

# Lesson 16 - “I Cannot Go Beyond the Word of the Lord”

Purpose: To encourage us to submit to God’s will without hesitation.  
Numbers 22 - 36

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**

Last week we discussed the stubbornness of the Israelites and their failure to have faith in Jehovah sometimes resulting in their death.

Would anyone like to contribute their thoughts on our own stubbornness today and how that keeps us from fully embracing Jesus Christ and His Gospel?

# Chapter Summaries

Chapter 22 Balak offers money, cattle, and great honors to Balaam to curse Israel—The Lord forbids Balaam to do so—An angel opposes Balaam on the way.

Chapter 23 The Lord commands Balaam to bless Israel—He does so, saying, Who can count the dust of Jacob? and, What hath God wrought!

Chapter 24 Balaam sees in vision and prophesies of the destiny of Israel—He prophesies of the Messiah: There will come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre will rise out of Israel.

Chapter 25 The Israelites who worship false gods are slain—Phinehas slays the adulterers and stays the plague—Israel is commanded to vex the Midianites who beguiled them.

Chapter 26 Moses and Eleazar count the Israelites on the plains of Moab near Jericho—The males twenty years and older, excluding Levites, total 601,730—Only Caleb and Joshua remain from those numbered at Sinai.

Chapter 27 The law of inheritances to sons, daughters, and kinsmen is explained—Moses will see but not enter the promised land—Joshua is called and set apart to lead Israel.

Chapter 28 Sacrifices are to be offered each morning and evening, on the Sabbath, on the first day of each month, at Passover, on each day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and at the Feast of Firstfruits.

Chapter 29 Sacrifices are to be offered during the seventh month, including at the Feast of Trumpets and at the Feast of Tabernacles.

Chapter 30 Vows and oaths must be kept—Fathers may disallow vows of daughters, and husbands may disallow vows of wives.

Chapter 31 Moses sends forth 12,000 warriors who destroy the Midianites—The prey is divided in Israel—None in the armies of Israel are lost.

Chapter 32 Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh receive their inheritances east of the Jordan—They covenant to join other tribes in conquering Canaan.

Chapter 33 Israel's journeys from Egypt to Canaan are reviewed—The people are commanded to drive out the inhabitants of the land—Any remaining inhabitants will vex Israel.

Chapter 34 Moses specifies the borders of Israel's inheritance in Canaan and names the princes of the tribes who will divide the land.

Chapter 35 The Levites are to possess their own cities—Cities of refuge are established for those guilty of manslaughter—Murderers are to be executed by the revenger of blood.

Chapter 36 Some daughters in Israel are directed to marry within their own tribe—Inheritances are not to move from tribe to tribe.

In Numbers 13, Jehovah has brought the Israelites from Mt. Sinai to Kadesh-barnea. From here, Israel will begin its conquest of Canaan, the Promised Land. Twelve spies, one from each of the Twelve Tribes, were chosen because they were leaders of their tribe. Ten of the Twelve brought back this report from [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.*

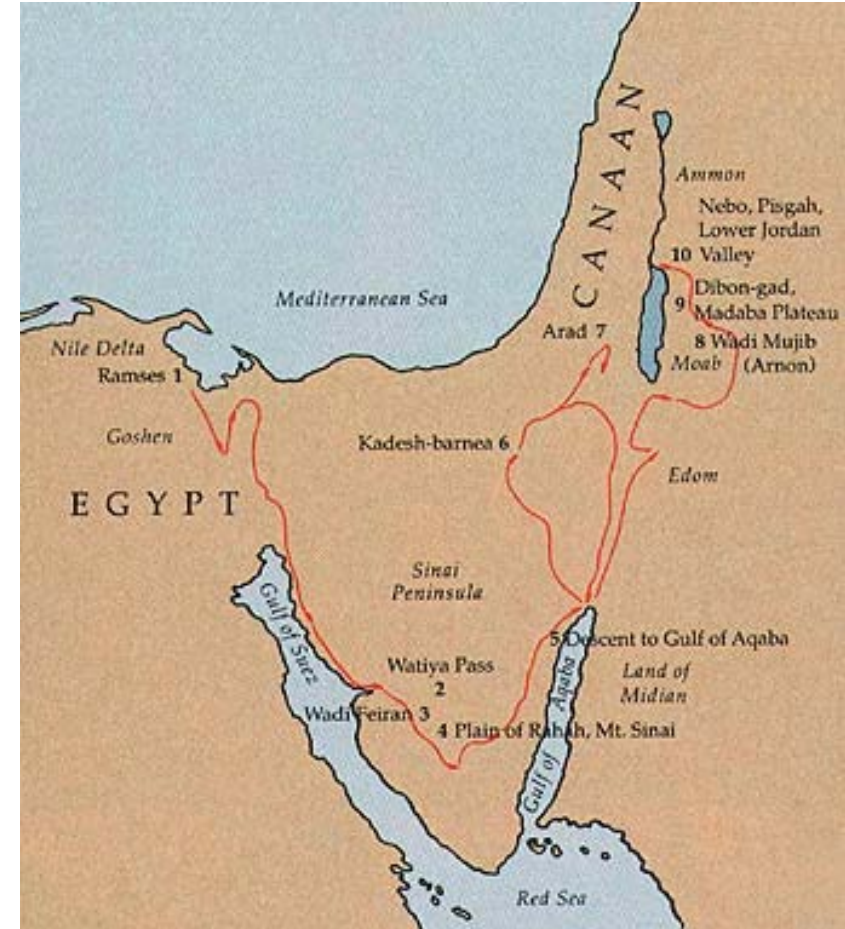
*29 The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan.*

*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.*



## Caleb and Joshua Bring Back an Opposing Report

### [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.

## Jehovah's Anger at Israel and Moses' Pleadings to Preserve the Israelite Nation

### [Numbers 14:11-25](#)

11 ¶ And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?

12 I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.

13 ¶ And Moses said unto the Lord, Then the Egyptians shall hear it, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;)

14 And they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou Lord art among this people, that thou Lord art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night.

15 ¶ Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying,

16 Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness.

17 And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying,

18 The Lord is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.

19 Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.

20 And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word:

21 But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.

22 Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice;

23 Surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it:

24 But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.

25 (Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwelt in the valley.) Tomorrow turn you, and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea.

## **Jehovah Listens to Moses' Plea and Preserves Israel But Will Keep the Adult Generation From Entering the Promise Land**

### [Numbers 14:26-39](#)

26 ¶ And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,

27 How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me.

28 Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the Lord, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you:

29 Your carcases shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me,

30 Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.

31 But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised.

32 But as for you, your carcases, they shall fall in this wilderness.

33 And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcases be wasted in the wilderness.

34 After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise.

35 I the Lord have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.

36 And the men, which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the land,

37 Even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the Lord.

38 But Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of the men that went to search the land, lived still.

39 And Moses told these sayings unto all the children of Israel: and the people mourned greatly.

Such an exaggerated report of itself was bad enough and demonstrated the lack of faith of the ten men who gave it. But the national tragedy began when Israel hearkened to their report. They openly rejected the numerous evidences of God's power that had been almost daily fare and began to cry out that it would have been better for them never to have left Egypt. Nor did the murmuring stop there. A movement was started to reject Moses and choose a leader that would take them back to Egypt. When Joshua and Caleb tried to counteract the effect of the negative report, the congregation sought to have them stoned.

Little wonder that the anger of the Lord was kindled. In a great intercessory prayer, Moses pleaded for mercy for his people. He did not excuse the behavior of his people, but only emphasized the long-suffering mercy of the Lord. Israel was spared destruction but lost the privilege of immediately entering the promised land. For the next thirty-eight years they were to wander in the harsh wilderness of Sinai. During that time they could have conquered the inhabitants of the land of promise, built cities, eaten the fruit of the land flowing "with milk and honey", and raised their children in comfort and peace. But they would not, and so all above the age of twenty who had repudiated the power of the Lord, except Joshua and Caleb, were to die in the wilderness.

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



## Tisha B'Av

Tisha B'Av ("the ninth of Av") is an annual fast day in Judaism, on which a number of disasters in Jewish history occurred, primarily the destruction of both the First Temple by the Babylonians and the Second Temple by the Romans in Jerusalem. Tisha B'Av is regarded as the saddest day in the Jewish calendar and it is thus believed to be a day which is destined for tragedy. Tisha B'Av falls in July or August in the Western calendar.

- The Twelve Spies sent by Moses to observe the land of Canaan returned from their mission. Only two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, brought a positive report, while the others spoke disparagingly about the land. The majority report caused the Children of Israel to cry, panic and despair of ever entering the "Promised Land". For this, they were punished by God that their generation would not enter the land. Because of the Israelites' lack of faith, God decreed that for all generations this date would become a day of crying and misfortune for their descendants.
- The First Temple built by King Solomon and the Kingdom of Judah destroyed by the Babylonians led by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 BC after a two-year siege and the Judeans were sent into the Babylonian exile. According to the Talmud in tractate Ta'anit, the actual destruction of the First Temple began on the Ninth of Av and the Temple continued to burn throughout the Tenth of Av.
- The Second Temple built by Ezra and Nehemiah was destroyed by the Romans in August 70 AD, scattering the people of Judea and commencing the Jewish exile from the Holy Land.
- The Romans subsequently crushed Bar Kokhba's revolt and destroyed the city of Betar, killing over 500,000 Jewish civilians (approximately 580,000) on August 4, 135 AD. Following the Bar Kokhba revolt, Roman commander Turnus Rufus plowed the site of the Temple in Jerusalem and the surrounding area, in 135 CE.

The observance of the day includes five prohibitions, most notable of which is a 25-hour fast.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tisha\\_B'Av](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tisha_B'Av)

There is little written in the Old Testament about the 38 years of wandering in the wilderness that the Israelites had to suffer for their disbelief and lack of faith in Jehovah. There is little, if any, written or is there archaeological evidence of the Israelite nation wandering through the wilderness north of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba. Either they left little in the manner of built cities or fortifications or their presence in the area has been erased from land.

We are going to discuss four events that are recorded in the latter chapters of Numbers as evidence of what life was like for the wanderings during part of their 38 years of chastisement.

- Numbers 16:1–40. The Rebellion of Korah and Other Leaders of Israel
- Numbers 20:2–13. Why Was Moses Not Allowed into the Holy Land?
- Numbers 21:4–9. The Brazen Serpent in the Wilderness
- Numbers 26. The New Census of Israel after 38 Years of Wandering

## Numbers 16:1 – 3

1 Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men:

2 And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown:

3 And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?

## **Numbers 16:1–40. The Rebellion of Korah and Other Leaders of Israel**

In Korah's rebellion is a direct challenge to Moses' and Aaron's leadership. Up to this time, Israel was constantly murmuring and complaining, but apparently this was a greater attempt to replace Moses as the one chosen by God to lead His people. (Miriam's and Aaron's rebellion was an attempt to be equal with Moses, but it did not seek to overthrow him.) Korah, a Levite, had two hundred and fifty of Israel's most prominent leaders behind him when he accused Moses and Aaron of taking too much upon themselves. Had the insurrection been led by just any Israelite, it would have been serious enough, but Korah was a Levite, one who held the holy priesthood, and should therefore have been one of those in the forefront of obedience rather than of rebellion.

The Lord commanded both Aaron and the legitimate priesthood holders and Korah and those who followed him to bring censers and incense to the tabernacle. A censer was a small metal container made to hold hot coals taken from the altar of the tabernacle. During the tabernacle service, the officiating priest was required to sprinkle incense on the burning coals on the altar of incense, which stood directly in front of the veil of the tabernacle.

Here, Korah and his supporters were asked to bring fire before the Lord as a symbol of their prayers and supplication for His support of their cause. Instead, the earth opened up and swallowed the leaders of the rebellion, and fire came down and consumed the other two hundred and fifty who presumed to take priesthood power unto themselves.

## 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.

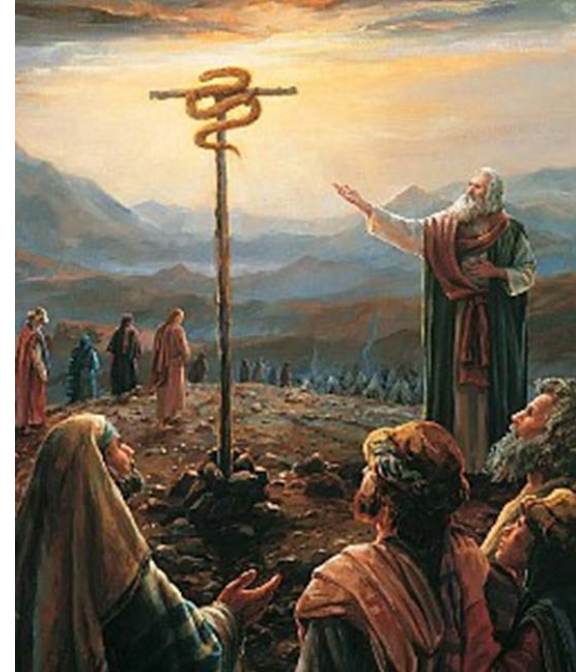
5 And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.

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 Census of Israel After 38 Years of Wandering in the Wilderness

## [Numbers 26: 1-4, 51 and 63-65](#)

1 And it came to pass after the plague, that the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, saying,

2 Take the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, from twenty years old and upward, throughout their fathers' house, all that are able to go to war in Israel.

3 And Moses and Eleazar the priest spake with them in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho, saying,

4 Take the sum of the people, from twenty years old and upward; as the Lord commanded Moses and the children of Israel, which went forth out of the land of Egypt.

51 These were the numbered of the children of Israel, six hundred thousand and a thousand seven hundred and thirty.

63 ¶ These are they that were numbered by Moses and Eleazar the priest, who numbered the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho.

64 But among these there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron the priest numbered, when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai.

65 For the Lord had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness. And there was not left a man of them, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.

Prior to entrance into the promised land, Moses and Eleazar, the priest, counted by their respective tribes the children of Israel aged twenty years and older. In the process, they discovered that, except for three people, not one living soul over twenty years of age who had been numbered at the beginning of the desert wanderings thirty-eight years earlier was left among the children of Israel. Only Joshua, Caleb, and Moses himself remained of the original company that came out of Egypt. All of this was as the Lord had said.

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



## Wondering while Wandering

We sometimes talk about the children of Israel wandering in the wilderness for 40 years before being allowed to enter the promised land. A cloud or pillar of fire rested above the tabernacle when they were to stop, and when it moved, the camp followed. I suspect that they also spent 40 years “wondering” in the wilderness—wondering when they were going to move, when and where they would stop, and when they would eventually reach the promised land. This story is richly symbolic. As we each journey through our own mortal wilderness, we want to reach the “promised land” of living with God eternally. He has promised to lead us there. Yet while each person needs to wander along the same route—be obedient, repent, receive priesthood ordinances, and endure faithfully—each person’s life is unique.

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: “The Lord has placed currents of divine influence in your life that will lead you along the individual plan He would have you fulfill here on earth. Seek through the Spirit to identify it and carefully follow that direction that the Lord has put in your life. Align yourself with it. Choose, willingly, to exercise your agency to follow it.” Consider which was harder for the camp of Israel to endure: spending a year in an unpleasant place or leaving a nice place after two days? I think both scenarios tested their faith.

So it is with us. We may not be satisfied with our circumstances and thus spend time wondering when things will change. Or we may experience an unanticipated change to our pleasant routine. How we choose to respond to these experiences determines, in a large part, our happiness. And if we spend our lives wondering while we wander, we may miss out on wonderful opportunities for spiritual growth.

<https://www.lds.org/liahona/2014/08/young-adults/act-upon-this-land-as-for-years?lang=eng>

## **This Week's Lesson Challenge**

After everything they'd seen – the Ten Plagues, the Parting of the Red Sea, Mt. Sinai, their daily Manna --, Israel still did not have enough faith to give into Jehovah's desire to love them and fight their battles for them.

As believers in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we too have seen many wonderful events and miracles. After all we have seen, are we still unwilling to fully turn our lives over to Jesus Christ? Consider this week where you can better follow Jesus Christ and trust in His plan for each of us.