

BIBLE SURVEY



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SECTION 3: THE WILDERNESS

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CLASS SCHEDULE FOR BIBLE SURVEY: SECTION 3: THE WILDERNESS

#	Title	Text	Date
1	Leviticus: Sacrifices, Feasts, & Sabbaths	Lev. 1-5; 16; 23; 25	April 6
2	Leviticus: Priests & Levites	Lev. 8-10; 21-22; Num. 3-4	April 13
3	Leviticus: Be Holy	Lev. 19	April 20
4	Numbers: Sinai to Paran	Num. 1-12	April 27
5	Numbers: Spies	Num. 13-14	May 4
6	Numbers: Korah's Rebellion	Num. 16-18	May 11
7	Numbers: Moses Sins	Num. 20; Deut. 2-3	May 18
8	Numbers: Bronze Serpent	Num. 21	May 25
9	Numbers: Balaam & Israel's Sin at Peor	Num. 22-25; 31	June 1
10	Numbers: The Second Generation	Num. 26-27, 31-35	June 8
11	Deuteronomy: Sermons to the New Generation	Deut. 4-12	June 15
12	Deuteronomy: Moses' Legacy	Deut. 29-34	June 22
13	Section 3 Review		June 29

Overview

After the Old Testament was completed, the Jews divided it into three sections (Luke 24:44). The first section was called The Law. In Hebrew, it's the Torah. In Greek, it's the Pentateuch (Five Books). The Law was written by Moses, except for the very end of Deuteronomy, which was probably written by Joshua or another prophet. Therefore, these books are sometimes simply referred to as "Moses" (Luke 24:27). The other two sections were The Prophets and the Writings.

Section 3 covers Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These books follow the Israelites from Sinai to the plains of Moab by the Jordan River (1446 to 1406 BC). Numbers provides the primary narrative. Leviticus provides the details of the Law given at Sinai. Deuteronomy records the sermons Moses preached to the second generation in the plains of Moab forty years later. Deuteronomy means "Second Law" in Greek.

The Israelite calendar

The Israelites used a "lunisolar" calendar. Each month began with the new moon. Months were either 29 or 30 days. Since the lunar calendar year is about 11 days shorter than the solar year, adjustments were made to realign the calendar with the seasons. Every two or three years, an extra "leap month" was added. The beginning of their year fell in late March or early April by our solar calendar.

The month names typically used are from the Aramaic era. Only some of the original Hebrew month names are found in the Bible.

The Israelite calendar had two New Year's Days, one at the true beginning of the calendar year and another at the start of the seventh month. Modern Jews regard this second New year's Day, Rosh Hashanah, as an anniversary of the day of creation, but this is just myth.

Scriptures by location

Sinai – Exo. 19-40; Lev. 1-27; Num. 1:1-10:10

Journey from Sinai to Paran – Num. 10:11-12:15

Paran – Num. 12:16-19:22; 20:1-21

Journey from Paran to Moab – Num. 20:22-21:20

Conquered and took possession of the Amorite lands – Num. 21:21-35

Plains of Moab – Num. 22:1-36:13; Deut. 1-34; Josh. 1-2

DATE (BC)	EVENT
1446	Exodus
1446	Law given at Sinai and tabernacle built
1446	Nadab & Abihu struck by God for unauthorized fire
1446	Execution of a blasphemer
1445	First census = 603,550 + 22,000 Levites
1445	Israel left Sinai to travel to Paran
1445	Complaining, quail, and a plague
1445	Miriam and Aaron challenge Moses
	Spy mission and Israelites refuse to take Canaan
	Israelites defeated by Canaanites and Amalekites
	Execution of a Sabbath-breaker
	Korah's rebellion and a plague
	People complain and Moses sins at Meribah
	Aaron dies on Mt. Hor
	Israelites defeat king of Arad
	People complain and God sends deadly serpents
	Israel defeats Amorite kings (Sihon and Og)
	Balaam hired to curse Israel but blesses them instead
	Baal Worship at Peor and a plague
	Second census = 601,730 + 23,000 Levites
	Israelites attack and defeat Midian
	Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh settle given Gilead
1406	Israel camps in the plains of Moab
1406	Moses preaches the Law to the second generation
1406	Moses dies
1406	Joshua leads Israel across Jordan to begin the conquest
1406-1399	Conquest of Canaan (primary)

Religious feasts and holidays instituted in the Law

TIME	FEAST / HOLIDAY	SEASON
1 Nisan	New Year's Day (<i>Rosh Chodesh</i>)	Spring
14 Nisan	Passover (<i>Pesach</i>)	Spring
15-21 Nisan	Feast of Unleavened Bread (<i>Chag Hamatzot</i>)	Spring
16 Nisan	Feast of Firstfruits (<i>Habikkurim</i>)	Spring
6 Sivan	Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) (<i>Shavuot</i>)	Spring
1 Tishri	Trumpets / New Year's Day (<i>Rosh Hashanah</i>)	Fall
10 Tishri	Day of Atonement (<i>Yom Kippur</i>)	Fall
15-21 Tishri	Feast of Tabernacles (<i>Sukkot</i>)	Fall

People who were unclean or on a long journey at Passover could observe it on the 14th of the second month (Num. 9:1-14).

National holidays instituted later

TIME	FEAST / HOLIDAY	SEASON
25 Chislev	Hanukkah (2 nd century BC)	Winter
13-14 Adar	Purim (5 th century BC)	Winter

Purim commemorated God's preservation of the Jews in Persia in 473 BC (Esther 9). Hannukah, or the Festival of Lights, commemorated the rededication of the temple in 164 BC after it had been desecrated by the Seleucid tyrant, Antiochus IV Epiphanes. It is therefore also associated with the Maccabean Revolt and Jewish independence.

Months: 1 Nisan (Abib), 2 Iyar (Ziv), 3 Sivan, 4 Tammuz, 5 Ab, 6 Elul, 7 Tishri (Ethanim), 8 Cheshvan (Bul), 9 Chislev, 10 Tevet, 11 Shebat, 12 Adar. Years with an extra month had 1st and 2nd Adar or "Adar Aleph" and "Adar Bet".

I. Leviticus

- A. Laws related to worship (Lev. 1-17)
 - 1. Sacrifices (1-7)
 - 2. Priests (8-10)
 - 3. Purity and national laws (11-17)
- B. Laws about sin and sanctification (18-27)
 - 1. People (18-20)
 - 2. Priests (21-22)
 - 3. Worship (23-24)
 - 4. Laws for Canaan and vows (25-27)

II. Numbers

- A. First generation (1-10)
 - 1. Census, organization, and priestly duties (1-4)
 - 2. Laws (5-6)
 - 3. Consecration of tabernacle and Levites (7-8)
 - 4. Passover observed and instructions for trumpets (9-10)
- B. First generation rebels (10-14)
 - 1. Move from Sinai to Paran (10)
 - 2. Complaining and rebellion (11-12)
 - 3. Spies report and people refuse to take Canaan (13-14)
- C. Forty years in the wilderness (15-25)
 - 1. Laws (15)
 - 2. Korah's rebellion (16-17)
 - 3. Levitical instructions (18)
 - 4. Laws (19)
 - 5. People complain and Moses sins (20-21)
 - 6. Israelites conquer Amorites and take land east of the Jordan (21)
 - 7. Balaam hired to curse Israel but forced to bless them (22-24)
 - 8. Sin and a plague (25)

- D. Second generation prepares to invade Canaan (26-)
 - 1. Census and Joshua appointed to lead (26-27)
 - 2. Offerings and laws (28-30)
 - 3. Israel defeated Midian (31)
 - 4. Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh settle in Gilead (32)
 - 5. Summary of journey (33)
 - 6. Instructions concerning the promised land (34-36)

III. Deuteronomy

- A. Sermon on history from Sinai to Moab (1-4)
 - 1. Israel's refusal to take Canaan and punishment (1-2)
 - 2. Israelites defeat Amorites and take land (2-3)
 - 3. Obedience commanded (4)
- B. Sermon on the Law (4-26)
 - 1. Ten Commandments (4-6)
 - 2. God's plan and Israel's obligation to obey (7-9)
 - 3. Sin at Sinai and reminder to obey (9-11)
 - 4. Worship in the promised land (12)
 - 5. Rehearsal of laws (12-17)
 - 6. Laws concerning priests, judges, and kings (17)
 - 7. Prophecy about a prophet like Moses (18)
 - 8. Various laws (19-26)
- C. Sermon on the covenant (27-32)
 - 1. Blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience (27-28)
 - 2. Confirming the covenant with the new generation (29-30)
 - 3. Joshua appointed to succeed Moses (31)
- D. Moses' legacy (32-34)
 - 1. Song and blessings of Moses (32-33)
 - 2. Death of Moses (34)

Lev. 19:1-2 (LSB) - Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying: “Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘You shall be holy, for I, Yahweh your God, am holy.’ ”

Note: “Holy” means set apart and special. While Hebrew and Greek have one root word for this, English has many different words: holy, saint, sanctify, consecrate, hallow, sacred, etc. The antonym is profane, which is to treat something holy as if it is common.

Lev. 19:18 (LSB) - “...you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am Yahweh.”

Note: This is one of the two foundational commands which summarize the whole Law (Matt. 22:35-40; Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14)

Num. 6:22-26 (WEB) - Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, ‘This is how you shall bless the children of Israel.’ You shall tell them, ‘Yahweh bless you, and keep you. Yahweh make his face to shine on you, and be gracious to you. Yahweh lift up his face toward you, and give you peace.’ ”

Note: Our hymn, “The Lord Bless You And Keep You” is from this priestly blessing for Israel.

Num. 26:64-65 (LSB) - Among these there was not a man of those who were numbered by Moses and Aaron the priest, who numbered the sons of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai. For Yahweh had said of them, “They shall surely die in the wilderness.” And not a man was left of them, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun.

Num. 33:50-56 (ESV) - The LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho, saying, “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘When you pass over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you and destroy all their figured stones and destroy all their metal images and demolish all their high places. And you shall take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given the land to you to possess it... But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then those of them whom you let remain shall be as barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall trouble you in the land where you dwell. And I will do to you as I thought to do to them.’ ”

Note: God commanded a complete purge of all traces of Canaanite idolatry. When Israel failed to complete this, God’s warning was recalled (Judges 2:1-3).

Deut. 4:2 (ESV) - “You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you.”

Deut. 4:23-24 (ESV) – “Take care, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make a carved image, the form of anything that the LORD your God has forbidden you. For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.”

Deut. 6:5-9 (WEB) - “You shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. These words, which I command you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them for a sign on your hand, and they shall be for frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the door posts of your house and on your gates.”

Notes: The hypocrites literally wore little boxes containing the Scriptures (Matt. 23:5).

Deut. 8:3 (ESV) - “...man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.”

Deut. 12:13-14 (ESV) - “Take care that you do not offer your burnt offerings at any place that you see, but at the place that the LORD will choose in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I am commanding you.”

Notes: This location was not revealed until Solomon, about 500 years later (2 Chron. 7:12; 1 Kings 8:28-29; Deut. 16:2; 26:2). The Samaritans added Mt. Gerizim into their version of the Law and worshiped there unacceptably for centuries (John 4:20).

Deut. 18:15 (ESV) - “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers— it is to him you shall listen...”

Notes: When John and Jesus came, the Jews were anticipating the arrival of this prophet (John 1:21). Some recognized that Jesus was the Prophet (6:14; 7:40; Acts 3:11-26).

Deut 29:29 (WEB) - “The secret things belong to Yahweh our God; but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.”

Deut. 30:11-14 (ESV) - “This commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.”

Questions

1. When and where were the words of Leviticus given to Israel? (Lev. 27:34)

2. List the five major offerings. (Lev. 1-5)

1) Lev. 1:1-3 _____

2) Lev. 2:1-2 _____

3) Lev. 3:1 _____

4) Lev. 4:1-3 _____

5) Lev. 5:14-15 _____

3. List the seven major feasts. (Lev. 23)

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

6) _____

7) _____

4. For which three feasts were the people required to travel to the temple? (Deut. 16:16)

5. How was the one bringing his burnt offering involved in the sacrifice? Why do you think the people needed to be so personally involved? (Lev. 1:1-9)

6. What did the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread commemorate?

7. What was the Feast of Week called in Greek? On what day of the week did it always begin, and how do we know? (Lev. 23:15-16; Acts 2:1)

8. When was Sabbath observance first given to the Israelites? (Hint: Use a concordance or online search tool for the first occurrence of “sabbath”)

9. How was Israel to observe the Sabbath? What does “Sabbath” mean?

10. Many Sabbatarians claim that Saturday is the primary day on which Christians should assemble for worship. How might you respond?

11. What were Israelites to do on the Sabbath year? How often did this occur?

12. What were Israelites to do on the year of Jubilee? How often did this occur?

13. What was done on the Day of Atonement that was not done any other day?

14. What feast were Jesus and the twelve disciples eating when Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper? (Matt. 26:17-29)

15. What is our Sabbath? (Heb. 3-4)

Questions

1. Name Aaron's sons.
2. What were the ingredients for the anointing oil? What were the people commanded to not do? (Exo. 30:22-33)
3. What should happen to anyone outside of Aaron's descendants who attempted to enter the tabernacle or serve as a priest? (Num. 3:10)
4. What was the purpose of the Thummim and Urim? (Exo. 28:30; 1 Sam. 14:41)
5. What were the marital laws for priests? (Lev. 21:13-15)
6. What was the error of Nadab and Abihu? From the command that followed, what may have "influenced" them to disobey? (Lev. 10:1-3, 8-9)
7. What additional priestly responsibilities are found in Lev. 10:10-11?
8. List the duties of each Levitical clan. (Num. 4)
 - a) Kohath _____
 - b) Gershon _____
 - c) Merari _____

9. Who changed the Levitical duties? Why? Was this change lawful? (1 Chron. 23-26; see 23:25-26 and 29:25)

10. Besides Aaron and his four sons, name another priest mentioned in the Bible.

11. What king appointed priests from other tribes and new feast days? (1 Kings 12:25-33)

12. David later compared the priestly anointing ceremony to what in Psalm 133:1-2?

Additional resources

The chart in this article presents the complete genealogy of the Levites. The article is titled “The Levitical Priesthood” on bible.ca.

<https://www.bible.ca/archeology/archeology-exodus-route-sinai-levitical-priesthood-levi-gershomites-kohathites-merarites-aaronic-zadok-asaph-heman-ethan-abiathar-eli-sadducees-annas-caiaphas-ananias.htm>

Questions

1. What sin and punishment are recorded in Leviticus 24:10-16, 23?
 2. What statements did God make after the sins of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:3) and Moses (Num. 20:12)? What does this reveal about the influence and responsibility of those in leadership roles?
 3. What do “holy” and “profane” mean?
 4. Where is Leviticus 11:44 quoted in the New Testament?
 5. God declared, “I am holy.” Jesus began his example prayer to the Father with, “Hallowed be your name,” which means kept holy (Matt. 6:9). How might Israel profane God’s name? (Lev. 18:21; 19:12; 21:1-9; 22:1-3; Jer. 34:15-16; Amos 2:6-8)
 6. What phrase is repeated 15 times in Leviticus 19? Why do you think God used this phrase so much here?
 7. How did God’s laws for Israel compare to the laws of the other nations? Try to find a specific example to compare.

8. What two cultures were most likely to influence Israel to do evil? (Lev. 18:3)
 9. Why did God say he would drive the inhabitants out of their land? (Lev. 18:24-30)
 10. Name at least two sins which carried the death penalty.

Questions

1. How large was the congregation of Israel at the time of the first census? What were the criteria for this census? (Num. 1)

2. In Exodus 13, God commanded that the firstborn males of the people and animals be consecrated. The animals were to be sacrificed, and the people were to be redeemed.
 - a) What is redemption?

 - b) How did God redeem the firstborn from all the tribes? (Num. 3:11-13)

 - c) What were the criteria for counting the Levites? How many were counted?

 - d) How many firstborns were counted? (Num. 3:40-43)

 - e) How were these additional firstborn people redeemed? (Num. 3:44-51)

3. What were the basic requirements for the Nazirite vow? (Num. 6:1-8)

4. When did the people leave Sinai? How did they know it was time to go? (Num. 9:17; 10:11-12)

5. What happened at Taberah, and what does Taberah mean? (Num. 11:1-3)

6. How did their circumstances skew their memory of Egypt? (Num. 11:4-6)

7. What effect did Israel's complaining have on Moses? What was God's solution?
(Num. 11:16-17)

8. What message from God did Moses doubt? (Num. 11:18-23)

9. What happened at Kibroth-hattaavah. What does Kibroth-hattaavah mean?
(Num. 11:31-34)

10. What did Miriam and Aaron complain about. How did God respond? (Num. 12)

Notes

The words of our hymn “The Lord Bless You And Keep You” are taken from Aaron’s blessing upon the people of Israel. (Num. 6:22-27)

Questions

1. Where is the wilderness of Paran in relation to Canaan?
 2. What spy was from the tribe of Ephraim? What had his job been? (Exod. 24:13; Num. 11:28)
 3. What do the names Joshua and Hoshea mean? What was the Aramaic form of Joshua? (See recommended resource at the end of this lesson)
 4. What information was to be collected by the spies?
 5. What was notable about the sons of Anak?
 6. Did the land measure up to God's description? What does "flowing with milk and honey" mean? (Exo. 3:8)
 7. Following the bad report of the spies, what did Israel decide to do?

8. What was wrong with Israel's desire to return to Egypt? (Exo. 14:13; 23:31; 33:1-3)

9. What punishment was God going to use at first? How did Moses save them from it?

10. Locate a verse which shows the fulfillment of God's word in Num. 14:29-30.

11. What was the "age of accountability" in Israel? (Deut. 1:39; Num. 14:29)

12. What happened to the ten evil spies?

13. What happened in the battle against the Amalekites and Canaanites? Why?

Recommended resource: BibleStudyTools.com has an interlinear which allows you to access a wealth of information on the Hebrew and Greek words behind our English translations. From the main menu, click Interlinear Bible. Then, choose your preferred translation. Click Numbers, then chapter 13, and then scroll down to verse 16. Click on Hoshea or Joshua. Then, do the same for Acts 7:45 and click on Joshua.

I included an article I wrote for our website on these names on the next page.

<http://www.churchofbend.com/btn/joshua.htm>

Behind the Name: Hoshea, Joshua, Jesus

Hoshea (also spelled Hosea and Oshea) meant “Salvation.” Joshua (also spelled Jehoshua) meant “Yahweh Saves.” The Aramaic form is Jeshua. The Greek form is rendered Jesus or Joshua in English translations.

There are two people named Hosea in the Bible. One is the eighth century prophet sent to Israel in the final decades before its fall. Most of our information about him is found in the book bearing his name.

The other is Hoshea, the son of Nun and leader of the conquest of Canaan. He is better known as Joshua, the name Moses called him. We are first introduced to him when he was Moses’ assistant. Later, when Israel prepared to invade Canaan from the south, he was chosen as one of the spies and stood with Caleb against the faithless others. EXODUS 17:9; 24:13; NUMBERS 13-14, 16

Joshua led the conquest of Canaan. The theme of the book which bears his name is “Be strong and courageous.” He is mentioned in some of our hymns, including Dare to Stand Like Joshua and The Walls Came Tumbling Down. JOSHUA 1:6, 18; 10:25

In some of the post-exilic¹ Scriptures, the Aramaic form, Jeshua, is used. English translators usually use Joshua in Haggai and Zechariah but Jeshua in Ezra and Nehemiah (except in references to Joshua the son of Nun). In most manuscripts, Jeshua is only found in Ezra 5:2, within a section written in Aramaic. Jeshua was a high priest and one of the leaders in the temple rebuilding project. He was also crowned in a symbolic foreshadowing of the Christ. NEHEMIAH 8:17; HAGGAI 1:1; ZECHARIAH 6:9-15

In the New Testament, the Greek spelling of this name, iesous, is usually rendered Jesus in English translations, except where it refers to people from the Old Testament (Joshua the son of Nun and an obscure ancestor of the Christ). Two other individuals in the New Testament were named Jesus: a Christian, whose Roman name was Justus, and the criminal nicknamed Barabbas². LUKE 3:29; ACTS 7:45; HEBREWS 4:8; COLOSSIANS 4:11; MATTHEW 27:16

Joseph was instructed by the angel to name Mary's child Jesus, because he would be the savior. Since Jesus was a common name, the custom of distinguishing him by his hometown or title was sometimes followed: "Jesus of Nazareth" and "Jesus the Christ." MATTHEW 1:21; ACTS 2:22; MATTHEW 27:17

Hebrew/Aramaic/Greek Pronunciations:

Hoshea/Hosea = ho-shay-ah

Joshua (Yehoshua) = yeh-ho-shoo-ah

Jeshua (Yeshua) = yay-shoo-ah

Jesus (Iesous) = ee-ay-soos

Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun Joshua. NUMBERS 13:16

Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak arose and began to rebuild the house of God that is in Jerusalem, and the prophets of God were with them, supporting them. EZRA 5:2

"She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." MATTHEW 1:21

Footnotes:

¹ Post-exilic refers to the era after the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity (536 BC). Books composed in this era: Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and the last four chapters of Daniel.

² Barabbas' birthname, Jesus, is only found in some manuscripts and is therefore absent or relegated to a footnote in many translations. However, the evidence strongly favors its authenticity. See the NET's footnote on Matthew 27:16. Barabbas is a nickname literally translated "Son of Dad," which probably had some figurative meaning in Jewish culture.

Numbers 14:2-4 - *All the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, “Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! Why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?” And they said to one another, “Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt.”*

This is not the first or last time Israel looked back to Egypt. When they grew hungry, thirsty, fearful, or discontented, they forgot the bitterness of their time in Egypt and longed to return to it. (Exo. 16:3; Num. 11:5; 20:5; 21:5)

At the Red Sea, when Israel seemed trapped by Pharaoh's army, Moses said, "*The Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again.*" (Exo. 14:13)

God's promise would be recalled many times throughout their history. God's laws for Israel's kings prohibited foreign entanglements: acquiring horses (military aid), multiplying wives (political marriages to princesses), and acquiring gold and silver (tribute for protection) (Deut. 17:14-17). In times of political turmoil, smaller nations sought alliances with larger ones for protection. There were several reasons Israel should not do this.

- (1) It showed a lack of faith in God's promised protection and victory over their enemies.
- (2) Alliances with pagan nations invited idolatry and sin into Israel. Solomon's intermarriage with pagan princesses is a prime example of this.
- (3) In exchange for protection, the smaller nations became vassals of the larger ones. They paid tribute, pledged loyalty, and forfeited their sovereignty.
- (4) Nations often attributed their prosperity and power to their gods. When smaller nations sought help or were brought under subjection, the gods of the greater nation were considered superior. "Israel's God can't even protect his people" basically sums up how Israel's weakness was perceived by the Gentiles. Seeking help from Egypt showed that Israel trusted Egypt's gods more than its own God.

The temptation to turn to Egypt remained a problem for a thousand years. When power struggles and military threats arose, Israel and Judah often turned to Egypt for help. The prophets repeatedly warned them not to do this, but they wouldn't listen. As a result, Egypt exercised considerable power over them. (Isa. 30-31; Jer. 42; 2 Chron. 36:1-4)

Egypt remained a symbol of slavery throughout Israel's history. Once free, God warned them never to turn back to it. But they broke this command many times, because their faith failed. Egypt offered a worldly sense of security they could see, and they chose it over faith in the security God promised. As God warned, it never worked out well in the end for Israel.

Israel's relationship with Egypt is a parable of our relationship with sin. Once saved, we are set free from sin (Rom. 6). Our baptism is compared to Israel's figurative baptism in the Red Sea (1 Cor. 10). Will we walk on toward our promised land by faith, or will we turn back to the slavery of sin?

Questions

1. What clan of the Levites was Korah from? What were their duties?

2. From what tribe were the other rebel leaders?

3. To whom were the rebels complaining? Who were they really defying?

4. Provide at least one verse showing that God had chosen Moses to lead and Aaron to be the priest.

5. When had the people accepted Moses as their leader and prophet? (Exo. 20:18-19)

6. What false accusation may have been implied by the complaint against Moses (Num. 16:15)?

7. What was the real reason they had not inherited the land of milk and honey?

8. God was ready to destroy the whole congregation several times. What did Moses do each time (Num. 16:19-26; 14:11-19; Exo. 32:9-14)? What could have Moses done when the people opposed him? How is Moses described in Num. 12:3?
9. What happened to the rebel leaders? What happened to the 250 men?
10. Who did the people blame for the deaths of the rebels? What was their punishment? How was the punishment stopped? How many died?
11. Did Korah's sons die (Num. 26:9-11)? Does this contradict Num. 16:32-33?
12. How did God show that he had chosen Aaron? What was to be done with Aaron's staff afterward?
13. What New Testament writer cites Korah's rebellion as an example of God's punishment against ungodly people?

Note: Eleven psalms are attributed to the sons of Korah. Another is attributed to Heman—probably the Korahite singer in David's time. The prophet-judge Samuel was also a Korahite. Despite their ancestor's sin, this clan had many godly people.

Did Korah's children die when the earth swallowed the rebel leaders?

Num. 16:27-33 - ²⁷ And Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the door of their tents, together with their wives, their sons, and their little ones. ²⁸ And Moses said... ³⁰ "But if the Lord creates something new, and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into Sheol, then you shall know that these men have despised the Lord." ... ³² And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the people who belonged to Korah and all their goods. ³³ So they and all that belonged to them went down alive into Sheol, and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly.

Yet, we later read this:

Num. 26:9-11 - ⁹ These are the Dathan and Abiram, chosen from the congregation, who contended against Moses and Aaron in the company of Korah, when they contended against the Lord ¹⁰ and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up together with Korah, when that company died, when the fire devoured 250 men, and they became a warning. ¹¹ But the sons of Korah did not die.

The descendants of Korah went on to write several psalms. The prophet Samuel was a descendant of Korah as well. Skeptics cite this as a contradiction.

"All the people who belonged to Korah" probably referred to Korah's rebel followers rather than Korah's family. In fact, many translations read this way in verse 32:

...and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men who belonged to Korah with their possessions (NASB)

It's possible that the families of Dathan and Abiram perished, because they were standing in the door of their tents with Dathan and Abiram. But Korah's family is not mentioned as standing at the door with Korah, so we cannot assume they were present.

Since Numbers 16 never mentions Korah's family, and the same book later clarifies that Korah's sons did not die, no mistake or contradiction can be legitimately claimed.

Those who charge the Bible with contradicting itself almost always make assumptions, and their charges can often be answered by simply asking if the text really says what the opponents claim. In this case, Numbers 16 never states that Korah's children perished.

Questions

1. What were the people complaining about in Numbers 20:2? How could they have known that God would provide what they needed?
 2. Why were they still in the wilderness instead of settling in the land of milk and honey?
 3. When had Moses struck a rock to provide before this? What was different this time?
 4. Moses was accountable for his own words, but did he shoulder the blame alone?
(Psa. 106:32-33; Deut. 1:37; 3:26)
 5. What was the punishment for Moses' sin? Where would he die? (Num. 27:12-14;
Deut. 32:48-52)
 6. In Lesson 3, Question 2, we looked at a similar statement concerning the sin of Nadab and Abihu. Briefly recall what was said there and why this sin carried such a harsh punishment.

7. Why did the Israelites call the Edomites their brothers? Why didn't they fight Edom?
(Deut. 2:1-8)

8. Besides Edom, what other people were the Israelites told to avoid? How were these people related to Israel? (Deut. 2:9-22)

9. Where did Aaron die? How old was he? How long after the Exodus was this?
(Num. 33:38-39)

10. Who succeeded Aaron as high priest? (Num. 20:22-29)

11. Read Psalm 78:32-43. How does the psalmist describe Israel's repentance?

12. Why were the nations unsettled by Israel's presence? (Exod. 15:14-16)

Questions

1. Israel vowed to “utterly destroy” (or “devote to destruction”) the cities of Arad.
 - a) What prompted Israel to seek God’s aid against Arad?
 - b) What was to be done with the people and animals? What was to be done with the plunder? (Josh. 6:17-21; Deut. 2:34; 7:1-5; 1 Sam. 15)
2. Why did God send serpents among his people?
3. After Moses prayed, what did God tell Moses and the people to do?
4. What happened to the bronze serpent much later in Israel’s history? (2 Kings 18:1-4)
5. Explain how Jesus used the bronze serpent to teach about the plan of salvation.
(John 3:14-15)
6. Two kings, Sihon and Og, refused to let Israel pass through their land. What people were these kings over? What happened to them?

7. Who was given the land of Sihon and Og, and where was it located? (Num. 32)

8. What effect did the defeat of Sihon and Og have on the inhabitants of Canaan? Whom did Moses encourage by recalling these victories? (Josh. 2:10; Deut. 3:21-22)

9. How were Sihon and Og described in the psalms (Psa. 136:17-20; 135:10-11)? How large was the coffin (or bed, in some translations) of King Og (Deut. 3:11)?

10. When Israel defeated Sihon and took his land, at whose border did they stop? Why did they not fight this nation? Who had this nation defeated to take possession of this land? (Num. 21:24; Deut. 2:37, 17-21)

Note: “Utterly destroy” (or “devote to destruction” ESV) is from the Hebrew words *charam* (v.) and *cherem* (n.). First, anything that could be killed or burned would be, as if it were a sacrifice. Second, any treasures were “banned,” that is, devoted to God. For example, gold and silver would go to the tabernacle treasury or used to pay the Levites. Achan and King Saul broke God’s command to *charam* Jericho and Amalek. (Josh. 6:17-21, 24; 7:1; 1 Sam. 15:3, 8-9, 18-19)

Resource: A map of the nations on both sides of the Jordan River is available on our website. Use this direct link to access it: <http://www.churchofbend.com/amorites.htm>.

Questions

1. Where was Moab located?

2. Why was King Balak afraid? How did he hope Balaam could help?

3. What did God tell Balaam when the first group from Moab arrived? What did God tell him when the second group arrived?

4. Balaam seemed righteous at first. What were his responses to King Balak’s requests and anger? (Num. 22:13, 18, 38; 23:12, 26; 24:12-13)

5. Why was God angry with Balaam?

6. What did Balak tell Balaam to do after the second and third oracles? (Num. 23:25; 24:11)

7. What two historical figures may have been the subject(s) of Balaam’s fourth oracle? (Num. 24:15-19)

8. What nations did Balaam prophesy against?

9. What character flaw in Balaam is brought out later? (2 Peter 2; Jude 1; Rev. 2:14)

10. What eventually happened to Balaam? (Num. 31:8; Josh. 13:22)

11. What did the Moabites invite Israel to do? Where did they get this idea? (Num. 31:16; Rev. 2:14)

12. What was God’s punishment on Israel? How was it stopped? How many died?

13. Who was Phinehas?

14. What was God’s punishment on Midian? (Num. 31)

15. Did Balaam “die the death of the righteous” as he desired in Numbers 23:10?

Recommended resource:

Wayne Jackson discussed the Scriptural connections and historical interpretations concerning Balaam’s fourth oracle, making a strong case for its Messianic intent.

<https://christiancourier.com/articles/did-balaam-prophecy-concerning-the-messiah>

If God told Balaam he could accept Balak's invitation, why did God get angry with him for going?

Numbers 22:20-22 - *God came to Balaam at night and said to him, "If the men have come to call you, rise, go with them; but only do what I tell you." So Balaam rose in the morning and saddled his donkey and went with the princes of Moab. But God's anger was kindled because he went, and the angel of the Lord took his stand in the way as his adversary.*

After Balak's first request, God commanded Balaam not to go and not to curse Israel. Balaam obediently declined the invitation. So, Balak sent a larger, nobler company with a generous offer. Balaam again wisely answered that he must follow God's command, so the princes stayed overnight. This is the background of the text in question.

Read the text carefully. What condition must be fulfilled before Balaam could go? "If the men have come to call you..." Rather than reading that the condition was fulfilled, we read that Balaam got ready and went without being called. The princes were waiting for Balaam's answer. They did not call Balaam to go in the morning. He went of his own initiative.

The narrative does not provide much information on Balaam here. It simply relates the events. 2 Peter 2:5 and Jude 1:11 reveal that Balaam was greedy. He wanted to accept Balak's generous offer so badly that he did not wait to be called.

After Balaam's sin was pointed out to him, God permitted him to continue the journey but only to speak as God instructed. Three times, King Balak asked for Balaam to curse Israel, but Balaam blessed them instead. This part of the narrative ends with Balak and Balaam parting ways. Next, we read about the Israelites being seduced by the Moabites and Midianites to engage in idolatry and sexual immorality. The narrative obviously skipped something, and the gap is filled in later.

In Numbers 31, God ordered Israel to attack the Midianites for enticing Israel to worship idols and commit sexual immorality with them. First, we read that Balaam was killed when God ordered Israel to attack the Midianites. Obviously, he made some kind of deal with them after he'd blessed Israel. Israel disobediently spared the women— the very ones who had engaged in the sexual immorality. Moses' response reveals something about the incident not reported in the original narrative.

Numbers 31:15-16 - *Moses said to them, "Have you let all the women live? Behold, these, on Balaam's advice, caused the people of Israel to act treacherously against the Lord in the incident of Peor, and so the plague came among the congregation of the Lord."*

Balaam feared God enough to not curse them, as Balak had hired him to do. But he saw another opportunity to get paid. God had explicitly forbidden him from cursing Israel, but he knew how to get Israel to turn away from God, and God himself would punish them. He revealed this idea to Israel's enemies, and the plan worked. The Moabites and Midianites followed Balaam's advice and were able to get Israel's God to turn against them. Balaam was apparently compensated for his brilliant plot.

The message to the church in Pergamum included a references to this part of the story.

Revelation 2:14 - *"You have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality."*

The original narrative ends with Balaam sounding quite honorable, but his corruption is exposed later. It's clear that he wanted to help the enemies of Israel (Deut. 23:3-5; Josh. 24:9-10). He was not so bold as to blatantly defy God's command to bless Israel, but he devised an alternative way to give Israel's enemies what they sought, even though he knew it was sinful. Balaam became a symbol for false teaching, greed, and corruption.

Numbers 25:9 records that 24,000 died from the plague. 1 Corinthians 10:8, which is almost certainly referring to the same event, states that 23,000 fell in a single day. Notice that Numbers 25 provides a total. When we combine that with the Paul's statement, we can conclude that 23,000 died on the first day and another 1,000 died after that from the sickness.

The book of Numbers provides more than just censuses. It records several mass-casualty events which ultimately contributed to the deaths of everyone in the census except Joshua and Caleb. Almost 40,000 deaths are recorded after the people refused to invade Canaan the first time. Many more are recorded without a number. Ultimately, the number of deaths between the first and second census was 603,548. From the first census, only Joshua and Caleb survived to see the conquest of Canaan.

Questions

1. When and where was the second census taken? Who from the first census was still alive when the second was taken?

2. What were the totals from the first and second censuses? What were the totals from the first and second censuses of the Levites? (Num. 1:46; 3:39)

3. What two Levites from the first census were still alive from the first census? (Hint: There were two named)

4. What tribe was the largest in both censuses?

5. Why did God instruct Moses to attack the Midianites? (Num. 31)

6. What did Reuben and Gad request? How did Moses interpret this request? What did Reuben and Gad agree to do? (Num. 32)

7. What was the land east of the Jordan called after Israel settled it?

8. What did God remind the people to do when they invaded Canaan? What would happen if they failed to complete this mission? (Num. 33:50-56)
 9. How many cities were given to the Levites? (Num. 35:6-8)
 10. How many cities of refuge were designated? How were they distributed in the future land of Israel? Briefly explain the purpose of the cities of refuge. (Num. 35:9-15)
 11. Numbers 33 lists the Israelite's camps in the wilderness. Select one of these locations and tell what happened while Israel camped there.

Questions

1. What does “Deuteronomy” mean? Why is it called that?
 2. Where and when did Moses preach the sermons in Deuteronomy? (Deut.29:1, 5)
 3. What did Moses say about God’s law in Deuteronomy 4:5-8?
 4. Where in the New Testament is God described as a consuming fire, and what specific warning was given in light of that description? (Deut. 4:24)
 5. What things had God done to show that he is the only true God? (Deut. 4:32-40)
 6. What kind of heart did the people have when they heard God speak on Mt. Sinai? Were they right to feel this way? (Deut. 5:22-29)
 7. How was the importance of teaching God’s law described in Deuteronomy 6:4-9?

8. When the Israelites invaded Canaan, what did God command them to do? Be specific.
(Deut. 7:1-5, 25-26)

9. When they encountered the intimidating people of Canaan, what must they remember that would encourage them? (Deut. 7:17-24)

10. Who quoted the words, “Man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord”? What does it mean? (Deut. 8:3; 32:47)

11. Briefly describe the ways God had preserved the Israelites over the forty years since the exodus. What lesson did this teach them? (Deut. 8)

12. God foretold that he would choose a place for the Israelites to worship in the land of Canaan, but the location was not revealed through Moses. (Deut. 12:5-14; 16:2; 26:2)

1) When did God appoint it? What city was it? (2 Chron. 7:12; 1 Kings 8:28-29)

2) What was to be done there every seventh year? (Deut. 31:9-13)

3) Who added Mt. Gerizim into their version of the Law of Moses and worshiped there? (John 4:20)

Questions

1. What was renewed as Moses delivered his final words? (Deut. 29:10-15)

2. What did Moses say about God’s law in Deuteronomy 30:11-14?

3. Moses had interceded for the Israelites so many times to save them from utter destruction. What is surprising about Moses’ efforts to save them in all these situations? What might a less meek man have done? (See Lesson 6, Question 8)

4. Why was Moses not allowed to enter Canaan?

5. Who did God choose to lead the conquest of Canaan?

6. What was the purpose of the song in Deuteronomy 32? (Deut. 31:19-22)

7. How old was Moses when he died?

8. What three names are given to the mountains on which Moses died? (Num. 27:12; Deut. 3:27; 32:49; 34:1)

9. How was Moses described after his death? (Deut. 34:10-12)

10. Deuteronomy is one of the most frequently quoted books in the Bible. Do you have any favorite verses from it?

11. Did you learn anything in this study that you didn’t know before?

12. Do you have any questions from Section 3?



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