

# Under The Fig Tree



## WEEK 8

### Introduction

This week, we begin our studies of the Book of Numbers. Twice God called for a census to be taken: hence the title *Numbers*. The Hebrew name of the book is *Bemidbar (in the desert)*. Either of the book's names is relevant, but perhaps the Hebrew name is a clearer indication of its content. In Exodus we have the record of the departure from Egypt, to the encampment at Sinai. In Leviticus we have a record of God's teaching at Sinai and the establishing of the nation. In *Bemidbar (Numbers)* we have the account of Israel's journey from Sinai to the border of the Land of Canaan. This is an amazing book to have in our possession. There is no clearer account of any ancient nation than that of Israel. God preserved the history for a purpose – that we study it and be taught through it.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Day 1

#### Notes on Today's Readings

Numbers Chapter 1. You may wonder why this book begins with a list of names. This would hardly be the way to start a best-seller novel in our day! Yet, the Bible is still top of the best-seller list! There must be something important for us to learn in the book. God gave Moses very strict instructions about how and when to take a census. It was not just Moses' idea to keep records of the names and numbers of Israel. God Himself wanted a record of the families and of the fighting men.

Throughout the Bible we learn that God considers the family as the foundation of His community, and this is emphasized here. He lists His people by name and by family. The records in Numbers remind us that our local fellowships are to be organized with an emphasis on family. It is a long time ago since God numbered Israel by families and the records have lasted over many centuries. These were people whom God knew by name. This is an encouragement to us. He knows *us* too, if we are His disciples. We are known to Him *personally, by name*, and He cares about our family and our future. We are *people*, not *numbers* as the world systems of today would make us appear to be.

If you add up the numbers of the men, from each of the tribes, who were over twenty years of age, you will have the exact number of the fighting men. This will give you an idea of the number of people who left Egypt – a very large number of people to be cared for day by day.

See what else the Holy Spirit says to you as you read the list of the families of Israel.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 2. We do not have a record of how each Tribal standard was designed, but we do have a clear description of the order of the camp. Each Tribe camped in its allotted place by its standard. This is

wonderful picture of a disciplined and ordered community. You may find it instructive to draw a plan of the camp. The details are written clearly in this chapter. With the Tabernacle at the centre, the Tribes are camped all around. Try to imagine the vast scale of this. God, in the Tabernacle, is at the centre. The Priests minister before God. God instructs the Priests and they convey His Word to the people. This is a taste of heaven on earth. We will leave a fuller reading of the Book of Revelation to another time. A brief reference, however, is relevant here. In Revelation we read about a vast multitude of people from every tribe and tongue gathered before the throne of God. This is the great gathering of those saved through faith in Yeshua, when the final census is taken and all God's records are complete. First in the list are 12,000 from each of the Tribes of Israel. This picture of the Tribes of Israel gathered around the Tabernacle in the wilderness is a type and shadow of things to come. Read the chapter with this in mind.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 3. Read this chapter just as carefully, as you read every chapter. In verse 13 we have a reference to the first-born of the Egyptians who were killed at the Passover. By contrast, the first-born of the Israelites were spared. Now the Levites are appointed as representatives of the first-born, and the numbering is done very carefully. Every first-born male over one month old was replaced by one of the Levites as his representative in the ministry of the Tabernacle. The difference in numbers was also accounted for, by the collection of 5 shekels for each additional Levite. The Levites, together, represented every one of the first-born of Israel. This principle was at the foundation of their ministry. Israel was not only counted, their redemption was in mind, each individual accounted for; the census related to matters of life and death.

In other parts of the Bible we will discover that Israel as a whole was considered as God's first born son. This comes from the fact that Jacob was the forefather of the nation, the grandson of Abraham and son of Isaac. Yeshua is the High Priest of the New Covenant and exchanged His life for the life of His people. The Son of God was given for the entire nation, considered like one first born son. Israel learned this principle first through the Levitical Priesthood. They may not have realized that this was to teach them about Yeshua, but that was the purpose that God had in view. A foundation of understanding was set in place for what Yeshua was to do as the Priest, Intercessor, and Redeemer through Sacrifice. The preparations that God instituted through the Levitical Priesthood are the basis for understanding what Yeshua has done for all who are saved by faith in Him.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 4. The detailed ordering of the camp now centres on those who were chosen for specific tasks in the service of the Tabernacle. When Israel's camp was to move on to another place, God went before the people in a pillar of fire. Behind came the tribes in their assigned order. Those appointed to specific services dismantled the Tabernacle structure, packed each part away as instructed by God, and then carried it in the prescribed way. What an awesome sight this would have been as Israel marched on from camp to camp. How this would send a stirring among the nations all around – a mighty people led through the desert by their God! At the new site, chosen by God, the camp would be set up again in exactly the same manner that God had instructed. He would again rest over the Tabernacle, now in a pillar of cloud.

Read the details, and meditate upon what you read. There is order in every aspect of God's Kingdom. The ministry was to be passed on from generation to generation in this manner. The Levites ministered from the age of 30 to the age of 50 and then became overseers of the next generation. Yeshua's

ministry was inaugurated according to this same pattern. He commenced His ministry at the age of 30 years.

We might consider how our own lives and ministries are intended to reflect this same order. Perhaps we need to understand the spirit of this and see how it applies to our own ordered communities. God still orders His community and assigns each person to a specific task.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Day 2

Chapter 5. Consider what it must have been like to be either included in the camp or excluded from the camp. The camp was to be a place of absolute holiness. Those with incurable diseases were banished to live outside the community. Compare this with the Kingdom of Heaven. The Kingdom of Heaven is a place where there will be no-one who is has a spiritual disease or who is unholy in any way. Physical impurity symbolizes this, understood from the account of Israel in the wilderness. One day, only those who are purified through the shed blood of Yeshua will be gathered into the eternal Kingdom. When Yeshua came from Heaven to this earth, it was to the place of uncleanness to which Adam and Eve were banished, and where we were all born – outside the camp, as it were. We, spiritually, are like the lepers who cannot heal themselves and so live outside the Kingdom until we are cleansed through the Holy Spirit. Israel's camp was an earthly representation of the heavenly Kingdom for which we are being prepared.

When Yeshua healed lepers He was teaching us, spiritual truth through physical illustrations: He can heal us spiritually, in order to bring us into the fullness of eternal life with Him. What was lost at the Fall, is regained through faith in Him.

The seventh Commandment is that we must not commit adultery. This commandment is for both men and women. It is the foundation on which families must be built. God is building a community and His community is founded on the family. Teaching about holiness begins in the family and it is the responsibility of parents to teach their children. Wives have a special place in God's plan. God uses the principle of the good wife to teach us about the way the entire community is betrothed to God. This is one of the images, drawn from human life, that is used to teach us about the purity of relationship we must have with God. God is a jealous God and He taught Israel about this through what a husband might feel concerning his wife if she is considered to be unfaithful. It may seem harsh, the way it is presented in this chapter, but a wife should be pure. She is a symbol of what the entire community should be in relationship to God. This teaching is still relevant and very important. Israel learned through the laws what we must learn through the Spirit. They learned, through cultivating faithful families, what God desires in relationship with all His people.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 6. The Hebrew root of the word *Nazirite* is *nazir* of *nezir*. It is associated with the principle of separation, abstinence, consecration and fasting. From time to time any person, including in our own day, might find it an appropriate time to set themselves apart to consider a matter of importance in their life, or to recommit themselves to God. This practice comes to us today more through the principle of fasting than through the physical actions of a Nazirite. The *Nazirite* set himself apart for a period to make a special vow. Paul the Apostle took a Nazirite vow, according to this tradition, as is recorded in the Book of Acts. He was an Israelite from the Tribe of Benjamin and carried on the tradition of his people in the prescribed manner.

Yeshua was also from the Tribes of Israel. He was from the Tribe of Judah. So when He said, at the Passover Meal before His Sacrificial death on the Cross, that He would not drink of the fruit of the vine again until the Kingdom of Heaven comes, He was taking a Nazirite vow. He is consecrated to God for us and still fulfilling this vow, even as we read this chapter today.

The Aaronic blessing ends this chapter. God desires to bless His people according to the words of this blessing. What more would anyone want than this? God's Covenant with Israel is so that He can bless His people. He desires to put His Name on His people. By bearing His Name, the world around would

see His character through the lives of His people. He wants a people in this world who are the visible evidence of who He is and what He is like. This is a great privilege. Though Israel as a whole failed to live up to this calling, Yeshua fulfilled it to the uttermost. Yahweh came to earth in Yeshua. How does He, Yahweh, put His Name on His people today? It is through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who seals us for salvation through faith in Yeshua. Through the Holy Spirit He also manifests spiritual gifts and ministries through His people, as the visible evidence of His Name and His character. God has not changed: the blessing is as valid today as it was at the time of Moses. Are we, all of His people together, the visible evidence on earth of the Father and the Son, a valid representation of His character, filled with His life, and living in His shalom? This is still His intention for His people.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 7. Each Tribe came forward, one Tribe each day, for twelve days, bearing their offering. A wonderful beginning was made for the pilgrimage through the wilderness. After the inauguration of the ministry of the Tabernacle, came the response of all the people. What a wonderful sense of peace, through the Lord's presence, came to the camp over those days. This was a taste of Heaven on earth. Oh that it could have been maintained through all the days of Israel's journey! This same taste of Heaven is for us today. It is being fulfilled through Yeshua's offering to God for all the Tribes of the Israel of God and for all who are being added to His people from the nations of the world. This is the peace that Yeshua brings through the New Covenant. God spoke to Israel when the offerings were made in the wilderness. One day we all will hear His voice again, when everything is ordered in the Kingdom of Heaven in fulfillment of what Israel experienced all those years ago.

Special gifts of oxen and carts were given to the Levites for their ministry, to help bear their burdens. The Koathites, however, were to bear their burdens on their own shoulders. They were appointed to carry the Tabernacle's holy things through the wilderness. Look back at Chapter 4, where the ministry of the Koathites was described. They alone were to carry the holy vessels of the Tabernacle and they were to do so in the prescribed manner. Any other way would lead to death. This speaks of Yeshua. The pattern of the Tabernacle represents the plan of salvation. No one else could carry this burden other than Yeshua. There is no other way to the Father than through His appointed sacrifice on the cross that was carried to the site of the Crucifixion. Yeshua also told us to take up our cross (our daily burden for the sake of the Kingdom) and follow Him. The Ministry of the Tabernacle teaches us about the order and importance of God's way – there is no other way than through obedience to Him. One way – the burden of salvation was carried only on the shoulders of Yeshua, and those chosen to share His ongoing ministry are appointed by Him alone. Any other way results in death not life.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 8. Now we come to the ministry of the Tabernacle. Seven lamps were hung on the lampstand by Aaron, and were to burn continually before God. The Levites were then consecrated for service. No one else could approach God in the Tabernacle, or plague would come upon them. Remember that the Tabernacle is a representation of a heavenly reality. The book of Revelation contains a number of experiences of the Apostle John when he was taken up to heaven in the Spirit. One of his visions was of the sevenfold Spirit of God before the throne. When Aaron lit the lamps in the Tabernacle he was performing a ministry in harmony with the heavenly reality. The seven lamps before the Holiest Place were representative of what John saw in Heaven. It is no wonder that Moses was given precise instructions for the Tabernacle.

As we read this chapter today, we might meditate upon the order of our own ministries in the Church. Sometimes, because we know that we are no longer under the curse of the law (the punishments for

disobedience), we tend to become ill-disciplined, even irreverent in our communal gatherings. Surely, we must learn of God's desire for order and reverence from these chapters of Numbers. We, who believe that Yeshua HaMashiach is the High Priest of the New Covenant, are called to be sanctified by His Spirit. We, in Him, are the lights before the Throne of God, called to give thanks and to intercede for others. Our privilege is even greater than that of the Levites, and of Aaron who hung up the lamps.

The Levites learned how to minister to God and to the people. They entered the ministry from the age of 25 years. Previously we learned that they ministered from the age of 30 to the age of 50. The first five years of service would have been like an apprenticeship, where they learned from the older Levites. These older Levites retired from active service at the age of 50 to serve the younger generation who were being prepared for ministry. These are points of teaching for us. We would do well to consider this, in the ordering of our own communities

\*\*\*\*\*

## Day 3

Revelation Chapters 1 to 4. Before we continue our readings from Numbers, let us turn to the first part of the Book of Revelation. This is the last book of the Bible. It is a very important book, yet hard to understand. At the time when John received some profound prophetic visions, the Christian Church of the day was suffering persecution. It was comparable to the time when the Israelites were persecuted in Egypt and also the time when they were exiled to Babylon. In Egypt, God delivered his people with amazing miracles. In Babylon, Daniel had dramatic visions of the future. These visions were for encouragement in the present circumstances and promises for the future. It was like this when John recorded his visions in the Book of Revelation. It was both for encouragement at the time of persecution in those days and also a prophecy for the future. There were also messages of correction to be sent to the church congregations. Yeshua is seen as moving among His people. He is the fulfillment of the Covenant made with Abraham. At the time when God cut the Covenant with Abraham, a smoking oven and a flaming torch passed between the dead animals (Genesis 15). When God dwelt among His people in the wilderness it was, likewise, in a pillar of smoke and a pillar of fire. The picture of Yeshua in the Book of Revelation reminds us of the awesome ways God has been among His people in throughout history. This vision from the unseen heavens should inspire us to understand more fully God's purposes for His Church on earth.

The truths of the Bible interweave through the Scriptures. The Bible is not a book where we are set a puzzle to solve, but it is a book full of truth that is veiled to the unbeliever. We must seek in order to find. It is like this with the Book of Revelation. The visions that John was shown have meaning for all of God's people and are to be studied in the context of the entire Bible.

We will read just four verses of the Book of Revelation today. These chapters are relevant to what we are reading in the Book of Numbers. We will return to the Book of Revelation at other times to further explore the prophecies within the Book. These prophecies relate to other parts of the Bible as well.

\*\*\*\*\*

Revelation Chapter 1. When Aaron was anointed as High Priest he set up the golden lampstand. The Hebrew name for a lampstand is *Menorah*. Because of the seven branches on the Menorah, it is used as a symbol relating to a number of biblical truths, such as seven days of the week and seven Feasts of the Lord. Sometimes we try to force too much into the symbolism and we must be careful. How will it speak to us today?

Most pictures of the Menorah show it as having seven branches each with a light on top – all one piece. The description of the Menorah in Exodus and in Numbers is not quite like this. The lampstand itself is beaten out of one piece of gold. The seven lamps are then hung on the lampstand. The lamps themselves are not part of the one piece of gold that formed the stand itself. Aaron hung these lamps on the side facing the Holiest Place where God brought His Presence to dwell in the midst of the camp.

The Menorah was part of what Moses was shown on the mountain and a representation of a heavenly reality. When Aaron ministered among the lamps he was engaged in an earthly ministry touching a heavenly reality.

Yeshua is now the High Priest ministering not in the earthly Tabernacle but in the heavenly reality. John saw this in the Spirit. Before He became the Son of Man, Yeshua was already the Son of God, dwelling with the Father in the highest heaven. Aaron's High Priestly ministry brought to earth the image of what was in heaven. Yeshua is the beginning and the end. For a period of time God's people were taught

through the earthly Tabernacle. Yeshua was in the beginning. Now John was allowed to see the heavenly reality – the end purpose in Yeshua.

When the seven lamps of the Tabernacle burned they were representative of the seven-fold Spirit of God in the unseen spiritual world. Just as Aaron ministered among the lamps, so Yeshua ministers as High Priest of the New Covenant, in the heavenly reality of the lamps.

The Tabernacle in the wilderness is gone, along with the Temple, because it was intended for a limited purpose. It did not fulfill that purpose completely because God's people must be reborn through the Spirit of God. Israel's failure to obey the entire Law was to help us to understand our need. John was shown higher revelations so that we might learn, with all the Israel of God, the great height to which we are now called. The Tabernacle was on earth. John was taken up to see the heavenly reality where Yeshua ministers before the throne of God.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapters 2 and 3. John was given messages for the seven Churches in Asia. Seven is the number of the Menorah. It is symbolic. A church is a gathering of the Lord's people in a certain area. The word *church* is used in our Bible translations. The Greek from which the word comes is *ekklesia*, meaning a group of people *called out*. Israel was *called out* of Egypt to become an assembly of God's people. They were to learn to live by faith. They were a worshipping community, a living witness to the God of Abraham on this earth. The command to Pharaoh was, "Let my people go that they may serve me."

In the Last Days, communities of God's people are called out to serve Him from all over the world. They are now like the lamps of the Menorah shining before the Throne of God. That is the link between the seven lamps on the Menorah and the seven churches. When Yeshua came, it was to regather and reform the community of faith, fulfilling the types and shadows of the wilderness community. He sent His Holy Spirit like flames of fire to burn in His people. Thus the imagery of the lamps burning on the menorah became the reality of the Spirit of God in His people. The seven assemblies in Asia were not the only churches of the day, but they represent all the churches in that day and throughout the years. They were to be like lamps burning before the heavenly Altar and as a visible witness in the world. It was not that each congregation should have one aspect of the sevenfold Spirit of God, but that the Spirit of God, shown as a seven-fold Spirit to John, should burn brightly in all of the assemblies of God. This is the greater fulfillment of the ministry of the Tabernacle. Aaron ministered through the earthly type; Yeshua ministers among His people as the New Covenant reality. There is a fulfillment yet to come when God's people will be transformed into the final heavenly reality. For now, we must learn to live and witness on this earth in the manner to which we are appointed. Filled with the Holy Spirit, in Yeshua, we are to be the fulfillment to which the menorah pointed.

It is one thing to compare the congregations of God's people with the Tabernacle - even this should fill us with awe. It is even greater to compare us with the fuller heavenly reality. John was allowed to see into this heavenly reality to give a wake-up call to the congregations of his day and through all the ages. The truth of the matter is that, despite all that Yeshua has done, we fall short of our calling.

The seven churches of Asia illustrate what has been discovered in local assemblies over all the years. There is strength and there is weakness, and there is always a call to stand firm in the faith and persevere. Read the letters, and note down the characteristics of the churches, both good and bad. The same message comes to every assembly today. Each has a specific character. From time to time we need to be renewed by the Holy Spirit to burn more brightly, or have our light removed. This is the same Holy Spirit who ministered from heaven at the time of Aaron, and who also came to all of God's



people after the Resurrection of Yeshua. We find patterns and principles in the Tabernacle and from the seven churches in Asia. We may be convicted by some of the letters to these churches. The main teaching in all of the letters is, *listen to what the Spirit says*.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 4. This Chapter is intended for an encouragement. Let us first review what we read in chapters 1 to 3. In Chapter 1, we saw how John had a special visionary revelation of the risen Lord. In Chapters 2 and 3, he was shown the reality of the state of the church congregations. Each of these congregations needed a fresh vision of the heavenly reality which was to come to earth through them. This is symbolized by the Tabernacle ministry, but now more fully accomplished through the Holy Spirit dwelling in the people of God. Yet, we learn that the earthly reality of the heavenly light can soon grow dim. The earthly reality is not the full manifestation of the Heavenly Kingdom, but the vision given to John was to encourage the assemblies of believers, in his day and in our day, to be stronger in the things of God, not dimmed by the world around. Having been shown the reality of the churches John was again shown the heavenly vision. This heavenly reality will one day be fulfilled completely. Our present circumstances on this earth are limited because we remain in bodies of flesh, but we must, like the lamps on the menorah of Aaron's day, keep burning for the Lord, overcoming earthly limitations rather than letting them overcome us.

The purpose of turning to these chapters of Revelation in the context of reading Numbers is to see how the pattern of Aaron's ministry points to Yeshua, so that we can continue to learn relevant truths from the journey of Israel through the wilderness.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Day 4

Numbers Chapter 9. In the Letter to the Hebrews we read that the Tabernacle and Priestly ministry was *a copy and shadow of the heavenly things*. In Hebrews we also read of *the law, having a shadow of the good things to come*. We are not told that it was *only a shadow*, as if it has little value. Compared with the heavenly reality, it was to be understood as a temporary means of pointing to Yeshua's ministry. A shadow is an indistinct image of the real thing. We see its form but do not distinguish its details. There was once a man whom Yeshua healed of his blindness in two stages (Mark 8:22-25). The first time the Lord touched Him he said, "I see men like trees, walking." They were indistinct images – shadows one might say. Then the Lord touched Him a second time and the man saw clearly. It is like this regarding the shadows of the Old Covenant. The Priests of the Old Covenant were ministering within a system that was an exact representation of what was to come - the form but not the full substance. We can build our understanding on the same foundations as the Children of Israel by studying the form that was later fulfilled. So then, having taken one day to consider the fulfillment in the Kingdom of Heaven, as it was shown to John, let us continue to set the foundations of our understanding by pursuing our studies in the Books of Torah.

Israel left Egypt after the first Passover. They left Sinai after the second Passover. God established the yearly cycle with the Feast of Passover. All Israel must celebrate the Feast so rules were made for circumstances that might occur from time to time to prevent the normal celebration of the Feast. The Passover was established as the beginning of the new year. This points to the new beginning that Yeshua brought through His own Passover Sacrifice.

Israel moved when God moved and camped when He rested. This teaches us that we must move with Him too. The Holy Spirit was sent to live within all true disciples of the Lord. We must learn to obey His prompts to move or to rest, just as Israel learned to follow the pillar of cloud and of fire. Yeshua taught us this through His own life and ministry. He did only what the Father was doing. It should be the same for us.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 10. *He teaches our hands to make war*. This is written in Psalm 18 and is a constant theme in the Bible. In the reality of life on this earth God knew that enemies would rise up against Israel. The census was primarily to count the number of the men who could be armed for battle. Having reached a certain age, each man was part of God's army. God mobilized His people as a family, and also as an army.

He made provision for the sounding of alarm through silver trumpets when the enemy was to be resisted. We might wonder how this applies to us.

Yeshua said clearly that there would be wars and rumours of wars right to the end of the age and that we must not be alarmed. Yet we must also be careful how to interpret the teaching in Numbers as in other passages of Scripture. In Psalm after Psalm, for example, there is a call for the defeat of the enemies of Israel. Should we repeat these Psalms with an expectation of waging war on our physical enemies? Sometimes in the history of the nations just wars have been waged when a tyrannical nation has risen to oppose the purposes of God. There will be, however, less and less of God's law and justice governing the nations in the end days. The antichrist will rise and deception will rise to a peak in the world. Will there be even one righteous nation who stands as a witness to God and can be used in a righteous war? The battle is mainly moving into the unseen domain.

Our enemies are spiritual in nature. These spiritual enemies manifest their evil in the nations of the world. This was so at the time of Israel in Bible history. Israel fought the spiritual battle through waging war on the physical enemies under the sway of the evil one. The main lesson we learn now, through Israel's battles, is the nature of our spiritual adversaries. It was our spiritual enemies that the Lord Yeshua disarmed on the Cross. These are still our spiritual enemies, doing their evil from the unseen world through lies and deception. Our victory is through faith in Yeshua, since they have no weapon with which to defeat us if we abide in Him. Therefore, we learn about this unseen warfare through the principles of Torah and through the physical warfare that is recorded. From time to time we, too, may hear from the Lord, "Sound the alarm!". This is because our spiritual enemies will rise up to oppose us. We too, the covenant people of God, are a fighting force and must be awake to the task just as Israel was. We are still, in a certain sense, an army on the march through the wilderness. Yet, our adversaries are spiritual and our weapons are spiritual.

Consider this as you read about the Tribes of Israel marching forward from Sinai in battle formation, with standards flying.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 11. This is a very sad chapter! Does it remind us about ourselves? The Lord had done what was impossible for the people. He had delivered them from bondage and, despite their great number, fed them manna in the desert. He wanted them to trust Him, but here we have them weeping and complaining again. They are fearful for the future. They miss the "luxuries" of Egypt. They would prefer bondage with variety of food than freedom with God! It was even too much for Moses and so Moses complained to God too! They wanted meat, did they? Well, alright, said the Lord, you shall have enough meat to make you sick of it! What a sad day, but does this remind us of ourselves when the going gets a little tough? Faith has to be tested. This means that we grow in faith through the exercise of our faith. We are growing too, like the Israelites needed to do. How are we doing compared with them? Think about this a little today. The sin of complaining is still, unfortunately, evident among the people of God!

The burden was too much for Moses and so the Holy Spirit fell upon 70 elders to help him with the ministry.

The burden was not too great for Yeshua. No complaint came from Him even on the Cross. He is our leader now, but Moses prayer was also answered – *Oh that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!* This began to be fulfilled on the day that the Spirit was poured out on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), and fulfilled what was also prophesied by Joel. The Lord said *I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh* and that is what He is doing in the generation of those who come to Him through faith today. The manifestation of the Spirit of the Lord comes in the ministry of prophecy – speaking out whatever Spiritual Word God places in us. This is sometimes manifest in spiritual languages, sometimes in miracles, sometimes in wisdom, or encouragement, pastoral care, evangelism, hospitality, teaching, sometimes understanding the times, or whatever other ministry the Lord manifests through us. It began here in the wilderness with Moses. Moses was the sole leader of Israel but then the ministry was shared among those anointed for the task. Now, all true disciples of the Lord share in His ministry in a diversity of ways to build up His body to maturity – we are the prophetic people for whom Moses prayed.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 12. The complaining did not abate. This time Miriam decided that she had a grievance and challenged the leadership of Moses. Our readings today began with a reminder of Passover. The Israelites celebrated Passover for the second time and then began their journey from Sinai. Passover brings a reminder of God's deliverance from Egypt through His appointment of Moses. Miriam challenged his leadership. This was the same Miriam who had put Moses into an ark in the river, watched God protect him in the courts of Pharaoh, and witnessed every step of his life and ministry. God was angry and Miriam became a leper. God confirmed His calling on Moses with a rebuke to Miriam. Yet, He was also gracious to Miriam and only banned her from the community for seven days, like a naughty child, sent away to think about what she had done!

Let us learn from these incidents. We have one leader and His Name is Yeshua. We might not always understand what He is doing, how or why He is doing it. We may look at our circumstances and the world around us and think that He is not really leading us anywhere. We have the tendency to invent ideas of our own as to how God's people should be led or how we should conduct our lives. Beware of this!

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians about the taking of Communion, he mentioned that there were sick among them because they met together and did not discern the Lord's body as they should (1 Corinthians 11). Communion derives from the celebration of Passover. This takes us back to the context of our chapter today where Miriam became sick, shortly after the Passover celebration, when she did not properly discern what God was doing through Moses. Now, at our Communion celebrations we must ensure that we discern what the Lord is doing through Yeshua among His people. It is our opportunity to renew fellowship with one another as we also remember Him.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Day 5

Chapter 13. The lesson that we learn from this chapter is relevant through all ages. It is an accurate historical account of the Children of Israel and we must remember this. That is the first emphasis of the reading. Then we can go on to learn what the Holy Spirit would teach us from their history. Even on foot, the journey from Egypt to the borders of Canaan did not take long to complete, yet the journey was extended to a full forty years. In theory the Israelites could have gone straight into the Promised Land after the spies returned with their reports, but there was a problem. They had two things to report. The first was that the land was indeed as the Lord had promised – a land flowing with milk and honey. What does this mean? Were the rivers made of milk and honey rather than flowing with water? No. They were to inherit this land and to be workers in the land in partnership with God. Their land had all the potential for milk and honey. God had prepared a fruitful land for them to live in. It was a land of green vegetation on which flocks could feed, and of flowers from which bees could extract nectar. The fruitfulness of the land was proved through the abundance of the grapes, pomegranates and figs that they brought back. God was true to His word!

Yet, there was a second report. There were giants in the land and it brought fear to all but two of the spies! They saw the promise, but they also saw the problems – and the problems caused them to doubt the promises.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 14. The doubts of the ten spies spread like a disease among the Israelites and so fear spread throughout the camp and complaining began once more. Only Joshua and Caleb stood firm in faith. They knew that God would deliver the giants into their hands; but the congregation wanted to stone them as false prophets.

Moses was tested once more. He stood before God on behalf of the people to ask that they be delivered from under the death sentence that God would have put them all under. They were reprieved of the immediate death sentence, but judged, nevertheless. All but two of those who had been numbered at the census were to die in the wilderness. None of this generation, except Joshua and Caleb, would enter the Promised Land. These two men of faith would live through forty years in the wilderness and lead the remainder of the people into the wilderness. Even Moses would not cross the Jordan into Canaan. The generation who were numbered in the wilderness – the ones over twenty years of age, the men of war – they would all die. Not until then would the younger generation be allowed into the Promised Land. The Lord sent a plague among the ten spies who had lacked faith and they died there and then. The word was spoken and despite a change of mind from the people to try and enter the land, the attempt failed. This is a profound teaching about standing firm in faith for the promises of God. Israel had no second chance.

There are very important principles. We are learning from the failures of a nation who could not live up to God's standards. We are like this in our natural man. Even with the gift of the Holy Spirit to live in us, sometimes we still allow our natural man to dominate us, which inhibits the growth of our spiritual nature. Fear of the circumstances of this life can encompass us despite the promises of God growing in us. We have a promised land ahead of us too – all that God, through Yeshua, has purposed for us. It is to be taken by faith, and, as the writer to the Hebrews said, we must boldly enter in. Yeshua's Name is related to the name Joshua. Joshua led his people into the Promised Land. Yeshua leads us into the Kingdom of Heaven. For all who are being prepared for salvation from Israel and all of the nations, the promise is fulfilled in Yeshua. We confront giants too – the seemingly impossible situations of our lives

that war against our flesh and subdue our spirits. Our reading of the warnings to the seven churches of Revelation show us that it is possible for the light of faith and service to diminish in our congregations, bringing the same condemnation from God as was given to Israel on the edge of the Promised Land. Serious lessons!

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 15. It is wonderful to read the first verses of this chapter. If we had stood with Israel at the borders of Canaan, suffered the rebuke from the Lord and been left to wander for 40 years to wait for a generation to die, we would not have expected these words to come so quickly – *When you have come into the land that you are to inhabit, which I am giving you. When, not if!* Each generation of God’s people looks forward to the fulfillment of God’s promises. It may not be our generation that sees a particular fulfillment, but we are a people linked together through the present, out of the past, and into the future. A generation may die, but the promise of God still stands.

Israel was once again reminded of the sacrifices and offerings that brought them into fellowship with God through faith. The entry to Canaan was delayed, but the promise remained and the preparations continued. God did not abandon His people. He had made a covenant with Abraham and that covenant was to be fulfilled. In the more distant future the true meaning of that covenant was also going to be fulfilled – eternal salvation through Yeshua for all who would live by faith. This is one reason why the man who did not observe the Sabbath day was put to death. Remember the Sabbath Day is an eternal commandment fulfilled in Yeshua – a visible testimony to the God of Creation. Tassles on the fringes of the men’s garments were, similarly, to be a continual reminder of God’s laws. God kept His people in the wilderness for further instruction and did not abandon them or change His requirements of them. They spent forty years learning their lessons thoroughly.

Pause and reflect on all God’s promises. They are fulfilled in Yeshua despite every problem that is before us. Remember when He went, in a boat, with His disciples across the lake and a storm arose. The storm made the disciples fear for their lives. The Lord was asleep in the boat but awoke to still the storm. He had said that they were going to the other side of the lake and that was where they were going! Take courage in your own life despite problems that sometimes arise to dampen our faith. The Lord is taking us to the promised destination that He has prepared for us – come what may. It may seem that there is a long delay in His coming, but come He will!

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 16. Once again there is layer upon layer of teaching in an incident from the wilderness years. This time Korah rose up in rebellion against Moses. God has a structure for His authority. It is for Him to choose whom He will appoint for the various offices and responsibilities among His people. God’s ways are not our ways so we must be careful not to usurp authority but to seek to find our own role and purpose before God. The plague on Israel was a very real incident as was the moment when the ground opened up to swallow Korah and those who followed him into rebellion. In this chapter we have an important and relevant study about authority. Yeshua is now the One whom God the Father has appointed with *all authority* to lead us to the eternal Kingdom. As Mary, His mother, said at the wedding in Cana, “Whatever He says to you, do it.” As the Father said on the Mount of Transfiguration, “This is My Beloved Son, Listen to Him.” Congregations of believers will only be strong under the authority of Yeshua, who strengthens His Church through gifts and ministries of the Holy Spirit. Each one is appointed according to His choosing.

Some people do not like to think of a real Hell, which is likened to a pit. If Korah and those who rebelled against Moses were swallowed up in a pit, then we should also take seriously the fate of those who rebel against Yeshua.

Moses interceded for Israel and made atonement for them. The wrath of God turned away from the Israelites once more. Yeshua lives to intercede for His people in fulfillment of this experience in the wilderness. We have all sinned and fallen short of God's plan and listened to the voices that rise up against God in a rebellious world. Thank God for His Son Yeshua who stands in the gap for us, but we must respond to His authoritative voice. All who remain rebels will perish like Korah.

\*\*\*\*\*

Psalm 2. Include this Psalm as part of your meditations today. It draws on the principles that we have studied from the days of Moses, and shows us their fulfillment through Yeshua. The world around us is rising in rebellion once more. This rebellion will reach a peak, but the enemies of God will come under His wrath and judgement at the appointed time. This is like the judgement on Korah at the time of Moses. Now it is Yeshua who is forever the One who rules and reigns.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Day 6

Chapter 17. This chapter is in the context of the rebellion of Korah, when the order of God's authority was reconfirmed. The authority of Aaron as High Priest was confirmed through the miraculous budding of his rod compared with all the other rods. It produced buds overnight: it had also produced blossoms and ripe almonds – all the seasons in one day! This was to be a constant reminder as to God's order of authority – only one way.

There is further symbolism in the budding of an almond branch. The Hebrew word for *almond* is *shaqed*. This symbol is used again in Jeremiah 1:11-13, where God shows the prophet a vision of an almond branch. He said, to Jeremiah, "What do you see?" Jeremiah answered that he saw the branch of an almond tree- *shaqed*. God then said that he was watching over His Word to perform it. The Hebrew for *watch* is *shaqad*, the same as *almond* except for a slight change of pronunciation. The almond branch was used as a symbol of God brooding over His Word. Jeremiah was from a priestly family and would have known about Aaron's rod. He would have appreciated the imagery strengthened through the Hebrew word-play. At the time of Moses, of Jeremiah and throughout all time the authority of God's Word is performed only in the way He appointed it to be – He continues to brood , *shaqed*, over His Word. That is why Aaron's Rod budded and produced almonds.

This reminds us of Yeshua, who used the words *I AM*, about Himself, making it known clearly that He is the chosen Word of God made flesh. In Him is all authority. There is no spiritual bud, flower or fruit outside of Him – only one way. What about all the religions of the world that claim to show a person an alternative way to God? What about all the world leaders who seek authority outside of being appointed by God through Yeshua? They are, like the rods that did not bud – lifeless. What about the evidence of the authority of Yeshua in His disciples? True fruit of the Kingdom is the evidence of the indwelling Spirit of God within.

John 15:5 – *I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 18. The ministry of intercession is *work*. Aaron's ministry illustrates this work of intercession. He was to *bear the iniquity* of the community before God. The central task of the Levitical Priesthood was to care about the community, be conscious of the sin of the community and stand at the Altar of Incense on behalf of the people. Their lives were devoted to the ministry of intercession above all else.

This gives us a picture of Yeshua on the Cross. *Father forgive them for they know not what they do*, was His High Priestly prayer. That prayer is still being prayed today and all who are appointed to the ministry of intercession share in this burden of prayer. As Paul said (Colossians 1:24), *I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church*. This too is the work of intercession, shared with our High Priest, Yeshua.

Those who were called to full time ministry were to be provided for by the tithes of the people. There is a wonderful principle of tithing within this chapter. Those in full time ministry on behalf of the people were to receive enough for them and their family. The tithe was first to be tithed to God, illustrating that the gifts were first given to Him. The Levites could then retain their portion as if they had worked in the fields for it. If this was done in obedience, then God honoured the tithe and the Levites could take their portion home and use it for their household. The tithe that they offered up as a heave offering was



holy and not to be taken home, but consumed in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle by Aaron and his sons. It was God's portion shared with them.

We understand the teaching of these chapters by the power of God's Spirit. He will show us the holiness that is within these teachings and He will inspire us as to their relevance today. You will find yourself desiring God's order and sanctification in your life as you read and pray through the Scriptures. This particular chapter reminds us of what Yeshua said to the Church of Laodicea, *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will eat with him, and he with me.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 19. Here again we have practices for the Levitical Priesthood that teach us about deep spiritual truths. Yeshua told us that He came to bring life in all its fullness. God wants life and light in this world. So the principle of a person being unclean through touching a dead body is to teach us about emphasizing life and not death. The Red Heifer was to be absolutely pure and became the means for sanctifying the priests. It was to be killed outside the camp. After the prescribed rituals were performed it was the means of cleansing someone who was unclean. These principles still apply. There is no place for the unclean in the Kingdom of God. Just as the Red Heifer was killed outside the camp, so was Yeshua sacrificed outside the City of Jerusalem. Anyone who is not cleansed (sanctified, made holy) through Him remains unclean. Sin brings death and we all have touched death through our sin. Just as the Heifer's ashes were mixed with water and poured onto the unclean person in Moses' day, so Yeshua comes to us in His Spirit to cleanse us from our sin when we come to Him in faith. He came to bring us life in all its fullness. Through his death comes life. That principle is learned through the Red Heifer.

The rituals of the Tabernacle may seem to be strange, but they are exact shadows of the continuing order of God, now fulfilled in Yeshua. They are recorded to help us understand how to approach God through Yeshua, and what He will do for us.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 20. Miriam died in the wilderness. She was Moses' sister. She placed him among the bulrushes in Egypt, so that Moses would live to be the leader of Israel. She saw him grow and accompanied him, along with all Israel, out of Egypt. She rejoiced with her tambourine, leading the other women, when they were delivered through the Red Sea. She contended for authority, was made leprous and healed. She journeyed day after day, but never went into the Promised Land. Her death is recorded in just one sentence of this chapter.

It was the first month - the Passover would be celebrated in that month to remind all the people what God had done for them.

Once more, they were thirsty – and complained.

Moses bowed in humility before God and was given the authority to perform yet another miracle. Water would pour forth from a rock at his command. For once, Moses became impatient. Was it not reasonable that there should be water to drink? No-one can live for long in the wilderness without water. Was it not reasonable that God should provide water and understand the moaning and understand that Moses was justified in being impatient? Water did indeed come out of the rock, but Moses struck it twice and not once. He was, therefore, prohibited from leading God's people into the Promised Land!

God is not fickle. Moses will inherit eternal life as well as us! He lived by faith and his faith pointed to Yeshua. But God's teaching cannot be compromised. Paul taught the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 10:4), *And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.* Paul taught us that what was experienced in the wilderness were examples through which God would teach us. Even Moses suffered God's discipline so that God's teaching would not be compromised. Yeshua is the rock from whom Spiritual life flows, likened to pure clear water. He was sacrificed (struck) once by God and we must accept this by faith once and for all. It is no use becoming impatient as God works out His purposes and, through impatience, distort His work and His Word. Moses had to teach us this through the consequence of his actions. The Rock, Yeshua, was struck once and once only, just as the rock in the wilderness was to be struck once only in faith.

Edom would come under God's judgement because they would not allow Israel to share in their water. Here is another issue for our meditations.

Aaron was next to die. He died in dignity on Mount Hor after Eleazar was appointed High Priest in His place, but die he did, according to God's Word.

This account is intended to show us, through many examples, the seriousness of God's Word, and also seriousness concerning our ministries and the order of God's Kingdom. What do you hear the Holy Spirit saying to you today? Ask for understanding of what you read here.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Day 7

### A Day for Rest and Further Reflection

Take an opportunity to prayerfully consider what you have studied this week. It would be a good idea to go over some of the Scriptures again, especially if you did not pay enough attention to some of the details. Another suggestion would be to read the Book of Hebrews again and prayerfully consider once more how Yeshua fulfills the shadows of the Torah. See how you are led by the Holy Spirit and do whatever He tells you.

\*\*\*\*\*