

YOUTH



LEVEL 5

BIBLE

LESSONS



LESSON 6



Israel in the Wilderness

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# ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS

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**T**he children of Israel continued to grow and multiply greatly in the land of Egypt. After the Pharaoh who knew Joseph died, another took his place. Many years passed. Because there were so many Israelites, the Pharaoh who now ruled the land feared them, and forced them into slave labor.

After about four hundred years in Egypt, God chose Moses to lead the people to freedom. Because Pharaoh refused to free the Israelites, God sent destructive plagues upon Egypt. The tenth and last plague was the death of the firstborn of Egypt. Pharaoh finally let the Israelites go.

But soon after the Israelites left, Pharaoh decided that he had made a mistake in freeing them. So he and his army chased after the Israelites to bring them back to Egypt.

The unarmed Israelites appeared trapped as they faced the deep, broad waters of the Red Sea. Pharaoh's army was rapidly closing in on them. There seemed to be no way of escape!

Moses held up his staff over the Red

Sea, just as God told him to do. Suddenly, the waters of the sea parted, forming a large pathway with towering walls of water on either side. Moses then led the people across the dry sea bed. But Pharaoh and his army began to pursue the Israelites through the sea.

The distance between the Israelites and the Egyptians quickly closed. When the last of the Israelites safely reached the opposite shore, God told Moses to hold his staff in the air. The mighty walls of water thundered back together, crushing the entire Egyptian army!

Free at last, the Israelites sang a song of thanksgiving to the great God of the universe.

Let's now journey with the Israelites through the hot desert sands as they move towards the Promised Land—the land of Canaan which God, many years before, had promised to Abraham and his descendants. As we do, we will learn some important lessons from the mistakes they made.

## **MANNA FROM HEAVEN**

God led the Israelites, numbering over two million, by a pillar of cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night. The people trudged on through

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### **ABOUT OUR COVER . . .**

Mt. Sinai, located in the Sinai peninsula, is where God codified the Ten Commandments on two tablets of stone.

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the hot desert. After three days, they finally reached water, but it was too bitter for them to drink. So God miraculously made the waters sweet and fresh (Exodus 15:22-25).

The Israelites traveled through the desert for nearly a month. Then they began to complain, saying they didn't have enough food. "Oh, if we had only stayed back in Egypt. We always had plenty of food there. But now we will die from hunger in this miserable desert," they murmured.

Little did the people know that God would give them a very special food. The next morning the people found little, round, white flakes all over the ground. Because they had never seen anything like it before, they called the food "manna", meaning "What is it?" It was bread from heaven, also known as angels' food (Psalms 78:25). The manna tasted like small wafers made with honey.



The Israelites crossed the Red Sea on dry ground between two towering walls of water.

God sent manna every day, except on the Sabbath. On the day before the Sabbath the Israelites were to gather a double portion. God was taking care of His people (Exodus 16:11-22).

## **GOD THUNDERS OUT THE TEN COMMANDMENTS**

In the third month after the Israelites left Egypt, they arrived at Mount Sinai. (Look on a Bible map to see where Mount Sinai is located.)

With the people camped around the base of the mountain, God thundered out the Ten Commandments for all to hear (Exodus 20:1-17). He then commanded Moses to go up the mountain to receive more laws that would help the people to have happy lives.

God wanted the Israelites to be a model nation for all other nations to see. These nations would see, by looking at Israel, that the nation which obeys God and keeps His commandments is blessed. For God had told the Israelites that if they obeyed Him they would have happy and abundant lives. But if they disobeyed, they would be miserable.

## **THE GOLDEN CALF**

Moses was up in the mountain forty days and forty nights (Exodus 24:18). During that time, what were the Israelites doing? Let's let an imaginary person tell the story:

"My name is Arnan. I was ten years old when Moses went up Mount Sinai. Many days passed and still he didn't return. My parents told me not to worry, because God was with him.

“One day, while I was out taking care of the goats, a large group of people walked past me. These were some of the same people who often complained and talked against Moses.

“Being a curious person, I left my sister with the goats and followed these people at a safe distance. The angry crowd stopped in front of Aaron’s tent. Aaron came out. I moved closer to hear what they were saying.

“The leaders of the group talked about making some gods. Aaron, who had been left in charge of the camp during Moses’ absence, looked frightened.

“As the mob continued talking, I thought, ‘Don’t these people understand that we’re commanded not to worship idols? Surely they must have heard God thunder out the Ten Commandments just a short time ago. Had they forgotten how God led us through the Red Sea and then drowned the entire Egyptian army?’

“I was really surprised to hear that they wanted to make a calf out of gold! This wild crowd meant nothing but trouble (Exodus 32:1-4).

“During the next few days, workmen built a large shiny calf of pure gold. ‘Don’t go near that calf,’ my father warned me. ‘Something evil is bound to happen.’

“The next morning, the smell of roasting meat filled the air. Our neighbors told us Aaron had just declared a feast day (verse 5). I heard one man ask my father if he was going to worship the golden calf. When my

father said ‘No,’ the man laughed and went on his way.

“ ‘How foolish it is for them to think a false god like that has any power,’ my mother said. ‘I know,’ was my response.

“Soon we heard wild shouts coming from the area where the golden calf was. My father said that people were losing control of themselves and partying wildly.

“ ‘It’s time we prayed for the return of Moses,’ he said quietly.

“A short while later Moses did return from the mountain. When he saw the golden calf and the people dancing and shouting, he became so angry that he threw down the two tables of stone on which God had specially written the Ten Commandments. They hit the base of the mountain and smashed into many pieces.

“Moses gave the order to build a large



The flames were so hot, the golden calf, built while Moses was away on Mt. Sinai, soon melted down to the ground.

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bonfire around the shiny calf. It was so hot that we had to move back. The idol melted into a large puddle (verses 18-20). The gold was then ground up into fine powder and sprinkled into our drinking water.

“When I drank the water with the gold in it, all I could think about was how disobedient some of the people had been. If they had only listened to God when He told them not to worship idols, everything would have been fine.

“I will never forget that unfortunate day. My uncle was killed because he had taken part in the idolatrous festival. About three thousand men died that day as a result of their sins (verses 27-28). I made up my mind to never worship any idols. I would only worship the one, true God who led us out of Egypt.”

### **ISRAELITES NOT SATISFIED WITH MANNA**

The Israelites now began to complain about the manna God gave them. Turn to Numbers 11:5 and fill in the blanks. “We remember the \_\_\_\_\_, which we did eat in \_\_\_\_\_ freely; the \_\_\_\_\_, and the \_\_\_\_\_, and the \_\_\_\_\_ . . . .”

Many of the Israelites didn’t like the manna. They wanted meat. The fact that God was providing them with manna wasn’t satisfactory. They wanted to eat the kinds of food they had eaten back in Egypt.

God said he would give them meat. In fact, He said they would receive so much of it that it would become

loathsome to them (Numbers 11:20). God then sent the Israelites enough quail to feed them for an entire month! The complainers received the meat they wanted, but then suffered from a great plague sent by God as punishment for their complaining (Numbers 11:32-34).

### **Do You Remember?**

1. The word manna means, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
2. Who was left in charge while Moses was on Mt. Sinai? \_\_\_\_\_.
3. What did the rebellious Israelites build and then worship? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

### **MOSES IS CRITICIZED**

Miriam and Aaron, the sister and brother of Moses, spoke against Moses. They criticized him because he had married an Ethiopian woman. They said, “Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?”

But it was not their job to criticize the man *God chose* to lead the Israelites!

God heard them, as He hears everything that we say, and corrected them. God afflicted Miriam with a fatal disease. The disease is called \_\_\_\_\_ (Numbers 12:10). Moses prayed for her, and after seven days God healed her.

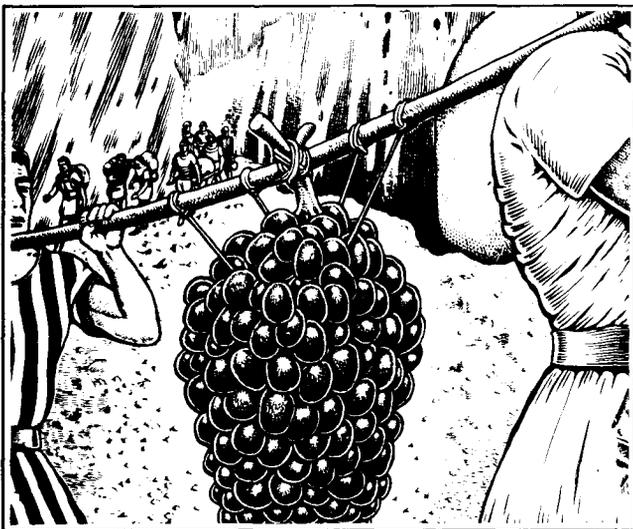
This is a lesson to us that we should not criticize or speak against those in authority. It is wrong, for example, to criticize our parents when they do something we don’t agree with.

## ISRAEL REFUSES TO ENTER CANAAN

After Miriam was healed, the Israelites continued their journey. They stopped in the Wilderness of Paran, which was near the Promised Land.

Before entering the land of Canaan, Moses sent twelve scouts to look it over. They passed the Dead Sea, the lowest spot on the face of the earth. They traveled to the Sea of Galilee, where many years later, Jesus spent much of His life. They saw the Mediterranean Sea, the Jordan Valley, farmlands, cities and people. The scouts brought back some of the food from the area, including grapes as large as plums! (Numbers 13:17-24.)

When the scouts returned, they reported to the people what they had seen. Two of the scouts, Joshua and Caleb, told the Israelites about the wonderful land, advising them to go up to the land at once and take possession of it.



The scouts who searched Canaan brought back grapes as large as plums.

The other scouts, however, gave a bad report. They advised the people not to enter the land because the inhabitants were much stronger than the Israelites. “In fact, the land is inhabited by a race of giants so large that ordinary men look like grasshoppers in comparison!” they said.

Most of the Israelites believed the scouts who gave the bad report. They refused to enter the land. In fact, they chose a leader to take them back to Egypt (Numbers 14:4). This was rebellion against God and His servant Moses!

Because of this, God pronounced a punishment on the Israelites. “Your \_\_\_\_\_ shall \_\_\_\_\_ in this \_\_\_\_\_ . . .” (verse 29). They were to wander forty years in the wilderness until all those twenty years and older (except for Joshua and Caleb) died. It was the children—those under the age of twenty—who would have the wonderful opportunity of entering the Promised Land.

## EARTH SWALLOWS REBELS

Arnan continues the story:

“One day, as I played in the dirt outside our tent, I saw some of our neighbors, Korah, Dathan and Abiram walking toward Moses’ tent. They were talking about replacing Moses and Aaron, and leading the Israelites themselves.

“I wondered about this, because my father told me that it is God who chooses the leaders, and that He had chosen Moses. I followed at a distance to

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see what these men and their followers would do.

“They stopped in front of Moses’ tent. ‘Could they be serious about this?’ I thought.

“Moses came out of his tent. Korah said something about Moses and Aaron trying to do everything themselves. The men appeared very disrespectful.

“Moses then said something that sent shivers up and down my spine. Speaking to Korah and his followers, he said, ‘By tomorrow morning God will reveal who His true servants really are!’

“I thought surely these men would be afraid and say they were sorry, but they weren’t. They all went home. I followed Korah, Dathan, and Abiram back to their tents. They seemed to think they would soon be in charge of Israel.

“Just after supper Moses and Aaron came to visit the men. I followed at a small distance again, anxious to hear what was happening. Moses said something about God causing the earth to swallow up these men! (Numbers 16:30.)

“I was frightened and raced for home, wishing I had stayed there instead of being so curious. After I reached my tent, I turned around to look over in the direction of the three men. The ground suddenly began to rumble and shake in the area these men were standing. ‘It’s happening just as Moses said,’ I thought to myself.

“People were screaming and running in all directions. Suddenly, the ground caved in, swallowing up these men, their households and possessions, and

those who had conspired with them. The earth closed over them and they perished!

“The next day, as I walked through the camp, I heard some people saying that Moses and Aaron had caused the earth to open up like that. Why, even I knew that only God could have performed a miracle like that! ‘If these people keep talking like that, they may fall into the ground too,’ I thought. ‘It would be so much better if they would just keep quiet and mind their own business.’

“Suddenly, some of these same people began to die. As time passed, more and more fell to the earth dead. As far as I could see, dead people were scattered on the ground.

“Far ahead I saw Aaron waving a lighted censer. Behind him no one seemed to be dying. I ran toward Aaron and passed him. The plague stopped. Later, I learned that 14,700 people had died. I realized that talking about God’s servants in a wrong way was very serious business. If only these people had obeyed God, He would have spared them” (verse 49).

## **NEAR THE PROMISED LAND**

After forty years of wandering in the wilderness, it was now time for the Israelites to enter the land of Canaan. But again, the people complained. They said they didn’t have enough food and water.

God instructed Moses to speak to a rock and then He would cause water to flow out from it. However, Moses did

not follow God's instructions properly. In a fit of anger, because of the rebellious people, Moses struck the rock with his staff, instead of just speaking to it.

God sent the water, but He was upset with Moses and Aaron for not following His instructions. As a result of their disobedience, God did not allow them to enter the Promised Land (Numbers 20:12). Aaron died soon thereafter at the age of one hundred and twenty-three.

### Do You Remember?

1. Miriam had leprosy for \_\_\_\_ days.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ were the two scouts who told the truth.
3. \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

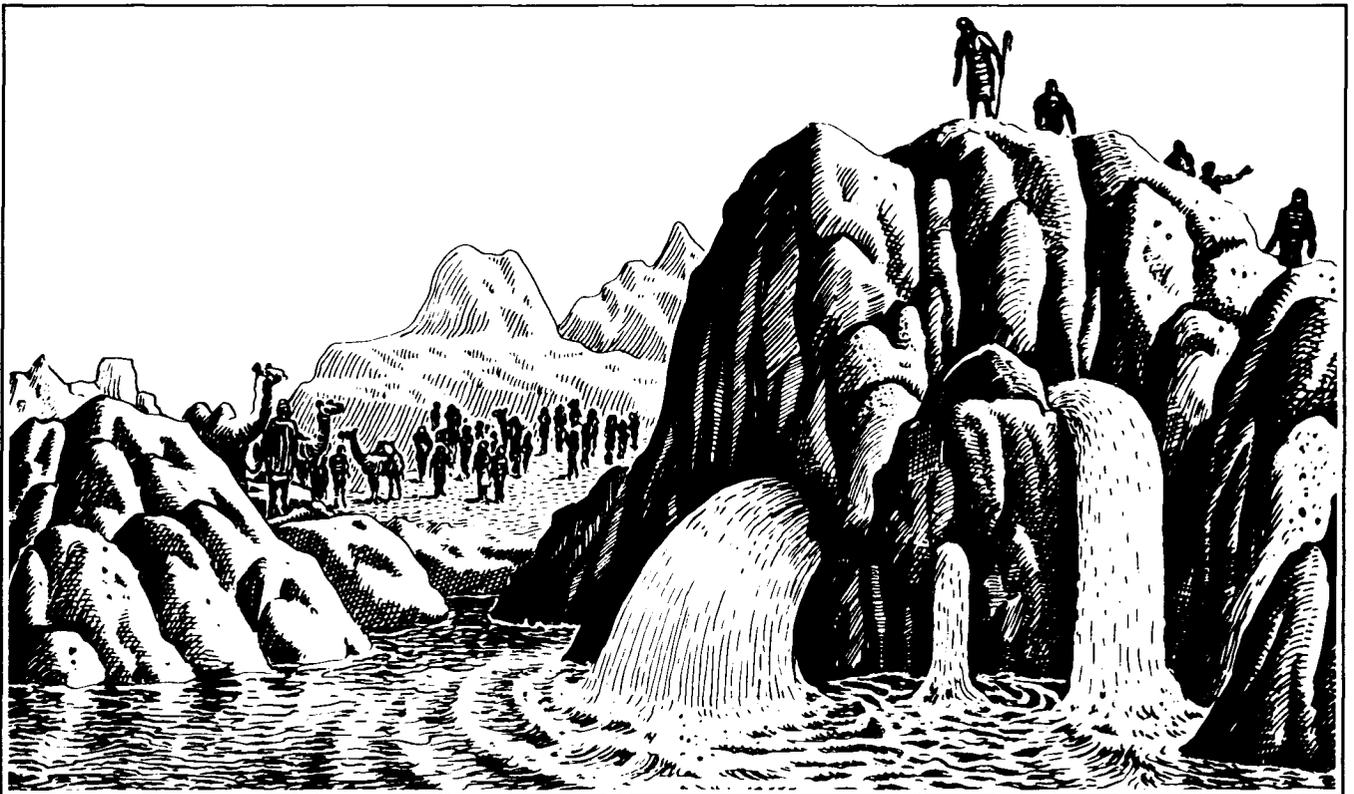
\_\_\_\_\_ disappeared into the earth.

### GOD SENDS SNAKES TO PUNISH THE COMPLAINERS

Reu, the imaginary son of Arnan, our imaginary story-teller, now continues the story:

"After Aaron died, the people mourned for him thirty days. I cried when he died on the mountain. I still remember father telling me about the time he ran past Aaron during one of the plagues. That was many years ago, before I was born.

"We began to travel toward Canaan once again, but then some of the people started to complain. 'Oh, no!' I thought. Of course, desert travel was hot and



Moses disobeyed God's instructions and struck the rock with his staff.

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tiring, but I knew that we would soon be in a wonderful land where I could raise goats and have my own garden.

“Soon, a large crowd of people arrived at Moses’ tent. They angrily complained that the manna was not good enough for them (Numbers 21:5). My mother told me that without the manna which God faithfully sent us everyday, we would starve to death.

“Having a curious nature just like my father, I followed the crowd at a safe distance. They used nasty words and behaved badly. I remembered my parents telling me how God dislikes complaining. Thinking the situation might become too dangerous, I turned and started walking home.

“Just then I heard a strange noise. ‘It sounds like people screaming,’ I thought. As I looked through the camp, I saw my friend Ethan’s parents running from their tent. On the ground, I could see large snakes wriggling after them. Worse yet, they were coming in my direction!

“Before they ran much further, one of the snakes bit Ethan’s father. Another bit his mother. Both screamed in pain, and after taking a few more steps they died. ‘They must have been some of the complainers,’ I thought. Trembling, I raced for my tent. I saw snakes all through the camp. I could only think of one thing—‘I hoped my parents hadn’t complained.’

“As I reached the tent, I could see that everything was fine. No snakes were near our tent, but they were wriggling into some of the neighbors’

tents. I ran into my father’s arms. All around us were screams of pain and terror (verse 6).

“‘You didn’t complain about the manna, did you?’ I asked my parents.

“‘No, son, we didn’t,’ my father said. ‘I learned that lesson years ago.’

“God soon told Moses to make a bronze snake and put it on a pole. When those who were bitten looked at it, they were healed by God (verse 9).

### **A GIANT IS DEFEATED**

“On the way to Canaan, my father was chosen as one of the soldiers to fight against a giant and his army who did not want us to enter the Promised Land. This giant, whose name was Og, stood about twelve feet tall! I was worried that my father would get hurt or killed in the battle. But my father reassured me, saying, ‘Don’t worry, God will fight for us.’

“As the men went off to battle, I was sure I would see my father again. Sure enough, my father did return. God had delivered Og and his army into the hands of the Israelites. We thanked God for giving us the victory.”

### **A TALKING DONKEY**

After the defeat of Og and his nation, the king of Moab was afraid. He wanted to destroy the Israelites, but knew he was not powerful enough. He thought of a plan. He asked the prophet Balaam to curse the Israelites (Numbers 22:5-6).

God told Balaam not to go to Moab. But he disobeyed and went anyway. On the way, God sent an angel with a sword to kill him. The donkey Balaam was

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riding saw the angel, which was blocking the road, but Balaam did not. The animal kept trying to get out of the way, but Balaam kept forcing it back on the road. Finally, Balaam became so angry that he beat the donkey with his staff. Then the donkey spoke!

It said, "What have I \_\_\_\_\_ unto \_\_\_\_\_, that thou hast \_\_\_\_\_ me these \_\_\_\_\_ times?" (Numbers 22:28.) God spoke to Balaam through the donkey! The angel blocking the road suddenly became visible. Balaam was so fearful that he immediately fell to the ground. The angel then told him he must now go on to Moab. While there he was to speak only what God wanted him to.

Balaam then blessed the Israelites instead of cursing them, as the king of Moab had wanted him to do (Numbers 24:1, 10). He could only do what God allowed, and God wanted him to bless—not curse—the Israelites!

### LESSONS FOR US TODAY

In this lesson we have learned of the many calamities which came upon the Israelites because of their disobedience to God.

But why were these things preserved in the Bible for us today? "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted" (I Corinthians 10:6).

God intends for us to learn from the experiences of the ancient Israelites and to avoid following their bad examples, which only led to suffering and misery.

The Israelites made many serious

mistakes. One of these was idolatry. We should not worship things such as actors, actresses, athletes, television and music. Although these things may not be wrong in themselves, we should not allow them to consume most of our time. We should always try to put God *first* in our lives.

The Israelites also tempted God. We shouldn't try to see how much we can get away with at home, before receiving correction. For example, if our room is untidy, we should clean it *before* we are asked. We should also obey our parents immediately.

The Israelites also complained. Let's try not to be guilty of this. Try going a day without complaining—about anything! Complaining didn't bring the Israelites happiness, and neither will it bring us happiness!

We should also practice the way of "give"—not "get"—by being kind to others and helping them in whatever way we can. This is showing real love and concern for our neighbors.

Learning from the mistakes of the ancient Israelites will help us to lead happy and abundant lives. So let's strive to obey God and keep His commandments, and to ultimately be in His Kingdom!

### Do You Remember?

List five mistakes the Israelites made.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

# FRACTION-NITIONS

Find the phrases below by using their "fraction-nitions." A fraction-nition is a word consisting of fractional parts of other words. To find the words and fraction-nitions below, read each clue and select the correct letters. Enter them in the next empty solution box(es). The first question is done for you as an example.

**A**

One of the miracles God performed for the Israelites:

B I

**B**

The way the Israelites should have lived their lives, and the way that will make us happy:



- 1** The first 2/5 of BIBLE
- 2** The last 4/7 of QUITTER
- 3** The first 3/5 of WATCH
- 4** The last 2/5 of CHEER

- 5** The first 2/5 of MARRY
- 6** The last 2/5 of ABIDE
- 7** The first 3/5 of SWELL
- 8** The last 1/2 of MEET



- 1** The first 1/4 of GOMORRAH
- 2** The last 1/3 of CLOUDS
- 3** The last 3/4 of AWAY

- 4** The first 1/4 of OFFERING
- 5** The last 4/7 of FORGIVE

**BIBLE MEMORY**

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

## BIBLE BASEBALL

See how many runs you can score by filling in the blanks below. Fill in the correct answers in order and record your score on the scoreboard in the diagram after answering each question. Each right answer is a home run. Each wrong answer is an out. If you make three outs you lose the game. Play Ball!

1. God delivered the Ten Commandments from \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Honor thy father and mother is the \_\_\_\_\_ commandment.
3. The two scouts who told the truth were Joshua and \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The lowest point on earth is the \_\_\_\_\_.
5. \_\_\_\_\_, Dathan and Abiram perished in the earthquake.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ died at the age of 123.
7. The twelve foot giant's name was \_\_\_\_\_.

