

LEVITICUS

*L*ed out of bondage by a holy God, Israel must now learn what it means to be His holy people. Thus Leviticus, the book of worship, follows Exodus, the book of deliverance. Leviticus addresses the question, "How can a sinful people worship and serve a holy God?" Taking its name from the priestly tribe of Levi, Leviticus outlines regulations concerning priests and worship in the tabernacle and contains God's provision for man's sin: the blood atonement.

Focus	Holy Sacrifices	Holy Service
Divisions	Offerings of Praise and Dedication Offerings of Restoration Holy Office of the Priest Holiness in Daily Life Holiness in National Life Holiness for the Individual Holy Priests and Holy Feasts Holiness in the Holy Land	
	1 3 4 7 8 10 11 15 16 17 18 20 21 23 24 27	
Topics	Worshipping a Holy God Vital Offerings	Walking with a Holy God Various Obligations
Place	Mount Sinai	
Time	Approximately 1 Month	

Offerings of Praise and Dedication

1/2

Sat.–Sun.

February

Leviticus 1–3
Heart of the Passage:
Leviticus 1



Overview: With the tabernacle completed, God now gives Moses instructions regarding the five types of sacrifices that would be offered in the tabernacle. Three of them—the sweet savor offerings—were voluntary expressions of worship tailored to the person’s ability to give. Two—non-

sweet savor offerings—were required when sin had broken fellowship with God. In the burnt offering, the worshiper declared his total commitment to God. Through the meal offering he acknowledged that his material possessions belonged wholly to the Lord. By means of the peace offering, the worshiper publicly expressed his thanks or made a vow of spiritual service to God.

Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3
Burnt Offering	Meal Offering	Peace Offering
Sacrifices for Those in Fellowship with God		

God knew all about our wickedness in the world, and still thought us worth saving.



Insight: Sacrifices for the 20th Century

Animal sacrifices, so essential to Old Testament worship, ceased with Christ’s once-for-all-time sacrifice on the cross. Yet Peter tells us that all believers are priests who should continually offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God (1 Peter 2:5).



Your Daily Walk: Today you will read about three Old Testament sacrifices prescribed for each Israelite. But did you know that the New Testament describes at least three “sacrifices” prescribed for each believer—three ways for you to offer a sacrifice to God today?

Instead of a whole burnt offering, you can offer your body as “a living sacrifice . . . unto God” (Romans 12:1). In place of a meal offering, you might offer from your material possessions “an acceptable sacrifice” by helping someone in financial need (like the Philippians did for Paul; see Philippians 4:18). Instead of the peace offering, you could offer the “sacrifice of praise” to God (Hebrews 13:15), a verbal expression of thanksgiving for His care and provision in your life.

Today would be a good time to offer a sweet savor sacrifice to God. Take one of the three sacrifices described above and put it to work by committing each part of your body to God’s service (living sacrifice), sharing publicly God’s goodness in your life (sacrifice of praise), or writing a check to someone in need (acceptable sacrifice).

Offerings for Restoration

Monday

3

February



Overview: In addition to the three sweet savor offerings, God gives the Israelites two non-sweet savor sacrifices. Both are required when sin has broken fellowship with God. The sin offering—covering sins of uncleanness, neglect, or thoughtlessness—provided restoration for the sinner while teaching the seriousness of sin and its consequences. The trespass offering—covering sins of injury to God and to others—provided not only for the restoration of the sinner, but for compensation to the injured party as well.

Leviticus 4–7
Heart of the Passage:
Leviticus 4–5

Chapter 4	Chapter 5	Chapters 6–7
Sin Offering	Trespass Offering	A Second Look at the Offerings
Sacrifices to Restore Fellowship		Sacrifices Reviewed



Your Daily Walk: In the margin, list five unpleasant but beneficial experiences from daily life—things you dislike doing, but know they are good for you. (Hint: You might want to start in the dentist’s office.)

Life is a long lesson in humility.

You probably don’t enjoy the whine of the dentist’s drill; but after all the poking and drilling and bitter taste, you find you feel a lot better. Being corrected by a boss when you’ve made a mistake isn’t pleasant either, but afterwards you’re glad your boss cared enough to confront you with the truth.

In the Christian life there are some equally painful but profitable exercises—like obeying the Biblical principle of restitution. When an Israelite caused injury to another, God’s command was clear: “Make it up to him.” You, as a Christian, likewise have an obligation to repay those whom you have injured.

Think back over the past week. Is there someone whose character or possessions you have damaged? Have you asked for forgiveness? (That’s hard.) Have you repaid what you owe? (That’s harder still.) Take the initiative today to offer a trespass offering to God. You’ll find the peace of mind and restored relationship well worth the pain.



Insight: And If You Need a Model to Follow . . . Zacchaeus, the tax collector who trusted Christ (Luke 19:1-10), beautifully illustrates restitution at work. The law told a sinner to restore what he had taken or damaged, plus 20 percent. Zacchaeus in his gratitude offered to restore what he had taken *fourfold!*

ISRAEL'S HIGH PRIEST . . . AND YOURS

Israel's high priest was the most important man in the religious life of the nation, for only he could offer the atoning sacrifice which God demanded. God still requires an atoning sacrifice for the sins of humanity; but in place of the temporary Aaronic priesthood He has installed Jesus Christ, His own Son. He is our High Priest forever by virtue of His perfect sacrifice of Himself for our sins. Notice seven striking comparisons between these two (high) priests:

		ISRAEL'S HIGH PRIEST (LEVITICUS)	YOUR HIGH PRIEST (HEBREWS)
1	Person	Aaron or one of his descendants (16:3, 32)	Christ Himself (4:14)
2	Place	Holy of Holies in the tabernacle (16:15-17)	Heaven itself (9:24)
3	Offering	Animal blood (16:14-15)	His own blood (9:12)
4	Frequency	Once every year (16:34)	Once for all time (9:12)
5	Effect	Effective for the nation of Israel (16:34)	Effective to save "to the uttermost" (7:25)
6	Duration	Effective for one year (16:34)	Provides eternal redemption (9:12)
7	Purity	High priest needed purification himself (16:6)	Christ "is consecrated forevermore" (7:26-28)

Holy Office of the Priest

Tuesday

February

4



Overview: Israel's tabernacle, the place of communion with God through sacrifice, is entrusted to the custody of Aaron and his sons. The priestly corps must undergo a ten-step consecration process and a seven-day dedication period before they can begin their ministry of mediation. God's blessing—made visible by His fiery presence—suddenly turns into a curse as judgment falls on two of Aaron's disobedient sons. Their deaths remind all Israel of the solemn responsibility of serving a holy God. *Obedience*, not *expedience*, should mark the people of God.

Leviticus 8–10
Heart of the Passage:
Leviticus 9:23–10:7

Chapter 8	Chapter 9	Chapter 10
Consecration of the Priestly Ministry	Inauguration of the Priestly Ministry	Regulation of the Priestly Ministry
Dedication	Duty	



Your Daily Walk: Nothing is as hard to gain, and as easy to lose, as a good reputation. One philosopher has observed, "To have lost your reputation is to be dead among the living." Perhaps as a child you heard your parents say, "Remember now, what you do and say reflects on us." Your parents were telling you that the family's reputation was either being tarnished or enhanced by your actions.

Perhaps that is why God responded with such frightening judgment upon Nadab and Abihu. By their carelessness and disobedience, they threatened God's very reputation both inside and outside the nation of Israel—a grave sin indeed.

Your life as a Christian is the only "Bible" some people will ever read. Do you reveal a holy God by your commitment to holiness, or do you smear the reputation of God with an inconsistent life? Write this thought on a card and carry it with you:

"God's reputation is at stake in my life. I want to *maintain* it, not *stain* it."

Then each time you are tempted to stray from God's holiness, pull out that card. Read it; think about it; then let God strengthen you to be wholly—and holy—His.



Insight: The Danger of Failing to Live Up to Your Name Nadab ("noble, virtuous") and Abihu ("God is my father") were in danger of damaging not only their own reputations. If allowed to continue in their sinful ways, they would have besmirched both their families and the godly names they carried.

No one can build a reputation on what he's going to do tomorrow.

Holiness in Daily Life

5

Wednesday

February

Leviticus 11–15

Heart of the Passage:

Leviticus 11:44–47; 13:59;
14:54–57



Overview: Worshiping a holy God demands a holy people. For this reason God gives Israel a series of regulations dealing with ceremonial uncleanness. Four areas are specified: dietary laws (describing edible and nonedible animals); child-birth matters; leprosy and other skin disorders; and bodily discharges. Each set of commands follows a general pattern. The worshiper's defilement is first described, then the means for regaining his purity are prescribed. It's a lengthy, detailed section—because holiness demands attention to detail.

Chapter 11	Chapter 12	Chapters 13–14	Chapter 15
Purity in Diet	Purity in Delivery	Purity in Disease	Purity in Discharges
Avoidable Defilement	Unavoidable Defilement		

The Lord has two heavens to dwell in, and the holy heart is one of them.



Your Daily Walk: A once-popular song opens with the words, “It’s impossible . . .” And when you read the command in 11:44, “Be holy; for I am holy,” you’re probably ready to croon right along with the singer.

Isn’t God demanding something impossible and unattainable from His people? Isn’t He being unreasonable when He says, “Be holy”? From a human point of view, the task seems impossible.

That is precisely the point! It is impossible by human efforts alone to live up to the righteous demands of a holy God. But rather than frustrate you, God wants to teach you. The law was designed to teach the Israelites to be dependent upon God. Just as He provided sacrifices and rituals for cleansing His less-than-perfect people, so He wants to teach you that only through the supernatural provision of a sinless Savior, Jesus Christ, can you hope to achieve holiness.

Paul puts it this way: “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord [by faith, trusting in Him], so walk ye in him [by faith, trusting in Him]” (Colossians 2:6). In Christ’s strength you can live a holy and pure life. Complete this thought from Leviticus 11:44: “*Ye shall be holy* [how? when? where? with whom?]; *for I am holy.*” Then work today on developing the habit of holiness in one area of your life.



Insight: Leprosy Then and Now

It is doubtful that modern-day leprosy (which cripples and disfigures) is the same as Levitical or New Testament “leprosy” (which was a white scaly disease, much like eczema or psoriasis).

Holiness in National Life

Thursday

February

6



Overview: The great Day of Atonement observed each year was Israel's most significant act of worship. On that day, the nation gathered to watch in expectation as the high priest entered the Holy of Holies with the blood of atonement which would cover the sins of the entire nation for another year. Because blood was the central element in Israel's national and personal redemption God prohibited the use of blood for any purpose other than sacrifice to Him.

Leviticus 16-17
Heart of the Passage:
Leviticus 16

Chapter 16	Chapter 17
Day of Atonement	Defilement by Blood
Holiness of the Nation	



Your Daily Walk: What would you do if God gave you the responsibility of atoning for your own sins? What would *you* offer as payment to satisfy His righteous demands: the deed to your house? your savings account? your awards and achievements? your spotless reputation? As sincere as these offerings might be, they would never be adequate to make amends for your sins.

Each year, as the nation of Israel stood in front of the tabernacle on the Day of Atonement and watched the high priest carry the blood of the sin offering into the Holy of Holies, the people were reminded again that atonement was God's idea. It was *His* provision for forgiveness of sinful men. *He* took the initiative to establish a sacrifice of atonement, which provided a blood substitute for the guilty nation.

Just as God provided the way to cover Israel's sins, so too He has sent His own Son as the once-for-all-time atonement for your sins (1 John 2:2). As you rejoice over that wonderful truth, make a list of three friends who need to experience Christ's forgiveness of sins. Pray today for each of the three names . . . and be ready to share a word of testimony when God opens the door.



Insight: No Private Sacrifices Allowed! The restrictions against private sacrifices outside the tabernacle (17:3-4) were to prevent the people from copying their pagan neighbors, who often poured their blood sacrifices into the ground as food for their gods. Only properly ordained priests in the proper location (the tabernacle) could offer Israel's sacrifices.

Jesus Christ is God's perfect provision for imperfect people.

Holiness for the Individual

7

Friday

February

Leviticus 18–20
Heart of the Passage:
Leviticus 19



Overview: In addition to the regulations governing national holiness, God provides Israel with laws governing personal conduct and purity in relation to the family, the community, and society in general. Because obedience is His primary concern, God requires that violators of His laws be punished, and that the punishment be appropriate to the crime committed. God's strict guidelines for living reflect His desire that His people "be holy . . . for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine" (20:26).

Chapter 18	Chapter 19	Chapter 20
Purity in Morals	Practice of Love	Penalty for Disobedience
Holiness for the Individual		

The primary test of life is not service but love for both man and God.



Your Daily Walk: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (19:18) rolls off the tongue with a familiar ease. But putting it into practice is another matter. Of all God's commands, it may be one of the most difficult to keep. The reason? Because *loving* your neighbor means you must be *involved in the life* of your neighbor. That's hard to do because a human being's natural tendency is toward *selfishness*, not *selflessness*.

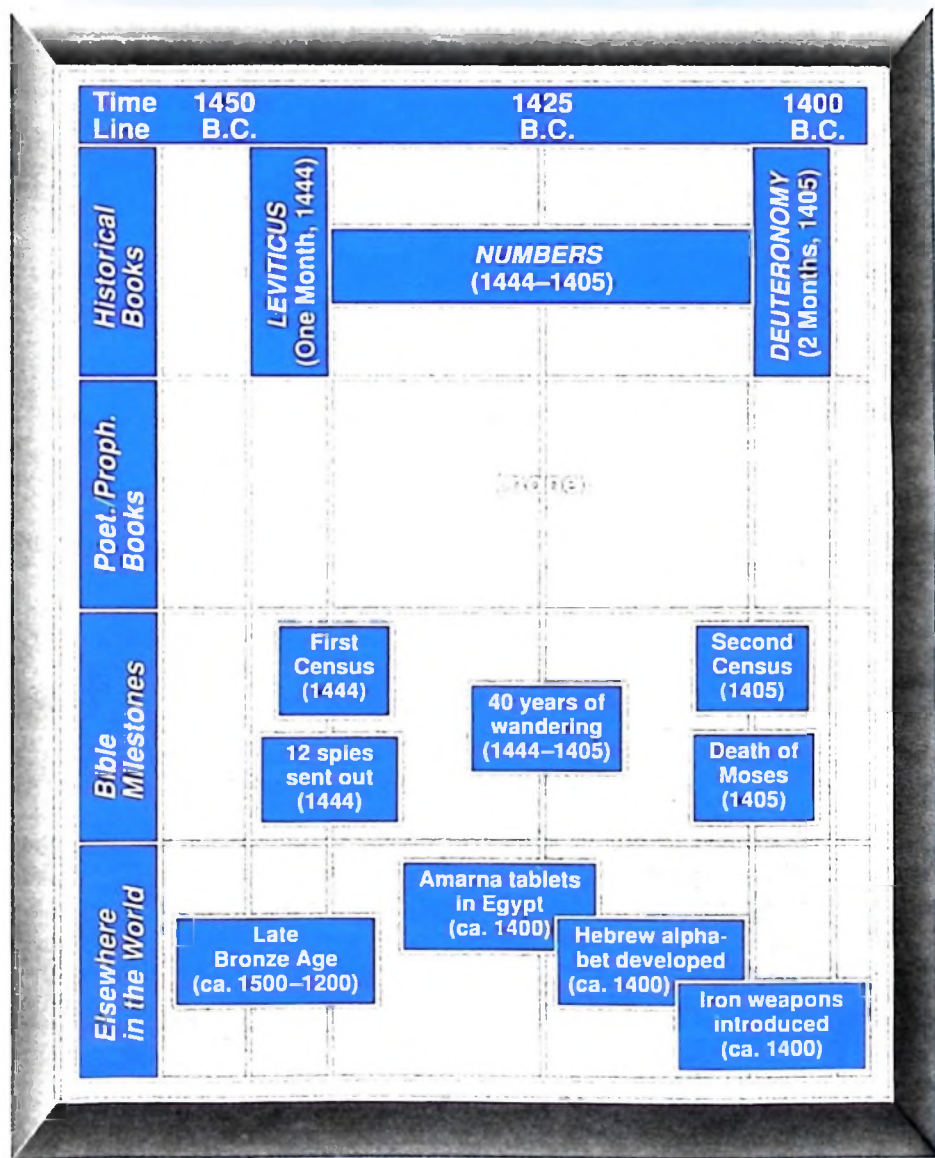
The Old Testament law was a challenge to keep because it made very specific demands on the individual. If an Israelite had questions about how to relate to his neighbor, the Law provided the answers (19:9-18). The New Testament is just as specific, and just as demanding—especially when it speaks of your relationship to your "neighbor." Jesus' story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) points out that your "neighbor" is anyone who needs your help and whose need God has equipped you to meet.

Even if you live alone, there are people around you who need your loving involvement. Put God's command to love your neighbor into practice today by seeking out someone who needs help with yardwork, housework, or homework. Assist them in love . . . and treat them as you would yourself.



Insight: "Do Like Me to Be Like Me"
Nearly 30 times in chapters 18–22 we read God's words: "I am the LORD," and, "Be holy . . . for I the LORD your God am holy." Without a doubt, the holiness of the Redeemer is the compelling reason for His insistence on practices of purity by the redeemed.

Placing the Books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy



Holy Priests and Holy Feasts

8/9

Sat.–Sun.

February

Leviticus 21–23
Heart of the Passage:
Leviticus 21



Overview: Privilege often carries with it responsibility, and in the case of Israel's priests, the responsibilities of serving a holy God become quite demanding. The priests must avoid defilement which others might ordinarily experience. They must be without physical defect in order to serve in the sanctuary. They must bear the responsibility for maintaining purity in Israel's sacrificial worship. They must preside at Israel's yearly feasts and sacred assemblies. It is indeed a demanding assignment to lead a nation in corporate worship of a holy God—a privilege not to be taken lightly or entered into casually.

Chapter 21				Chapter 22		Chapter 23	
Disqualification of a Priest Through Defilement		Defect		Duties of a Priest in Ceremonies		Celebrations	
1	15	16	24				
Holy Priests						Holy Feasts	

It is easier to follow the leader than to lead the followers.



Your Daily Walk: If you discovered that your dining room had been “bugged,” would you have some embarrassing conversations to explain?

Unfortunately, in many Christian homes the main course for Sunday dinner is often “roast preacher.” It’s an easy habit to slip into, but one which can produce harm and bitterness.

In Israel’s system of worship, the priests carried much of the responsibility for leading corporate worship. Today the church no longer has a “priestly class,” but it does have those specially gifted, trained, and set apart for the work of the ministry (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1). Like the priests of Old Testament times, these leaders have given freely of their time and energy in order to lead you in worship.

How often do you “remember them which have the rule over you” (Hebrews 13:7)? Take a few minutes to write a thank-you note to your pastor or church leader, expressing gratitude for the consistent spiritual investment that person makes in your life.



Insight: Probing a Priestly Prohibition

Priests with physical handicaps were excluded from offering sacrifices (21:17-21), though they were entitled to the privileges of priesthood such as eating the priestly portion (21:22). God was not relegating them to second-class status, but merely showing that the special service of sacrificing unblemished animals before a holy God required unblemished priests.

Holiness in the Holy Land

Monday

February

10



Overview: The closing chapters of Leviticus contain a variety of instructions for Israel when the people occupy the Promised Land. Oil and bread must be provided for the sanctuary. The death penalty must fall on those who blaspheme the name of God. The land must be given periodic rest during the Sabbatical and Jubilee years. God promises to honor obedience to His commands and reward disobedience with stern judgment. The work of the Lord must be faithfully supported by the tithes of God's people, and vows must not be entered into lightly.

Leviticus 24–27
Heart of the Passage:
Leviticus 25

Chapter 24	Chapter 25	Chapter 26	Chapter 27
Provision for the Sanctuary	Protection for the Land	Obedience and Disobedience	Vows and Tithes
Honoring God's Property		Honoring God's Program	



Your Daily Walk: Ownership is always a sensitive issue.

People are born with an innate desire to possess. Children at play argue loudly, "That's mine!" Though adults usually tend to be more civilized about it, you'll find the same sentiment voiced repeatedly: "I want what's mine!"

God recognized this tendency in His people and instituted the Year of Jubilee to help teach them a crucial spiritual truth. Every fiftieth year, all land that had been sold was to be returned to its original owner. And every acre of land was to remain uncultivated in order to remind the nation that the land belonged not to them, but to God. He would give it to them (25:2), and they would enjoy it—not as owners but as aliens and tenants (25:23).

How do you view your possessions? Do you hold on to them tightly, or have you recognized them as something graciously loaned to you by God? Remember, a steward is someone who owns nothing, but is responsible for everything entrusted to his care. To reinforce that truth, choose one room of your house and list everything in it. Then across the list, write these words: "Mine by stewardship, His by ownership." Get the picture?

If you owned everything your heart desired, chances are your heart would desire something else.



Insight: Captivity Foretold

One of the earliest predictions of the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities occurs in today's reading (26:33-35). Israel knew from the start what would happen if the people disobeyed God's Word. Yet, centuries later it would come true.

NUMBERS

Numbers is the chronicle of Israel's years of wilderness wandering between Sinai and Moab. Named for the two numberings of the nation, the book begins about a year after the Exodus and ends 40 years later as a new generation prepares to cross the Jordan and occupy the Promised Land. Detailing the lives of such men of God as Moses, Caleb, and Joshua, Numbers teaches that while God's discipline may sometimes be severe, He patiently waits to reward those who obey His Word.

Focus	Walking	Wandering	Waiting
Divisions	Counting and Camping Cleansing and Congregating Criticizing and Complaining	Twelve Spies; and Death in the Desert Aaron and Levites in the Wilderness Serpent of Brass and Story of Balaam	Second Census and Laws of Israel Last Days of Moses' Leadership Sections, Sanctuaries, and Settlements
	1 4 5 8 9 12 13	16 17 20 21 25 26	30 31 33 34 36
Topics	Law and Order	Rebellion and Disorder	New Laws for the New Order
Place	Moving Out En Route to Kadesh	Moving On En Route to Nowhere	Moving In En Route to Canaan
Time	Two Months	38 Years	A Few Months

Counting and Camping

Tuesday

February

11



Overview: With the laws given and the ceremonies specified, God now commands Moses to count the people and position them in a square formation around the tabernacle. The number of fighting men (603,550) suggests a total population in excess of three million men, women, and children. The Levites are then positioned and numbered, and each priestly group is assigned a “work detail” in connection with the care and transporting of the tabernacle.

Numbers 1–4
Heart of the Passage:
Numbers 3

Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4
Population of the Nation	Placement of the Nation	Placement of the Levites	Posts of the Levites
People		Priests	



Your Daily Walk: What is it that we all have the same amount of, but no one ever seems to have enough of? (Hint: The answer is not I.Q., money, or charge accounts.)

You probably guessed it. The one commodity shared equally by all members of the human race is time. Whether you are a peasant or a president, God’s gracious gift of time comes to you in bite-size, 24-hour chunks—no more, no less. Perhaps you have been frustrated in your attempt to manage your time and accomplish everything you set out to do each day. If so, consider this: You have all the time you need to accomplish everything God intends for you to accomplish today. That means if you are too busy to do the things you know God wants you to do, then you are busier than God intends for you to be.

Analyze your time priorities right now. Across a sheet of paper, draw seven columns for Sunday through Saturday, and divide each day according to the way you normally spend it. Is there adequate time for sleep? Bible study? prayer? recreation? family activities? If not, what needs to change if God is to be honored by your use of time?



Insight: The World’s Largest Mobile Home Park

If the population estimate of three million is accurate, and a minimum living space is allowed for each Israelite’s family and flocks, the camp of Israel must have been enormous—covering more than 100 square miles (about twice the size of San Francisco). Yet through a detailed, God-given plan for pitching, striking, and moving camp, Moses maintained order in the nation.

There’s no time like the present to procrastinate.

Cleansing and Congregating

12

Wednesday

February

Numbers 5-8

Heart of the Passage:

Numbers 5:11-31; 6:1-21



Overview: With the Israelites numbered and positioned, God further prepares the nation for entering the Promised Land by giving Moses instructions for cleansing and worship. First, Israel must be free of defilement from immorality and suspicions. The people must sense the sanctity of binding commitments such as the Nazirite vow.

They must provide for the material needs of the tabernacle. And they must have a purified group of Levites to minister effectively for them in the corporate worship and celebration of the nation.

Chapter 5	Chapter 6	Chapter 7	Chapter 8
Separation from Defilement	Service for the Dedicated	Presentation of the Leaders	Presentation of the Levites
Cleansing		Worship	

Envy shoots at others and wounds itself.



Your Daily Walk: A jealous husband. A suspicious wife. The combination can eat like acid into the marriage relationship. For this reason, God provided the seemingly strange ritual of Numbers 5:11-31 in order to deal decisively with jealousy and suspicion in the home. The ordeal by “bitter water” was designed to dramatize the bitterness and heartache caused by festering jealousy.

Today, the problem of jealousy remains just as widespread and malignant. But God’s prescribed cure has changed somewhat. According to James 4:7-10, it involves three parts: (1) *submission* to God; (2) *confession* to one another; (3) *restoration* in forgiving love. As with Numbers 5, the process is painful . . . but necessary.

Examine your heart right now. Are you harboring suspicion or jealousy toward a spouse, Christian friend, or family member? The place to begin is by talking to God. Confess your wrong attitude and appropriate His forgiveness. Then confront the other party in love. It won’t be pleasant, but when the alternative is simmering bitterness and broken fellowship, wouldn’t you agree that God’s way is best?



Insight: No Wine, Haircuts, or Corpses Allowed

The requirements of the Nazirite vow might seem strange unless understood in their symbolic sense. Wine symbolized comfort and enjoyment. Death represented defilement. Long hair stood for God-given strength and dignity. By avoiding the former two and maintaining the latter, a Nazirite declared his or her total devotion to God.

Criticizing and Complaining

Thursday

February

13



Overview: Finally, the day has arrived for the nation to “pull up stakes” and set out for Canaan. As silver trumpets herald the trip’s commencement, the huge camp prepares to march. The long-awaited journey has begun. But all too soon, gratitude turns to grouchiness: The people complain about their daily diet of manna and express jealousy over Moses’ leadership. In the midst of miraculous provision, there is persistent complaining, until at last the weary Israelites arrive at Kadesh-barnea, on the very border of Canaan.

Numbers 9–12
Heart of the Passage:
Numbers 9–10

Chapter 9	Chapter 10	Chapter 11	Chapter 12
Pillar of Cloud	Command to March	Complaint over Food	Challenge to Moses
Beginning the Journey		Bemoaning the Journey	



Your Daily Walk: How many things can you think of that were truly “good” about the “good old days”?

When you experience adversity—even though you’re obeying God—you may catch yourself looking back on the “good old days” with a twinge of nostalgia. Memory is selective. Current difficulty often seems to bring to mind only the best of yesterday.

The Israelites had hardly broken camp when they began to complain about God’s daily provision of manna. To hear them tell it, you’d think they had left paradise in Egypt (11:5). But their *foresight* was even worse than their *hindsight*, for they forgot God’s promise of future blessing. God never intended for His children to spend the rest of their lives in the desert eating manna.

Have difficult times caused you to look longingly on the way life used to be? To help you keep your eyes focused on God’s purpose for you, write these verses on a 3x5 card and carry it throughout the day:

“But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13-14). Keep looking up, and you’ll never want to look back.



Insight: Ark in the Middle, Ark in the Front
 Compare Numbers chapters 2 and 10, and note that the ark enjoyed a position of prominence both in the camp and on the march. Can you suggest a reason for each position?

Those with their eyes fixed on the past risk a severe collision with the future.

Numbers 13–16
Heart of the Passage:
Numbers 13



Overview: At the Lord's command, Moses selects one man from each tribe to form a spying party to survey the land of Canaan. They return four days later, all having seen the same thing but with a divided opinion as to what it meant. The majority opinion: "The people are too strong for us." The minority opinion: "We shall surely overcome." Disheartened and faithless, the people threaten to stone Moses and return to Egypt rather than face what seems to them certain massacre. God's punishment for their unbelief is severe: one year of wilderness wandering for each day the spies were in the land—and death in the wilderness for that entire generation. And yet, God's plans will not be ultimately thwarted, as seen in the laws which He gives them to practice *in the land!*

Chapter 13	Chapter 14	Chapter 15	Chapter 16
A Divided Opinion	A Disbelieving People	A Divine Code of Law	A Disobedient Korah
Spying Out the Land		Spelling Out the Law	

No one deserves the title "giant" when measured against an omnipotent God.



Your Daily Walk: Two bricklayers were asked what they were doing. The first replied, "I'm laying brick"; the second, "I'm building a great cathedral." Same task, same bricks, two thoroughly different perspectives.

On the verge of entering the promised land, the Israelites evaluated the spies' report. The land is good; it flows with milk and honey; but it also overflows with fortified cities and giants. Obviously, there could be only one response—"Let's go!" The question was, *in which direction?* Joshua and Caleb responded with faith: "Let's go *forward!*" The other 10 spies responded by feelings: "Let's go *back* to Egypt!" Majority opinion prevailed . . . and Israel traced circles in the desert for 40 years.

Where is God stretching your faith today? Spy out your situation and make a list of what you see. Then ask yourself two questions: "How could I respond to this without faith? How should I respond to this in faith?" Then do the thing that will please God.



Insight: "Hey Moses, You Remind Me of Someone . . ." He was a humble man. His own people wanted to stone him, but in turn he asked God to spare their lives. He was innocent, but he had to share the same punishment as his followers. He eventually delivered them into a new life in the Promised Land. Does Moses remind you of Someone else you know?

Aaron and Levites in the Wilderness

Sat.–Sun.

February

15/16



Overview: As the “grumbling generation” marches through the wilderness outside the Promised Land, their discontent focuses on Moses and Aaron. Only a miraculous budding of Aaron’s rod can convince the people that Aaron represents God’s authority. In this context of rebellion, God again emphasizes the Levites’ role in the service of the tabernacle, and provides the red heifer as a means of cleansing the people from the ever-present defilement of death. Eventually, Moses is affected by the nation’s complaining attitude as well. In a moment of anger he *strikes* the rock instead of *speaking* to it as God commanded, and so forfeits his privilege to set foot in the Promised Land.

Numbers 17–20

Heart of the Passage:

Numbers 18, 20

Chapter 17	Chapter 18	Chapter 19	Chapter 20
Special Rod of Aaron	Special Duties of the Levites	Sacrifice of the Red Heifer	Angry Sin of Moses
Reminders of the Future		Reminders of the Present	



Your Daily Walk: In the margin write three things that you feel are essential for your future security. Now go back over your list and cross off any item that could easily be destroyed by a natural disaster or a financial reversal. Is there anything left?

God made it clear to Aaron and his family that their security was to be in Him alone, even as they enjoyed their new homeland. God had faithfully supplied Aaron’s daily needs in the past (18:18–19), and He would do the same in the future. This was true also for the nation as a whole. God had been their great Sustainer, and would continue to provide even when they possessed wealth of their own.

Though owning property or having a bank account is not wrong, the danger is in allowing such things to crowd out your daily dependence on God. You may be in “good hands” financially, but you’re in better hands with God. Write your Social Security number next to Numbers 18:20 to remind you that true security comes from God.



Insight: Don’t Touch That Grave!

Because a Jew was defiled by touching a human grave (19:16), tombs in Israel were often whitewashed so that unwary passers-by could avoid contact with them. This helps explain why the Pharisees were offended when Jesus denounced them in Matthew 23:27 as “whited sepulchers.”

If money can't buy it, it's probably worth having.

Serpent of Brass and Story of Balaam

17

Monday

February

Numbers 21–25
Heart of the Passage:
Numbers 21



Overview: The wanderings are drawing to a close and the movement of the people becomes more purposeful. They are heading for the plains of Moab, east of the Jordan River and poised just opposite the Promised Land. Along the way they face both physical and spiritual conflict.

Militarily, they enjoy victory over the Canaanites, Amorites, and Bashanites. But constant grumbling about the food and water results in God sending fiery serpents in judgment. The advance of the Israelites causes the king of Moab to hire a diviner, Balaam, to foretell the future and to curse the nation of Israel. Instead Balaam blesses Israel and predicts how she will prosper.

Chapter 21	Chapter 22	Chapters 23–24	Chapter 25
Three Victories, One Defeat	Balaam's Call	Balaam's Prophecies	Balaam's Influence
Serpent of Brass	Story of Balaam		

The world is not nearly so shocked at hearing Christianity preached as it is at seeing Christianity practiced.



Your Daily Walk: Are you a roller-coaster Christian—up one day and down the next? It's a frustrating feeling, and one most Christians would rather do without. But what is the secret to consistency in the Christian life?

In the space of a single chapter (21), the nation of Israel conquered three national powers. Smashing victories! Stunning triumphs! But for some of the people it wasn't enough. To their way of thinking God wasn't working fast enough. After all, they were still on the wrong side of the Jordan and didn't possess a single spadeful of the land they had been promised. Their impatience led to criticism about the living conditions, the length of the journey, and God's timetable.

One key to consistency in the Christian life is simply giving God time to work. Rough edges take time to smooth. Growth to maturity never occurs overnight. But each day can represent a significant step in the right direction. Tuck a note in one of your shoes before you retire tonight to remind you when you awaken tomorrow of the step toward maturity the next 24 hours can bring with God's help. (You might want to read Colossians 2:6-7 as you start the day.)



Insight: The Far-Reaching Influence of Balaam
Balaam's idea was simple: "If you can't curse a people, corrupt them so that God will have to chasten them!" Notice in Revelation 2:14 how his teaching was still being felt 1,500 years later.

Second Census and Laws of Israel

Tuesday
February 18



Overview: A final census of the people, ordered by Moses prior to entering the Promised Land, reveals that the old generation has died off—a fact which signals an end to the 40 years of wandering. Following the census, God designates a new leader to replace Moses. For, although he survived the judgment of his generation, he would not lead the people into Canaan. Next, Moses reviews for the new generation the various sacrifices of worship—as well as the daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly celebrations—to ensure that the nation does not overlook any of its holy obligations or divinely assigned remembrances.

Numbers 26–30
Heart of the Passage:
Numbers 27

Chapter 26	Chapter 27	Chapters 28–30
Counting the Nation	Calling a New Leader	Clarifying the Code of Worship
Another Census	Another Captain	Another Challenge



Your Daily Walk: Would you rather be known for your *good reputation* or your *outstanding character*? Circle your choice.

Though reputation and character are often used as interchangeable terms, their meanings are vastly different. Your reputation is what others think you are; your character is what God knows you are.

For all his humanness, Israel's great leader revealed a striking depth of character when God told him that he would soon die. Instead of complaining, Moses expressed concern over the welfare of the people. Forty years of wilderness travel, during which time his ability and reputation as a leader were frequently under fire, served not to shatter his character, but rather to shape it.

What circumstance has God brought into your life to build your character: A difficult relationship? A conflict at work? A physical or financial problem? Complete this sentence by writing in the character-shaping experience you face today: "God, build my character today as I face the challenge of _____."

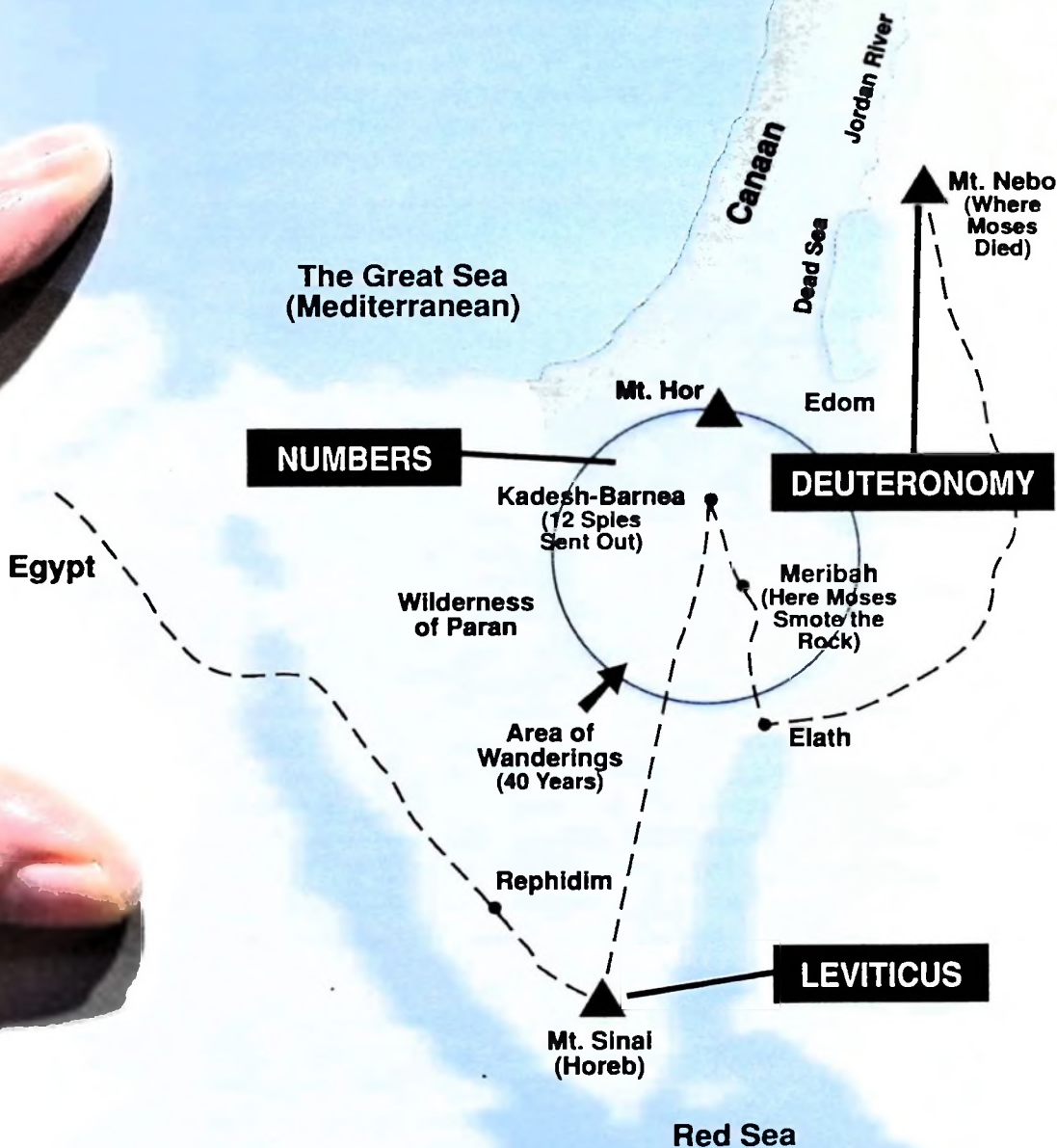


Insight: "All Right, Everybody, Count Off!"

The census taken in chapter 26 served at least three purposes besides merely "counting heads": (1) It measured Israel's military strength; (2) provided the records necessary to divide the land properly; and (3) supplied accurate genealogical records which would be needed by future generations.

Reputation is precious, but character is priceless.

The Journey to Moab and the Land of Promise



Last Days of Moses' Leadership

Wednesday

February

19



Overview: Moses' final acts of leadership before his death involve conquest and consolidation. Midian, which had led Israel into idolatry, is judged as 12,000 Israelite troops annihilate this powerful people and collect a wealth of spoils. Next, the tribes of Reuben and Gad ask to settle on the east side of the Jordan. Moses grants their request on the condition that they help the remaining 10 tribes complete the conquest of the Promised Land first. The section closes with a review of the geographic movement during the 40 years of wandering.

Numbers 31–33
Heart of the Passage:
Numbers 32

Chapter 31	Chapter 32	Chapter 33
Defeat of the Midianites	Decision of Reuben and Gad	Details of the Wandering
Moses the Commander	Moses the Administrator	Moses the Traveler



Your Daily Walk: If you have ever watched a quiz show where contestants are faced with the difficult choice of (1) keeping what they have already won, or (2) risking it all on winning an even bigger prize, then you'll understand the situation in today's section.

With the lands of Jazer and Gilead conquered, Reuben and Gad came to Moses wanting to settle there. They were willing to help conquer the rest of the land, but they liked what they saw east of the Jordan River and weren't willing to take a chance on what they hadn't seen. Though this might at first seem prudent on their part, it was contrary to God's intention for His people. He had already promised the entire nation victory over the Canaanites if they would just trust Him. By settling for God's second best, Reuben and Gad set the stage for future strife.

How is God asking you to step out in faith into unknown territory? The temptation will be there to settle for the security of the status quo—and miss the blessing God has for you. Instead of being controlled by a fear of the unknown, let your actions be guided by a confidence of the Known—the God of Israel who never slumbers or sleeps (Psalm 121:4).



Insight: The End of Balaam
Israel's conquest of Midian included the execution of Balaam (31:8). This judgment may seem unduly harsh for the one who had blessed the nation, until it is learned that Balaam masterminded the scheme to defile the Israelites with Midianite women (31:16).

Fear is of the flesh, and panic is of the devil.

Sections, Sanctuaries, and Settlements

20

Thursday

February

Numbers 34–36

Heart of the Passage:

Numbers 35:1-15; 35:9-34



Overview: Now God specifies the boundaries of the land and appoints the men who will oversee the work of dividing it among the remaining tribes. The cities in which the Levites will live are designated, as well as the cities of refuge for those guilty of unintentional murder.

Since the land is apportioned through the male side of the family, the case of a family in which there is no male heir is clarified by Moses, who specifies that all land must stay within the tribe to which it was originally given.

Chapter 34	Chapter 35	Chapter 36
Dividing the Land	Designating Cities of Refuge	Detailing the Law of Inheritance
Partition	Protection	Provision

*The way of
uprightness
is the way to
heavenly
wealth.*



Your Daily Walk: A good subtitle for today's reading might be "How to Be Blessed with God's Best." As you read, think about this question: Why do some people seem to enjoy the blessing of God more than others?

God's best for Israel was complete possession and enjoyment of the land of Canaan. The equitable division of the land among the tribes and families showed that God's blessing was designed to touch every person in the nation. The only prerequisite for enjoyment of that blessing was a believing faith, demonstrated by obedience to God.

As you look at the people whose lives seem to overflow with God's blessing, you may be tempted to think they have a special key to His storehouses which you don't possess. Turn to the New Testament and read the first 14 verses of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. There you'll find a reminder of just how rich you are as a Christian. Then on a deposit slip from your checkbook, itemize the parts of your spiritual inheritance that you own but are not presently enjoying: forgiveness (unshackled from your past), acceptance (seeing yourself as God sees you), redemption (set free from sin's bondage to serve God), etc. Now what do you need to do in order for you to enjoy what you already possess?



Insight: The Old Testament Right to a Fair Trial
Because the nearest relative of a victim of murder had the right to avenge the death, cities of refuge were necessary to provide protective custody for an accused manslayer until the legal process could be carried out (35:10-15, 22-28).

DEUTERONOMY

The last of the five books of Moses, Deuteronomy reviews the 40-year period of the nation's walk with God and previews the new relationship soon to begin in Canaan. Taking the form of a series of sermons, the book addresses the new generation emerging from the wilderness march. Moses reminds the Israelites of the central importance of obedience and stresses holiness as a way of life. Everything—possession of the land, victory over enemies, prosperity, and enjoyment of life—depends on these valuable lessons.

Focus	Backward	Inward	Upward
Divisions	Reviewing the Wanderings Renewing God's Demands for Obedience Remembering Lessons In Obedience	Religious Laws for Canaan Civil Laws for Canaan Societal Laws for Canaan	Commitment to the Covenant Farewell and Death of Moses
	1 4 5 7 8 11 12	15 17 20 21 26 27	30 31 34
Topics	Lessons from the Past	Lessons for the Future	Lessons of a Leader
	The Obedient Life	The Orderly Life	One Man's Life
Place	Moab (North of the Dead Sea)		
Time	About 2 Months		

Reviewing the Wanderings

21

Friday

February

Deuteronomy 1-4
Heart of the Passage:
Deuteronomy 1, 4



Overview: The first of Moses' three sermons in the Book of Deuteronomy reviews the history of the nation and traces God's dealings with His people. Because of unbelief the Israelites failed to possess the land God had promised them. But even their disobedience could not annul the promise of God. Israel would one day dwell in the

land, though an entire generation had died in the wilderness for failing to believe God. True to His word, God overthrew nation after nation during Israel's relentless march to the Jordan River. The lesson from the past is painfully transparent: Blessing and victory follow obedience, but disobedience brings only defeat and heartache.

Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4
Postponement of the Land	Promise of the Land	Possession of the Land	Principle from the Land: Obey
Looking to the Past			Learning from the Past

To overlook one's own faults is to miss a valuable free education.



Your Daily Walk: What have you learned during the months or years you've been walking with the Lord?

The story is told of a high school teacher who spoke with excessive pride of her 38 years of (mediocre) teaching experience. Her principal responded with a chuckle, "Well, that's not quite correct. Actually she's a first-year teacher—38 times over." Do you see the difference? Each year that teacher was making the same mistakes she made during her first year—mistakes which should have been corrected long ago. She never profited from her past errors and so was destined to repeat them again and again.

Moses tried to shake the nation of Israel from its complacency by pointing out the deadly consequences of past disobedience. As you read today's section, you could almost hear him plead with the people to open their eyes and learn from their sordid history.

How about you? Are you wiser in the ways of God today for having seen Him work in the past? Drop us a postcard with a "history lesson" from your life that is making a difference in your walk with God today.



Insight: Words Worth Repeating

How much practical application do Moses' sermons to his people in the Book of Deuteronomy carry? Just ask Jesus, who quoted this book *three times* to fend off Satan in the wilderness, one for each offer Satan made (Matthew 4:1-11).

Reviewing God's Demands

Sat.-Sun.

February

22/23



Overview: The second (and longest) of Moses' three sermons begins in chapter 5 and ends in chapter 26. Moses begins by reviewing the Ten Commandments, the foundational expression of God's moral requirements for humanity. He then stresses the importance of loving God and passing on His law to succeeding generations. Moses realizes the need for Israel to keep the Law and teach future generations God's commands if they are to be what God desires of His children: an obedient people that conquer its foes in the strength God provides.

Deuteronomy 5-7
Heart of the Passage:
Deuteronomy 6

Chapter 5	Chapter 6	Chapter 7
Restarting the Ten Commandments	Revealing a New Command	Repeating a Future Hope
Laws from Sinai	Law of Love	Certainty of Victory



Your Daily Walk: If a "god" is defined as "anything that has the potential to replace God as the focus of your life," what will be the most dangerous god you encounter today . . . at work? . . . at home? . . . on your campus? . . . in your leisure-time activities? (Write your response in the margin.)

As Moses repeated God's law to the people, he emphasized one command: "Thou shalt have none other gods before me" (5:7). Why that command? Because he had indelible memories of the golden calf incident at Mount Sinai. He knew the ever-present danger of substituting *something* for the all-important *Someone*. In addition, Moses had keen foresight. He knew the religious "climate" into which the people were about to move: a land filled with idolatry and unabashed immorality which, if permitted, would turn the Israelites away from God.

Go back over your list of potential gods. Have you allowed one or more to take a "controlling interest" in your life? If so, circle the ones that need to be rooted out. Then invite the one true God to return to His desired (and proper) place in your life.



Insight: Hear Ye, Hear Ye!
Deuteronomy 6:4 begins the celebrated Hebrew *Shema* ("Hear"), which consists of vv. 6:4-9, 11:13-21 and Numbers 15:37-41, and is recited twice daily by devout Jews. The command, "Hear, O Israel" is repeated seven times in the book (4:1; 5:1; 6:3-4; 9:1; 20:3; 27:9) to emphasize Moses' appeal for obedience on the part of the nation.

Idolatry is anything that cools your desire for Christ.

Remembering Lessons in Obedience

24

Monday

February

Deuteronomy 8–11
Heart of the Passage:
Deuteronomy 9



Overview: Moses continues his second sermon by calling upon Israel to remember God's miraculous care throughout the wilderness experience. As He provided abundantly in the past, so He will provide in the future. But Israel must not forget her sinful past—especially the golden calf incident and its tragic consequences. The choice is

Israel's to make. If she will love and obey, God will shower her with blessings; if she rebels, God's judgment must surely follow.

Chapter 8	Chapter 9	Chapters 10–11
Remember the Lord's Provision	Remember Israel's Provocation	Respond with Obedience
God's Part	Moses' Part	The Nation's Part

When your heart is filled with faith, there is no room left for fear.



Your Daily Walk: Who or what are the “Anakim” in your life? If you're not sure, spend a few extra minutes in chapter 9 of today's reading.

The sons of Anak were a race of giants greatly feared by the Israelites. When the spies made their report about the Promised Land (Numbers 13:26-33), it included two specific references to the Anakim: first, an observation which was true (“We saw the children of Anak there”; 13:28); second, an interpretation which was false (“We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we”; 13:31). For four years these towering giants stood as a taunting symbol of the nation's unbelief. So tall and formidable were they that the nation had coined a saying, “Who can stand before the children of Anak?” (Deuteronomy 9:2). But Moses assured the Israelites that God specializes in dealing with Anakim. God would go before His people to destroy the giants and give them the land as He had promised.

Where are you facing “Anakim” in your life? What impossible situation seems to stand squarely in the way of your spiritual progress? God's word to Israel is also aimed at you: “The LORD thy God is he which goeth over before thee” (9:3). Stop by a grocery store today and buy a giant-size box of something you need, as a token of your faith in God to handle your “giant-size” situation.



Insight: Phylacteries—A “Binding” Practice
The Pharisees of Jesus' day (and orthodox Jews of today) practiced Deuteronomy 11:18 by tying small boxes containing verses of Scripture to their foreheads and left arms when they pray.

Religious Laws for Canaan

Tuesday

February

25



Overview: From the general principles of the Law and exhortations to obedience,

Moses now moves to more specific regulations governing life in the Promised Land. God Himself would specify the place and manner of worship, and Israel must reject all idolatrous practices. Purity, tithing, release from debt, and servanthood are all ways in which Israel can demonstrate her unique relationship with God. And the nation must be careful to observe all the feast days that mark important events in her miraculous history.

Deuteronomy 12–16
Heart of the Passage:
Deuteronomy 12:1–16;
14:22–15:11

Chapter 12	Chapter 13	Chapter 14	Chapter 15	Chapter 16
Regulations for a Holy Land Involving . . .				
Offerings	False Gods	Food	Finances	Feasts
"Observe . . . all these words . . . that it may go well with thee" (12:28).				



Your Daily Walk: Today pierced ears are considered by some to be highly fashionable. But in Israel, ears were pierced for a vastly different reason.

In today's reading Moses gives instructions concerning the release of servants after a six-year period. Once in a while there arose a situation in which a servant so loved his master that he did not wish to be set free. He would prefer to remain under his master's protection, devoted to his work, rather than to set out on his own. As a perpetual sign of this new relationship, the master would pierce the servant's ear, thereby proclaiming to the world, "This is my beloved servant; I am perpetually his beloved master."

In Psalm 40, David picks up this image: "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened [pierced]. . . I delight to do thy will, O my God" (40:6, 8).

What about your ears? Have they been pierced for the Lord? Are you the property of the Father, ready to do His will as a loving servant? If not, give God your ears—and life—right now.



Insight: "What We Do This Day . . . Don't!" (12:8)

The disruption of life caused by the conquest of the land east of the Jordan may have made orderly worship impossible. This verse may have been intended to prohibit the use of private altars for worship or sacrifice. Once in the land, only one place of worship would be sanctioned: the tabernacle in Jerusalem.

Service is the overflow of super-abundant devotion.

Civil Laws for Canaan

26

Wednesday

February

Deuteronomy 17-20
Heart of the Passage:
Deuteronomy 17-18



Overview: Because Israel was a civil society as well as a religious community, laws governing national affairs were as vital as religious statutes. In today's reading Moses delivers a set of regulations which provides for justice and impartiality in the settling of a wide variety of situations which might arise in the life of the nation. Included are laws governing kings, priests, and prophets; peacetime and war; national and international affairs; the guilty and the innocent.

Chapter 17	Chapter 18	Chapter 19	Chapter 20
Choosing a King	Testing a Prophet	Providing a Refuge	Waging a War
National Affairs			International Affairs

Envy is usually the mother of gossip.



Your Daily Walk: "Now, I don't know if this is true or not, but did you hear about . . . ?"

If you've ever been the subject of such talk, you know the pain and destructiveness of hearsay. God hates rumor, hearsay, and gossip. That's why He designated a system of justice in Israel whereby no action could be taken against an accused person until two or three witnesses had testified to the truthfulness of the accusation (17:6-7). This law required a thorough investigation and gave the accused the right to be confronted by his accusers. The system was so effective that it became standard practice in the New Testament for handling church discipline (2 Corinthians 13:1). Jesus reaffirmed the Old Testament law when He said, "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. . . . But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established" (Matthew 18:15-16).

God's principle is clear: You are responsible to investigate a charge of wrongdoing against a fellow Christian before acting on it or telling someone else about it. Find an electrical fuse and carry it with you today as a reminder to "short-circuit" rumors and hearsay before they cause a power failure in your spiritual life.



Insight: The Motive Behind the Monarch (17:14)

Although Israel's request for a king would seem harmless enough, 1 Samuel 8:4-9 reveals that this desire for a human monarch was indicative of Israel's refusal to retain God as her true King.

Societal Laws for Canaan

Thursday

February

27



Overview: The concluding portion of Moses' second sermon contains a variety of wise guidelines for life in the Promised Land. Moses anticipates (and resolves) situations that could arise to disrupt the smooth functioning of Israel's society. In areas as diverse as marriage, capital punishment, purity, and tithing, Moses provides God's view of what should and should not be done.

Deuteronomy 21-26
Heart of the Passage:
Deuteronomy 23:1-8;
26:16-19

Chapters 21-22	Chapters 23-25	Chapter 26
Domestic Relationships	Defending the Weak	Donation to God
Family Matters	National Matters	Tabernacle Matters



Your Daily Walk

Plan Ahead

Can you identify with that humorous little sign? Then you might get a chuckle out of this tidbit: A man whose life was notoriously cluttered and confused asked that this epitaph be etched on his tombstone: "Organized at last!"

If you are one of those impeccably organized people who plans everything well ahead of time, then you may skip today's devotional reading. But if you're like the majority of the human race, you may find Moses' example in today's reading very helpful. He greatly served Israel by giving the people clear directions in anticipation of a number of difficult situations. What can you learn from him?

Take the matter of potentially sinful situations. You have a child causing you disciplinary problems. You have a boss or fellow employee who irritates you. Why not plan right now the Biblical, God-honoring response you will make the next time that situation arises? Make three columns on a sheet of paper and write down (1) the anticipated situation; (2) your natural response; and (3) your prayerful, planned response. Keep that sheet handy and with God's help, plan ahead to glorify Him in the midst of a difficult situation.



Insight: High-Rise Living, Old Testament Style

God directed that all homes be built with restraining walls or fences around the roof (22:8). In a society where roofs were used as patios or extra bedrooms, this may have avoided accidental deaths.

Many errors in life result from an inability to sit still long enough to read what God has written.