

Lesson #7

PREPARATION FOR LESSON: read Numbers 9:15-23; 13:16-33; 14:1-38; chapters 16, 17, 20, 21:1-9; 27:12-2

BACKGROUND

Author and Date: written by Moses during his lifetime c. 1400 – 1300 BC
happened over a period of 39 years

Theme: the numbering or census of the Jewish people

Purpose: to describe the journey of Israel from Sinai to the border of the Promised Land; why it took 39 years instead of 11 days

OUTLINE

	The 1st Numbering	1-9 (1st generation)
	Travel Sinai to Kadesh	10-14
Wandering		15-20
	Travel Kadesh to Moab	21-25
	The 2nd Numbering	26-36 (2nd generation)

The Jewish style of writing: facts and outline are organized to create a *mirror image*, with the central focus on their *wandering*.

CHRONOLOGY

it was 40 years from leaving Egypt to entering the promised land at Jericho

39 years: from Egypt to 2nd time at Kadesh

13 months: Egypt to leaving Mt Sinai Num. 9:22
2 months from Egypt to Mt. Sinai Ex. 19:1
11 months at Mt. Sinai

2 months: Mt. Sinai to decision at Kadesh Dt. 1:2; Num. 13:25

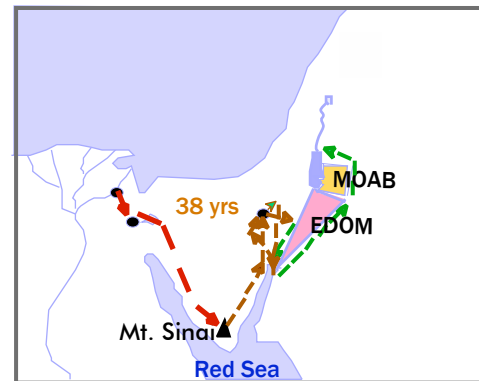
9 months + 37 years: from Kadesh to Kadesh
years of wandering and death

40th year: from Kadesh to Moab

1st month: return to Kadesh Num. 20:1

5th month: Aaron dies Num. 33:38

11th month: Moses' final instruction Dt. 1:3



EXPLANATIONS

Chapter 9:22-23 the cloud over the tabernacle guides the Jews - the visible presence of God (the Shechinah Glory).

When traveling by day, the cloud moved higher to give shade; at night, the fire in the cloud gave light. Psa. 105:39
Every day, when the people got up, they looked where the cloud was; what are God's plans for the day?

God wants to guide us in our lives, not with a physical cloud but thru practical ways...

...sometimes thru Scripture, teaching or the Holy Spirit working in our mind and thoughts

...other times thru information from books or people; common sense and circumstances

Chapter 13

What the scouts were to look for and what they said these facts were true

Land: it was fertile; a land flowing with *milk and honey* means a land ideal for agriculture.

Cities: they were fortified; archeology tells us some of the walls were 50 feet high and 15 feet thick.

People: they were strong; some were giants.

How 10 of the scouts felt: *we felt like grasshoppers* 13:33 this was true

they thought we were like grasshoppers this was not true read Joshua 2:9, 11

Chapter 14:18, 33 *God punishes the children for the sins of the fathers to the 3rd and 4th generation*

also stated in Exodus 20:5; 34:7; Leviticus 26:39; Deuteronomy 5:9 and Jeremiah 32:18

- God wanted His people to know their decisions would have long-lasting effects.
- If they disobeyed His laws, He would send **consequences** that would bring suffering.
Their children and family to the 3rd and 4th generation would suffer the consequences with them.
Their lives would be limited.
They would learn the behavior of their parents and repeat it generation after generation.
- This was not an absolute pronouncement of failure and doom.
In any generation, a person could decide to follow God.
And then a cycle of obedience and blessing would begin from generation to generation

EXPLANATIONS (continued)

Chapter 14:34 The significance of the number “forty”
 40 days of exploring: a **test** for the scouts and people to see if they will believe God’s promises.
 40 years of wandering: **judgment** for failure to believe God’s promises.

Chapters 15-19 The 38 years of wandering. The Jews are still God’s people; they have been forgiven; the contract with God is still in effect. They have His presence and provisions (Dt. 29:5). But they never **enjoy** His presence; they never experience His blessings and life as He wanted for them.

Chapter 20 Moses and Aaron lose their ministry and cannot lead the Jews into the promised land

- **Their sin:** instead of pointing to God, they turn the attention to themselves as the ones who provide 20:10
*They did not rely on God, to prove **His** holiness to the people* 20:12; 27:14; Psa. 106:32-33
 God wanted to give water from the rock to demonstrate: His power to do the impossible; His faithfulness to provide; His mercy even when the people did not believe. The people would be able to see God’s holiness. Instead all they saw was Moses and Aaron pointing to themselves.
 Their anger was legitimate; the problem was **how** they responded to the disobedience of the people.
- **Their punishment** is harsh because they have more knowledge
 If the 1st generation could not enter the land for lack of obedience, then surely their leaders cannot enter when they disobey. **The greater the spiritual knowledge, the greater the consequences when there is disobedience.**
 10 months later Moses writes Psa. 90 to express his thoughts about God’s response to his disobedience (God’s anger)

Chapter 21 *We detest this miserable food (manna)*

The sin: the 2nd generation speaks with bitterness and resentment against God and Moses
 They complain about the extra travel and lack of water.
 Using a word of contempt, they say the manna from God is worthless; they hate everything about it.
 They are saying that God is inadequate and His provision has been inadequate.
 They are guilty of blasphemy, arrogance and ungratefulness; they have despised God.

The punishment: poisonous snakes which bring death; God’s contract said punishment for blasphemy was death

The remedy: if they look at a bronze snake on a pole, they will be physically healed

The picture: see John 3:14-16; 2 Cor. 5:21 *He was made sin for us*

- The snake is a picture of Jesus on the cross with **our** sin; He was suffering the punishment for our sin.
 If we look at (believe in) Jesus on the cross, we can be spiritually healed.
- Our belief must be **specific**: *I disobeyed; Jesus made the payment for my disobedience.*
 - Our belief must be **confident**: *Jesus said if I accept His payment I have eternal life. I believe it.*
 - Our belief must be **personal**: no one can do it for me.
 - We have to actually **make** the decision.
 I mentally or verbally say, *Jesus, You made the payment for me and I accept it.*

Note of interest: this is not the origin of our medical symbol

The serpent on a staff, a Greek god called Asklepios became the Roman god Aesculapius. In 300 BC, the Romans made this the medical symbol. We need to understand the difference. In pagan religions, the snake is worshipped. The snake on a pole is the symbol of healing. In Scripture, the snake on the pole is a symbol of God’s judgment on sin. It is a symbol of death. They were both religious symbols, but with opposite meanings.

Chapter 26 The 2nd Numbering or Census - its purpose...

- to know the military strength of the 2nd generation
- to prove God’s word: the 1st generation has died; no one is over the age of 59 except Moses, Caleb and Joshua
- to divide the land fairly; the family clans (tribes) will receive an area of land based on their size

God’s Laws When reading about them, they can seem restrictive, harsh or excessive.

Many of the laws involve health and hygiene. God was protecting the nation from epidemics and plagues.

Many of the laws provided order and protection because the people were living so close together.

The laws also showed the Jews they could never be right with God by their efforts.

The ultimate purpose of the laws was to lead the Jewish people to Jesus - to prove they needed His goodness, grace, mercy and forgiveness because they were not capable of keeping the laws. Gal. 3:24



EXPLANATIONS (continued)

Picture Language in the Bible

Why there are so many pictures of Jesus

God wants to prepare the Jews so when Jesus comes, they can check Him out - *does He fit the pictures?*

It will be in the Old Testament where they can find answers - the books the Jews believe and trust.

For Jews seeking, waiting for and expecting their Messiah,

the Old Testament pictures are evidence Jesus **is** the Promised One.

For Gentiles, the pictures are proof Jesus was who He claimed to be.

Only the One sent by the Father could match **all** the pictures.

The more pictures of Jesus we see in the Old Testament, the more our faith is strengthened.

APPLICATION

So often we are like the 1st generation of God's people...

...afraid to obey because of the unknown

...unwilling to believe God because the situation looks too difficult

...choosing the easier way, even when it is foolish and self-destructive

If we make these choices, we are still part of God's family, but we will spend our life spiritually wandering...

...with no sense of fulfillment, enjoyment of life or spiritual progress

...with no enjoyment of God; no enjoyment of His blessings or the things He wants to do in our life

Disobedience brings consequences not only to us, but also to the generations that follow us.

Or we can make choices like Joshua and Caleb

In spite of obstacles or fear of the unknown, we can choose to believe and obey God as He directs us.

The result will be enjoyment of God. We will experience His strength, peace and a sense of His presence.

Even if we have to make difficult changes or experience loss, when we obey,

God will give us a life of fulfillment, enrichment and continual growth.

Enjoyment of God and His blessings or a wilderness experience - it all depends on our choices and obedience!

