

## Goals

When the Israelites left Egypt, they were probably not expecting the events that unfolded before them. Instead of entering a promised land, they were doomed to wander in the wilderness for 38 years. Yet the time spent in the desert did not necessarily help them learn from their rebellious ways. The key in learning from our mistakes is to take the time to reflect. Through these lessons, the students are encouraged to think about their relationship with God and how they can draw closer to Him. Is there something they need to change or a goal they need to set? If there is a barrier that is getting in the way of their faith, they need to seriously reflect on what is really important to them at this stage in their lives. With help from the Holy Spirit and guidance in these lessons, the students will hopefully take a step nearer to the heavenly kingdom.

unit  
4**Teacher Devotional**

When Jesus Christ came to save us, He knew that it would cost Him His life. In the Garden of Gethsemane, He prayed to God to take away His pain because He knew the difficult path He had to take. But in the end, Jesus Christ laid down His life for us because He was completely committed to saving us from sin. What about our commitment to the Lord? Does it only involve service once a week and prayer once a day? When we came to know Jesus Christ and declared that He is God, we made a commitment to Him, to give Him our life. What sacrifices have we made for Him? How do our lives shine for God? Let's renew our covenant and commitment to our Lord Jesus today and be determined to live for Him in totality.

Take Up Your Cross

*"Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.'"*  
(Mt 16:24)

## Lesson 10

Wandering  
in the DesertListed Scriptures

Lev 11:27; 2 Cor 6:14-18; Jer 15:16; Rev 12:15; Jn 17:17; Eph 4:29; Heb 11:24-26; Col 2:12; Jas 5:7; Mk 16:15; Rom 8:23

Lesson Aim

1. To know the events that led up to the forty years of wandering in the desert
2. To trust that God knows our future and allow Him to guide us

Memory Verse

"The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; And He knows those who trust in Him." (Nah 1:7)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Numbers 1-2, 9-14

## B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D

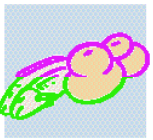


The book of Numbers is an account of Israel's wanderings in the desert. Although the original Hebrew title "in the desert" seems to fit this book better, the title "numbers" is derived from the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) because there are two censuses recorded in Numbers 1 and 26. The book covers a period of about 38 years, from when the Israelites left Sinai until they reached the entrance to Canaan. Actually, the distance between Egypt and Canaan was not all that great. But because of the Israelites' lack of faith, they were condemned to wander. With the exception of Joshua and Caleb, the rest of the soldiers who began the journey nearly all died off in the desert. Numbers contains 36 chapters and it can be divided into three segments. Chapters 1-14 cover the journey from Sinai to Kadesh; Chapters 15-20 continue with the journey from Kadesh to the 38 years of wandering; Chapters 21-36 cover the journey from Kadesh to the Moabite plains, where the people make preparations to cross the Jordan River.



What is one bad habit you wish you could change about yourself? It could be that you find yourself raising your voice at your parents when you know you should show respect. It could be that you procrastinate constantly and never get things done on time. Some habits have become such a regular part of our lives that we don't even see them as things that need to be changed. Or it may be that we know it but just can't seem to shake it. Some bad habits may also be crippling us, slowly turning us into people we don't really want to be. The Israelites probably wished they could stop complaining so often. It certainly made their lives a lot more miserable than they needed to be. Let's take a look at the events that led up to their decades of wandering in the wilderness.

## B I B L E S T U D Y



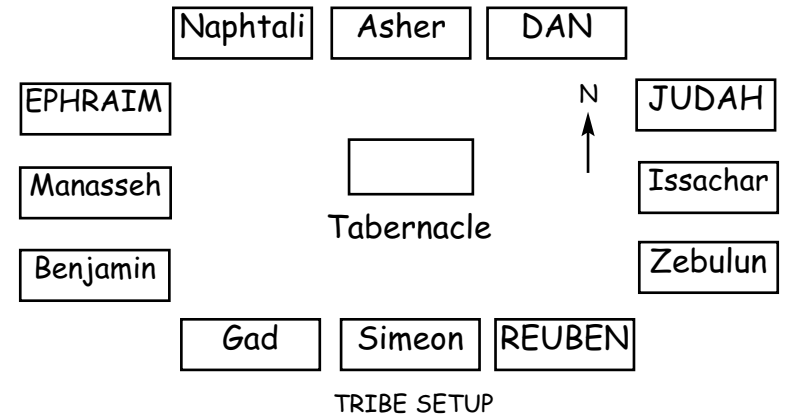
## Part 1

*Preparations for Canaan***A . The First Census (Num 1)**

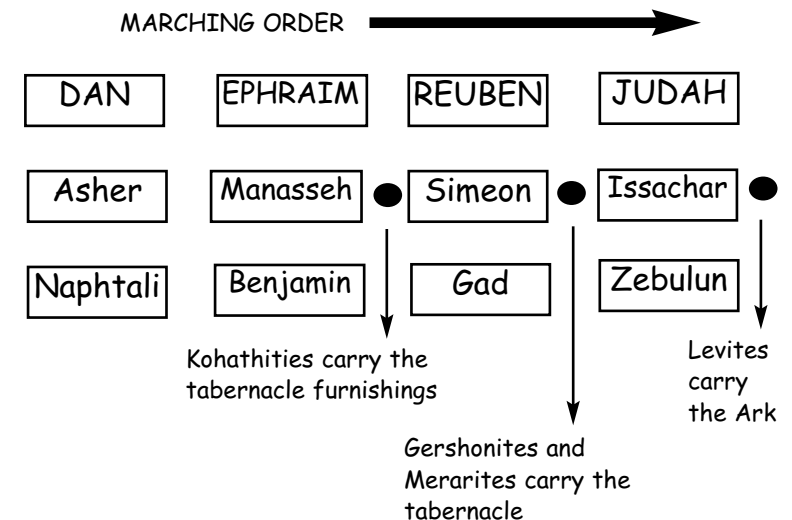
Moses followed God's command and took a census of the entire Israelite community. Every man who was twenty and older and able to serve in the army was counted. Excluding the Levites, the number came to be 603,550.

**B . Tribal Camps (Num 2)**

After the census was taken, it was time to organize the people. The 603,550 only listed the men. With women and children unaccounted for, there were likely over two million people. Clearly, some form of organization was necessary so that they could successfully march to Canaan as one. The tabernacle served as the focus and center of the camp. Three tribes were situated on each side of the tabernacle (north, east, south and west) and each division of three tribes had a tribal leader, highlighted in CAPS (see chart on next page).



When the camp had to move from one place to another, there was a specific marching order. The six tribes on the east and south would move first, followed by the Levites with the tabernacle in the middle. Then the six tribes on the west and north would follow, respectively (see chart below). The Levites served around the tabernacle as they were counted separately according to the offspring of Kohath, Gershon and Merari (Num 4:4-15, 21-26, 29-32 ).

**C . The Silver Trumpets (Num 9-10)**

As the people prepared to set out, offerings were made for the dedication of the tabernacle. Israel also celebrated the Passover for the second time since it

had been a year since they had first left Egypt. In order to organize and mobilize such a large group of people, God instructed Moses to make two silver trumpets. They were to be used to call the community together and signal the camps to set out. When both trumpets were sounded, all the Israelites were to assemble at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. Upon further trumpet blasts, each tribe was to set out according to its marching order. The trumpets were also used before battles and for announcing feasts and festivals. The priests were the trumpet blowers. After all the necessary preparations were made and the trumpets sounded, the Israelites set out for Canaan with the pillar of cloud and fire guiding them.

### Teaching Tips

*Copies of the charts are already in the students' workbooks. However, the names of each of the tribes have not been filled in. Be sure to ask them to write in the name of each tribe as the tribes are discussed. By giving them an opportunity to fill in the charts, they will have a better impression of the setup and marching order.*

## Part 2 Incidents at Kadesh



Getting ready to conquer their own land should have been an exciting time for the Israelites. But rather than focusing on what was ahead, they only saw their misfortunes, the lack of food and the desert that surrounded them. Less than three days into their journey, the people began to complain about almost everything. Eventually, it cost them their chance to enter into Canaan and they were doomed to wander in the wilderness for forty years.

## **A. The Israelites Demand Meat (Num 11)**

As the Israelites journeyed, they began to grumble over their misery in the wilderness. They could not yet see the Promised Land and focused their attention on the good things they had had in Egypt. More and more, they craved meat and vegetables since they were tired of eating manna every day. God did end up sending them countless quails but as the people ate the meat, God struck them with a severe plague and many were left dead (Num 11:33-34).

## **B. Miriam and Aaron Criticize Moses (Num 12)**

While in Hazeroth, Miriam and Aaron found excuses to criticize Moses. God's anger burned against them and Miriam came down with leprosy. She was confined outside the camp for seven days and because of their criticism, the entire journey was delayed.

## **C. The Unfavorable Report of the Ten Spies (Num 13-14)**

When the Israelites neared Canaan, they sent out 12 people (one leader from each tribe) to spy on the land. They had to give reports on the cities, the land and the fruits it bore as well as the forest. After forty days, the spies returned. Although they all admitted the land was flowing with milk and honey as the Lord had promised, ten of them decided that the people already living in Canaan were too powerful to overcome. Only Caleb and Joshua were courageous enough to insist on attacking the land because they believed that God would guide them. But the ten prevailed, and when the Israelites heard their words, they all began to murmur against Moses, wishing to return to Egypt. God was furious with them and condemned them to wander in the wilderness for a little over 38 years (the other two years included when they first left Egypt and camped at Sinai for over a year and when the next generation got ready to enter Canaan after 38 years of wandering). In addition, the ten spies were struck down by a plague sent by God because of the great damage they did (Num 14:33-38). They did not just give a simple report of their findings, but rather, they caused the people to lose faith in God completely. After God forbade anyone twenty or older who had complained to enter Canaan, the Israelites tried to take possession of the land through their own means, but they failed miserably (Num 14:39-45).

### C H E C K   F O R   U N D E R S T A N D I N G



- 1** How were the 12 tribes situated around the tabernacle? What was their marching order?
- 2** What purposes did the sounding of the silver trumpets serve?
- 3** Why did God strike the Israelites with such harsh punishment for wanting to eat meat? Was it wrong to want to eat meat?

4

Miriam and Aaron were Moses' siblings. Yet they allowed jealousy to come into their hearts. How does jealousy creep into our hearts?

5

The Israelites thought they could conquer the land on their own. Why do we trust in our own abilities more than that of God? Do you find that, in most situations, God is the first or the last you turn to?

## L I F E A P P L I C A T I O N



We know that God is always our guide. While wandering in the desert, that was the one thing the Israelites forgot, that no matter what they were facing, God was there to help them. Because they did not remember to turn to Him, they were unable to receive the comfort, strength and guidance they could have had. Below are two stories to encourage the students to always trust in God no matter what they are facing, or even when they don't know what lies ahead of them.

### The Guide

*When skiing in Colorado one day, a man noticed some people on the slope wearing red vests. Moving closer, he could read these words on the vests: BLIND SKIER. He couldn't believe it. He had difficulty skiing with 20/20 vision! How could people without sight manage to ski?*

*He watched the skiers for a while and discovered their secret. Each skier had a guide who skied beside, behind, or in front of him, always in a position where the two could easily communicate. The guide used two basic forms of communication. First, he tapped his ski poles together to assure the blind person that he was there. Second, he spoke simple, specific directions: "Go right. Turn left. Slow. Stop. Skier on your right." The skier's responsibility was to trust the guide to give good instructions, and to immediately and completely obey those instructions.*

Think about this:

What do you think you will be doing five years from now? Do you think you will still be in school or will you be working? What about ten years from now? Will you own a home, be married or will you be traveling and broadening your horizons? Although we all have our plans, the reality is that we can't see even five

seconds into the future. We cannot see the struggles that are to come. Other people may run into us, or we into them, like errant skiers on a crowded slope. But God has given us the Holy Spirit to be our guide through life—to walk before and behind us, and to dwell in us. Our role is to listen and obey.

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. And He delights in his way." (Psalm 37:23)

### Finding the Path

*E. Stanley Jones tells the story of a missionary who became lost in an African jungle. Looking around, he saw nothing but bushes and a few clearings. He stumbled about until he finally came across a native hut. He asked one of the natives if he could lead him out of the jungle and back to the mission station. The native agreed to help him.*

*"Thank you!" exclaimed the missionary. "Which way do I go?"*

*The native replied, "Walk." And so they did, hacking their way through the unmarked jungle for more than an hour.*

*Pausing to rest, the missionary looked around and had the same overwhelming sense that he was lost. All he saw were bushes, and a few clearings.*

*"Are you quite sure this is the way?" he asked. "I don't see any path."*

*The native looked at him and replied, "Bwana, in this place there is no path. I am the path."*

Think about this:

We all wish we could know what our future holds, the path that we will be treading on. The Israelites would have complained less if they had just focused on what God had promised them. But instead, they were bothered by the immediate things that surrounded them. The missionary would certainly have been less stressed if he had known that eventually he would find his way out, but he too was blindsided by the bushes that stood before him. Today, we have so much happening around us that we can hardly see beyond the next week, let alone the next year. We have school obligations, tests to study for, friends to see and church activities to think about. With so many things to do, it can be overwhelming. What colleges will we attend? Will we have good jobs? These are all questions we worry about. Although there are no immediate answers, we do know

one thing: God promised to guide us. When we have no clues, we must remember that God is omniscient—all wise. When we run out of time, we must remember that God is omnipresent—all time is in His hand. When we are weak, we must remember that God is omnipotent—all power belongs to Him.

## REFLECTION & PRAYER



*People often say that hindsight is 20/20, meaning that things are obviously much clearer when we can review our experiences. We can know the mistakes we made and learn to choose more wisely in the future. But foresight can also be 20/20. Although we don't know what will occur, we can obtain the peace of knowing that God will take care of everything for us. That kind of peace can only come through prayer. In this already hectic world, it seems ironic that the answer to many of our worries comes in such a simple form. Yet, God's world wasn't meant to be complicated. Let us remember to take a moment out and commune with God, allowing His goodness to rule in our hearts. Then we may be able to see the things around us just that little bit clearer.*

## Lesson 11

# The New Generation

### Listed Scriptures

Num 20, 21, 22, 24:10, 33:16, 31:8, 27-30, 35

### Lesson Aim

1. To learn about the events that occurred after the 38 years of wandering
2. To resolve not to be stubborn and to take time to think about our actions and words

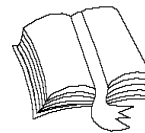
### Memory Verse

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Phil 4:13)

### Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Numbers 20-22, 24, 27-30, 35

## BIBLE BACKGROUND



The Bible doesn't record in detail what occurred during the thirty-something years of wandering. Right after the Israelites tried to enter the land on their own and failed miserably (Num 14), no major event is noted until the new generation had grown up and was ready to enter Canaan (Num 20). Between Numbers 15-19, Moses repeats some of the laws regarding worship as well as the regulations concerning the priests (Num 15, 18, 19). The people also continued to rebel, most notably, the rebellion of Korah who was a descendant of Levi. Along with 250 other leaders, they rose up against Moses and Aaron. God was so angry at their continued disobedience that He opened up the earth and it swallowed them alive with all their households and possessions. 14,700 other grumblers also died from a plague sent by God (Num 16:2-3, 32-34, 41-49). In order to put an end to their constant complaints and prove to the people that Moses and Aaron were God's chosen vessels, God told Moses to get twelve staffs from the tribes of Israel. Then they were placed before the ark. The next morning, only Aaron's rod had sprouted and budded, producing almonds. Later the staff was placed in the ark as a reminder of God's provision and guidance (Heb 9:4).