



Volume III

By

Mark McGee

Chapter Twenty-Five

And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: ‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel. Exodus 19:3-6

The children of Israel are now ready for the next step in their training to reign with God. If they obey His voice and keep His covenant, they will be to God ‘a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’

Obeying God

Obeying God is the second of five ‘absolutes’ we are using to share how God ‘Trains to Reign.’ The first absolute is to believe in One True God (Monotheism). The second absolute is to Fear God and Obey Him. God had proven Himself worthy of believing to be the One True God. Now it was time for Israel to fear Him and obey Him. How would God do it?

God prepared the people of Israel to meet Him in a far more ‘personal’ way. God had spoken to Moses, who had spoken to the people. The time had come for God to move His Presence closer to His people. He would ‘descend’ on Mount Sinai in view of the people. Preparation included the following –

- Moses was to consecrate the people
- The people were to wash their clothes
- The men were not to ‘come near’ their wives (sexually) during the three days of preparation

- God would 'come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight all the people'
- Moses was to set bounds for the people and their animals so no one would touch the mountain and die
- When the people heard 'the trumpet sounds long,' they would come near the mountain

Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. Then the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on

the top of the mountain. And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. Exodus 19:16-20

Imagine being an Israelite on that great day. The God of Creation came down upon Mount Sinai in your view. The whole mountain quaked and smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace. You are standing at the foot of the mountain, taking in the greatness of your God. Why was God doing this?

Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw *it*, they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, ‘You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.’ And Moses said to the people, ‘Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin.’ So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God *was*. Exodus 20:18-21

The answer is simple: God was training His people to reign with Him on earth – ‘for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin.’ The people were afraid, but Moses drew back to the thick darkness where God was.

God made two primary points in His first speech to the children of Israel –

1. God alone is the One True God – ‘You shall have no other gods before Me.’
2. The people were to treat each other with honor and respect – ‘Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.’

This reminds me of how Jesus answered the scribe's question about, 'Which is the first commandment of all?'

Jesus answered him, 'The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these. Mark 12:29-31

Ten Commandments?

Your Bible may have a heading for Exodus 20 that reads ‘The Ten Commandments.’ I remember going to the theatre with my father when I was a young child to watch a new movie with Charlton Heston titled ‘The Ten Commandments.’ The 1956 classic played a role in leading many people to think of God’s commands to Israel as numbering ‘Ten.’ While I agree that the *Ten Commandments* certainly encapsulates the ‘spirit’ of God’s Law, there are far more than ‘Ten Commandments’ in the Mosaic Law. The real number is in the ‘hundreds.’

The next several chapters of Exodus and Leviticus include many of those Laws. Here’s a quick look at some of the legal categories where you’ll find the specifics of the Laws (using the headings from the New King James Version). Keep in mind that this is just a list of some of the ‘categories’ of God’s Law. The specific Laws in each category make the number of ‘Commandments’ much higher in number –

- The Law of the Altar
- The Law Concerning Servants
- The Law Concerning Violence
- Animal Control Laws
- Responsibility for Property (Property Laws)
- Moral and Ceremonial Principles
- Justice for All
- The Law of Sabbaths
- Three Annual Feasts
- Offerings for the Sanctuary
- The Ark of the Testimony
- The Table for the Showbread
- The Gold Lampstand
- The Tabernacle
- The Altar of Burnt Offering
- The Court of the Tabernacle
- The Care of the Lampstand

- Garments for the Priesthood
- The Ephod
- The Breastplate
- Other Priestly Garments
- Aaron and His Sons Consecrated
- The Daily Offerings
- The Altar of Incense
- The Ransom Money
- The Bronze Laver
- The Holy Anointing Oil
- The Incense
- The Burnt Offering
- The Grain Offering
- The Peace Offering
- The Sin Offering
- The Trespass Offering
- Offerings with Restitution

- Foods Permitted and Forbidden
- The Ritual After Childbirth
- The Law Concerning Leprosy
- The Law Concerning Leprous Garments
- The Law Concerning Leprous Houses
- The Law Concerning Bodily Discharges
- Laws of Sexual Morality
- Moral and Ceremonial Laws
- Penalties for Breaking the Law

I'll stop there because of how long this article is becoming. Imagine again that you are an Israelite and you hear Moses describe God's Laws in lengthy detail. How are you supposed to even remember them all – less obey them all? Imagine what the Israelites thought when they heard Jesus Christ say this centuries later –

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:17-20

Jesus Christ is the only Israelite who actually kept every Law of God. Keeping hundreds of Laws was a seemingly physical impossibility, yet Jesus kept them all. How? He was God in Flesh. Only God could keep His own Laws.

So, what was the purpose of the Law if no one but God could keep them? The answer is right in front of us –

What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one ... Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. Galatians 3:19-20, 24-25

God used His Law to train Israel to understand that their ability to ‘subdue’ the earth and ‘reign’ with Him was not in their power, but in His promise of ‘the Seed’ to whom ‘the promise was made.

Chapter Twenty-Six

And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel. Genesis 3:15

Remember God's promise to one day destroy the seed of the serpent through the 'Seed' of the woman? We know who the Seed is because of 1 John 3:8 (among many other New Testament Scriptures) –

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

We know that the 'Seed' would come from Eve, but which of her children would carry the 'Seed' forward? We've seen that it was through her son Seth, his son Enosh, and their lineage to Noah. Noah's son Shem would carry forward the promised 'Seed' through his descendants to Abram. Abram would carry forward the promised 'Seed' through Isaac (the son of promise) and his son Jacob. We next learned from Jacob's

prophecies concerning his twelve sons that the Seed would carry forward through Judah –

Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise; Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; Your father's children shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion's whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; And as a lion, who shall rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people. Binding his donkey to the vine, And his donkey's colt to the choice vine, He washed his garments in wine, And his clothes in the blood of grapes. His eyes are darker than wine, And his teeth whiter than milk. Genesis 49:8-12

Jesus Christ is the 'Lion of the Tribe of Judah' (Revelation 5:5), which is proof that the Jacob's prophecy was accurate – 'The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him *shall be* the obedience of the people.'

However, given all that we've seen happen so far in God leading the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage and giving them His Law at Mount Sinai, have you seen any of the descendants of Judah mentioned by name? We know they must have made it because King David was from the Tribe of Judah, and of course Jesus Christ is the 'Lion of the Tribe of Judah,' but where do we find the lineage of Judah pushing the 'Seed' forward in the wilderness?

Judah in the Wilderness

The family of Judah is not mentioned by name until Exodus 31. That's when God commanded Moses concerning the artisans who would build the tabernacle –

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 'See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of workmanship. Exodus 31:1-5

You might notice that Bezalel, the artisan, was the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. Remember Hur? He was one of the two men who held Moses' hand up as he held the 'rod of God' during the war with Amalek (Exodus 17). The tribe of Judah continued to be invaluable to Israel's success as it carried the 'Seed' of the woman who would destroy the 'seed' of the serpent.

God called Bezalel and filled him with 'the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all *manner of* workmanship, to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all *manner of* workmanship.' Bezalel from the Tribe of Judah was involved in all aspects of building the Tabernacle, including teaching others how to do the necessary work –

And He has put in his heart the ability to teach, in him and Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. He has filled them with skill to do all manner of work of the engraver and the designer and the tapestry maker, in blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine linen, and of the weaver—those who do every work and those who design artistic works. Exodus 35:34-35

The Tabernacle was a ‘portable’ Temple or worship center for God (*mishkan*, מִשְׁכָּן – ‘to dwell, dwelling place’) was a complex structure, as you can read in Exodus 36. The entire structure was surrounded by a ‘fence’ and had only one ‘entrance.’ The people of Israel would regularly bring their offerings to the priests in what was called the ‘Courtyard’ or ‘Outer Court.’ The Courtyard had a bronze altar where the priests would perform the sacrifices and wash their hands. That’s as far as the people (non-priests) could go. The priests would then enter into the ‘Tent’ that contained two rooms, separated by a large veil. The first room, known as the ‘Holy Place,’ contained an altar of incense where the priests were to burn a special incense to God each morning and evening as a reminder of God’s Presence there, a golden lampstand that

was to be kept burning continually, and a table of showbread ('shewbread' – 'bread of the presence'). The priests baked fresh bread every week and they were the only ones who could eat it. The second room was known as the 'Holy of Holies' or 'Most Holy Place.' It contained the 'Ark of the Covenant' with its 'Mercy Seat,' which was where God 'dwelled' with His people. Only the High Priest was allowed to enter the 'Holy of Holies' once a year on the 'Day of Atonement' to sprinkle blood on the 'Ark of the Covenant' to atone for the sins of the people, including his own.

Jesus Christ told His followers that He was the Way, the Truth, and the Life, which corresponds to His being the Entrance to God's Presence, the Offering for Sin, the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, and God Himself. The portable Tabernacle and Solomon's permanent Temple pointed to the coming of Jesus Christ, God in Flesh, who would dwell with His people.

You can read how Bezalel of the Tribe of Judah made and oversaw the making of the following –

- the Ark of the Covenant
- the Table for the Showbread
- the Golden Lampstand
- the Altar of Incense
- the Holy Anointing Oil and the Pure Incense of Sweet Spices, ‘according to the work of the perfumer’
- the Altar of Burnt Offering
- the Bronze Laver
- the Court of the Tabernacle (Exodus 37 and 38).

Again, complicated and intricate, but empowered by the filling of the Holy Spirit .. led by a member of the Tribe of Judah and the Tribe of Dan. The work they did was of such quality that we find it still in use centuries later –

Now the bronze altar that Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, had made, he put before the tabernacle of the Lord; Solomon and the assembly sought Him there. And Solomon went up there to the bronze altar before the Lord, which was at the tabernacle of meeting, and offered a thousand burnt offerings on it. 2 Chronicles 1:5-6

Judah in the Census

Now the Lord spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying: 'Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel, by their families, by their fathers' houses, according to the number of names, every male individually, from twenty years old and above —all who are able to go to war in Israel. You and Aaron shall number them by their armies. And with you there shall be a man from every tribe, each one the head of his father's house. Numbers 1:1-4

We also find the family of Judah mentioned in the census that Moses took on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of Egypt. The name of the man who would represent the Tribe of Judah and stand with Moses was 'Nahshon the son of Amminadab' –

From the children of Judah, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war: those who were numbered of the tribe of Judah were seventy-four thousand six hundred.
Numbers 1:26-27

You can find Nahshon listed in the lineage of Jesus Christ in Matthew 1 and Luke 3.

That census demonstrated the strength of each tribe by the number of its people. Judah had the most people at the time and would grow in population through the years. You will find the Tribe of Judah mentioned many times in Numbers, which is part of the Torah. It is an official record that is recognized by God and Israel. You will also find the Tribe of Judah mentioned as being active during the leadership of Joshua, and in the Book of Judges. We also see Judah's family mentioned in the Book of Ruth, and the writings of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles. You can follow the 'Seed' to the family of Jesse, the father of David who would become the king of Israel (Jesse and David are also included in the lineage of

Jesus in Matthew 1 and Luke 3). You can follow the 'Seed' through Solomon and all the kings of Judah until the children of Israel were taken into Babylonian captivity. You can follow the Seed after that time as well, but we'll save that for a future part of our study.

Chapter Twenty-Seven

God's training of Israel to 'reign' with Him was not a straight line. It had a lot of 'bumps' along the way; many 'ups and downs,' 'twists and turns.' One of the biggest problems Israel had during their training experience was 'Training Principle #1'

—

- God is the One True God (Monotheism)

Remember the first of the Ten Commandments God gave to Moses?

And God spoke all these words, saying: 'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. 'You shall have no other gods before Me. Exodus 20:1-3

That seems pretty clear, but read on –

You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.
Exodus 20:4-5

That also seems clear. God is the One True God. The other ‘gods’ that Israel had experienced in Egypt and would in the future as they entered Canaan were ‘carved’ (made by hand). Keep in mind that God gave Israel these commandments just a couple of months after He destroyed all of the Egyptian ‘gods’ and led them miraculously from slavery to freedom.

Israel and Idols

The people of Israel were afraid of God, so they ‘stood afar off’ while Moses ‘drew near the thick darkness where God was’ (Exodus 20:21). That’s where God gave Moses the ‘Ten Commandments,’ many other commandments, and instructions about how the children of Israel would serve and worship Him. What do you think the ‘children of Israel’ did while Moses was receiving the commandments from God?

Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, ‘Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’ And Aaron said to them, ‘Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.’ So all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. And he received the gold from their hand, and he

fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, 'This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!' Exodus 32:1-4

What were they thinking? They fashioned an idol of gold and said, 'This is your God, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!?' Crazy, right? But notice who led the people in making the 'carved idol?' Aaron! Moses' brother! The man God would choose to become Israel's High Priest! (Exodus 28:1) I find it remarkable that Aaron would do such a thing, but he did. The people went to Aaron to ask him to 'make us gods that shall go before us.' Aaron told them to gather gold earrings and bring it to them. Aaron took the gold 'from their hand and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf.' The people of Israel were thrilled with what Aaron did for them –

So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, 'Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord.' Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and

the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

Exodus 32:5-6

Did see that? After building the 'gold calf' idol (false god), Aaron proclaimed that the next day would be a feast day 'to the Lord' where the people would offer burnt offerings and peace offerings. What was wrong with Aaron? Was he afraid of the people? Did he agree with them that something had gone wrong with Moses' meeting with God? Was Aaron a 'closest' worshipper of false gods? Remember that Aaron would have had a lot of experience with false gods in Egypt. The fact that he so was able to so quickly make the 'gold calf' may be because he was experienced at making false gods in Egypt. I'm not saying he did, just asking questions at this point.

God Reacts

The One True God 'knows' everything (Omniscience), so how did he react to what He knew Israel was doing?

And the Lord said to Moses, 'Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molded calf, and worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!' And the Lord said to Moses, 'I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people! Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation. Exodus 32:7-10

Moses ‘pleaded with the Lord his God’ not to kill the people –

Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.’ So the Lord relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people. Exodus 32:12-14

God often expressed Himself in the Old Testament in ways that are similar to ‘human’ responses – like expressing anger verbally and threatening to kill His people. That’s part of ‘training to reign.’ How we respond to a higher-ranking officer (God in this case) demonstrates our character, in addition to how well we’ve been trained. I think that may have been the case here.

Moses Reacts

Just because Moses pleaded with God not to kill the children of Israel didn't mean that what the people had done didn't bother him. He was trying to save the nation from divine destruction, but Moses was ready to take action against those responsible –

So it was, as soon as he came near the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing. So Moses' anger became hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. Then he took the calf which they had made, burned it in the fire, and ground it to powder; and he scattered it on the water and made the children of Israel drink it. And Moses said to Aaron, 'What did this people do to you that you have brought so great a sin upon them?' So Aaron said, 'Do not let the anger of my lord become hot. You know the people, that they are set on evil. For they said to me, 'Make us gods that shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do

not know what has become of him.’ And I said to them, ‘Whoever has any gold, let them break it off.’ So they gave it to me, and I cast it into the fire, and this calf came out.’ Now when Moses saw that the people were unrestrained (for Aaron had not restrained them, to their shame among their enemies), then Moses stood in the entrance of the camp, and said, ‘Whoever is on the Lord’s side—come to me! And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him. And he said to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘Let every man put his sword on his side, and go in and out from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and let every man kill his brother, every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.’ So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day. Then Moses said, ‘Consecrate yourselves today to the Lord, that He may bestow on you a blessing this day, for every man has opposed his son and his brother. Exodus 32:19-29

This is just my personal take based on many years of managing people. I think Aaron threw the children of Israel ‘under the bus’ to take the heat off himself – ‘Do not let the anger of my lord become hot. You know the people, that they *are set* on evil.’ He may have been afraid of what Moses would do to him, not knowing what God had just told Moses on the mountain about how Aaron and his sons would be priests to God.

What Moses did next might seem ‘sharp’ or even ‘heavy-handed,’ but it was the right way for him to deal with the problem. Having served in the military during a time of war, I understand what’s at stake when training fighters. God said He was ready to kill everyone, but Moses asked God to let him handle the situation. The way Moses dealt with it was more ‘targeted.’ Yes, three-thousand people died, but the nation was saved.

Moses told the people that they had committed a ‘great sin.’ He said he would ‘go up to the Lord’ to see if he could ‘make atonement’ for their sin. Here’s how God responded to Moses

—

And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book. Now therefore, go, lead the people to the place of which I have spoken to you. Behold, My Angel shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit for punishment, I will visit punishment upon them for their sin.’ So the Lord plagued the people because of what they did with the calf which Aaron made. Exodus 32:33-35

I suggest you read Exodus chapters 33 – 40 to see what God did next, how He renewed His ‘covenant’ with Israel, and how the people responded to their ‘training’ to that point.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

Leviticus is one of the more difficult Books of the Pentateuch for many people because of all the ‘legal’ language in it. However, there are some important lessons for anyone who wants to ‘train to reign’ with God.

Many people, Christians and non-Christians, have told me that Leviticus is the hardest Book in the Bible for them to understand, with the Book of Numbers being #2 on that list. Leviticus is an important part of the Pentateuch for several reasons – one being that it is a primary ‘training manual’ for Israel. Christians and non-Christians can also learn much from it as well.

Training in Leviticus

When God first spoke with Moses from the burning bush, He said that Moses would lead the children of Israel out of slavery in Egypt into a ‘good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites’ (Exodus 3:8). What we read in Leviticus concerns how God ‘trained’ His people to ‘subdue’ and ‘reign’ in those enemy territories.

We see God giving the ‘Laws and Commandments’ for Israel in Exodus. The Book of Exodus ends with the Israelite artisans finishing the work of building the ‘tabernacle of the tent of meeting,’ along with all its furnishings, and the ‘garments of ministry’ that Aaron and his sons would wear in their positions as ‘priests.’ (Exodus 39 & 40)

Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of

the Lord filled the tabernacle. Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would go onward in all their journeys. But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not journey till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the Lord was above the tabernacle by day, and fire was over it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys. Exodus 40:34-38

Imagine seeing the sight of the Tabernacle every morning when you walk outside your tent. God told Moses how to arrange the twelve tribes of Israel so that the Tabernacle was the center of their lives. That's a good training lesson for all of us – God's 'presence' should always be at the center of a believer's life.

What we see in Leviticus is God explaining to Moses (who would then tell the people of Israel) how each 'offering' was to be made to Him. That included the following offerings (explained in the first seven chapters) –

- Burnt Offering
- Grain Offering
- Peace Offering
- Sin Offering
- Trespass Offering
- Restitution Offerings

Chapters eight – ten deal with the ‘priestly’ ministry. Chapter 11 deals with foods that are permitted and forbidden – also known as ‘clean’ and ‘unclean’ foods. That was important for the Israelites because they would be going into nations where the people had many health issues that came from bad nutrition. What God trained Israel to do with foods (including methods of preparation and cooking) would help keep them healthy as they entered into the land of the Canaanites and other ‘ites.’

It’s interesting to see how ‘modern science’ has confirmed the wisdom of ‘clean and unclean’ foods found in Leviticus, along with details of preparing and cooking foods and the importance of cleaning utensils used in that process.

Leviticus also has many chapters dedicated to various illnesses and ‘uncleanness’ that would help the Israelites remain healthy as they entered areas filled with people who had those illnesses and were physically ‘unclean.’ Again, ‘modern science’ has confirmed much of what we find in Leviticus.

Training in Numbers

The Book of Numbers (also part of the Pentateuch) is also important as a ‘training’ manual to ‘reign’ with God on earth. It begins with God speaking with Moses about taking a ‘census of all the congregation of the children of Israel.’ This took place on the first day of the second month, in the second year after God led Israel out of Egypt. You might remember from a past study that we learned from the census that the tribe of Judah had the largest population of all the tribes. The tribe of Manasseh had the smallest population of all the tribes with men of the age to ‘go to war’ –

Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel, by their families, by their fathers’ houses, according to the number of names, every male individually, from twenty years old and above—all who are able to go to war in Israel. You and Aaron shall number them by their armies. Numbers 1:2-3

God used the terms ‘congregation, children, families, and armies’ when referring to Israel. The census was about the names of every male from the age of twenty years old and above – ‘all who are able to go to war in Israel.’ This wording should leave no doubt in anyone’s mind about what God planned for Israel to do when they entered in the ‘promised land.’ They would go to ‘war’ with the nations that inhabited the areas that God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel).

Numbers reminds me in some ways of a ‘military manual.’ Each tribe had a ‘standard’ (דָּגָל – *degel*, banner) beside the tribal ‘emblem’ (אֹת – *oth*, sign). The tribes (armies) would set up camp surrounding the ‘tabernacle.’ Each tribe had a specific area they would ‘encamp’ every time they moved to a new location –

And the tabernacle of meeting shall move out with the camp of the Levites in the middle of the camps; as they camp, so they shall move out, everyone in his place, by their standards. Numbers 2:17

The movements were very much in a 'military' system –

Thus the children of Israel did according to all that the Lord commanded Moses; so they camped by their standards and so they broke camp, each one by his family, according to their fathers' houses. Numbers 2:34

Numbers also includes a census of all the 'Levites' from a month old and above. They numbered twenty-two thousand' (Numbers 3:39). Moses and Aaron were Levites. Aaron and his sons served as 'priests' in Israel. The job of the Levites in the 'military' movement was to oversee the 'tabernacle of the Testimony.' That included overseeing all of its furnishings, taking down the tabernacle, carrying the tabernacle and all its furnishings, and setting it up again when God stopped for the Israelites to make camp.

The movements of all the tribes were orderly and done with military precision. The tribes of Israel were God's 'armies' on earth. He was training them to reign with Him.

One of the ways Israel trained was through the use of ‘silver trumpets’ –

When you go to war in your land against the enemy who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, and you will be remembered before the Lord your God, and you will be saved from your enemies. Also in the day of your gladness, in your appointed feasts, and at the beginning of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; and they shall be a memorial for you before your God: I am the Lord your God. Numbers 10:9-10

Trumpets have been used for thousands of years in military actions. Each sound of the trumpet communicated a different aspect of battle, call to quarters, etc. I and thousands of other military trainees learned the importance of responding correctly and promptly to various trumpet calls. The sound of a trumpet carries a long distance, which made it so useful with a large army – whether in camp or on the battlefield.

Much of the 'basic training' was completed by the 'twentieth *day* of the second month, in the second year,' so the cloud was 'taken up from above the tabernacle of the Testimony' (Numbers 10:11). God was on the move with His 'armies' behind Him –

And the children of Israel set out from the Wilderness of Sinai on their journeys; then the cloud settled down in the Wilderness of Paran. So they started out for the first time according to the command of the Lord by the hand of Moses. Numbers 10:12-13

Chapter Twenty-Nine

After spending about a year training in the wilderness, the 'armies' of Israel are on the move. However, things didn't go as Moses had hoped. Israel made several 'fatal' errors. More training would be necessary.

Israel's Fatal Errors

Now when the people complained, it displeased the Lord; for the Lord heard it, and His anger was aroused. So the fire of the Lord burned among them, and consumed some in the outskirts of the camp. Then the people cried out to Moses, and when Moses prayed to the Lord, the fire was quenched. So he called the name of the place Taberah, because the fire of the Lord had burned among them. Numbers 11:1-3

God called the children of Israel 'stiff-necked people' (Exodus 32:9). Even after seeing the power of the Almighty God, even after receiving God's Laws, even after all of their training in the wilderness, 'the people complained.' This was just the first of several 'fatal errors' that Israel would make in the days and weeks after they left Sinai and headed for the 'promised land.'

Error #1

Their first fatal error was to complain about the food God had given them to eat. They should have trusted God to take care of them, even as He had promised, but they didn't. They reverted to their old ways of thinking –

Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: 'Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes! Numbers 11:4-6

God and Moses were angry with the people. You can read the details of their response in Numbers 11, but here's the fatal result. –

Now a wind went out from the Lord, and it brought quail from the sea and left them fluttering near the camp, about a day's journey on this side and about a day's journey on the other side, all around the camp, and about two cubits above the surface of the ground. And the people stayed up all that day, all night, and all the next day, and gathered the quail (he who gathered least gathered ten homers); and they spread them out for themselves all around the camp. But while the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was aroused against the people, and the Lord struck the people with a very great plague. So he called the name of that place Kibroth Hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had yielded to craving. Numbers 11:31-34

After burying the dead, Israel followed God and Moses from Kibroth Hattaavah to Hazeroth, 'and camped at Hazeroth' (Numbers 11:35).

Error #2

The next error came from an unlikely source – Moses' brother and sister. They 'spoke against Moses' because he married a woman from Ethiopia. It's possible that Moses' first wife (a Midianite) died and that Moses married a second wife. Based on the Law God had given directly to Moses, I seriously doubt that Moses would have committed adultery. Here's what happened next –

Suddenly the Lord said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, 'Come out, you three, to the tabernacle of meeting!' So the three came out. Then the Lord came down in the pillar of cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam. Numbers 12:4-5

God spoke clearly to Aaron and Miriam that Moses was His chosen prophet, unlike any other prophet –

I speak with him face to face, Even plainly, and not in dark sayings; And he sees the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant Moses? Numbers 12:8

God's anger 'was aroused against them, and He departed.' When the cloud departed from the tabernacle, Miriam suddenly became leprous, 'as white as snow.' Aaron begged Moses to ask God to heal her. Moses cried out to the Lord and asked Him to heal his sister. God did heal Miriam, but not before she faced the shame of being a leper. Miriam was shut out of the camp for seven days, and Israel waited until her week was complete. Then, the people moved from Hazeroth and camped in the Wilderness of Paran.

Error #3

God told Moses to select a man from each of the twelve tribes of Israel ‘ to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel’ (Numbers 13:1). Moses selected men from each tribe and sent them out –

Then Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said to them, ‘Go up this way into the South, and go up to the mountains, and see what the land is like: whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, few or many; whether the land they dwell in is good or bad; whether the cities they inhabit are like camps or strongholds; whether the land is rich or poor; and whether there are forests there or not. Be of good courage. And bring some of the fruit of the land.’ Now the time was the season of the first ripe grapes. Numbers 13:17-20

The men returned to Kadesh in the Wilderness of Paran, but the message of ten of the twelve men was not encouraging. They reported that though the land flowed with milk and honey, the people who lived there were very strong and lived in large, fortified cities. The people they saw included the Amalekites, the Hittites, the Jebusites, and Amorites, the Canaanites, and the descendants of Anak. They were apparently tall, powerful people, because the ten spies said, 'we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight' (Numbers 13:33). Bottom line, ten of the spies didn't trust God to fight and win their battles.

What about the other two spies, Joshua and Caleb? Their perspective was different than the others –

Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, 'Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it.' Numbers 13:30

Joshua and Caleb tore their clothes and spoke to the children of Israel –

The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, 'a land which flows with milk and honey.' Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the Lord is with us. Do not fear them. Numbers 14:7-9

Notice that Joshua and Caleb viewed the people's refusal to enter the 'promised land' as 'rebellion' against God. That's another important 'training' principle to learn.

How did the people react to what Joshua and Caleb said? They said 'to stone them with stones' (Numbers 14:10). However, the 'glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of meeting before all the children of Israel.'

Then the Lord said to Moses: 'How long will these people reject Me? And how long will they not believe Me, with all the signs which I have performed among them? I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they. Numbers 14:11-12

Notice that God views 'rebellion' as 'rejection.' He was read to strike down the people and disinherit them. However, Moses once again interceded for Israel –

Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy, just as You have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now. Numbers 14:19

God did pardon the people, but said that because Israel had put Him to the test 'now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice,' He would not allow them to 'see the land of which I swore to their fathers' (Numbers 14:22). God did say that He would allow Caleb to enter the land. We also know that Joshua was also allowed to enter the land because he actually led Israel in the 'promised land.'

God told Moses to lead Israel ‘out into the wilderness by the Way of the Red Sea.’ What was God’s plan? First, the ten spies who brought Israel a bad report about going into the ‘promised land’ died of a plague. Second, Israel would wander through the wilderness until all of the people who had complained against Him were dead –

But as for you, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness. And your sons shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years, and bear the brunt of your infidelity, until your carcasses are consumed in the wilderness. According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, namely forty years, and you shall know My rejection. I the Lord have spoken this. I will surely do so to all this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.’ Numbers 14:32-35

Believe it or not, the people of Israel continued to make fatal errors as they rebelled against God. More training would be necessary before Israel was ready to enter the 'promised land.' You can read the details from Numbers 17 – 36.

Chapter Thirty

As I've mentioned before, many Christians don't read the Pentateuch (Genesis – Deuteronomy). Some say it's too hard to understand. Others say it's dull and they don't see how something that happened thousands of years ago has any impact on us today.

What they forget is that Jesus and His disciples quoted from the Pentateuch – often. The history of Israel is especially important as we see how God trained His people to 'reign' with Him. When people push back on the idea of reading Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, I invite them to at least read the Book of Deuteronomy. That's the last Book of the Pentateuch. It's also the final words of Moses to Israel prior to his death.

Moses also made a major error that would keep him from entering the 'promised land.' He lost his temper with Israel and disobeyed a direct command from God because of that anger. Because of that sin against God, Moses was not allowed to enter the 'promised land' with the children of Israel. I know that may seem unfair on the surface, but an important part of 'training to reign' is obedience.

And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, 'Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?' Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank. Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them. Numbers 20:10-12

Moses disobeyed God soon after his sister Miriam died in Kadesh. Maybe he overreacted to Israel's continued rebellious spirit because of grief over his sister's death. We're not told, but for some reason Moses disobeyed what God told him to do and was punished for it.

After burying Miriam, the children of Israel journeyed from Kadesh to Mount Hor. God spoke to Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor and told them that Aaron was about to die and reminded him that he would not enter the promised land, 'because you rebelled against My word at the water of Meribah' (Numbers 20:24). God told Moses to take Aaron's priestly garments and put them on his son Eleazar. Moses did as he was told, placed Aaron's garments on Eleazar, then Aaron died. The congregation of Israel saw that Aaron was dead and all the people mourned for him for thirty days.

God had more for Moses to do before his death, including taking vengeance on the Midianites for the children of Israel. God told Moses that he would be gather to his people after that. You can read the details in Numbers 31. God was getting Israel ready to go to war and reclaim the land He had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob –

Now the Lord spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, across from Jericho, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you have crossed the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, destroy all their engraved stones, destroy all their molded images, and demolish all their high places; you shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land and dwell in it, for I have given you the land to possess. And you shall divide the land by lot as an inheritance among your families; to the larger you shall give a larger inheritance, and to the smaller you shall give a smaller inheritance; there everyone’s inheritance shall be whatever falls to him by lot. You shall inherit according to the tribes of your fathers. But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the

land from before you, then it shall be that those whom you let remain shall be irritants in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall harass you in the land where you dwell. Moreover it shall be that I will do to you as I thought to do to them.’ Numbers 33:50-56

Deuteronomy

The Book of Deuteronomy is a record of what Moses said to Israel ‘in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first *day* of the month’ (Deuteronomy 1:3). The word ‘Deuteronomy’ comes from the Greek word Δευτερονόμιον used in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible and the Latin word *Deuteronomium* used in the Vulgate. It basically means ‘a repetition of the Law,’ sometimes called the ‘Second Law’ because Moses was repeating it for the benefit of Israel.

Keep in mind that the people Moses was talking to were the children of the Israelites who left Egyptian slavery 40 years earlier. God caused those Israelite to wander through the wilderness for forty years because of their rebellion against God and refusal to enter the promised land. The two exceptions would be Joshua and Caleb because they believed that God could defeat His enemies. Moses explained what happened this way –

And the Lord heard the sound of your words, and was angry, and took an oath, saying, 'Surely not one of these men of this evil generation shall see that good land of which I swore to give to your fathers, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him and his children I am giving the land on which he walked, because he wholly followed the Lord.' The Lord was also angry with me for your sakes, saying, 'Even you shall not go in there. Joshua the son of Nun, who stands before you, he shall go in there. Encourage him, for he shall cause Israel to inherit it. Deuteronomy 1:34-38

In addition to being a wonderful summary of Israel's escape from slavery in Egypt through their many times of disobedience and eventual punishment of wandering the wilderness, we learn much about what's important as followers of God. The well-known 'Shema' prayer is found in Deuteronomy 6. It reiterates Training Rules #1 and #5 for reigning with God –

'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. Deuteronomy 6:4-5

Christians should certainly recognize this from how Jesus answered a question from a Jewish lawyer –

But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, 'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?' Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.' Matthew 22:34-40

Moses also reminded the children of Israel about not forgetting God once they settled into their new home –

So it shall be, when the Lord your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build, houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant—when you have eaten and are full— then beware, lest you forget the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. You shall fear the Lord your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name. You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around you (for the Lord your God is a jealous God among you), lest the anger of the Lord your God be aroused against you and destroy you from the face of the earth. You shall not tempt the Lord your God as you tempted Him in Massah. You shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, His testimonies, and His statutes which He has commanded you. And you shall do what is right and good

in the sight of the Lord, that it may be well with you, and that you may go in and possess the good land of which the Lord swore to your fathers, to cast out all your enemies from before you, as the Lord has spoken.
Deuteronomy 6:10-19

This is the basic tenor of Deuteronomy – Moses repeating and reminding the children of Israel of their special place in God’s eternal plan. The day came when Moses handed the leadership over to Joshua. He said this on his birthday –

I am one hundred and twenty years old today. I can no longer go out and come in ... Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, ‘Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it. And the Lord, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed.’ Deuteronomy 31:2, 7-8

Moses sang a song to Israel (Deuteronomy 32), gave them his final blessing (Deuteronomy 33), then went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is across from Jericho. God showed Moses all the land of Gilead as far as Dan, all Naphtali and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, the South, and the Plain of the Valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, as far as Noah. This was the land that God swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – ‘saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’

What happened next was extraordinary in human history – God buried a man –

So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor; but no one knows his grave to this day. Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died. His eyes were not dim nor his natural vigor diminished. And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. So the days of

weeping and mourning for Moses ended. Deuteronomy 34:5-8

Finally, we have this amazing epitaph –

But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, in all the signs and wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, before Pharaoh, before all his servants, and in all his land, and by all that mighty power and all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel. Deuteronomy 34:10-12

Next eBook

The time had come for Joshua to lead Israel into the ‘promised land’ to ‘subdue and have dominion.’ The children (armies) of Israel were trained to reign, but how well would they do under the intense pressures that awaited them? We’ll see in the next part of our special series – *Train to Reign*.

“Scripture taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.”

GraceLife Copyright © 1990-2025

The logo for GraceLife, featuring the word "GraceLife" in a bold, dark red, sans-serif font with a subtle drop shadow effect.