



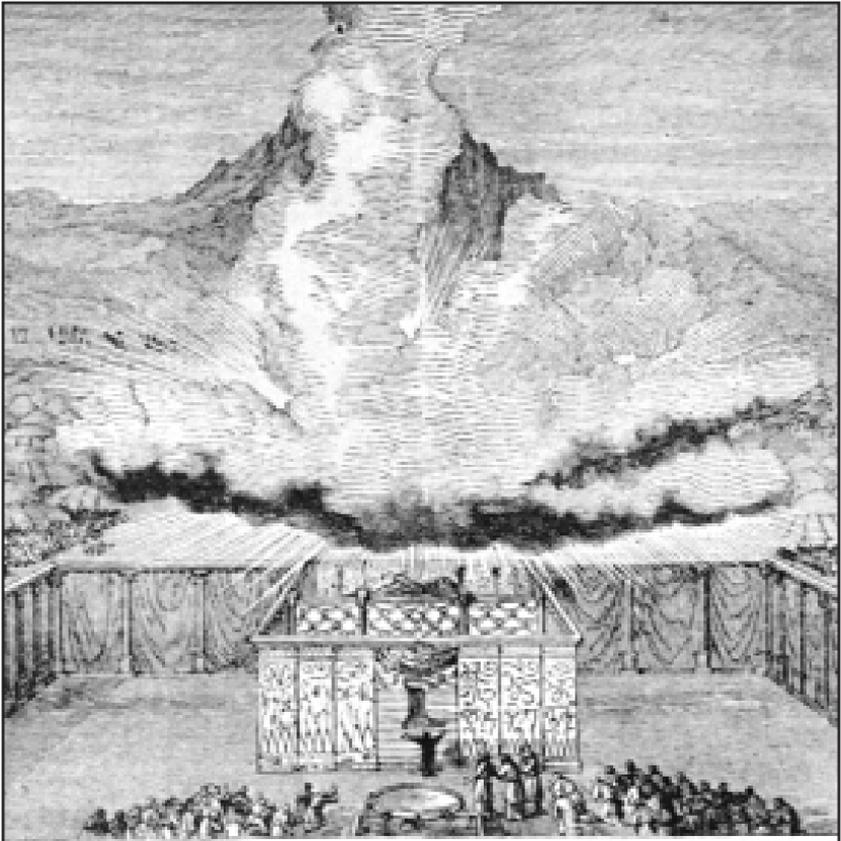
CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

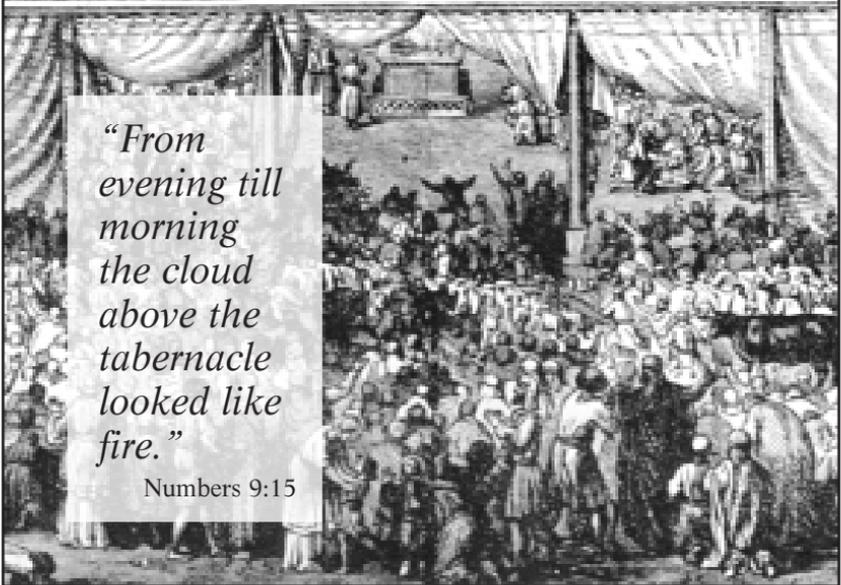
NUMBERS

Week 2



“From evening till morning the cloud above the tabernacle looked like fire.”

Numbers 9:15



Cloud Travel Agency

DAY 8

Numbers 9:15–10:10

Have you ever gone hiking and ended up lost? How did you find your way home? (a) read or listened to signs of nature, (b) checked a map or compass, (c) waited for the rescue team, (d) prayed!

1. How did the Israelites know when to pack and leave? To stay put and camp?
2. What would have happened if they hadn't followed God and his "tour guide"—Moses?
3. Why the coded trumpet signals (10:1-10)? How many different uses for the trumpet can you identify here? (a) as a wake-up call, (b) "Soup's on—come and get it!" (c) mass communication, (d) marching orders, (e) to lead in worship, (f) to hail the Chief, (g) to muster troops to battle.

1. When have you waited for God? (a) God has yet to speak to you, (b) your patience was rewarded when _____, (c) right now you're looking for his direction in _____, (d) you are awaiting the right time to _____.
2. What's the hardest thing about waiting on God?
3. What gets you up and moving for God? (a) a loud blast, (b) a visible sign, (c) directions from the Bible, (d) nothing yet.

*A towering column by day and glowing like fire at night, the extraordinary **cloud** (9:15) over the Tabernacle was not just any cloud. It was a signal to the Israelites to stay encamped or to pack up and move. This supernatural occurrence was a divine phenomenon—a visible sign of God's presence and direction.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

Are We There Yet?

Numbers 10:11-36

OPENING
up to the Word

Is there a long road trip that is vivid in your memory, and why?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What problems might the Israelites have had to overcome when the cloud finally lifted from above the Tabernacle (10:11)? (a) law of inertia, (b) confusion in a camp of 2 million people, (c) fear of unknown, (d) risk of division, (e) lack of trust, (f) need for protection, (g) lack of food and water.

2. What did Moses hope to gain from Hobab the Midianite (10:29-32; see Jdg 1:16)? To join Moses, what must Hobab give up?

LIVING
out the Word

1. What would be the hardest thing for you to give up if God led you to another place? What would lead you believe God was leading you?

2. What would be your greatest concern about such a move—whether it be cross-town or cross-country?

3. Is Jesus leading you to another spiritual place in your life? Could he be leading you away from Christ-less religion and into his grace?

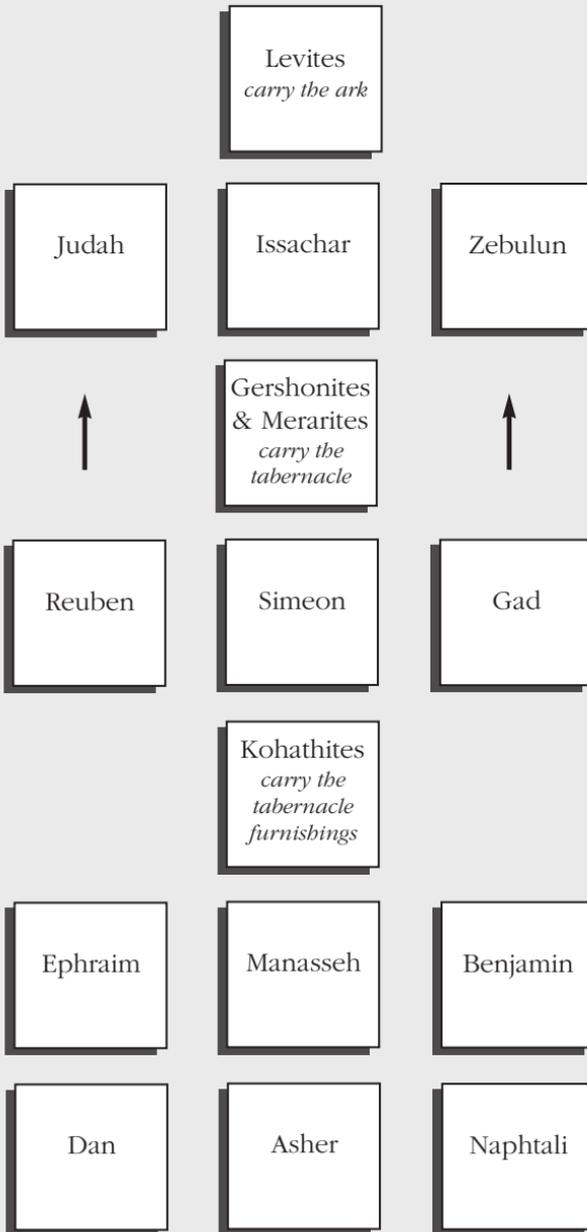
4. Is there a “Hobab” in your life—someone you would want as your guide or mentor on a major faith adventure?

WINDOW
on the Word

*On the twentieth day of the second month **the Israelites departed** (10:11; compare Ex 40:17). They had been camped at the foot of Mount Sinai for about 11 months when the cloud lifted from above the Tabernacle. In that span of time, the Law had been given, the Tabernacle built, the priests consecrated, the nation mustered, the society organized. By one estimate, it should have taken this many people just a few months to conquer the Promised Land. But it took them 39 years just to enter it and 45 years before they had conquered it!*

ISRAEL'S MARCHING ORDER

Numbers 10:11-28, 33-36



*“Now a wind
went out from the
Lord and drove
quail in from the
sea.”*

Numbers 11:31



Kentucky Fried Quail

DAY 10

Numbers 11:1-35

What food can you never have too much of?
What do you absolutely refuse to eat?

1. What hardships do you suppose topped the people's list of complaints (11:1, 4-6, 18-20; compare Ex 15:22-27; 16:1-9; 17:1-7)?
2. Is it good or bad that the people's complaints gained a "hearing of the Lord" (11:1)? What happened as a result? How and why did God judge them?
3. Moses went to God with his own complaints. How would you characterize them (11:10-15)? (a) anxious and overburdened, (b) helpless and suicidal, (c) confident and assertive, (d) threatening and manipulative, (e) like a defense attorney.
4. How did God respond (11:16-23)? What was the real problem?
5. Was it good or bad for Moses that Eldad and Medad began prophesying by God's Spirit (11:26-29)? What happened as a result?

1. When faced with a hardship, do you grumble like the Israelites? What new perspective on God's blessings does this chapter give you?
2. When have you experienced Jesus transforming a hardship into a blessing?
3. Do you ever tire of the manna of God's simple grace—and crave instead the bloody, red meat of law, judgment and insitutional religion?

Fire from the Lord (11:1) was a swift, but merciful, judgment on the Israelites. Later, God issued a plague (11:33). God gives people time to change their ways before he administers complete judgment. **Manna** (11:6-7) means, literally "What is it?" Several attempts have been made to find natural explanations for this mystery food, as if it were a substance that could be found under certain conditions in nature (see Ex 16:15-35 and related note).

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

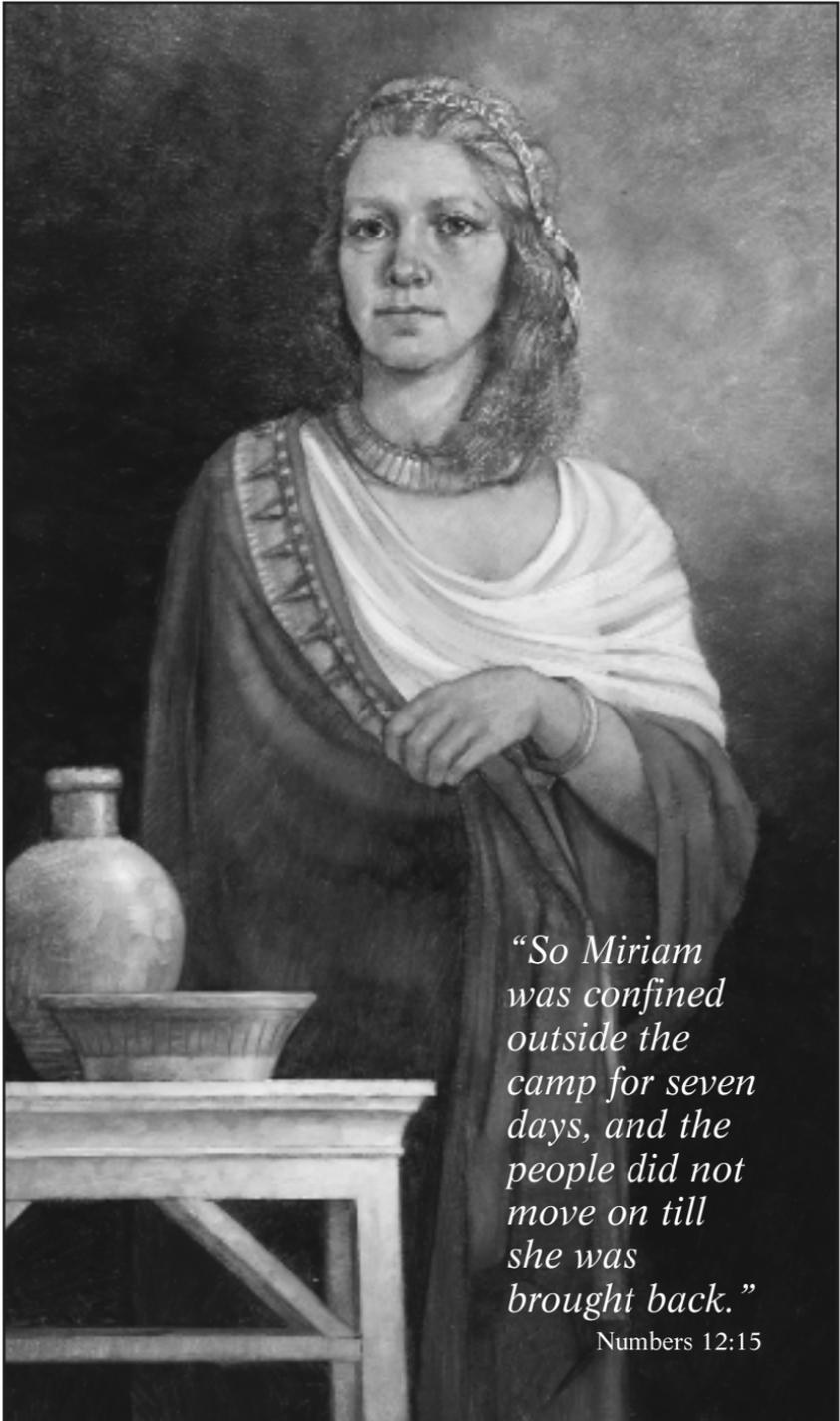
into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word



*“So Miriam
was confined
outside the
camp for seven
days, and the
people did not
move on till
she was
brought back.”*

Numbers 12:15

Sibling Rivalry

DAY 11

Numbers 12:1-16

Do you get along with your siblings? Which one of you is the authority figure? The clown? The scapegoat? The mediator?

1. What issue about their brother Moses upset Miriam and Aaron (12:1; see note)? What was their real issue with Moses (12:2)? (a) interracial marriage, (b) family pride, (c) envy, (d) a power play.
2. What mattered most in determining the fate of “leprous” Miriam? (a) God’s opinion of Moses, (b) justice and mercy of God, (c) penitent plea of Aaron, (d) intercession of Moses, (e) laws of Israel, (f) nature of her disease, (g) gender bias.
3. What kind of brother was Moses to Miriam and Aaron?
4. What kind of servant was Moses, compared to other prophets (12:3-8) and to Jesus (Ac 7:37; Heb 1:1; 3:1-6)?

1. If you had been in charge, how would you have handled your sister and brother?
2. When you mess up, do you expect punishment? What kind? Would anyone intercede for you?
3. Who are you most envious of?

Moses’ Cushite wife (12:1), descended from Cush (first son of Ham), might be Zipporah the Midianite (Ex 2:15-22), but more likely refers to a second wife taken by Moses after Zipporah died. The claim that Moses was more **humble** than anyone else (12:3) is likely a later editorial insert, as Moses, the primary author, would hardly make such a claim for himself. Though humble when his own honor was at stake, Moses could be intensely angry when God’s honor was at stake (see Ex 32:19-35). **Miriam became leprous** (12:10). Such terms described various diseases affecting the skin. Modern leprosy (Hanson’s disease) was not known in the Middle East until the NT era or later.

OPENING

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DIGGING

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A Fork in the Road

Numbers 13:1-33

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you faced a watershed event or fork-in-the-road experience? How did you decide which road to take?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Which spies stand out by name (13:4-16; compare lists in ch. 1-2)?
2. What was the purpose of the spies' mission, which covered 250 miles each way and took 40 days to complete (13:17-20)? (a) to gain tactical information for war, (b) to build faith for the move, (c) to survey the land for settlement, (d) to find excuses not to go there.
3. What effect did the majority report have on the people (13:26-33; see 14:1-4, 36)? Who filed a minority report (13:30; see 14:6-9)?
4. What was their biggest mistake? (a) looking at circumstances, (b) looking at people, (c) distrust of God's promise, (d) lack of self-confidence, (e) letting fear dominate.

LIVING
out the Word

1. Is something keeping you from entering God's "promised land" of grace and rest in Jesus? (a) giant religious institutions, (b) giant people, (c) giant doubts, (d) a giant case of legalistic religion.
2. What "fruit" (good things) do you lack because you doubt Jesus' power in your life?

WINDOW
on the Word

***We seemed like grasshoppers** (13:33). This was figurative language meaning that some Canaanites were a formidable sight. The descendants of Anak (13:28) were unusually large people, believed to be from seven to nine feet tall and assumed to be related to the Nephilim (13:33), who were giants in the days of Noah (see Ge 6:4). Some Canaanite cities were fortified with walls as much as 20 feet thick and 25 feet tall.*

“When they reached the Valley of Eshcol, they cut off a branch bearing a single cluster of grapes. Two of them carried it on a pole between them, along with some pomegranates and figs.”

Numbers 13:23



Artwork by Basil Wolverton

So You Want to Go Home?

Numbers 14:1-45

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever wanted to go home shortly after arriving somewhere? (a) at summer camp, (b) at school, (c) in a new hometown, (d) at a party among strangers. Why the change of mind?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. How did the people respond to the majority report and to the attempts of Joshua and Caleb to change their minds (14:1-10)? How did God respond (14:10-12)?

2. Moses convinced God not to destroy the Israelites (14:12-20). How is it that God changed his mind? (a) God can be reasoned with, (b) God is merciful, (c) God responds to humans, but his purpose and nature never changes.

3. What was God's alternative punishment (14:21-23, 28-35, 37-38, 43-45)? Was this an arbitrary consequence imposed by God or something the people brought on themselves?

4. Some Israelites tried to enter the Promised Land anyway (14:40). Why didn't they understand the prohibition?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Are there fearful "giants" in your life? Ever want to return to an "Egypt" from which God has delivered you?

2. How are you like these Israelites? (a) you listen to religious fear-mongers, (b) you do your own thing when God says "No," (c) you tend to "catastrophize" bad news, (d) you are concerned for your children's future, (e) you have tested the Lord *at least* ten times.

3. Have you been like Caleb and Joshua—loyal to God and encouraging others to trust the Lord?

WINDOW
on the Word

*The Israelites' desire to **return to Egypt** troubled Joshua and Caleb so much that they tore their clothes (14:6), a way of showing deep sorrow or despair. Israel tested the Lord ten times in the post-Exodus era up to this point. See the ten incidents recorded in Exodus 14:10-12; 15:22-24; 16:1-3; 16:19-20; 16:27-30; 17:1-4; 32:1-35; Numbers 11:1-3; 11:4-34; 14:3.*

What's That Smell?

DAY 14

Numbers 15:1-41

What is your favorite aroma? Does it evoke any childhood memories?

1. Why did God go into such detail again about the different sacrifices and offerings? (a) each generation must learn afresh, (b) their parents blew it, (c) all new habits require repetition, (d) proper worship was that important.
2. Why were these offerings so pleasing to God? (a) their aroma, (b) their cost, (c) the obedience they signified, (d) God is easy to please, (e) God is arbitrary.
3. How do you think God knows if a sin is intentional or unintentional (15:22-31)? What provisions does God make for this difference?
4. Why was Sabbath-breaking so serious (15:30-36; see Ex 31:15; 35:2; Lev 24:10-16)?
5. Why the tassels (15:38-40; see note)?

1. What examples of a “pleasing aroma” can we send to God? (a) our time, (b) our money, (c) our trust, (d) our wills, (e) our lives.
2. What other sacrifices might God want you to make in response to his redeeming you?
3. Do we as Christians need “tassels” to remind us of God’s love, mercy and grace?

*Though God had just punished the Israelites who had shown contempt for his promises, here in a dramatic turnaround, he instructs their offspring for when they enter the Promised Land. God was assuring the next generation that his original promise still remained in force. **An aroma pleasing to the Lord**—consisting of animal, grain or drink offerings—referred to God’s pleasure with their obedience and sacrifice (15:3-21). **Tassels** (15:38) dangled from the fringe of garments. They were to be constant reminders to the Israelites that they were to obey every one of God’s 613 old covenant laws. Did the tassels work?*

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