

Come Follow Me May 9-15

Numbers 11–14; 20–24

“Rebel Not Ye against the Lord, Neither Fear”

This outline highlights some of the many valuable principles in the book of Numbers. Be open also to others the Spirit may help you see.

Record Your Impressions

Even on foot, it wouldn't normally take 40 years to travel from the wilderness of Sinai to the promised land in Canaan. But that's how long the children of Israel needed, not to cover the geographical distance but to cover the spiritual distance: the distance between who they were and who the Lord needed them to become as His covenant people.

The book of Numbers describes some of what happened during those 40 years, including lessons the children of Israel needed to learn before entering the promised land. They learned about being faithful to the Lord's chosen servants (see [Numbers 12](#)). They learned about trusting the Lord's power, even when the future seems hopeless (see [Numbers 13–14](#)). And they learned that being faithless or untrusting brings spiritual harm, but they could repent and look to the Savior for healing (see [Numbers 21:4–9](#)).

We're all like the Israelites in some ways. We all know what it's like to be in a spiritual wilderness, and the same lessons they learned can help us prepare to enter our own promised land: eternal life with our Heavenly Father.

For an overview of the book of Numbers, see "[Numbers](#)" in the Bible Dictionary.

Numbers

The book that bears this name is so called from the double numbering or census of the people ([Num. 1-4; 26](#)). It contains notices of events in the wilderness, more especially in the second year after the Exodus, and at the close of the wandering, interspersed with legislation. (1) [1:1-10:10](#), preparation for departure from Sinai. (2) [10:11-14:45](#), march from Sinai to borders of Canaan; the sending of the spies and their report; the refusal to enter Canaan, and God's punishment for disobedience. (3) [15:1-19:22](#), various laws and historical notices. (4) [20:1-36:13](#), the history of the last year in the wilderness from the second arrival of the Israelites in Kadesh till they reach "the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho." The book is remarkable for the number of fragments of ancient poetry preserved in it ([6:24-26; 10:35-36; 21:14-15, 17-18, 27-30](#)). See also [Pentateuch](#).

(17-1) Introduction

The title of the book of Numbers in the King James Version comes from the Latin Vulgate *Numeri* ("Numbers"), which is descriptive of the census given in the first three chapters of the book rather than of its content in general. Therefore, *Numbers* is strictly the Christian name for this section of the Torah, or first five books of Moses.

The Hebrews most often chose from among the first words of the text for a title for each of the books in the Bible. Thus, the Jews have called this book either *Vayedabber* ("And He Spoke"), which is the first Hebrew word of the book, or, more commonly, *Bemidbar* ("In the Wilderness"), which is the fifth word in the first verse.

This part of the work of Moses records the movement of the children of Israel from Mount Sinai to Mount Pisgah, which was on the east side of the Jordan River and overlooked the promised land. The book includes an account of the numbering of Israel, the Levitical preparations for moving the tabernacle, why Israel was cursed with forty years of wandering, the second numbering of Israel after those above twenty years of age at the time of the Exodus had died, the choosing of Joshua to lead Israel, and a description of some land inheritances by the various tribes.

The book does not have many doctrinal discourses, but it gives the necessary understanding to key historical events in the story of the family of Jacob.

Some of the doctrinal implications of these historical events are of great worth. Be alert to the major events and specific preparations Israel underwent before they were ready to realize their promised reward.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 11

Fire from the Lord consumes the rebels in Israel—Israel murmurs and lusts for meat instead of manna—Moses complains that he cannot bear the burden alone—He is commanded to choose seventy elders to assist him—The Lord promises meat until it becomes loathsome to the Israelites—The seventy elders are chosen, they prophesy, the Lord comes down, and Eldad and Medad prophesy in the camp—Israel is provided with quail—The people lust, a great plague follows, and many die.

1 And *when* the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard *it*; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed *them that were* in the uttermost parts of the camp.

2 And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the LORD, the fire was quenched.

3 And he called the name of the place Taberah: because the fire of the LORD burnt among them.

4 ¶ And the mixed multitude that *was* among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?

5 We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick:

6 But now our soul *is* dried away: *there is* nothing at all, beside this manna, *before* our eyes.

7 And the manna *was* as coriander seed, and the colour thereof as the colour of bdellium.

8 *And* the people went about, and gathered *it*, and ground *it* in mills, or beat *it* in a mortar, and baked *it* in pans, and made cakes of it: and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil.

9 And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it.

10 ¶ Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent: and the anger of the LORD was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased.

11 And Moses said unto the LORD, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me?

12 Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers?

13 Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat.

14 I am not able to bear all this people alone, because *it is* too heavy for me.

15 And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness.

16 ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee.

17 And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which *is* upon thee, and will put *it* upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear *it* not thyself alone.

18 And say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow, and ye shall eat flesh: for ye have wept in the ears of the LORD, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? for *it was* well with us in Egypt: therefore the LORD will give you flesh, and ye shall eat.

19 Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days;

20 *But* even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the LORD which *is* among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?

21 And Moses said, The people, among whom I *am*, *are* six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month.

22 Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them?

23 And the LORD said unto Moses, Is the LORD's hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not.

24 ¶ And Moses went out, and told the people the words of the LORD, and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle.

25 And the LORD came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that *was* upon him, and gave *it* unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, *that*, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease.

26 But there remained two *of the* men in the camp, the name of the one *was* Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the spirit rested upon them; and they *were* of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle: and they prophesied in the camp.

27 And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp.

28 And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, *one* of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them.

29 And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the LORD's people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!

(17-22) Numbers 11:16–17, 24–29. What Special Gift Were the Seventy Given?

“In answer to Moses’ request for help, seventy men were chosen and endowed with the ‘spirit that was upon him’ (i.e., upon *Moses*; it means they were endowed with some of the same authority and spiritual gifts) so that they were able also to ‘prophesy.’ When some people objected that two of the men were prophesying who did not come out for the ceremony of installation, Moses said wishfully, ‘Would God that all the Lord’s people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!’ He refused to forbid them to prophesy.

“(Note that we live in a dispensation when *all* members of the congregation of the Lord *may* have the gift of prophecy, and other gifts, by virtue of the fact that all who are baptized are given the ‘Gift of the Holy Ghost.’ Probably some of us do not exercise it however.)

“On such spiritual gifts in Paul’s time, see I Corinthians 12:4–10.” (Rasmussen, Introduction to the Old Testament, 1:115.)

In this material is another evidence of Moses’ greatness. Some leaders would be threatened if subordinates evidenced gifts and abilities similar to their own because then their own status and position would be jeopardized. Not so with Moses. In answer to Joshua’s complaint, Moses asked, “Enviest thou for my sake?” (Numbers 11:29). Not only was he not threatened by this remarkable sharing of his spiritual power, but he expressed the desire to have every single Israelite share the same power with him.

30 And Moses gat him into the camp, he and the elders of Israel.

31 ¶ And there went forth a wind from the LORD, and brought quails from the sea, and let *them* fall by the camp, as it were a day’s journey on this side, and as it were a day’s journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits *high* upon the face of the earth.

32 And the people stood up all that day, and all *that* night, and all the next day, and they gathered the quails: he that gathered least gathered ten homers: and they spread *them* all abroad for themselves round about the camp.

33 And while the flesh *was* yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD smote the people with a very great plague.

34 And he called the name of that place Kibroth-hattaavah: because there they buried the people that lusted.

35 *And* the people journeyed from Kibroth-hattaavah unto Hazeroth; and abode at Hazeroth.

(17-23) Numbers 11:19–20, 31–35

When God sent the quail in answer to Israel’s longing for something other than manna, the people turned gluttonous. The smallest catch equaled about one hundred bushels,

far beyond normal need. The greedy lust for more than they could use brought a just punishment upon the people. How many died in the plague is not recorded, but the place was called “Graves of the Craving” or “The Graves of Lust” (see [v. 34](#)).

NUMBERS CHAPTER 12

Aaron and Miriam complain against Moses, the most meek of all men — The Lord promises to speak to Moses mouth to mouth and to reveal to him the similitude of the Lord — Miriam becomes leprous for a week.

1 And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the “Ethiopian” woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman.

2 And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard *it*.

3 (Now the man Moses *was* very “meek”, above all the men which *were* upon the face of the earth.)

4 And the LORD spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out.

5 And the LORD came down in the “pillar” of the cloud, and stood *in* the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth.

6 And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a “prophet” among you, *I* the LORD will make myself known unto him in a “vision”, and will speak unto him in a “dream”.

7 My servant Moses *is* not so, who *is* faithful in all mine house.

8 With him will I “speak” “mouth” to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he “behold”: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?

9 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them; and he departed.

10 And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam *became* “leprous”, *white* as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, *she was* leprous.

11 And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned.

(17-24) Numbers 12:1–11. Why Did Miriam and Aaron Oppose Moses?

According to Josephus, when Moses was a general of the Egyptian army in the attack against the Ethiopians, he married an Ethiopian woman as a political alliance to end the war (see Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, bk. 2, chap. 10, par. 1).

The ostensible reason for Miriam’s and Aaron’s complaining was that the Ethiopians were non-Israelite descendants of Cush. The real reason for the complaint, however,

seems to have been jealousy motivated by Moses' position as spiritual leader and prophet of Israel.

“This elevation of Moses excited envy on the part of his brother and sister, whom God had also richly endowed and placed so high, that Miriam was distinguished as a prophetess above all the women of Israel, whilst Aaron had been raised by his investiture with the high-priesthood into the spiritual head of the whole nation. But the pride of the natural heart was not satisfied with this. They would dispute with their brother Moses the pre-eminence of his special calling and his exclusive position, which they might possibly regard themselves as entitled to contest with him not only as his brother and sister, but also as the nearest supporters of his vocation. Miriam was the instigator of the open rebellion, as we may see both from the fact that her name stands before that of Aaron, and also from the use of the feminine verb.” (Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary, 1:3:75.)

Today some members of the Church fall into a similar trap. Because the Lord blesses them with the gifts of the Spirit, they think that they have equal or superior status to the presiding priesthood authority. Soon they are led into apostasy if they do not humble themselves and submit to the Lord's servants called to preside. Even if Moses' wish had been granted and every soul in Israel had received the gift of prophecy (see [Numbers 11:29](#)), Moses would still have been the one chosen by the Lord to preside. One question that arises is, Why was only Miriam, and not Aaron, punished with leprosy when both had participated in the opposition? There are two possible reasons. First, as Keil and Delitzsch pointed out, Miriam was the instigator of the attack on Moses' right to preside. Thus, her sin was the more grievous. Second, for Aaron to seek priesthood leadership demonstrated pride and self-aggrandizement. He aspired to a position to which he had not been called. When Miriam sought that position, she not only demonstrated pride but also sought to set up an order contrary to God's system of government. From the beginning, the priesthood callings and the right to preside were given to men. Miriam's attempt to achieve equality with Moses was a serious breach of that divinely instituted system of order.

12 Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother's womb.

13 And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee.

14 ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in *again*.

15 And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days: and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in *again*.

16 And afterward the people removed from Hazeroth, and pitched in the wilderness of Paran.

Numbers 11:11–17, 24–29; 12

Revelation is available to all, but God guides His Church through His prophet.

In Numbers 11:11–17, 24–29, notice the problem Moses faced and the solution God proposed. What do you think Moses meant when he said he wished “that all the Lord’s people were prophets”? (verse 29). As you ponder these verses, consider these words of President Russell M. Nelson: “Does God really *want* to speak to you? Yes! ... Oh, there is so much more that your Father in Heaven wants you to know” (“[Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 95).

However, saying that everyone can be a prophet doesn’t mean they all can lead God’s people the way Moses did. The incident recorded in Numbers 12 makes this clear. As you read this chapter, what cautions do you find? What do you feel the Lord wants you to understand about personal revelation and following the prophet?

See also 1 Nephi 10:17; Doctrine and Covenants 28:1–7; Dallin H. Oaks, “[Two Lines of Communication](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 83–86.

Points to Ponder

(17-25) Often teachers of the Old Testament separate [Numbers 11](#) and 12 and treat them as if they are two different stories when actually a powerful lesson comes out of seeing the relationship between the two. Answer the following questions as you study these two chapters again.

1. What event immediately preceded the complaints about the food? (see [Numbers 11:1–3](#)). What does that suggest about Israel’s unwillingness to learn from experience?
2. When the Israelites complained about the monotony of their diet, who were they really complaining about? (see [Numbers 11:20](#)).
3. *Manna* was the people’s name for the food sent from God and was derived from the Hebrew word meaning “What is this?” (see [Exodus 16:15](#) and explanatory footnotes to that verse). What was God’s name for the food? (see [Exodus 16:4](#)).
4. What typological significance do you see in the fact that Israel tired of the food sent from heaven and “fell a lusting” ([Numbers 11:4](#)) for the food of

Egypt? (see [John 6:30–35, 51](#)). Remember that Egypt, like Babylon, is a type of the world (see [Revelation 11:8](#)).

5. The Lord eventually gave Israel their wish and provided the flesh of quail for them, but before doing so He granted Moses his wish for help in the burdens of leadership. Instead of just calling additional help, how did the Lord choose to share the burden of Moses? (see [11:16–17, 24–25](#)).
6. The seventy elders of Israel were granted one of the gifts of the Spirit, the gift of prophecy (see [D&C 46:22](#)). Of what, do you suppose, did they prophesy? (see [Mosiah 13:33–35](#)).
7. Carefully read [John 6:33–34, 47–51](#) again. Do you now see any significance in the fact that the Lord sent the gift of prophecy among the Israelites who were complaining that they were tired of manna?
8. Note the language related to eating in such scriptures as [2 Nephi 9:51](#); [32:3](#); [Jacob 3:2](#); [Isaiah 40:11](#); [John 21:15–17](#); [D&C 20:77](#). Who was more truly fed that day, the Israelites who collected the quail or the seventy who feasted on the fruits of the Spirit? How do these events add poignant meaning to Moses' cry, "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!"? ([Numbers 11:29](#)).
9. What is the eventual end of those who seek to feast only upon the flesh of the world? (see [Numbers 11:31–34](#)).
10. Now think of the rebellion of Miriam and Aaron in the context of what had just happened. Almost certainly Aaron would have been one of the seventy leaders of the people chosen to receive the gift of prophecy (see [11:16](#)). Miriam also had the gift of prophecy, not given on this occasion, but previously, for she was called "a prophetess" ([Exodus 15:20](#)). Is there any danger that a person who feels the marvelous power of the gift of prophecy might think he was suddenly equal in power to the prophet who is the presiding priesthood officer? Why?
11. Suppose that Moses' wish that all Israel were prophets (see [Numbers 11:29](#)) had been realized. Would that event have meant that Moses was no longer the prophet, or presiding priesthood officer, in Israel?
12. Miriam's sin was not in seeking to be like Moses in terms of spiritual gifts but rather in seeking to share with him the calling of presiding priesthood officer. What lesson is there in that event for modern Israel?
13. We saw in Leviticus that leprosy was in and of itself a type (see [Reading 15-7](#)). What then is the symbolic significance of Miriam's punishment for rejecting Moses' position of leadership? How is that punishment related to the warning given in [Doctrine and Covenants 1:14](#)?

(18-1) Introduction

The Old Testament has some stories of great and marvelous men and women. Abraham, Sarah, Ruth, Moses, Adam, Eve, Enoch, and many others provide inspiration to all who desire to achieve true greatness. But the Old Testament also records many tragedies. The tragedy was not so much in what happened, but in what was lost, in what could have been, compared to what was. King David lost his exaltation because of his foolish attempt to cover his sin of adultery through murder. Saul, called by the Lord to be the first king of Israel, soon forgot who was the true king and ended his life in a frantic search for tranquility. Samson had unusual powers given him, and yet he wasted them in frivolous and self-centered actions.

In this chapter you will study another Old Testament tragedy, but in this case it was a national tragedy. The Israelites had been led out of the power of the greatest empire in the world at that time. They had been personal witnesses to plagues that afflicted the Egyptians but left Israel untouched. They had with their own hands smeared blood on the doorways of their homes and then heard the cries of the Egyptians as their firstborn fell. They had walked between towering walls of water that divided at the command of Moses, then watched as those walls collapsed on the armies of the pharaoh. They ate bread that miraculously appeared each morning, drank water gushing from a rock, felt Sinai quake, and saw it glow with fire. What people in all of history had greater witness that God was with them and would use His unsurpassable power in their behalf? They had so much and were promised so much more. Then came the choice. In one foolish, blind, faithless choice this generation of Israel lost it all.

Read now the tragedy of Israel. It should make every righteous soul of every age weep for these foolish people. Look into your own heart and see if the tragedy of Israel could not be repeated in your own life.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 13

Moses sends twelve spies to search the land of Canaan — Ten of them bring an evil report, telling only of the strength of the inhabitants.

1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

2 Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them.

3 And Moses by the commandment of the LORD sent them from the wilderness of Paran: all those men *were* heads of the children of Israel.

4 And these *were* their names: of the tribe of Reuben, Shammua the son of Zaccur.

5 Of the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat the son of Hori.

6 Of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh.

7 Of the tribe of Issachar, Igal the son of Joseph.

8 Of the tribe of Ephraim, Oshea the son of Nun.

9 Of the tribe of Benjamin, Palti the son of Raphu.

10 Of the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel the son of Sodi.

11 Of the tribe of Joseph, *namely*, of the tribe of Manasseh, Gaddi the son of Susi.

12 Of the tribe of Dan, Ammiel the son of Gemalli.

13 Of the tribe of Asher, Sethur the son of Michael.

14 Of the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi the son of Vophsi.

15 Of the tribe of Gad, Geuel the son of Machi.

16 These *are* the names of the men which Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Oshea the son of Nun Jehoshua.

17 ¶ And Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said unto them, Get you up this way southward, and go up into the mountain:

18 And see the land, what it *is*; and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they *be* strong or weak, few or many;

19 And what the land *is* that they dwell in, whether it *be* good or bad; and what cities *they be* that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strong holds;

20 And what the land *is*, whether it *be* fat or lean, whether there be wood therein, or not. And be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land. Now the time *was* the time of the firstripe grapes.

21 ¶ So they went up, and searched the land from the wilderness of Zin unto Rehob, as men come to Hamath.

22 And they ascended by the south, and came unto Hebron; where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the children of Anak, *were*. (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.)

23 And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and *they brought* of the pomegranates, and of the figs.

24 The place was called the brook Eshcol, because of the cluster of grapes which the children of Israel cut down from thence.

25 And they returned from searching of the land after forty days.

26 ¶ And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and shewed them the fruit of the land.

27 And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this *is* the fruit of it.

28 Nevertheless the people *be* strong that dwell in the land, and the cities *are* walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there.

29 The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan.

30 And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.

31 But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they *are* stronger than we.

32 And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, *is* a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it *are* men of a great stature.

33 And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, *which come* of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 14

Israel murmurs and speaks of returning to Egypt — Joshua and Caleb give a good report of Canaan — Moses mediates between Israel and the Lord — The adults of Israel will not enter the promised land — The Lord slays the false spies by a plague — Some rebels try to go alone and are slain by the Amalekites and Canaanites.

1 And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night.

2 And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!

3 And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt?

4 And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.

5 Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel.

6 ¶ And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, *which were* of them that searched the land, rent their clothes:

7 And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, *is* an exceeding good land.

8 If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.

9 Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they *are* bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD *is* with us: fear them not.

10 But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel.

11 ¶ And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?

12 I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.

13 ¶ And Moses said unto the LORD, Then the Egyptians shall hear *it*, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;)

14 And they will tell *it* to the inhabitants of this land: *for* they have heard that thou LORD *art* among this people, that thou LORD art seen face to face, and *that* thy cloud standeth over them, and *that* thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night.

15 ¶ Now *if* thou shalt kill *all* this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying,

16 Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness.

17 And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying,

18 The LORD *is* longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation*.

19 Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.

20 And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to thy word:

21 But *as* truly *as* I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD.

22 Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice;

23 Surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it:

24 But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.

25 (Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwelt in the valley.) To morrow turn you, and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea.

26 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,

27 How long *shall I bear with* this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me.

28 Say unto them, *As truly as I live*, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you:

29 Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me,

30 Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, *concerning* which I sware to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.

31 But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised.

32 But *as for* you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness.

33 And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness.

34 After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, *even* forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, *even* forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise.

35 I the LORD have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.

36 And the men, which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the land,

37 Even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the LORD.

38 But Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, *which were* of the men that went to search the land, lived *still*.

39 And Moses told these sayings unto all the children of Israel: and the people mourned greatly.

40 ¶ And they rose up early in the morning, and gat them up into the top of the mountain, saying, Lo, we *be here*, and will go up unto the place which the LORD hath promised: for we have sinned.

41 And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the LORD? but it shall not prosper.

42 Go not up, for the LORD *is* not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies.

43 For the Amalekites and the Canaanites *are* there before you, and ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from the LORD, therefore the LORD will not be with you.

44 But they presumed to go up unto the hill top: nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and Moses, departed not out of the camp.

45 Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, *even* unto Hormah.

Numbers 13–14

With faith in the Lord, I can have hope for the future.

As you read [Numbers 13–14](#), try to put yourself in the place of the Israelites.

Why do you think they wanted to “return into Egypt”? ([Numbers 14:3](#)). Are

you ever like those who were pessimistic about entering the promised land?

How would you describe the other “spirit” Caleb had? ([Numbers 14:24](#)).

What impresses you about the faith of Caleb and Joshua, and how might you apply their examples to situations you face?

See also *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Gordon B. Hinckley* (2016), 75–76.

(18-2) Numbers 13–14. The Spies and Their Evil Report of the Land

At this point in history, Israel was just a few months out of Egypt, and they had been given the law of God. The Lord indicated that it was then time to go in and possess the promised land. He commanded that a reconnaissance group be sent into Canaan to reconnoiter the land. The evidence of the richness of the land was irrefutable, and the spies even brought back a cluster of grapes carried on a staff between two men to demonstrate the beauty and richness of the produce (see [Numbers 13:23](#)). Yet the spies, except for Joshua and Caleb, reported that, despite the richness of the land, there was no hope for driving out the inhabitants. The exaggerated tone of their negative report shows in the use of such words as “*very great*,” the land “*eateth up the inhabitants thereof*,” “*all the people ... are men of great stature*,” “*we saw the giants*,” “*we were ... as grasshoppers*” ([vv. 28, 32–33](#); emphasis added). Such an exaggerated report of itself was bad enough and demonstrated the lack of faith of the ten men who gave it. But the national tragedy began when Israel hearkened to their report. They openly rejected the numerous evidences of God’s power that had been almost daily fare and began to cry out that it would have been better for them never to have left Egypt. Nor did the murmuring stop there. A movement was started to reject Moses and choose a leader that would take them back to Egypt (see [Numbers 14:4](#) and [Nehemiah 9:17](#), which suggest that they actually chose the leaders who would take them

back). When Joshua and Caleb tried to counteract the effect of the negative report, the congregation sought to have them stoned (see [Numbers 14:10](#)). Little wonder that the anger of the Lord was kindled. In a great intercessory prayer, Moses pleaded for mercy for his people (see [Numbers 14:13–14](#)). He did not excuse the behavior of his people, but only emphasized the long-suffering mercy of the Lord. Israel was spared destruction but lost the privilege of immediately entering the promised land. For the next thirty-eight years they were to wander in the harsh wilderness of Sinai. During that time they could have conquered the inhabitants of the land of promise, built cities, eaten the fruit of the land flowing “with milk and honey” ([Numbers 13:27](#)), and raised their children in comfort and peace. But they would not, and so all above the age of twenty who had repudiated the power of the Lord, except Joshua and Caleb, were to die in the wilderness.

(18-3) [Numbers 14:40–45](#). Can Israel Prevail without the Lord?

When Moses told the Israelites all the words of the Lord, he records that they “mourned greatly” ([Numbers 14:39](#)). And yet, their mourning was not that of true repentance, as the events which immediately follow show. Like immature children who missed the whole point of parental punishment, Israel suddenly decided they would go up against the Canaanites, “for we have sinned” ([v. 40](#)). But Moses indicated that it was too late. The Lord had retracted the commandment to go up and possess the land, and, therefore, if they went up then, they would go without His power.

Then came the second stage of the tragedy. The Israelites had just lost the right to enter the promised land because they had refused to follow the Lord. Now, in an attempt to show how “repentant” they were, *they refused to follow the Lord*. With sorrowful brevity Moses simply said, “Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them” ([v. 45](#)).

NUMBERS CHAPTER 20

Miriam dies — Moses smites a rock at Meribah and brings forth water — The king of Edom refuses to let Israel pass peacefully through his land — Aaron dies, and Eleazar becomes the high priest.

1 Then came the children of Israel, *even* the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin in the first month: and the people abode in ᵃKadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there.

2 And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron.

3 And the people ᵃchode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD!

4 And why have ye brought up the congregation of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there?

5 And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? *it is* no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither *is* there any water to drink.

6 And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the ᵃtabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto them.

7 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

8 Take the ᵃrod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and ᵃspeak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink.

9 And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him.

10 And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, ᵃHear now, ye rebels; must ᵃwe fetch you water out of this rock?

11 And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he ᵃsmote the ᵃrock twice: and the ᵃwater came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts *also*.

12 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye ᵃbelieved me not, to ᵃsanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not ᵃbring this congregation into the ᵃland which I have given them.

13 This *is* the water of ᵃMeribah; because the children of Israel ᵃstrove with the LORD, and he was sanctified in them.

(18-13) Numbers 20:2–13. Why Was Moses Not Allowed into the Holy Land?

Rebellion among the children of Israel was not at all uncommon in their desert wanderings. The rebellion described in these verses, however, was especially serious because it apparently led Moses, the prophet of God, to momentarily forget what the Lord had commanded him to do. The Lord had told Moses to provide water for murmuring Israel in a special way. Pointing out a certain rock, the Lord told Moses, “Speak ye unto the rock before their [Israel’s] eyes; and it shall give forth his water” (v. 8). But Moses was weary and angry with Israel. “Hear now, ye rebels,” he said. “Must *we* fetch you water out of this rock?” (v. 10; emphasis added). Then, instead of

speaking to the rock as God commanded, Moses “smote the rock twice” and water gushed forth ([v. 11](#)). The Lord then chided Moses and Aaron for their failure to sanctify Him in the eyes of the people and told both men that neither of them would be allowed to bring Israel into the promised land (see [v. 12](#)). Not only did they not follow the Lord’s instructions carefully but they also suggested by the use of *we* that they were the ones who provided the water.

This incident, taken together with other scripture, creates a number of questions. Did Moses really sin against the Lord? Was that the reason Moses was not permitted to enter the promised land? Did Moses really assume glory to himself, or was he simply angry with the lack of faith exhibited by the children of Israel? Was this one error enough to cancel out years of great faith, obedience, and devotion?

At least two other Old Testament passages indicate that Moses did sin in striking the rock at Meribah (see [Numbers 27:12–14](#); [Deuteronomy 32:51–52](#)). Other passages, however, help to clarify the matter. [Deuteronomy 3:26](#) and [4:21](#) indicate that the Lord told Moses that the reason he could not enter the promised land was that the Lord was angry with him “*for your sakes*” (emphasis added). This statement could imply that there were reasons other than the error of Moses for the prohibition. Two other facts strengthen this supposition. First, both Moses and the higher priesthood were taken from Israel because of the people’s unworthiness, not Moses’ (see [D&C 84:23–25](#)). Second, Moses was translated when his mortal ministry was finished (see [Alma 45:19](#)). In other words, Moses was privileged to enter a land of promise far greater than the land of Canaan. He had finished his calling in mortality, and a new leader was to take Israel into the promised land. And, Moses was translated—hardly a punishment for sinning against God.

14 ¶ And Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the king of Edom, Thus saith thy brother Israel, Thou knowest all the travail that hath befallen us:

(18-14) Numbers 20:14

Moses referred to his people as “brother Israel” when he addressed the king of the Edomites ([v. 14](#)) because the Edomites were direct descendants of Edom (Esau), the brother of Jacob (Israel), from whom the Israelites descended. There was therefore a blood relationship between the two peoples. The things that Moses said imply that the Edomite king was well aware of the relationship. Still, he refused to let the Israelites pass through his lands.

Between the rebellion of Korah (chaps. 16–17) and the request for passage through the land of Edom (chap. 20), thirty-eight years of wandering had transpired. For reasons not known to us now, Moses did not describe those years in this record.

15 How our fathers went down into Egypt, and we have dwelt in Egypt a long time; and the Egyptians vexed us, and our fathers:

16 And when we cried unto the LORD, he heard our voice, and sent an angel, and hath brought us forth out of Egypt: and, behold, we *are* in Kadesh, a city in the uttermost of thy border:

17 Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country: we will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink *of* the water of the wells: we will go by the king's *high* way, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders.

(18-15) Numbers 20:17. To What Does the Phrase “King’s High Way” Refer?

“The ‘king’s way’ is the public high road, which was probably made at the cost of the state, and kept up for the king and his armies to travel upon, and is synonymous with the ‘sultan-road’ (*Derb es Sultan*) or ‘emperor road,’ as the open, broad, old military roads are still called in the East” (Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary, 1:3:134).

The highway ran along the highlands of present-day Jordan from the Red Sea up into Syria. On the east it paralleled the Dead Sea and the River Jordan.

18 And Edom said unto him, Thou shalt not pass by me, lest I come out against thee with the sword.

19 And the children of Israel said unto him, We will go by the high way: and if I and my cattle drink of thy water, then I will pay for it: I will only, without *doing* any thing *else*, go through on my feet.

20 And he said, Thou shalt not go through. And Edom came out against him with much people, and with a strong hand.

21 Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border: wherefore Israel turned away from him.

22 ¶ And the children of Israel, *even* the whole congregation, journeyed from Kadesh, and came unto mount Hor.

23 And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying,

24 Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah.

25 Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up unto mount Hor:

26 And strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son: and Aaron shall be gathered *unto his people*, and shall die there.

27 And Moses did as the LORD commanded: and they went up into mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation.

28 And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and ʼAaron died there in the top of the mount: and Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount.

29 And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, *even* all the house of Israel.

(18-16) Numbers 20:22–29. What Is the Significance of Moses' Removing Aaron's Clothes and Placing Them on Eleazar?

“This was, in effect, depriving him of his office; and putting the clothes on his son Eleazar implied a transfer of that office to him. A transfer of office, from this circumstance of *putting the clothes* of the late possessor on the person intended to succeed him, was called *investing* or *investment*, (*clothing*;) as removing a person from an office was termed *divesting* or *unclothing*.” (Clarke, Bible Commentary, 1:682.)

The same custom continues to this day in some institutions. When an officer is installed or removed from office, ceremonial clothing is either put on or taken off, symbolizing a transfer of authority. When one departs in dishonor, he is literally stripped of his gown or robes. In the military, the cutting off of one's epaulets or insignia of rank is the same thing.

Aaron, however, was not retiring in dishonor or disgrace. His death was imminent (see v. 28), and it was time for new and younger leadership.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 21

The children of Israel destroy those Canaanites who fight against them — The Israelites are plagued with fiery serpents — Moses lifts up a serpent of brass to save those who look thereon — Israel defeats the Amorites, destroys the people of Bashan, and occupies their lands.

1 And *when* ʼking ʼArad the Canaanite, which dwelt in the ʼsouth, heard tell that Israel came by the way of ʼthe spies; then he fought against Israel, and took *some* of them prisoners.

2 And Israel vowed a ʼvow unto the LORD, and said, If thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities.

3 And the LORD hearkened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly ʼdestroyed them and their cities: and he called the name of the place ʼHormah.

4 ¶ And they journeyed from mount ʼHor by the way of the ʼRed sea, to ʼcompass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.

5 And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for *there is no bread, neither is there any water;* and our soul loatheth this light bread.

6 And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.

7 ¶ Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.

8 And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.

9 And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

Numbers 21:4–9

If I look to Jesus Christ in faith, He can heal me spiritually.

Book of Mormon prophets knew the story recorded in [Numbers 21:4–9](#) and understood its spiritual significance. What do [1 Nephi 17:40–41](#); [Alma 33:18–22](#); and [Helaman 8:13–15](#) add to your understanding of this story? As you study these passages, think about the spiritual healing you hope for. The Israelites had to “[behold] the serpent of brass” ([Numbers 21:9](#)) to be healed. What do you feel inspired to do to more fully “look upon the Son of God with faith”? ([Helaman 8:15](#)).

See also [John 3:14–15](#); [Doctrine and Covenants 6:36](#); Dale G. Renlund, “[Abound with Blessings](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 70–73.

(18-17) Numbers 21:4–9. The Brazen Serpent in the Wilderness

For the typological significance of this event read [John 3:14–15](#); [2 Nephi 25:20](#); [Alma 33:19–20](#); Reading 18-26.

10 ¶ And the children of Israel set forward, and pitched in Oboth.

11 And they journeyed from Oboth, and pitched at Ije-abarim, in the wilderness which *is before* Moab, toward the sunrising.

12 ¶ From thence they removed, and pitched in the valley of Zared.

13 From thence they removed, and pitched on the other side of Arnon, which *is* in the wilderness that cometh out of the coasts of the Amorites: for Arnon *is* the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites.

14 Wherefore it is said in the book of the wars of the LORD, What he did in the Red sea, and in the brooks of Arnon,

15 And at the astream of the brooks that goeth down to the dwelling of Ar, and lieth upon the border of Moab.

16 And from thence *they went* to aBeer: that is the well whereof the LORD spake unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water.

17 ¶ Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it:

18 The princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it, by *the direction* of the lawgiver, with their staves. And from the wilderness *they went* to Mattanah:

19 And from Mattanah to Nahaliel: and from Nahaliel to Bamoth:

20 And from Bamoth *in* the valley, that is in the country of Moab, to the top of Pisgah, which alooketh toward Jeshimon.

21 ¶ And Israel sent messengers unto aSihon king of the bAmorites, saying,

22 Let me pass through thy land: we will not turn into the fields, or into the vineyards; we will not drink *of* the waters of the well: *but* we will go along by the king's *high* way, until we be past thy borders.

23 And aSihon would not suffer Israel to pass through his bborder: but Sihon gathered all his people together, and went out against Israel into the wilderness: and he came to Jahaz, and fought against Israel.

24 And Israel asmote him with the edge of the sword, and possessed his land from bArnon unto Jabbok, even unto the children of Ammon: for the border of the children of Ammon *was* strong.

25 And Israel took all these acities: and Israel dwelt in all the cities of the Amorites, in Heshbon, and in all the villages thereof.

26 For Heshbon *was* the city of Sihon the king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab, and taken all his land out of his hand, even unto Arnon.

27 Wherefore they that speak in proverbs say, Come into Heshbon, let the city of Sihon be built and aprepared:

28 For there is a fire gone out of aHeshbon, a flame from the city of Sihon: it hath consumed Ar of Moab, *and* the lords of the high places of Arnon.

29 Woe to thee, Moab! thou art undone, O people of aChemosh: he hath given his sons that escaped, and his daughters, into captivity unto Sihon king of the Amorites.

30 We have shot at them; Heshbon is perished even unto Dibon, and we have laid them waste even unto Nophah, which *reacheth* unto Medeba.

31 ¶ Thus Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites.

32 And Moses sent to spy out aJaazer, and they took the villages thereof, and drove out the Amorites that *were* there.

33 ¶ And they turned and went up by the way of Bashan: and aOg the king of Bashan went out against them, he, and all his people, to the battle at Edrei.

34 And the LORD said unto Moses, Fear him not: for I have delivered him into thy hand, and all his people, and his land; and thou shalt do to him as thou didst unto Sihon king of the aAmorites, which dwelt at Heshbon.

35 So they smote him, and his sons, and all his people, until there was none left him alive: and they possessed his land.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 22

Balak offers money, cattle, and great honors to Balaam to curse Israel — The Lord forbids Balaam to do so — An angel opposes Balaam on the way.

1 And the children of Israel set forward, and pitched in the plains of Moab on this side Jordan *by* Jericho.

2 ¶ And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites.

3 And Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they *were* many: and Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel.

4 And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all *that are* round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. And Balak the son of Zippor *was* king of the Moabites at that time.

5 He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam the son of Beor to Pethor, which *is* by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me:

6 Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they *are* too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, *that* we may smite them, and *that* I may drive them out of the land: for I wot that he whom thou blessest *is* blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed.

7 And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand; and they came unto Balaam, and spake unto him the words of Balak.

8 And he said unto them, Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the LORD shall speak unto me: and the princes of Moab abode with Balaam.

9 And God came unto Balaam, and said, What men *are* these with thee?

10 And Balaam said unto God, Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, hath sent unto me, *saying*,

11 Behold, *there is* a people come out of Egypt, which covereth the face of the earth: come now, curse me them; peradventure I shall be able to overcome them, and drive them out.

12 And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they *are* blessed.

13 And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said unto the princes of Balak, Get you into your land: for the LORD refuseth to give me leave to go with you.

14 And the princes of Moab rose up, and they went unto Balak, and said, Balaam refuseth to come with us.

15 ¶ And Balak sent yet again princes, more, and more honourable than they.

16 And they came to Balaam, and said to him, Thus saith Balak the son of Zippor, Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me:

17 For I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people.

18 And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more.

19 Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the LORD will say unto me more.

20 And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up, *and* go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do.

21 And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.

22 ¶ And God's anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the LORD stood in the way for an adversary against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants *were* with him.

23 And the ass *saw* the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field: and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way.

24 But the angel of the LORD stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall *being* on this side, and a wall on that side.

25 And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall: and he smote her again.

26 And the angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place, where *was* no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left.

27 And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff.

28 And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?

29 And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I *kill* thee.

30 And the *ass* said unto Balaam, *Am* not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since *I was* thine unto this day? *was* I ever *wont* to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay.

31 Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face.

32 And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? behold, I went out to withstand thee, because *thy way is* perverse before me:

33 And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive.

34 And Balaam said unto the angel of the LORD, I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again.

35 And the angel of the LORD said unto Balaam, Go with the men: but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.

36 ¶ And when Balak heard that Balaam was come, he went out to meet him unto a city of Moab, which *is* in the border of Arnon, which *is* in the utmost coast.

37 And Balak said unto Balaam, Did I not earnestly send unto thee to call thee? wherefore camest thou not unto me? am I not able indeed to promote thee to honour?

38 And Balaam said unto Balak, Lo, I am come unto thee: have I now any power at all to say any thing? the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak.

39 And Balaam went with Balak, and they came unto Kirjath-huzoth.

40 And Balak offered oxen and sheep, and sent to Balaam, and to the princes that *were* with him.

41 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Balak took Balaam, and brought him up into the high places of Baal, that thence he might see the utmost *part* of the people.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 23

The Lord commands Balaam to bless Israel—He does so, saying, Who can count the dust of Jacob? and, What hath God wrought!

1 And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven oxen and seven rams.

2 And Balak did as Balaam had spoken; and Balak and Balaam offered on *every* altar a bullock and a ram.

3 And Balaam said unto Balak, Stand by thy burnt offering, and I will go: peradventure the LORD will come to meet me: and whatsoever he sheweth me I will tell thee. And he went to an high place.

4 And God met Balaam: and he said unto him, I have prepared seven altars, and I have offered upon *every* altar a bullock and a ram.

5 And the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, Return unto Balak, and thus thou shalt speak.

6 And he returned unto him, and, lo, he stood by his burnt sacrifice, he, and all the princes of Moab.

7 And he took up his parable, and said, Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, *saying*, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel.

8 How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, *whom* the LORD hath not defied?

9 For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.

10 Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth *part* of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!

11 And Balak said unto Balaam, What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed *them* altogether.

12 And he answered and said, Must I not take heed to speak that which the LORD hath put in my mouth?

13 And Balak said unto him, Come, I pray thee, with me unto another place, from whence thou mayest see them: thou shalt see but the utmost part of them, and shalt not see them all: and curse me them from thence.

14 ¶ And he brought him into the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars, and offered a bullock and a ram on *every* altar.

15 And he said unto Balak, Stand here by thy burnt offering, while I meet *the LORD* yonder.

16 And the LORD met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, Go again unto Balak, and say thus.

17 And when he came to him, behold, he stood by his burnt offering, and the princes of Moab with him. And Balak said unto him, What hath the LORD spoken?

18 And he took up his parable, and said, Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor:

19 God *is* not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do *it*? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

20 Behold, I have received *commandment* to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it.

21 He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God *is* with him, and the shout of a king *is* among them.

22 God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn.

23 Surely *there is* no enchantment against Jacob, neither *is there* any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!

24 Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat *of* the prey, and drink the blood of the slain.

25 ¶ And Balak said unto Balaam, Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all.

26 But Balaam answered and said unto Balak, Told not I thee, saying, All that the LORD speaketh, that I must do?
27 ¶ And Balak said unto Balaam, Come, I pray thee, I will bring thee unto another place; peradventure it will please God that thou mayest curse me them from thence.
28 And Balak brought Balaam unto the top of Peor, that looketh toward Jeshimon.
29 And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven bullocks and seven rams.
30 And Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered a bullock and a ram on *every* altar.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 24

Balaam sees in vision and prophesies of the destiny of Israel — He prophesies of the Messiah: There will come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre will rise out of Israel.

1 And when Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments, but he set his face toward the wilderness.
2 And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding *in his tents* according to their tribes; and the spirit of God came upon him.
3 And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said:
4 He hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling *into a trance*, but having his eyes open:
5 How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, *and* thy tabernacles, O Israel!
6 As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the LORD hath planted, *and* as cedar trees beside the waters.
7 He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed *shall be* in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted.
8 God brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn: he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce *them* through with his arrows.
9 He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up? Blessed *is* he that blesseth thee, and cursed *is* he that curseth thee.
10 ¶ And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together: and Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed *them* these three times.
11 Therefore now flee thou to thy place: I thought to promote thee unto great honour; but, lo, the LORD hath kept thee back from honour.
12 And Balaam said unto Balak, Spake I not also to thy messengers which thou sentest unto me, saying,

13 If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the LORD, to do *either* good or bad of mine own mind; *but* what the LORD saith, that will I speak?

14 And now, behold, I go unto my people: come *therefore*, and I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days.

15 ¶ And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said:

16 He hath said, which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the most High, *which* saw the vision of the Almighty, falling *into a trance*, but having his eyes open:

17 I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.

18 And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly.

19 Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city.

20 ¶ And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable, and said, Amalek *was* the first of the nations; but his latter end *shall be* that he perish for ever.

21 And he looked on the Kenites, and took up his parable, and said, Strong is thy dwellingplace, and thou puttest thy nest in a rock.

22 Nevertheless the Kenite shall be wasted, until Asshur shall carry thee away captive.

23 And he took up his parable, and said, Alas, who shall live when God doeth this!

24 And ships *shall come* from the coast of Chittim, and shall afflict Asshur, and shall afflict Eber, and he also shall perish for ever.

25 And Balaam rose up, and went and returned to his place: and Balak also went his way.

Numbers 22–24

I can follow God's will, even if others try to persuade me not to.

When Balak, the king of Moab, learned that the Israelites were approaching, he called for Balaam, a man known for pronouncing blessings and curses.

Balak wanted him to weaken the Israelites by cursing them. Notice how Balak tried to persuade Balaam (see [Numbers 22:5–7, 15–17](#)), and think about temptations you face to go against God's will. What impresses you about Balaam's responses in [Numbers 22:18, 38; 23:8, 12, 26; 24:13](#)?

Sadly, it seems that Balaam eventually gave in to pressure and betrayed Israel (see [Numbers 31:16](#); [Jude 1:11](#)). Ponder how you can remain faithful to the Lord despite pressure from others.

(18-18) [Numbers 22–24](#). The Story of Balaam

When the two mighty kings of the Amorites were defeated by the irresistible might of Israel, the Moabites, with their Midianite confederates, were filled with such alarm that Balak, their king, sought assistance. It was not from his own god, Baal, who had proven impotent against Israel during the Amorite conflict, that he sought power, however. Instead, he decided to use Israel's own God, whose power had been marvelously manifest, against them. To this end he sent a delegation bearing presents to Balaam of Pethor, a celebrated prognosticator in upper Mesopotamia, who apparently had a reputation for being able to bless and curse with great effect (see [Numbers 22:3–6](#)). It is difficult to determine from the record whether or not Balaam was a true prophet of God holding the powers of the priesthood authority. He lived in an area known as Aram, probably named after the son of Kemuel and grandson of Nahor, a cousin of Abraham. Haran, the place of Abraham's first settlement after he left Ur, was a seat for the worship of Jehovah and was also in Aram. Therefore, Balaam could have been one of the few scattered people such as Jethro, who held the priesthood and exercised its power. The Bible suggests that he had a true knowledge of God and was susceptible to revelation from Him. Regardless of their origin, the Lord raises up inspired men to all nations (see [Alma 29:8](#)).

It is significant that Balaam is referred to as a soothsayer or diviner, somewhat on the order of Simon of the New Testament (compare [Joshua 13:22](#); [Acts 8:9–24](#)). Although he acknowledged Jehovah and professed his dependence on Him, Balaam was willing to go against the Lord's counsel and accompany the men of Balak. To assure his responsiveness to God's will, the Lord sent an angel to threaten him with death should he curse Israel.

One of the remarkable things about Balaam's blessing of Israel is the Messianic promise of Christ (see [Numbers 24:14, 17, 19](#)).

The rebuke received by Balaam from an animal wrought upon by the Spirit of God is a singular event in history. Speculation on how the deed was accomplished is useless. It is certain that the beast spoke in a way understandable to Balaam. Other scriptures indicate that when animals are filled with the divine Spirit and celestialized, they will be able to express themselves in ways presently denied them (see [Revelation 4:6, 9](#); [D&C 77:2–4](#)). Balaam is not recorded as showing surprise at this phenomenon, which circumstance has led some to suggest that Balaam's mind was troubled because of his attempt to serve both God and mammon. Had he been more thoughtful, the unusual

behavior of his otherwise obedient mount would have caused him to look about to discover the trouble. Then perchance he would have discovered the angel's presence. The incident was sufficient to carry out the Lord's purposes, however. Balaam was shown that it was not the journey in itself that was displeasing to God, but the feelings and intentions he harbored. The entire incident seems to have been brought about to sharpen his conscience and sober his mind so he would strictly speak only the word of God.

The record next describes the whoredoms Israel committed with the daughters of Moab; that is, Israel joined the women of Moab in worshiping Baal-peor, a fertility god, including offering sacrifices to the god and indulging in sexual immorality. What is not mentioned here but is explained later ([Numbers 31:16](#)) is that Balaam advised the Moabites in this action. Evidently, when he saw that he could not earn Balak's commission by cursing Israel directly, he told Balak that God would only bless Israel when they were righteous. If the Moabites could seduce Israel into idol worship, they would lose God's power. Thus, Balaam became a symbol of those who use their callings and gifts to get gain and pervert the Lord's people (see [2 Peter 2:15](#); [Revelation 2:14](#)).

Ideas for Family Scripture Study and Home Evening

[Numbers 11:4–6](#).

Is our attitude ever similar to the attitude the Israelites expressed in [Numbers 11:4–6](#)? How can the counsel in [Doctrine and Covenants 59:15–21](#) help?

[Numbers 12:3](#).

How did Moses show that he was “very meek” in [Numbers 12](#) or in other scripture passages you've read? You might review Elder David A. Bednar's explanation of meekness in his message “[Meek and Lowly of Heart](#)” (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 30–33) or in “[Meek, Meekness](#)” in Guide to the Scriptures ([scriptures.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](#)). What do we learn about how we can become more meek? What blessings can come as we do so?

[Numbers 13–14](#).

Two (or more) members of your family could pretend to “spy out” ([Numbers 13:17](#)) another part of your home as if it were the promised land. Then they could each give a report based on [Numbers 13:27–33](#) or [Numbers 14:6–9](#). What do we learn about faith from the two different reports in these verses? How can we be more like Caleb and Joshua?

Numbers 21:4–9.

After reading [Numbers 21:4–9](#), along with [1 Nephi 17:40–41](#); [Alma 33:18–22](#); and [Helaman 8:13–15](#), your family could make a serpent out of paper or clay and write on it or on paper some simple things you can do to “look upon the Son of God with faith” ([Helaman 8:15](#)).

For more ideas for teaching children, see [this week’s outline](#) in *Come, Follow Me—For Primary*.

Suggested song: “[Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee](#),” *Hymns*, no. 141.



Moses and the Brass Serpent, by Judith A. Mehr