

The Wilderness Wanderings

*The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger,
and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. (Exodus 34:6)*

Are we there yet? Not quite . . . but the Israelites are “free at last” and on their way to the Promised Land (Canaan). It will take 40 years to reach their destination; an entire generation will live and die in the wilderness. There will be some grumbling, rebellion, and setbacks, but the Israelites will also experience God’s power, love and mercy.

Exodus 15:22 – 19	From Egypt to Mt. Sinai
Exodus 19 – Numbers 10	Encampment at Mt. Sinai (approx. 1 year)
Numbers 10 – 21	Wilderness Wanderings (approx. 38 years)
Numbers 22 – Deuteronomy 34	Encampment before Canaan (approx. 1 year)

Some Struggles on the Journey (Learning to trust God)

- Joy of freedom fades with hardship: Blaming and complaining (Ex. 15:24, 16:2-3)
- One of the first (and ongoing) problems: Water (Ex. 15:22ff)
- Organization: Jethro (Ex. 18:1-27)
- Sharing the load: 70 elders (Num. 11:16ff)
- Hardships/Rebellion/More complaining: “Boring!” (Num. 11:4-6)
- People’s Rebellion: Moses in the crossfire (Num. 14:1-45)
- People needing a god they can “see” Golden Calf (Ex. 32:1-33:6)
- Serpents and the bronze serpent (Num. 21:4-9; c.f. John 3:14-15)

God’s Gracious Providence (Blessing again)

- Healing: “I am the LORD who heals you.” (Ex. 15:26)
- Bread from heaven: Manna (“What is it?”) (Ex. 16:4ff)
On the 6th day food for two days – so they could rest on the seventh day (Ex. 16:29)
Sabbath - even before the Ten Commandments!
The Israelis ate manna for 40 years! (Ex. 16:35)
- Quail (Ex. 16:13)
- Water from the rock (Ex. 17:6)

Giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai

- Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1-17)
- If . . . (23:20-33)

The Covenant/Promise (Ex. 24:1-12 and renewed Deut. 29)

- Connection with covenants with Noah and Abraham

The Presence of God

- Pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night
- With Moses on the mountain (Ex. 33:11: “as a friend”!)
- Veiled from the people (Ex. 34:33; Paul’s interpretation)

- The Ark of the Covenant (Ex. 25:10-22)
- Tabernacle – provisions – construction – dedication
God dwelling among his people

Slavery and nomadic wandering as formative and integral to self-identity

- “A wandering Aramean was my father...”
- “Remember, you were a slave in Egypt...”
- Shema: Hear, O Israel...” and remember (Deut. 6:4-9)
- Concern for the oppressed and alien; the neighbor in need (Deut. 15:7-11)

Preparing to Settle

- The death of Moses (Deut. 34:10) at 120
- Blessing of Tribes (Deut. 32:48 – 33:29)
- Joshua – Successor to Moses (Num.27:12-23, Deut. 31)
- Of all who left Egypt, only two survive to enter the Promised Land – Joshua and Caleb (more on that next week . . .)

Moses’ enduring achievement – he received God’s law, and made every effort to record it, teach it, and establish it for future generations – that’s you!

~ *SMALL GROUP TIME* ~
~ *The Wilderness Wanderings* ~

1. What are some examples of God taking care of the people in the desert?

2. What are some examples of God taking care of you?

3. What does it mean to keep the Sabbath?

4. Where were the Ten Commandments given? Why did God give the Ten Commandments?

5. Compare the Covenant with Abraham with the Covenant with Moses and the people on Mt. Sinai.

6. Several times in the stories we read tonight, God becomes angry with the people. Give an example of God's mercy from these stories.

7. How did Moses share his authority?

8. The construction of the Tabernacle is one of the high points of Exodus. Why is this important?

9. Why did the people wander 40 years? Did anyone that left Egypt survive to enter the Promised Land? Who?

10. How is God's love revealed in this story?

Did you know? (Fun facts to know and tell!)

- We looked at the three remaining books in the Pentateuch tonight:

Leviticus – the 3rd book, means ‘and he called.’ It refers to the Lord calling Moses to give him these instructions. It also has a strong association with Levi, the name of the tribe set apart to be priests, and contains detailed instructions for priests as well as instructions for every day life. A well-known verse from this book: “Love your neighbor as you love yourself.” (Leviticus 19:18)

Numbers – The 4th book of the Bible has a fitting name. People are counted at the beginning of this book (Chapter 1) and then again towards the end (Chapter 26). This book describes the years the Israelites spend in the Sinai Desert. This book also has the wonderful story of Balaam and his talking donkey (see Chapter 22:1-24:25). Balaam’s oracles are some of the oldest poetry in the Bible.

Deuteronomy – The 5th book of the Bible means ‘a copy of this law.’ It clearly defines what our relationship with God and with each other is meant to be. There are over 80 quotations from the book of Deuteronomy in the New Testament including: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”

- The 613 Commandments: Yes, there are 613 commandments in the Law of Moses. The first two came directly from God, and 611 were said to have been given through Moses. The number 611 is the numerical value of the word *Torah* which means law, commandment, or instruction.
- The other Ark (not just a boat - Exodus 25:10-12). In synagogues today, the “ark” is the cabinet or closet that holds the Torah scrolls (the Law of Moses). The ark is a focal point of synagogue architecture, and in Orthodox synagogues it is placed against the wall nearest Jerusalem.
- The construction and dedication of the tabernacle, where God dwells among his people, is one of the high points in Exodus. The tabernacle is a model or prototype for **all** later temples and churches.
- Our verse tonight is a wonderful definition of God, and it is often repeated in the Old Testament (see Psalm 103:6-8, Jonah 4:2). You may also recognize it from the Gospel Acclamation we sing during Lent.

Our Verse: *The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.* (Exodus 34:6)

Next Time: A new leader for Israel, and the invasion and conquest of Canaan. We’ll look at the sixth book of the Bible – Joshua, which means ‘The Lord Saves’! Be ready for . . . trumpets and/or singing and /or marching . . . See you then!

THE PENTATEUCH
(Law or Teaching)

The Pentateuch is composed of five books: **Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy**. As a literary unit they provide the background for the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. Chronologically the Pentateuch covers the period of time from creation to the end of the Mosaic era.

<i>Beginnings</i>	<i>Genesis 1:1 – 11:32</i>
Creation	1:1 – 2:25
Fall and Consequences	3:1 – 6:10
Flood	6:11 – 8:19
Man's new beginning	8:20 – 11:32
<i>Patriarchs/Matriarchs</i>	<i>Genesis 12:1 – 50:26</i>
Abraham and Sarah	12:1 – 25:18
Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel	25:19 – 36:43
Joseph	37:1 – 50:26
<i>Liberation of Israel</i>	<i>Exodus 1:1 – 19:2</i>
Israel freed from Slavery	1:1 – 13:19
From Egypt to Mt. Sinai	13:20 – 19:2
<i>Religion of Israel</i>	<i>Exodus 19:3 – Leviticus 27:34</i>
God's covenant with Israel	Ex. 19:3 – 24:8
The place of worship	24:9 – 40:38
Instructions for holy living	Lev. 1:1-27:34
Offerings	1:1 – 7:38
Priesthood	8:1 – 10:20
Laws of purification	11:1 – 15:33
Day of atonement	16:1-34
Heathen customs forbidden	17:1 – 18:30
Laws of holiness	19:1-22:33
Feasts and seasons	23:1 – 25:55
Conditions of God's blessings	26:1 – 27:34
<i>Organization of Israel</i>	<i>Numbers 1:1 – 10:10</i>
Numbering of Israel	1:1 – 4:49
Camp regulations	5:1 – 6:21
Religious life of Israel	6:22 – 9:14
Provisions for guidance	9:15 – 10:10
<i>Wilderness Wanderings</i>	<i>Numbers 10:11 – 22:1</i>
From Mt. Sinai to Kadesh	10:11 – 12:16
Kadesh crisis	13:1-14:45
Years of wandering	15:1 – 19:22
Kadesh to Plains of Moab	20:1 – 22:1
<i>Instructions for entering Canaan</i>	<i>Numbers 22:2 – 36:13</i>
Preservation of God's chosen people	22:2 – 25:18
Preparation for conquest	26:1 – 33:49
Anticipation of occupation	33:50 – 36:13
<i>Looking Back/Looking Ahead</i>	<i>Deuteronomy 1:1 – 34:12</i>
History and its significance	1:1 – 4:43
Law and its significance	4:44 – 26:68
Final preparations and farewell	29:1 – 34:12