

Christ in the Old Testament

Summer - Fall 2020

Prepared by Dan Hager

Class Objective: Build students' faith in Jesus by revealing Christ's supreme role in the Bible's overall story. Equip students to study the Old Testament in ways that are productive, enjoyable, and fruitful.

The Torah

Focus Statement: What does it say that when God gives rules, He calls them "The Teaching"? Once we understand God's purpose - ultimately fulfilled in Jesus - His laws in Exodus through Deuteronomy make so much more sense!

After Moses read the **"Book of the Covenant"** to the people of Israel at Mount Sinai, they said in **Exodus 24:7**, **"All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient."** Moses then sealed the covenant with blood (Exodus 24:8, cf. Hebrews 9:18-20). Yet, God wasn't done. **"The LORD said to Moses, 'Come up to me on the mountain and wait there, that I may give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction'"** (Exo. 24:12). The Hebrew word we translate as "Law" is **"Torah."**

- **What do you think of when you hear the word "law"?**

"Torah" also means _____ or _____. The first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures are called "The Law", but its first third is stories: we are seventy chapters into it before the commandments start to be given! (Imagine if the U.S. Constitution began with biographies of the Founding Fathers.) Because God's intent was to teach Israel how to be like Him (and ultimately, bring Christ into the world), story continued to be important to the Law.

When Moses and his assistant Joshua left to go up to God on the mountain, they told the elders, **"Wait here for us until we return to you. And behold, Aaron and Hur are with you. Whoever has a dispute, let him go to them"** (Exo. 24:14). The people saw **"the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain"** as Moses entered the cloud surrounding it (Exo. 24:15-18). He then spent the next forty days and forty nights receiving commandments from God for how He would establish His presence among them.

- Exo. 25: Sanctuary Contributions, Ark of the Covenant, Table for Bread, Golden Lampstand
- Exo. 26: The Tabernacle
- Exo. 27: The Bronze Altar, the Court of the Tabernacle, Oil for the Lamp
- Exo. 28: The Priests' Garments
- Exo. 29: The Consecration of the Priests
- Exo. 30: The Altar of Incense, Census Tax, Bronze Basin, Anointing Oil and Incense
- Exo. 31: Enabling Oholiab and Bezalel to make what God commanded, the Sabbath

These extensive instructions created a way for God to be present with His people in a world still bearing the weight of sin, re-establishing what was lost in Genesis 1-2.

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Yet, "the Law" isn't just rules but instruction. Watch what happens next. Read **Exodus 32:1-6**.

- **How were the people violating their covenant with God?**

As cosmically disastrous as humanity's sin in Genesis 3 was for all of creation, Israel's sin in Exodus 32 was equally disastrous for their nation. God was so angry that He was prepared to destroy the people and make a nation of Moses, but Moses interceded. Read **Exodus 32:7-14**.

- **Why did Moses ask God to relent?**

Moses destroyed the calf and executed 3,000 of the men who had "**broken loose**" with help from his own tribe, the sons of Levi (Exo. 32:15-29). The people later suffered from a plague God sent, as well (Exo. 32:30-35). Yet the effects lingered beyond that. Read **Exodus 33:1-23**.

- **What was God still going to do for the people?**

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- **What was God not going to do?**

This is where “the teaching” comes in. This story is about more than God giving rules and people being punished (though that’s there, too). It’s about learning who God is. Read **Exodus 34:1-9**.

- **Who is God?**

Following this interaction, God renews the covenant with the people. Things go very differently this time when Moses comes down the mountain. Read **Exodus 34:29-35**.

- **How is viewing the commandments given and the stories involved in their entirety a different experience from other approaches to studying these passages?**

From here, work began to build the tabernacle, providing God’s presence among His people. Yet, the story doesn’t end there.

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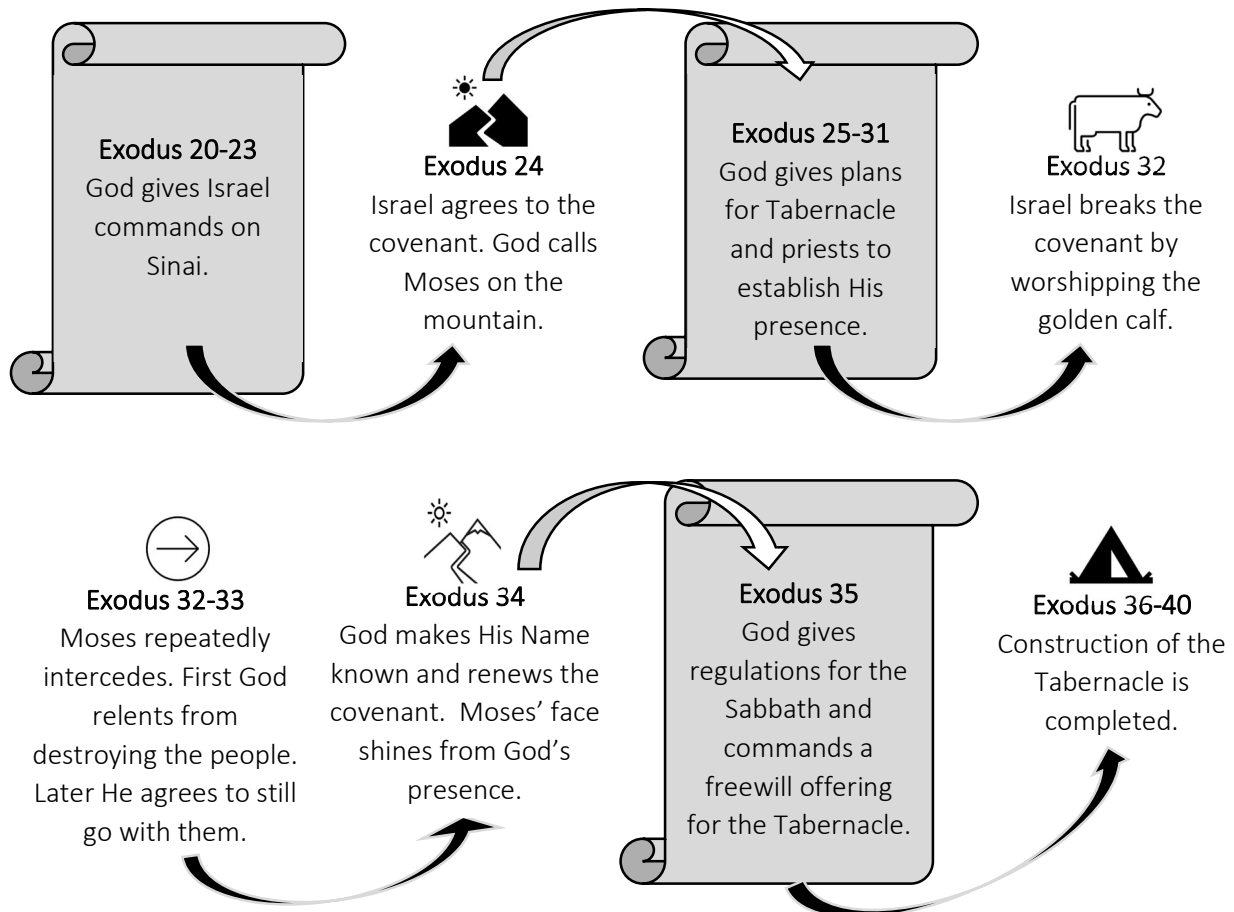
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Be Holy

Focus Statement: As God gave Israel His Law, it was meant to set them apart from their neighbors by teaching them to be holy!

_____ , the Hebrew word we translate "Law", also means **direction** or **instruction**. This is why it includes stories as well as commands. When we recognize this about its design and that Christ is the goal of the law (cf. Rom. 10:4), it starts to make a lot more sense!



This approach fundamentally changes things when it comes to reading "The Law"! Moses' commanded, "Take from among you a contribution to the LORD. Whoever is of a generous heart, let him bring the LORD's contribution" (Exo. 35:4-5). In the next chapter, we see the people's response. Read **Exodus 36:2-7**.

- How does knowing the story teach us more than the command by itself?

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Instead of being a hodge-podge of arbitrary rules, the commandments God gives are a crucial part of how He personally teaches Israel to be His **“treasured possession among all peoples...a kingdom of priests and a holy nation”** (Exo. 19:5-6). Yet, as God told Moses in Exodus 33-34, this is a big responsibility that sinful people like us should not take lightly. We get a glimpse at this when the Tabernacle is finished and **“the glory of the LORD”** fills it. Read **Exodus 40:34-38**.

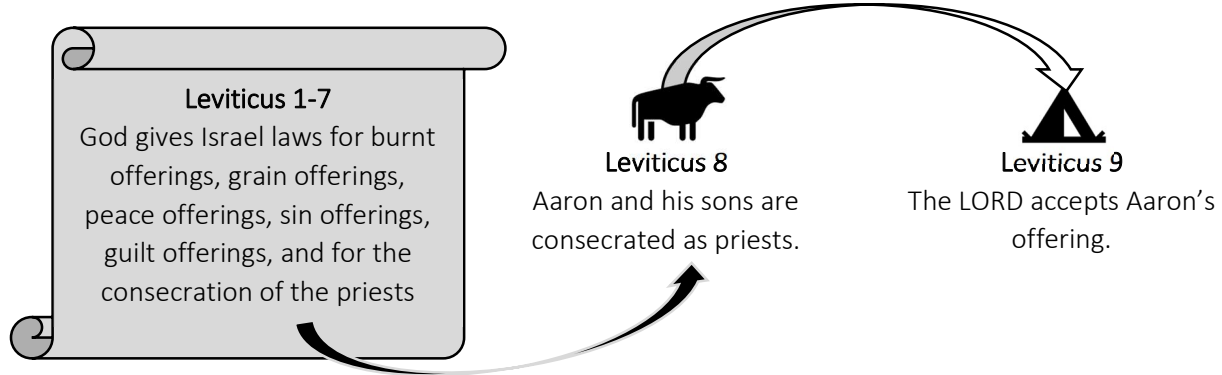
- How does this provide a fitting conclusion to this part of the story?

- What new problem does this introduce to Israel's story?

Read **Exodus 40:1-2**. When did this happen? _____

Read **Numbers 1:1**. When did this happen? _____

Can you begin to see where **Leviticus** fits in to what God is teaching? It is the book that bridges the gap between Israel being unable to come near and being able to move forward with God's presence! That's why it begins with, **“The LORD called Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting...”** (Lev. 1:1)



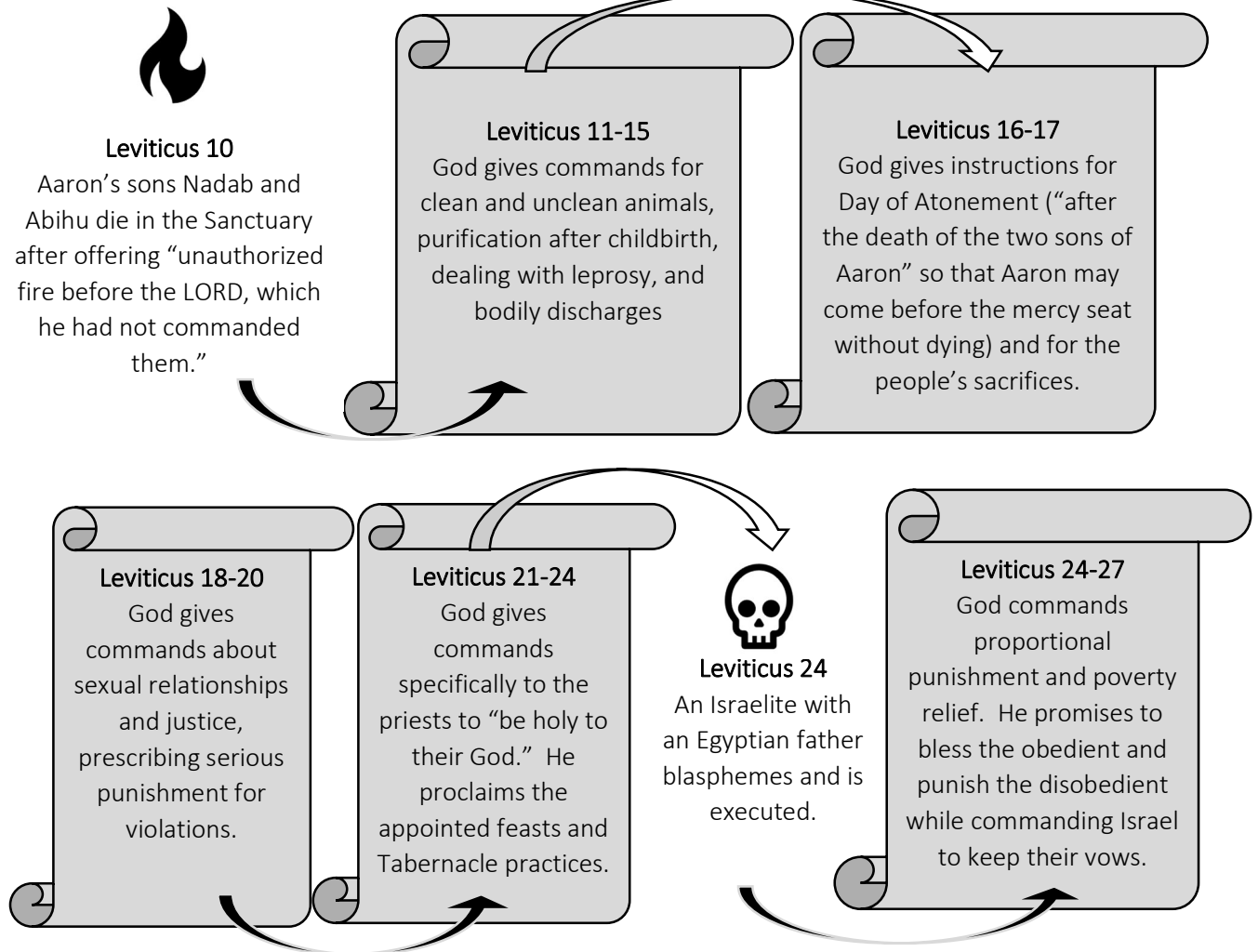
This solved the problem we were left with at the end of Exodus 40. **“Then Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them, and he came down from offering the sin offering and the burnt offering and the peace offerings. And Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting, and when they came out they blessed the people, and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people”** (Leviticus 9:22-23). Unfortunately, we immediately encounter a new problem, driving the next set of commandments given.

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In a month, God had taught Israel how to live in His presence without being consumed, all in preparation for their journey to the Promised Land. When we learn to approach the Law as God's Teaching, it can bring clarity to an otherwise confusing book. Read **Leviticus 11:44-45**.

- What was God's reason for giving Israel these Laws?

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It wasn't just about religious ritual, either. The Law that God taught them affected every area of their lives, a fact which set them apart from their neighbors. Read **Leviticus 19:9-18**.

- **How does God show that He is teaching Israel to have good character with these laws?**

Even after we understand the big picture, some of the specific details of the Law can be odd or even troubling to us within our modern context. When we read the prohibitions in **Leviticus 18:6-23** against incest, adultery, child sacrifice, homosexuality, and bestiality, it makes us uncomfortable. We may even ask, "Why is that in the Bible?" Read **Leviticus 18:1-5, 24-30**.

- **Why is that in the Bible?**

The Bible Project offers free (and incredibly well-made) videos that are hugely helpful in exploring and understanding these concepts. Check them out!

- *The Character of God (Exodus 34:6-7)* at <https://youtu.be/nxwzq1PJImM>
- *Overview: Leviticus* at <https://youtu.be/IJ-FekWUZzE>
- *Holiness* at <https://youtu.be/I9vn5UvsHvM>

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For I am Holy

Focus Statement: Jesus brought to fulfillment the holiness God taught in His Law by perfectly embodying it and offering it to us!

As Leviticus taught God's people how to be like Him and to live in His presence in the midst of a sinful world, we ultimately see that fulfilled in Jesus. Read **John 1:9-18** and **Hebrews 3:1-6**.

- **How does Jesus ultimately fulfill what Leviticus teaches?**

Because of Jesus, we get to be God's house, personally experiencing His presence through the gift of the Holy Spirit (cf. Eph. 2:19-22). Yet, this means holiness matters for Christians (cf. I Peter 1:13-2:12).

- **Why are we often uncomfortable with personally being called holy?**

The Corinthians struggled like ancient Israel with idolatry, sexual immorality, testing God, and grumbling (cf. I Cor. 10:6-11). Yet, the Apostle Paul – in no uncertain terms – made clear the importance of our holiness and how God accomplishes it. Read **I Corinthians 6:9-20**.

- **How does God make us holy?**

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- **Why does it matter that we personally be holy?**

Better

Focus Statement: When God teaches us His Law, it helps us to understand what He accomplished through Jesus. When that is clear, we see how He makes everything better.

Leviticus is a shadow of what Jesus would ultimately do for us. Read **Hebrews 8:1-13**.

- **What makes Christ a better high priest?**

Drawing heavily on the Law of Moses, the Hebrews writer goes on to describe everything that is better with Christ. Read **Hebrews 9:1-10:18**.

- **How was what Christ accomplished like what occurred in the “earthly place of holiness”?**

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- How is what Christ accomplished *better*?

When we realize this, it should have a dramatic impact. Read **Hebrews 10:19-39**.

- God's presence was meant to change Israel's daily living. How does Jesus change our lives?

People who God has taught see things differently. Read **Hebrews 12:18-29**.

- How has God opened your eyes to His Law and the nature of holiness?

Those who truly allowed God's Law to teach them recognized this about Jesus. As we learn to truly meditate on and delight in God's Law – as He always intended – we will see this, too.

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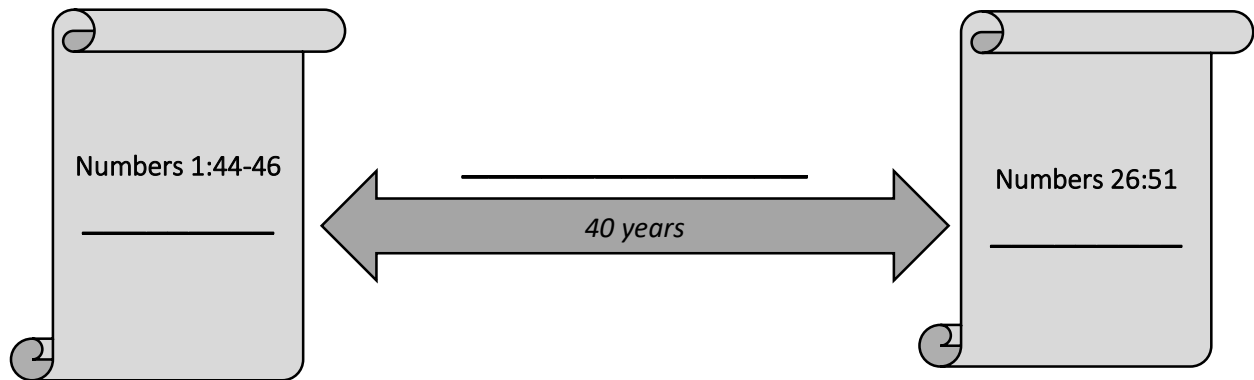
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Meditate on God's Law

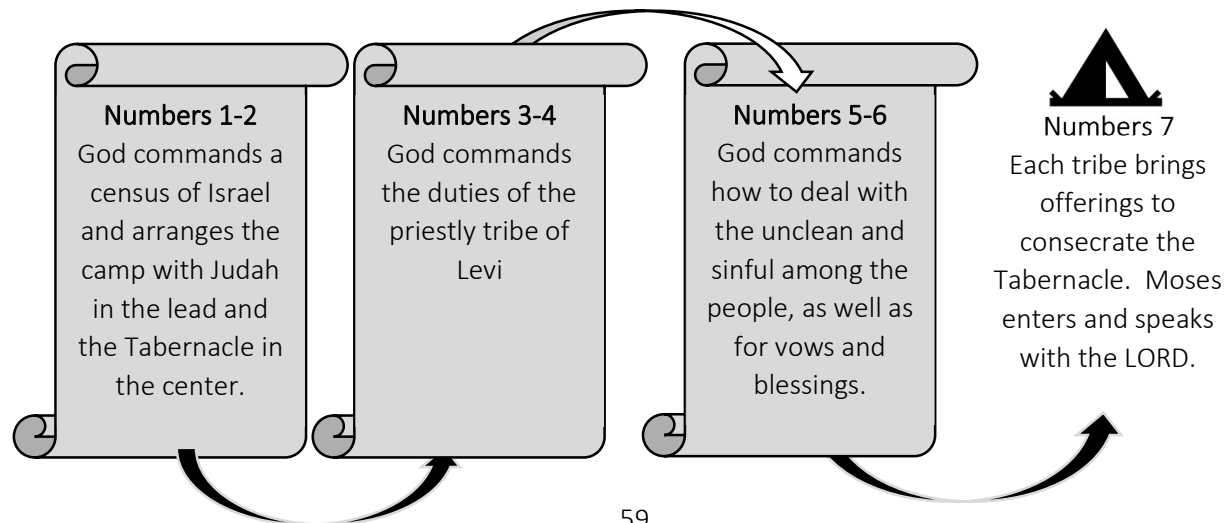
Focus Statement: God's Law is more than just a collection of rules and census figures. As we see in Numbers, His wisdom is meant to be meditated on, allowing Him to shape our hearts!

If Leviticus' detailed commandments were not already enough of a challenge, Numbers introduces a new dynamic to the stories and laws of the Torah: census figures!



- What would you expect a nation's population to do over 40 years' time?

Unlike our English title for the book (and the Greek title from which it was translated), the original Hebrew title is much more descriptive (and interesting): "In the Wilderness". It comes from the book's opening verse, "**The LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tent of meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt...**" (Num. 1:1). Much like Leviticus directly continued the story of Exodus, Numbers now takes the baton.

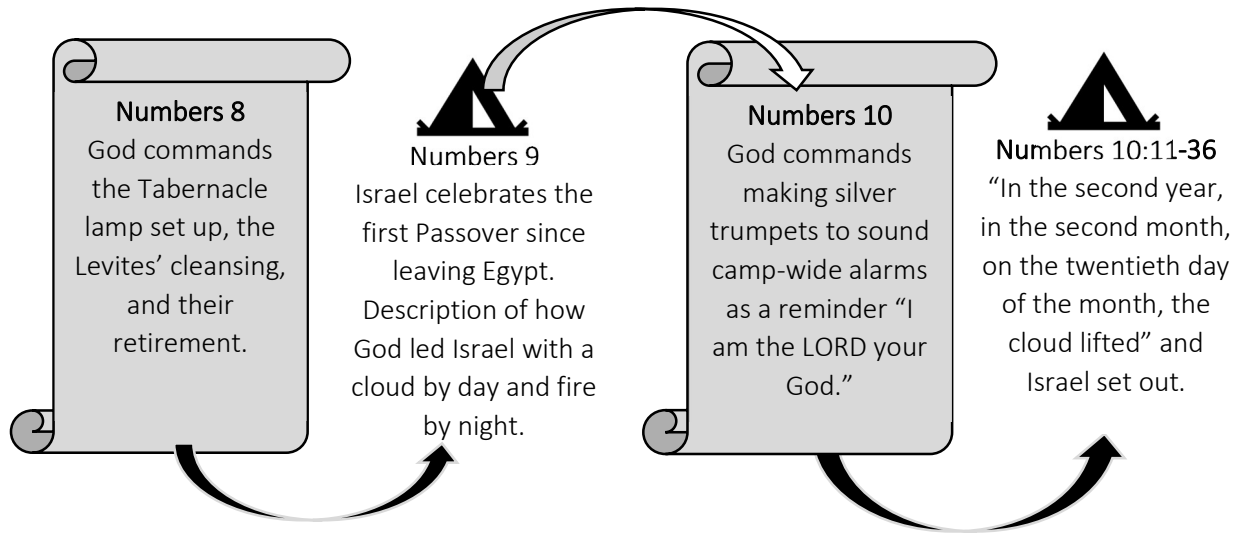


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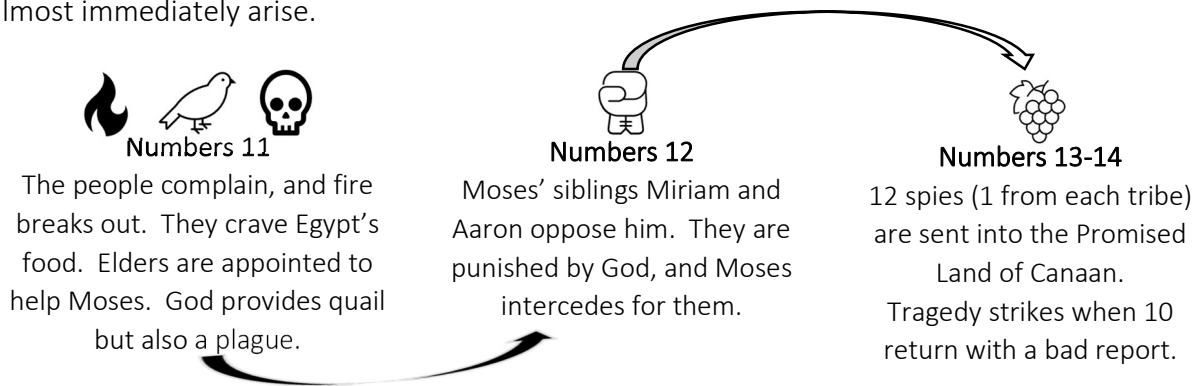
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In way that closely mirrors Israel's experience from the Red Sea to Sinai in Exodus, problems almost immediately arise.



When ten of the spies brought back a bad report from the Promised Land ("We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are"), it caused a rebellion, leading to a repeat of a now too familiar scene. Read **Numbers 14:11-25**.

- How do we see themes we've studied earlier in the Torah repeated here?

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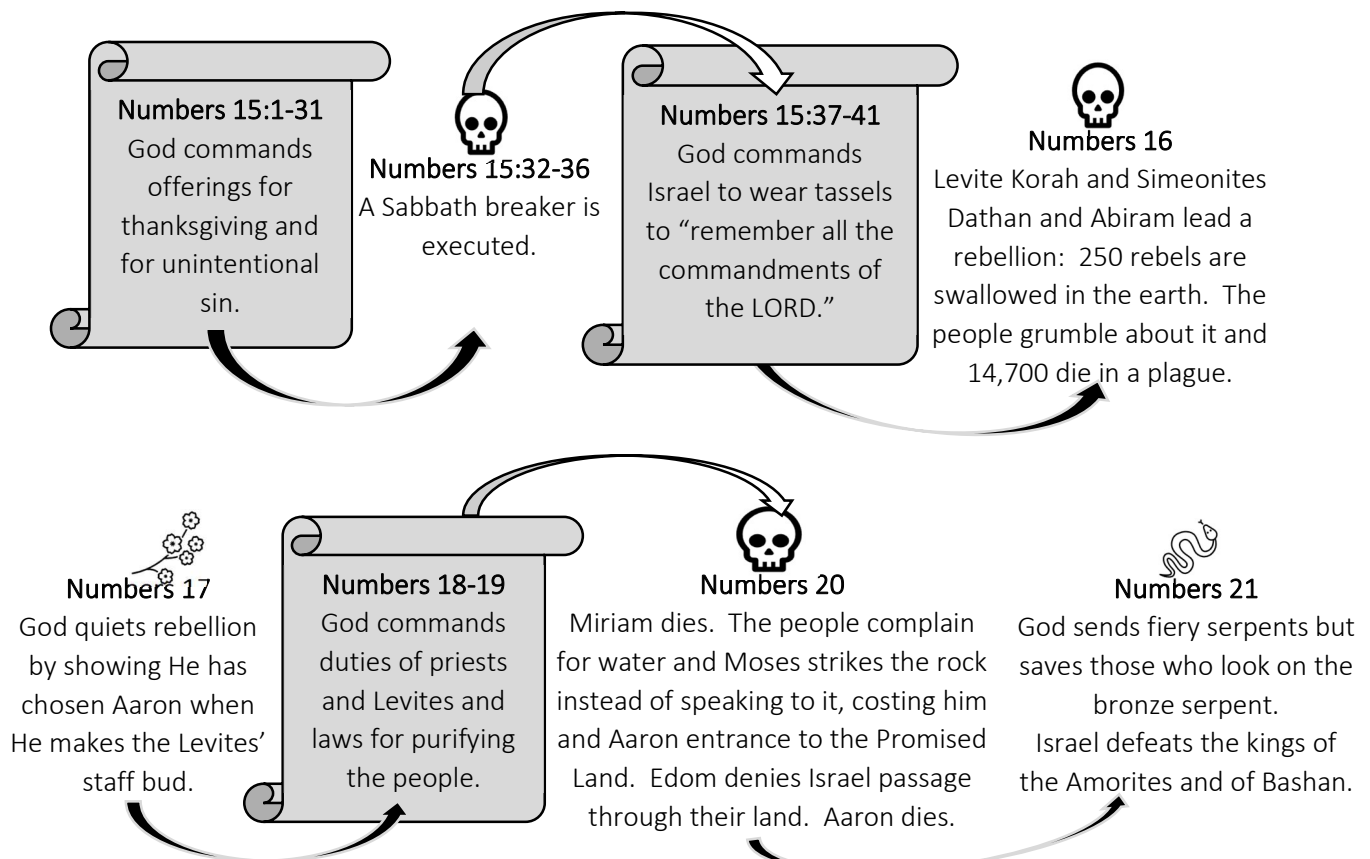
While a precise list of what God was referring to when He said Israel put Him “to the test these ten times” (14:22), He is likely referring to at least some of these events.

1	Exodus 14:10-14	At the Red Sea
2	Exodus 15:22-27	Water of Marah
3	Exodus 16:1-12	Grumbling for Food
4	Exodus 16:19-21	Storing Manna
5	Exodus 16:27	Gathering Manna on Sabbath
6	Exodus 17:1-7	Waters of Massah and Meribah
7	Exodus 32:1-35	Golden Calf
8	Numbers 11:1-3	Fires of Taberah*
9	Numbers 11:4-35	Graves of Craving
10	Numbers 13:25-14:45	Rebellion at Spies' Bad Report

**The Talmud, which summarizes Jewish rabbinic teaching in the fifth century AD, leaves out the "Fires of Taberah" and mentions a second instance of doubting after crossing the Red Sea based on Psalm 106:6-7's reference to "at the sea".*

Reference: <https://torah.org/learning/pirkei-avos-chapter5-6/>

As we see through the rest of Numbers, this pattern continued in Israel's forty years in the wilderness. Even Moses and Aaron would eventually fall victim to it.



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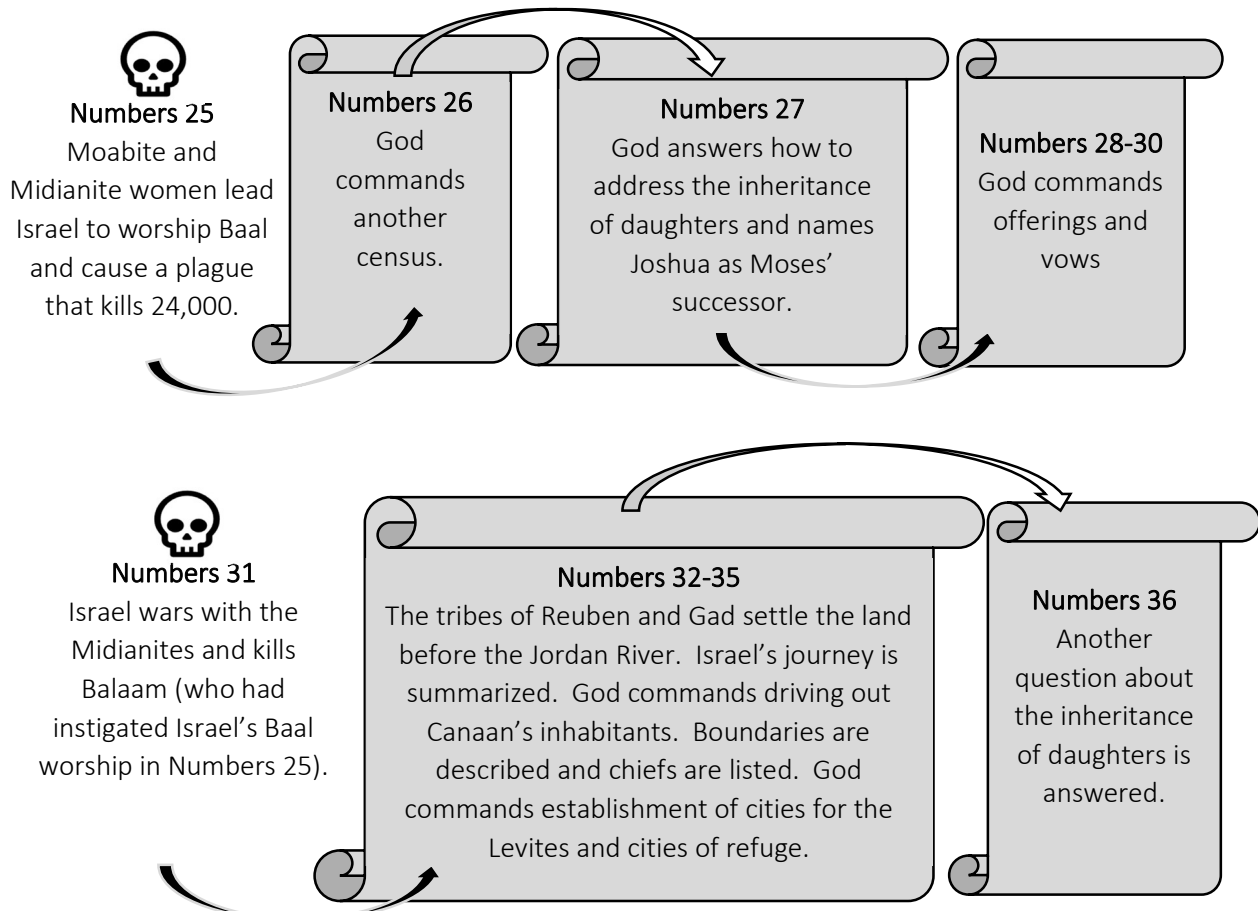
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While God's anger may make us uncomfortable, Numbers shows us how He is slow to anger: the harshest punishment only comes after repeated rebellion. When He does punish Israel, He is withdrawing His grace and returning them to the state they would have been in before: one of sin and death. As we have previously studied, Paul uses these accounts to make that point in I **Corinthians 10:1-13**, where he says, **"Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall"** knowing that **"God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability"**. Though He will by no means clear the guilty, God keeps providing a way back for His sinful people by His steadfast love and faithfulness (Ex. 34:6-7).

While Israel rebelled, God was still working for their good in ways they did not realize. In **Numbers 22-24**, Moabite king Balak hired the sorcerer Balaam to curse Israel while they camped below. Balaam's willingness to speak for money made him a prototype for false prophets in the New Testament (cf. II Peter 2:15-16, Jude 11, Revelation 2:14). Yet, every time Balaam spoke, God made him bless Israel and curse their enemies. His final oracle is especially interesting: **"The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor...who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down with his eyes uncovered: I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth"** (Num. 24:15-17). Does that sound like anyone you know? **Jesus!**



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Seeing God's overall story deepened the meaning of Leviticus' commands for us. Similarly, instead of skipping over or speeding past the censuses of Numbers, we should ask what is God trying to teach us through them?

- What was different about the people counted in Numbers 26 compared to Numbers 1?

Yet, notice what happens if we directly compare the two censuses by tribe:

<i>Tribe</i>	<i>Numbers 1 Census</i>	<i>Numbers 26 Census</i>	<i>% Change</i>
Reuben	46,500	43,730	-6.0%
Simeon	59,300	22,200	-62.6%
Gad	45,650	40,500	-11.3%
Judah	74,600	76,500	2.5%
Issachar	54,400	64,300	18.2%
Zebulun	57,400	60,500	5.4%
Ephraim	40,500	32,500	-19.8%
Manasseh	32,200	52,700	63.7%
Benjamin	35,400	45,600	28.8%
Dan	62,700	64,400	2.7%
Asher	41,500	53,400	28.7%
Naphtali	53,400	45,400	-15.0%
Total*	603,550	601,730	-0.3%

**Levites were not counted in Numbers 1. They were an additional 23,000 in Numbers 26.*

While Israel's total population stayed relatively flat over 40 years, there were massive changes within specific tribes. This is most pronounced with the tribes of Simeon and Manasseh, whose populations essentially flip-flop. Read **Numbers 25:1-15**.

- Is there anything within God's story to account for the change in Simeon's census?

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The change in Manasseh is less obvious; however, there is a specific situation that comes up twice in Numbers – including right after the second census – that gives insight. Read **Numbers 27:1-11** and **Numbers 36:1-13**.

- **What do these stories tell us about the character of the Manassites?**

You see, all of the Torah – the stories, the commandments, even the census figures – are part of how God teaches us! So, we might ask at this point: why haven't we seen that before? Maybe it makes sense to us now. Yet, why have we not only missed it but even viewed those elements – the commandments of Leviticus, the lists of Numbers – as a hindrance?

The key is in how we approach the Law. As God prepared Joshua to lead the people in taking the Promised Land after Moses' death, He would make this crystal clear. Read **Joshua 1:7-9**.

- **How is the approach to the Law that God tells Joshua to take different than how we commonly approach Bible study?**

This gets at something essential for us to understand about the Law of Moses: it is **meditation** literature. If we are going to see these truly remarkable things about it – learning from it who God is in such a way that it leads us to Jesus – we must deeply engage with it. As Moses prepared Israel to enter the Promised Land, he instructed them to do just that in Deuteronomy.

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Rules, Stories, and Knowing God

Focus Statement: In Deuteronomy, Moses explains what the Law's stories and rules are really about: knowing God! Yet, are we approaching them in such a way to let that happen?

The English title of the final book of the Law of Moses, **Deuteronomy**, comes from its Greek title meaning "Second Law." This reflects how it largely retells the stories and commands of the preceding books. The Hebrew title for it was *The Words*, coming from the book's opening verse (as was also the case with *In the Beginning*, *The Names*, *The LORD Called*, and *In the Wilderness*). "Words" made the book unique: Deuteronomy is mostly three different sermons by Moses.

- *Sermon:* " _____ " (Deuteronomy 1:1-4:43)
- *Sermon:* " _____ " (Deuteronomy 4:44-26:19)
- *Sermon:* " _____ " (Deuteronomy 27:1-28:68)
- *Covenant Renewed* (Deuteronomy 29-30)
- *Joshua Commissioned and Moses' Farewell* (Deuteronomy 31-33)
- *Moses' Death* (Deuteronomy 34)

The New Testament directly quotes Deuteronomy more than any other book of the Law – 55 times by some counts¹! (Only the Psalms and Isaiah are quoted more.) As we listen in on Moses' sermons, he says what the Law is supposed to teach us with its stories, rules, and even censuses. If we learn what God is teaching, we will be ready to know and love Him!

Sermon: "Explaining the Law" (Deuteronomy 1:1-4:43)

Israel was on the border of the Promised Land. It should have taken 11 days to travel from Sinai to Kadesh-barnea; but they rebelled there after the bad report by the ten spies in Numbers 13-14. As a result, it was now the fortieth year. Moses used this speech to remind the people how they got there: their refusal to enter the land, God's punishment, and now their recent victories through His faithfulness. Moses, who would not be able to enter the land himself, wanted them to remember to trust God completely: He will fight for them. Read **Deuteronomy 4:1-14**.

- **How did Moses relate "the rules" to "the story"?**

Notice that it is not "know the story" or "keep the rules": one leads to the other! As Moses concluded his sermon, he made this point in a powerful way. Read **Deuteronomy 4:32-40**.

¹ "Old Testament Passages Cited in the New Testament." *ESV Study Bible*. <https://www.esv.org/resources/esv-study-bible/chart-ot-nt-passages/>

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- Sometimes, we focus on the story of God's love and dismiss rules, or we focus on the rules and pay little attention to God's story. How did Moses teach us to approach things?

When the Torah is approached this way, it has an effect! We see this 535 years later when one of Judah's few good kings, Jehoshaphat, reigned from 871-849 B.C. Read **II Chronicles 17:1-10**.

- What relationship did the Chronicler show between teaching the Law and national success?

Sadly, not every king would live that faithfully, eventually resulting in the people's exile from the Promised Land. Once they returned, however, resuming this sort of instruction would be critical to getting things right going forward. We see this in Nehemiah's example in 445 B.C., which was 960 years after Moses first preached these words. Read **Nehemiah 8:1-12**.

- How specifically did Jehoshaphat and Nehemiah accomplish the teaching of the Law?

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God's Words on Your Heart

Focus Statement: In the *shema*, God tells us what His Law is all about: it was, is, and always will be about our giving Him our hearts.

Sermon: "This is the Law" (Deuteronomy 4:44-26:19)

Moses' second sermon makes up most of Deuteronomy. Almost half of the New Testament's Deuteronomy quotes come from chapters 5-11! Chapters 12-26 give "the statutes and rules", preparing Israel to settle the land with commands rooted in who God is and what He has done.

In fact, Moses continually focuses on who God is, what He has done, and how the people should respond: which is love. This is especially seen in the *shema* in Deuteronomy 6:4-5, which sums up Moses' second sermon, Deuteronomy, and the Torah itself. Read **Deuteronomy 6:1-5**.

Hear, O Israel:

The LORD our God,

the LORD is one.

You shall love the LORD your God

With all your heart

And with all your soul

And with all your might.

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This was no abstract religious concept. Moses gave concrete instruction for how to practice it. The Jewish people took that instruction very seriously. Read **Deuteronomy 6:6-25**.

- **What kind of relationship would someone who really “hears” the *shema* have with God?**

God's intent with the *Torah* – the “*Law*” or “*Instruction*” – was always about shaping our hearts. In fact, when we learn this, we can see it clearly in the life of Jesus. Read **Matthew 4:1-11**.

- **What Scriptures did Jesus quote to resist Satan's temptation?**

Knowing God's word was so important. Yet, notice that the specifics – things like turning stones into bread or jumping off the Temple – were not explicitly prohibited by the “rules”. If we went looking in a concordance or on reference card, these passages would not pop up.

- **How did Jesus know those passages applied to these situations?**

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How was Jesus able to do this? We see this in Psalm 119, which repeatedly associates knowing and keeping God's command with the "whole heart". Read **Psalm 119:9-16** and **33-40**.

- **What are specific things these passages highlight about how we best engage God's word?**

As we have previously observed, the Torah is meditation literature. God's Law is meant to be deeply reflected on for the purpose of shaping our hearts. A great example of this is found in **Deuteronomy 17:14-20**. This passage is stunning for the way it anticipates Israel having kings hundreds of years before its first king, Saul, was ever anointed. Yet even more remarkable is its focus on the king's character. Read **Deuteronomy 17:18-20**.

- **What was Israel's future king to do to learn to fear the LORD and keep his heart right?**

When we approach the Law the way Moses taught, our hearts are in tune with God. This is the approach Jesus took. When people recognized and received Him, it is because they took that approach, too!

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The Greatest Commands

Focus Statement: God's people have often sought to distill His Law to its essence. What did Jesus say mattered most? Love God and love your neighbor.

The "statutes and rules" in Moses' second speech in Deuteronomy dealt with worship, justice, and more in a wide variety of applications. When Jesus walked the earth over 1,400 years later, rabbis debated how best to interpret them in their modern context, with attention to identifying which commands were "weighty" (kind of like our own debates about "salvation issues"). This was not as easy as it might seem. Read **Deuteronomy 5:16** and **Deuteronomy 22:6-7**.

- If you had to pick one, which of these would you label as the "weightier" command?

- What promise is attached to each command?

Debating "weighty" versus "light" often had to do with resolving conflicts between keeping two commandments, as in Jesus' admonition to "**judge with right judgment**" in **John 7:21-24**. There Jesus compared His practice of healing of people on the Sabbath (which some Jews were fiercely disputing) to circumcising a baby boy on the Sabbath (which was widely accepted). The command to circumcise on the eighth day superseded the command to rest on the Sabbath.

While wrestling with such issues, people would debate the "great commandment" of the Law, the commandment which supersedes all other commandments. Grasping for a question to trip Jesus up, a lawyer brought Him into that debate. Read **Matthew 22:34-40**.

- What passages did Jesus quote as being the greatest commands?

- How is what Jesus said different than the original Hebrew wording from the Torah?

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- **Why does Jesus say these are the greatest?**

The Apostles followed Jesus in approaching the Law in this way. The Gentile converts in Galatia had been falsely taught they had to be circumcised to be saved. Paul saw this as contradictory to what he had taught them and what the Law was leading to: salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, who fulfilled the Law. Yet, it is critical to note that when Paul made this point, it was not by saying, "The Law doesn't apply to you." Read **Galatians 5:1-15**.

- **Why did Paul say the Gentiles did not need to be circumcised?**

Paul made a similar point to another community struggling with division along Jewish-Gentile lines. Read **Romans 13:8-10**.

- **Would Moses agree with Paul's interpretation here? Why or why not?**

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Learning to Think like God

Focus Statement: The more truly meditate on God's Law, the more He teaches us how to apply His word to all sorts of difficult situations.

Again and again, Scripture tells us to meditate on God's Law, considering who He is and what He has accomplished, especially through longer, oral readings with support from a trusty "Bible nerd." While Moses' second speech in Deuteronomy includes a lot of detailed commandments dealing with worship, justice, and more, if we meditate on it in this way, we may start notice some specific themes start to emerge.

One of these relates to "**purging the evil person**" – not only as punishment for their wrongdoing but for the protection of the nation and preservation of God's presence. This was applied to several different circumstances:

- Deuteronomy 13:1-5 _____
- Deuteronomy 17:2-7 _____
- Deuteronomy 17:8-13 _____
- Deuteronomy 19:15-21 _____
- Deuteronomy 21:18-21 _____
- Deuteronomy 22:13-24 _____
- Deuteronomy 24:7 _____

As the Spirit inspired Paul's writing to the early Christians, we can clearly see he had been taught by God's Law. Notice how he applied the principles God taught to a situation in Corinth. Read Deuteronomy 22:22-30 and I Corinthians 5:1-13.

- How can we tell Paul had Deuteronomy in mind when he wrote to the Corinthians?

- How did Paul apply what God taught in Deuteronomy to the Corinthians' situation?

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One difference we might notice is that people were "purged" by execution under the Old Covenant while they are disfellowshipped under the New Covenant. This difference leads some of us to think of the Old as more severe or harsh than the New. Read **Hebrews 10:26-31**.

- **According to the Holy Spirit, which covenant has the worse punishment?**

Paul applied God's thinking to a variety of situations throughout his letters. Read **Deuteronomy 19:15-21** and **I Timothy 5:17-21**.

- **Why would God require two or three witnesses to an offense?**

- **Knowing the Roman government had its own legal system, what does it tell us that Paul applied this teaching to elders in the church?**

Paul's applications required much deeper thinking than simply, "Does this rule apply?" It required truly learning what God wants. We see that in his statement to not "muzzle the ox", which he also brought up in another letter. Read **Deuteronomy 25:4** and **I Corinthians 9:1-14**.

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- **Why did God give the original command in Deuteronomy?**

- **How did Paul apply that principle to life in Christ's kingdom?**

In fact, this sort of meditation along with the Spirit's inspiration would even help explain exactly what Jesus did on the cross. Read **Deuteronomy 21:22-23** and **Galatians 3:10-14**.

- **How did Jesus' death on the cross relate to this command in Deuteronomy?**

This brings us to "the curse of the law". What exactly does that mean? This is a major part of the focus of Moses' third sermon in Deuteronomy and of our next lesson.

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The Curse of the Law

Focus Statement: Jesus has taken away the “curse of the Law”. Yet this has nothing to do with the number or nature of the rules. It has everything to do with how He has defeated sin and death, a victory that He shares with us.

As a citizen of the United States, do you know how many laws you are under?

Sometimes, we think of the **Law of Moses** – the **Torah** in Hebrew, meaning “law” but also “instruction” – as being burdensome. We usually think this because:

When we approach God's Law as a list of rules instead of truly meditating on it to know who God is and to seek to obey that in our own lives, we reach some incorrect conclusions about it, Him, and ourselves. How can we know? Because the New Testament tells us! Read **Romans 7:7-25**.

- **What does the Apostle Paul say the problem with the Law really is?**

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We know that the covenant Jesus mediates between God and us **“is better, since it is enacted on better promises. For if the first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second”** (Heb. 8:7). Yet instead of critiquing the rules' number, nature, or immediate penalty, God wants to show us what He has accomplished for us through Jesus!

In Moses' third sermon in **Deuteronomy 27:1-28:68**, he pronounced curses for breaking God's Law and blessings for obeying it as the people prepare to enter the Promised Land.

- **When do we first read of blessings and curses in the Torah?**

In this sermon, Moses pronounces twelve curses. The first eleven deal with specific violations of the Law in terms of idol worship, dishonoring parents, dishonesty, injustice, sexual immorality, and violence. Then he gives the twelfth curse. Read **Deuteronomy 27:26**.

- **Who is subject to this “curse of the Law”?**

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In Moses' second sermon, he pronounced a more specific curse in **Deuteronomy 21:22-23**: **“And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day for a hanged man is cursed by God. You shall not defile your land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance”**

Paul would combine Deuteronomy's curses to show just what Jesus accomplished for us through His death, burial and resurrection. It is stunning. Read **Galatians 3:1-14**.

- How did Jesus “become a curse” for us?

- How does Jesus bring the “blessing” on all nations?

Remember the desperate struggle with sin Paul described in Romans 7? Keep going to see how God solves it. Read **Romans 8:1-30**.

- What has God done that the law could not do by sending Jesus and giving the Spirit?

While the law is holy and righteous and good, what we have in Christ is better, especially for what has been unveiled for us through the Spirit.

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Unveiled

Focus Statement: As Deuteronomy closes, we are told there was never another prophet like Moses. Then Jesus came and took away the veil.

After Moses' third sermon, God renewed His covenant with the people of Israel as Moses challenged them to choose between blessing and curse, life and death (Deuteronomy 29-30). Joshua was commissioned to lead Israel into the Promised Land, and Moses gave the people a copy of the Book of the Law, taught a song to "be a witness against the people", and pronounced a blessing on each tribe (Deuteronomy 31-33). The Torah – or "Law of Moses" – then closes with Moses' death. Read **Deuteronomy 34:1-12**.

- **How does this provide a fitting conclusion to God's story in the Torah?**

- **What parts of God's story are left dangling?**

The statement that "**there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses**" speaks to his importance and lasting impact. Yet, it also introduces a problem: Moses had said during his second sermon that there would be a prophet like him. Read **Deuteronomy 18:15-19**.

- **How specifically did Moses say this promised prophet would be like him?**

Based on this passage, the people in Jesus' day eagerly anticipated the coming of "the Prophet".

- **John 1:19-23** _____
- **John 6:13-15** _____
- **John 7:40-44** _____

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Early in the apostles' ministry, they would make this connection between Moses' prophecy and Jesus. Just listen to what Peter preached when a crowd gathered after he healed a lame man at the Temple gate. Read **Acts 3:11-26**.

- How did Peter see the various prophecies (e.g. the Christ, the Prophet) being fulfilled?

- Why would that be surprising for some of the people?

Saul of Tarsus was extremely zealous and advancing in Judaism beyond his peers, which led him to conclude that Jesus' church should be violently persecuted and destroyed (Gal. 1:13-14). That all changed once he saw the risen Christ for himself, and it was not long before he "**confounded the Jews...by proving that Jesus was the Christ**" (Acts 9:22). Through Jesus, he was now seeing the Scriptures in a new light, something he would share with others through his ministry as the Apostle Paul. Read **II Corinthians 3:1-18**.

- What makes the glory of Christ and the Spirit's ministry greater than Moses and the Law?

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What God accomplished through Christ and the Holy Spirit was sorely needed. Before Moses' death, he said: **"For I know how rebellious and stubborn you are. Behold, even today while I am yet alive with you, you have been rebellious against the LORD. How much more after my death...For I know that after my death you will surely act corruptly and turn aside from the way that I have commanded you. And in the days to come evil will befall you, because you will do what is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger through the work of your hands"** (Deut. 32:27,29). He wasn't wrong: Israel's answer to his challenge to choose between blessing and curse, life and death forms the basis for the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Digging Deeper: According to these New Testament passages, how does Jesus bring fulfillment to these key statements from Deuteronomy?

<i>Moses' statement</i>	<i>New Testament passage</i>	<i>Jesus' fulfillment</i>
Deuteronomy 18:15-19	John 8:28, 12:49-50 Matthew 17:5	
Deuteronomy 30:1-6	Colossians 2:6-15, Romans 2:28-29	
Deuteronomy 30:11-14	Romans 10:5-13	
Deuteronomy 34:10-12	Hebrews 3:1-6	

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Rest

Focus Statement: Even after settling the Promised Land, Israel would never get to rest long because of their unfaithfulness. Good thing God sent the Lord of the Sabbath to lead us into true rest!

Jesus referred to the Hebrew Scriptures as **"the Law and the Prophets"** (Matthew 5:17). The first five books of the Bible were that "Law" or "Teaching" – the "Torah" in Hebrew. The rest were the "Prophets" (or sometimes, "the Prophets and the Psalms" as in Luke 24:44).

Joshua picks up immediately where the Torah left off, with the LORD telling Moses's successor He will give Israel the Promised Land: **"Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success"** (Joshua 1:7-8). The book is a testimony to the truth of that, showing the incredible success God gave the people when they faithfully obeyed Him – and not just the people of Israel. Read **Joshua 2:1-14**.

- How does Rahab show that "believing God is counted as righteousness"?

Though there would be some sin in the camp needing addressed, the people generally remained faithful under Joshua's leadership. **"So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD had spoken to Israel according to Moses. And Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal allotments. And the land had rest from war"** (Joshua 11:23). In this way, the book provides important resolution to some key themes of the Torah. Chapters 13-22 describe each tribe receiving its inheritance. This fulfilled God's word to Moses (Numbers 34-35). It also fulfilled His promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-9).

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In fact, it fulfilled even more than that. Just as God “**finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done**” in Genesis 2:2, we are told that “**the LORD had given rest to Israel from all their surrounding enemies**” as “**Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work that the LORD did for Israel**” (Joshua 23:1, 24:31, emphasis added). This gives a beautiful glimpse of God's original design from the first two pages of the Bible: He had a people who filled the world with His image and were settled with Him. This is what Israel's Sabbath observance was always meant to point toward (Exodus 16:35). Tragically, this rest would not last.

Judges, the next book, tells a very rated-R story. It is filled with sexual immorality and extreme violence – the very things the Torah showed were so against God's design and the reason the Canaanites were vomited out of the land (Leviticus 18-19). Because Israel did not drive out all of the land's inhabitants as God commanded, the very thing He warned them against happened. Read **Judges 2:11-23**.

- Why is what happened to Israel after Joshua's death not a surprise?

When the people repented, God would raise up a judge to deliver them. Yet, these judges were far from models of covenant faithfulness. In fact, they seemed to get worse as the story continued! Yet, God worked through these imperfect people to deliver Israel from their enemies, and “**the land had rest**” for a generation or two (Judges 3:30, 5:31, 8:28). As *Judges* progressed, the inspired author gave a reason for why this disobedience kept occurring:

“In those days there was _____ in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25).

In terms of faithfulness to God's covenant, *Ruth*, the next book in our English Bibles, presented a much different picture. Set during the time period of *Judges*, a famine forced an Israelite family from the land and brought death: just as Moses warned would happen in **Deuteronomy 28** if the people were unfaithful! When repeated tragedy left Naomi of Judah with only her Moabite daughters-in-law, she urged them to return to their families of origin: “**The LORD grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband!**” (Ruth 1:9, emphasis added). Yet Ruth showed steadfast love and faithfulness, declaring: “**For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God**” (Ruth 1:16). Like Rahab, a foreigner demonstrated greater faithfulness to God than many in Israel!

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God's providence led Ruth to Boaz's field, a **"worthy man"** who actually observed **Deuteronomy 24:19's** command to leave sheaves for **"the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow"** when harvesting. Naomi rejoiced when she heard of it: Boaz was also a relative who could redeem and marry Ruth according to **Deuteronomy 25:5-10**. Do you know what Naomi's hope for Ruth was in doing this? **"My daughter, should I not seek rest for you, that it may be well with you?"** (Ruth 3:1, emphasis added). While the nation as a whole suffered due to their unfaithfulness, *Ruth* tells a story of how God still blessed a faithful family that obeyed His commands.

As Boaz and Ruth married and welcomed a son (which delighted Naomi), this family's story of finding rest by being faithful to God would impact the entire nation. **"And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi." They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David"** (Ruth 4:17). Ruth was the great-grandmother of David, Israel's great king and answer to the problem in *Judges!*

In fact, Ruth's faithfulness impacted her family, the nation of Israel, and all the families of the earth. Read **Matthew 1:1-6**.

- **How does Jesus increase the significance of the individual stories of Rahab and Ruth?**

Isn't that amazing? That's still not all. The individual stories fit together more than we realize, and it all comes back to rest. Read **Matthew 11:25-12:14**.

- **While the Pharisees debated Sabbath-keeping with Jesus, what was He really accomplishing?**

