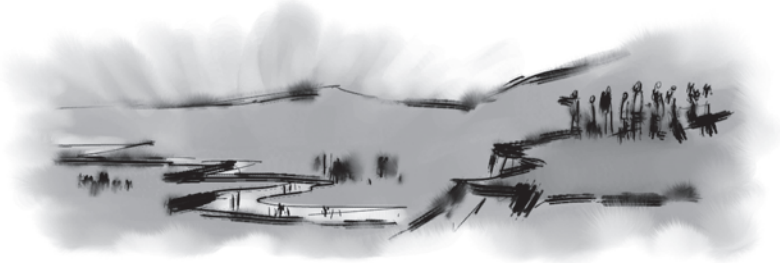


The Second Generation: Admonitions



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Numbers 26–32, Romans 5.*

Memory Text: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (*Deuteronomy 6:4, 5*).

TTrue to His Word that the rebellious generation who had refused to enter the Promised Land would not enter it, the Lord now brought a new generation to the borders of that same land. There He directed Moses and the high priest, Eleazar, to number the congregation of males from 20 years and upward, “all that are able to go to war” (*Num. 26:2*). Surprisingly, the total in this second count amounted to 601,730 (*vs. 51*), nearly the same as that in the first count, 603,550, 40 years before (*Num. 2:32*). In spite of the divine judgment on the nation, in which the first generation (except for Joshua and Caleb) perished, God had multiplied them abundantly, and the armies of Israel mustered in the plains of Moab were for all practical purposes as large as those of the first generation.

Many questions, however, remained: Was this new generation, having lived with the results of their parents' bad mistakes, ready to learn from those mistakes and obey the Lord? How ready were they to take up the mantle now given to them? What lessons were they going to have to learn, and what can we learn from them, as well?

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, December 19.*

Land Division

After the debacle at Shittim, a census was taken of the males 20 years of age and older (*Num. 26:1–4*). With just a few notable exceptions (*see vs. 64, 65*), the older generation had died off, and a new one had appeared.

What was one of the reasons that the census was taken? Why would this be important? *Num. 26:52–56*.

Once the second generation had conquered the land, it needed to be divided fairly; otherwise, this could have become a source of fighting and confusion. Fortunately, Moses was still living and could direct in this important matter. As the text states, those tribes with a lot of members were given the most land; those with fewer, less. What could be fairer than that?

Read Numbers 27:1–11. What important principles do we see being made manifest here?

A key element here is the sanctity of the family, especially in regard to property and the rights of inheritance. It's clear that the idea was to keep the property as close as possible within the family. The land, after all, was an "inheritance," and so it belonged in the family.

As we see, too, this was not a one-time deal. Because these women had the faith and courage to approach Moses over an issue of basic fairness, the Lord established a "statute of judgment" (*Num. 27:11*) that would endure for future generations and would protect women who might have found themselves in similar circumstances.

It's always so easy to let things like possessions dominate us so that we forget even the most basic Christian principles. How can we protect ourselves from allowing our desire for things to ruin our relationship with God and with others?

Successor

After so many years in the wilderness, the children of Israel were soon to make their crossing into the Promised Land. A new generation had arisen that was soon to inherit the land first promised to them when still in the loins of Abraham many centuries earlier (*Gen. 17:8*). Thus, despite the setbacks, the rebellions, the murmuring, the lack of faith in His people, God was going to fulfill His word. He was just going to do it with another generation, that's all.

Read Numbers 27:12–23 and answer the following questions:

• In Numbers 27:12 the Lord talks about the land that He has “given” (in the past tense) to the children of Israel, even though they were not there yet. What does that tell us about God’s promises?

• After the Lord told Moses again that he could not cross into this land because of his sin, how does Moses respond? That is, what is Moses’ main concern? What does that tell us about the kind of man he was?

• Why was it important that Joshua be given his charge before all the congregation?

Moses was soon to die, his work being done. The charge was now given to Joshua, Moses’ appointed successor. How interesting that it wasn’t one of Moses’ sons but, instead, someone who had proved his own worth. God, not Moses or the congregation, chose Joshua.

Also, the texts make it clear that, as with Moses, Joshua was to lead only through the guidance of God; that is, besides the written laws and commandments, he also was to seek the Lord’s will through the “judgment of [the] Urim before the Lord” (*vs. 21*).

How often do you seek the Lord in prayer regarding important decisions you need to make? Upon what basis do you make your decisions, if not through seeking God’s will?

Sacrificial System Reaffirmed

When the Lord spoke audibly the Ten Commandments (*Exodus 20*) from Mount Sinai and commanded the building of the tabernacle (*Exodus 25*), the second generation would have been children. Now God chooses to reaffirm, in summary form, the sacrificial system to the adult second generation.

Numbers 28:1–8 describes the “daily” or “continual” offering of a lamb in the morning and one in the evening. It was arranged in such a manner that this sacrifice always was burning (*Lev. 6:9, 13*). This “daily” or “continual” was the sanctuary’s centerpiece. It took priority over all other sacrifices and was central to Israel’s worship. This sacrifice represented the constant availability of God’s forgiveness and acceptance through the Redeemer prefigured in the sacrifice.

Read Romans 5. What does that tell us about the fullness and completeness of Christ’s sacrifice for us?

On the Sabbath day (apart from the “daily”), a special sacrifice was made. It consisted of two lambs, morning and evening (*Num. 28:9, 10*). Then, Numbers 28:11–15 details the sacrifices for the new moon, which then was followed by the festivals: Passover, Pentecost (Feast of Weeks), the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles (*Numbers 28, 29*).

“Some wonder why God desired so many sacrifices and appointed the offering of so many bleeding victims in the Jewish economy.

“Every dying victim was a type of Christ, which lesson was impressed on mind and heart in the most solemn, sacred ceremony, and explained definitely by the priests. Sacrifices were explicitly planned by God Himself to teach this great and momentous truth, that through the blood of Christ alone there is forgiveness of sins.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 107.

Why is it so important to trust only in Christ’s merits and righteousness, as opposed to anything in ourselves, as the only means of salvation? What happens if we start looking to ourselves, as if somehow we could be good enough to deserve or earn our salvation?

Keeping Your Word

Read Numbers 30 regarding vows and oaths. What important principle can we take away from this chapter for ourselves today? What does this tell us about the importance of our words? What warnings should we take away from here too?

It's one thing to flat-out lie; that's obviously sinful and wrong. But that's not what's being talked about here. How often have we made a solemn promise, or a vow in the Lord's name, that we absolutely intended to keep at the time, only to eventually break it for one reason or another?

In this immediate context, we're dealing with vows made "unto the Lord," but in reality, when we—especially as professing Christians—say that we are going to do something, we should follow through on it. That we intended to do it at the time we said it will make little difference to the one to whom we make the promises. Maybe the individual will believe us, maybe not. The point is, as professed Christians, what kind of representative of Christ are we if we are going around making promises or vows that—for whatever reason—we end up not keeping? What good is our religion if we don't keep our word? That's why it is crucial that we be very careful in what we promise or make vows about, because we might find ourselves in the embarrassing position of not being able to follow through, no matter how good our intentions.

"The obligation to which one's word is pledged—if it do[es] not bind him to perform a wrong act—should be held sacred."—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 506. In Israelite culture, failure to keep one's promise, sworn in the name of God, was regarded as a sin of omission. In a real sense, failure to fulfill a vow is taking His name in vain, especially if we are Christians who, ideally, do all things in the name of Christ.

How many times have you made vows and promises to others, to God, or to yourself that you have broken? What can you learn from these experiences? What promises can you claim that will help prevent this from happening continually?

On the Borders

After all this time, a new generation has arisen, one more than ready to leave the wilderness and finally have a home to call their own. Some were, indeed, more than ready to settle down.

Read Numbers 32:1–5. What is going on here? Why would they make this request?

In Numbers 32:6–15, Moses gives his response. He's not happy, and he views their actions as sinful. He compares it to what happened the last time they were on the borders and ready to cross over. Except that this time, their reasons were different. The first time they were simply scared of the people in the land and didn't trust the Lord enough to go over. This situation wasn't like that one. They weren't afraid to go over; instead they liked it where they were and wanted to remain there.

How did the leaders of Reuben and Gad respond, and how did Moses respond in return? *Num. 32:16–42.*

The response of the Reubenites and Gadites showed that they were willing to do their part for the rest of their countrymen. That is, however much they wanted the land that they already possessed, they weren't going to be selfish about it. However much they were seduced by what they possessed, they were going to make sure the rest of the Israelites got their possessions as well before they settled down to enjoy their own.

Seeing their willingness, Moses, though warning them that “your sin will find you out [vs. 23],” nevertheless took them at their word and agreed on the stated conditions.

Think about your own relationship to the church body as a whole. How much are you seeking to give to the church, in contrast to how much you take from it? What does your answer tell you about yourself? At the same time, might there not be times that, because of circumstances, you need to take more than you can give?

Further Study: Study the following texts regarding specific points Moses chose to remind the second generation of Israelites about. His remarks are based on the principle: “We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.”—Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches*, p. 196.

- Shittim plague in which 24,000 died (*Num. 25:9, 26:1*)
- Korah, Dathan, and Abiram’s rebellion (*Num. 26:9–11*)
- Er and Onan, sons of Judah (*vs. 19*)
- Nadab and Abihu, priestly sons of Aaron (*vs. 61*)
- The first generation died in the wilderness, except Caleb and Joshua (*vss. 63–65*)

Most of these events listed by Moses were events the second generation experienced. Why allude to these tragedies in Hebrew history? The apostle Paul explains: “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (*1 Cor. 10:11*).

Discussion Questions:

1 How can one generation pass to the next generation its values, beliefs, and zeal? Or can it? Or look at it this way: Should one generation expect the next one to have the same kind of experiences and faith that it had? Discuss.

2 Dwell more on the question of what our role is in the church. First, what is the role of the church as a whole? How do we fit in with that role? Should we always be in a position of giving? When is it appropriate to take?

3 As we have studied the children of Israel on the move in the wilderness, what mistakes have they made that we are in danger of making, as well? What main lessons can we learn from what they have done? More important, what can we do to ensure that we don’t fall into the same traps? Or if we already have, how can we get out of them?

Summary: While Moses still lived, it was fitting that God instructed him to give final instructions to the second generation, reaffirm the faith, and also to appoint Joshua as the nation’s new leader under God.

Divine Appointment

by BARNABAS HOPE

As a worker for God in a country that is not friendly to evangelism, I pray that He will go before me and prepare the hearts of people to receive His word. And He does.

While walking down the street one day, I passed a small key shop. Two men stood inside talking. One held an old book. *They must be reading the Koran*, I thought as I passed. I finished my errand and turned toward home. I decided to have a key made so I could talk to those men.

“What are you doing in this country?” the key maker asked as he worked. I told him that I was associated with a travel agency in town. The man still held the old book in his hand. It had been marked with several colors of ink. I knew that people didn’t normally write in the Koran. Then I realized that it was a Bible.

I paid him for the key and prepared to leave. As I walked by the man’s Bible, I laid my hand on it and said, “This is a great book. You would do well to keep reading it.”

“That’s my Bible,” he said, smiling slightly. “I bought it many years ago.” Then he asked what faith I followed. I told him I was a Seventh-day Adventist believer.

“Oh,” he said, “I know about them. I’ve read about Adventists on the Internet. Do Seventh-day Adventists have any books I can get?” I told him we did, and he asked me to bring him one.

Just the morning before this unexpected meeting, my family had read the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch for worship. We talked about the lesson this story held that we never know when we will meet someone whom the Holy Spirit has already prepared, and that we must be prepared to teach them when God places them in our path.

As I walked home from the key shop, I thought about how Phillip came across the eunuch sitting and reading the Bible and ministered to him. I pondered how I had never seen anyone in this country reading the Bible. Then today I met this man in the key shop who was reading a Bible—and sharing the Bible with another man.

I pray daily that the Lord will lead us to people who want to know what we know, for our environment is not friendly to evangelism.

Only a handful of Adventist believers live in the country I serve in. Pray for them, and continue giving to the mission offerings, which support missionaries around the world.

BARNABAS HOPE is a church planter serving in the Middle East.