

Study No.5

From Mt. Sinai to Canaan



Timeframe of events:

Forty-year period, c.1400 B.C.
(some time between c.1500-1300 B.C.)

Summary: This study's readings are mainly comprised of events taking place over a forty-year period in the wilderness, commencing with the Israelites arriving at Mt. Sinai, three months after leaving Egypt. Whilst there, God makes His covenant with the people, and Moses receives the bulk of what would become known as "The Law". The tabernacle is constructed, the Levitical priesthood is established, worship procedures are more formalised, and a code for social justice is presented. After eleven months, the people head towards Canaan, refuse to enter when given the opportunity, and suffer the consequences by being led around the wilderness for 38 years until the first generation of people dies out. In the fortieth year, the second generation make their way to the borders of Canaan.

Main Reading / Listening



Read and/or listen to the following passages at least once. Twice is better for taking it all in!

As a minimum, please read or listen to:

Exodus 20:1-17

To read or listen to the entire Bible systematically, this week's passages are:

See list on page 2, which consists of selected passages - mostly of a narrative nature - found within Exodus 19 to 40, Leviticus and Numbers.)

The Law sections of Ex 19-40, Lev. & Num. will be covered in Study No.6.

Narrative Readings: Exodus 19-40, Leviticus, Numbers

Below is a list of largely narrative passages (approx. 41 chapters) from these three books. Some laws will be found amongst these readings, but the ... symbol shows where the longer law passages have been omitted. Some shorter narrative sections have been excluded from this list and can be found amongst the Law readings. A few passages appear in both lists.

Exodus 19 to 40

- ch.19** Arrival at Sinai. Covenant agreed to in principle.
- 20:1-21** The Ten Words (Commandments), and fear of God
- ...
- ch.24** The covenant (with its terms) ratified.
- ...
- 32:1-34:9** Israel's sin, Moses' pleading
- ...
- 35:20 - ch.40** Construction of the sanctuary carried out

Leviticus

- ...
- ch.8-10** Levitical priesthood instigated
- ...

Numbers

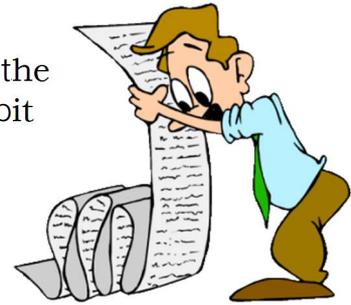
- * For suggestions on reading chs. 1-4, 7, 26 see page 3.*
- ch.1-4*** First census and classification of Israelites
 - ...
 - ch.7*** Offerings from tribal leaders
 - ...
 - ch.9** The second Passover, and the cloud & the fire
 - ...
 - 10:11-36** Israel departs from Sinai in the manner prescribed
 - ch.11-14** Dissension, First Canaan invasion aborted
 - ...
 - ch.16,17** Moses' and Aaron's authority challenged
 - ...
 - ch.20-25** Journey from the wilderness to the Canaanite border
 - ch.26*, 27 ... 31-36** Camped near the Canaanite border



Year 1 at Mt. Sinai
Year 2 Commencing at Mt. Sinai
Departing from Mt. Sinai
38 years wandering
Year 40 Moving towards Canaan

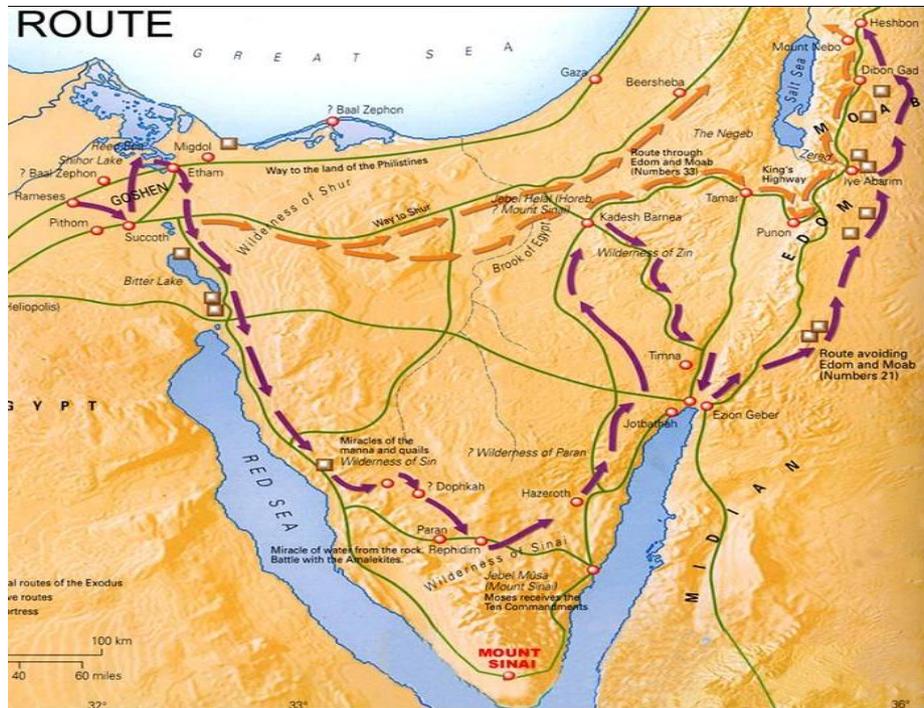
Suggestions on reading passages like Numbers chs. 1-4,7,26

There are several lists in these passages, focussing on the **twelve tribes and the Levites**. All of this can seem a bit irrelevant and unnecessary at first glance, so here's a few tips to help you read chapters and lists like these in the Bible.



- Become familiar with the names of the tribes of Israel. There are 13 in all. They occur frequently in Scripture, and should be distinguished from non-Israelite tribes and nations throughout the Bible.
- The 13 tribes are commonly spoken of as being 12 tribes, plus the tribe of the Levites.
- Try to become familiar with the names of some of Israel's neighbours, such as the Moabites, Edomites, Amorites, Hittites, Hivites, Perrizites, Jebusites, Amalekites, etc. This will help to stop confusing the names of foreign nations with Israelite tribes, many of which are "-ites"!
- Israel's 12 tribes are often grouped together in one of two ways:
 - (a) Commencing with Reuben, in order of the tribes' namesakes' birth (excluding Levi) by their four different mothers. e.g. Num. chapter 1.
 - (b) Commencing with Judah, in order of their layout surrounding the tabernacle, and the order in which they travelled as a nation. E.g. Num. chapters 2 & 10. See the charts on page 6.
- From Exodus onwards, the Levites are usually listed separately in the Bible, and not considered to be one of the "12" tribes. They are often grouped according to the families of Levi's three sons: Gershon, Kohath and Merari.
- The people listed in Numbers 7:10-83 are the same as those listed in chapter 1, but in the same order as set out in chapter 2. Look for familiar names within the lists. Some of the same names keep turning up in the text.

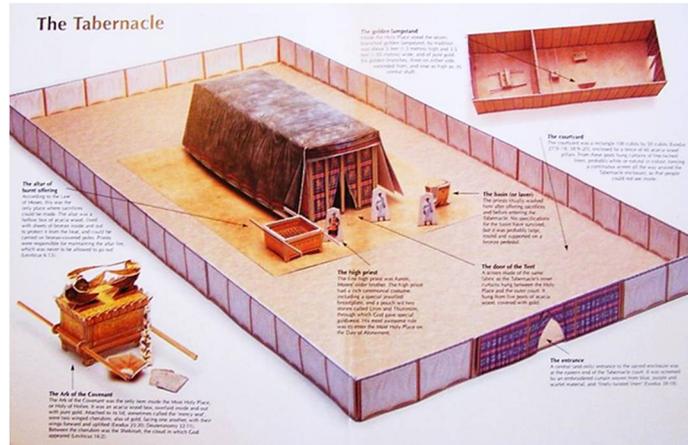
Relevant Charts:



Traditional route of the Exodus



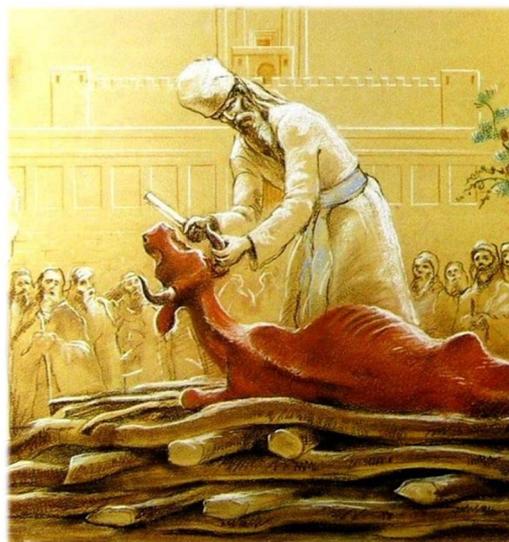
Possible route of the journey from Mt. Sinai in Saudi Arabia to Canaan.



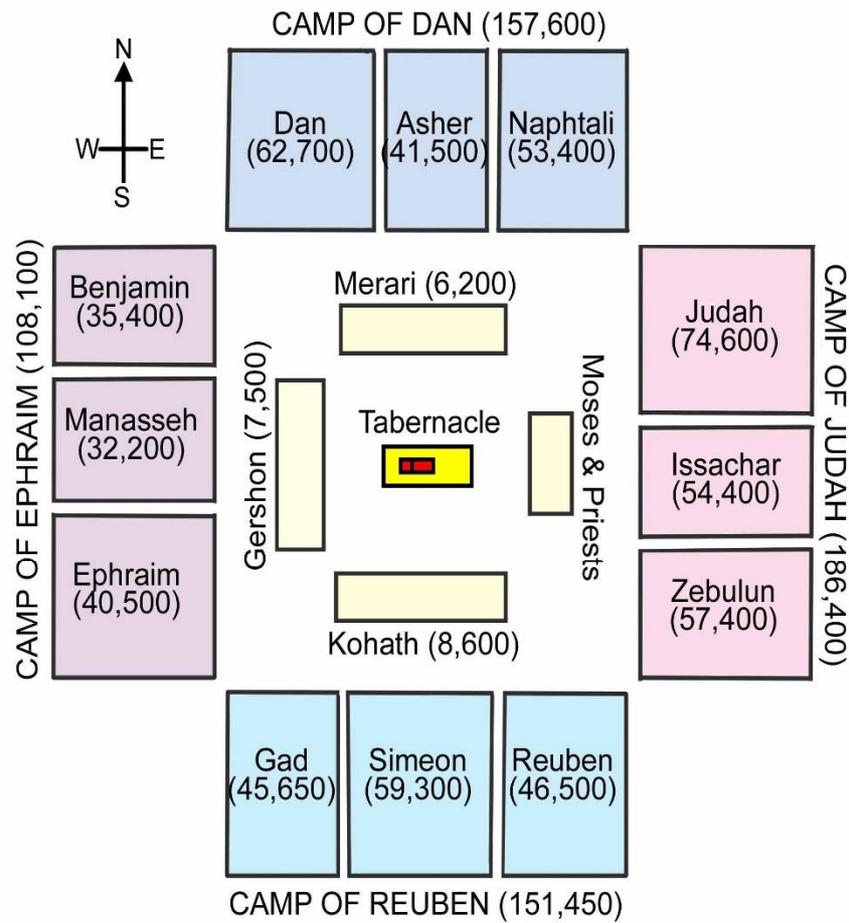
Model of the tabernacle (Exodus ch.25-31, 35-40)



Above: *Left:* High Priest (Exodus ch.28 & 29, Leviticus 8-10).
Right: Ordinary Priest (Exodus 28:39-43, 39:27-29).



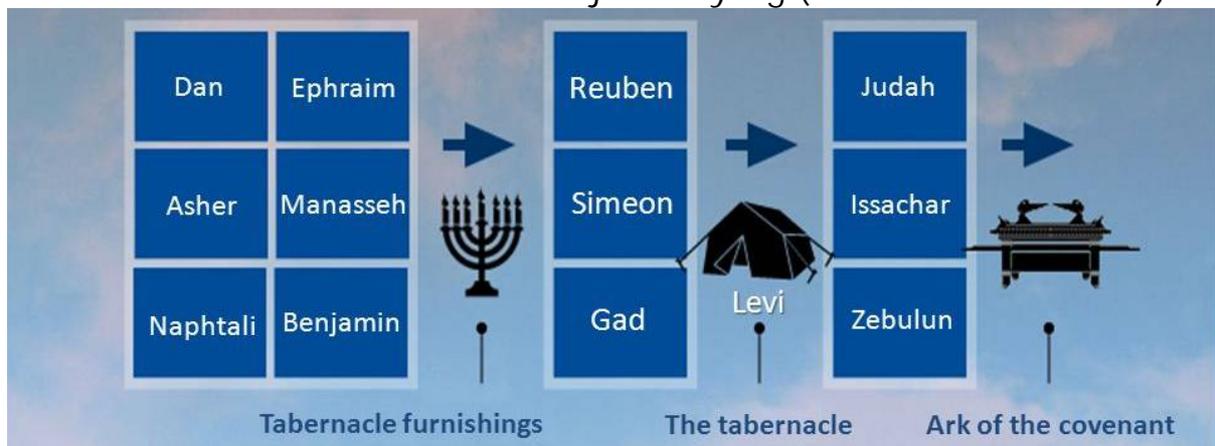
Priest carrying out a sacrificial offering (Leviticus ch.1 to 7).



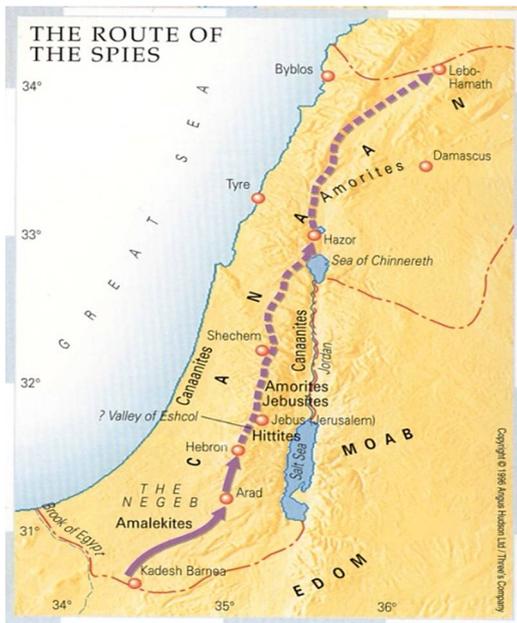
Arrangement of the Camp of Israel Numbers 2:1-3:39

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Order of the Israelites whilst journeying (Numbers 10:14-34)



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Enhancing your reading:

Attempt one or more of the following tasks for a better appreciation of the subjects covered by the main readings for this study.



- Jot down any questions arising from this study's readings. Ask someone else for help, or conduct your own research to try and answer these questions.

- Note any passages, verses, themes or lessons that have stood out to you from this study's readings. Write down or verbalise your reasons.

- Read or listen to these other Bible passages that relate to the content of this week's readings:

Psalm 77:20

Psalm 78:1-77

Psalm 106:6-39

Nehemiah 9:9-23

John 1:15-17

John 3:14,15

Acts 7:35-44

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

2 Corinthians 3:7-18

Hebrews 12:18-24



For much deeper study:

- Read or refer to the following books, articles, etc. Most are available in hard copy or electronic formats, online and offline:

Companion Bible Appendices:

- 39. The Decalogue
- 40. Names of the Tabernacle
- 41. The Cherubim
- 43. "Offer" and "Offerings"
- 45. The Order and Grouping of the Twelve Tribes
- 47. The Book of the Law

**Consider and discuss
the following questions:**



Exodus 19 to 40:

- (1) How does Exodus 19 mark a major turning point in Scripture?
- (2) Mountains, such as that mentioned in 19:2, feature in several Bible events. (a) Use a concordance to find some others. (b) Is there a common theme amongst each event?
- (3) Why are two different titles of God used in the one verse in 19:3?
- (4) Compare 19:4 with Isaiah 40:31. Explain the reference to eagles' wings.
- (5) What is meant by the phrase "and brought you to Myself" in 19:4 ?

(6) Is 19:5,6 a conditional or unconditional promise? In what way is this promise a key to understanding much of the Bible?

(7) Compare Ex 19:5,6 with 1 Peter 2:9,10. Who was Peter addressing? What implications does this have for Christians reading Peter's statement today?

(8) Compare Ex 19:8 with 24:3 and 24:7. Each verse records the people saying that they will obey the words of Jehovah. What were the people agreeing to on each occasion?

(9) Clouds also feature several times in the Bible (e.g. 19:9). (a) Use a concordance to find some others. (b) Is there a common theme amongst each event?

(10) How did the Lord make His presence visible to the Israelites 19:11? Cp v.21

(11) In what ways may Mt. Sinai be likened to the tabernacle and temples yet to be constructed at that point? (see 19:12)

(12) Why were any executions (19:13) to be carried out in these specified manners?

(13) What similarities do the events of 19:16-20 share with events of Christ's second coming? Cp. Matt 24:29-31; Zechariah 14:4; Daniel 7:13,14.

(14) The Levitical priesthood was not established until chapters 28 & 29, so who are the "priests" of 19:22?

(15) Where does the term "Ten Commandments" (better translated as "The Ten Words") occur in the Bible text?

(16) What role did the Ten Words/Commandments in 20:1-17 play amongst the ancient Israelites?

(17) What place do they have in modern Christianity?

(18) How were the Ten Words/Commandments related to the rest of the Law, which was soon to be given to the Israelites?

(19) Compare Ex 20:1-17 with Mark 12:28-31. Which of God's commandments to Israel was the most important?

- (20) Read Ex 24:5. (a) What is the difference between burnt offerings and peace offerings? (b) Why were each presented at this occasion?
- (21) What was the Book of the Covenant mentioned in 24:7?
- (22) Why did Moses sprinkle blood on the people? (Ex 24:8)
- (23) What manifestation of God did the Israelite leaders see in 24:9-11?
- (24) Ex 24.13 and 32.17 refer to Joshua. What role did he play in the Exodus story? (cp. Numbers 27:12-23)
- (25) What manifestation of God did the Israelite community see in 24:17?
- (26) The number 40 occurs several times in the Bible (e.g. 24:18). (a) Where else in the Bible may this be found? (b) What is the significance of 40?
- (27) Moses journeyed up Mt Sinai several times (e.g. 19:3,20; 24:12,13, etc.). (a) Why did God require this of Moses? (b) Why didn't He speak with Moses at some other location? (c) In light of this, explain Exodus 33:7-11.
- (28) Read 32:4 Why did the people specifically worship a calf?
- (29) Why did the people present burnt offerings and peace offerings (32:6)? What was the intention behind these offerings?
- (30) Compare Ex 32:11 ("I will make of you a great nation") with a similar promise in Genesis 12:2. What was God saying to Moses here?
- (31) One phrase in 32:8 is variously translated as "This is your god" or "These are your gods". (a) Why the difference? (b) Which do you think is the better translation?
- (32) Did God really intend to destroy the nation there and then in 32:14?
- (33) Was the killing described in 32:25-28 justified?
- (34) What blessing was bestowed upon the Levites as a result of their actions? (32:29)
- (35) Read 32:30-32. What is atonement?
- (36) What was the significance of people removing their ornaments (33:4-6)?
- (37) Is there a contradiction between 33:11 and 33:20?

(38) What did Moses mean by "show me Your glory"? (33:18)

(39) Read 33:21-23; 34:5-9 How do you imagine this scene taking place?

(40) Below is a model of the tablets given to Moses (32:15,16).

(a) In what ways are they an accurate portrayal? (b) In what ways are they inaccurate?



(41) Amongst modern-day images depicting ten commandments written on stone (try conducting a Google image search, etc., to find some examples), what phrase from the first commandment or "word" is missing in almost all of them?

(42) Read 34:29-35 At which times did Moses have a veil on his face? At which times did he not?

(43) How was the tabernacle of 35:11 different to the one described in 33:7 in both purpose and structure?

(44) 35:11 Regarding the tabernacle of 35:11, what was it, and what was its purpose? Cp Ex 25:8

(45) What was the difference between the "tabernacle" and the "tent", both mentioned in 35:11?

(46) Being in the wilderness, how were the people able to bring so many of the valuable items described in 35:21-29?

(47) How did God's spirit work in the artisans of the tabernacle (35:31-36:1)? Does God work in this same way today?

(48) From the time of receiving the instructions until completion, approximately how long did it take for the tabernacle structure and its furnishings to be made? Compare 40:17 with 19:1; 24:18.

(49) Once everything had been made, how long did it take to erect the tabernacle and place its furnishings (40:17)? Cp Numbers 4; 10:11,12.

(50) What was the glory and the cloud described in 40:35-38?

Leviticus:

(51) Why is the book of Leviticus given this name?

(52) Compare 8:6,10 with Matthew 3:13-16. What similarities are there with the beginning of Christ's ministry?

(53) What features are shared by both the priestly investiture ceremony (especially 9:7,8,15) and the Day of Atonement ceremony described later in chapter 16 (especially vv.11,15)?

(54) Why did the offering of "profane" fire (NIV: "unauthorized" fire) in Leviticus 10:1 bring about the deaths of Nadab and Abihu?

Numbers:

(55) In most English Bibles, the fourth book is called "Numbers", whereas Jews today know it as "In the Wilderness". (a) How did it get each of these different names? (b) Which do you think is the better title, and why?

(56) In Numbers 1:46, the people counted in the first census amounted to 603,550. Who from the nation was actually counted, and what was the nation's total population more likely to be at that time?

(57) Why did God order a census?

(58) Despite the detailed record of the census, we are not ever told the exact number of the total population. Why do you think this is? (see Genesis 13:16; 15:5 for a possible explanation.)

(59) What was the primary role of the Levite tribe at this time? (Numbers 3:5-10)

(60) The Lord says that 'the Levites are mine' in 3:12,13. What was meant by this? Didn't the whole nation belong to God? (e.g. Exodus 3:10 "My people, the children of Israel".)

(61) In what way were the Levites numbered differently (3:15) to the other twelve tribes? (cp 1:2,3)

(62) What was the idea behind the "redemption money" of 3:46-51?

(63) In just a few words, summarize the main duties of each of the three divisions of Levites as given in 4:1-33.

(64) What is the reason for the difference in distribution of oxen and carts in Numbers 7:2-9?

(65) It is often said that the High Priest was the only person allowed inside the Holy of Holies. Although generally true, this is not entirely accurate. Who else was permitted access (Numbers 7:89; see also 4:4-6, 17-20)?

(66) The Passover ceremony was observed in the second year (9:1-14), but the seven-day festival of Unleavened Bread does not seem to have been observed - note the lack of its mention, and compare Numbers 10:11. Why wasn't it also observed in this instance?

(67) When was Passover next observed after this? Use a concordance or your electronic Bible's search feature to help you answer this question.

(68) 9:15-23 speaks of the cloud that hovered over the tabernacle in the wilderness. (a) Where else in Scripture do clouds feature in the text? Use a concordance or the search feature to help you find other instances. (b) What do you think is generally symbolised by clouds in the Bible?

(69) How does Moses' exclamation in Numbers 11:29 foreshadow the prophecy of Ezekiel 37:27, 28?

(70) On at least two occasions, the people complained about the food. Compare Exodus 16:2-4 with Numbers 11:1-10, and it can be seen that the Lord responded quite differently to these two similar complaints. Explain this difference.

(71) How far into Canaan did the spies venture? See 13:21-25 and the map on page 7 of this worksheet.

(72) Compare Numbers 14:12 with Genesis 12:2. What are the implications of what God was suggesting to Moses?

(73) What is the stated reason for both Moses and Aaron not leading the people into the promised land in 20:12? See also 20:24; 27:14. In what way are Moses and Aaron said to have erred?

(74) What is the significance of people being able to look upon a bronze serpent on a pole and being cured of their snake bite (21:8)? How is this related to John 3:14,15?

(75) Who was Balaam (22:5)? Was he an Israelite?

(76) Why are Balaam's prophecies (Num 22-24) in poetic form? Couldn't he have expressed his blessings in simpler language?

(77) In chs. 22 to 24, Balaam spoke the words of Jehovah, despite the best efforts of Balak to make him speak otherwise. How do the Scriptures comment on Balaam elsewhere? See 31:8,16. How is Balaam compared to certain teachers in 2 Peter 2:1-3,12-22?

(77) The Lord instructs the Israelites to carry out a lot of killing on the way to the promised land (e.g. Num 21:23-26, 33-35; 25:4; etc.). Why did God order such killings? Do you think that such killing was justifiable?

(78) How should modern day Christians view such instructions? Is there a place for putting people to death today, especially those who oppose God or His will in some way?

(79) Is it true to say that the God of the New Testament is a God of love (e.g. 1 John 4:16), but that the God of the Old Testament is an angry God? Give reasons for your answer.

(80) In Numbers 26, why did God order a second census?

(81) Compare the totals given for first and second censuses (i.e. the totals given in 1:46 & 26:51). What do you notice about these figures? What may be concluded from this comparison?

(82) Why were the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh permitted to settle in land east of the Jordan River (Numbers 32)?