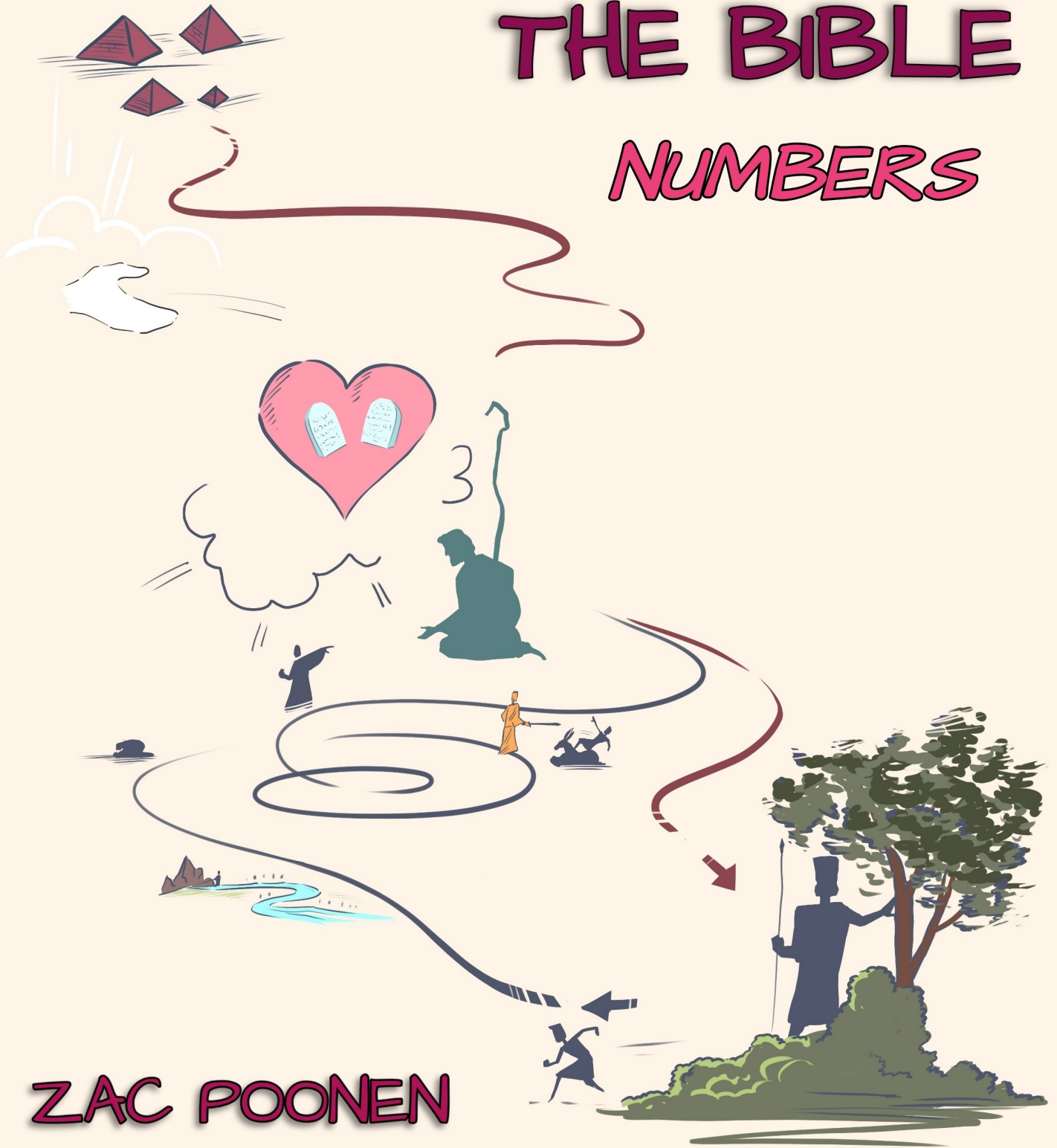


THROUGH THE BIBLE *NUMBERS*



ZAC POONEN

Illustrations by VINAY KURUVILLA

NUMBERS

This 4th book of Moses deals with Israel's wanderings and wars in the wilderness.



God is a God of **order** and we can see this by the way the camps of Israelite tribes were placed. He taught this unruly bunch of slaves **orderliness** and **cleanliness**. Many believers have no sense of these in their lives. This affects our **spiritual growth**.

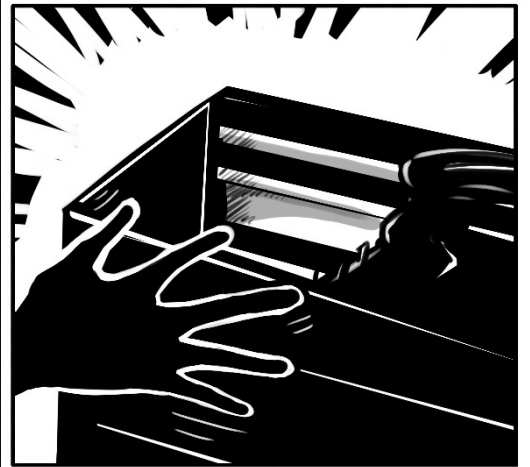
In chapter 7 we see details of offerings of the leaders. There is a lot of **repetition** too.



This shows us that God is **interested** in each **individual**. Ten **different** people might have offered the **same** offering. But God recorded what each person gave **separately**. This shows us something of the **heart** of God. In the world today, it is easy to feel lost as one among **millions** but God sees each individual as **special**.



Levi had **three** sons - Kohath, Gershon and Merari and they were in charge of moving the **tabernacle**. **6** carts and **12** oxen were given for moving the tabernacle. But these were **NOT** equally divided. 2 carts and 4 oxen were given to the Gershonites. 4 carts and 8 oxen were given to the Merarites. The Kohathites were to carry the ark on their **shoulders**. Let us not **covet** and question God regarding what **others** have. The all-wise God does everything **perfectly**.



The most sacred job of moving the tabernacle was given to the sons of Levi. We learn that we **cannot** take God's commandments **lightly**. In David's time, **Uzzah** touched the ark because he **thought** it was falling. He was **not** a Levite. God **killed** him for this. If God has not given us **responsibility** in the church, we should not **touch** it. We must learn to mind **our own business**.



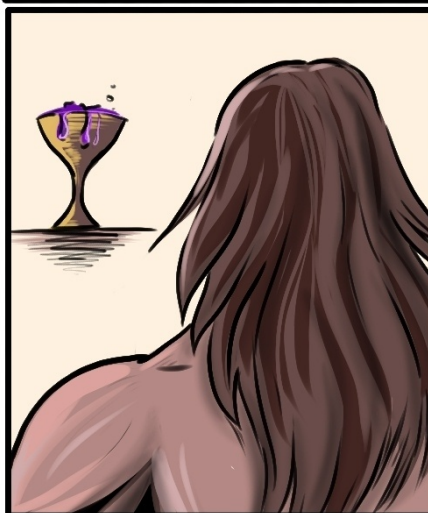
In Numbers 5:2 we read that lepers were to be put *outside* the camp. Although Exodus 15:26 says "I am the Lord, your Healer" there were sick Israelites that were *not* healed. Although God could have healed them, he didn't. We *cannot* lock God in a box saying *He heals all who have faith*.



Restitution was to have an added 20% to the original sum for a year old debt. This is why *Zaccheus*, who was a shrewd accountant, calculated that if 20% was for a year's debt, over 300% would have to be added for eight year old debts, at compound interest. This is why he returned 4 times what he had *wrongly* taken from people. The Lord allowed him to do this because *it was righteous*.



In chapter 5 : 11 - 31 we read of how God exposes *sin* in an *unfaithful* wife. We read about how God exposed *adultery* in a woman by making her *drink water* that contained some of the *dust* of the floor of the *tabernacle*. The *secret* sin would be revealed by seeing whether her belly was swelling and her thigh rotting. In the early *church*, the secret sin of Ananias and Saphira was exposed by the Holy Spirit, not "holy water". *Peter* exposed Ananias and Saphira supernaturally through the *discernment* of the *Holy Spirit*. It is very important for spiritual leaders to have *discernment* through the Holy Spirit so they can see the true *spiritual condition* of people.



Numbers 6 : 1 - 21 deals with the *Nazirite* vow. They were not to cut their hair or drink grape-juice or wine. *Samson* was Nazirite. His strength was in his dedication. *Jesus*, however was not a *Nazirite*. He was called a *Nazarene* because he lived in *Nazareth*.



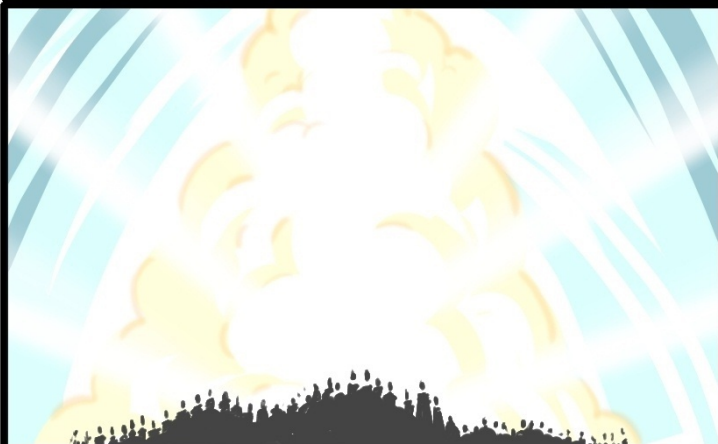
In chapter 6 we see the blessing that Aaron gives the people. It was *not* one of health and wealth. It was far more.
 " May He preserve you from all evil.
 May His glory shine upon you.
 May He be merciful to you.
 May you have peace in heart, home and life"



In chapter 9 we read about how the Lord lead His people by a pillar of cloud and fire. When the cloud moved, they set out. When the cloud stopped, they stopped. Sometimes the cloud lingered for a few days, sometimes for months. Imagine the *inconvenience* of this! They would have just set up camp in the *evening* and then at *dawn* they had to *move*! They had to learn *patience* and learn to *obey* God *moment by moment*. A *true* servant of God will never *complain* when God tells him to do something *inconvenient*.



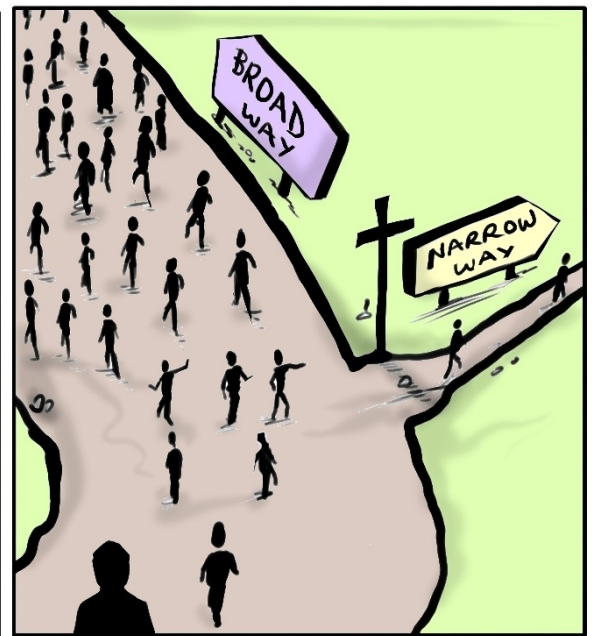
In chapter 1 and 2 we see the *grumbling* of the leaders. Miriam and Aaron *criticised* Moses and were *jealous* of his *ministry*. They saw God using their *younger* brother as Israel's *prophet leader*. Moses was the *humblest* man on earth. The Lord *heard* the grumbling against Moses. The Lord *affirmed* that He spoke to Moses *face to face*, not in visions and dreams. To hear the Lord *speaking* to our *hearts* through His *Spirit* is far more *superior* to visions. The Lord was *angry* with Miriam and Aaron for *criticising* his *anointed* servant.



The pillar is a picture of the Holy Spirit. We can be *born* of the Spirit but only those who are "*led by the Spirit*" are *sons* of God. (Romans 8.14) There is a *difference* between a *child* and a *mature son*



Miriam was struck with *leprosy* and Moses, whom she *criticized*, had to *pray* for her. We are called to "*pray* for those who *persecute* us " (Matthew 5.44) . Moses did this.

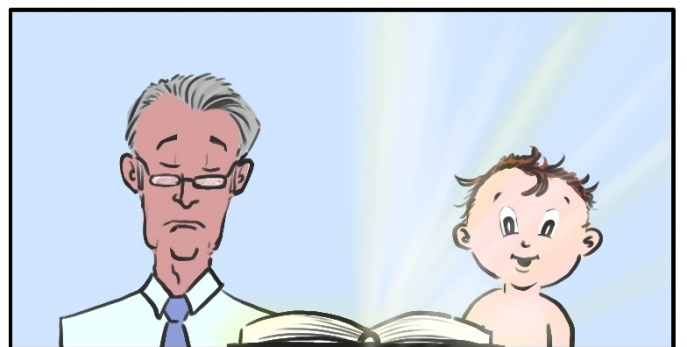


Joshua and Caleb said " the Lord will help us conquer those giants ". But the 600,000 Israelites listened to the majority. Jesus said " the way to life is narrow and very few find it " It is dangerous to follow the majority because invariably they are wrong and are on the broad way to destruction. Jesus' church had only 11 members in it ! God was on the side of the 2 here and not the 10. But the Israelites foolishly followed the majority and they had to wander in the wilderness for the next 38 years ! Christendom in general is full of compromise and worldliness. Here and there, God raises a few who stand for the truth of God's word without any compromise. God with one man is a majority against any number of people.

In chapter 13 , the Israelites came to Kadesh-barnea at the border of Canaan - the land that God had promised them. It was now 2 years since they left Egypt. They sent 12 spies to survey the land. All said it was a wonderful land. 10 however said " there are huge giants there and we cannot conquer them ". Caleb and Joshua replied differently ..



We recognize a man with whom God is standing with by the language of faith he speaks. " We can overcome the giants of anger, sexual lust , jealousy, murmuring and the love of money. God will crush Satan under our feet. This is faith



Sadly, many Christians go astray exactly like the Israelites - through human reasoning God has hidden these truths from the clever and intelligent and revealed them to babes. What we need is the revelation of the Holy Spirit



In chapter 16 we read of the rebellion of Korah and his fellow-rebels. They did not learn from the mistake of Miriam. Wise men learn from the mistakes of others



Initially we read of Korah, Dathan, Abiram and On rebelling. Overnight, one of the men, On, came to his senses. The sons of Korah pulled back from their dad and stood with Moses. Sometimes the children have more sense than the parents. Thus the sons of Korah did not die. In Psalm 84 : 10 they wrote " I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of God than dwell in the tents of wickedness "



Foolish men make the same mistakes that others make. We read of two men who went to heaven alive - Enoch and Elijah. Here we read the rebels went alive to hell ! Moses called Dathan and Abiram to warn them privately but they refused to meet him. Their pride and arrogance in refusing to meet Moses sealed their fate and the fate of their families. The next morning these three men came to Moses with no change in their attitude and they were punished



God now wanted to prove to the Israelites that it was He Himself Who had appointed Aaron to be the high priest. The Lord identifies His servants by the principle of resurrection



We find a lovely verse in Chapter 18:20, where the Lord tells Aaron, " You shall have no inheritance in the promised land. I am your portion and your inheritance. " There is nothing wrong with owning a house, lands, cars or whatever but we are not attached to them.



In Chapter 20, we read of , the otherwise faithful, Moses being punished for *one* act of disobedience. This was the *second* time the people cried for water. This time the Lord told Moses to *speak* to the rock, not smite it. Moses was *angry* and *struck* the rock and was *not* allowed to enter Canaan



God expects more from leaders, than from ordinary believers. To whom more is given, more is required. Although Moses pleaded with God, He would not relent. Whenever Moses prayed for others, God relented. But *not* when he prayed for *himself*. God was *good* to him ... 1500 years later, God allowed him to enter the promised land, when he stood with our Lord Jesus on the *mount of transfiguration*!

That was the *first* time he stood in the promised land. God honoured His servant by giving him a much *better* entry into Canaan than if he had entered with the *rebellious* Israelites. God is always " *silently planning for us in love* ". But at that time, God had to punish Moses publicly so that the people would know that God is strict with disobedience in His servants.



But did the water *flow* when Moses disobeyed? *Yes*, it did. Even when a man *disobeys* God, the blessings may *still* flow from his ministry. It proves that *God loves the people*. It does *not* prove that God is happy with such a man who is *carnal* and *disobedient*.



In Chapter 21, we read of the poisonous snakes. When the people cried out, God told Moses to make a bronze figure of a serpent and put it on the pole. Anyone who was bitten could look at it and be healed. This was a picture of the cross where Jesus would be lifted up to die. The old serpent Satan has bitten us all and if we look at Jesus we can be healed - forgiven and set free *permanently*!



In Chapters 22-24 we read King Balak invited Balaam to *curse* Israel



Balaam sought the will of God and God *clearly* told Balaam *not* to go. But then King Balak said he would give him *more honour and more money* if he cursed Israel. Then Balaam sought God's will a *second* time. There was *no* need for this. But he was *eager* to get the *money*.



But God *doesn't* change his mind regarding His decision.. *even* if *money* and *honour* are *more* attractive to us. Let us remember Balaam when we face *similar* situations. Nevertheless, the Lord *saw* Balaam *wanted* to go so He said "Go" but God sent an *angel* to *stop* him. The *donkey* saw the angel when the *spiritually blind* prophet *could not*! This was because he loved *money* whereas the donkey did *not*! Although Balaam was once a prophet he *lost* the anointing.



This was the first instance of *speaking in tongues* - a donkey speaking a *foreign* language *fluently*! But speaking in tongues did *not* make the donkey *spiritual*.. Now Balaam suggested a *clever* tactic to Balak of Moab. The *best* way to *destroy* the Israelites was by *making* God turn against them - through *immorality*. So he asked them to send their *pretty women* into the Israeli camp. Thus Israel *fell* into *immorality* and also started *worshipping* the *idols* of the Moabite girls. Sure enough, God punished them *severely*. 24,000 people *died* of a *plague*. Satan has *polluted* believers in the *same* way today! Let us *learn* from Satan's *schemes*



As the plague spread, the Israelites would have been wiped out as a nation but for the **zeal of one man**, Phinehas. He killed both the man and Midianite woman who he was with in the tent. Then the plague stopped. God honours those who stand boldly for him against others even though it is unpopular.

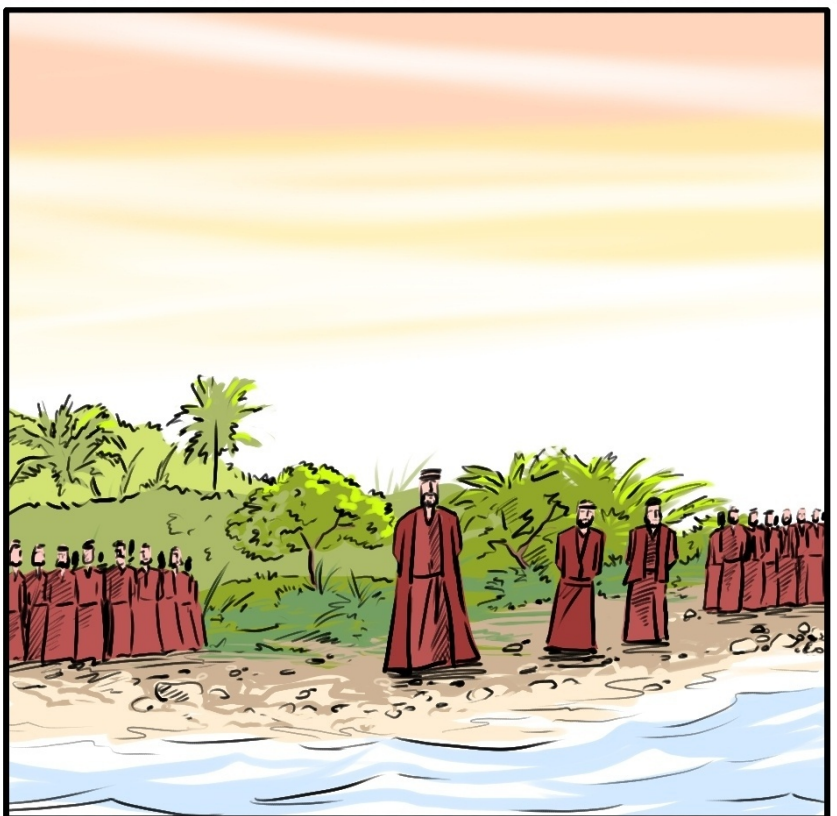


In chapter 26, we read of the **second** census. We see here the **persistence** of God in bringing them **back** to Kadesh-Barnea and giving them a **second** chance to enter the **promised land**. This is a great **encouragement** to those who have **failed**. He is the God of the **millionth** chance! He **forgives** us again and again and gives us **any** number of chances to enter a life of **victory**.

In chapter 28 and 29 are some more laws about offerings. Chapter 30 concerns vows. A **father** can cancel a vow that his **daughter** foolishly makes and a **husband** can cancel a foolish vow his **wife** makes. It is important for fathers and husbands to **prevent** their **children** from going **astray** and to be the **head** of the home.



When Moses chose the next leader of Israel, he did **not** choose his sons. He was a man of **God** and was **not** interested in starting a **dynasty**. He sought **God's** will and God told him to appoint Joshua "a man in whom is the **Spirit**" (verse 18), as the next **leader** of Israel.



In Chapter 32, we read of the **compromise** of the tribes of **Reuben** and **Gad**. They were **enormously** **wealthy** in **cattle** and needed **pastures**. They found the land of Gilead on the **eastern** side of Jordan (**not** within **Canaan**) and wanted to settle there. Even after 40 years of **wandering** they **rejected** the call of God to enter **Canaan**. What does God do with people who are more interested in their **business** and **wealth** than a life of **victory**? He lets them go their way.