

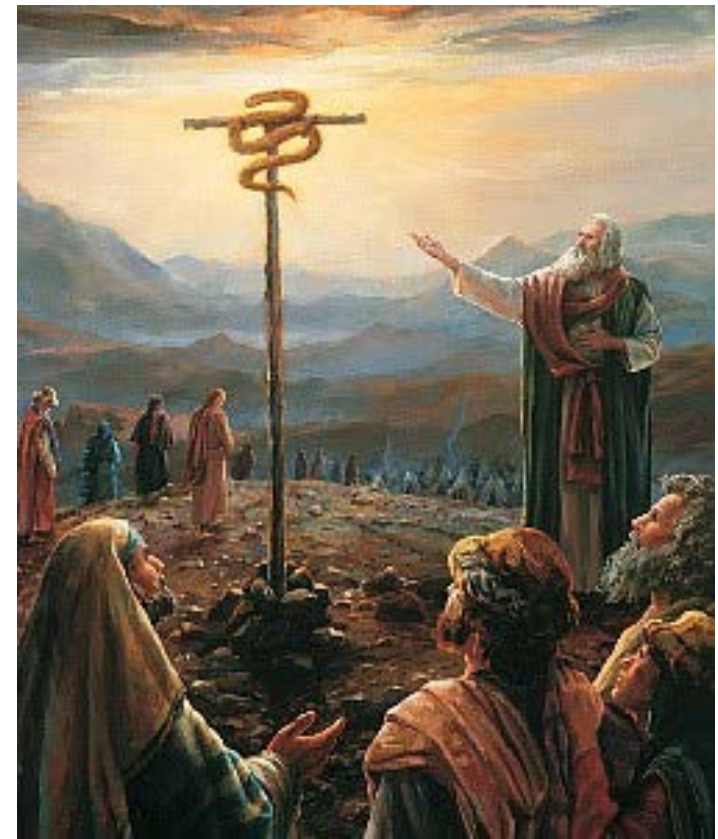
Lesson 15 - “Look to God and Live”

Purpose: To encourage us to overcome worldly desires and fears and look to the Savior and his prophets for guidance.

Numbers 11 – 14, 21

My lessons take a different path than the Gospel Doctrine lesson manual. The lesson outline looks closer at the doctrinal topics included in the lesson purpose and scripture block. The lessons are designed to challenge mature, active Latter-Day Saints who have a solid Gospel foundation and are looking for insights into the scriptures that will broaden their faith and understanding.

If you are interested in downloading the Powerpoint file, links to source material or reading posts about improving Gospel Doctrine class preparation, delivery and engagement, you can join my Facebook Group and have full access to the content posted there. The link is <https://www.facebook.com/groups/188904648521022/>



Last Week's Lesson Challenge

We can observe that the Israelites continuously stumbling and falling in the face of the challenges that the Exodus placed before them. Jehovah implored them to have faith in him, obey His commandments and let Him fight their battles for them. Do we find ourselves today doing what the Israelites did, relying upon ourselves rather than turning to the Lord?

Would any share their thoughts during the week on last week's lesson challenge?

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 11 - Fire from the Lord consumes the rebels in Israel—Israel murmurs and lusts for meat instead of manna—Moses complains that he cannot bear the burden alone—He is commanded to choose seventy elders to assist him—The Lord promises meat until it becomes loathsome to the Israelites—The seventy elders are chosen, they prophesy, the Lord comes down, and Eldad and Medad prophesy in the camp—Israel is provided with quail—The people lust, a great plague follows, and many die.

Chapter 12 - Aaron and Miriam complain against Moses, the most meek of all men—The Lord promises to speak to Moses mouth to mouth and to reveal to him the similitude of the Lord—Miriam becomes leprous for a week.

Chapter 13 - Moses sends twelve spies to search the land of Canaan—Ten of them bring an evil report, telling only of the strength of the inhabitants.

Chapter 14 - Israel murmurs and speaks of returning to Egypt—Joshua and Caleb give a good report of Canaan—Moses mediates between Israel and the Lord—The adults of Israel will not enter the promised land—The Lord slays the false spies by a plague—Some rebels try to go alone and are slain by the Amalekites and Canaanites.

Chapter 21 - The children of Israel destroy those Canaanites who fight against them—The Israelites are plagued with fiery serpents—Moses lifts up a serpent of brass to save those who look thereon—Israel defeats the Amorites, destroys the people of Bashan, and occupies their lands.

The Israelites Want More Than Jehovah's Manna – [Numbers 11](#)

Consider how you normally respond to challenging or frustrating experiences.

Numbers 11 describes some of the challenges and frustrations Moses and the Israelites experienced as they journeyed in the wilderness toward the promised land. As we study Numbers 11, look for principles that could help you respond to the challenges and frustrations in your life.

What did the Lord do after the people complained? The Lord was likely displeased with the Israelites' complaining because it showed their ingratitude for all He had done for them.

The Israelites Want More Than Jehovah's Manna – [Numbers 11:1-9](#)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Israelites Want More Than Jehovah's Manna – Numbers 11:10-15

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

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

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

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

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

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

Moses heard the people continue to weep or complain about their circumstances. The Lord and Moses were displeased because of these continued complaints. One principle we can learn from the Israelites' poor example is that failing to recognize our blessings can lead us to be ungrateful to the Lord.

Instead of merely complaining like many of his people, Moses took his challenges and frustrations to the Lord in prayer.

<https://www.lds.org/manual/old-testament-study-guide-for-home-study-seminary-students-2015/introduction-to-numbers/unit-13-day-2-numbers-11-12?lang=eng>

The Israelites Want More Than Jehovah's Manna – [Numbers 11:16-23](#)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Israelites Want More Than Jehovah's Manna – Numbers 11:31-35

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

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

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

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

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

Numbers 11:31–35 records that, in response to Moses's prayer, the Lord provided an abundance of quail for the Israelites to eat. As they gathered the quail, many overindulged and gathered more than they needed. The Lord was again angry with them, apparently because they lusted after or hoarded the quail—again showing ingratitude. The Lord sent a plague, and many Israelites died. The greedy lust for more than they could use brought a just punishment upon the people. How many died in the plague is not recorded, but the place was called “Graves of the Craving” or “The Graves of Lust” (see v. 34).

<https://www.lds.org/manual/old-testament-study-guide-for-home-study-seminary-students-2015/introduction-to-numbers/unit-13-day-2-numbers-11-12?lang=eng>

Numbers 12 - Why Did Miriam and Aaron Oppose Moses?

According to Josephus, when Moses was a general of the Egyptian army in the attack against the Ethiopians, he married an Ethiopian woman as a political alliance to end the war (see Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, bk. 2, chap. 10, par. 1). The ostensible reason for Miriam's and Aaron's complaining was that the Ethiopians were non-Israelite descendants of Cush. The real reason for the complaint, however, seems to have been jealousy motivated by Moses' position as spiritual leader and prophet of Israel. "This elevation of Moses excited envy on the part of his brother and sister, whom God had also richly endowed and placed so high, that Miriam was distinguished as a prophetess above all the women of Israel, whilst Aaron had been raised by his investiture with the high-priesthood into the spiritual head of the whole nation. But the pride of the natural heart was not satisfied with this. They would dispute with their brother Moses the pre-eminence of his special calling and his exclusive position, which they might possibly regard themselves as entitled to contest with him not only as his brother and sister, but also as the nearest supporters of his vocation. Miriam was the instigator of the open rebellion, as we may see both from the fact that her name stands before that of Aaron, and also from the use of the feminine verb." (Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary, 1:3:75.)

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

<https://www.lds.org/manual/old-testament-student-manual-genesis-2-samuel/numbers-1-12-wilderness-wanderings-part-1?lang=eng>

Numbers 13:26-33

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Israel was just a few months out of Egypt, and they had been given the law of God. The Lord indicated that it was then time to go in and possess the promised land. He commanded that a reconnaissance group be sent into Canaan to reconnoiter the land. The evidence of the richness of the land was irrefutable, and the spies even brought back a cluster of grapes carried on a staff between two men to demonstrate the beauty and richness of the produce (see Numbers 13:23). Yet the spies, except for Joshua and Caleb, reported that, despite the richness of the land, there was no hope for driving out the inhabitants. The exaggerated tone of their negative report shows in the use of such words as “very great,” the land “eateth up the inhabitants thereof,” “all the people ... are men of great stature,” “we saw the giants,” “we were ... as grasshoppers” (vv. 28, 32–33; emphasis added).

<https://www.lds.org/manual/old-testament-student-manual-genesis-2-samuel/numbers-13-36-wilderness-wanderings-part-2?lang=eng>

What did the 10 who went to Canaan miss? What did they fail to understand that Caleb and Joshua understood?

Numbers 14:6 - 10

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

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

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

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

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

Numbers 15:32-36

32 ¶ And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day.

33 And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation.

34 And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him.

35 And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp.

36 And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the Lord commanded Moses.

Is Picking Up Sticks on the Sabbath Worthy of Death?

To stone a man for violation of the Sabbath seems a harsh punishment. But in its historical context, two things are significant. Moses had just given the law for willful rebellion against God. Did this man know the law of the Sabbath? Moses had clearly taught earlier that one who violated the Sabbath was to be put to death (see Exodus 31:14–15; 35:2). Obviously, here is an example of one who “despised the word of the Lord” (Numbers 15:31).

But think for a moment of what had just happened to Israel. They, as a nation, had despised the word of the Lord, first, by refusing to go up against the Canaanites when the Lord had told them to, and second, by going up against them after the Lord had told them not to. Thus Israel had been denied entry into the promised land. Now, an individual despised the word of the Lord and refused to enter the rest required on the Sabbath. Just as Israel was to suffer death in the wilderness for their rebellion, so a rebellious individual must be punished with the same punishment. Otherwise, God would be inconsistent.

Numbers 20:7-13

7 ¶ And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
8 Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink.
9 And Moses took the rod from before the Lord, as he commanded him.
10 And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?
11 And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also.
12 ¶ And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.
13 This is the water of Meribah; because the children of Israel strove with the Lord, and he was sanctified in them.

Why Was Moses Not Allowed into the Holy Land?

This incident, taken together with other scripture, creates a number of questions. Did Moses really sin against the Lord? Was that the reason Moses was not permitted to enter the promised land? Did Moses really assume glory to himself, or was he simply angry with the lack of faith exhibited by the children of Israel? Was this one error enough to cancel out years of great faith, obedience, and devotion? At least two other Old Testament passages indicate that Moses did sin in striking the rock at Meribah (see Numbers 27:12–14; Deuteronomy 32:51–52). Other passages, however, help to clarify the matter. Deuteronomy 3:26 and 4:21 indicate that the Lord told Moses that the reason he could not enter the promised land was that the Lord was angry with him “for your sakes”. This statement could imply that there were reasons other than the error of Moses for the prohibition. Two other facts strengthen this supposition. First, both Moses and the higher priesthood were taken from Israel because of the people’s unworthiness, not Moses’ (see D&C 84:23–25). Second, Moses was translated when his mortal ministry was finished (see Alma 45:19). In other words, Moses was privileged to enter a land of promise far greater than the land of Canaan. He had finished his calling in mortality, and a new leader was to take Israel into the promised land. And, Moses was translated—hardly a punishment for sinning against God.

<https://www.lds.org/manual/old-testament-student-manual-genesis-2-samuel/numbers-13-36-wilderness-wanderings-part-2?lang=eng>

Numbers 21:4-9

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

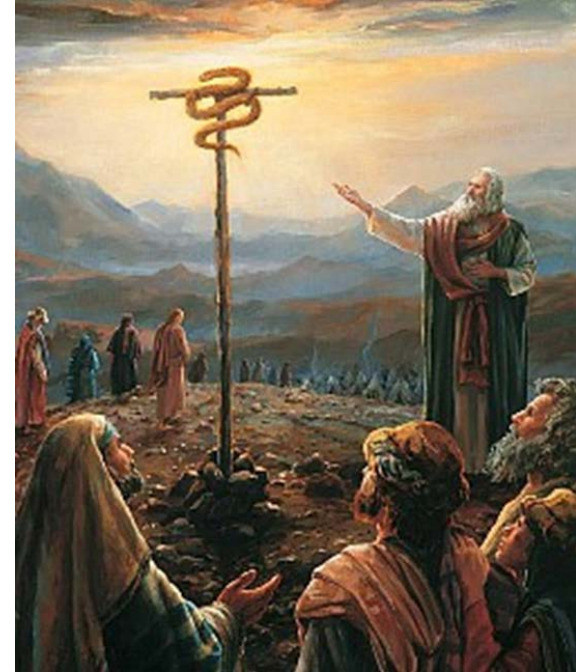
5 And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.

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

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

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

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



[Alma 33:19-22](#)

19 Behold, he was spoken of by Moses; yea, and behold a type was raised up in the wilderness, that whosoever would look upon it might live. And many did look and live.

20 But few understood the meaning of those things, and this because of the hardness of their hearts. But there were many who were so hardened that they would not look, therefore they perished. Now the reason they would not look is because they did not believe that it would heal them.

21 O my brethren, if ye could be healed by merely casting about your eyes that ye might be healed, would ye not behold quickly, or would ye rather harden your hearts in unbelief, and be slothful, that ye would not cast about your eyes, that ye might perish?

22 If so, wo shall come upon you; but if not so, then cast about your eyes and begin to believe in the Son of God, that he will come to redeem his people, and that he shall suffer and die to atone for their sins; and that he shall rise again from the dead, which shall bring to pass the resurrection, that all men shall stand before him, to be judged at the last and judgment day, according to their works.

Three Book of Mormon prophets used this story in their efforts to persuade their people to repent and believe in Christ. Nephi, son of Lehi, told his brothers that the Lord sent the serpents among the people to soften their hearts and that the only “labor which they had to perform was to look” (1 Ne. 17:41). Nephi also emphasized that while the labor was simple and easy, many still perished. The prophet Alma added several insights into this story: (1) many Israelites “did look and live” (Alma 33:19); (2) many would not even look because they did not believe, so they died; (3) among those who did look and were healed, some did not understand what the Lord was trying to teach them (see Alma 33:20). Nephi, son of Helaman, explained the symbolism of the brass serpent when he testified: “As he [Moses] lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness, even so shall he [the Messiah] be lifted up. ... And as many as should look upon the Son of God with faith, having a contrite spirit, might live, even unto that life which is eternal” (Hel. 8:14–15).

The Savior likened Himself to the serpent of brass: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:14–15).

<https://www.lds.org/ensign/2002/03/look-and-live?lang=eng>

The stories in the Book of Numbers illustrate the challenges that the Israelites faced in the desert. With each challenge, Jehovah asked the Israelites to rely upon Him, to lean on His arm and to let him face their challenges for them. Each time, they failed, not learning the lessons that Jehovah needed them to learn to become His chosen people.

In Numbers 21 is the beautiful story of “Look to God and Live.” The Israelites were punished for their stubbornness and failure to have faith and live the commandments. Fiery serpents were among them. Jehovah told Moses to raise a brazen serpent on a “cross-like” pole and tell the Israelites if they only looked on the raised serpent, the simplest act of faith possible, they would be saved.

What more of a symbol of Jesus Christ on the cross could be given to them and us, look to God and live.

This Week's Lesson Challenge

Can we learn from studying the Israelites? Can we move beyond our own stubbornness and have faith and live the commandments?

This week consider the times that you rely more upon yourself than your faith in Jesus Christ. Consider how your life would be different if you chose to rely up your faith in Jesus Christ.