

**THE BIBLE: THE UNFOLDING OF
GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE**

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**A Five-Year Study Guide To The Scriptures
With an Emphasis On God's Redemptive Scheme**

Preface

In any learning endeavor it is important to have clear objectives. A haphazard approach to study will not be as efficient and effective as studying with purpose, whether the subject is physics, history or the Bible.

The Hueytown congregation has now completed a three-and-a-half year curriculum which provided an overview of the Scriptures. The elders have decided to build upon this foundation by developing a five-year curriculum that will allow for some in-depth study which was not possible under the previous format. It is hoped that these lessons are arranged in such a way as to make for fruitful study.

This curriculum will focus upon God's scheme of redemption as it is gradually revealed throughout the history of man. From the entrance of sin into the world to the rise, fall and restoration of the nation of Israel to the incarnation of the Messiah, the Scriptures tell of God's desire to bring man back into fellowship and how He accomplished that desire. If we can learn to recognize this redemptive theme interwoven from Genesis through Revelation, the individual books of the Bible will make more sense as we appreciate the contribution they make to the development of the theme.

May God bless us in our diligent attempts to learn all we can about Him.

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

Jim Jonas, evangelist
Hueytown church of Christ
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God Builds A Nation

Year 1, Quarter 1

This study covers Genesis-Deuteronomy with a special emphasis upon God’s covenant with Abraham. We will trace the development of a nation from Abraham’s descendants, the covenant God made with them, and their preparation to conquer the land which God had promised to them.

Outline

Week 1: The Covenant With Abraham

- ◆ The Faith of Abraham
- ◆ Abraham Leaves His Home
- ◆ The First Promises to Abraham
- ◆ The Promises Clarified
- ◆ God Affirms His Covenant With Abraham

Week 2: The Covenant With Abraham

- ◆ The Birth of Ishmael
- ◆ Abram Becomes Abraham
- ◆ Sarah Included in the Promise
- ◆ The Birth of Isaac
- ◆ The Offering of Isaac

Week 3: Isaac and Jacob

- ◆ A Wife and Children for Isaac
- ◆ The Promises Confirmed to Isaac
- ◆ The Promises Extended to Jacob
- ◆ Jacob’s Return to Canaan
- ◆ Jacob Becomes Israel

Week 4: The Israelites in Egypt

- ◆ Joseph’s Rise to Power
- ◆ Jacob and His Family Come to Goshen
- ◆ The Death of Jacob

- ◆ The Death of Joseph
- ◆ Enslavement in Egypt

Week 5: The Exodus - Birth of a Nation

- ◆ The Preparation and Commission of Moses
- ◆ Deliverance from Bondage Assured
- ◆ Departure from Egypt
- ◆ God's Testing of Israel
- ◆ A Nation in Need of Government

Week 6: The Covenant at Sinai

- ◆ A Special People
- ◆ A Fearsome God and the Ten Commandments
- ◆ An Angel-Guide to Canaan
- ◆ The Affirmation and Breaking of the Covenant
- ◆ Renewal of the Covenant and Command to Leave Sinai

Week 7: The Law of Moses

- ◆ An Overview
- ◆ The Tabernacle
- ◆ The Ark of the Covenant
- ◆ The Aaronic Priesthood
- ◆ The Three Annual Feasts

Week 8: The Law of Moses

- ◆ Laws Regarding Idolatry
- ◆ Laws Governing Sexual Conduct
- ◆ Laws Regarding Criminal and Civil Behavior
- ◆ Health, Hygiene and Diet
- ◆ Periodic Reading of the Law

Week 9: Failure to Enter Canaan

- ◆ Moses and the People Complain
- ◆ Moses' Leadership Challenged
- ◆ The Negative Report of the Spies
- ◆ God's Punishment of Israel
- ◆ The Failed Attempt to Invade

Week 10: Trials in the Wilderness

- ◆ Korah's Rebellion Against Moses and Aaron
- ◆ Moses' Transgression
- ◆ Battles in the Wilderness
- ◆ Balaam's Oracles
- ◆ A Second Numbering of Israel

Week 11: Preparing to Enter Canaan

- ◆ Joshua Appointed as Moses' Successor
- ◆ The Tribes Settling in the Trans-Jordan
- ◆ The Boundaries of the Land
- ◆ Levite Cities and Cities of Refuge
- ◆ Separation of Tribal Land

Week 12: Moses' Final Exhortation

- ◆ Deuteronomy: A Transitional Book
- ◆ A Review of History
- ◆ The Great Manifestations of God's Power
- ◆ Warnings Against Idolatry
- ◆ Obedience Stressed

Week 13: Moses' Final Exhortation

- ◆ God: Faithful to the Covenant
- ◆ Israel: A Special Nation
- ◆ The Blessings of Obedience
- ◆ The Curses of Disobedience
- ◆ The Death of Moses

Day 1: The Faith of Abraham

The early chapters of the Bible tell of man's struggle with sin, from Adam and Eve's disobedience and expulsion from the garden to the destruction of an entire decadent world by the flood. But they also tell of righteous, God-fearing men such as Noah and Enoch. Many generations of early man are passed over with only a brief mention until we are introduced to an individual called Abram (Gn 11:27-32).

Abraham was a man of obedient faith in God. So great was his faith that God chose Abraham for a special purpose: to bring the Redeemer of mankind into the world through his descendants. No nation upon the earth was deemed suitable for this honor; God would build a nation from scratch and establish a unique relationship with them. In doing so, His power and love would be demonstrated within the very fabric of unfolding human history.

But as great as Abraham's faith was, he was not above sin. An incident from his life tells of his lying to protect himself (Gn 20:1-13). This illustrates man's problem in relation to sin: no man was without sin; every man who lives, though he may have faith in God, commits sin. This is why a Redeemer, one who could provide for sin's removal, was needed.

1. Where was Abraham's original homeland?
2. What sin did Abraham commit against Abimelech and God?
3. How does God describe Abraham to Abimelech - "He is a _____"?

Day 2: Abraham Leaves His Home

While still dwelling in his homeland of Ur, God told Abraham to leave and travel to a far country (Ac 7:1-4). After dwelling for a time in Haran, where his father died, Abraham continued on to Canaan under God's direction (Gn 12:4-6). His faith is finally rewarded as he enters the land that God had promised to show him.

4. Abraham left Ur "not knowing _____" (Heb 11:8).
5. Who accompanied Abraham into Canaan?
6. How old was Abraham at this time?

Day 3: The First Promises To Abraham

The first record of the promises to Abraham is found in Gn 12:2-3. Verse 1 is merely a command; it does not appear that the land to be shown to Abraham is promised to him as of yet (comp. Ac 7:5). God does promise two things: 1) a great nation would come from Abraham, and 2) in Abraham all the families of the earth would be blessed. These promises will be clarified and elaborated upon as time goes on, but they indicate a universal blessing to eventually come from one man. What an amazing prophecy! Who could foresee thousands of years of human events transpiring from the life of a single individual? Only the One who could make the prophecy come to pass - God.

The land-promise is added to the original promises in Gn 12:7. Though the Canaanites were then in the land, God vows that the land will one day belong to the descendants of Abraham. Abraham, however, will not dwell in the land as its owner but as a sojourner (Heb 11:9). All he owned at his death was a burial cave (Gn 23:17-20).

7. How did the requirement for Abraham to leave his homeland and kinfolk bear upon God's promise to build a nation from his descendants?
8. Where is Abraham when God first promises to give Canaan to his descendants?

Day 4: The Promises Clarified

After Abraham and Lot separated, God told Abraham to survey the land all around him "for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever" (Gn 13:14-15). Not only would Abraham's descendants be a great nation, but they would be "as the dust of the earth" (Gn 13:15-16). These things were not just God's knowledge of the future but He would make His promises a reality: "I give ... I will make."

9. T/F At the time of Abraham and Lot's parting, Abraham is still struggling to make a living in Canaan (Gn 13:2).
10. What phrase describes Abraham's manner of life (Gn 13:4)?

Day 5: God Affirms His Covenant With Abraham

All men of faith occasionally need encouragement and Abraham was no different. He becomes concerned as time passes and he and Sarah are childless (Gn 15:2-3). God assures Abraham that his descendants will be as the stars of heaven in number (Gn 15:4-5). But Abraham also needs reassurance of the promise to inherit Canaan (Gn 15:7-8). In a strange and terrifying vision, God reveals that this is yet distant. There will be an intervening period of slavery followed by a return to the land in the fourth generation (Gn 15:12-16). Note God's language of certainty: "I have given this land" (Gn 15:18).

11. In what condition would Abraham's descendants come out of slavery?
12. Why would they not return until the fourth generation?

Day 1: The Birth of Ishmael

Both Sarah and Abraham's faith faltered after ten childless years in Canaan (Gn 16:3). They decided to "help" God by using Hagar as a surrogate mother, but her conception only led to family discord (Gn 16:1-6). Hagar, having fled from Sarah, is told by an angel to return to Abraham's household. She is promised a son who will beget a multitude (Gn 16:9-12), but Ishmael is not the son of God's covenant with Abraham.

1. T/F Hagar's nationality made Ishmael half-Canaanite.
2. Discuss 16:4-5 in relation to the problems of concubinage or multiple wives. How are these problems manifested in our own society?
3. How old was Abraham when Ishmael was born?

Day 2: Abram Becomes Abraham

Thirteen more years pass uneventfully. God then appears to Abraham to confirm the long-standing promises (Gn 17:1-8). A new aspect emerges: Abraham is to be the father of *many nations* and kings will come from him. The land-promise is again affirmed. Further, God vows to be a covenant-God with Abraham's descendants but details are not yet revealed. Abraham's name is changed to reflect the exceeding fruitfulness of his posterity.

4. How old is Abraham now?
5. Even in Abraham's old age, how does God expect him to live?
6. How would Abraham be the father of many nations? (See Gn 25:1-4; Rom 4:16-17)

Day 3: Sarah Included in the Promise

Sarah is now beyond the point of childbearing (Gn 17:17; 18:11) and Abraham is infertile (Rom 4:19). It has not yet been revealed that Ishmael is not to be the heir of the promise, but God now makes it clear (Gn 17:15-22). Three times God explicitly says that Sarah will bear Abraham's son of promise. As Abraham will be the father of many nations, so Sarah shall be the mother of nations and kings. This news stretches Abraham's faith, but he maintains a trusting and obedient faith in God. At this time, God establishes the covenant of circumcision with Abraham, an important event that will later figure in the question of circumcision of the Gentiles (see Rom 4:9-12).

7. T/F Abraham had thought that Ishmael would be the heir of the promises.

8. When would Isaac be born?
9. What would God establish with Isaac and his descendants?

Day 4: The Birth of Isaac

Angels visit Abraham and announce again Sarah's upcoming maternity (Gn 18:9-15). This evokes a silent laugh of amusement or doubt as Sarah contemplates the physical requirements. But God knows the thoughts of man and inquires of Sarah's laughter. This is the **fifth** time that God says Sarah shall have a son (Gn 17:16, 19, 21; 18:10, 14). God knows He is challenging the belief of this faithful couple, and He repeatedly indicates the mother (Sarah, past childbearing age), the time (the next year), and the sex of the child (son).

Abraham's faith is finally rewarded in Gn 21:2 (note mother, time, sex). But the birth of Isaac stirs up domestic dispute yet again and Sarah insists on Hagar and Ishmael's banishment (Gn 21:8-14). Abraham is distressed over Sarah's demand to send his son away, but God tells him to comply with her wishes, "for in Isaac your seed shall be called." There must be no controversy or competition with Ishmael (note the prophecy of his character in 16:12). God comforts Abraham with the reminder that Ishmael will also become a nation "because he is your seed." To again stress the point of His prophetic power, God repeats these promises concerning Ishmael four times (Gn 16:10; 17:20; 21:13 and 21:18).

10. What principle is God proving by these promises and their fulfillment (18:14)?
11. About how old was Ishmael when Sarah sent Hagar and him away? 10 15 20
12. How is Abraham comforted concerning Ishmael's welfare?

Day 5: The Offering of Isaac

While it may be difficult to understand many aspects of God's command to offer Isaac as a burnt offering (Gn 22:1-12), it is clearly a test of Abraham's faith in God's word and His power. God has made it clear over the years of repeated promises and through the miraculous circumstances of his birth that the covenant depended upon Isaac's own children. Note that Abraham says to his servants, "**We** will come back" (Gn 22:5), and Hebrews says he believed "that God was able to raise him ... even from the dead" (Heb 11:17-19). After this supreme challenge, God repeats the three-fold promise to Abraham (Gn 22:16-18). God has been vindicated in selecting this mighty man of faith as the one through whose descendants the Messiah would come into the world.

13. T/F Abraham delayed for three days before beginning his journey to Moriah.
14. What two qualities defined Abraham's faith in God (22:12, 18)?

Day 1: A Wife and Children for Isaac

God's covenant is strong on Abraham's mind when he arranges Isaac's marriage (Gn 24:3-8). Abraham knows that the Canaanites will eventually be driven out of the land due to their wickedness, so he does not want Isaac to marry a Canaanite. But Abraham does not want Isaac to leave the promised land in search of a wife among his relatives in Mesopotamia, possibly for fear that Isaac might not want to return. Finally, Rebekah, the granddaughter of Nahor, Abraham's brother, agrees to marry Isaac and returns with Abraham's servant to Canaan.

After twenty years of barrenness (Gn 25:20, 26), God grants children to Isaac and Rebekah. God reveals to Rebekah that twins - two nations - are in her womb and that the older will serve the younger (Gn 25:22-23; comp. Rom 9:10-13). As a symbol of this prophecy, Jacob is born grasping the heel of Esau (Gn 25:26; see Hos 12:3).

1. How does Abraham describe God (Gn 24:7)?
2. T/F Rebekah's family had a faith in God similar to Abraham's faith (Gn 24:50-51).
3. God chose Jacob **before/after** birth to inherit the promises of Abraham and Isaac.

Day 2: The Promises Confirmed to Isaac

While dwelling among the Philistines due to a famine in Canaan, God appears to Isaac and confirms the three-fold promise which had been made to Abraham (Gn 26:1-5). What a comfort it must have been to these great men that, in spite of present circumstances, God promises to be with them and to greatly bless their descendants. As time passes, Isaac becomes wealthy and secure in the land and God reaffirms the promises to him (Gn 26:16, 22-24).

4. What did Abraham do which caused God to establish His covenant with him?
5. God promised to bless Isaac "for _____ sake".

Day 3: The Promises Extended to Jacob

The deceitful scheming of Rebekah and Jacob manage to secure an irrevocable blessing from an elderly, enfeebled Isaac at the expense of Esau. As a result, Jacob flees from the wrath of his brother to Rebekah's family, from which Isaac and Rebekah hope that Jacob will find a wife (Gn 28:1-4). During his flight northward, God appears to Jacob in a dream and extends to him the three-fold promise of Abraham and Isaac (Gn 28:13-15). Though Jacob has behaved wickedly, God vows to bless him for the sake of the promises.

Jacob has much to learn about faith in God, and when he awakens he vows to accept God if God will keep His promises (Gn 28:20-21).

6. T/F Isaac now recognizes that Jacob is to inherit the promise rather than Esau.
7. How does God identify Himself to Jacob?
8. As Jacob leaves the land for an uncertain future, what does God promise him (28:15)?

Day 4: Jacob's Return to Canaan

While working for his uncle Laban for some twenty years (Gn 31:38, 41), Jacob acquires four wives, eleven sons and a daughter (Gn 29:31-30:24). Again, the wife who is to produce the son of promise is barren leading to envy, strife and multiple marriages. These things are not desired by God but they do not interfere with His vow to keep His covenant. Finally, God commands Jacob to return to Canaan (Gn 31:3) and reminds him of his vow made at Bethel (Gn 31:13). Jacob will need this assurance as he faces the brother whom he had earlier defrauded.

Through Jacob's experiences, he has learned to trust in God rather than his own shrewdness. As Esau approaches, Jacob calls upon God for protection, reminding Him of His promises to care for him and multiply his descendants (Gn 32:9-12). Jacob reenters the land according to all that God had said.

9. What assurance did Jacob have that Esau would not kill him and his children?
10. What does 32:10 reveal about Jacob's attitude?

Day 5: Jacob Becomes Israel

Eventually, Jacob makes his way back to Bethel where God yet again confirms the promises to him (Gn 35:9-12). Jacob's name is changed to Israel, and he is reminded that nations and kings would come from his body and his descendants would inherit the land. Shortly thereafter, Rachel dies while giving birth to Benjamin (Gn 35:16-18). Thus, Benjamin is the only son actually born in Canaan.

11. List the twelve sons of Jacob by their mothers:

Leah:	Bilhah:	Zilpah:	Rachel:
1)	(Rachel's maidservant)	(Leah's maidservant)	11)
2)	7)	9)	12)
3)	8)	10)	
4)			
5)			
6)			

Day 1: Joseph's Rise to Power

Prophecy is an important element in the unfolding of God's redemptive scheme. God does not merely put an interpretation upon events which have already occurred, but He *foretells* what will happen and then manipulates events so that it comes to pass. When Joseph is young, God prophesies in dreams that Joseph's family would one day bow at his feet (Gn 37:5-11). Not only did the fulfillment of this prophecy seem unlikely, but no one could possibly connect these dreams with the realization of the nation-promise made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But it is through the elevation of Joseph that Jacob's family is preserved from a devastating famine and is placed in a prosperous environment which allows them to multiply.

Through the trials of slavery and imprisonment, God blesses Joseph so that he gains favor among the Egyptians (Gn 39:1-6, 21-23). It is through the interpretation of Pharaoh's prophetic dreams that Joseph becomes governor of all Egypt (Gn 41:25, 28, 32, 37-46). Finally, as Joseph reveals his true identity to his brethren, the meaning of the dreams that he had at seventeen years of age becomes clear: *"God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you who sent me here, but God ..."* (Gn 45:5-8).

1. Discuss the factors which led to Joseph being so hated by his brothers.
2. What outlook helps prevent Joseph from being bitter toward his brethren?

Day 2: Jacob and His Family Come to Goshen

After the dramatic revelation to Jacob that his beloved Joseph was not dead but the governor of Egypt, God encourages Jacob to go to Egypt, indicating that it is His purpose for the people to grow into a great nation there (Gn 46:3-4). This fulfills what God had told Abraham many years before (Gn 15:13). Thus, the offspring of Jacob numbering 70 persons enters Egypt (Gn 46:27), a modest number considering how long the promises have been in effect and the countless multitudes which shall come from them.

3. Where does God promise to be as Jacob goes to Egypt?
4. Why was Goshen selected as a settling place (Gn 45:18; 47:6, 11)?

Day 3: The Death of Jacob

As in the case of Abraham and Isaac, Jacob carries the promises of God to his death. He recounts to Joseph the first appearance of God to him (Gn 48:3-4) before turning his

attention to Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Jacob includes them as heirs along with their uncles (Gn 48:5-6). In a reversal of blessing reminiscent of his own selection over Esau, Jacob blesses the younger Ephraim before the older Manasseh (Gn 48:14, 17-20). Both would be great, but Ephraim would be dominant over Manasseh. Before dying, Jacob pronounces blessings upon all his sons, the descendants of whom will become a great nation and will divide the land of promise among themselves.

5. Of what was Jacob confident at his death (Gn 48:21)?
6. What request does Jacob make of his sons regarding his burial (Gn 49:29-31; see Gn 47:29-30)? Who was buried at Machpelah?

Day 4: The Death of Joseph

A review of chronology might be helpful. Joseph was 17 when trouble first began brewing with his brothers (Gn 37:2); 30 when promoted as governor of Egypt (41:46); 39 when he reveals his identity to his brethren (Gn 45:6); 56 when Jacob dies (Gn 47:28); and 110 at his own death (Gn 50:26). After the death of Jacob, Joseph's brethren fear that he might now take his revenge upon them, so they ask for his forgiveness (Gn 50:15-18). In a statement of God's great providence, Joseph tells his brethren, "*you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day*" (Gn 50:20). This truth is demonstrated throughout the unfolding of God's scheme; regardless of the intent and the activities of man, God controls all things and his purposes cannot be frustrated. Like his father Jacob, Joseph is confident of the eventual return of the people to the land (Gn 50:24).

7. What do Joseph's brethren do in 50:18? What does this again fulfill?
8. What does Joseph promise to do for his brethren (Gn 50:21)?

Day 5: Enslavement in Egypt

In the years following Joseph's death, the Israelites grow to such a magnitude that they are feared by the Egyptians (Ex 1:5-10). Terrible hardship is placed upon Israel in an attempt to subjugate them, "*but the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew*" (Ex 1:11-14). In desperation, Pharaoh commands the midwives to kill the male children and then orders parents to kill their sons, but these measures are to no avail: "*and the people multiplied and grew very mighty*" (Ex 1:20). Thus, in sheer numerical terms, we can see that God's promises are coming true; a nation of Abraham's descendants is developing in the womb of Egypt.

9. What kind of Pharaoh arose after Joseph died?
10. What slave-labor were the Israelites doing for the Egyptians?

11. How did the children of Israel obey God rather than men?

God Builds A Nation: The Exodus - Birth of a Nation Week 5

Day 1: The Preparation and Commission of Moses

God's purpose for the period of Egyptian bondage is nearing its end, but He must first invest eighty years of training in the one who will lead them to freedom. Through providential circumstances, an Israelite named Moses is reared in Pharaoh's own home and given all the honors and privileges of Egyptian royalty. Moses, however, is aware of his Hebrew heritage and by faith in God identifies himself with Israel (Heb 11:24-26).

After Moses' humbling exile in Midian and when Israel's suffering has become intolerable, God "*remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob*" (Ex 2:23-25) and commissions Moses to lead the people from bondage. In His appearance to Moses in the burning bush, God identifies Himself as the God of the patriarchs and expresses His intention to lead them from bondage to the promised land (Ex 3:6-8).

The special relationship which God sustains with the Israelites is seen in Ex 4:22-23: "*Israel is My son, My firstborn.*" They are not the first nation of God's making but the most important under His scheme of redemption: they were created by promise to Abraham unto the eventual blessing of all other nations.

1. According to Ac 7:23-25, how did Moses assume the Israelites would view him?
2. T/F Moses did not have faith in God until He saw the burning bush.
3. How would a snake, leprosy, blood and Aaron help Moses in his task (Ex 4:1-17)?

Day 2: Deliverance from Bondage Assured

In a trial of both Moses' faith and leadership, his first attempt to persuade Pharaoh to free the people only increases their hardship. In response, God vows to keep the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and lead the people to Canaan (Ex 5:22-6:9). God acknowledges to Moses ahead of time that Pharaoh will stubbornly resist the release of the people, but this will work to God's glory (Ex 7:1-7).

4. How does God identify Himself in 6:2, 6, 7, 8, 29; 7:5?
5. Why did the Israelites not believe what Moses had told them about God's deliverance?
6. How would Pharaoh's hardness of heart serve God's purposes?

Day 3: Departure from Egypt

God had said to Abraham that the Israelites would come out of captivity with great possessions; this is fulfilled in Ex 3:21-22; 11:2-3; 12:35-36. God had said that they would become a great nation; this is indicated in Ex 12:37 where a round figure of 600,000 is listed. Actually the figure is 603,550 soldiers over the age of twenty, and the figure does not include foreigners, Levites, women and children (Ex 38:26; Num 1:45-49).

In spite of the horrifying events of the plagues and the death of all the firstborn in Egypt, Pharaoh cannot concede the Israelites to God. He pursues them unto his destruction in the Red Sea, thus glorifying God in the eyes of the Egyptians (Ex 14:13-18) and fostering belief among Israel (Ex 14:30-31). Nevertheless, a glimpse of the future lies in this episode; the people murmur against God and Moses even as they are delivered by God's miraculous power (Ex 14:10-12).

7. What had the Egyptians and the Israelites failed to learn from the plagues?

8. Why did the Egyptians try to flee once in the midst of the Red Sea (Ex 14:25)?

Day 4: God's Testing of Israel

Before Israel comes to Mt. Sinai, they must yet learn some lessons about God's care for them and their need to obey Him. "Murmuring" is the key word: they murmur over their thirst (Ex 15:24-26); they murmur over their hunger (Ex 16:1-8); they again murmur over thirst (Ex 17:2-4, 7). But the elements aren't their only enemies; the Amalekites threaten them and God gives them victory by the upraised arms of Moses (Ex 17:8-16). How short their memories are on their suffering in Egypt! They would rather return to captivity and torture than walk by faith with God through the wilderness.

9. What is the key to God's blessing for Israel (Ex 15:26)?

10. Their murmurings were not really against Moses and Aaron but against whom?

11. How did Israel tempt God in these things (Ex 17:7)?

Day 5: A Nation in Need of Government

Any society the size of Israel needs social controls: laws, courts, leadership, instruction, etc. Jethro, Moses father-in-law, sees the strain on Moses and suggests a delegation of responsibility if God so approves (Ex 18:13-23). This foreshadows the establishment of a comprehensive law between God and Israel which will further define the people as a nation and preserve them unto God's future purpose for them.

12. What was Moses making known to the people even before Mt. Sinai?

13. How might the principle in this passage bear upon the plurality of elders in a congregation?

Day 1: A Special People

While God had established other nations and had given laws to which He held man accountable, what is about to happen with Israel is unprecedented in human history. God will reveal Himself and His laws to Abraham's descendants and will become their exclusive God; they will be elevated above all other nations so that God may introduce redemption to all the world through them.

Moses is called up to the mountain to meet with God (Ex 19:3-6). God proposes to make the children of Israel "*a special treasure to Me above all people*" (Ex 19:5). This will be conditional upon the willingness of the people to obey God and honor His covenant with them. Moses returns to the people with God's offer which is accepted (Ex 19:7-9).

1. Does God propose to make this covenant with all people of the earth? With whom?
2. Does the special covenant with Israel mean that other nations would be without any laws from God?
3. Why did God speak with Moses in the thick cloud?

Day 2: A Fearsome God and the Ten Commandments

God required the people to purify themselves in preparation for His appearance on the third day (Ex 19:10-15). The manifestations of God's power were intended to instill awe and reverence in the people, for respect for God, Himself, would be the basis for obeying His covenant (Ex 19:16-20). God initially delivers the ten commandments to Israel, which serve as a constitutional core of all the ordinances and statutes to follow (Ex 20:1-17). The laws require exclusive worship of God, family loyalty, truth, fair treatment of others, and a Sabbath day's rest. As God speaks, the people fear death at the display of His power and glory (Ex 20:18-21).

4. List the sights and sounds that accompanied God's manifestation to the people.
5. What do the people request because of their fear?

Day 3: An Angel-Guide to Canaan

God provides an Angel to "*bring you to the place which I have prepared*" (Ex 23:20-23). God warns Israel against adopting their gods, making covenants with them, and allowing them to remain in the land (Ex 23:24-33). More specific information is given concerning the inheritance of the land: it will be a gradual displacement of the native people and the borders are specified (Ex 23:29-31). The nation-promise has now been fulfilled with the establishment of covenant, and the fulfillment of the land-promise is on the horizon.

6. What does God promise the people if they obey the voice of His guiding Angel?
7. What good things would happen to the people if they faithfully served God?
8. T/F God would drive the native people of Canaan out within the span of one year.

Day 4: The Affirmation and Breaking of the Covenant

Ex 24:1-8 tells of the ratification of the covenant by the Israelites. Moses wrote the words in a book, read them in the hearing of the people and twice the people vow to keep the commandments of God. This acceptance of God's covenant terms is sealed by the sprinkling of blood upon the people.

Nevertheless, only a short time later, even as Moses is on the mountain receiving further instructions from God, Aaron makes a golden calf for the people saying, "*This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!*" (Ex 32:4). Their earlier murmuring and their present disobedience cause God to threaten them with destruction, but Moses intercedes for them, calling to mind the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Ex 32:13). After purging the people of the polluting influence (Ex 32:27-28), Moses asks for God's forgiveness on behalf of the nation. God commands Moses to lead Israel forth to Canaan under the guidance of the Angel (Ex 32:31-35).

9. What is the book called wherein Moses wrote the laws of God?
10. How does God characterize the children of Israel (Ex 32:9)?
11. How does Aaron demonstrate his lack of leadership capability?

Day 5: Renewal of the Covenant and Command to Leave Sinai

God is displeased with Israel but commands them to go up to the land of promise (Ex 33:1-5). God replaces the stone tablets which had been broken by Moses and reveals His character to the leader of His people (Ex 34:1-9). God then renews His desire for the Israelites to go to Canaan and be His arm of punishment against them (Ex 34:10-17).

12. How has God demonstrated the qualities listed in Ex 34:6-7?
13. What would intermarriage with the Canaanites lead to (Ex 34:15-16)?
14. Discuss the immaturity of the Israelites. How have they behaved like children? What should we learn from their example?

Day 1: An Overview

Any nation must have the conduct of its citizens regulated by laws. Usually, a central government of some type creates and enforces a such a law system. “In a theocracy, however, there is a minimum of legislative or administrative function. The ruler is God, and it is he who determines the nation’s laws, as well as the people’s direction - politically, militarily, and economically” (F. LaGard Smith, **The Daily Bible**, p 261).

“The Israelites are about to begin a new phase in the history of their young nation. They are going to begin functioning as a nation under covenant relationship, with virtually every daily action influenced, if not directly prescribed, by law. During the next four decades God will give to Moses scores of laws - laws affecting their religious and ceremonial duties; laws regulating diet and hygiene; laws of dedication and religious symbolism; civil laws and laws affecting political leaders, the army, and the court system; criminal laws and offenses against religion, society, and morality; and various family and estate laws.

“The many laws within Israel’s code are recorded in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Often the same laws are repeated on different occasions and in varying contexts. Sometimes a law will be further expanded or more completely explained. In anticipation of the Israelites’ becoming less nomadic and more settled, the laws will appropriately reflect the changing circumstances” (ibid, p 157).

We will take a selective look at some of these laws and the principles which underlie them in Weeks 7-8.

1. What does the term “theocracy” mean?
2. T/F God gave laws to Israel through Moses over a span of at least forty years.

Day 2: The Tabernacle

Of highest priority before departing from Mt. Sinai is the construction of the tabernacle and its furniture (Ex 31:1-11). The tabernacle is a portable structure in which God will manifest His presence among the people. God gives Moses a detailed blueprint of the tabernacle and insists on meticulous care in building “*according to the pattern*” (Ex 25:9, 40; 26:30; 27:8; Ac 7:44; Heb 8:5). This was accomplished (Ex 39:32-43).

3. Stephen called the tabernacle a tabernacle of _____.
4. Where was Moses when he received the instructions for building the tabernacle?
5. Who was Bezaleel and why was he important?

Day 3: The Ark of the Covenant

The most important piece of furniture within the tabernacle is the ark of the covenant (Ex 25:10-22), a chest of acacia wood overlaid with gold. The lid of the chest is adorned with a “mercy seat” centered between the outstretched wings of two facing cherubim. The chest is located in the inner sanctum - the Most Holy Place; it is here that God will meet with the people and forgive their sins on the Day of Atonement (see Lv 16:14-16).

6. What was to be put in the ark? What is “the Testimony”? (see Dt 10:1-5)
7. T/F God would sit on the mercy seat when Aaron came on the Day of Atonement.

Day 4: The Aaronic Priesthood

God chooses Moses’ brother, Aaron, as the priestly family over Israel (Ex 28:1-4; Num 3:1-4). They were to attend to the tabernacle services. God also appoints an entire tribe, Levi, to assist the priests in these services (Num 3:5-13; 8:23-26). Laws governing the priests and Levites and their service are numerous and detailed. When it came to the tabernacle and the worship associated with it, God was very meticulous and exact. Both the priests and Levites are consecrated to their assigned duties by elaborate rituals.

8. How many sons of Aaron were consecrated as priests? Which two died shortly thereafter and why?
9. How are the priestly garments of Aaron described?

Day 5: The Three Annual Feasts

To encourage national unity, God institutes three main annual feasts at which all Israelite males must be present (Ex 23:14-17). Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread is to be observed in the first month of the Jewish year (our March/April) as a memorial of the Exodus (Lv 23:4-8; Ex 13:8-10). The Feast of Weeks is so named because it comes seven weeks after the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Lv 23:15-21). This is in the third Jewish month (our May-June), and because this is the time of the early wheat harvest, the Feast is also known as Harvest or Firstfruits (later, Pentecost). The third feast, Tabernacles, occurs in the seventh Jewish month (our September/October)(Lv 23:33-43). It celebrates the later harvest and commemorates the nomadic existence of the Israelites between their Egyptian bondage and settling in Canaan.

10. What were the Jews to tell their children at the observance of Passover?
11. Attendance at these three feasts every year would create what practical necessity?
12. Research: What yearly observance occurred 5 days before the Feast of Tabernacles?

Day 1: Laws Regarding Idolatry

Jehovah boldly claims to be a jealous God and will not tolerate Israel's worship of idols; such, in fact, would invalidate the covenant. Many laws, therefore, prohibit all forms of idolatry including making images, offering sacrifice, witchcraft and divination. Deuteronomy 12:1-14, 29-32 give particular warning against adopting the idolatrous ways of the Canaanites. Unfortunately, these warnings will go unheeded.

1. Who will choose where God shall be worshipped in Canaan (Dt 12:5, 11, 14)?
2. Were all the laws of God fully in place before entrance into Canaan (Dt 12:8-9)?
3. What kind of practices are involved in idolatrous worship (Dt 12:31)?

Day 2: Laws Governing Sexual Conduct

In contrast to idolatry, the Law of Moses set a high standard of sexual conduct. Adultery is forbidden under penalty of death; prostitution, incest, homosexuality and bestiality are also prohibited. Lv 18:1-5, 24-30; 20:22-24 warn the Israelites against defiling themselves with the abominable practices of the Egyptians and the Canaanites. Such practices led to the removal of the Canaanites from the promised land and would also lead to Israel's downfall.

4. What practice does Lv 18:22 and 20:13 prohibit?
5. T/F Only the woman would be put to death in an adulterous affair (Lv 20:10).
6. God said He had _____ Israel from the peoples.

Day 3: Laws Regarding Criminal and Civil Behavior

Crimes such as murder, kidnapping, rape, assault, bribery, false testimony, fraud and theft are defined and assigned penalties. Civil matters such as personal injury, property damage, borrowing and lending, fair treatment of the underprivileged, and ownership of slaves are addressed. It is worthy of note that imprisonment and/or "rehabilitation" were not part of theocratic justice. Penalties involved capital punishment, restitution in kind, and fines. While some of these laws and penalties may seem unduly harsh to our Western thinking, it must be kept in mind that these heaven-revealed guidelines were far superior to any human ethical standard then existing. Also, the nation of Israel was created by God for a special purpose and therefore required a higher standard of purity and holiness. Note the principle undergirding various laws in the Book of Leviticus: "*You shall be holy; for I am holy*" (Lv 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7, 26).

7. What was the reason for the death penalty for murder (Num 35:33-34)?
8. What governing principle is found in Lv 19:17-18?
9. To whom could an Israelite not charge interest (Dt 23:19-20)?

Day 4: Health, Hygiene and Diet

It is sometimes hard to distinguish laws which pertain to ceremonial defilement from those which pertain to biological defilement. Detailed instructions are given concerning contagious diseases, leprosy and other skin conditions, emission of body fluids, menstrual periods, contact with dead bodies and other health conditions. Only animals categorized as “clean” may be eaten: Ox, sheep, goat, deer, gazelle, fish (with fins and scales), crickets, grasshoppers, and others (see Lv 11). “Unclean” animals are to be avoided: rabbits, pigs, camels, various birds, lizards, snakes and others (Lv 11). Not only are these animals not to be eaten, mere contact with their carcasses would contaminate. Again, God points to the separation of the people unto Himself as the reason for such unique dietary restrictions (Lv 11:44-47).

10. What is forbidden to be eaten in Lv 17:10-14; Dt 12:23-25? What reason is given?
11. T/F A man whose sheep was killed by a lion could not eat the sheep (Ex 22:31).
12. What was the main criteria of a “clean” beast (Lv 11:2-3)?
13. How was the contagious leper to warn others of his condition (Lv 13:45-46)?

Day 5: Periodic Reading of the Law

Moses commands that the law be read to all the people every seven years (Dt 31:9-13). Additionally, there was to be ongoing instruction in the home (Dt 4:9-10; 6:6-9). Even the clothes worn by the people should remind them of God’s commandments (Num 15:37-41). The periodic feasts, the continuous sacrifices and other acts of worship, the very land in which they dwell - all these things should combine to remind the people of their covenant relation with God and their great heritage of faith and obedience as embodied in Abraham. God has now established and organized Israel as a nation; they leave Sinai bound for the land that God had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

14. T/F Every seven years, at Passover, the Law was to be read to the people.
15. Of what significance was a tassel interwoven with a blue thread?

Day 1: Moses and the People Complain

About 14 months since leaving Egypt (Num 9:1; 10:11), the nation of Israel breaks camp at Mt. Sinai and heads for Canaan. Before long, however, they revert to the murmuring in which they had engaged when they left Egypt (Num 11:1-6). Caught between a complaining people and an angry God, Moses is exasperated and prefers death to the burdens of unassisted leadership (Num 11:11-15).

God answers both complaints. Moses is given a council of 70 elders to distribute the duties of governing such a large population (Num 11:16-17, 24-30). The humility of Moses is seen as the elders are endowed with the Holy Spirit; he is not envious or jealous of their gift. Israel's murmuring, however, was unreasonable and God answers them to their misery *"because you have despised the LORD who is among you ... saying, 'Why did we ever come up out of Egypt?'"* Even as they are eating the quail they craved, God strikes the murmurers with a plague and many die (Num 11:33).

1. What did Israel remember about Egypt? What had they forgotten?
2. Who chose the 70 elders to assist Moses?
3. Who was concerned for Moses when Eldad and Medad prophesied in the camp?

Day 2: Moses' Leadership Challenged

The humility of Moses was not shared by Miriam and Aaron who challenge him on his marriage to an Ethiopian woman (Num 12:1-3). In a passage which defines the unique role of Moses and his relationship with God, God rebukes Aaron and Miriam for daring to elevate themselves as his equals (Num 12:6-8). Miriam, who seems to have been the instigator, is then stricken with leprosy, an appropriate affliction considering that a leprous hand was one of the signs of Moses' authority from God (Num 12:9-10; Ex 4:6-7).

4. How did God speak through prophets? How did He speak with Moses?
5. What did Moses do when his sister was smitten with leprosy?

Day 3: The Negative Report of the Spies

Twelve spies are chosen and sent into Canaan (Num 13:17-20). When they return and give their report, the consensus is that the land cannot be taken: *"We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we ... we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight"* (Num 13:31-33). Two spies, Joshua and Caleb, dissent and recommend an immediate attack of Canaan (Num 13:30; 14:6-9). However, the negative report sparks the ever-present pessimism and distrust of the people. Rebellion ensues; the mob seeks to replace Moses; and Joshua and Caleb are threatened with stoning (Num 14:1-4, 10). The people have learned nothing since leaving Egypt.

6. How did Joshua and Caleb correctly forecast victory against such a strong enemy?
7. T/F A good test of what is right is where the majority stands on an issue.
8. The rejection of Moses was really a rejection of whom (14:4, 11)?

Day 4: God's Punishment of Israel

God again threatens to destroy the people and raise up another nation from Moses' descendants, but Moses again intercedes for them (Num 14:11-19). The great leader is himself acquiring the characteristics of God: longsuffering, mercy, and forgiveness. Moses reminds God of the very character which He had earlier revealed (Ex 34:6-7). God complies with Moses' request, but He declares that the adult generation of those who had come out of Egypt would not enter Canaan because of their persistent unbelief (Num 14:20-23, 29-35).

9. T/F Moses is concerned about God's honor and reputation among the nations.
10. What caused God to specify a forty year period of wandering in the wilderness?
11. What admirable thing is said of Caleb (Num 14:24)?

Day 5: The Failed Attempt to Invade

It is a trait of faithlessness to resist what is commanded and do what is forbidden. The Israelites were told to take the land with God's full blessing and backing and they refused. Now that they have been punished and barred from Canaan, what do they do? They set their minds to march in and take the land (Num 14:39-45)! Disobedience, no matter how sorry one might be for his actions and zealous to atone for them, is never acceptable. Again, Moses' leadership is ignored and the express command of God is violated. The attempt ends in failure.

12. Did the people acknowledge their sin?
13. Did their contrition obligate God to accept their attempt to undo the damage?
14. What guaranteed their failure before the Amalekites and Canaanites?

Day 1: Korah's Rebellion Against Moses and Aaron

The last forty years of Moses' life were difficult for him and for the whole nation. They faced the hardships of nomadic life, enemy nations, and deferred hopes of settling in a rich land of promise. But there was also internal strife and contention; Num 16-17 tell of a conspiracy to wrest leadership away from Moses and Aaron.

Moses and Aaron are accused by a large and influential delegation of taking leadership upon themselves (Num 16:1-3). The blame for Israel's present circumstances is laid at Moses and Aaron's feet (Num 16:12-14); in truth, the nation's suffering is caused by the very arrogance and presumption of the people that is demonstrated by the rebellion! Moses rebukes Korah for being dissatisfied with the position of honor that God had bestowed upon the tribe of Levi and for seeking the priesthood (Num 16:8-11, 39-40).

After the awesome and terrifying spectacle of the earth swallowing up the households of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and the fire of heaven consuming the 250 men offering incense, the people still murmur against Moses and Aaron (Num 16:41-50). Only Moses' intercession staves off a plague upon the congregation, and God affirms Aaron's priesthood by causing his rod to bud and produce almonds (see Num 17:5, 10).

1. Rebellion against God's leaders is rebellion against _____ (Num 16:11, 30).
2. T/F Moses had a clear conscience on the fairness of his leadership (Num 16:15).
3. How were the censures to become a sign to future generations?

Day 2: Moses' Transgression

It is understandable that Moses would get frustrated with Israel's continual whining and lamentation for Egypt, but he crossed the line when his frustration boiled over into his own disobedience (Num 20:1-13; Dt 3:23-27). The people are having enough trouble obeying God; the last thing they need is for their leader to show disrespect for God. Punishment is swift and irrevocable: Both Moses and Aaron are barred from entering Canaan, and both will die a short time later, Aaron first (Num 20:22-29; 33:38-39).

4. Who does the statement in Num 20:10 glorify? Who does it not glorify?
5. How did God react when Moses asked to be allowed into Canaan?
6. How old was Aaron when he died? How old was Moses when Aaron died (Ex 7:7)?

Day 3: Battles in the Wilderness

The militarism of the Israelites developed during the wilderness wandering as they met several of their enemies in battle. This period served as a "boot camp" for the later wars

that would secure the land of Canaan. Israel utterly destroys the king of Arad and his people in Hormah (Num 21:1-3). But after this victory, discouragement and murmuring again set in and God sends a plague of poisonous serpents to rebuke them (Num 21:4-9). After being denied permission by king Sihon to pass peacefully through his land, Israel attacks the Amorites and dwells for a time in their cities (Num 21:21-26, 31-32). Moving northward, Moses then defeats Og, king of Bashan (Num 21:33-35). Later, in one of Moses' final acts of leadership, the Midianites are attacked as punishment for their earlier enticement of Israel into fornication (Num 31:1-3, 7-20; cf. Num 25:1-5). While to our Western sensibilities these battles seem barbaric, we must remember that Israel is carrying out the judgment of God upon these nations. Let us be thankful that our warfare as Christians is spiritual and not carnal.

7. What is the continual complaint of the people against Moses?
8. What does Moses always do for the people when they are in trouble (Num 21:7)?
9. Whose vengeance was taken upon the Midianites? What famous person was killed?

Day 4: Balaam's Oracles

The huge, roving band of Israelites was now striking fear into the hearts of the settled peoples in and around Canaan (note Rahab's observation in Josh 2:8-11). Balak, king of Moab, is greatly afraid of Israel and tries to hire Balaam to curse them (Num 22:1-6, 11-12). Note the various things Balaam says about Israel: those "*whom the Lord has not denounced ... A people dwelling alone, not reckoning itself among the nations ... Who can count the dust of Jacob, or number one-fourth of Israel?*" (Num 23:8-10); "*He has not observed iniquity in Jacob ... The LORD his God is with him ... It now must be said of Jacob and of Israel, 'Oh, what God has done!' ... Look, a people rises like a lioness ... it shall not lie down until it devours the prey...*" (Num 23:21, 23-24); "*He shall consume the nations, his enemies; He shall break their bones ... Blessed is he who blesses you, and cursed is he who curses you*" (Num 24:8-9). In spite of the persistent disobedience of the people, God is forgiving their sins and giving them victory over their enemies in order to be faithful to the covenant made with Abraham.

10. According to Rahab, what effect did the defeat of King Sihon and King Og have?
11. How could Balaam say of God, "He has not observed iniquity in Jacob"?

Day 5: A Second Numbering of Israel

God commands another census of Israel to demonstrate to the people that His decreed punishment against them had been fulfilled (Num 26:1-4, 63-65). The population has declined a bit since leaving Egypt - 601,730 fighting men (Num 26:51). The land will be divided among the tribes by this census (Num 26:52-56).

12. Who was not found in the list of the second census (Num 26:64)?

Day 1: Joshua Appointed as Moses' Successor

Moses is greatly disappointed that he will not share in the conquest of the land with his people, but his supreme concern is the effective leadership of the nation: *“that the congregation of the LORD may not be like sheep which have no shepherd”* (Num 27:12-17). God instructs Moses to inaugurate Joshua before Eleazar the priest and the whole congregation of Israel as the next leader of the nation (see also Dt 31:1-3, 7-8). We were introduced to Joshua as a military captain back in Ex 17:8ff where he defeated the Amalekites on the way to Mt. Sinai. Joshua was also called Moses' assistant and accompanied him upon Mt. Sinai to receive revelation from God (Ex 24:13-14; 32:17). We then see Joshua with Moses in the tabernacle of meeting where Moses communed with God (Ex 33:11). Joshua had been at Moses' right hand for many years preparing for this transition.

1. How old is Moses now? When he fled to Midian? At the exodus? (Ac 7:23, 30)
2. Joshua is described as a man “in whom is the _____.”
3. List Joshua's credentials for leadership. How long had he been groomed?

Day 2: The Tribes Settling in the Trans-Jordan

After the defeat of Sihon and Og and the capture of their lands along the eastern shores of the Dead Sea and Jordan River (called the “trans-Jordan”), the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh appeal to Moses for possession of the land as their inheritance (Num 32:1-5). Moses is troubled by the request fearing that the lack of support from these tribes would dishearten the rest (Num 32:6-15). A deal is then made that these tribes would temporarily settle their families and animals in the trans-Jordan and then assist their brethren in capturing the rest of the land (Num 32:16-19). This compromise proves satisfactory (Num 32:20-33).

4. Why did Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh desire the land of the trans-Jordan?
5. T/F At first, Moses likened their request to the ten spies who discouraged the people.
6. If these tribes failed to assist their brethren, their sin would _____.

Day 3: The Boundaries of the Land

The general extent of the land is given in Num 34:2-12. It appears that the northern boundary falls a bit short of what God originally intended; the Euphrates River is mentioned in Dt 1:7. Under Solomon's reign, the border will eventually reach the Euphrates.

7. Consult a good Bible atlas or detailed map for the boundaries of the promised land.

Day 4: Levite Cities and Cities of Refuge

God had taken the Levites as a special tribe unto Himself instead of the first-born of every family (Num 3:40-51). The Levites were not counted among the twelve tribes in regard to the division of the land; instead, they are given 48 cities and a narrow strip of land around each city for their animals (Num 35:1-8). Six of the cities are to be designated as cities of refuge; safe-havens for those who would commit accidental manslaughter (Num 35:9-15, 22-28). In this provision, God distinguishes between premeditated murder, which is worthy of death, and accidental death, which deserves a lesser punishment.

8. T/F Three cities of refuge would be east of the Jordan and three west of the Jordan.

9. When would the manslayer be allowed to leave the city of refuge?

10. T/F The Levites were to attend to worship and not own cattle.

Day 5: Separation of Tribal Land

A question of marriage and the inheritance of land is brought before Moses by the tribe of Manasseh (Num 36). The situation: Suppose a man has no sons and his daughters inherit his property. If they should marry outside the tribe, then their property would transfer to the tribe of their marriage, thus diminishing the original territory. How should this be handled? Moses considers the question legitimate and stipulates that the daughters who inherit land must marry a person of their choice within the tribe to which they belong. Otherwise, there are no restrictions on inter-tribal marriages. God intends for the land to remain divided among the tribes, perhaps to be a perpetual reminder of their historic development as a nation from the twelve sons of Jacob.

11. T/F No daughter could marry outside her own tribe.

12. Where did Moses get the solution to the problem raised by the tribe of Manasseh?

Day 1: Deuteronomy: A Transitional Book

The book of Deuteronomy contains the final words of Moses to the Israelites as they are on the threshold of Canaan (Dt 1:1-5). The clarifications and conditions placed upon retaining the land of promise are called “*the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, **besides the covenant** which He made with them in Horeb*” (Dt 29:1).

In Deuteronomy, Moses passionately pleads for the Israelites to remember the past - the glorious manifestations of God’s power and their persistent hard-heartedness; to be courageous in the present - God is giving them the land promised hundreds of years before; and to be cautious in the future - continue to obey God lest He drive them out of Canaan.

Many themes recur in Deuteronomy: Egypt and the exodus; the events at Mt. Sinai; the failure to enter the land; the period of wilderness wandering; the faithfulness of God to the covenant; the dangers of idolatry; and others. The main conclusion of the book is: **God has been faithful to His covenant though Israel has been unfaithful to God.** The passion of Moses is no doubt generated by the knowledge that he will soon die and no longer lead the people who had so aggravated and vexed him these last forty years.

1. Where were these last words of Moses spoken?

Day 2: A Review of History

There are at least 20 exhortations in Deuteronomy to “remember” or “do not forget” as Moses urges Israel to evaluate and learn from the past. In his history review of the first three chapters, there is great emphasis upon God’s role among them: the Lord spoke; the Lord multiplied; the Lord commanded; the Lord fought; the Lord heard; the Lord blessed; the Lord gave; the Lord delivered; etc. Israel could look back to the wilderness and see that their clothes didn’t wear out, their feet did not swell, and their food had been miraculously supplied “*that you may know that I am the LORD your God*” (Dt 29:5-6). From this experience they could also learn that God had chastised them as a Father (Dt 8:2-6), and by it they had been prepared for greater blessings to come (Dt 8:16). They owed their very existence to God and could see His hand at every turn in their history. This reminder would not only benefit Israel in this time of challenge and transition but will benefit Christians if taken to heart (I Cor 10:6, 11).

2. What is one indication that God has been forgotten (Dt 8:11)?
3. What should the past help them remember when prosperity comes later (Dt 8:11-18)?

Day 3: The Great Manifestations of God's Power

The instances where Israel had been shown the mighty power of God are almost endless. They could look back for generations and see what God had unfolded from Abraham onward, great and awesome things (Dt 10:21-22). But in their own generation and the one past, God had shown signs and wonders in Egypt (Dt 6:21-23; 11:2-4); glory and greatness at Mt. Sinai (Dt 5:23-24); horrible judgment during Korah's rebellion (Dt 11:6-7). *"Or did God ever try to go and take for Himself a nation from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm ... To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD Himself is God ... Out of heaven He let you hear His voice ... on earth He showed you His great fire ..."* (Dt 4:34-36). Indeed, God had revealed Himself to no other nation as He had to Israel. They must not take this for granted.

4. Did God **need** to work such miracles to accomplish His will? Why did He do them?
5. What do these experiences say about the relationship between miracles and belief?

Day 4: Warnings Against Idolatry

The Law contained prohibitions of idol worship. The reason should now be obvious: the only true God is the one who can declare such purposes and work them out over centuries of human existence both by miracle and providential control. Idols are non-entities, mere figments of man's imagination which give him license to pursue his own agenda (remember the calf at Mt. Sinai - Dt 9:13ff). For the past several decades, Israel has been kept physically distant from other peoples, but they will be challenged on their resistance to idolatry when they take possession of the land. Hence, Moses gives numerous warnings against following after the ways of the Canaanites: Dt 4:15-19; 6:14-15; 7:1-5; 11:16-17; 12:2-3, 29-32; 30:17-18.

6. T/F God told Israel to destroy altars and images but have mercy upon the people.
7. Anyone who suggested the worship of an idol should be _____ (Dt 13:6-11).

Day 5: Obedience Stressed

The heart of the covenant relationship between Israel and God is the Law; the Law was designed to keep the nation pure and distinct so that the Abrahamic promises might be ultimately fulfilled through them. It was imperative, then, to observe the Law and to be obedient people. Moses urged such obedience and pronounced various blessings upon it: Dt 4:1-2, 5-6, 40; 5:1; 6:1-3, 17-18; 8:1; 11:1, 8-9, 13, 22.

8. What will others say about those who diligently follow God's laws (Dt 4:6)?
9. T/F The Law of Moses stressed only obedience to God rather than love for Him.
10. Does God ask a lesser degree of obedience from Christians than He did from Jews?

Day 1: God: Faithful to the Covenant

Moses points out several times in Deuteronomy that the favored position of Israel is not due to their virtue but is a by-product of God's love for their ancestors: *"And because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them ..."* (Dt 4:37; see 10:15). No characteristic of the nation itself caused God to value it more highly than any other: *"The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand ..."* (Dt 7:7-10). Lest the people become self-righteous as they displace the Canaanites, Moses tells them that their victory will not be due to their own righteousness, *"for you are a stiff-necked people"* (Dt 9:6). Instead the Canaanites are being judged by God for their wickedness, *"that He may fulfill the word which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob"* (Dt 9:4-5).

1. What does God keep for a thousand generations?
2. How can Dt 7:7 comfort a small church among many large denominations?

Day 2: Israel: A Special Nation

The truth that Israel holds special status on account of their illustrious and faithful ancestors should humble them and challenge them to have a similar faith. But the fact remains that they *are* a special nation unto God, unique among all the nations in their laws and in their rise to nationhood (Dt 4:7-8, 20, 34; 7:6). Their faithful adherence to the Law would guarantee their privileged status *"high above all nations which He has made, in praise, in name, and in honor"* (Dt 26:18-19; see also 28:9; 29:12-13).

3. What was one advantage to Israel in having God so near (Dt 4:7)?
4. Compare Dt 4:8 and Rom 3:2. How does this concept apply to Christians today?
5. Can you find a new testament passage indicating the church's "holy nation" status?

Day 3: The Blessings of Obedience

The covenant which God made with Abraham was unconditional; that is, God made unilateral promises to Abraham to create a nation from his descendants, give them a land, and eventually bring spiritual blessing to all the world through them. Nothing could prevent these things from coming to pass. But the special blessings and privileges now being promised to Israel are **conditional**. Moses makes it clear that the fruitfulness of the land, the health and prosperity of the people, and the perpetual ownership of the land by divine decree depends upon continual national obedience to the covenant laws (Dt 7:12-16; 28:1-14).

6. List some of the ways in which the people would be blessed in the land of Canaan.
7. What would these blessings cause all the nations to see?

Day 4: The Curses of Disobedience

The blessings of obedience are pretty straightforward: peace, prosperity and perpetuity. But the consequences of unfaithfulness to the covenant are horrible and far-reaching (Dt 28:15-68). Unfruitful procreation, disease, unfavorable climate and weather, military defeat, confusion and bad judgment, foreign invasion, exile and a return to Egyptian-style slavery will befall Israel if they abandon God. Instead of being God's special treasure and chosen people, Israel *"shall become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword among all nations ... Then men would say: 'Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD God of their fathers ... the anger of the LORD was aroused against this land, to bring on it every curse that is written in this book'"* (Dt 28:37; 29:25, 27).

If all the corrective judgments fail to produce repentance, if the people insist on worshipping other gods, God will then send them *"to a nation which neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you shall serve other gods - wood and stone"* (Dt 28:36). God goes on to describe the invading nation in some detail, the horrendous conditions of the sieges that will precede captivity, and the terrible treatment which will befall them at the hand of their enemies. Worst of all, however, is the diminishing of the nation/land promise: *"You shall be left few in number, whereas you were as the stars of heaven in multitude ... the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you and bring you to nothing; and you shall be plucked from off the land which you go to possess. Then the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other ..."* (Dt 28:62-64).

Looking far into the future, Moses then assures the people that if they repent in exile, God will even then bring them back to the land and restore all their blessings (Dt 30:1-10). These blessings and cursings represent not only conditions of law but prophecy of the future; they are but a preview of what is to come over the next thousand years of Israelite history.

8. Describe the mental anguish that would afflict Israel (Dt 28:65-67).
9. Will Egypt be the destroying nation to come upon Israel? How do you know?

Day 5: The Death of Moses

Moses dies having seen but never entered the promised land (Dt 34:1-12). God's faithful servant (Heb 3:5), a man of unparalleled spiritual stature who had taught Israel, led them, judged them and interceded for them, is now gone. Probably mourned more in death than appreciated in life, Moses had fulfilled his role in establishing the nation and bringing them to the threshold of Canaan. Moses dies with the echoes of his warnings still in the nation's ears, and he leaves them a song of remembrance (Dt 32).

10. Did Moses' sin at Kadesh keep him from going to heaven? Explain.