the Amalekites and Canaanites), have now faded. The people have learned, the hard way, the suffering that disobedience brings.

The masses are now on the way back into the wilderness out of which they had first come. And it's at this point that the Lord communicates with Moses as the chapter opens: “Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land of your habitations, which I give unto you . . .” (vs. 2).

Despite the major setback, the promise was still sure: God would bring His people into the Promised Land. Of that there was no question!

Also, we come across some of the special instructions given to God's chosen people. However unique the circumstances, however unique the specific commands, there are spiritual lessons and principles given not only for them but for us, as well.

*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 7.

Thankfulness

Read Numbers 15:1–10, 18–21. What were the purposes of these offerings? What did they represent? What was the purpose of bringing oil, drink, and grain, as well?

The Hebrew term for “meat/grain” is *minchah*, meaning “gift” or “tribute.” It included the flour, olive oil, and wine, representing the offerer’s gratitude for God’s blessings on the fields and crops (*see Deut. 8:18*).

In the context of Numbers 15, these directions really carried a promise to the younger generation that one day they would plant fields of wheat, barley, and other grains in their new home in Canaan. They would with their own hands establish vineyards on the hills and orchards of olive trees and other fruits such as figs and pomegranates. In other words, these nonbloody offerings helped point them to the material blessings that were to be theirs were they to remain faithful. No doubt, all these thoughts were wrapped up in their sacrifices to the Lord, which helped point them day by day to the land of promise that awaited them.

How did the apostle Paul apply this concept in New Testament times?

Rom. 12:1; 2 Cor. 2:15, 16; Eph. 5:2.

However difficult their circumstances at present, the Lord wanted His people to cultivate an attitude of praise and gratitude for what He had done for them and what He promised to do for them in the future. Should not we do the same?

Whatever your present woes, why is it important to dwell on God’s goodness, love, and care? How does keeping the Cross before you help you better realize God’s love and care for you, even in the worst of times? What things can you be grateful for now, regardless of your situation? Why is dwelling on these blessings so important for us?

The Stranger Within Your Gates

One of the more radical ideas of ancient Israel dealt with their attitude toward strangers, toward those who were not of their heritage or of their faith.

What specific commands were given to the second generation of Israelites as they looked forward to settling in Canaan? *Num. 15:14–16*. How is this same principle revealed in the New Testament? *Gal. 3:26–29, Col. 3:11*.

The “stranger” or foreigner would be a person who settled among the Israelites and who fully accepted the faith and, if male, duly was circumcised. They were to be treated and loved as if they were Israelites. “One ordinance” or “one law” shall be for you, and “for the stranger that sojourneth with you” (*Num. 15:16*). Talk about inclusiveness!

In the dedicatory prayer at the opening of the first temple, what request did Solomon make of God in regard to non-Israelites? *1 Kings 8:41–43*. What does Isaiah have to say about the strangers who sought to worship at the temple? *Isa. 56:6, 7*.

When one considers the whole purpose of God calling out His people and establishing them in the Promised Land, these texts all make perfect sense. Israel had to maintain its distinctive teaching and truths, the teaching and truths that made them God’s special representatives to the pagan world. Yet at the same time, they needed to be open and receptive to the pagans who wanted to learn about their God and follow Him.

In many ways, our church today must do that same thing. We have specific truths to teach the world, truths that we need to guard and protect, and yet at the same time, we have to be willing to embrace those who are seeking to know the Lord and His message for this time.

In what ways is it so easy to be exclusive, judgmental, and condemnatory of those who don’t see things as we do? How can we avoid that attitude, and yet at the same time, protect the truths we have been given?

Sins of Ignorance

We must keep in mind that the younger generation that God is addressing in this chapter (*Numbers 15*) was born in slavery. Thus, they had been influenced by the Egyptian culture that surrounded them, as well as by their parents, who as slaves also were influenced by that same culture. Hence, they had a lot of bad things to unlearn and a lot of new and good things to learn.

If the congregation became aware that, as a group, they had erred from the Lord's commandments, what were they to do? What is the significance of the fact that they had to bring a "sin" offering to the Lord for what was done out of ignorance? *Num. 15:22–27.*

The sin offering atoned for their sin. The burnt offering represented a renewal of the congregation's consecration to God. How interesting that the Lord would distinguish between things done unintentionally and that which was deliberate. At the same time, however, even the things done unintentionally were deemed "sin" and needed to be atoned for.

How did an individual secure atonement for his or her sin of ignorance? How did this procedure differ from that of the congregation? *Num. 15:27–29.*

"There are those who have known the pardoning love of Christ and who really desire to be children of God, yet they realize that their character is imperfect, their life faulty, and they are ready to doubt whether their hearts have been renewed by the Holy Spirit. To such I would say, Do not draw back in despair. We shall often have to bow down and weep at the feet of Jesus because of our shortcomings and mistakes, but we are not to be discouraged. Even if we are overcome by the enemy, we are not cast off, not forsaken and rejected of God. No; Christ is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Said the beloved John, 'These things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.'"—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 64.

How often do you tend to doubt whether you truly have been renewed by the Holy Spirit? What happened at the Cross that should give you the courage to press on, even when filled with doubt about your own salvation? See *Rom. 5:6–8.*

Sins of Defiance

Read Numbers 15:30, 31. What's happening here, and what lessons can we draw from it for ourselves? Why does the punishment seem so harsh? Where is grace in all this?

The phrase in the Hebrew is “with a high hand,” a posture of arrogance and rebellion. Israel truly sinned “with a high hand” against the Lord at Kadesh. But God commuted the death sentence to banishment in the wilderness. The point is, sins were taken very seriously by the Lord. Often in cases like this, those who afterward say that they are sorry, are, in fact, sorry only because they got caught, not sorry for the sins themselves. Against such hardness of heart, what can the Lord do? Sin truly must be repented of before it can be forgiven.

Read Numbers 15:32–36. Why do you think the Lord had the whole congregation take part in this execution? What spiritual lesson can we draw from this?

It must have been a difficult thing for a group of Israelites to stone one of their members to death. Evidently God was attempting to show His people the seriousness of sin. “The wages of sin is death” (*Rom. 6:23*). Perhaps, too, He sought to show them the corporate nature of their community and that what they did influenced others around them. What each one did, individually, still impacted the welfare of the whole. After all, was it not because of the complaining of some people that the whole camp was made to suffer by remaining in the wilderness?

As Christians, we especially need to be aware of the fact that our deeds, be they for good or for evil, impact others, as well as ourselves.

Meanwhile, though in the theocracy of ancient Israel death often came immediately, we shouldn't be fooled. Even though we aren't immediately struck dead for our defiance, that does not mean that we are not going to reap our just rewards one day.

How ready and willing are you to repent, confess, and admit your sins? Or, on the other hand, how often do you find yourself justifying your sins for one reason or another? Why is that so spiritually dangerous?

Tassels of Blue

If you have ever seen Orthodox Jews, you might have noticed them wearing something under their shirts with white tassels on it. Its origins are found here, in the Bible.

What did the Lord direct Moses to instruct every Israelite to attach to their garments? *Num. 15:38.*

Apparently attaching tassels of various colors was a common practice among the ancient peoples of the Near East, and God adopted the practice. The “fringe” (*KJV*) or tassel was attached to the four corners of the outer garment with a thread (“ribband,” *KJV*) of blue on each tassel. The modern *prayer shawl* has four tassels—one on each corner, tied in a traditional knot with white and blue threads.

What reason was given for wearing tassels? That is, what specific things did God want the Israelites to remember? *Num. 15:39–41.*

The word *remember* stands out twice in these verses. Every time an Israelite saw the tassels, he or she was to “remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God” (*vs. 40*). When tempted to go after other gods—spiritual adultery—the blue in the tassels would call him or her back to their sworn loyalty to God, the God who had brought the nation out of Egyptian slavery (*vs. 41*).

Apparently, even with the presence of God among them in such a marked manner, the Lord wanted to give them something even more immediate to help them remember what they needed to do.

Though we don’t wear tassels today, we have something so much more powerful: the cross of Christ, which always should bring before our minds the cost of sin, the cost of our redemption, and the promise of salvation for all who, through faith, trust in the merits of Jesus and who “follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (*Heb. 12:14*).

How could following Jesus’ words to “pray always” (*Luke 21:36*) help you remember what God has done for you and what He asks you to do in return?

Further Study: “Our confession of His faithfulness is Heaven’s chosen agency for revealing Christ to the world. We are to acknowledge His grace as made known through the holy men of old; but that which will be most effectual is the testimony of our own experience. We are witnesses for God as we reveal in ourselves the working of a power that is divine. Every individual has a life distinct from all others, and an experience differing essentially from theirs. God desires that our praise shall ascend to Him, marked by our own individuality. These precious acknowledgments to the praise of the glory of His grace, when supported by a Christ-like life, have an irresistible power that works for the salvation of souls.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 347.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Go through the Ellen G. White quote above. What is she saying? What important principles can we take from it? How do you understand the idea that our praise to God, along with a “Christ-like life,” can be a powerful influence on the salvation of others?
- ❷ What has your own experience of giving praise and glory to God done for you in your walk with the Lord? Why is this attitude so important?
- ❸ Dwell more on Monday’s lesson about how the Israelites were to treat the strangers among them. What other lessons can we take from this for ourselves today? How do we treat those who are not of our faith, those who hold views that we believe to be wrong? How should we treat them? At the same time, how do we show them that we believe we have something that they need to know, while not acting as if we are somehow superior? What lessons can we learn from the Israelites in this area?
- ❹ What can we, as a community, do to help remind each other not only of what God has done for us but of what He expects us to do in response? What role does the Lord’s Supper have in helping us remember what we have in Jesus?

Summary: Although that first generation was condemned to wander in the wilderness until they died, the Lord would encourage their children to look forward to Canaan. Hence came God’s further instruction regarding sacrifices, a loving attitude toward the foreigner who converted to the faith, how to deal with sins of ignorance and sins of open defiance, and finally the attaching of blue tassels to their garments to remind them of God’s commandments and that their obedience to Him demonstrated the only way to true happiness.

Francesca's Special Ministry

by DEENA BARTEL-WAGNER

Francesca Watkins is nine years old and lives in Tennessee in the United States. She has lots of friends, but Ernestine is Francesca's special friend. Francesca enjoys being an example of Jesus to her friend Ernestine.

Ernestine has multiple sclerosis. She can't walk and must use a wheelchair to get around. When she first moved into Francesca's neighborhood, she didn't know anyone. Then Francesca came into her life.

"I learned that Ernestine doesn't get many visitors," Francesca says, "so I visit her after school. I bring in her mail, and we talk."

When Francesca noticed that Ernestine wasn't eating well because it was hard for her to cook, Francesca asked her mother how they could help. Now Francesca's mom prepares two healthful meals a day for Ernestine with lots of fruits and vegetables.

Sometimes Francesca doesn't feel like visiting Ernestine, but she goes anyway. "I promised Ernestine that I would visit every day, and it isn't fair not to keep my promise," Francesca says.

One day when Francesca stopped by, she found Ernestine lying on the floor of her garage. She had fallen from her wheelchair and couldn't get up. Francesca comforted her friend and then ran to get her sister, Sierra. After praying, the girls were able to get her back into her wheelchair.

Francesca and Ernestine talk of many different things, but Francesca tries never to leave her friend before she has prayed with her. And whenever they can, Francesca enjoys taking Ernestine shopping when she goes. It's a fun way to help Ernestine get out of the house.

"It's not hard to share Jesus with other people around us," Francesca says. "When you find someone who doesn't know Jesus, you can just be their friend. Help them with something that they can't do and offer

to pray that they will have a good day. When you do this, others will see Jesus in your life."

Friendship evangelism is so simple that many children are doing it. Our mission offerings help support all types of evangelism at home and in distant lands.



FRANCESCA AND ERNESTINE (*left*). DEENA BARTEL-WAGNER is a freelance writer living in New York.



The children stare at the picture their teacher holds up. Suddenly the story of Jesus comes alive! This is the Man who stilled the sea, who raised people from the dead, who called the children to Himself and blessed them. This is Jesus, and He's real!

For generations children around the world have had picture rolls and felts to illustrate Bible stories. But the children of the South Pacific islands have not seen them, for they've worn out years ago. They have had nothing to hold their attention as they hear the Bible stories.

But that's changing. Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering will help provide new, permanent picture charts for children in the islands of the Pacific. I want to help these children grasp the story of salvation, to understand the love that Jesus offers them. For me it's personal.

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Power Struggle



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: Gen. 17:10–17, Numbers 16, 17, Josh. 4:3–9, Matt. 26:13, Luke 22:19.

Memory Text: “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (*Proverbs 16:18*).

An ill-disguised hatred against Moses and Aaron still rankled in the hearts of the multitude. To be condemned to wander in the wilderness until the first generation out of Egypt died seemed more than many of them could bear. Instead of submitting to God’s judgment, some began to plot how they could rid themselves of the two brothers, as if somehow these two men, and not God, were the ones responsible for this situation.

“Korah, the leading spirit in this movement, was a Levite, of the family of Kohath, and a cousin of Moses; he was a man of ability and influence. Though appointed to the service of the tabernacle, he had become dissatisfied with his position and for some time . . . had been secretly opposing the authority of Moses and Aaron. . . . He finally conceived the bold design of overthrowing both the civil and the religious authority.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 395.

This week’s lesson should be a powerful reminder to us of the corruptness of the human heart. Pride, jealousy, and love of power, if cherished and left to fester, can manifest themselves in horrific ways. God alone knows how much pain, suffering, and loss have resulted and will result from those who, knowing better, allow these bitter seeds to bear their harvest. May we learn from the mistakes seen here and not make the same ones ourselves.

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 14.

Rebellion (Again)

Read Numbers 16:1–3. Read carefully the rebels' words to Moses. What four lies are found there?

Moses' reaction to this attack (*vs. 4*) reveals just how frustrated he must have felt at such twisted and distorted charges, especially by those who should have known better. "They were of the number who went up with Moses into the mount and beheld the divine glory. . . . Professing great interest in the prosperity of the people, they first whispered their discontent to one another and then to leading men of Israel. Their insinuations were so readily received that they ventured still further, and at last they really believed themselves to be actuated by zeal for God." —Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 396, 397.

Here, again, we see the manifestation of Satan's original sin in heaven. No matter how exalted these men and princes were, or the high positions that they held, it wasn't enough for them. They wanted more.

How careful we must be!

What else was behind their rebellion? Why, too, were these charges so utterly false? *Num. 16:12–14.*

What's so incredible are the words of these men, calling Egypt (Egypt!) the land flowing "with milk and honey." It's amazing how sin was so able to pervert their judgment that the country of their slavery and bondage was now referred to by them in terms that represented God's Promised Land!

What are ways in which we deceive ourselves, ways in which we rationalize or justify our sins and wrong deeds? How can we protect ourselves against this sad and dangerous spiritual trap?

If the Lord Creates Something New

Look at Moses' reaction to these men (*Num. 16:4–11*). Despite the exalted position that they had been given, they wanted more. Moses clearly saw that.

Even more important, if you listened to their words, it seemed as if they were rebelling against Moses and Aaron, as if these two, of themselves, had usurped all this authority, had overstepped their bounds, and had exalted themselves over everyone else, as well as having led them into the wilderness to kill them.

In reality, however, who were they truly rebelling against? *Num. 16:11*.

Again, one has to wonder where these men came up with such false charges. Whose power split the Red Sea—God's, or Moses and Aaron's? Who brought manna for them every morning—God, or Moses and Aaron? Who was it that manifested the cloud by day and the fire by night—God, or Moses and Aaron? It's hard to imagine how, with all that they had witnessed, they could have acted as they did.

Read Numbers 16:15–35. Notice Moses' words in verses 28–30. What is Moses saying that shows what the real issue was?

Think of their situation. If these men had been able to incite a wider rebellion, who knows the horrible consequences that could have come. The children of Israel, as it were, hardly grounded in the Lord as they should be, easily could have gone totally astray. They had to know that the Lord was in control, that the Lord was the One who was leading them, and that Moses and Aaron were doing what God had called them to do and were not acting in their own behalf. All this should have been obvious, but again, sin has a powerful way of clouding our minds. The spirit of rebellion, once fostered, is hard to quell and often takes on a momentum all its own.

How susceptible are you to feelings of envy regarding those who have position or authority over you? What can you learn from Christ's example that could help you overcome this potentially ruinous sentiment?

Memorials

Archaeological research in Palestine has not uncovered many written materials (other than the Dead Sea scrolls), yet the Scriptures refer to a variety of memorials as visible signs to recall continuously to Israel's memory their meaning. For instance, in Genesis 28:11–22, Jacob set up a stone memorial in order to remember the covenant promises that God had made to him and to his descendants.

How was this terrible rebellion against Moses and Aaron memorialized? *Num. 16:36–40.* What especially was this memorial to remind them of?

Most of the memorials mentioned in the Old Testament reminded Israel of God's will, His goodness, grace, and covenant blessings. They pointed the person Godward, upward, toward the Lord. For example, the rainbow after the Flood (*Gen. 9:13*), circumcision (*Gen. 17:10–17*), the Passover festival (*Num. 9:1–14*), the blue tassels on their clothing (*Num. 15:38–41*), or the memorial stones Joshua erected at the Jordan crossing (*Josh. 4:3–9*).

In contrast, the bronze plates in the court were a *preventative* memorial to warn a stranger or a nondescendant of Aaron from attempting to usurp the priesthood. In a broader sense, it would remind people of what happened when humans—rationalizing their own greed, ambition, and desire for power—rebelled against God. It was a memorial, warning people to “be not as Korah, and as his company” (*Num. 16:40*).

What are some other memorials you can find in the Bible, and what are their purposes? See, for instance, *Exod. 20:8–11*, *Num. 31:54*, *Matt. 26:13*, *Luke 22:19*. In what ways were the animal sacrifices a kind of memorial?

What things about the Lord and His promises do you constantly need reminding of? Why is it important to keep those promises constantly before you?

Between the Living and the Dead

We would think that the judgments that fell upon Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and the 250 princes would have sobered the wilderness congregation. After all, fire was coming down from heaven and consuming some, while the earth was opening up and consuming the others. What more could the Lord have done to show His righteous indignation at such outright rebellion and apostasy?

Read Numbers 16:41–50. What should this tell us about fallen human nature? How did their accusation reflect the same accusation that Korah and the others had just made?

What this amazing account should reveal to us is that the spirit of rebellion among some of the people hadn't ended with Korah. It remained in the camp, even after all that just had happened. It's hard to understand how anyone could have acted that way, especially after what they had just witnessed. Again, this only goes to show us how once we start the slide toward rebellion and apostasy, we might find ourselves doing some very crazy and irrational things. How crucial that we, through God's grace, claiming His promises (*1 Cor. 10:13, Phil. 1:6*), die to these sentiments before they lead us toward ruin.

Read Numbers 16:48. What does the idea of Aaron standing between the living and the dead mean? How do we, in this scene, get a glimpse of what Jesus has done for us?

There are only two kinds of people in this world, the living and the dead, not the physically dead but the spiritually dead. "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (*John 3:18*). Jesus stands between the living and the dead; He's the border, the transition point from one to the other. Only through Him can we go from death to life.

Are you among the living? Justify your answer.

Aaron's Rod That Budded

Although thousands had died in the rebellion stirred up by Korah, the Lord knew the issue of priestly leadership had yet to be settled. Even with all that He had done, the powerful and painful judgments poured out on the rebellious, God must have known that the people were still restless. With justification, He could have wiped them all out, though it was never His desire to do that. Even after all that had happened, the Lord still was willing to work with these people and reveal His saving grace to them.

Read Numbers 17 and answer the following questions:

- What was the reason for the test?
-

- How was this test to be a means of preventing further rebellion and the resulting condemnation?
-

- How does the reaction of the people reveal that they seem to have finally gotten the message that only certain people would be allowed to be priests?
-

The miracle of Aaron's staff blooming and producing almonds could not be denied. The Israelites had to admit that God had wrought a miracle within the tabernacle that, once and for all, designated Aaron and his descendants as the priests of the Lord's sanctuary. The tragedy is that it cost so much suffering to get the point across. What's amazing is that the Lord was willing to do even more for them in order to set them straight.

From our perspective, it's so easy to condemn and judge the Hebrews. Yet, what if we look at ourselves, individually (*2 Cor. 3:15*)? Why is it often so hard for us to learn the lessons that God seeks to teach us? Why, even when we have been given more than enough evidence of God's love and grace, do we fail to trust Him? Why do we make the same mistakes again and again? Even more important, why is it crucial that we not seek to justify our mistakes?

Further Study: Read Ellen G. White, “The Rebellion of Korah,” pp. 395–405, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

“I question whether genuine rebellion is ever curable. . . .

“Rebellion and apostasy are in the very air we breathe. We shall be affected by it unless we by faith hang our helpless souls upon Christ. If men are so easily misled, how will they stand when Satan shall personate Christ, and work miracles? Who will be unmoved by his misrepresentations? Professing to be Christ when it is only Satan assuming the person of Christ, and apparently working the works of Christ? What will hold God’s people from giving their allegiance to false Christs? ‘Go not ye after them.’”

“The doctrines must be plainly understood. The men accepted to teach the truth must be anchored; then their vessel will hold against storm and tempest, because the anchor holds them firmly. The deceptions will increase, and we are to call rebellion by its right name. We are to stand with the whole armor on.” —Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1114.

Discussion Questions:

① What are ways in which sin deceives us? How can we know if we are being deceived by it? (After all, isn’t part of the deception of sin to make us think that actually we’re not being deceived?) What role does the Bible play in answering this question? How can others help us, as well?

② However open and outright the rebellion we looked at this week, what are other ways that the same spirit can be manifest among us? How can we recognize it when it arises among ourselves, especially when it’s often cloaked under guises that make us think we’re not rebelling really, but instead, really standing up for what is right? How do we know the difference?

③ Why are memorials, either religious or secular, important? What are some secular memorials common in your culture, and what do they represent?

Summary: The rebellion of Korah and his associates against Moses and Aaron was so deep-seated that God had to destroy them and their followers by earthquake, fire, and plague. This account should serve as a warning against envy and jealousy, as did the memorial bronze plates on the altar. If we would pray for our leaders and cherish what God has done for them and us, we may be spared the internal troubles that beset ancient Israel in Korah’s uprising.

Long Journey to God

by SAM ABRAHAM

Kiyasudeen grew up in a non-Christian home in India. When he was 11 years old he went to live with his aunt, who had no children. Kiyasudeen noticed that his aunt worshiped a different God. He watched as she lit a candle under a picture of a Man named Jesus and then prayed silently. Sometimes Kiyasudeen went to the room where his aunt prayed and stood before the picture of Jesus and prayed to Him too, saying, “Jesus, please take care of me.”

Three years later he returned home. He often went to the temple with his father. While his father prayed to his god, Kiyasudeen prayed to Jesus.

Then tragedy struck. Both his mother and his aunt died. Deeply depressed, Kiyasudeen climbed a small hill outside town, where he fasted and prayed for three days. “You are a holy God,” he said. “Auntie told me about the great feast in heaven. Will I be there? How will I know if I am prepared to go?”

He returned home to find a job. He needed to support himself, and he hoped to earn enough money to pay his school fees and write his school leaving exam. He found a job, but after several months the employer hadn’t paid him. When Kiyasudeen asked for his money, the man beat him and sent him away. The boy found a church, which he entered to pray. “God, be my help; educate me,” he pleaded.

The church’s pastor saw the boy and asked what he prayed for. Kiyasudeen said that he wanted to study. The pastor said, “Why don’t you go to the seminary? You can study theology and become a pastor.” Kiyasudeen accepted and enrolled in the church’s seminary. After he graduated, he began preaching.

While visiting people one day, he saw a sign outside one house that said, “Pastor, Seventh-day Adventist Church.” He asked the pastor what “seventh day” meant. The pastor explained that the seventh day is the Sabbath. Kiyasudeen was astonished. “I studied in a seminary, and no one told me about the Sabbath. Is it Sunday?”

The Adventist pastor pointed to the calendar. Kiyasudeen saw that Saturday was the seventh day. He asked the pastor to teach him, and the two studied and prayed together for three months. Then Kiyasudeen asked to be baptized.

Kiyasudeen tried to share with his family God’s love, but they rejected him. So he shares his faith with anyone who will listen.

Our mission offerings help bring the gospel of Jesus to those like Kiyasudeen who are searching for the living God. Thank you.

SAM ABRAHAM is a lay worker living in Thanjavur, India.

Priests and Levites



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: Numbers 9, 18, 19, 1 Pet. 2:9, Rev. 14:6–12.

Memory Text: “And the Lord spake unto Aaron, . . . I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel” (Numbers 18:20).

After Korah's rebellion and the test of the staffs, it became necessary to emphasize further the distinct roles between the priests and Levites. Each had their God-appointed functions, and the Lord clearly drew the lines between those functions. And though all these roles and functions long ago have become obsolete, there still are lessons we can draw from them for ourselves today.

Notice, for instance, just how sacred and solemn these roles were. Thus, we could learn for ourselves how we need to take seriously our sacred responsibilities and trusts, whatever they are.

Notice, too, just how interdependent these people were with each other and the nation as a whole. We certainly can draw lessons from that for ourselves today as a church body.

Also, pay attention to the role of grace in these chapters, especially in regard to the gifts given these people through no merit of their own. They had these positions only because God gave those positions to them, not because of any inherent worth in and of themselves.

What a powerful symbol of the gospel.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 21.*

Division of Labor

“Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel” (*Exod. 19:5, 6*).

How can we relate those words above to ourselves, today, as a church called to bring a message to the world? Is this calling unconditional? See *1 Pet. 2:9, Rev. 14:6–12*.

In Numbers 18:1, the Lord wanted to give assurance to the worshipers that they would not die, but only if they approached the sanctuary through His specially chosen priests, who would act as mediators between them and the Lord. The priests, as distinct from the remainder of the Levites, were responsible for seeing that no unauthorized person approached the tabernacle, thereby defiling it. This would allay the fears of the congregation that in coming near the tabernacle they risked death.

Read Numbers 18:1–7. What distinctions were made in the roles given these men?

What's important to note here is that although all the nation was to be a “kingdom of priests,” only certain people were allowed into certain roles, as seen here in the division of the Levites and the family of Aaron from the general population and then in the division made between Aaron's family and the Levites. Obviously, in New Testament times, hereditary roles, such as found with the Levites, clearly have been abolished, yet we find in the New Testament distinct roles in the church (*1 Cor. 12:28–31, Eph. 4:11*).

What are your gifts, and how could you better use them to serve your local church?

The Gifts of Divine Service

When we read the Lord's instruction in Numbers 18:1–7, a few points stand out. First, the Lord makes it clear that He is the One who is appointing the people to these positions. Perhaps this emphasis was made because of the previous problems, not just with Korah and his cohorts but even with Miriam and Aaron. Now, though, there would be no question as to why these people were given these roles. They were there because God put them there—period.

Notice, too, the reason the Lord wanted to make these divisions. It was so that His “wrath may never again come upon the Israelites” (*vs. 5, NRSV*). Here, again, we see God's mercy even amid such powerful judgments. God seeks to save His people, not condemn or destroy them. The whole plan of salvation, from start to finish, reveals the Lord's desire to redeem sinful fallen beings from the destruction that sin otherwise brings (*John 3:16–18*).

What term is used to describe what the Levites are to the priesthood and what the priesthood was to Aaron's family? What lessons should we draw from it?

When you think of a gift, you think of something that is not earned. It's totally of grace. This was a privilege bestowed upon these people, not because of any merit on their part but simply through God's grace and providence. In the end, the Lord needed someone to do this work, and in His divine wisdom these were the ones He chose.

Of course, with this sacred task came sacred responsibilities. Issues of life and death, both physically and spiritually, were involved here, for the tabernacle was the place where God dwelt on earth. The sanctuary was also the model for what Jesus would do here on earth and for His ministry in heaven (*Hebrews 9*). It was like a miniature Calvary being played out in types and shadows. The destiny of souls lay in the balance. Hence, the solemnity the Lord placed on the roles given these men.

Think about your innate talents, whatever they are. No matter how hard you work to cultivate them, they are still that—gifts, something given to you by God. What are you doing with those gifts? Are you using them for yourself or for the good of others and the furtherance of the Lord's work? Might you need to do some serious soul-searching and changing?

Sanctuary Support

Having distinguished between the two groups of religious workers, the Lord next gives instruction regarding their economic support. Their positions were, apparently, full time. That is, they didn't "serve tables" (*Acts 6:2*) in order to support themselves. The support had to come from elsewhere.

Read Numbers 18:8–20. What points seem most pertinent to you?

Many interesting thoughts come through these texts. Notice, for instance, how closely the Lord related the offering given to Him with what was given to the priesthood. That is, though the offerings and gifts were made to Him, He gave them to the priests. Thus, by giving the offering to the Lord, they were at the same time giving them to the priests. This shows the close link between the Lord and the priesthood, which served as intermediaries between God and the people.

At the same time, we can see the humanity of the priests, as well. Though in this privileged position, they still were depending on the people they served for their sustenance. No doubt, with the people giving them of their best oil, wine, grain, and so forth, the priesthood constantly was reminded of their obligation to serve these people faithfully and not to take advantage of the position that they had been given.

Also, to redeem a child or an animal by means of money was one of the ways the Lord taught Israel the concept of substitution. One day in the future Christ would give His life as a substitute for sinners (see *1 Pet. 1:18, 19*). Salt, added to every sacrifice, was a symbol that signified the permanence of God's covenant with His people (see *Lev. 2:13*).

What kind of sacred responsibilities do you hold? How faithful are you in the tasks that others are trusting you with? How could you do better in faithfully executing your responsibilities?

The Tithing Plan

Although the tribe of Levi had no land territory, they were given 48 cities, 13 of which were for the families of the priests (*Josh. 21:19, 41*). The Lord declared that He was their “part” or portion (*Num. 18:20*).

In addition to their portion of the sacrificial offerings, what other plan did the Lord devise to care for both priests and Levites? *Num. 18:21–32*.

Returning a tithe of one’s income to the Lord (*Lev. 27:30*) was an ancient practice. It is first mentioned in the Bible when Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek, King-priest of Salem (*Gen. 14:18–20; Heb. 7:1, 2*). Jacob promised the Lord he would render “the tenth” of all he would earn in his future (*Gen. 28:22*). Now, the Lord adapts the use of Israel’s tithe, giving it for the support of the entire Levitical tribe—including the families of the priests.

Even the Levites, who were paid in tithe, tithed as well, their tithe going to Aaron. The Levites were to give the “best part” of what they received as tithe. Hence, not only did that tithe go toward the support of the priesthood; it also enabled the Levites to realize their dependence upon God and that all they received was from Him. They, too, needed to show their gratitude by faithfully returning the “tithe of the tithe.” If the people always needed to remember their dependence upon the Lord, how much more so the Levites?

Read Numbers 18:32. What point should be taken away from that regarding the sacredness of their calling?

In this divine plan, everyone had their role, everyone had something to do. The priests and the Levites had their sacred duties to carry out regarding the service and ministry in the sanctuary, while the people had theirs in regard to the paying of a faithful tithe. The tithe was a small thing to give, considering what the Levites and priesthood performed in their behalf. In a sense, all the different groups were dependent upon the function of each other, and all were dependent upon the Lord.

The Red Heifer

The sacrifice of an unblemished red heifer that never had been yoked is the strangest rite in Israel's sanctuary system (*Numbers 19*). What lessons can we learn from it?

This heifer was to be red, a symbol of blood, Christ's blood obviously. It had to be without blemish, as well, and never had borne a yoke—another symbol of Christ, a spotless sacrifice who came voluntarily to accomplish the work of atonement. There was no obligatory yoke upon Him, for He was independent and above all law.

The sacrificial heifer was brought forth without the camp, and slain. Thus Christ suffered without the gates of Jerusalem (*Heb. 13:12*), for Calvary was outside the city walls. This was to show that Christ did not die for the Hebrews alone but for all humanity (*Rom. 5:12–20*). He proclaims to a fallen world that He has come to be their Redeemer and urges them to accept the salvation He offers.

After slaying the heifer, the priest, clothed in pure white garments, took the blood in his hands as it issued from the body of the victim, and cast it toward the tabernacle seven times. Thus, Christ in His own spotless righteousness, after shedding His precious blood, entered into the heavenly sanctuary to minister in the sinner's behalf. And there His blood is brought into the service of reconciling God to humanity (see *Heb. 10:21–23*).

The body of the heifer was burned to ashes, which signified a whole and ample sacrifice. The ashes then were gathered up by a person uncontaminated by contact with the dead and laid up in a clean place without the camp. When the ceremony of cleansing was to be performed, these ashes were placed in a vessel containing water from a running stream. A clean and pure person then took the hyssop and sprinkled the contents of the vessel not only upon the tent where someone died but also upon its contents and the people inside of it. This purification ceremony was repeated several times in order to be thorough, and was done as a purification from sin.

The cleansing water, sprinkled on the unclean, symbolized the blood of Christ spilled to cleanse us from moral impurities. The repeated sprinklings illustrate the thoroughness of the work that must be accomplished for the repenting sinner. All that he has must be consecrated. Not only should the sinner's own soul be washed clean and pure, but he or she should seek purity and holiness in all aspects of his or her existence.

Look at your life. What things still need to be submitted to the purification process? What are you holding on to, and why?

Further Study: “God’s plan in the tithing system is beautiful in its simplicity and equality. All may take hold of it in faith and courage, for it is divine in its origin. In it are combined simplicity and utility, and it does not require depth of learning to understand and execute it. All may feel that they can act a part in carrying forward the precious work of salvation. Every man, woman, and youth may become a treasurer for the Lord, and may be an agent to meet the demands upon the treasury. . . .

“Great objects are accomplished by this system. If one and all would accept it, each would be made a vigilant and faithful treasurer for God; and there would be no want of means with which to carry forward the great work of sounding the last message of warning to the world.”—Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, p. 223.

Discussion Questions:

- ①** What are some of the issues regarding tithe in the church today? Why is tithing so important, not just for the function of the church but for the spiritual well-being of the one who tithes?

- ②** Go back over Thursday’s lesson on the red heifer. Dwell on what it tells us about Christ’s death and ministry in our behalf. What does it tell us about our need to be cleansed from sin? What has Christ done that enables us to have victory over sin?

- ③** Think about your home. Are there things there that you need to cleanse, things that could be defiling it? Books, DVDs, music, magazines, whatever? What are they, and why should you get rid of them?

- ④** What are ways that we can help others, especially the young people in our church, use their God-given talents for the Lord? That is, how can we help steer folk, who do have gifts, in the right direction of using those gifts for the right purposes? What is our obligation to help them?

Summary: Because of Korah’s rebellion and desire to hold the office of a priest, God instructed Moses (for the people) in regard to the distinction between the priests and the Levites. The priesthood was a gift from God; the Levites were a gift to the priesthood. Both were supported by a tithing plan. With the ashes of a red heifer mixed with water, the Lord provided for a special ritual cleansing, which signified the grace of God in cleansing a person from the stain of sin.

Poured Out and Running Over: Part 1

by JOANNE W. LAFEVER

My spirit was heavy as I walked upstairs into an empty classroom in the Adventist elementary school in Taipei, Taiwan, that day in 1998. Just two weeks before school started, I had received a phone call from the current principal saying that he couldn't return to Taiwan for health reasons. Suddenly I was the new principal as well as a teacher.

The little mission school had been established to serve the children of missionary families working at the Taipei Adventist Hospital. It was registered with the Taiwan government as a foreign school, which allowed it to take any students with foreign passports who wanted an American—and Christian—education.

My husband, Beech, and I were committed to continue teaching there if God wanted us to. But being the principal was a huge challenge, especially since I spoke no Mandarin Chinese.

The school board agreed to keep the school open as long as we remained self-supporting and could fulfill our mission to lead people to Jesus. I knew that winning souls is what Adventist schools are about, and our school was ready to do it. Only one of the current students came from an Adventist home.

We faced many challenges that first year, and only prayer got us through. But we knew that God had a plan. Then a radical idea hit me.

Our family had seen God's blessings as we returned tithe. Why not tithe the increase of the school? We had no idea whether the school would break even financially that year, but I told God I'd return tithe on any income the school made. And by the end of the school year, we returned \$450 tithe!

We had never had the money to advertise our school, so getting new students was always a challenge. As the next school year approached, we decided to take out an ad in a major Chinese-language newspaper. It would run for just four days over a weekend.

The Monday after the ad ran, a man called to make an appointment. He said he had seen our ad and wanted to enroll his first-grader in a foreign school. Then he mentioned that he never bought newspapers—except this one day!

Then a colleague of his learned that he was transferring his child to our school. She decided to transfer her three children, too. Over the years that man has kept his three children in the Adventist school and recommended our school to 40 others.

JOANNE W. LAFEVER is principal of Taipei Adventist American School in Taipei, Taiwan.

The Sin of Moses and Aaron



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Numbers 20; 21; John 3:14, 15; James 4:4–15.*

Memory Text: “Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with thine eyes: for thou shalt not go over this Jordan” (*Deuteronomy 3:27*).

After years of wandering in the wilderness, Israel finally reached Kadesh-Barnea, on the southern border of the Promised Land. After all that they had gone through, all the hard lessons the Lord had sought to teach them, all the powerful judgments issued upon those who openly rebelled, one would have thought that these people, once and for all, finally would have been ready for the Lord to use them to their fullest potential. As we know, that wasn't quite how it happened.

This week we'll study what is a perennial theme all through the Bible: the mercy and grace of God in contrast to the faithlessness, sin, and ingratitude of His people. From Adam and Eve in Eden to the Laodicean church today (*Rev. 3:14–18*), again and again we see God's mercy and grace in dealing with those who more often than not failed to claim the promises of victory, faith, and holiness that He offers. At the same time, we can see His willingness to forgive those who stumble and fall, even those who should have known better, such as the great Moses himself, who, in a moment of weakness and impatience, lost sight of the God who had done so much for him. Thus, if even Moses can fall, what about the rest of us?

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, November 28.*

When Giants Fall

When the water ceased to flow at Israel's encampment at Kadesh-Barnea, a grand opportunity presented itself for Israel to look to God for help. He always had provided for them in the past, so why should it be any different now? However, they quickly forgot the past and turned on Moses and Aaron with their old complaints.

Read Numbers 20:1–13. What did the Lord command Moses to do, and what did he do instead? Why do you think that this meek, faithful, and devoted servant of God showed such an uncharacteristic lack of faith and trust?

On one level, it's easy to understand Moses' frustration. First, he just had buried his sister and no doubt was feeling pain over that. And then to hear these people utter, basically, the same complaint that their forefathers had made years ago? Nevertheless, in the Lord's eyes, none of this excused his behavior.

"The water gushed forth in abundance to satisfy the host. But a great wrong had been done. Moses had spoken from irritated feeling. . . . When he took it upon himself to accuse them, he grieved the Spirit of God and wrought only harm to the people. His lack of patience and self-control was evident. Thus the people were given occasion to question whether his past course had been under the direction of God, and to excuse their own sins. Moses, as well as they, had offended God. His course, they said, had from the first been open to criticism and censure. They had now found the pretext which they desired for rejecting all the reproofs that God had sent them through His servant." —Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 417.

Even the most faithful and diligent servants of the Lord need to be careful. What makes this sin even worse was that it was done by someone who had been given great privileges. Think of all that Moses had seen of God's power; think of all the incredible revelations of the Lord that he had, again and again, witnessed. And yet, even with all that, he allowed self to rise up and dominate? What a warning this should be for the rest of us.

Think of a time when you felt pushed over the edge and did something rash and sinful. How often did you wish you could have turned back the clock and undone the damage? What lessons have you learned from this incident that, ideally, could help prevent you from doing the same thing again?

Death of Aaron

Read Numbers 20:23–29. What points seem pertinent here in the depiction of the death of Aaron? What lessons can we take away from this for ourselves and whatever work we are doing for the Lord?

Chapter 20 opened with the death of Miriam and ended with the death of Aaron. It's clear that the older generation was passing on, and the new one was to take up where they had left off. We see the same thing in our church today. One generation goes, and a new one arises to pick up the mantle. The crucial question remains: How much will the new generation learn from the mistakes, as well as the successes, of the older one?

Notice the difference in the accounts of the deaths of Miriam and Aaron. Her death was mentioned in just one short verse. It's almost as if her death came suddenly and unexpectedly. What a contrast to Aaron's, which is clearly foretold.

Before Aaron's death, Aaron, Moses, and Aaron's son, Eleazar, go to the top of Mount Hor, where in the sight of the congregation Moses takes off his brother's priestly garments and puts them on his nephew, Eleazar, a powerful symbol of the transference of the role of one generation to another. Though Aaron was soon to be "gathered unto his people," the work of the high priest must go on. In other words, the work and mission of the church is greater than any one man or woman. If we choose, we can do our duty faithfully, but sooner or later we pass from the scene, and others pick up where we have left off.

It's hard to imagine just how emotional this incident must have been for everyone involved. Moses, knowing that soon his death surely would follow, strips his brother of the sacred garments and places them on his nephew, Aaron's son; Aaron, no doubt remorseful over some of his failures, knows that he is soon to die; and Eleazar, standing before his father, who will soon die, now bears the heavy responsibility of the high priest. Meanwhile, down below, the children of Israel watch the whole thing unfold.

If you were to die tomorrow, what legacy would you leave? What have you done for the Lord's work? How can you better use the little time that you, as do any of us (*James 4:13–15*), have left?

The Sin of Ingratitude

Because the nation of Edom (descendants of Esau) refused to let Israel pass through its borders, it was necessary to go around it. (*See Num. 20:14–21.*) The Edomites occupied the territory extending south from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Aqabah.

Read Numbers 21:1–5. What were the people's complaints? Think about all that had happened to them and all that they had gone through. Could there have been some justification for their complaints?

However much they might have thought that they had reason to grumble, the Lord obviously didn't agree. After all, every day of their travels they had been kept by a miracle of divine mercy. They had all the water they needed, even in a desert; they had bread from heaven to eat, angels' food (*Ps. 78:25*); and they had peace and safety under the shadowy cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. There was not a feeble one in all their ranks. Their feet had not swelled on their long journeys, neither had their clothes "waxed . . . old" (*Deut. 8:3, 4; Ps. 105:37*). No doubt, they had their struggles, their problems, their fears, as we all do. But apparently, focusing only on those problems, they forgot the divine blessings that had been theirs for so long. Indeed, perhaps that might have been their problem: so used to God's mercy, grace, and provision, they started to take it for granted. And once we take things for granted, it's very easy to forget about them.

What are some things that you take for granted in your life? Why is that such a foolish thing to do?

The only cure for this is to day by day thank the Lord for what He has given us. This is why praise is so important. God doesn't need our praise; we need to praise the Lord as much as we can, for this serves as a constant reminder to us of just how much we have to be thankful for to the Lord.

Write out your own psalm of praise. Put in it all things that you have to be thankful for. Imagine if you were to sing it every day. How could this help you from falling into the sin of ingratitude and the dangerous traps it can lead to?

The Fiery Serpents

However much the people thought that they had valid things to complain about, it's clear the Lord wasn't sympathetic to their grievances. After all these years in the desert, all these years of seeing God working among them, what do they do but regurgitate the same old complaint about having been brought into the desert in order to be killed? No wonder the Lord wasn't sympathetic. What made their complaints even worse was that they just had experienced a victory over the Canaanites.

Read Numbers 21:5–9. How again do we see Moses in the role of intercessor? Why, especially now, did the people need an intercessor?

There are about 35 different species of snakes in Palestine. Some are extremely poisonous. The poisonous serpents that infested the wilderness were called "fiery serpents," on account of the terrible effects produced by their sting. As the protecting hand of God was removed from Israel, great numbers of the people were attacked by these venomous creatures. In other words, it wasn't that God sent them upon the Israelites; rather, the Lord took His protection away from them, and they then suffered the consequences.

Read John 3:14, 15. How does Jesus relate the incident with the serpents to the plan of salvation? In what sense have we all been bitten by fiery serpents?

The existence of the bronze serpent on the pole wasn't enough to stop the bites from killing people. They had to look; they had to make the choice to obey and then receive the benefits of the provision made in their behalf. In the same way, the death of Jesus itself automatically doesn't bring salvation to the world. His death provided the means of salvation, but just as the people in the wilderness needed to look, we have to look to Jesus and believe in order to receive what He so freely and graciously offers.

How have you known in your own life the healing power of Christ, even now? What other hurts do you need to bring to Him for consolation, healing, and strength to move on despite what seems like insurmountable pain?

Early Conquests

Nearly forty years earlier Israel attempted to attack the Canaanites in this same area and were beaten badly (*Num. 14:40–45*). That generation now had died during the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness and a new one now was prepared to pick up where the older one had left off.

Read Numbers 21:10–33 and answer the following questions:

- What promises did the Hebrews make to the pagan king Sihon? What was offered in those promises?
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- Who attacked whom? *Vs. 23.*
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- What difference was there between how the Israelites responded to King Sihon and King Og?
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“These nations on the borders of Canaan would have been spared, had they not stood, in defiance of God’s word, to oppose the progress of Israel. . . . Although the Amorites were idolaters, whose life was justly forfeited by their great wickedness, God spared them four hundred years. . . . All His wonders in bringing Israel from Egypt were known to them. Sufficient evidence was given.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 434.

Note the difference in strategy in regard to the two kingdoms. No courteous request is made to pass peacefully through Og’s land. Rather, the Lord drew the king and his armies away from their cities that “were fenced with high walls, gates, and bars” (*Deut. 3:5*). Away from their defenses, Israel—under the guidance and promises of God through Moses—was able to defeat King Og and his Amorite army in the field.

The victory over Sihon and Og—the kings of the Amorites in Transjordan—was immortalized forever in song (*Pss. 135:10–12, 136:18–26*) and in the national memory (*Judg. 11:18–22*).

Forty years later the children of Israel finally were entering the Promised Land. Look at all the time wasted, all due to their own lack of faith and trust, despite all the evidence that they had of God’s leading. How much precious time are you wasting, not moving ahead on faith? How can you better learn to trust in God’s promises and then to act on those promises now instead of wasting time?

Further Study: Read Ellen G. White, "The Smitten Rock," pp. 411–421; "The Journey Around Edom," pp. 422–432; "The Conquest of Bashan," pp. 433–437, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

"Nicodemus was being drawn to Christ. As the Saviour explained to him concerning the new birth, he longed to have this change wrought in himself. By what means could it be accomplished? Jesus answered the unspoken question: 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.'

"Here was ground with which Nicodemus was familiar. The symbol of the uplifted serpent made plain to him the Saviour's mission. When the people of Israel were dying from the sting of the fiery serpents, God directed Moses to make a serpent of brass, and place it on high in the midst of the congregation. Then the word was sounded throughout the encampment that all who would look upon the serpent should live. The people well knew that in itself the serpent had no power to help them. It was a symbol of Christ. As the image made in the likeness of the destroying serpents was lifted up for their healing, so One made 'in the likeness of sinful flesh' was to be their Redeemer. . . . Whether for the healing of their wounds or the pardon of their sins, they could do nothing for themselves but show their faith in the Gift of God. They were to look and live."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 174, 175.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ Think about the story of the fiery serpents. Talk about having to act on faith. That is, just by looking at the brazen serpent, the Israelites were promised to be spared what would otherwise have been a certain death. There was no natural explanation; their life depended upon a supernatural act on their behalf. How does that reflect the plan of salvation, as well? What should this tell us about just how helpless we are on our own, apart from God, for eternal life? How should this reality keep us humble?

- ❷ In what ways might we, either as individuals or as a church, be making some of the same mistakes as the children of Israel made? Why is it always so hard to see our own spiritual weak points?

Summary: This segment of the book of Numbers focuses on the close of the 40 years of wandering. Grieving over the death of their sister Miriam, Moses and Aaron, in a state of anger, sin against the Lord. Later, the grumbling congregation, bitten by death-dealing snakes, found physical and spiritual healing by faith when they looked upon a bronze serpent the Lord commanded Moses to make and place before them. Following this humbling experience, the Lord enabled Israel to conquer the Amorites of Transjordan and to seize their territories.

Poured Out and Running Over: Part 2

by JOANNE W. LAFEVER

It looked as if our little mission school in Taiwan would close. Most of the missionaries who had sent their children here were gone. Then God showed us that He had other plans for our school. He transformed it into a real mission school—a school for children whose parents wanted an American—and a Christian—education.

With God's blessings the school enrollment increased. We have grown from four classrooms to eight, from 50 students to more than 125. We are bursting at the seams. We have remodeled the school and made major improvements to our facility and our academic program. I'm sure that at least some of these blessings have been the result of faithfully tithing our increase.

Nearly every student comes from a non-Adventist home, and our teachers take seriously their commission to win souls for Jesus. Every year children make decisions for Jesus as a result of studying at Taipei Adventist American School and coming into contact with God's message of love.

Over the years many parents have told us that they wished we had a Christian high school where their children could study when they complete eighth grade. They didn't want their children to have to travel to the United States at such an early age just to continue their international education. Taipei has three high schools that serve foreign students, but they are quite secular. We wanted to see our students who had come to know Jesus continue their education in an Adventist Christian academic environment.

So in 2004 we stepped out in faith and established an Adventist high school for foreign students. Starting with just 18 students, the enrollment has grown to more than 100. The school is providing a strong academic program in a Christian setting, and it regularly places its students in Adventist high schools and colleges in the United States. Not one of these children is from an Adventist family, but they are learning about Jesus and His love for them.

Our name, Taipei Adventist American School, reflects our mission and our faith. It has been exciting to see how God has opened the "windows of heaven" and poured out blessings on our school as a result of taking Him at His word. We know that as He has led us in the past, He will continue to bless us if we take Him at His word. We have proved Him. He has abundantly fulfilled His promises!

JOANNE W. LAFEVER is principal of Taipei Adventist American School in Taipei, Taiwan.

The “Madness” of the Prophet



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: Numbers 22–24, Deut. 1:30, 20:4, Matt. 15:14, 1 Cor. 2:14, 2 Pet. 2:14–16, Rev. 3:17.

Memory Text: “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Timothy 6:10).

The story of Balaam is well-known and often used to make jokes, such as, “Well, if God could talk through Balaam’s donkey, then He could talk through so-and-so.”

In one sense, however, there’s nothing really funny about this story. Though it can be read on various levels, Balaam’s encounter with the Lord can be seen as another example of how sin, if not overcome, if not wrestled with through the power of God, can lead us into paths of destruction.

Balaam is referred to in the New Testament three times (2 Pet. 2:15, 16; Jude 11; Rev. 2:14), and none of the references are very flattering. On the contrary, he’s a prototype, a symbol, of sin.

Peter talks about the “madness” of Balaam. Yet, it wasn’t the “madness” of the mentally deranged; rather, it was the madness of someone who was so swept up into covetousness that he was ready to do what Balak asked, and all for money, regardless of how wrong it was.

If someone like Balaam, a prophet, could be so “mad,” how much madder would we be to do something similar, especially with his example before us?

*Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 5.

A Fearful and Deluded King

Try to put yourself in the position of Balak, king of Moab. Here was this massive horde that had come out of the great nation of Egypt and who had survived only by miracles (what else?) in the desert for four decades. And now they were camped “in the plains of Moab” (*Num. 22:1*), not far from his kingdom.

Even though the nation had not made any threats against them and wasn’t intending to invade, Balak, understandably, was nervous. After all, just look what they had done to King Og of Bashan and to King Sihon of the Amorites—whose nation already had defeated Moab (*see Num. 21:26*). Not to mention what they had done to the Canaanites (*vss. 1–3*), too. No wonder he was nervous.

Read Numbers 22:1–6. What was it about the Israelites that especially made the king fearful?

In reality, if Israel had been a threat, what should Balak really have been afraid of? See Gen. 48:21, Exod. 15:1, Deut. 1:30, 20:4.

It’s kind of ironic that Balak, facing what he believed to be an insurmountable foe, would seek out a prophet of the God of the very people he wanted cursed and defeated. Whether he realized what he was doing, we don’t know; but from our perspective, it’s obvious that Balak’s plans were doomed from the start. One only could wonder, too, why he didn’t get one of his own local *holy men* to petition the Moabite gods to defend them against Israel. Instead, he called upon a prophet of the true God. Perhaps the key to that is found in Numbers 22:6: “ ‘Curse this people for me, for they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land, for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed’ ” (*NKJV*).

Ask yourself how much you really seek to depend upon God and how much you trust in yourself, your money, your job, your talents, whatever. How can you learn to get your eyes off these things and on the Lord? Why is that naturally hard to do? See 1 Cor. 2:14.

Balaam

Who was this Balaam?

“Balaam was once a good man and a prophet of God; but he had apostatized, and had given himself up to covetousness; yet he still professed to be a servant of the Most High. He was not ignorant of God’s work in behalf of Israel; and when the messengers announced their errand, he well knew that it was his duty to refuse the rewards of Balak and to dismiss the ambassadors. But he ventured to dally with temptation.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 439.

Read Numbers 22:7–21. On the surface, it looks as if Balaam is standing firm for the Lord. However, if you read carefully, what hints can you find of his playing with temptation?

Balaam had urged the messengers to tarry with him that night, declaring that he would give no decided answer till he had asked counsel of the Lord. Balaam must have realized that his curses would not hurt Israel, for Balaam knew, or at least had known, the Lord. He really didn’t need to ask the Lord; perhaps He did so hoping there would be another answer. Either way, by having them linger when he should have dismissed them right away, he opened himself up to temptation. After all, the men had come with “the fees for divination” (vs. 7, NRSV).

Notice what happened at the second invitation, when they promised him even more. God had said that “if the men come to call” he may go, provided he speak only what God said (vs. 20). But in the early morning—before the princes could say anything—Balaam saddled his donkey and rode off at once with ambassadors of Moab. In other words, despite all the pretense of faithfulness and his claims about not being able to be bought at any price, he was eager to get all the money that was offered to him.

Read 2 Peter 2:14–16. How did Peter view the actions of Balaam? What warning is there for us regarding covetousness and temptation? Why is it so easy to rationalize away our sin to the point that it doesn’t seem sinful?

Unnatural Confrontation

Determined in his heart to get the rewards the king offered him, Balaam set out with the men toward Moab. Despite all Balaam's outward professions of fidelity, which he even might have believed himself, the Lord knew what was going on in the man's heart and responded to it.

Read Numbers 22:22–34 and answer the following questions:

- What symbolic significance might there be to the fact that the dumb animal was able to see the angel of the Lord and that Balaam, a supposed prophet of God, couldn't? See Zeph. 1:17, Matt. 15:14, Rev. 3:17.
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- Read Balaam's first response to the donkey after it spoke to him. Think about what was happening. What does Balaam's irrational response reveal about the true nature of his heart and his desire for wealth? After all, what would most people do were an animal to start conversing with them?
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- How does this story reveal God's grace, even to Balaam, despite his course of action?
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A lot has been written over the centuries regarding this, one of the stranger stories in the Bible. Different commentators come away with different interpretations. One point, though, seems clear: Balaam was a man who had a special connection with the Lord. After all, the Lord still was speaking with Him in an intimate manner. And yet, even with this connection, Balaam was determined to do what he himself wanted.

In what ways, even the most subtle ways, do you find yourself fighting against the Lord? That is, you're determined to do what you want even though you know it's not what God wants. How can you overcome this dangerous attitude?

“The Death of the Righteous”

After the incident with the donkey, Balaam came to Balak. It is interesting to note that Balak brought Balaam to “the high places of Baal” (*Num. 22:41*). Apparently, Near Eastern pagans built their shrines on the tops of mountains so as to be nearer the gods whom they wished to influence. Balaam ordered the king to build at this place seven altars and offer seven bullocks and seven rams thereon.

Read the words that Balaam, controlled by God, spoke over the children of Israel. What powerful message, and promise, is found in them? What hope is offered to us all in them, as well? See *Num. 23:5–10*; see also *1 Corinthians 15*.

“He saw them supported by His arm as they enter the dark valley of the shadow of death. And he beheld them coming forth from their graves, crowned with glory, honor, and immortality. He saw the redeemed rejoicing in the unfading glories of the earth made new. Gazing upon the scene, he exclaimed, ‘Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel?’ And as he saw the crown of glory on every brow, the joy beaming from every countenance, and looked forward to that endless life of unalloyed happiness, he uttered the solemn prayer, ‘Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!’ ”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 447.

What does it mean to “die the death of the righteous”? What is the only way we can die such a death? *Rom. 3:20–24*.

In a sense, these words of God uttered over His ancient people reflect the gospel promise of all of God’s people in every age, the promise of eternal life because of the righteousness of Jesus. None of us are righteous; none of us live or die in and of ourselves with enough righteousness to deliver us from the grave. Only the righteousness of Jesus can, which is credited to us by faith. Here, in the book of Numbers, with the story of Balaam, God is revealing to us the promise of salvation through Jesus.

Star and Scepter

Imagine the king's surprise when Balaam began to bless Israel. Although angry, the king still wasn't ready to give up. He took the prophet to another mountain peak where he could see only a small part of Israel and built another seven altars, offering again bullocks and rams. Balaam "went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments" (*Num. 24:1*). Yet again, instead of Balak getting the curse that he was willing to pay so much for, Balaam—under the control of God—uttered another blessing over Israel. A third time Balak arranged for seven altars and their sacrifices on another peak, but Balaam knew it was useless to ask God for permission to use magic on Israel. Looking on Israel's encampment from this third angle, he blessed the nation again (*Num. 23:27–30, 24:1–10*), and Balak sent him home in disgrace for his failure to curse Israel.

Read the parable Balaam told in Numbers 24:15–17. What was this a prophecy of, and how was it fulfilled? *Gen. 49:10; Matt. 2:1, 2.*

"Seeking clearer knowledge, [the wise men] turned to the Hebrew Scriptures. . . . Balaam belonged to the magicians, though at one time a prophet of God; by the Holy Spirit he had foretold the prosperity of Israel and the appearing of the Messiah. . . . The prophecy of Balaam had declared, 'There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel.' . . . Could this strange star have been sent as a harbinger of the Promised One?"—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 59, 60.

Bible students long have seen in these words a Messianic prediction, that of the coming Redeemer, Jesus. The image of a scepter (power) and a star (light) both are apt symbols of Jesus. Though the Lord used, at the time of the prophecy itself, local symbols, which would have meaning to those who heard it then, the principle behind the prophecy—that of Christ's power and victory—apply to the whole world. Jesus is the Light of the world and the rightful Owner of it, and no matter what humans' plans are, in the end the whole world will see Him prevail. See *Isa. 45:23, Rom. 14:11, Phil. 2:10.*

However much injustice in the world, we have the promise that God will prevail and that justice will, as well. How does that promise help you cope with all the injustice you see now?

Further Study: Read Ellen G. White, “Balaam,” pp. 438–452, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*; “The Beatitudes,” pp. 17–44; “The Spirituality of the Law,” pp. 45–58, in *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*.

“He who will abuse animals because he has them in his power is both a coward and a tyrant. A disposition to cause pain, whether to our fellow men or to the brute creation, is satanic. Many do not realize that their cruelty will ever be known, because the poor dumb animals cannot reveal it. But could the eyes of these men be opened, as were those of Balaam, they would see an angel of God standing as a witness, to testify against them in the courts above. A record goes up to heaven, and a day is coming when judgment will be pronounced against those who abuse God’s creatures.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 443.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ What are some other spiritual lessons we can take away from the story of Balaam? What does it teach, for instance, about God’s sovereignty, about human free will and God’s providence, or about human sinfulness?

- ❷ Dwell more on this idea of the “death of the righteous.” If you were to die today, would it be a “death of the righteous”? Justify your answer.

- ❸ Money is such an incredibly corrupting influence in all areas of life, including our religious life. How can we, as Christians, protect ourselves, our faith, and our church from the potentially corrupting influence of money?

- ❹ Read Jude 11 and Revelation 2:14, which, aside from the verses we already looked at in 2 Peter, are the only other New Testament references to Balaam. What can we learn from them that can help us better understand where Balaam went astray?

Summary: The account of Balaam’s attempt to curse Israel in return for riches and honor brings out into the open his inordinate greed and covetousness. The tenth commandment warns us away from this sinful human trait. None of us is immune to this, or to any other sin, which if not overcome can lead to our final ruin. How important it is that we learn from Balaam’s mistakes.

Christmas Gift for Jesus

by SOLANGE DELAI ARAÚJO

The church I attend in Brazil is just four years old, but the members are active missionaries for God, and many have been added to God's family as a result.

Brother Carlos Ari has been an active church member and lay leader for 15 years. During these years, he has shared God's love with many people. Doing so filled him with great joy. Many of those who had asked for baptism had been led to Christ by Brother Ari, but Maria, his wife, had not yet committed her life to Christ.

Sometimes Maria attended church with her husband and children. And she even participated in some church activities. She especially enjoyed helping out in our community to relieve the suffering of the poor. She taught her children to walk in the ways of the Lord, but she had never given her life to Christ. Carlos couldn't understand what was holding his wife back from making such an important decision.

Once when the pastor visited Carlos and Maria he invited Maria to give her life completely to Jesus and seal her commitment with baptism. But her response disappointed him. "The more you speak of baptism, the longer it will take to become a reality," she said. The pastor saw the sad look on Carlos's face. Later he spoke with Carlos alone and encouraged him to continue praying for his wife. He assured the pastor that he was not discouraged and would continue to seek souls for the kingdom of heaven. Carlos continued to pray for his wife and share God's love whenever he could. But he saw no change in her life.

Christmas arrived, and the church planned a special worship service, titled "Gifts for Jesus." The service included a baptism, and some of the people to be baptized were people Carlos had helped prepare for this moment. Maria attended with her husband, and her presence brought obvious joy to his heart.

Following the pastor's message we witnessed a baptism. The pastor introduced each person as a Christmas gift to Jesus. Then the last candidate stepped into the pool. It was Maria. With tears streaming down his face, Carlos and his children walked to the front of the church so he could witness this special moment—a special gift to God and to the family. They had prayed for this moment and didn't want to miss it!

At last Carlos can say, "As for me and my [entire] household, we will serve the Lord" (*Josh. 24:15, NIV*).

Your mission offerings are gifts to God every day. They make it possible to lead thousands to the feet of Jesus, gifts to the Savior.

SOLANGE DELAI ARAÚJO lives in the South Minas Conference in eastern Brazil.

LESSON 11 *December 5–11

Immorality *on the Border*



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: Numbers 25, 31, Deut. 21:10–14, 1 Cor. 10:1–14, Rev. 2:14.

Memory Text: “Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand” (1 Corinthians 10:8).

Here again we see the same theme running through the book of Numbers: God’s people, led so clearly and powerfully by Him, still making wrong choices, still showing a lack of faith, still falling into the most flagrant disobedience. All God wanted to do, from the start, was bring them into the Promised Land; and time and again, all they were doing, by their choices, was making it so much more difficult for that to happen.

No question about it: God’s overriding providence succeeded then, and will succeed. Just as He brought His ancient covenant people into the Promised Land, He will do the same in the end time for us. How much better, though, if we would cooperate with Him rather than work against His purposes.

This week we’ll look at one of the greatest breaches of faith in all of Old Testament history, the apostasy at Shittim. And though it happened thousands of years ago in a culture and context radically different from ours today, the spiritual parallels are there, and they should shout a loud warning to God’s church, also on the borders of the Promised Land.

*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 12.

Seduction

Numbers 25:1 reads: “While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women” (*NIV*). Just a clear-cut statement of fact, nothing more.

The text says that “Israel was staying” in Shittim. That is, they weren’t going anywhere. They were at rest. At ease, really, because they just had finished a number of successful conquests: they had beaten the Canaanites (*Num. 21:1–3*), the Amorites (*vss. 21–31*), and the folk under the rule of King Og of Bashan (*vss. 33–35*). And now they were on the borders of the Promised Land, just across the Jordan River.

In other words, after numerous mistakes and setbacks, things were going quite well. They were in no immediate danger from warring armies, because they readily had dispatched all of these military threats. Hence, they were able to take it easy.

Read Numbers 25:1–3. What were the steps involved here in this apostasy? How did something so terrible happen?

Sex, food, idolatry—it was all there on the shores of the Jordan. According to the order seen in the texts, they first had sexual relations with the women, which clearly broke down barriers. And then it was at the invitation of these women that the men sacrificed to their pagan gods and then eventually bowed down and worshiped them.

Again, from our perspective, it’s hard to understand how something like this could happen. *They should have known better, right?* At the same time, here they were, mingling with these people, probably not much at first, but then, over time, more and more. Slowly but surely their guard was let down; and before they knew it, they were ensnared by lust and passion. Once they had fallen into that trap, anything was possible.

We fool ourselves when we think we are less vulnerable to the deceptions of sin of any kind.

Read 1 Corinthians 10:1–14. How can we apply the lessons there to ourselves, today, in whatever situation we are in? What similar temptations do we face in our own contexts? What promise can we take from these words and make our own?

Behind the Scenes

Read Revelation 2:14 and Numbers 31:16. What insight do they give us into what was going on here with Israel at Shittim? How does this help us understand how they fell?

Unable to succeed one way, their enemies (the Moabites and the Midianites) now tried another, and it worked so much better. The principle should be clear: As long as we are acting in faith and obedience, a lot of doors to sin, deception, and ruin are closed. Once, however, we move away from doing what we should, anything can happen. How crucial, then, that we seek to stay on the path of obedience.

"At Balaam's suggestion, a grand festival in honor of their gods was appointed by the king of Moab, and it was secretly arranged that Balaam should induce the Israelites to attend. He was regarded by them as a prophet of God, and hence had little difficulty in accomplishing his purpose. Great numbers of the people joined him in witnessing the festivities. They ventured upon the forbidden ground, and were entangled in the snare of Satan. Beguiled with music and dancing, and allured by the beauty of heathen vestals, they cast off their fealty to Jehovah. As they united in mirth and feasting, indulgence in wine beclouded their senses and broke down the barriers of self-control. Passion had full sway; and having defiled their consciences by lewdness, they were persuaded to bow down to idols. They offered sacrifice upon heathen altars and participated in the most degrading rites.

"It was not long before the poison had spread, like a deadly infection, through the camp of Israel. Those who would have conquered their enemies in battle were overcome by the wiles of heathen women. The people seemed to be infatuated. The rulers and the leading men were among the first to transgress, and so many of the people were guilty that the apostasy became national. 'Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor [a Moabite god worshipped at Mount Peor].' When Moses was aroused to perceive the evil, the plots of their enemies had been so successful that not only were the Israelites participating in the licentious worship at Mount Peor, but the heathen rites were coming to be observed in the camp of Israel."—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 454, 455.

Time and time again we see the same principle at play: God doing so much for His people, God promising so much to His people, and they—in response—destroying themselves. What about you? What has God promised you, and how are you responding to those promises?

Sin and Punishment

The fact that these men fell into a trap didn't, obviously, excuse their sin. If they had obeyed the Lord to begin with, if they had kept His commandments, if they had done what they knew was right and not slowly opened themselves up to temptation, this dreadful apostasy and suffering never would have occurred. No doubt, at first, they had no intention of going as far as they did. After all, they were just going to a party, that's all. And because Balaam, a prophet of their own God, had invited them, what could be wrong with that? How quickly, though, things got out of hand.

What other examples in the Bible can you find of people opening the door to sin that eventually led to horrific consequences, consequences that they probably never imagined would come?

No question, all through the Bible we see this same thing happening, again and again. From Eve in Eden to Judas in Jerusalem, those who should have known better, those who had been warned, those who had great light, nevertheless chose to ignore that light and—no doubt justifying and rationalizing their actions—fell into sins that brought devastating consequences. Who of us, perhaps, hasn't experienced this same thing in their own lives? God calls us to obey Him, not because He's a demanding tyrant but because He loves His children and knows what's best for us.

Read Numbers 25:4, 5. Why such a strong reaction? See also vss. 8, 9. What lesson can we take away from this for ourselves?

Think how painful it must have been for Israelites to have to kill other Israelites. Indeed, it seems as though each tribe may have had the responsibility of executing those of their own who were involved in this apostasy. Thus, some might have had to execute members of their immediate family! And to do it in broad daylight (literally "in front of the sun"). It must have been a terrible experience for the whole camp.

What do you do with someone close to you who is partaking of a sinful practice that can have a harmful impact on you and others? What is your responsibility and duty in such a situation? To whom can you turn for help in knowing how to respond?

Open Sin

It's hard to imagine the chaos, confusion, and pain that must have been going on among the Israelites at this time. We get an inkling of the pain, at least, in Numbers 25:6, which said that the people "were weeping at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting" (*NIV*). Weeping, no doubt, for the apostasy, for the suffering, and for their dead kinsmen. Also, with a plague ravaging the camp, they might have been weeping for themselves and their family, as well, fearful that they might be next. The fact that they were at the tent of meeting means that they were imploring the Lord to end the devastation.

Read Numbers 25:6–18. How do we understand what was going on here? What lessons can we take away from this story?

Though the text doesn't come out and explicitly say it, one could read into the text that the Israelite man, Zimri, was having a sexual relationship with the woman when Phinehas came into the tent and thrust his javelin through them both. However harsh all this might seem, think about the circumstances. The whole camp is weeping and pleading with the Lord because of what was happening, and this man—so audacious and open in his sin—brings this Midianite woman into the camp before all of them and then takes her into the tent and has sexual relations with her. *All the while a plague is ravaging the camp!* What made it even worse was that Zimri came from a house of princes; that is, he was part of royal stock and thus should have known better. He must have been so deceived, so consumed with lust, that the sight of the camp weeping before the tabernacle didn't slow him down at all.

All through the Bible, we see examples of how sin clouds the reasoning powers and leads people to do some of the most unthinkable and irrational things. Think of Cain, of David with Bathsheba, of Judas betraying Jesus. No wonder the Bible, time and again, warns us against sin. It's not that God can't forgive our sin; it's that the sin can so warp us that we can get to the point that we don't even see it as sin any longer.

In your own walk with the Lord, how have you experienced the reality of how the practice of sin hardens you to just how bad it really is? What can you do to break out of this deadly unspiritual trap?

Destruction of the Midianites

After the terrible devastation at Shittim, the Lord commanded Israel to attack the Midianites, the ones who had—through their deceptions—brought such suffering to His people. Justice was going to be done. This particular branch of the Midianites had given themselves completely over to idolatry and all its attendant evils. Like the Amorites, this clan of Midian had “filled up the cup of their iniquity.”—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, May 2, 1893. And the Lord decreed their destruction.

Read Numbers 31, the story of the destruction of the Midianites. What are some of the hard things in this account that make it difficult for us to understand today?

Killing all the people, even the children, is hard enough for us to understand. We just have to trust in the revelation we have of God as revealed to us through Jesus Christ and accept that there are things we don’t understand from our perspective, things not revealed to us.

Many find Numbers 31:13–18 particularly disturbing, and understandably so. But we should keep a few things in mind. Many of these Midianite women were the ones directly involved in the deception that led to thousands upon thousands of deaths; hence, they were reaping the punishment for their sins. But what about the young girls, the virgins, who probably had done nothing?

Suppose the Lord said to just leave them be? These helpless young women would be left alone, with all their parents dead, their whole social structure destroyed. What could happen to them in the harsh and dangerous world at that time? This way, by being taken into the Israelite camp, these women not only would be protected from whatever dangers they would have faced had they been left alone; they also would be treated well by the Israelites. After all, Israelite law demanded that.

Read Deuteronomy 21:10–14. How does this help us better understand what was going on with those women who were taken as prisoners by the Israelites? In what ways does this help us better understand Numbers 31?

Further Study: Read Ellen G. White, “Apostasy at the Jordan,” pp. 453–461, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

“It was when the Israelites were in a condition of outward ease and security that they were led into sin. . . . They neglected prayer and cherished a spirit of self-confidence. . . . A long preparatory process, unknown to the world, goes on in the heart before the Christian commits open sin. The mind does not come down at once from purity and holiness to depravity, corruption, and crime. It takes time to degrade those formed in the image of God to the brutal or the satanic. By beholding we become changed. By the indulgence of impure thoughts man can so educate his mind that sin which he once loathed will become pleasant to him.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 459.

Discussion Questions:

- 1** One of the greatest gifts God has given to human beings is the gift of sexuality. It’s also been one of the most abused, one that Satan uses again and again, and with great success, to ensnare and ruin those who love God and want to serve Him. How can we help each other in this area? What choices can we make regarding dress, language, decorum, what we watch in the media, and behavior in general that can remove stumbling blocks and temptation in regard to a sin that has led to so much suffering among us?

- 2** Think of the devastation that this sin caused in the camp. Think of the suffering of the people as a whole. What should this tell us about how, as a church community, we have a responsibility to deal with sin among us?

- 3** The Israelites didn’t fall into this sin overnight. It was a step-by-step process. What about us as a church today? Are we letting down our guard regarding things that could, ever so slightly, allow us to become hardened to what will lead us into Satan’s traps? What role does the issue of standards play in this important area? How can standards help protect us against this slow and steady move toward apostasy and ruin? Or can they at all? Or, if they can help us, how should they be applied?

Summary: Israel’s moral collapse on the borders of Canaan may serve as an example of one method Satan will use to cause God’s people to apostatize in these end times. “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (*Matt. 26:41*).

Trouble in the Village

by BARNABAS SIRCAR

I am a teenager living in the extreme southern part of Bangladesh. Six years ago an Adventist pastor came to our village. He visited every home, sharing God's love with those who would listen. Because many of the children in the village attended a Protestant school outside the village, some people were willing to hear about Jesus. Two years later 20 people were ready for baptism. Among them were my parents, my elder sister, and I.

But not everyone in the village was happy that we had become Adventists. The Protestant church leaders accused the Adventists of stealing their members. They united with the non-Christians to force the pastor to leave the area and make us return to our former religion. We faced many problems at that time. But even when we were forbidden to use the village well and had to dig our own well, we clung to our newfound faith.

The villagers then went to the police and accused us Adventists of destroying their idols, which lay broken into pieces under the tree where they had once stood. The land on which this tree stood belonged to my family, and we were targeted by the accusations. We couldn't prove that we were innocent, so we turned to God. We fasted and prayed that God would intercede for us. If we lost the case, we could be fined a large sum of money or be thrown into prison.

The police listened to both sides of the case. After we presented our side, we continued to pray that God would reveal the real troublemakers. Suddenly chaos broke out among the non-Christians in the crowd. People hurled accusations at one another. "You broke the idol and blamed the Adventists!" one shouted. "No, you broke the idol!" another yelled. Eventually the truth came out that the non-Christians had broken their own idol and blamed the Adventists.

Finally peace came to the village. The Protestant church leaders in the village still try to drive us out of the village, but we pray that God will soften their hearts so they can hear the message of hope and peace in Jesus.

Your mission offerings help send lay evangelists into villages such as ours, to teach the people and lead them to Jesus. Then they help to build simple chapels in which to worship. Thank you.



BARNABAS SIRCAR (*left*) attends an Adventist school in Bangladesh.

The Second Generation: Admonitions



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: Numbers 26–32, Romans 5.

Memory Text: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (*Deuteronomy 6:4, 5*).

True to His Word that the rebellious generation who had refused to enter the Promised Land would not enter it, the Lord now brought a new generation to the borders of that same land. There He directed Moses and the high priest, Eleazar, to number the congregation of males from 20 years and upward, “all that are able to go to war” (*Num. 26:2*). Surprisingly, the total in this second count amounted to 601,730 (*vs. 51*), nearly the same as that in the first count, 603,550, 40 years before (*Num. 2:32*). In spite of the divine judgment on the nation, in which the first generation (except for Joshua and Caleb) perished, God had multiplied them abundantly, and the armies of Israel mustered in the plains of Moab were for all practical purposes as large as those of the first generation.

Many questions, however, remained: Was this new generation, having lived with the results of their parents' bad mistakes, ready to learn from those mistakes and obey the Lord? How ready were they to take up the mantle now given to them? What lessons were they going to have to learn, and what can we learn from them, as well?

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 19.*

Land Division

After the debacle at Shittim, a census was taken of the males 20 years of age and older (*Num. 26:1–4*). With just a few notable exceptions (see vss. 64, 65), the older generation had died off, and a new one had appeared.

What was one of the reasons that the census was taken? Why would this be important? *Num. 26:52–56.*

Once the second generation had conquered the land, it needed to be divided fairly; otherwise, this could have become a source of fighting and confusion. Fortunately, Moses was still living and could direct in this important matter. As the text states, those tribes with a lot of members were given the most land; those with fewer, less. What could be fairer than that?

Read Numbers 27:1–11. What important principles do we see being made manifest here?

A key element here is the sanctity of the family, especially in regard to property and the rights of inheritance. It's clear that the idea was to keep the property as close as possible within the family. The land, after all, was an "inheritance," and so it belonged in the family.

As we see, too, this was not a one-time deal. Because these women had the faith and courage to approach Moses over an issue of basic fairness, the Lord established a "statute of judgment" (*Num. 27:11*) that would endure for future generations and would protect women who might have found themselves in similar circumstances.

It's always so easy to let things like possessions dominate us so that we forget even the most basic Christian principles. How can we protect ourselves from allowing our desire for things to ruin our relationship with God and with others?

Successor

After so many years in the wilderness, the children of Israel were soon to make their crossing into the Promised Land. A new generation had arisen that was soon to inherit the land first promised to them when still in the loins of Abraham many centuries earlier (*Gen. 17:8*). Thus, despite the setbacks, the rebellions, the murmuring, the lack of faith in His people, God was going to fulfill His word. He was just going to do it with another generation, that's all.

Read Numbers 27:12–23 and answer the following questions:

- In Numbers 27:12 the Lord talks about the land that He has “given” (in the past tense) to the children of Israel, even though they were not there yet. What does that tell us about God’s promises?

- After the Lord told Moses again that he could not cross into this land because of his sin, how does Moses respond? That is, what is Moses’ main concern? What does that tell us about the kind of man he was?

- Why was it important that Joshua be given his charge before all the congregation?

Moses was soon to die, his work being done. The charge was now given to Joshua, Moses’ appointed successor. How interesting that it wasn’t one of Moses’ sons but, instead, someone who had proved his own worth. God, not Moses or the congregation, chose Joshua.

Also, the texts make it clear that, as with Moses, Joshua was to lead only through the guidance of God; that is, besides the written laws and commandments, he also was to seek the Lord’s will through the “judgment of [the] Urim before the Lord” (*vs. 21*).

How often do you seek the Lord in prayer regarding important decisions you need to make? Upon what basis do you make your decisions, if not through seeking God’s will?

Sacrificial System Reaffirmed

When the Lord spoke audibly the Ten Commandments (*Exodus 20*) from Mount Sinai and commanded the building of the tabernacle (*Exodus 25*), the second generation would have been children. Now God chooses to reaffirm, in summary form, the sacrificial system to the adult second generation.

Numbers 28:1–8 describes the “daily” or “continual” offering of a lamb in the morning and one in the evening. It was arranged in such a manner that this sacrifice always was burning (*Lev. 6:9, 13*). This “daily” or “continual” was the sanctuary’s centerpiece. It took priority over all other sacrifices and was central to Israel’s worship. This sacrifice represented the constant availability of God’s forgiveness and acceptance through the Redeemer prefigured in the sacrifice.

Read Romans 5. What does that tell us about the fullness and completeness of Christ’s sacrifice for us?

On the Sabbath day (apart from the “daily”), a special sacrifice was made. It consisted of two lambs, morning and evening (*Num. 28:9, 10*). Then, Numbers 28:11–15 details the sacrifices for the new moon, which then was followed by the festivals: Passover, Pentecost (Feast of Weeks), the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles (*Numbers 28, 29*).

“Some wonder why God desired so many sacrifices and appointed the offering of so many bleeding victims in the Jewish economy.

“Every dying victim was a type of Christ, which lesson was impressed on mind and heart in the most solemn, sacred ceremony, and explained definitely by the priests. Sacrifices were explicitly planned by God Himself to teach this great and momentous truth, that through the blood of Christ alone there is forgiveness of sins.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 107.

Why is it so important to trust only in Christ’s merits and righteousness, as opposed to anything in ourselves, as the only means of salvation? What happens if we start looking to ourselves, as if somehow we could be good enough to deserve or earn our salvation?

Keeping Your Word

Read Numbers 30 regarding vows and oaths. What important principle can we take away from this chapter for ourselves today? What does this tell us about the importance of our words? What warnings should we take away from here too?

It's one thing to flat-out lie; that's obviously sinful and wrong. But that's not what's being talked about here. How often have we made a solemn promise, or a vow in the Lord's name, that we absolutely intended to keep at the time, only to eventually break it for one reason or another?

In this immediate context, we're dealing with vows made "unto the Lord," but in reality, when we—especially as professing Christians—say that we are going to do something, we should follow through on it. That we intended to do it at the time we said it will make little difference to the one to whom we make the promises. Maybe the individual will believe us, maybe not. The point is, as professed Christians, what kind of representative of Christ are we if we are going around making promises or vows that—for whatever reason—we end up not keeping? What good is our religion if we don't keep our word? That's why it is crucial that we be very careful in what we promise or make vows about, because we might find ourselves in the embarrassing position of not being able to follow through, no matter how good our intentions.

"The obligation to which one's word is pledged—if it do[es] not bind him to perform a wrong act—should be held sacred."—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 506. In Israelite culture, failure to keep one's promise, sworn in the name of God, was regarded as a sin of omission. In a real sense, failure to fulfill a vow is taking His name in vain, especially if we are Christians who, ideally, do all things in the name of Christ.

How many times have you made vows and promises to others, to God, or to yourself that you have broken? What can you learn from these experiences? What promises can you claim that will help prevent this from happening continually?

On the Borders

After all this time, a new generation has arisen, one more than ready to leave the wilderness and finally have a home to call their own. Some were, indeed, more than ready to settle down.

Read Numbers 32:1–5. What is going on here? Why would they make this request?

In Numbers 32:6–15, Moses gives his response. He's not happy, and he views their actions as sinful. He compares it to what happened the last time they were on the borders and ready to cross over. Except that this time, their reasons were different. The first time they were simply scared of the people in the land and didn't trust the Lord enough to go over. This situation wasn't like that one. They weren't afraid to go over; instead they liked it where they were and wanted to remain there.

How did the leaders of Reuben and Gad respond, and how did Moses respond in return? *Num. 32:16–42.*

The response of the Reubenites and Gadites showed that they were willing to do their part for the rest of their countrymen. That is, however much they wanted the land that they already possessed, they weren't going to be selfish about it. However much they were seduced by what they possessed, they were going to make sure the rest of the Israelites got their possessions as well before they settled down to enjoy their own.

Seeing their willingness, Moses, though warning them that “your sin will find you out [vs. 23],” nevertheless took them at their word and agreed on the stated conditions.

Think about your own relationship to the church body as a whole. How much are you seeking to give to the church, in contrast to how much you take from it? What does your answer tell you about yourself? At the same time, might there not be times that, because of circumstances, you need to take more than you can give?

Further Study: Study the following texts regarding specific points Moses chose to remind the second generation of Israelites about. His remarks are based on the principle: “We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.”—Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches*, p. 196.

- Shittim plague in which 24,000 died (*Num. 25:9, 26:1*)
- Korah, Dathan, and Abiram’s rebellion (*Num. 26:9–11*)
- Er and Onan, sons of Judah (*vs. 19*)
- Nadab and Abihu, priestly sons of Aaron (*vs. 61*)
- The first generation died in the wilderness, except Caleb and Joshua (*vss. 63–65*)

Most of these events listed by Moses were events the second generation experienced. Why allude to these tragedies in Hebrew history? The apostle Paul explains: “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (*1 Cor. 10:11*).

Discussion Questions:

① How can one generation pass to the next generation its values, beliefs, and zeal? Or can it? Or look at it this way: Should one generation expect the next one to have the same kind of experiences and faith that it had? Discuss.

② Dwell more on the question of what our role is in the church. First, what is the role of the church as a whole? How do we fit in with that role? Should we always be in a position of giving? When is it appropriate to take?

③ As we have studied the children of Israel on the move in the wilderness, what mistakes have they made that we are in danger of making, as well? What main lessons can we learn from what they have done? More important, what can we do to ensure that we don’t fall into the same traps? Or if we already have, how can we get out of them?

Summary: While Moses still lived, it was fitting that God instructed him to give final instructions to the second generation, reaffirm the faith, and also to appoint Joshua as the nation’s new leader under God.

Divine Appointment

by BARNABAS HOPE

As a worker for God in a country that is not friendly to evangelism, I pray that He will go before me and prepare the hearts of people to receive His word. And He does.

While walking down the street one day, I passed a small key shop. Two men stood inside talking. One held an old book. *They must be reading the Koran*, I thought as I passed. I finished my errand and turned toward home. I decided to have a key made so I could talk to those men.

"What are you doing in this country?" the key maker asked as he worked. I told him that I was associated with a travel agency in town. The man still held the old book in his hand. It had been marked with several colors of ink. I knew that people didn't normally write in the Koran. Then I realized that it was a Bible.

I paid him for the key and prepared to leave. As I walked by the man's Bible, I laid my hand on it and said, "This is a great book. You would do well to keep reading it."

"That's my Bible," he said, smiling slightly. "I bought it many years ago." Then he asked what faith I followed. I told him I was a Seventh-day Adventist believer.

"Oh," he said, "I know about them. I've read about Adventists on the Internet. Do Seventh-day Adventists have any books I can get?" I told him we did, and he asked me to bring him one.

Just the morning before this unexpected meeting, my family had read the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch for worship. We talked about the lesson this story held that we never know when we will meet someone whom the Holy Spirit has already prepared, and that we must be prepared to teach them when God places them in our path.

As I walked home from the key shop, I thought about how Phillip came across the eunuch sitting and reading the Bible and ministered to him. I pondered how I had never seen anyone in this country reading the Bible. Then today I met this man in the key shop who was reading a Bible—and sharing the Bible with another man.

I pray daily that the Lord will lead us to people who want to know what we know, for our environment is not friendly to evangelism.

Only a handful of Adventist believers live in the country I serve in. Pray for them, and continue giving to the mission offerings, which support missionaries around the world.

BARNABAS HOPE is a church planter serving in the Middle East.

Cities of Refuge



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: Numbers 33–36, Josh. 20:1–7, Ephesians 2.

Memory Text: “We . . . who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast” (*Hebrews 6:18, 19*).

Though God was faithful in doing all that He had promised, the nation itself, at least that first generation, proved unfaithful and—instead of inheriting the land offered it—died in a harsh wilderness on the wrong side of the Jordan River, the side they were to have fled from and not to have died in. What a tragedy, especially because it didn't need to happen. All that they had been given, all that God had done for them, and yet, still they refused to trust, refused to act in faith even though they had witnessed dramatic manifestations of God's power in ways that most of us never have seen and, at least in this life, probably never will.

But the Lord was not through. No way. The theme of the Bible, again and again, is that God will fulfill His promises. The Lord will have His redeemed people in a new heaven and new earth. That is beyond question. The only question for us is, Will we be there, or will we be like the first generation, who despite all that was done for them, refused to enter into the promises given them?

This week, our last week in Numbers, we'll look at some of the final preparations as the children of Israel get ready to claim their promised inheritance.

*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 26.

History Lesson

Read Numbers 33. Why do you think the Lord had Moses write down their “starting points, stage by stage”? What purpose could that serve?

It’s really an incredible history, if you think about it. An entire nation flees its captors after centuries of oppression and survives for four decades wandering in the hostile environment of the Sinai wilderness. Only by the grace, power, and miracles of God could this have happened. Notice, too, how the text in Numbers 33:2 stressed that they moved place to place “by the commandment of the Lord.” The Lord wanted them, and future generations, never to forget that the whole story of the Hebrew people on the move in the wilderness was, really, the story about God and His dealings with sinful human beings in an effort to save them and to bring them into the Promised Land.

However powerful the story of their wanderings, today there are biblical scholars who, while not denying the reality of a group of ex-slaves leaving Egypt, nevertheless try to attribute it to purely natural circumstances. That is, they were doing exactly what the Lord didn’t want done, and that is to forget that God was central to all that had happened.

Read Numbers 33:50–56. Putting aside the immediate historical context (and the inevitable difficult issues it raises for us today), what important spiritual principle is found in these texts? From what you know of the history of ancient Israel after they had settled the land, why was this commandment about dealing with these peoples so important?

Compromise with the world has been and continues to be “barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides” (vs. 55, NRSV) for the Lord’s people. Unless we protect ourselves from the bad influences in the world and from the culture surrounding us, we are always in danger of allowing these things to corrupt our faith and lead us astray.

How can we protect ourselves from the negative influences that are always around us? What personal choices must you, and you alone, make for yourself to help limit the negative impact of these influences on you?

Cities of the Levites

It will be remembered that, because of the Levites' loyalty at Sinai, they were to be rewarded. God was to be their portion. Nevertheless, the Lord made specific provisions for them and how they were to live among the people they were to serve.

What provision was made for the Levites? What does this teach us about how the Levites were to live? *Num. 35:1–8.*

Notice, too, how the land was to be given to them from all the tribes. Those who had been given a lot of land were to give up more than those who had been given less. Hence, fairness in the land allocation is again seen. And yet, all the tribes were to give of “the inheritance of their possession” (vs. 2). All were to take part in making sure that the Levites were provided for. Thus, the Lord clearly wanted them to know their obligations. In a sense, the principle of tithing works the same way. Those who have a lot will, by default, tithe more than those who have less.

At the same time, too, the fact that they were to be provided for by the other tribes certainly must have been a constant reminder to the Levites of their responsibility to do their work faithfully in behalf of the people.

The Levites, then, were to be scattered among all the tribes of Israel; that is, they weren't gathered in one specific area. They were to live among the people, perhaps as a reminder of the faithfulness of their fathers during the worship of the golden calf. Hence, ideally, they in their sacred roles could be a constant witness to the people of what faithfulness and holiness should be about. Living among them, being part of their communities, sharing in their struggles, sorrows, and joys, the Levites—had they been faithful to their task—could have been a blessing to the nation. They were not to be some exclusive, elite, arrogant class that lived apart from the community in which they served. They were to serve, not be served. What an example of what true ministry is all about.

Read Ephesians 2. What does this tell us about what it means to be part of a community of believers? How can we best fit into our community and fulfill whatever roles we are called to?

Cities of Refuge

Read Numbers 35:6, 9–12. What is being established here, and why?

At this time in ancient Israel, no system of justice operated. If a man accidentally or on purpose killed a man, the victim's nearest of kin became his "avenger of blood" (*Deut. 19:12*) to execute justice. To prevent a miscarriage of justice, a system of six Levitical cities (three on each side of the Jordan) were appointed to which the murderer could flee for safety (*Josh. 20:1–7*).

Numbers 35:12, though, brings out an important point. Fleeing to the city automatically didn't guarantee permanent asylum. In some cases it would be a temporary refuge "until he stands before the congregation in judgment" (*NKJV*). That is, until the facts of the case could be established. These cities did not provide some kind of permanent diplomatic immunity, in which today a diplomat can commit a crime in a host country and not be held accountable. In this case, these cities were set up in order to prevent what could be a miscarriage of justice.

Read Numbers 35:9–21. How do we understand this form of justice in light of the gospel?

Some people don't understand how something like this could be reconciled with Bible texts about forgiveness or turning the other cheek. But what we are dealing with here is a criminal code. The gospel of forgiveness and grace, as taught by Christ, doesn't mean that crime, especially something as heinous as murder, goes unpunished by society. That a killer might even repent before God is, really, a different matter. What society can function if crime is not punished? What we see here is God's way of making sure that one of the worst crimes, that of murder, is dealt with in a fair and just manner.

Suppose you know someone whose family member has been murdered, and the accused, unquestionably guilty, is convicted. The family, who are Christians, can have a say in the sentence, either death or life in prison. What would you advise them, and why? Bring your answer to class on Sabbath.

Cites of Refuge, Continued

Read Numbers 35:22–34 and answer the following questions:

- How was the whole congregation involved in dealing with these situations? Why would it be important for them to be involved?

- What distinction was made between premeditated murder and that of manslaughter?

- Even though the death might have been by accident, the perpetrator still had to remain in the city of refuge in order to be protected. Given the context, why do you think that was so?

- All through the book of Numbers we have seen example after example of God's supernatural intervention, especially in cases of apostasy, sin, and rebellion. That being the case, why do you think the Lord set up this system of justice, in which humans were responsible for determining guilt and innocence? Why didn't He just supernaturally administer justice, as He did in other cases?

- Why do you think a murderer couldn't be put to death on the testimony of just one witness? What does that say about how serious the issue regarding capital punishment was?

Christ, Our Refuge

“The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence” (2 Sam. 22:3).

How does 2 Samuel 22:3 reflect, at least somewhat, what the cities of refuge provided?

In what ways do we find the same kind of refuge and protection in Christ that those who fled to the cities of refuge found? See John 8:10, 11; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Heb. 6:18.

“The cities of refuge appointed for God’s ancient people were a symbol of the refuge provided in Christ. The same merciful Saviour who appointed those temporal cities of refuge has by the shedding of His own blood provided for the transgressors of God’s law a sure retreat, into which they may flee for safety from the second death. No power can take out of His hands the souls that go to Him for pardon. ‘There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.’ ‘Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us;’ that ‘we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.’ Romans 8:1, 34; Hebrews 6:18.

“He who fled to the city of refuge could make no delay. Family and employment were left behind. There was no time to say farewell to loved ones. His life was at stake, and every other interest must be sacrificed to the one purpose—to reach the place of safety. Weariness was forgotten, difficulties were unheeded. The fugitive dared not for one moment slacken his pace until he was within the wall of the city.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 516, 517.

At the same time, the parallel is not exact, because our understanding of the Cross is that even those who have committed premeditated sin, even murder, can be forgiven by the Lord.

Do you feel that you are not good enough to be saved? Do you feel that your sins are too great for you to be accepted by God? Do you feel that you are unworthy of forgiveness? If so, then why is it important to forget about how you feel and claim the promises of forgiveness, salvation, and acceptance offered to you by Jesus?

Further Study: Ellen G. White, "The Division of Canaan," pp. 510–520, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

"The sinner is exposed to eternal death, until he finds a hiding place in Christ; and as loitering and carelessness might rob the fugitive of his only chance for life, so delays and indifference may prove the ruin of the soul. Satan, the great adversary, is on the track of every transgressor of God's holy law, and he who is not sensible of his danger, and does not earnestly seek shelter in the eternal refuge, will fall a prey to the destroyer.

"The prisoner who at any time went outside the city of refuge was abandoned to the avenger of blood. Thus the people were taught to adhere to the methods which infinite wisdom appointed for their security. Even so, it is not enough that the sinner believe in Christ for the pardon of sin; he must, by faith and obedience, abide in Him."—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 517.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ In class, discuss your answer to Tuesday's question regarding the death penalty. What would you tell the family, and why? Also, is it right and fair to apply what was done in ancient Israel to our system of justice today? Discuss.
- ❷ Why is it so important to remember how the Lord has led us in the past, either as individuals or as a church? What dangers arise if we forget the past? At the same time, why is it important not to dwell too much on what already has been done and cannot be changed? How can we strike the right balance here?
- ❸ If someone were to ask you, "What does it mean to take refuge in Christ?" what would you answer? How do we "take refuge" in the Lord? What does that mean? How should it change our lives?
- ❹ How do we administer church discipline today? How do we deal with wayward members whose actions are a reproach to the Lord? Yet, at the same time, how do we deal with them in a way that does not make us appear judgmental? Or can we?

Summary: The children of Israel, on the borders of the Promised Land, are given a quick summary of how God has led them all those years. Just before they enter, the Lord establishes the cities of refuge, places of asylum that, in a unique way, represent the refuge that we, as sinners, can find in Christ.

The Offering

by MOUSSAH NUHU-DAMARU

It was a tough time in Nigeria. I worked for the government, and my wife was a teacher, but we hadn't been paid in weeks. And my wife was expecting. We weren't sure how we would manage.

I still hadn't been paid when my wife went into labor. I had no money to pay the hospital, the doctors in the government hospitals were on strike, and the mission hospital was too far away. Our only option was an expensive private hospital.

We hired a taxi to take us to the private hospital, but on the way my wife started delivering the baby. The driver found a small clinic where she was able to deliver the baby. We rejoiced in our newborn son and thanked God for saving us a lot of money!

Two days later teachers were told to report in person to be paid their back wages. I couldn't go for my wife; she had to go herself and take our new son with her. And after waiting all day to be paid, she was told to return the next day!

On Sabbath morning I prepared for church. I wanted to give a thank offering for our new son, but I still hadn't been paid, and I had only eight naira (about six cents)! As an elder I felt a responsibility to be a good example, and that included faithfulness in tithes and offerings. How could I give just eight naira to God? Finally I gave my mother five naira and my three older children one naira each. I went to church with nothing.

During Sabbath School my son said that a man wanted to see me. I went outside to see what he wanted. I recognized the man and greeted him. He wasn't a church member and I wondered how he knew where to find me. "Can we go somewhere and talk?" he asked.

I walked him to my house, which was nearby, and we sat down. Then he pulled out a roll of bills and peeled off 8,000 naira (\$60)! Imagine my surprise! I had forgotten that this man had owed me money. I thanked the man and hurried back to church.

I returned tithe on the money the man had given me and took a fitting offering for the thank offering. Later I told my wife what had happened.

The next day she was finally able to get her long-overdue pay. God is faithful!

Things became easier for us after that, but I'll never forget how God provided an offering just at the right time. Giving an offering for mission is always a blessing.

MOUSSAH NUHU-DAMARU is a lab technician in the Mass Communication Department at Babcock University in Nigeria, West Africa.

Next quarter's Bible study guide will explore how the Holy Spirit works in the lives of those who have surrendered their hearts to Christ. The guide will look at the fruit the Holy Spirit creates in us and how that defines the type of person we are to become in Jesus. "The Fruit of the Spirit," by Richard O'Ffill, will help you realize how you can allow the Holy Spirit to make you a new creation in Christ. The key to this process is a willingness to die to self and to live for God and others. This fruit in our lives is the result of salvation, not the means. Jesus is always the means, which we claim by faith.

Lesson 1—"By Their Fruit . . ."

The Week at a Glance:

- SUNDAY: "Every Tree Is Known by Its Own Fruit" (*Luke 6:44*)
MONDAY: "Without Me You Can Do Nothing" (*John 15:1-5*)
TUESDAY: "By This My Father Is Glorified" (*John 15:8*)
WEDNESDAY: "That It May Bear More Fruit" (*John 15:2*)
THURSDAY: "And If It Bears Fruit, Well. But If Not . . ." (*Luke 13:9*)

Memory Text—*Matthew 7:20*

Sabbath Gem: If we abide in the Lord and allow Him to abide in us through His Spirit, we will be changed, even radically.

Lesson 2—The Fruit of the Spirit Is Love

The Week at a Glance:

- SUNDAY: Love Is Multi-Dimensional (*Deut. 6:5, Matt. 22:39*)
MONDAY: What Love Does (*1 Cor. 13:4-7*)
TUESDAY: What Love Doesn't Do (*1 Cor. 13:4-7*)
WEDNESDAY: The Test of Love (*Matt. 5:43-48*)
THURSDAY: Love in Action (*Luke 10:25-37*)

Memory Text—*1 Corinthians 13:13*

Sabbath Gem: True Godlike love is something altogether different from what we as humans often label or consider as love. Yet, God's love impacts our entire existence, our way of life, and how we relate to others. Love is so central to God's character that it should be central to ours, as well.

Lessons for the Visually Impaired The regular *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* is available free each month in braille and on audiocassette to sight-impaired and physically handicapped persons who cannot read normal ink print. This includes individuals who, because of arthritis, multiple sclerosis, paralysis, accident, old age, and so forth, cannot hold or focus on normal ink-print publications. Contact Christian Record Services, Box 6097, Lincoln, NE 68506-0097.