

Chronological Bible Study

Week 6:

Wandering in the Wilderness

Numbers 1-36

Opening
Prayer
Numbers 6:24-27

[Video Link](#)





Introductions

- How many times in your life have you moved/relocated?

Questions?

Comments?

Summary of This Week's Readings

- The Organization and Sanctification of Israel
- The Failure of the Old Generation to Inherit the Promised Land
- The Preparation of the New Generation to Inherit the Promised Land



The Book of Numbers

- The key theme is God's divine judgment on unbelief and human waywardness
- The book provides a testimony to God's grace and mercy as He cares for His people.
- The book presents a vision of new beginnings and hope.

Book of Numbers

[Video Link](#)



Big Ideas in NUMBERS

God will judge rebellion

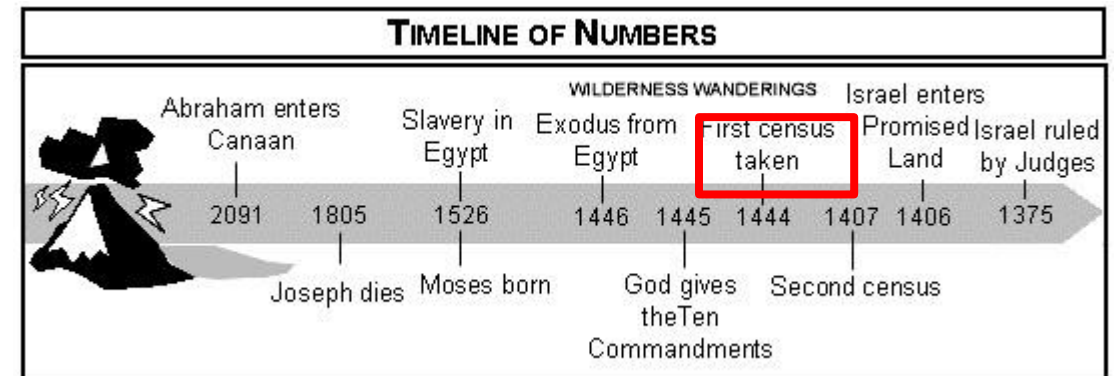
God faithfully cares for his people even when they are ungrateful

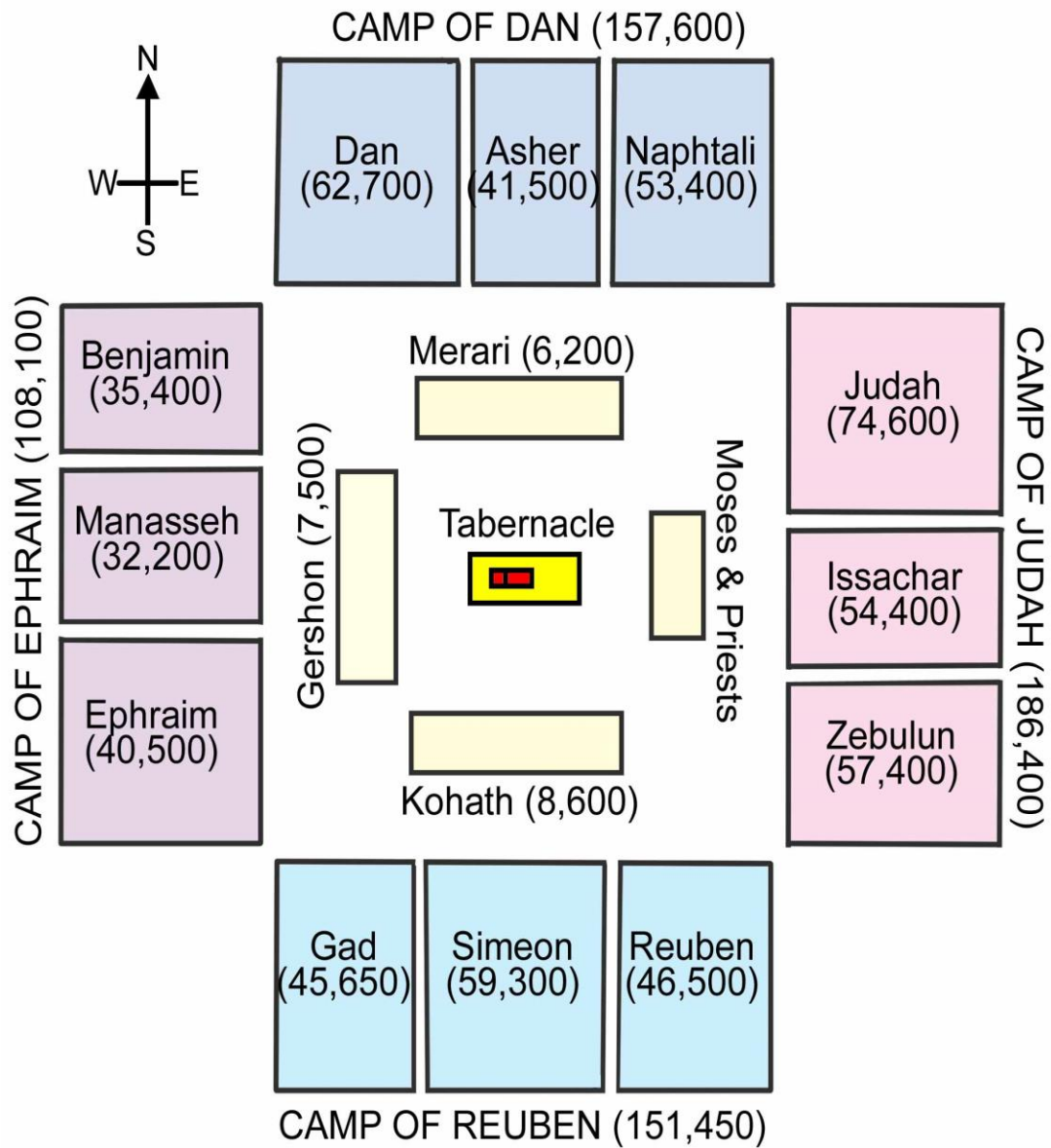
God is in absolute control; he accomplishes his plans despite human disruption

Judgment and pain follow disobedience; repentance results in hope and forgiveness

Overview of Numbers

- The book is called “In the Wilderness in Hebrew. Numbers derived from the Greek Septuagint.
- The transition from the generation that left Egypt to the one that enters the Promised Land 40 years later is described.
- Close to 3M men, women and children crossed the wilderness of Sinai
- Locations:
 - Mt. Sinai (20 days)
 - The Wilderness (38 years)
 - Plains of Moab (5 months)
- Sovereignty and providence, covenant and redemption, and rebellion and sin are key topics





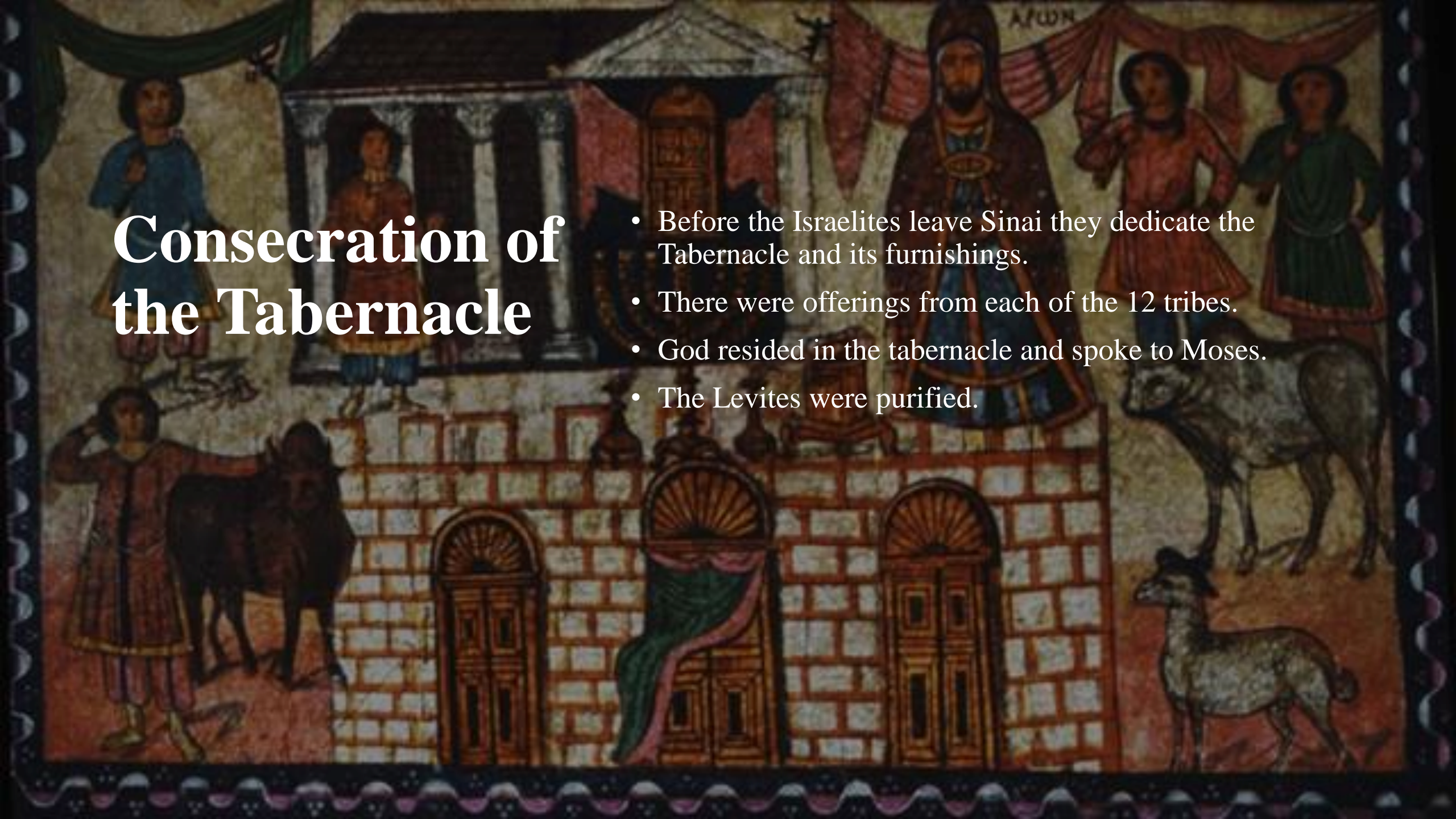
The Encampment

- The Israelites are organized socially and politically by the tribes descended from the sons of Jacob.
- The Tabernacle was in the center of camp.
- Tents organized around the tabernacle by tribe

Arrangement of the Camp of Israel
Numbers 2:1-3:39

Consecration of the Tabernacle

- Before the Israelites leave Sinai they dedicate the Tabernacle and its furnishings.
- There were offerings from each of the 12 tribes.
- God resided in the tabernacle and spoke to Moses.
- The Levites were purified.



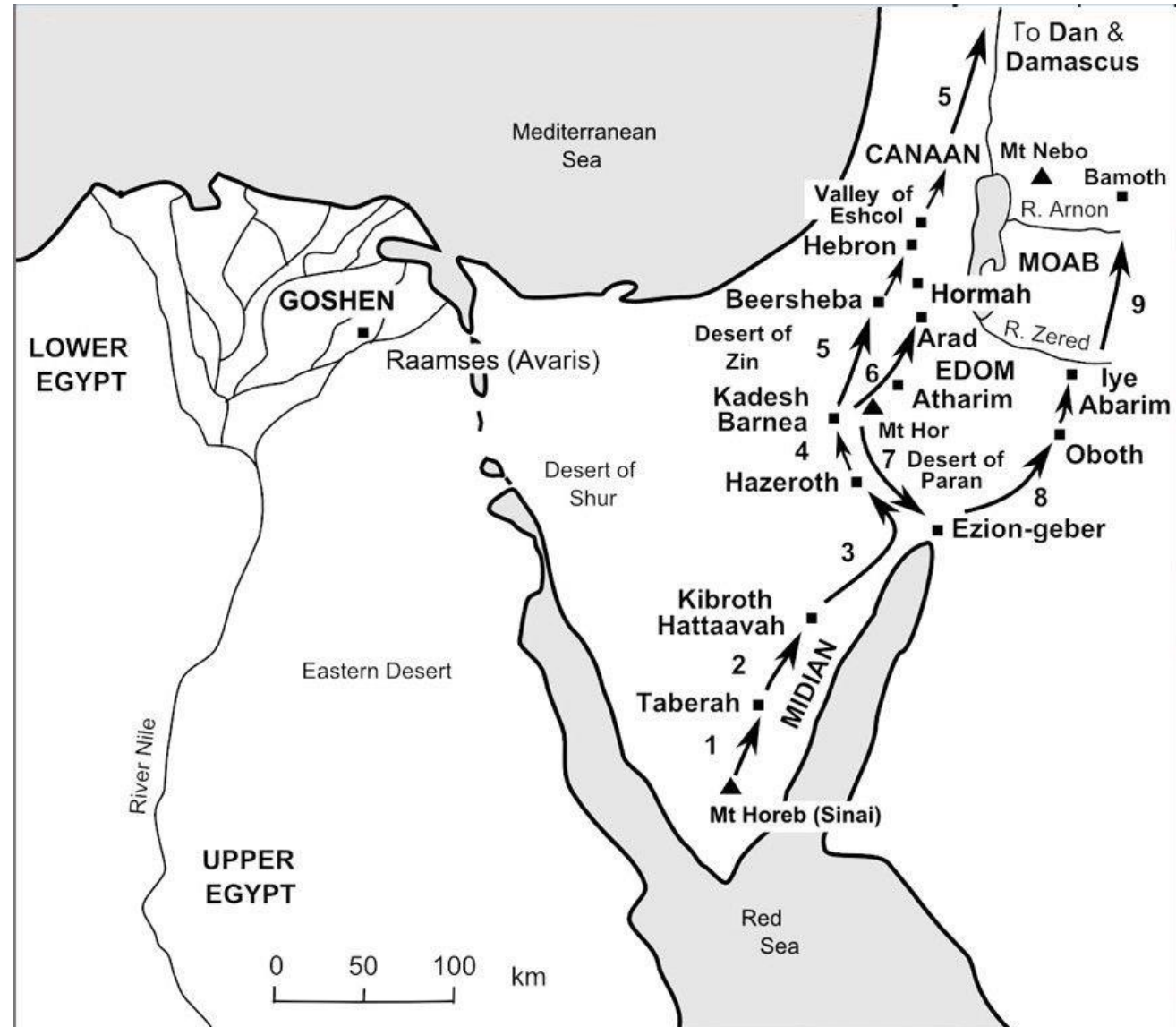
DISCUSSION

Why was involving all the tribes in the consecration of the temple so important? How did this make worship such an important element of their society?



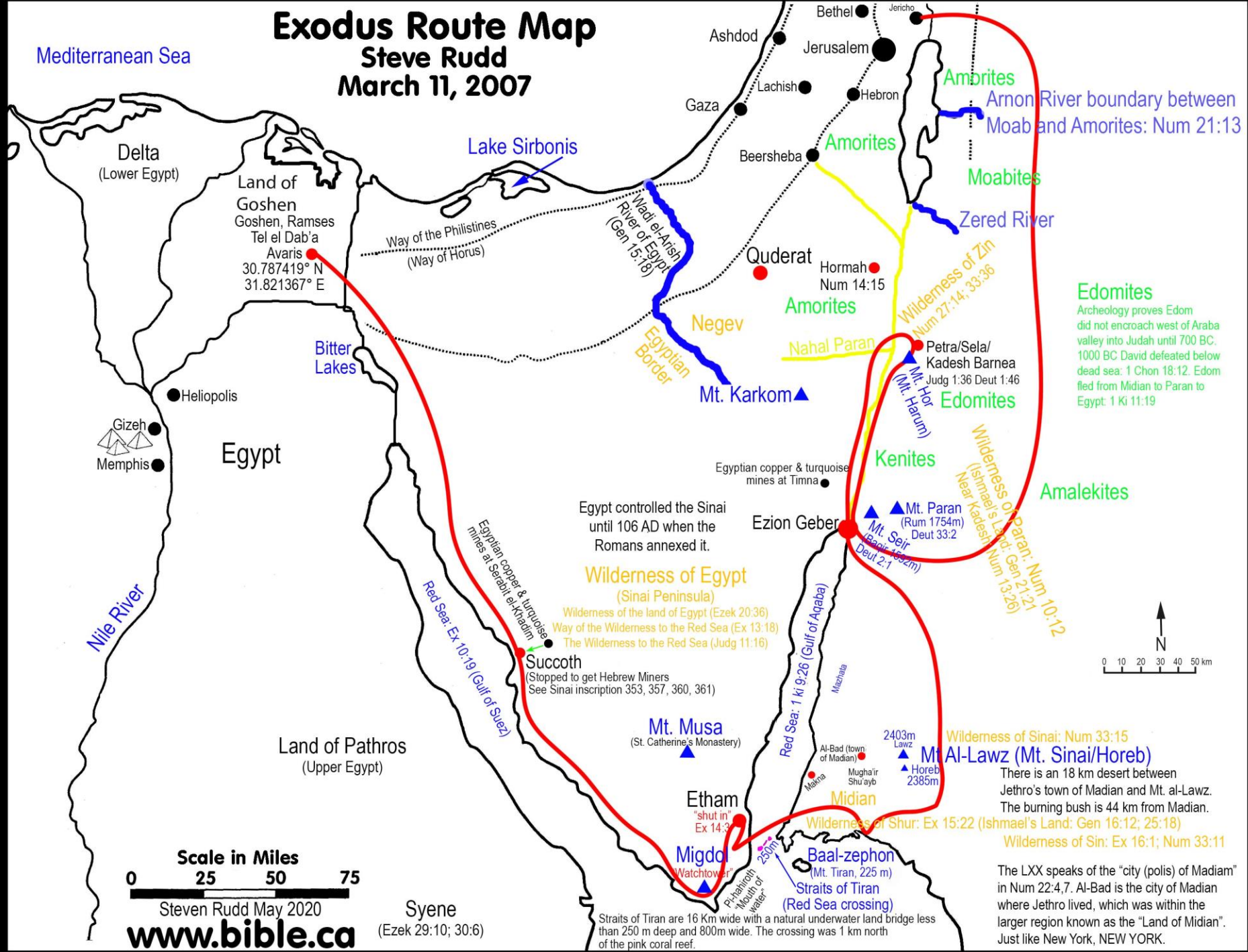
39 Years of Wandering

- The consequence imposed upon the Nation of Israel for mistrusting God was wandering in the desert until a generation died.
- Joshua and Caleb were exceptions because they had faith.
- Even Moses disobeyed one of God's specific instructions and he would not be allowed to enter the Promised Land.
- After 39 years, Moses turned over his leadership to Joshua.
- God took Moses up to Mt. Nebo to let him see the Promised Land. Moses died shortly after that and God buried Him.



Exodus Route Map

Steve Rudd
March 11, 2007



Mediterranean Sea

Delta (Lower Egypt)

Land of Goshen
Goshen, Ramses
Tel el Dab'a
Avaris
30.787419° N
31.821367° E

Way of the Philistines
(Way of Horus)

Lake Sirbonis

Wadi el-Arish
River of Egypt
(Gen 15:18)

Negev

Mt. Karkom

Nahal Paran

Wilderness of Zin
Num 27:14, 33:36

Petra/Sela/
Kadesh Barnea
Judg 1:36 Deut 1:46

Mt. Hor
(Mt. Harum)

Edomites

Archeology proves Edom did not encroach west of Araba valley into Judah until 700 BC. 1000 BC David defeated below dead sea: 1 Chon 18:12. Edom fled from Midian to Paran to Egypt: 1 Ki 11:19

Amalekites

Kenites

Mt. Paran
(Rum 1754m)
Deut 33:2

Mt. Seir
(Bani 1600m)
Deut 2:1

Wilderness of Paran: Num 10:12
(Ishmael's Land: Gen 21:21
Near Kadesh: Num 13:26)

Egypt controlled the Sinai until 106 AD when the Romans annexed it.

Wilderness of Egypt (Sinai Peninsula)
Wilderness of the land of Egypt (Ezek 20:36)
Way of the Wilderness to the Red Sea (Ex 13:18)
The Wilderness to the Red Sea (Judg 11:16)

Succoth
(Stopped to get Hebrew Miners
See Sinai inscription 353, 357, 360, 361)

Mt. Musa
(St. Catherine's Monastery)

2403m
Lawz

Mt. Al-Lawz (Mt. Sinai/Horeb)

There is an 18 km desert between Jethro's town of Midian and Mt. al-Lawz. The burning bush is 44 km from Midian.

Wilderness of Sin: Ex 16:1; Num 33:11

The LXX speaks of the "city (polis) of Midiam" in Num 22:4,7. Al-Bad is the city of Midian where Jethro lived, which was within the larger region known as the "Land of Midian". Just like New York, NEW YORK.

Ezion Geber

Red Sea: 1 ki 9:26 (Gulf of Aqaba)

Al-Bad (town of Midian)

Makra

Mughair Shu'ayb

250m

250m

Wilderness of Shur: Ex 15:22 (Ishmael's Land: Gen 16:12; 25:18)

Midian

Baal-zephon (Mt. Tiran, 225 m)

Straits of Tiran (Red Sea crossing)

Migdo (Watchtower)

Straits of Tiran are 16 Km wide with a natural underwater land bridge less than 250 m deep and 800m wide. The crossing was 1 km north of the pink coral reef.

Heliopolis

Gizeh

Memphis

Egypt

Nile River

Bitter Lakes

Land of Pathros (Upper Egypt)

Scale in Miles
0 25 50 75

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Syene (Ezek 29:10; 30:6)

0 10 20 30 40 50 km



Living in the Wilderness

- Water in the desert was a major concern. The area averages about 1.6 inches of rain per year.
- People lived in small portable tents.
- They subsisted on manna and quail provided by God.
- Dress was similar to what they wore in Egypt. Unclear how clothing was replenished.
- Governed by theocracy where Moses provided legal/judicial administration.



Significance of the Wilderness Period

- God molded the Hebrew slaves into a nation.
- God provided all of Israel's institutions during this period.
- God demonstrated His power and prepared His people for the conquest and settlement of Canaan.
- God must be a central part of day-to-day life—then and now.

The Gospel in Numbers

[Video Link](#)



DISCUSSION

God was building a people where God was a central focus of their lives. What is similar and different in the importance making God central in our lives today?



Holiness and Purity

- God called the Israelites to be holy.
- To be holy is to be set apart for God.
- The consecration of the tabernacle and priests was an act of making things and people near God holy.
- The fringes on the corners of garments was a symbol to obey God's laws to be holy.
- God commanded tithes and offerings.
- There were procedures for ritual purity.
- Our faith in Jesus is our means to holiness and purity today.



JOURNEY OF THE SPIES

NUM. 13:1-33; NUM. 34:1-12

- City
- City (uncertain location)
- Oasis
- ▲ Mountain peak
- Journey of the twelve spies
- The promised land

31



Exploring Canaan

- God commanded Moses to create a team of 12 to explore Canaan. They came back with 10 of the 12 recommending that the inhabitants were too powerful to fight.
- Only Joshua and Caleb had faith in God.
- God's wrath shown by declaring that no one over 20 would see the Promised Land except for Joshua and Caleb.
- Failure to have faith in God can be a problem today as well.

The Nephilim

- Offspring of the marriages between the “sons of God” and the “daughters of men” [GE 6:4].
- Translated as giants. They were wicked and extremely violent.
- Represented the greatest evil of both humans and spiritual beings.
- The spies report that the Nephilim are living in Canaan.
- They will come up again in Deuteronomy.





Complaints and Rebellion

- Israel complains to God and rejects Moses' leadership.
- Rebel against Moses and Aaron forgetting it was their sin that was causing them to wander for 40 years. The place where the grumbling occurred was called The Wilderness of Sin.
- God sent poisonous snakes into the camp, then instructed them to make a bronze serpent so people could be healed.
- The serpent on a stick was a reminder of their sin which brought about their suffering. God was chastising the people for their unbelief.
- The serpent is a symbol of sin and judgment.



Korah's Rebellion

- Korah rose against Moses and Aaron and incited over 250 people to join him.
- Korah was fighting for his own position in the Levite tribe and demanded to serve as High Priests.
- Korah and the rebels were “consumed by the earth” in punishment.
- God gave a sign that Aaron should be high priest by making his staff bloom.

The Leaders Sin

- Miriam and Aaron speak against Moses. The punishment was for Miriam to suffer skin diseases (NU 15).
- God tells Aaron to speak to the rock so it would bring forth water and instead Moses and Aaron strike the rock and speak angrily to the Israelites. They ignored the Lord's request, demonstrating a lack of faith and failing to honor God. (NU 20). The rock produced water, but Moses paid a high price as he would not enter the Promised Land.
- There are consequences to our sin.



DISCUSSION

What was the biggest reason the Israelites were complaining and rebelling? How was it similar or dissimilar to complaining and rebelling we do today?





Moab

- Moabite and Israelite history intertwined. Moab is a traditional enemy of Israel.
- Shihon's Amorite kingdom annexed much of Moab shortly before the Israelite conquest of Canaan (NU 21:17-29)
- Balak was the king of Moab. This is where the story of Balaam and Balak occurred.
- Moses saw the Promised Land from Moab's Mt. Nebo (NU 27:12-33).

Balak and Balaam

[Video Link](#)



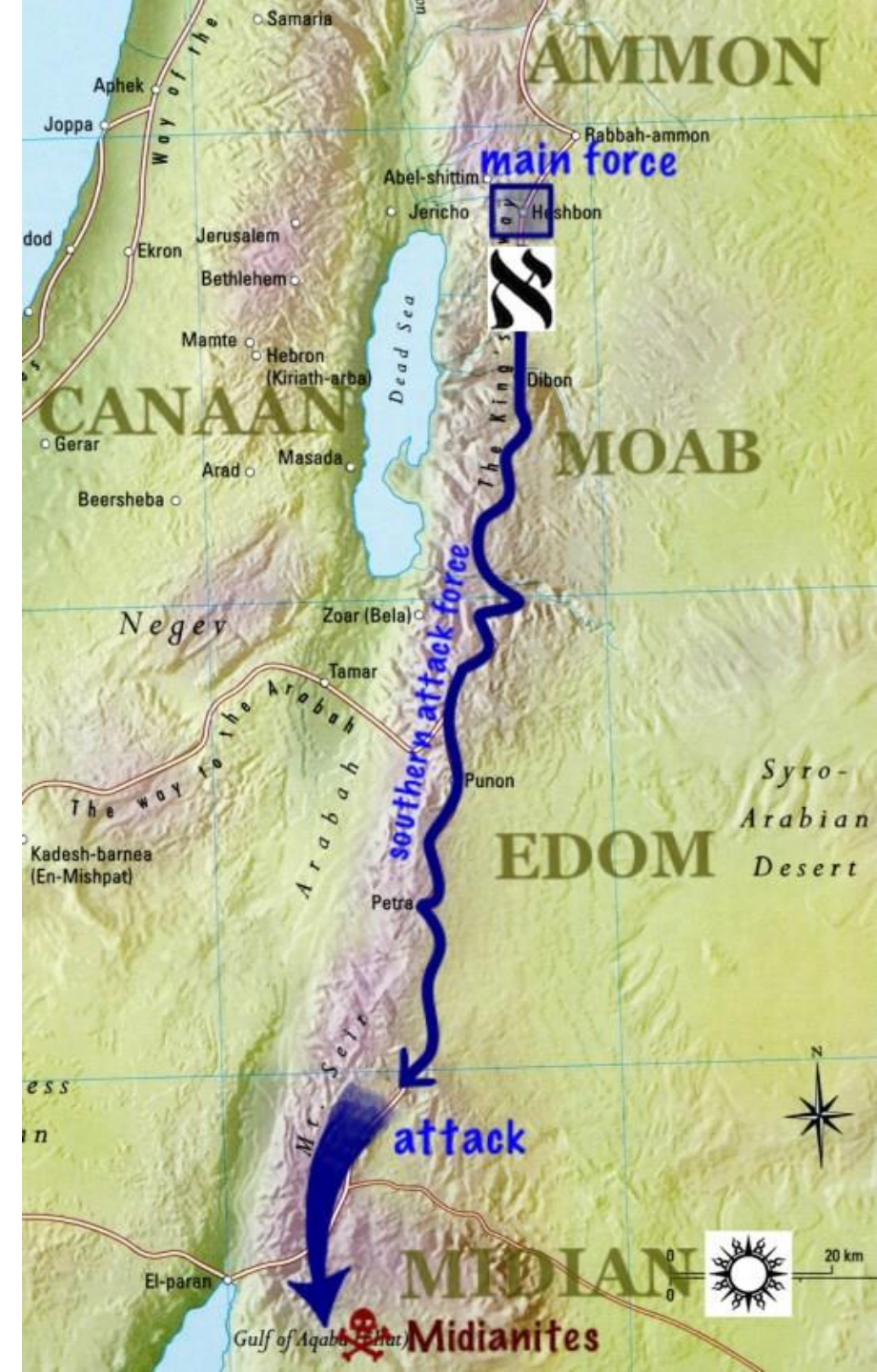
Sihon and Og

- Sihon was king of Amorites and defeated by the Israelites at Jahaz when he would not allow them to pass through his territory.
- Og was king of the Amorites of the land of Bahan. He was defeated by the Israelites.
- The lands of Sihon and Og were not part of Canaan.



The Battle of the Midianites

- The vengeance on the Midianites is in response to Balaam's plan to seduce the Israelite men into sexual immorality and idolatry. This was God's battle.
- All tribes, even the Levites, participated in the attack.
- Five Midianite kings and Balaam were killed in the battle. Women and children were taken captive. Cattle, flocks and property were seized.
- Zur, the father of the Midianite woman killed in by Phinehas (NU 25:14-15) was killed.



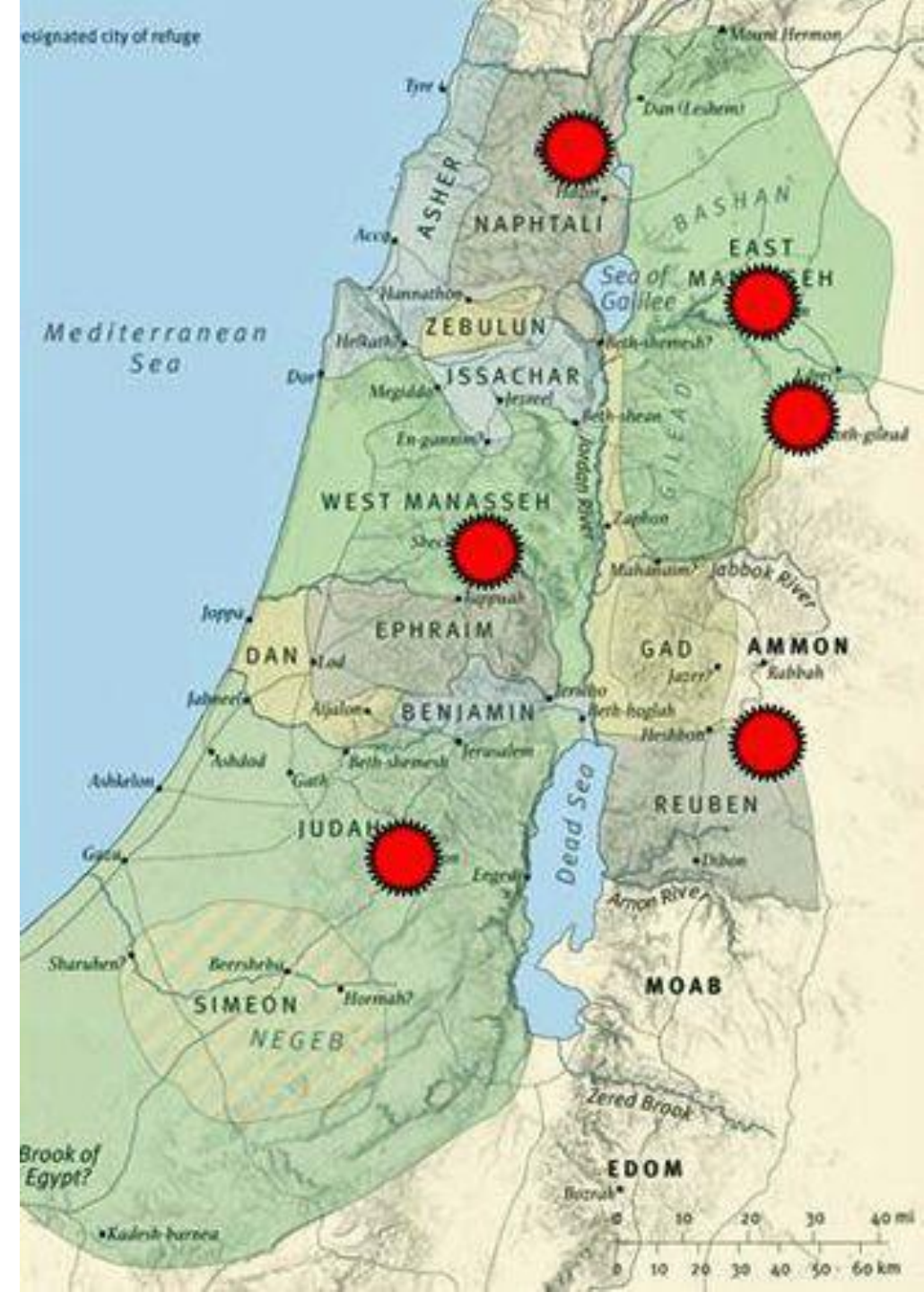
DISCUSSION

How does God's involvement in these battles tie back to the lack of faith shown in the early chapters of this book by the spies sent to investigate Canaan?



Cities of Refuge

- Six cities are named as Levitical towns: Golan, Ramoth, and Bosor, on the east (left bank) of the Jordan River, and Kedesh, Shechem, and Hebron on the western (right) side.
- Perpetrators of accidental manslaughter could claim asylum and not be subject to blood revenge until a trial occurred.
- This was consistent with other ancient cultures. Over time these rights were curtailed.



Zelophehad's Daughters



- Zelophehad was from the tribe of Manasseh.
- He died with only 5 daughters and no male heirs.
- The daughters requested Moses allow them to inherit their father's property and Moses agreed.
- They were required to marry within the Manasseh tribe.

Key Teachings About God

- God is sovereign
- God is patient but does not take disobedience lightly.
- God is faithful to his promises.
- God provides for his people.



DISCUSSION

What did you learn about God in this book?



Closing Song Wilderness

[Video Link](#)



39 Years of Wandering

17-23 OCT 2023

NUMBERS 1-36

Week 6

Numbers is the book of wanderings, which describes Israel’s experiences during their 40 years in the wilderness from Mount Sinai to the border of Canaan. It begins with a census to prepare them for future tasks. The first generation of Israelites did not trust God and did not thank Him for His provision. They would not inherit the Promised Land because they had been faithless. God teaches His people the consequences of rebellion and irresponsible decisions. God remained faithful to his people and ultimately shows great mercy and forgiveness by leading his people, despite their repeated rebellion, disobedience and complaining, to the edge of the promised land.

Weekly Reading Plan

Day 1: NU 1:1-5:32
 Day 2: NU 6:1-12:16
 Day 3: NU 12:1-17:20
 Day 4: NU 18:1-24:25
 Day 5: NU 25:1-28:68
 Day 6: NU 29:1-32:52
 Day 7: NU 33:1-36:13

Outline

The Organization and Sanctification of Israel [Day 1]
 The Sanctification of Israel and Israel’s Failure En Route to Kadesh [Day 2]
 Failure of Israel at Kadesh and in the Wilderness [Day 3]
 Role of the Priesthood and Failure En Route to Moab [Day 4]
 Failure with the Moabites, Reorganization of Israel, and Sacrifices [Day 5]
 Regulations of Offerings and Vows and Victory over Midian [Day 6]
 Conquest and Division of Israel [Day 7]

Key Characters

Moses	Calab
Aaron	Korah
Eleazar	Dathan
The Levites	Balak
12 tribes	Balaam
Miriam	Joshua
Abiram	

Key Locations

Sinai wilderness	Mt. Hor
Desert of Zin	Edom
Desert of Paran	Kadesh
Boundaries of Canaan	
Sihon and Og	

Key Terms

Wandering	Offerings
Wilderness	Festivals
Unbelief	Manna
Cities of Refuge	

Key Verses

Take a census of the whole Israelite community by their clans and families, listing every man by name, one by one. [NU 1:2]

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace. [NU 6:24-26]

Whenever the cloud was lifted up above the tent, the Israelites would set out; at the place where the cloud stopped, there the Israelites camped. [NU 9:17]

Come with us and we will treat you well, for the Lord has promised good things to Israel [NU 10:29]

“Rise up, Lord! May your enemies be scattered; may your foes flee before you.” Whenever it [the ark] came to rest, he said, “Return, Lord, to the countless thousands of Israel.” [NU 10:35-36]

“The Lord is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.” [NU 14:18-19]

But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them [NU: 20:12]

EPOCH 3
 (1500 – 1200 BC)

Chapter Summaries (from @biblesummary)

Lev25: Every seventh year the land shall rest. Every fiftieth year shall be a jubilee, when property shall be restored and slaves released.

Lev26: If you keep my laws I will give peace in the land and make you fruitful. If not I will scatter you, but I will not break my covenant.

Lev27: If anyone dedicates a person or land to the LORD you shall make a valuation. A tithe of everything from the land belongs to the LORD.

Nu1: The LORD told Moses to count the Israelite armies. The number of men over twenty years old was 603,550. The Levites were not counted.

Nu2: The Israelites shall camp around the tabernacle: Judah to the east, Reuben to the south, Ephraim to the west and Dan to the north.

Nu3: The Levites are to assist Aaron. I have taken them in place of every firstborn. The number of Levites over one month old was 22,000.

Nu4: The Kohathites are to carry the most holy things. The Gershonites are to carry the coverings. The Merarites are to carry the frame.

Nu5: Anyone who sins shall make restitution and add a fifth. If a man suspects his wife of unfaithfulness he shall take her to the priest.

Nu6: Anyone who makes a Nazirite vow shall not drink wine or cut their hair. Aaron's blessing shall be: "The LORD bless you and keep you."

Nu7: The leader of each tribe brought a grain offering, a burnt offering, a sin offering and peace offerings. Moses spoke with the LORD.

Nu8: Present the Levites as a wave offering to the LORD and make atonement for them. I have set them apart to serve at the tent of meeting.

Nu9: In the first month of the second year the Israelites kept the Passover. Whenever the cloud lifted from the tabernacle they journeyed.

Nu10: Make two silver trumpets to direct the congregation. In the second month the cloud lifted and they set out as the LORD had commanded.

Nu11: The people grumbled that they had no meat. The LORD was angry but he sent quails. He put his Spirit on seventy elders to help Moses.

Chapter Summaries (from @biblesummary)

Nu12: Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses. The LORD was angry and Miriam became leprous. Moses prayed and after seven days she returned.

Nu13: Moses sent men to spy out the land of Canaan. Caleb said, "Let us go up," but the others said that the inhabitants were too strong.

Nu14: The people grumbled so the LORD said that they would spend forty years in the wilderness. They went up to the land but were defeated.

Nu15: There is one law for you and for strangers. Make an offering if you sin unintentionally. Anyone who sins defiantly shall be cut off.

Nu16: Korah, Dathan and Abiram rose against Moses and Aaron. Moses said, "The LORD will choose." The ground swallowed up those with Korah.

Nu17: The LORD told Moses to bring a staff from each tribal leader to the Tent of Meeting to stop the grumbling. Aaron's staff blossomed.

Nu18: The LORD told Aaron: "I have given you the Levites to work at the Tent of Meeting. Everything that is devoted to the LORD is yours."

Nu19: Burn a heifer outside the camp for the water of cleansing. Anyone who is unclean and does not cleanse themselves shall be cut off.

Nu20: The LORD told Moses to speak to a rock to produce water but he struck the rock. Edom refused Israel passage. Aaron died at Mount Hor.

Nu21: The people grumbled so the LORD sent snakes. Moses made a bronze snake and whoever looked at it lived. Israel defeated the Amorites.

Nu22: Balak sent for Balaam to curse Israel. Balaam's donkey warned him. The Angel of the LORD said, "Go, but speak only what I tell you."

Nu23: The LORD gave Balaam a word: "How can I curse whom God has not cursed?" Then at another place: "The LORD their God is with Israel."

Nu24: Balaam gave a word: "How lovely are your tents, O Jacob." Balak was angry. Balaam said: "A star and a scepter shall rise in Israel."

Nu25: The people were unfaithful with Moabite women and worshipped their gods. Phinehas killed one couple and the LORD commended his zeal.

Nu26: The LORD told Moses and Eleazar to take a census. There were 601,730 fighting men and 23,000 Levites. Only Joshua and Caleb remained.

Nu27: The daughters of Zelophehad were given an inheritance. The LORD told Moses that he was to die. Moses commissioned Joshua as leader.

Nu28: Bring offerings each morning and evening, on the Sabbath and on the first of the month. Celebrate Passover and the Feast of Weeks.

Chapter Summaries (from @biblesummary)

Nu29: In the seventh month on first day sound the trumpets; on the tenth day make atonement; on the fifteenth day celebrate for seven days.

Nu30: When a man makes a vow he must not break his word. When a woman makes a vow it shall stand unless her father or husband forbids it.

Nu31: The LORD told Moses to take vengeance on the Midianites. The Israelites killed the men, burned their cities and divided the spoils.

Nu32: Reuben and Gad asked to settle in Gilead. Moses agreed if they helped to conquer the land, so Reuben, Gad and Manasseh built cities.

Nu33: The Israelites journeyed from Egypt. In the fortieth year Aaron died. They camped by the Jordan and the LORD said, "Take the land."

Nu34: Your borders in Canaan shall be Edom, the Great Sea, Mount Hor and the Jordan. Eleazar and Joshua shall divide the land among you.

Nu35: You shall give cities to the Levites. Appoint cities of refuge for anyone who has killed accidentally. A murderer shall be put to death.

Nu36: The clan of Gilead asked about Zelophehad's daughters. Moses said, "Daughters who inherit land must marry within their own tribe."

Teachings About God

- God accomplishes his promises despite His people's waywardness.
- God is sovereign and provides for His people in covenant faithfulness.
- God builds his nation (Israel) as the people of promise.
- God's mercy is shown by his blessing his people despite their unworthiness.
- God's kindness and the severity of God in Divine judgment of unbelief is illustrated.
- No force can stop God's kingdom purposes (NU 24).
- God's divine presence and guidance is evident. The book records God speaking more than 50 times to Moses.

Teachings About Humanity

- The book shows the progress of God's people in moving toward the goals God promised.
- God's people are sinful, flawed, and rebellious.
- God's people can move forward only as they trust and depend on Him.
- Even Moses sinned.
- The census saying an army of 600,000 suggests an overall population of at least 2M. Various views on what this means.

Teachings About Salvation

- The book contrasts God's faithfulness with Israel's disobedience.
- Without divine mercy all perish.
- Centrality of faith in receiving God's provision (NU 21:8-9)

Reflections of Christ/Holy Spirit

- God's spirit is present in enabling service and inspiring prophecy (NU 11:25-26; 24:2)
- Christ is foreseen as the water-giving rock and as the bronze snake that gives life to those who look, showing divine grace.

Literary Genres/Techniques

- Census (NU 1-4; 26)
- Narrative
- Laws
- Prophetic oracle (NU 23-24) written in poetic parallelism.
- Records 2 generations, 2 censuses, 2 journeys and 2 sets of instructions.

Author/Date of Writing

- Moses for the Israelites camped at the plains of Moab before they crossed the Jordan.
- The events occurred from Israel's encampment at Sinai to its encampment by the Jordan near Jericho (c 1445-1407 BC).

WEEK 6 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What did I learn about God?

- What message does it communicate about God that he is orderly [NU 2-3]?
- Why do you think God used a cloud in his relationship with Israel?
- What does it mean to be “set apart” [NU8:14]? How would the ritual in NU 8:5-14 illustrate the concept? What does this teach you about God’s desires for his own?
- How does God guide spiritual leaders today? How does this compare with his guidance in NU 9:15-23?

What did I learn about human nature?

- In LEV 27:1-15, what might it mean for a house to be dedicated to the Lord? What kind of family life would be expected in such a home? What difference would it make if you deliberately dedicated your house or your car or your money to the service of Jesus?
- What are the dangers of becoming isolated from the real world in which we live? How can we keep the balance between separation and involvement in the world?
- What are the biggest reason the Israelites were complaining? How was Moses affected by the people’s complaints? What good comes from complaining? What harm comes from complaining?
- What was the greatest way that Moses demonstrated his humility [NU 12:3]?

What did I learn about my life/relationship with God?

- What kinds of gifts do you give to God in time, money or talent? What motivates you to give these gifts? How does God use these gifts to aid you in your spiritual pilgrimage?
- How do you seek God’s guidance in your life? How often do you think about knowing and doing the will of God?
- What effect do other people’s demands, complaints or negative attitudes have on you? What do you complain about most? How do you think God feels about your complaints? How do your complaints affect your relationship with God?
- God asks every child of His to keep Him first, to obey Him above all and to give Him the honor and glory due to Him. How does this truth help you in your personal Christian walk?

Shared Time/Culture Insights

- Given the mobile nature of the Israelites, how important would the work of the Gershonites and Merarites (NU 3:21-33) be in the religious life of the Israelites? How would their work enhance the worship of all Israel? What does this say about the nature of worship?