

Exodus – Deuteronomy

Out of Egypt
into the Promised Land

Notes and Comments by John Sullivan

Exodus – Deuteronomy

Out of Egypt into the Promised Land

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NOTE TO E-BOOK READERS:

The printed journal, unlike this e-book version, has pages for notes.

You might want to have your own journal, either physical or electronic, because there is a lot of writing recommended in this study.

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Table of Contents

Week	Topic	Page
	Introduction	<i>i</i>
1	<i>Exodus 1 – 4 The Call of Moses – the Reluctant Leader</i>	1
2	<i>Exodus 5 – 15 The Ten Plagues – God's Mighty Hand</i>	4
3	<i>Exodus 16 – 24 Meeting God on Mt. Sinai</i>	7
4	<i>Exodus 25 – 40 The Tabernacle – God's Sanctuary</i>	10
5	<i>Leviticus 1 – 27 A Holy People for a Holy God</i>	13
6	<i>Numbers 1 – 21 The Setback</i>	16
7	<i>Numbers 22 – Deuteronomy 5 The End of the Desert!</i>	19
8	<i>Deuteronomy 6 – 34 Moses' Farewell</i>	22
	Conclusion	25
	Appendix: Map of the Exodus Journey	26
	Resources	28

*Open my eyes that I may see
wonderful things in your Law.*

Psalms 119:18

Exodus – Deuteronomy

Introduction

The Blessings and Difficulties of Coming out of Darkness into the Light

God had a literal goal for the Israelites that illustrates his spiritual goal for all of us. He wanted to take them **out of** the land of slavery and bring them **into** the Promised Land of freedom (of course, they don't actually get inside the Promised Land at the end of these readings, but they were knocking on the door). God had immense compassion and grace for them and heard their cry for mercy during their time of slavery. At the same time, he had great vision about how they could be a blessing to the whole world if they lived according to his plans in the land he had promised Abraham over 500 years earlier. Similarly, today he loves to shower his compassion and grace by bringing every one of us from the slavery so prevalent in the dominion of darkness into his kingdom of light where we can enjoy his blessings and be a blessing to others.

The blessings of free, purposeful, and godly living by the grace of God and the joy that it produces are clearly depicted in these four books of the Bible. Like what God did for the Israelites, he wants to show his grace to us also, not only to take us **out** of a bad situation but also to bless us by putting us **into** a great situation. Along with those blessings, however, the difficulties of coming out of darkness and embracing the new life of the kingdom of light are also clearly seen in these Scriptures. As we study both the blessings and the difficulties that the Israelites experienced over 3000 years ago, we have the opportunity to learn and apply many lessons to our lives as well. For one thing, hopefully we will become more and more aware that coming **out** of darkness is impossible without the grace of God, but it also takes faith on our part. Similarly, going **into** the light requires his grace and our faith. It took the Israelites 40 years to make that spiritual journey; it takes time for us as well. There is the instantaneous point of conversion, but there is also the on-going, life-long journey aspect of it as well. But one thing that was true for them and is the same for us is that it takes God's grace and our faith to bring us:

Out of Darkness



Into the Light

This journal is set up in 8 weeks, although the pace that you follow is totally up to you. The daily readings and the questions of this 8-week devotional guide are all designed with the goal in mind of helping you experience the theme of knowing the Scriptures better and knowing God better. He is the God who calls us **out of** darkness **into** the kingdom of light, by his amazing grace. (See **Colossians 1:13**.) The more we know him and the more we know of his word, the better we will be equipped to follow him right on in to our promised land.

NOTE: this will not be the easiest or fastest reading that you will ever do. Some parts of these Scriptures are well known for stopping people in their desire to read through the Bible. Don't rush or frustrate yourself with the difficulty; it's difficult for everyone. But don't let the length or difficulty of some of these Scriptures rob you from experiencing the amazing discoveries that come from devoting yourself to studying them.

One suggestion: start each day with the prayer that will be mentioned from time to time in this journal. That prayer is found in **Psalms 119:18**.

*Open my eyes that I may see
wonderful things in your Law.*

A side goal of this journal is the hope that you will find that this prayer will definitely be answered in your study. Yes, some of the readings may take awhile to get to those gems, but they are always there!

If you do this with a group, the **Thought Questions** can be used as part of your discussion with the group. You will enjoy helping each other discover God's Word.

May God inspire and equip you to know his Word better and to know him better!

John Sullivan
September 2018

Week 1

Exodus 1 – 4
Exodus 1 – 4

The Call of Moses – the Reluctant Leader

NOTE: Each week of this 8-week journal will have 5 subsections, with the idea in mind that you could spend one day on each subsection. But, as was stated in the introduction, obviously go at whatever pace fits you.

The exact dates of the time of the Exodus are very unclear. Here is one possible time line (although some estimates vary by as much as 200 years):

- The Call of Abraham (**Genesis 12**) About 2091 BC
- Jacob and his family go to Egypt (**Genesis 46**) About 1876 BC
- The Exodus from Egypt About 1446 BC

NOTE: Throughout this study of **Exodus** through **Deuteronomy**, read other resources such as the ones listed on p. 28.

1. The Misery of Slavery (Chapter 1)

a. The growth of Israel

- About 70 people came to Egypt during the time of Joseph (1:5). You can read the details of that migration in **Genesis 46**. They settled in the delta region known as Goshen. Research Goshen to discover what that land was like.
- Not long after the Israelites left Egypt, there was a census. There were over 600,000 men age 20 and older. (**Numbers 1:46**) When you add women and children, there had to be about 2 million people during the time of Moses.

b. The Egyptians' oppression and attempted genocide

- They used oppressive slave labor to build the cities of Pithom and Rameses (1:11).
- What do you get from the faithful story about the resistance of the midwives (1:15 – 21)?

c. The impact of slavery

- What do you think would be the impact on the Israelites for being enslaved all those years?
- What do you think would be the impact on the Egyptians for being so oppressive?

d. What did God say to Abraham centuries earlier about why he didn't give Abraham immediate possession of the Promised Land? **Genesis 15:12 – 16**.

Meditate about how God might have felt during that time, what he was planning, and how that might apply to your life. Read **Leviticus 26:13** to see how God wanted to build them up.

2. The Birth of the Future Leader (Chapter 2)

a. We all love the stories of the way Moses was protected at birth, how he spent his first 40 years in Pharaoh's court, and how he had to leave because he protected one of his fellow Israelites. Read **Hebrews 11:23 – 28** and note what you learn there from the example of:

- Moses' parents
- Moses himself

(continued on the next page)

- b. How do you think Moses' birth story, his upbringing in Pharaoh's court, and his 40 years of being a shepherd in Midian prepared him for the role God was about to ask him to fulfill?
- c. **Exodus 2:23** says that the Israelites cried out for help. What does verse 24 say about God's response?

Do you think Moses and the Israelites thoroughly understood and believed that about God at that time?

Meditate about that and pray to God praising him for his immense compassion and grace. At the same time, think about how you can make sure you understand and believe in his grace and compassion during those days when it seems like he is taking a long time putting his plan into action.

3. The Holy Ground of the Burning Bush (Chapter 3:1 – 10)

- a. While tending his flock one day, Moses decided to investigate what he considered to be a “*strange sight*” (verse 3) on Mt. Horeb – a bush on fire, yet not burning up. How much more strange it must have been when this bush started talking to him! When God told him to take off his sandals because it was holy ground, Moses hid his face. He will be told (3:11) that this is the same mountain that the Israelites would come to later to worship him. Then it would be referred to as Mt. Sinai. Can you imagine what this 80-year old Moses might have been feeling at that time?
- b. In verses 7 – 10, God outlines what he was doing then. This is an expansion of the thoughts found in 2:24. Think about how you believe that he still does these extremely important four things in your life, and write your thoughts about them here:
 - He sees (verse 7).
 - He hears (verse 7).
 - He cares (verse 7).
 - He comes (verse 8)

This is a HUGE area of practical faith: Are you fully convinced that this is true about God in your life?

- c. God told Moses his plans for Israel (verse 8). Note that he planned to deliver them **out** of a miserable way of life and lead them **into** a blessed life. That is the main theme of this whole study: *out of Egypt and into the Promised Land*. This two-step process has obvious applications to his goal for our lives as well as he wants to take us **out** of darkness and **into** the light. We will spend the next few weeks exploring this idea, but for now think about some of the obvious blessings and the difficulties, both for Israel of that day and for us today, associated with each step.
- d. God also told Moses that he was going to be the leader in these plans. We see in the next section how Moses reacted to that.

Meditate on that, pray about how God has concerns and plans for your life.

4. The Great “I Am” Convinces a Reluctant Leader (Chapter 3:11 – 4:17)

- a. Moses was reluctant. Can you see why?

During the first 40 years of his life, Moses saw firsthand the power that Pharaoh had and the apparent hopelessness of the Israelites' situation, and he spent the last 40 years trying to escape from both. So it is not difficult to see why Moses had no thoughts about being the leader God wanted him to be.

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Note, however, how God patiently worked through each of Moses' excuses.

Moses's Excuses	God's Answers
<i>Who am I that I should do this?</i> (3:11 – 12)	
<i>What if people ask me Your name?</i> (3:13 – 15)	
<i>What if they don't listen?</i> (4:1 – 9)	
<i>I'm not a good speaker.</i> (4:10 – 12)	

- b. God allowed Moses to express his excuses and reasoned with him how this was all possible. But when Moses showed signs of starting to rebel, God put a stop to it (4:13 – 17). What do you learn from that?
- c. Meditate on **Exodus 3:14**. God is the ever-present "I AM!" That is what he wants us to understand about him. Pray about any excuses that might be present in your life and about your determination to trust God to help you be whatever he calls you to be, because he is the great "I AM."

5. Moses' and Aaron's Obstacles in Egypt (Chapter 4:18 – 31)

- a. Once Moses worked through his own reluctance to be the leader, he faced two huge obstacles:

- **Pharaoh**

Verses 21 – 23 speak of Pharaoh's stubborn heart. The Scriptures reveal two aspects of Pharaoh's hardened heart: Pharaoh hardened his heart and God hardened his heart. The first one is easier to understand than the second. We will explore that more next week, but for now think: how would Pharaoh's hardened heart be a challenge for the faith of Moses and Aaron as leaders?

- **The Israelites themselves**

In verses 29 – 31, the people rejoiced when they heard the news that God cared for them and had compassion about their misery. They bowed down and worshipped. But, as we will see, when coming out of Egypt and going into the Promised Land became difficult, they often gave in to their fear. How would their fearful hearts challenge Moses and Aaron as leaders?

- b. What strange thing happened to Moses on his way back to Egypt (verses 24 – 26)?

Moses, for whatever reason, had not applied God's covenant sign of circumcision to his sons. (Note **Joshua 5:2 – 9**, for another example. During the years of the wilderness, Israel had not been practicing circumcision, but God had them restart it before going into the Promised Land.)

What do you get from all of that?

Meditate and pray about how you do not want to resist God by either being stubborn or fearful and how you want to be faithful and persistent when faced with either stubbornness or fear from others.

Thought Questions

1. How does God's response to Israel's misery (3:23 – 24; 4:7 – 10) apply to you? Do you believe that about God in your life?
2. What excuses have you given about God's calling to you and how has he helped you overcome them?
3. How does the truth about the ever-present "I AM" affect you personally and practically?

The Ten Plagues: God's Mighty Hand

As we have seen, Moses and Aaron had much opposition from Pharaoh, who was not at all willing to let the people go, and from the people themselves whose centuries of slavery had left them fearful and hopeless. Summary:

- What was Pharaoh's response to the demand to let the people go?
- What was the Israelites reaction to Pharaoh's response?
- How did Moses react to all of this, and how do you think you would have reacted?

1. God's Mighty Hand (Chapters 5 – 7)

- Note carefully God's words to Moses (6:1 – 8). He told him that he would establish his covenant with the Israelites, which, of course, is one of the great themes of the whole Bible. God said that he would accomplish the freedom from Egypt by his "*mighty hand*." These verses also outline the theme of this study: out of Egypt and into the Promised Land.
 - How do you think God's words would have helped Moses?
 - How did the Israelites respond when Moses relayed God's words to them (verse 9)?

The Israelites' response again caused Moses to doubt his ability to lead the people. So God was dealing with a **mighty challenge**: a reluctant leader, a stubborn enemy, and a fearful people. But soon his **mighty hand** would convince them all. Do you see any applications to that?

- What miraculous sign did Moses perform in Pharaoh's court (7:8 – 13)?
Did it convince Pharaoh?
- What we refer to as the *Ten Plagues* began in verse 14 of chapter 7. What was the first one?
Did it convince Pharaoh?

Meditate on what is said about God's "*mighty hand*" in 6:1. Think about God's mighty hand as it was displayed then to change the lives of a reluctant leader, a stubborn enemy, and a fearful people. Then pray about how that impacts you today because you genuinely believe that the great "*I AM*" is mightily at work in your life.

2. The Plagues Continue (Chapters 8 – 10)

Note carefully God's words in **Exodus 9:16** and **10:1 – 2**. God wanted the plagues to convince everyone that "*I am the LORD*." Pharaoh and the Egyptians needed that conviction. Moses needed it. The Israelites of that day needed it. Finally, God said that future generations would need it also, and so they should be reminded of this story, as Paul did in **Romans 9:17**. How about us? Why do we also need it?

List the next 8 plagues, Pharaoh's reactions to them, and how they might have impacted the Israelites and the Egyptians. Note also how Goshen, where the Israelites lived, was not affected by some of the plagues. (See also resources like those on page 28 for more insights.)

	Plague	Pharaoh's Reaction	Possible Impression on the People
#2			
#3			
#4			
#5			
#6			
#7			
#8			
#9			

As we often emphasize in these studies: *know the Scriptures and know God better*. We don't want to just know the stories of these plagues, as if they are some Bible trivia; we want to know God. Meditate and pray about how knowing these events helps you to be more and more convinced that he really is the Lord of All!

3. Pharaoh's Hardened Heart (Review of Chapters 5 – 10)

The idea of Pharaoh's hardened heart was introduced in chapter 4. We see it emphasized multiple times in chapters 5 – 10. It is stated two ways in these Scriptures: some verses say that Pharaoh hardened his heart, while others, like **Exodus 10:1**, say that God hardened his heart.

- a. Pharaoh hardened his heart. Read these verses again and note what is said there.

Exodus 7:13

Exodus 7:22

Exodus 8:15

Exodus 8:19

Exodus 8:32

Exodus 9:7

Exodus 9:34-35

- b. God hardened Pharaoh's heart. Read these verses again and note what is said there.

Exodus 9:12

Exodus 10:1

Exodus 10:20

Exodus 10:27

Research the question: *why did God harden Pharaoh's heart?* on websites like www.gotquestions.org to see what others think about this subject. Then come up with your own conclusions.

Meditate about your heart and pray that it will never become hard. Read also **Hebrews 3:12 – 13** about helping one another avoid a hard heart.

4. The Passover (Chapters 11 – 13)

The Passover fits into God's eternal plan of sending his Son as our Passover Lamb. In other words, rather than Jesus coincidentally resembling the original Passover lamb, it is more likely that the Sovereign Lord planned the original Passover to specifically exemplify what his Son would later do.

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- a. A mixture of celebration and awe.
 - Describe the mixture of celebration and awe that you think would be going on in the Israelites' lives as they prepared for the Passover meal.
 - Can you imagine the celebration and awe that they might have felt during the moments the angel of death was passing over their houses while they heard the cries of grief in the Egyptians' houses?
 - How does that mixture of celebration and awe relate to us as we have communion today?
- b. The unleavened bread (i.e. bread without yeast) was a part of the original Passover feast, and became a part of our communion.
 - What seems to be the practical reason for using unleavened bread in the original feast (12:39)?
 - Centuries later, Jesus ate the Passover feast with his disciples in what we call the Last Supper. What important significance did he give to the unleavened bread? Read also **I Corinthians 5:7 – 8**, which indicates a spiritual application to yeast.
- c. Let's note two more events of that time that were very important to the Israelites as they left Egypt:
 - **Exodus 12:33 – 36** describes the plundering of Egypt, which God predicted in 3:21 – 22. We will see both the temptations and the usefulness of those riches in later readings.
 - **Exodus 13:21 – 22** describes the pillars of cloud and fire that led and protected Israel during their journey. Can you imagine how that helped them?

God always has a plan to help individuals get out of their darkness. Meditate on all of this and pray to God about the mixture of celebration and awe that you feel as a result of his plan.

5. Crossing the Red Sea (Chapters 14 – 15)

- a. If any of the Israelites thought that they were done with the stubborn heart of Pharaoh, they were soon brought back to reality. What was the reaction when they saw Pharaoh's army pursuing them?
- b. Moses encouraged the people to stand firm and wait for God's deliverance, which seemed like a faithful response. But what was God's instruction to Moses (14:15 – 18)?
- c. Chapter 15 is an inspiring song of deliverance that Moses and the Israelites sang. What stands out to you about that song?

Crossing the Red Sea dramatically closed the first phase of God's plan for Israel: getting them out of Egypt. The rest of the book of Exodus, and the next four books of the Bible, describe the 40 years that it took for the second phase of his plan: getting them into the Promised Land. We saw how it took God's mighty hand to get them out of Egypt because of the difficulties arising from three areas: a reluctant leader, a stubborn enemy, and a fearful people. It will take no less of a mighty hand to get them to the next phase, often for the same three reasons. That was seen right away in the grumbling that came from the lack of water (15:22 – 27). Note, however, the faithful statement in Moses's song of deliverance (15:13) summarizing both phases. The second phase might not be harder than the first phase, but one thing we can say for sure is that it takes 10 times more pages of Scripture to describe getting Israel into the Promised Land than it did to describe getting them out of Egypt.

Exodus 15:13

*In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed.
In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling.*

Meditate and pray with gratitude about how God's unfailing love and strength continually lead you to him.

Thought Questions

1. Do you think God hardened Pharaoh's heart or Pharaoh hardened his own heart, or both? In either case, what do you learn from that?
2. How do you relate to the combination of celebration and awe they experienced?
3. What is the difficulty of coming out of darkness and the difficulty of coming into light? How does 15:13 apply to you?

Meeting God on Mt. Sinai

Leaving the harsh slavery of Egypt was a joyful, encouraging experience for the Israelites. Soon, however, they faced the difficulties of providing for their basic survival needs.

1. Food and Water (Chapters 16 – 17)

a. God the Provider

As our Creator, Shepherd, and Father, God is fully aware that food, water, and safety are basic needs for all humans. Notice how he provided for the Israelites after they came out of Egypt.

- He provided manna for food (ch. 16).
Note that God not only met their needs, he also gave them a test of faith and obedience. How do you think you would have done with that test?
- He provided water (17:1 – 7).
- He provided safety from the attacking Amalakites (17:8 – 15).
This was the first mention of Joshua. Why do you think God wanted Moses to write down the results of this battle for Joshua?

b. The complainers

In his word, God frequently encourages us to present our requests to him and to trust him for all of our basic needs. But you can see that the Israelites turned their requests into grumbling and complaining. Look at these four examples in the first two months after they left Egypt:

- When they saw the Egyptians pursuing them (14:10 – 12);
- When they came to the bitter waters of Marah (15:22 – 24);
- When they realized that they had no food (16:1 – 3);
- When they needed water (17:1 – 3).

They were so desperate that they often said they preferred to go back to Egypt. Why do you think that was true, and do you see us ever doing that (that is, wanting to go back to our old life)?

What do you think is the difference between complaining and being honest with God about things that concern you?

Meditate about God as your provider, and pray about your desire to NOT be a complainer. See **Philippians 2:14 – 16**. Be open about your hurts and needs, but avoid grumbling and complaining. It can sometimes be a little tricky to have a healthy balance in this area, but one thing we know for sure: we certainly do **not** want to go back to our old life!

2. Preparing to Meet God (Chapters 18 – 19)

a. Jethro's good advice (chapter 18).

We do not know today exactly where Mt. Sinai is. But it is somewhere in the area where Moses lived for 40 years with his father-in-law Jethro. It is possibly the same mountain where Moses met God earlier at the burning bush, called there "*Horeb, the mountain of God*" (3:1 and 3:12). So when the Israelites passed back through there, Jethro came to visit. What was his advice to Moses?

b. The Israelites arrived at Mt. Sinai in the third month after leaving Egypt. They stayed there for almost a year (**Numbers 10:11**). Think about the words God gave them (19:5 – 6). How would these thoughts encourage them? How do they compare to **1 Peter 2:9 – 10** concerning your life today?

- You are God's treasured possession.
- You are a kingdom of priests.
- You are a holy nation.

(continued on the next page)

- c. God also told Moses to have the people consecrate themselves for this time (19:10 – 11). What do you think that meant?
- d. **Hebrews 12:18 – 29** refers to the time when the Israelites came to this mountain and how frightening it was. They were used to their home in Goshen, which was the flatter, greener delta area of Egypt. The terrain alone in this new area was scary. (Do some research to find pictures of that area.) But the thunder and lightning that came from God's voice was even more threatening. What does this passage in **Hebrews** say about how that applies to us?

There is so much to absorb from these two chapters. Meditate and pray about your awe of God today.

3. The Ten Commandments (Chapter 20)

Take the time to list the Ten Commandments in your own hand writing. (You will see an idea later that God gave Moses that will give a hint as to why this suggestion involves your own hand writing. Of course, you can choose to type them, but see if there is any benefit that comes from writing them by hand.)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

What did Moses want the people to know about why God spoke to them (20:18 – 22)?

Meditate about how serious you are in listening to and obeying God.

4. Holy Laws for a Holy People (Chapters 21 – 23)

- a. There are a variety of laws in these three chapters giving details about the way God wanted them to live in the Promised Land. Understanding the Law (the *Torah*) is an important part of knowing your Bible and knowing God. See the note on p. 9 of this journal and, as you have time, study out that concept.
- b. God said to them, “*You are to be my holy people.*” (22:31) The word *holy* is used 150 times in **Exodus** through **Deuteronomy**, especially emphasized in **Leviticus**. Whenever you see that word in the readings of this study, you can usually understand it to mean *different, set apart by God*. It does not mean, except when it applies to God, that the person or thing that is holy is better than all others. But they are set apart. God wanted his people to see that he is different and that his laws are different from everything around them. God wanted them to understand even common, everyday aspects of his law in that light. For instance, the context in this example of the word *holy* deals with how to treat road kill!

How often do you think of yourself as God's holy people, and how does it affect your daily life?

- c. What did God want them to believe, both about his protection and their faithful response, as he led them into the new land (23:20 – 33)?

Meditate about what it means for you today to be God's holy people.

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5. The Blood of the Covenant (Chapter 24)

- a. When Moses told the people what God had said, what was their response (24:3)?

You probably already know that their future actions will sometimes turn out to be quite different from their words on that day. How important is it to you to: *say it; mean it; do it?*

- b. The “*Book of the Covenant*” (24:4 – 7).

Moses wrote down these words in a book (24:4) and read it to the people (24:7). Once again, what was their response (24:7)?

- c. Moses sprinkled blood on the people (24:8).

- How would you feel if you were in that audience?
- How do Moses’ words in verse 8 compare with Jesus’ words in **Matthew 26:28**?

We will see later (p. 14 of these notes) more details about the significance of blood in the sacrifices.

- d. The glory of the mountain (24:9 – 18).

- We already noted the awesomeness of that mountain experience and how **Hebrews 12:18 – 29** applies it to the awe that we should have in our relationship with God.
- Meditate about that again as you pray about your awe of God.

The Torah

The word *Law* in the Old Testament is usually a translation of the Hebrew word *Torah*, which means *instruction, direction, law*. It occurs over 200 times in the Old Testament. Most of the time it refers to divine instruction; it was viewed to be the authoritative law of God – not man. It is a combination of civil, moral, health, ecological, and religious directions, many of which were in sharp contrast to the laws that were in force in Egypt, from which the Israelites were coming, and Canaan, where they were going.

In the New Testament, we know that the Old Testament Law is not to be understood as the source of our salvation. In fact, no one can be saved by obeying the Torah, if for no other reason than the fact that no human being (other than the man who was God in the flesh, Jesus Christ) can sufficiently obey it. We are saved by grace through faith. Also we know that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law (**Matthew 5:17**). The religious aspects of the Torah, such as sacrifices and Sabbath worship, are fulfilled in Christ and no longer our laws today.

That, however, does not diminish the admiration that God’s people have for his Law. Consider, for example, the following praises for the Torah.

- **Psalms 119:18** *Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.*
- **Psalms 119:97** *Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.*

Godly people of that time appreciated the Torah for its beauty, practical value, and focus on the heart of the individual. They saw how it directed them into the free, purposeful, and compassionate life that produces much joy, instead of regret. They saw in it God’s grace that provided the forgiveness of their sins. Most of all, they respected it for being God’s direction. While it is true that many of them took it too far and made it a legalistic burden, as in the case of the Pharisees of Jesus’ day, respect for God’s instructions and directions is still an admirable trait.

Thought Questions

1. How can you balance being open about your concerns with your desire to not grumble?
2. Is awe an important ingredient in your worship?
3. What wonderful things (**Psalms 119:18**) are you seeing in God’s law?

The Tabernacle: God's Sanctuary

The rest of **Exodus** primarily deals with the instructions from God for building the tabernacle, which was a movable structure that was the model for the permanent temple that would be built centuries later. Reading the details of these instructions may seem a little tedious to us, but to God it was very important, and following these particular instructions was one thing Israel did very well.

1. "A Sanctuary for Me" (Chapters 25 – 27)

- a. Look carefully at God's words to Moses in 25:8 – 9.
 - What do you think "*a sanctuary for me*" meant for them, and how does it apply to you today?
 - Why do you think God said to make it exactly like the pattern he gave them? (We will see in the last chapter of **Exodus** how well they did.)
- b. The first article to be built and put in the tabernacle was the *ark of the covenant* (25:10 – 22).
 - This portable chest became a central figure for the Israelites for centuries to come.
 - What was in it and what was its significance to Israel?
- c. Next were the table and golden lampstands (25:23 – 40).
 - What do you think the "*bread of the Presence*" represented?
 - What do you think the golden lampstand represented?

Do you see the emotional and spiritual effects of having these two physical items in the tabernacle?

- d. Chapters 26 and 27 describe the curtains, the bronze altar and the courtyard. Again, this might not be the most exciting reading. At the end of these specific instructions we see a phrase that is used over and over again in this part of the Bible: *the Tent of Meeting* (27:21). The tabernacle, God's sanctuary, was, of course, not a home for God in the same sense that we use the word "home." But it was a physical place where he gave them the assurance that they could meet with him. How important do you think that was to them, and how important is it to you?

Meditate on the significance of your life being God's sanctuary.

2. The Priests and Sacrifices (Chapters 28 – 31)

- a. The Priests' sacred garments: "*dignity and honor*" (28:2)
 - Again, this may be difficult reading for us, but how serious was it to God (28:43)?
 - In particular, what phrase was written on Aaron's turban, and what do you think that meant to him?
 - In the New Covenant, we are not told to focus on literal clothes in our meeting with God or on physical clothes that make us holy. Rather, our "*clothes*" are what? (See **Colossians 3:12**, for instance.)
- b. What do you think is the importance to God involved with consecrating the priests and the tabernacle (chapter 29)? Focus especially on the depth of the words found in verse 42 – 46.
- c. One major purpose of the tabernacle was to be the location of sacrifices. The annual sacrifice of *Atonement* (30:10), as well as other sacrifices, are described in more detail in **Leviticus**. What do you think the word "*atonement*" meant to them and what does it mean to us today?

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3. The Golden Calf – the Horrible Possibility of Losing God’s Presence (Chapters 32 – 33)

- a. Why do you think they built the calf?
What causes us to worship our “idols”?
- b. Where did they get the jewelry that was used to make the calf? (Recall 12:36.)
- c. How do you think God felt at that time?

How do you think he feels when that happens today?
- d. Describe Moses’ intervention (32:32).

Why do you think he said that?
- e. What distressing words did God give Moses (33:3)?

Note how those words contrast with what God had said over and over again before then: “*I am with you.*” It’s no wonder these words hit Moses so hard. Don’t let their impact escape you either.
- f. What do you learn from Moses’ face-to-face relationship with God (33:11)?
- g. Meditate on **Exodus 33:15 – 16**. How does the importance of God’s presence apply to you today?

4. A Second Chance from the God of All Grace (Chapters 34 – 36)

- a. How does God describe himself to Moses (34:6 – 7)?

These words are repeated multiple times throughout Scripture (**Psalm 86:15** and **103:8**, for instance). These are God’s words about himself – not our opinions about what he should be like. Note that they were first given here to Moses at a time when His people were most in need of grace and compassion. How important are those characteristics to you?
- b. These chapters repeat a lot of what has already been said. That may seem like a boring repetition to us, but keep in mind: why was it necessary to repeat it?
 - Do we see how amazing it is that the grace of God gave them this second chance?
 - Do we see how amazing it is that the grace of God gives us a second chance (and more)?
- c. How long was Moses on the mountain this time (34:28)?
 - Why do you think the people did not build another calf?
 - Note the mention of the veil (34:29 – 35). See **2 Corinthians 3:12 – 18** for an interesting application.
- d. Chapters 35 and 36 give details about some of the offerings made to build the tabernacle and some of the skilled craftsmen that worked on it. They were so enthusiastic about this that they had to be asked to quit giving, because they had given so much (36:2 – 7). Have you ever heard of anything like that?
 - Recall that they were homeless with no income. Where did they get all of these possessions?
 - Note also that some of these same possessions had been used previously to finance the golden calf. What does that tell you about possessions and how they can be either used for good or for evil?

Spend some time meditating about the grace of God that gives you so many second chances and how you want to use your possessions for good, not evil.

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5. Finishing the Tabernacle (Chapters 37 – 40)

- a. Chapters 37 – 39 give a detailed report of how they made the tabernacle and everything in it.
- Remember that these are skilled craftsmen endowed with the Spirit of God (31:1 – 11). You can also sense the dedication they had in doing their work. How does that combination of God's gift and our dedication apply to us today?
 - This section ends with Moses' inspection of their finished work (39:42 – 43). A phrase that is repeated often in the next chapter appears there: "*just as the LORD commanded.*" Remember that these are the same people who worshipped the golden calf just a few weeks earlier. What do you think might be some reasons that they are now so faithfully obedient?
- b. Chapter 40 describes the tabernacle being assembled and dedicated, one year after they had left Egypt.
- This moveable structure became the center of worship until King Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem 480 years later (**1 Kings 6**). The fixed temple was modeled after the portable tabernacle but was much more glamorous due to the amazing prosperity of Israel in Solomon's time. The temple took Solomon's workers 7 years to complete, while the tabernacle took less than a year (40:17).
 - When the tabernacle was dedicated (40:34 – 35), the glory of the LORD filled it. By the way, the same thing happened centuries later when the temple was dedicated (**1 Kings 8:10 – 11**). How do you think that would have impacted the Israelites, especially as they might have reflected on the grace of God shown to them to give them their second chance?
 - You can research "*tabernacle*" on Google and YouTube to see interesting, virtual depictions of what the tabernacle might have looked like.
- c. The book of **Exodus** closes with the description of the cloud by day and fire by night that accompanied the tabernacle. We saw that introduced earlier just as the Israelites were leaving Egypt (13:21 – 22). What was the purpose of that visual aid and how to you think it affected them?

Meditate again about how grateful you are for God's presence, and for being his tabernacle.

Thought Questions

1. What does it mean to you personally and practically to be a sanctuary for God?
2. How does the presence of God, as described in Moses' conversation with Him in chapter 33, apply to you personally and practically?
3. Do you see the combination of the skills given to you by the Holy Spirit and your dedication to using them for his glory?

A Holy People for a Holy God

NOTE: Some of the readings for the next four weeks will be much longer. The “Context” of the reading will be given in the titles and subtitles of every section of these notes. This is the maximum reading. You may not have the time to read all of that, so it can be put off to be read later. In the notes, each question will begin with a “Read” Scripture. You can view those as the minimum readings, and they will provide enough information to meditate on the devotional ideas of each section. Whatever reading pattern you choose, don’t let the difficulty of some of these Scriptures cause you to back down from giving your heart to this part of God’s Word. “Difficult” never implies “avoid” for God’s holy people!

In **Exodus**, from chapter 20 on, God gave Moses his Law, beginning with the basic principles found in the Ten Commandments and continuing with many details, especially dealing with the tabernacle. **Leviticus** continues with those details, especially details surrounding the sacrifices and offerings to be given by the priests. The priests were all from the tribe of Levi, which gives us the title of this book.

1. Holy Sacrifices for a Holy People (Chapters 1 – 7)

a. Read **Leviticus 1:1 – 9** and **6:1 – 7**. *The Guilt Offerings*

- The burnt sacrifices were frequently referred to as *an aroma pleasing to the LORD*. God wanted them to know that their sacrifices smelled good to him. How do you think that made them feel? (See also **Revelation 5:8** to see a similar statement about our prayers.)
- It is stated several times that they were to *lay their hands* on the animal. That was connected to confessing their sin and physically realizing the guilt of their sin transferring to the animal who would then die for them. When that was taken seriously, how do you think that felt?
- Another word mentioned frequently is *atonement*, which carried the idea of *covering over their sin*. It meant that they were once again *at one* with God. Imagine also how that felt to them.
- If the sin was against another person, there was to be a restitution to the victim as well as a sacrifice to God. Harming another person was connected with being unfaithful to God (6:1). Do you see that connection also?

b. Read **Leviticus 7:11 – 15**. *Thank Offerings*

- Not all sacrifices were for sins. Some were freewill expressions of gratitude. They were also known as *fellowship offerings*.
- How would these sacrifices be connected to the heart and spirit of the one giving them?

As you have time, read all of this section. Imagine what it was like to hear all of this for the first time. Meditate on how those sacrifices for sin have their fulfillment in Christ and how your life is a thank offering, with your prayers being a pleasing aroma to God.

2. “Be Holy because I am Holy.” (Chapters 8 – 12)

a. Read **Leviticus 9:1 – 4; 18 – 24**. *The Priests’ first sacrifices*

- Imagine what those first sacrifices were like.
- What was the result?

b. Read **Leviticus 10:1 – 11**. *The unauthorized fire*

- Why do you think this punishment was so severe?
- How did that impact everyone else?
- Do you think God was too severe in his choice of punishment?

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c. Read **Leviticus 11:45**. “Be holy, because I am holy.”

- The word “*holy*” is used 70 times in the book of **Leviticus**, more than other book in the Bible. Remember that the word *holy* means different, set apart from the rest. God frequently reminded them of his holiness and how that made them holy. He is very different from all of the false gods in Egypt and in Canaan, and he wanted his people to be different from the idol worshippers. Note that the specific context of the statement this time is God giving them their dietary laws, many of which would be quite different from those of other countries. There were practical, health reasons for their differences, but God also wanted them to connect it to how different HE was from all of the false gods around them. Besides just agreeing that God's ways are good ideas, He also wanted them to realize that they are holy simply because He is holy.
- How often do you appreciate God's holiness and yours?

As you have time, read all of this section. Imagine what it was like to hear all of this for the first time.

Meditate on how the holiness of God is the reason that he calls you to be holy today.

3. HOLY LAWS FOR A HOLY PEOPLE (Chapters 13 – 17)

Chapters 13 – 15 deal with a lot of health issues, which are very interesting, although sometimes embarrassingly detailed. But chapter 16 involves one of the most interesting and impactful event in the yearly Jewish calendar. Give it some careful thought.

a. Read **Leviticus 16**. *The Day of Atonement*

- *Atonement* was a goal of every sin, or guilt, offering. But one day of the year (10th day of the 7th month, which falls around September or October of our calendar), there was a special *Day of Atonement*.
- Two goats were selected. One was sacrificed. The other was the *scapegoat*. They laid hands on it, confessed their sins, and let him escape. Do you see what both of those visualized for the Israelites? Can you imagine the impact that event had on faithful people?
- Do you also see how Jesus, our sacrifice of atonement, represents both? (See **1 John 2:1 – 2**.)

b. Read **Leviticus 17:10 – 12**. *The significance of blood*

- It is the blood that makes atonement for one's sins; i.e. covers it over and makes the person one with God (17:11).
- Again, what do you see is the connection to Jesus' blood for us?

As you have time, read all of this section. Imagine what it was like to hear all of this for the first time. Also, focus on the grace of God and the heart of the worshipper as seen in these sacrifices. Too often today, Old Testament sacrifices are viewed as being totally legalistic. It was based on law, for sure, but it also was saturated with grace and heart.

Meditate on Jesus, your sacrifice of atonement.

4. Respectful Relationships for a HOLY PEOPLE (Chapters 18 – 22)

a. Read **Leviticus 18:1 – 5**. *Being Different (holy)*

- Remember our theme of coming out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. One thing God wanted them to be sure about was that their life was going to be very different from the lifestyle in Egypt and the lifestyle in Canaan. He is quite different from the “gods” in Egypt and in Canaan, and so they were to be different (*holy*) – not self-righteous holiness, but different because God is different.
- Why do you think it is so hard for us even today to realize the difference God wants to see in us?

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b. Read **Leviticus 18:24 – 28**. *The Defiled Land*

- One thing that is often overlooked is how God views this physical world that he has created. The land of Canaan had been defiled by the people living there and it was “vomiting” them out of it. That’s a pretty graphic picture, isn’t it?
- Keep that in mind when studying later how strict God was about clearing the Canaanites out of that land. Remember **Genesis 15:12 – 16** showing that God waited patiently until the sin of the people of that land “reached its full measure.” The time between that promise and the exodus out of Egypt is over 500 years.

c. Read **Leviticus 19:1 – 18**. *Respectful Relationships*

- Meditate on the thoughts in **Exodus 19:1 – 2**. As we have seen, this is an often repeated idea in **Leviticus**: *be holy because God is holy*. The context this time deals with the way God’s people treat others. As followers of the holy God, they were to treat others in a way quite different from what they saw in Egypt and Canaan. It could be summarized with what Jesus called the second greatest commandment: *love your neighbor as yourself* (19:18). Do you think that was what they experienced in Egypt?
- What do you think about God’s provision for the poor and needy (19:9 – 10)?

As you have time, read all of this section. Imagine how different these relationship principles sounded to them. Meditate on how the holiness of God is the reason that he calls you to be holy in your relationships.

5. HOLY EVENTS for a HOLY PEOPLE (Chapters 23 – 27)

a. Read **Leviticus 23:1 – 5**. *Special Days: Feasting on Sacrifices*

- Chapter 23 lists the 7 feasts that were to occur every year. They all had specific purposes, but one general goal of every feast is to celebrate. What does that tell you about God?
- They were celebrations, but they were also expensive in time, travel expenses, and food preparations, all of which required sacrifice. Why do you think God wanted them to sacrifice in order to celebrate?
- Obviously there are dangers in overindulging in feasts. Again, God is holy – different. His feasts are not decadent, wasteful, gaudy orgies, like those of Egypt and Canaan. But do you think God wants you to enjoy celebrations today also?

b. Read **Leviticus 25:1 – 24**. *Special Years*

- The *Sabbath Year* and *Year of Jubilee* are amazing events. Who would ever think of these ideas? There are truly holy (different from what anyone else would propose.)
- Notice that these are specifically designed to give people and the land a time of rest and restitution. How were these ideas also a test of faith?
- What promise did God give them if they would trust him in these special years?
- How hard do you think it would be for them to follow these two principles? (See **2 Chronicles 36:21** to see how the 70 years of captivity was a forced time of rest for the land.)

c. Read **Leviticus 26:9 – 13**. *The Covenant*

“I’ll be your God, and you’ll be my people.” That is the basic wording of God’s covenant with his people found throughout Scripture.

As you have time, read all of this section. Imagine how different these ideas sounded to them, especially different from the way people in Egypt and Canaan (and in our world today) treated each other. God’s Law dealt with human relationships, justice, finances, generosity, celebrations, respect of the land, diet, and so many other ideas. Meditate on your covenant with God and how his Law makes you view life so differently.

Thought Questions

1. How does it affect you personally and practically to hear God say: “Be holy, because I am holy”?
2. How can you apply what God taught them about feasting on sacrifices?
3. How does God’s instructions about holy relationships apply to you?

No, the book of **Numbers** is not really about Math. Sorry. But it contains two accounts, almost 40 years apart from each other, when God had his people counted. The Greek name for this book is *Arithmoi*, from which we get our word *arithmetic*. But the Hebrew name for the book, *Bemidbar* which means *in the desert*, is probably more descriptive of what the book is about, because it describes the time that Israel was in the wilderness for almost 40 years. It's a great help for the times in your life when the journey seems to be a little too long and too difficult. You end up believing that if God could get these people through that desert, he can get you through whatever is going on in your life.

1. Do the Math! (Chapters 1 – 6)

- a. Read **Numbers 1:1 – 15**. *The First Census*
 - When did this census take place?
 - Who was counted?
 - What was the resulting count (2:32 – 33)? Imagine the needs of leading that many people out of Egypt and into the Promised Land.
 - Who was excluded from the count for the army?
- b. Read **Numbers 5:5 – 10**. *The Law of Restitution*
 - In addition to the census, several laws given earlier are repeated here. This is one we read earlier in **Leviticus 6:1**. God views wronging another person as being unfaithful to him.
 - Is that the way you view it?
- c. Read **Numbers 6:1 – 4**. *The Nazarite Vow*
 - What do you think was the purpose of this vow?
 - Samson (**Judges 13**) was one famous example of someone who took the Nazarite vow.
- d. Read **Numbers 6:22 – 27**. *The Benediction*

Meditate on the words of this amazing blessing and think about their value in your life.

As you have time, read all of this section. Note the detail in which God treated the names of the people being counted. They were people – not just numbers. Meditate on the blessings you have from being counted among God's people.

2. Moving On! (Chapters 7 – 12)

- a. Read **Numbers 9:1 – 5**. *The Second Passover – one year after Egypt*
 - This was also the time when the tabernacle was finished and first set up (**Exodus 40:17**). Think about all they had gone through during that year.
 - How would you have felt during this second Passover?
- b. Read **Numbers 10:11 – 13; 33 – 36**. *Leaving Mt. Sinai*
 - They came there at God's instruction to receive his Law, as we first saw in **Exodus 19**. They had been there for almost a year. During that year, there were some very positive and some very negative times. They almost lost God's presence altogether because of the golden calf. Then, blessed by God's grace to have a second chance, they showed uncommon devotion in building the tabernacle in a very timely fashion. A lot can happen in a year! (Think about the ups and downs of your last year.)

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- Now, they're ready to leave. But note: what was it that actually led them to leave?
- What were Moses' words as the ark of the covenant led them out? (See also how David turned this into a song in **Psalm 68:1**.)

c. Read **Numbers 11:1 – 35**. *Complaining*

- How did they remember Egypt? We saw this earlier in **Exodus**. (See p. 7 of these notes.)
- What can cause us to do that?
- In verse 23, God asked Moses if he thought that God's arm was too short. (See also **Isaiah 50:2; 59:1**). What do you get from that to apply to your life?

As you have time, read all of this section. Chapter 12 is particularly important with its description of Moses (verse 3) and the interesting story of the temporary lapse of Aaron and Miriam.

Meditate on how you never want to doubt God's leadership or complain about your life.

3. The Faithful Two and the Timid Ten (Chapters 13 – 14)

As you may know, this event is a major turning point in the lives of God's people Israel – one that impacted them for years to come.

a. Read **Numbers 13:1 – 2; 26 – 33**. *The report of the spies*

- Look at a map of that time and note where Kadesh Barnea is located.
- Joshua and Caleb gave a faithful report; ten of the spies gave a fearful report. They all saw the same things. What do you think was the major difference between them, and how can that apply to you?

b. Read **Numbers 14:1 – 19**. *The grumbling and rebellion*

- This time, their grumbling led them to the point of wanting to stone Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb. What was the leaders' response?
- What was God's response?

c. Read **Numbers 14: 20 – 38**. *God's forgiveness, yet their consequences*

- God told Moses that he forgave the people, just as Moses had asked. Nevertheless, they would have to suffer the consequences of not being able to go into the Promised Land. Do you think that it still happens sometimes today that we could be forgiven, yet have to suffer consequences?
- Who were the only exceptions to these consequences?

d. Read **Numbers 14: 39 – 45**. *Failed attempt to do it their own way*

- In spite of what God said, people tried to go into the Promised Land anyway. What was the result?
- What do you think caused that failure and how could that apply to us today?

As you have time, read again all of this section. It's not very long, and it's mostly descriptive of sinfulness, but it was a major turning point in the history of Israel and is full of important applications to us today. Meditate on your faithfulness to God, even during times when others might be fearful or disobedient.

4. Korah's Rebellion (Chapters 15 – 18)

a. Read **Numbers 16**. *The disastrous rebellion*.

- About 250 Israelites, led by Korah and Dathan rose up against Moses and Aaron. They were described as well-known community leaders.

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- Their criticism (verse 3) was that the whole community is holy, and they questioned why Moses and Aaron would set themselves above everyone else. There is actually some truth in that, isn't there? Maybe if they had expressed their concern differently, there would have been an entirely different result. What was Moses' response to their question?
- The opposition leaders actually described Egypt as the "*land flowing with milk and honey*" (16:13). What would cause them to forget their misery back there? Any applications to us?
- Moses let God decide – always a good idea! What happened to the 250 who led the rebellion?
- The whole Israelite community grumbled against Moses and Aaron about what happened. What were the horrible results of the rest of that story?
- This incident made a lasting impression on the Israelites and was often referred to as an example. See **I Corinthians 10:10** and **Jude 11**, for instance. It is also interesting to know that many of Korah's descendants rose above Korah's bad example and became respected worship and community leaders, proving that it is possible to overcome bad influences. (See **I Chronicles 6:31 – 38, 26:19** and **Psalms 85**.)

b. Read **Numbers 17**. *Aaron's rod that budded*

- God wanted to put an end to the grumbling against Moses and Aaron (verse 5) and the grumbling against himself (verse 10). As we saw before (see page 7 of these notes), God certainly wants us to come to him about what we see is wrong, whether it is with our own lives or with the lives of our leaders. As we have noted before, what do you think is the difference between grumbling and being honest about situations?
- This was another incident that left a lasting impression. Aaron's rod was to be kept as a sign to the rebellious (verse 10). Read **Hebrews 9:4** about how it was kept in the ark of the covenant.

As you have time, read all of this section. Meditate on how you want to avoid grumbling and rebellion.

5. Water, Snakes, and Kings (Chapters 19 – 21)

a. Read **Numbers 20:2 – 13**. *Water from the Rock*

- Evidently, the previous incidents didn't stop the grumbling and complaining. Still, God's steadfast love and strength provided what they needed.
- What happened, though, as a result of Moses' anger and disobedience at that time?

b. Read **Numbers 21:4 – 9**. *The Bronze Snake*

- More grumbling! Notice how they described the manna that God provided daily for them (vs. 5).
- Sadly, later generations used this bronze snake as an idol, which Hezekiah tore down about 700 years after Moses built it (**2 Kings 18:4**). We're capable of turning even good things into idols!
- On a positive note, though, Jesus referred to the bronze snake as an illustration of how he was lifted up on the cross (**John 3:14 – 15**). What do you think is the connection?

c. Read **Numbers 21:21 – 35**. *Kings Sihon and Og*

- Another example of God showing his mighty hand (21:34) and teaching his people to trust him.
- This story was used by future leaders to remind God's people to trust in his mighty hand during difficult times. (See **Psalms 135:11** and **Psalms 136:19 – 20**, for instance.)

As you have time, read all of this section. Continue to meditate on your desire to live a life of gratitude, rather than complaining. These Scriptures indicate that this might be a much bigger issue than we may have thought.

Thought Questions

1. What do you think you can do to make sure you are more like the faithful 2 than the timid 10?
2. How can we express concerns about people, such as leaders, without grumbling?
3. After reading this, is grumbling and complaining a bigger issue than you may have thought?

1. Balaam and His Talking Donkey (Numbers 22 – 25)

- a. Read **Numbers 22:1 – 7**. *The Moabites and Midianites*

Balak, the king of Moab, was afraid of Israel after he saw what happened to Sihon and Og. What he didn't know was that God had told Moses to leave them alone (**Deuteronomy 2:9**), because the Moabites were descendants of Lot. The Moabites joined forces with the Midianites to resist Israel. Remember that Moses had spent time with the Midianites and that his wife was from there. Again, this was a people who had no reason to fear Israel. So all of this panic was unnecessary! Does that ever happen to us?

- b. Read **Numbers 22:8 – 35**. *Balaam*

Balaam was evidently a well-known sorcerer who lived hundreds of miles away near the Euphrates River. He was acquainted enough with Yahweh to know that he should consult him before going along with Balak's plans.

- God told him specifically not to go. But after Balaam persisted, God allowed it. Do you think that could ever happen to us?
- The angel appeared on the journey to reinforce the importance of not cursing Israel. That's when the donkey started talking! What stands out to you about their conversation?

- c. Read **Numbers 23:1 – 26**. *The Failed Curses*

As Balaam predicted, he was not able to curse Israel, even though Balak tried to get him to do it three times. In fact, he blessed Israel and praised God instead. Meditate on **Numbers 23:19**, and thank God for what Balaam stated there. Even though Balaam had a lot of evil in his heart, he knew this truth about God.

- d. Read **Numbers 25:1 – 9**. *The Sin at Peor*

- When the Midianites saw that they were unable to resist Israel militarily, they resorted to tempting them sexually. Describe the horrible plague that was the result of that sin.
- It is not stated in chapter 25, but we learn later that it was Balaam who actually advised this approach (31:16). Balaam is often referred to in Scripture as a bad example of what an evil leader can produce. (See **Revelation 2:14** for instance.) And this sin at Peor is also often referred to as a bad example to avoid. (See **1 Corinthians 10:8** for instance.) It became an important, though unfortunate, event in Israel's history.

As you have time, read all of this section. We can learn valuable lessons from bad examples. Meditate on what you learn from Balaam's life.

2. Counting the New Generation (Numbers 26 – 30)

- a. Read **Numbers 26:1 – 4; 51**. *The Second Census*

- What was the total count this time?
- How does that compare to the total almost 40 years earlier (2:32 – 33)?

- b. Read **Numbers 27:1 – 11**. *Justice for One Family*

- In the midst of dealing with the important outcomes of the whole nation, God takes the time to record how the needs of one family were met. You will see the story of Zelophehad's daughters come up again in **Numbers 36** and **Joshua 17**.
- What do you learn from the way God met their needs? Do you think he sees you, even in the midst of billions of people?

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c. Read **Numbers 27:15 – 23**. *Joshua Commissioned*

- Moses was allowed to see the promised land, but he was reminded of why he was not allowed to go into it. So God told Moses to commission Joshua to succeed him as leader.
- Note verse 17. Moses was concerned and determined that the people would not become sheep without a shepherd. (This phrase is often repeated in Scripture. See **1 Kings 22:17** and **Matthew 9:36** for instance.)

As you have time, read all of this section. They're coming to an end of their 40-year journey out of Egypt. Satan has certainly been relentless in his attempts to keep them from going into the promised land, and he was successful in that attempt for most of them. But the new generation is now ready to go, and God kept showing his people what they could do to remain faithful to him.

Meditate on your faithfulness to rely on God to fight off Satan's relentless attacks.

3. Last Minute Details (Numbers 31 – 36)

a. Read **Numbers 31:1 – 24**. *Judgment on the Midianites*

- This was Moses' final battle, and it must have been one of his saddest, since it involved his wife's family.
- Balaam was also killed at that time. Remember, as stated in verse 16, it was Balaam that had advised the Midianite women to seduce Israel. That's why Moses was upset that the women were not punished.
- This kind of war is always upsetting to read about – especially when it is clear that there was really no need for the Midianites to resist Israel.

b. Read **Numbers 32:1 – 5, 23**. *The Eastern Tribes*

- The tribes of Reuben and Gad requested that they be able to settle on the eastern side of the Jordan River. Later on we learn that half the tribe of Manasseh also wanted to join them (32:33).
- Moses granted their request, providing that they were willing to go with the rest of Israel as they conquered Canaan. In verse 23, Moses warned them about what would happen if they didn't:

Numbers 32:23b	<i>You may be sure that your sin will find you out.</i>
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That had very specific applications to them. What do you think are some general applications of that important thought to your life? Does sin, even what you think is hidden sin, usually find you out?

- c. **Numbers 33** is a travelogue of their 40-year journey out of Egypt to the edge of the Promised Land. God told Moses to make a written record of it. It's tedious reading, to be sure, but find a map of that time period and trace their journey. See page 26 of this journal, for example. Try to imagine the stories that are on their minds as you reflect on that journey.

As you have time, read all of this section.

Meditate on the amazing ways God works in both the details and the over-all journey of your life.

4. Review of their Story (Deuteronomy 1 – 3)

Deuteronomy means “the second Law.” It was the eleventh month of the fortieth year since they left Egypt. The first generation adults, except for Joshua, Caleb, and Moses had died in the wilderness because of their lack of trust at Kadesh Barnea. Now Moses takes this time to prepare the new generation to cross over into the Promised Land. He starts by making sure they remember their story. As you read these three chapters, see how much of their story you remember from **Exodus**, **Leviticus**, and **Numbers**.

(continued on the next page)

- a. Read **Deuteronomy 1:1 – 5**. *The New Generation*
- They are now east of the Jordan River. Look at a map to see the locations of the events mentioned here. Compare this spot to Kadesh Barnea, where they first had the opportunity to enter into the Promised Land some 38 years earlier. See p. 26 of this journal.
 - Try to imagine the excitement of this time – the potential as well as the needs of the moment.
- b. Read **Deuteronomy 1:19 – 36**. *The Sin of Untrust*
- Moses then reminded them of the sin at Kadesh Barnea, some 38 years earlier.
 - What do you think is the value of bringing up this negative part of their story?
- c. Read **Deuteronomy 2:24 – 25; 3:1 – 2**. *Kings Sihon and Og*
- Moses then reminded them of more recent victories over King Sihon and King Og. This new generation would have actually witnessed those victories. We read about it in **Numbers 21**.
 - What do you think is the value of bringing up these events to the new generation? (See **Psalms 136:20 – 22**, for an example of how that story was used in a thanksgiving psalm.)

As you have time, read all three of these chapters and notice how Moses is establishing in this new generation a sense of appreciation for their story. Also, look at **Psalms 105** and **106** as examples of future generations appreciating their story, even centuries later.

Meditate on the amazing ways God works in your life and how you want to appreciate your story.

5. Review of the Law (Deuteronomy 4 – 5)

- a. Read **Deuteronomy 5:1 – 21**. *Repeating the Ten Commandments*

Most likely, they had heard these words many times before, just as we have. Take some time to meditate about what God is asking of his people. What stands out to you in terms of the two broad categories:

- How does God want us to view HIM?
- How does God want us to treat people?

- b. As you have time, read both of these chapters.

Meditate on how grateful you are for the commands and instructions that come from God about how he wants you to view him and how he wants you to treat others.

Thought Questions

1. What do you learn from the story of Balaam to apply to your life?
2. What do you learn from the story of Zelophehad's daughters that gives you encouragement about the way God works in your life?
3. What wonderful things (**Psalms 119:18**) are you seeing in God's law?

1. The Greatest Commandment (Deuteronomy 6 – 10)

a. Read **Deuteronomy 6**. *The Essence of the Whole Law*

- We recognize the importance of verse 5, because Jesus referred to it as the greatest commandment (**Matthew 22:34 – 40**.) Keep in mind that this was new to them. Try to imagine: how would this impact you if you were them, hearing this for the first time in light of what they know about their story?
- The phrase “*be careful*” is used 3 times in this chapter (verses 3, 12, 25) and about 20 times altogether in the book of **Deuteronomy**. What do you think Moses is emphasizing to them and what can we get from it today?
- Notice that he urges them to have God’s commandments on their heart (verse 6). In fact, this whole book refers to the heart about 25 times. How does this change one common misconception about the Old Testament that it was not about the heart?
- Moses also mentions several times in this book, as he does here in verse 7, to impress all of this onto their children. What do you get from that verse that is needed today also?
- What do you think was the value of the visual reminders that Moses taught them to have in their homes (verses 8 – 9)?
- Verse 23 talks about how they were brought out of Egypt to be brought into the Promised Land. This is a theme that we have discussed since the beginning of this series. Note that it has taken them 40 years to get to this point. Of course, they had the opportunity to go in 38 years earlier. It could have been a 2-year journey, instead of a 40-year one. What do you learn from that?

b. As you have time, read all of this section. You will note many valuable and inspirational teachings such as being God’s treasured possession (7:6), the covenant (7:12), which will also come up in later readings this week, as well as the famous quote that Jesus used in his temptation about not living by bread alone (8:3).

Meditate on how much you love God with all your heart and want to be careful to stay faithful to him.

2. Love and Obey (Deuteronomy 11 – 16)

a. Read **Deuteronomy 11**. *More Emphasis on the Essence of the Law*

- Verse 1 repeats what we saw in chapter 6 about the emphasis on love. How important is love for God to your obedience?
- How does Moses say that the land where they are going is different from the land in Egypt (verses 8 – 12)?
- Verses 18 – 21 are also very similar to what Moses said in chapter 6. He said to “*fix these words in your hearts and minds*.” What are some practical applications to you about that?
- Moses introduces in verses 26 – 32 something that he will develop in more detail in chapters 27 and 28: *the blessing and the curse*. What is the value of focusing on both?

b. As you have time, read all of this section. You will, of course, find many valuable and inspirational teachings such as the prediction about finding a permanent place for God’s temple (12:4 – 14), a review of the Sabbatical year (chapter 15), and the annual feasts (chapter 16).

Meditate on how much you love God with all your heart and how that is your reason for obeying him.

(continued on the next page)

3. Reviewing More Details of the Law (Deuteronomy 17 – 22)

a. Read **Deuteronomy 17:14 – 20**. *Future Kings*

- Even though God never wanted Israel to have a king, other than himself, he knew that there would come a time when they would want one, and he would permit it. What interesting instruction does Moses give here that every new king was supposed to do? (Hint: That instruction inspired the activity on p. 8 of this journal.)
- Do you think they all did that?

b. Read **Deuteronomy 18:15 – 19**. *“A Prophet Like Me”*

- What did God himself say to Moses about this prophet?
- We wouldn’t recognize it at the time, but this turned out to be a reference to Jesus. See **Acts 3:22**, for instance.

As you have time, read all of this section. It is a repeat, or review of many of the laws found in **Leviticus**. Some of them are not the most enjoyable reading for us today, but always keep in mind how valuable they were to the people of that day. In particular, the new generation needed all of these reminders.

Meditate on how valuable God’s commandments are to you today.

4. The Blessings and Curses (Deuteronomy 23 – 28)

a. Read **Deuteronomy 26:16 – 19**. *The Co-promises of the Covenant*

- The people declared that day:
- God declared that day:

How do you think the words of their declarations that day compare with your covenant with God today?

b. Read **Deuteronomy 27:1 – 28:14**. *The “Blessings and Curses” Ceremony*

- Moses gave them details about the plan he first mentioned in chapter 11. When they came to Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim in the Promised Land, they were to have this huge ceremony proclaiming these curses and blessings. We read about them doing that in **Joshua 8**.
- When this event later occurred, it had to be one of the most amazing assemblies of all time. One incredible aspect of it is how God gave the details about it long before it happened. What do you imagine would be the impact of being in that assembly of probably 2 million people hearing these words?

As you have time, read all of this section, as Moses continued to repeat the details of the Law to them.

Meditate on how much you appreciate not only the promises of God’s blessings but also the reminder of some of the curses that are possible when we are not faithful to his covenant.

5. The Choice: Life or Death? (Deuteronomy 29 – 34)

a. Read **Deuteronomy 29:9 – 15**. *The Covenant*

- One of the most important topics in all of Scripture is our covenant with God. Moses addresses it several times in his words to the new generation. Back in chapter 7, he referred to it as the covenant of love. Why do you think that it is always important for us to remember that it is covenant of love?

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- Here he reminded them (and us) of the simplicity of the covenant: *we promise to be his people; he promises to be our God. Or putting it another way: we promise that he will be our God, and he promises that we will be his people.* Many details of God's Law have changed since Moses' day. But the basic promises of the covenant have not changed. How important is that covenant to you on a daily basis?

b. Read **Deuteronomy 30:11 – 20**. *The Choice*

- Moses said that this choice was not too difficult for them or beyond their reach. (This is quoted in **Romans 10:6 – 8**.) Do you think that is true for us today also?
- The choice: life or death? The freedom to choose is one of the basic characteristics that God created in human beings. Sometimes, we may almost wish that we didn't have the ability to choose. But that is not his plan. How does that make you feel knowing that he has created you with the ability to choose?
- Which do you choose?

As you have time, read all of this section, which closes with the death of Moses.

Meditate on the choice that God gives you today and pray about how you are determined to make the right choices.

Thought Questions

1. What do you learn from the Greatest Commandment (**Deuteronomy 6:5**) to apply to your life today?
2. How does God's emphasis on the blessings and cursings apply to you?
3. We have often seen in this journal the emphasis on coming **out** of Egypt **into** the Promised Land. What have you noticed about God's grace and Israel's faith (or lack of) in their journey that can apply to you?

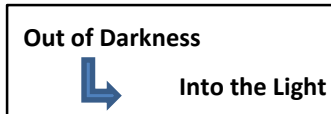
Exodus – Deuteronomy

Conclusion

The Blessings and Difficulties of Coming out of Darkness into the Light

Thank you for devoting yourself to this 8-week journey learning from the Israelites' 40-year journey **from** slavery **into** the Promised Land. Of course, as we closed the reading of this study, they were still not inside the Promised Land, but they were knocking on the door. When you're ready, get started with the study of **Joshua** to see the blessings and the difficulties of actually entering the Land of Promise. Joshua's book continues to make the point that entering the Promised Land (i.e. entering Light) is not even thinkable, let alone possible, without the blessing of God's grace, while at the same time making it clear that we need to take every step by faith. His grace – our faith. That's what their story, and in fact the whole Bible, is about.

As promised, this was not the easiest or shortest reading, but there was something to be gained in every step. Among other extremely valuable and practical lessons, hopefully you have been made more aware of the blessings of God's active grace and the importance of your active faith in every step of your spiritual journey that brings you:



Also, hopefully one of the goals of this journal came true as well. That is the goal of coming to a greater and greater faith that God will always answer that prayer stated in **Psalms 119:18**.

*Open my eyes that I may see
wonderful things in your Law.*

When I approach any time in God's word with the heartfelt request stated in that prayer, I have never seen it fail. God always reveals wonderful things. Especially, he reveals wonderful things about who he is and what it is like to be led by him the way the Israelites were led every day of their journey. In short, Bible study with this prayerful attitude always results in knowing the Bible better and knowing God better (another goal of this journal).

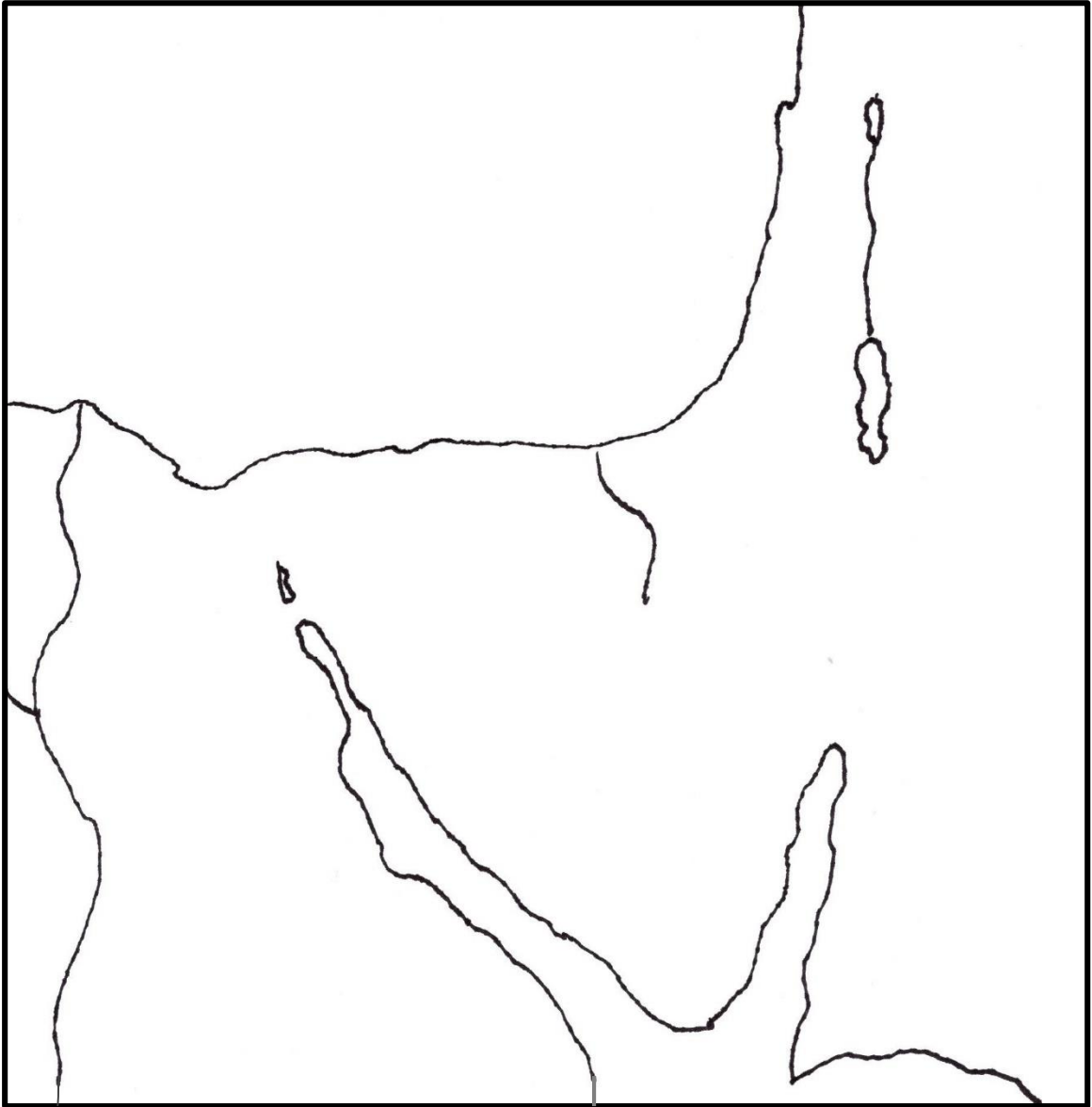
If your spiritual journey has been anything like mine, it was not difficult at all to identify with the setbacks in faith that the Israelites experienced during that 40 years. Setbacks that included idolatry, immorality, ingratitude, and just plain ignorance (to name just 4 that start with "i"). They came very close to losing the Presence of God entirely. Yes, we may be tempted to read some of the stories and think "*How in the world could they do that, think that, or say that?*" But when we think about, we probably realize that we have done the same or similar things. Whether or not they completely appreciated the compassionate grace of God that is really the outstanding theme of these four books, hopefully we are appreciating it more and more.

Thank you again, and may God continue to inspire and equip you to know his Word better and to know him better!

John Sullivan

Appendix: Map of the Exodus

The following is a hand-drawn map of the areas described in **Exodus** through **Deuteronomy**. Below the map, and on the next page, is a list of some of the key locations described in those Scriptures, with some general information about each location. Use a map of that time in your Bible or other resources and locate each of these places on this map.



	<i>Name</i>	<i>Description; Scripture Reference</i>
1	Dead Sea	Referred to as the Salt Sea in Num. 34:12 , where it is described as the eastern boundary of the southern tribes of Israel once they got into the Promised Land. It is “dead” because the Jordan River flows into it, but nothing flows out. It is the lowest spot on the surface of the earth (1290 ft. below sea level) and has a salt level of about 25%, four times that of ocean water.
2	Egypt	One of the oldest, continuing existing nations in history. First mentioned in the Bible in Gen. 12:10 when Abram went to live there. Egypt was the welcomed home to Israel in Gen. 46 , after God used Joseph to save the land from the 7-year famine. Later, it became the nation of slavery from which the Israelites were rescued by the leadership of Moses (Exodus 1).

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3	Gad, Reuben, Manasseh	The Israelite tribes of Gad, Reuben, and half of the tribe of Manasseh decided they wanted to live on the eastern side of the Jordan River (Num. 32). Their request was granted provided they go with the rest of the Israelites to conquer Canaan.
4	Goshen	The delta area of the Nile River in Egypt. Israel was allowed to settle there during the time of Joseph (Gen. 46:28). Goshen was specifically spared some of the 10 plagues that fell on Egypt (Ex. 8:22; 9:26). Even though they were in miserable slavery in Goshen, the Israelites sometimes complained that they had rather be back there than be on the difficult journey to the Promised Land (Ex. 16:3 , for instance).
5	Jordan River	The dividing line between the eastern and western tribes of Israel. After the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, the Israelites came to a spot on the eastern side of this river (Num. 22:1). Later, Joshua would lead them in a miraculous crossing.
6	Kadesh Barnea	Num. 13 – 14 gives the story of the 12 spies that were sent out at Kadesh, with the unfortunate result of an unfaithful decision on the Israelites' part to not go into the Promised Land. Thus began the period of the wilderness where all of that generation except Joshua and Caleb died off. The exact modern-day location of this spot is not clear, but it is somewhere in the Negev on the southern edge of Canaan.
7	Mediterranean Sea	Referred to during the time of Moses as the Great Sea (Num. 34:7).
8	Midian	The Midianites were descendants of Abraham through Keturah (Gen. 25:2). Moses lived in Midian during his second 40 years, where he married his wife Zipporah. The Israelites tried to travel through their land in between Egypt and Canaan peacefully but found much resistance, as evidenced during the famous story of Balaam.
9	Mt. Hor	Where Aaron was buried (Num. 20:23). Not identified with certainty today, but possibly south of the Dead Sea. Another mountain by the same name was in the northern border of Israel (Num. 34:7 – 8) and is also not clearly identified today.
10	Mt. Nebo	The mountain from which Moses saw the Promised Land (Deut. 34:1), just east of the north end of the Dead Sea.
11	Mt. Sinai	Also referred to as Mt. Horeb, where Moses met God at the burning bush (Ex. 3) and at the time of receiving the Law (Ex. 19). The exact location of Mt. Sinai is not known. At least four different locations have been suggested.
12	Nile River	The longest river in the world, about 4000 miles long.
13	Negev	The Negev, spelled Negeb in some translations, literally means <i>dry</i> . It became synonymous with “ <i>the south</i> ”, because it is in the southern area of Canaan between the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea. It is very dry most of the time. It is often referred to in Scriptures. Abram spent time there (Gen. 13:1) as did Isaac (Gen. 24:62). The Israelites traveled through there from Egypt to the Promised Land (Num. 21:1) where they had a battle with the King of Arad. Psalms 126:4 records the prayer after the exile, “ <i>Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like streams in the Negev.</i> ” Understanding the rarity and the blessing of streams in the Negev helps us get more meaning out of that prayer. Instead of asking for a glutinous amount of wealth, the prayer is asking for enough to be an appreciated blessing for others.
14	Peor	The mountain where King Balak unsuccessfully tried to get Balaam to curse Israel (Num. 23:28). Later, though, he was successful in getting the Israelites to commit immorality and idolatry at the town below the mountain called Baal Peor.
15	Red Sea	The Red Sea today is the great body of water separating Saudi Arabia from Africa. The northern tip of the Red Sea, the Gulf of Suez, separates the Sinai Peninsula from Northern Egypt. There is no clear conclusion today about where the Israelites crossed the Red Sea when God miraculously parted its waters (Ex. 14).

Resources

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May, Herbert G. (Editor) *Oxford Bible Atlas*, Oxford University Press, 1962.

Tenney, Merrill, (General Editor) *Pictorial Bible Dictionary*, The Southwestern Company, 1971.

Websites and Apps

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| www.biblegateway.com | A free online, searchable tool with the Bible in multitudes of translations and languages, along with many other Bible-study aids. |
| www.gotquestions.org | A searchable tool designed to try to give reasonable answers to Bible questions. Just type in the question and see what you think about their answer. |
| YouVersion Bible App | A free download of the Bible in many versions to make the Word of God available on your phone or other devices. The audio reading of the Bible is especially helpful. |

Notes

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