

Sunday, July 21, 2024 pm

## JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE (29)

### Leaving Mount Sinai

### Numbers 10ff

We have spent the past several lessons at Mt. Sinai. Israel has been there for a little over a year, but it is now time to leave and that is where we pick up our study. We are in the midst of the period known as the wilderness wanderings.

#### I. Leaving Mt. Sinai – Numbers 10:11

- a. 10:11 – It was the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the 2<sup>nd</sup> month, 2<sup>nd</sup> year the cloud was taken up and Israel set out from Mt. Sinai.
- b. They set out in order by tribes (10:12-28). First the children of Judah, Issachar and Zebulun. Then the tabernacle was taken down and carried by Levites. Following this, the tribes of Ruben, Simeon and Gad went out. Then the Kohathites set out carried the holy things (vs. 21 notes the tabernacle would be set up for their arrival). These were followed by Ephraim, Manasseh, Benjamin, Dan, Asher, and finally Naphtali.
- c. 10:29-31 records Moses asking his father-in-law to go with him.
- d. 10:33-36 – the Israelites traveled for 3 days to find another resting place. Note vs. 35-36, whenever the ark set out and when it rested, Moses would pray.

#### II. The people complain - Numbers 11-12

- a. They complain about no meat and recalled the fish and vegetables in Egypt. They call the manna wearisome (6-9). The LORD is angered and some are consumed by fire in the outskirts of the camp. They cried out to Moses who prayed for them and the fire was quenched.
- b. Moses pleads with YHWH – Num. 11:11-15 – he is frustrated and notes that the people belonged to YHWH (not him). Furthermore, he has no clue how to provide the meats they are demanding and he notes that the burden is too heavy for him.
  - i. YHWH tells him that He will give them meat for 30 days, so much that it will become loathsome. He also noted it was because they despised the LORD (demonstrated by their ingratitude).
  - ii. Moses asks how considering the nation included 600,000 men (plus families). He notes there is not enough flocks or a place where they can get fish. NOTE YHWH's response in vs. 23, *And the Lord said to Moses, "Has the Lord's arm been shortened? Now you shall see whether what I say will happen to you or not."*
- c. God appoints 70 elders (with the Spirit) to help him (11:16-30).
  - i. YHWH also tells Moses to gather 70 men that He would impart the Spirit that Moses had upon them so that they could help Moses in leading the people. (This is not the first time we read of this happening – cf. Exodus 18 where Jethro advised Moses to find helpers to judge the people)
  - ii. THE LORD came down in the cloud and gave the Spirit to these 70 men. They prophesied, but only once.
  - iii. There were 2 men who had remained in the camp and the Spirit fell upon them also. When it was told to Moses, Joshua told him to stop them. But note the response of

Moses, “Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the Lord’s people were prophets and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them” (11:29).

- d. The Lord sends quail (11:31-35) – so much that each person gathered at least 10 homers (a home is about the size of a 55 gallon drum or more) but they gorge themselves with it (unrestrained). Again, YHWH is angry with them and strikes them with a plague (11:31—35). The place was named, Kibroth Hattaavah (“Graves of craving”). The people then moved out.
- e. Aaron and Miriam challenge Moses (12:1-16).
  - i. The text says he married an Ethiopian woman (whom we know little about). And Miriam and Aaron complained against him because of this. But note vs. 2, *So they said, “Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?” And the Lord heard it. They were desiring more preeminence.*
  - ii. Vs. 3 notes that Moses was very humble, more than all on the face of the earth.
  - iii. The LORD then tells all 3 of them to come out to the tabernacle of Meeting. He appears and calls Aaron and Miriam forward. Note the declaration of the LORD in vs. 6-8 – Moses was different, even from other prophets. God spoke with him “face to face”.
  - iv. Miriam is struck with leprosy. Aaron pleads for forgiveness for their sins and Miriam’s life. Moses also prayed for her life.
  - v. YHWH answers by noting that if a father spits on his daughter’s face (a sign of rebuke) she would be shamed for 7 days. Miriam was to be shut out of the camp for that week and then restored.
- f. After this event they again move out to the wilderness of Paran (Paran is the central portion of the Sinai peninsula, about 50 miles south of the border of Canaan).

### III. **Spying the land of Canaan – Numbers 13-16**

- a. Spies are sent into Canaan – Numbers 13:1-25 records that from the wilderness of Paran 12 spies are sent and they are gone for 40 days. The text identifies the 12 leaders from each tribe and some of the places they went. When they return, they bring some of the fruit of the land including a cluster of grapes that was carried by 2 men on a pole.
- b. 13:26-29 - They give a report that the land is flowing with milk and honey (prosperous) and the cities are fortified and the people are large and dwelling throughout.
- c. 13:30 - Caleb quiets the people, “*Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it.*”
- d. 13:31-33, but 10 of the 12 bring a negative report about how they would not be able to defeat the people. We are like grasshoppers in their sight (we will be crushed). But they complain about the fortified cities and giants dwelling in the land. Joshua and Caleb plead with the people to go and obey God.
- e. 14:1-4, the people again complain against Moses and Aaron and wish they had died in Egypt. They even declare that they wanted to select a leader to return them to Egypt.
- f. 14:5-10, Moses and Aaron fell on their faces (grieving). Joshua and Caleb tore their clothes and pleaded with the people to go and trust God. See vs. 7-9 – it is a good land and “if the LORD delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us... Only do not rebel against the LORD, nor fear the people of the land... The LORD is with us.
- g. 14:10, But they refuse to enter and wanted to stone them. THEN the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle again.
- h. Moses interceded for the people (14:11-25). YHWH is angry and ready to start over with Moses, but he intercedes for the people and reminds God that He is a merciful, longsuffering and

forgiving God (vs. 18) – NOTE: This is a quote from Exodus 34:6-7 where Moses is going upon Mt. Sinai for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time and the LORD proclaimed these words. Furthermore he reminds the LORD of what nations would say if He utterly and instantly destroyed them.

- i. 14:20-24 - YHWH listens to Moses and pardoned the people
  - i. But He notes that their behavior is unacceptable considering the many signs He had shown them in Egypt and the wilderness and how some 10 times they had put Him to the test.
  - ii. He further declares that these men would NOT see the promised land.
  - iii. BUT Caleb would go into that land.
  - iv. They are instructed to turn and move out into the wilderness.
- j. 14:26-38 – He declared that all who were over 20 years of age would die in the wilderness. Except Joshua and Caleb (vs. 30). The “little ones”, whom the spies said would be the victims would inherit the land. They would dwell in the wilderness for 40 years (38 more years), 1 for each day they spied out the land. Vs. 36-27 – the 10 evil spies died by a plague before the LORD.
- k. 14:39-45 - The people regret their rebellion and attempt to enter the promised land but they are defeated by the Amalekites and Canaanites.
- l. NOTE: Following this the people will dwell in the wilderness for another 38 years and the LORD’s word will be fulfilled.
- m. Numbers 15- records more instructions to Israel concerning grain and drink offerings, as well as what to do when the people sinned unintentionally. NOTE 15:30-31 – the law for presumptuous sins. Vs. 32-36 we find an example of violating the Sabbath – a man gathering sticks. He was taken into custody and YHWH declared he was to be put to death (an example of how serious God is!).
- n. Numbers 16-17 – Korah and some of his men stage a rebellion against Moses. Exactly when this rebellion took place is unknown – it could have been early after their rejection or later as they approached the end of their wanderings. I tend to lean toward these events unfolding shortly after they are condemned to dwell in the wilderness. To me, this fits as they are dissatisfied with Moses & Aaron (and YHWH). Whenever it happens, a message is sent to Israel.

#### IV. **Lessons for today**

- a. **We need to move forward.** Israel could not establish permanent residence at Mt. Sinai. For them to inherit their promised land, they needed to move out. We too need to move forward. Cf. Hebrews 6:1 – let us go on to perfection...
- b. **A lesson in contentment** – the people complained about the manna. NOT thinking about how God was sustaining them in a harsh wilderness. We need to learn that contentment is being satisfied with what we have, even if it is not the best or wearisome. If it can sustain us, be content – 1 Timothy 6:6-8, cf. Philippians 4:11-12. ALSO, should you be abundantly blessed, do not forget God in that (consider how the people behaved with the quail).
- c. **Bear one another’s burdens.** Moses can only take so much of these ungrateful people. He needs help. God provides help for him. LET us understand that we are to be there for one another – Galatians 6:1-2, 1 Thessalonians 5:14, etc. NOTE: Moses pleaded with YHWH for help. If we need help, we need to ask (be humble enough to ask and accept it).
- d. **Again, take confidence that God CAN accomplish His will.** Moses questioned God when He promised to provide meat. We ought to be careful when questioning God in such a manner (cf. Isaiah 29:16, Romans 9:20-21). He can answer our prayers and will accomplish His purpose.

- e. **What is our desire for God's people?** Recall how after it was discovered that 2 men in the camp were prophesying, and Joshua wanted Moses to stop them. Moses desired that ALL Israel were prophets. It ought to be our desire that all Christians mature in the faith. And we need to believe that they CAN mature in our faith. Consider 1 Corinthians 13:7 – love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things and endures all things.
- f. **The grasshopper complex** – it is based on this text.
  - i. The Israelites had at least 2 issues with this. 1) They exaggerated their problem and made it bigger than it really was; 2) They minimized their abilities and resources to deal with the problem (i.e., they ignored the fact that God was with them).
  - ii. Today, this basically describes one with a weak faith that says he cannot win some battle because it is too big to overcome.
  - iii. BUT as Christians we need to understand: 1) That while we are facing struggles, we should not make them bigger than they really are. We must remind ourselves that it is usually the minority that follow God faithfully. And He is often with the “grasshopper” – consider David facing Goliath (1 Samuel 17).  
2) That God is greater than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4). Have the faith God requires of you to trust Him and face your problems. Also, avail yourself of whatever other resources you have (e.g., your brethren, etc.).
- g. **Sometimes others suffer consequence for our sins** – when the spies refused to take Canaan at YHWH's instructions, the results were devastating. All the people suffered as a result of their rebellious decision. Today, while others do not inherit your sin (contrary to what some teach), they might inherit the consequences of your sins. We see this often as children are born with defects because their mother took drugs while pregnant. A drunkard runs a red light and innocent people are injured or killed. A husband is reckless with his family's finances and the family suffers. A cheating spouse causes grief for the family. We can go on and on. The point is that times, other suffer because of our decisions. If we love our neighbor as ourself (Matthew 22:39), we will consider this before we intentionally act in a sinful way.

And thus we continue our journey as we find Israel leaving Mt. Sinai and headed toward their promised land. As we have seen, there were many problems they faced, but many of them they created. Let us resolve that we are going to move on BUT we will do so following His will.