**Survey of Old Testament**

**Numbers 11 Israel Complained and Moses Wants To Give Up**

1. "When the people complained, it displeased the Lord and his anger was kindled. In reaction the Lord in His anger consumed many of the rebels with fire. Apart from the golden calf punishment in Exodus 32, this marks the first divine judgment against the people. There would be many more after this time."
2. No sooner had the wrath of God diminished than the “mixed multitude” among the people began to crave meat (flesh), what they had in Egypt. All they had now, they said, was manna. The “mixed multitude” were traveling with Israel, but, like worldly church members today, their hearts were still in Egypt. Instead of remembering God’s goodness, they remembered the carnal things of Egypt! Verse 8 indicates that the people did their best to improve on the manna, for they ground it, beat it, and baked it. They would do anything to make God’s bread taste like the food of Egypt, but the problem was their appetite and not God’s bread.
3. Moses’ reaction was to ask the Lord why He was bringing this trouble on him. The Lord, not Moses, had created Israel as a people and had brought them into the wilderness. Since this was so, Moses could not and should not bear the responsibility for them (I cannot carry all these people by myself). If the Lord would not relieve him, Moses asked God if he could die. The Lord’s response was neither to allow Moses to die nor to take the leadership of Israel from him. Instead God created a structure of subleadership to enable Moses to delegate responsibility. God told Moses to select 70 elders of Israel, men on whom would be placed the same Spirit who rested on and empowered Moses.
4. Then the Lord commanded the people to prepare for the next day when He would give them so much meat they would get sick of it (Num. 11:18–20). For a month they would gorge themselves till the meat would come out of their nostrils. Soon after the people began their lustful gluttony, the Lord unleashed His wrath against them and sent a severe plague that killed many of them. The name “Kibroth-hattaavah” means “graves of lust.” “To be carnally minded is death” (Rom. 8:6).

**Numbers 12 Miriam and Aaron challenge Moses authority.**

1. Aaron, the high priest, and Miriam, a prophetess (Ex. 15:20–21), both were leaders in Israel with their brother Moses. The apparent cause of their argument was Moses’ wife, who was a Cushite (Ethiopian, and therefore a Gentile). But the real cause was their jealousy over Moses’ leadership. Moses proved his meekness (humility) by refusing to fight them; he left his cause in the hands of God. God has promised to defend His servants (Isa. 54:17). Apparently Miriam was the ringleader, for she was made leprous, and her sin held up the march of the camp for seven days. Aaron confessed his guilt, and Moses prayed for his sister Miriam, an evidence of true love and humility. It is a serious thing when spiritual leaders become envious of one another, because their sin affects the whole congregation.

**Numbers 13-14 Unbelief robs us of blessing**

1. Hebrews 3–4 reveals their unbelief. The key thought is that unbelief robs us of blessing. Notice the evidences of unbelief in the nation and its leaders. Deut. 1:20–23, Moses makes it clear that the sending of the spies was the desire of the people, not the commandment of the Lord. He permitted this plan to be used so that He might reveal to the people what their hearts were really like. God had already told them many times what Canaan was like, what nations were there, and how He would defeat their enemies and give them their promised inheritance; so what need was there for men to go in and spy out the land? Sad to say, human nature prefers to walk by sight, not by faith.
2. The spies searched the land and even brought back some of the wonderful fruit, but they also brought back an evil report and discouraged the hearts of the people. Except for Moses, Caleb, and Joshua, nobody in the nation believed that God would keep His promises! The ten spies described the glories of the land, and then added, “Nevertheless …” This word is usually a sign of unbelief. The people were strong; the cities were walled up; and giants were in the land. They saw the giants and saw themselves as grasshoppers but they did not see God. Their eyes were on the obstacles, not on the God who had led them there. Caleb showed true faith when he said, “We are well able!” The people showed unbelief when they said, “We are not able!” Instead of reporting the blessings of the land, the ten spies emphasized the difficulties, giving an “evil report” of God’s holy land. Unbelief always sees the obstacles; faith always sees the opportunities.
3. In Ex. 15, we see Israel singing in great victory, but here they are weeping in defeat! Had they forgotten their song? Had they forgotten all that God had done for them in the past two years? God waited until the people expressed a desire to replace Moses and return to Egypt; then He began to act. Caleb and Joshua realized that the nation’s response was nothing but rebellion (v. 9). God’s glory suddenly appeared, and God spoke to Moses. God was willing to destroy the entire nation and make a new nation through Moses’ family, but Moses rejected this offer. What humility and love! Moses intercedes to God on their behalf. He had the heart of a true shepherd, he loved his people and prayed for them. Note that Moses reminded God of His promises, His glory, His mercy and forgiveness. In this scene, Moses is a picture of Christ.
4. In His grace, God forgave their sin; but in His judgment, they reaped what they had sown. First, God gave the people their request, they would die in the wilderness. Only Caleb and Joshua were excluded from this judgment because of their faith and faithfulness. Since the men had spied out the land forty days, God gave the Jews forty years to wander in the wilderness while they died one by one. Finally, the ten spies who brought the evil report were killed immediately by a plague. Faith leads to obedience and unbelief leads to rebellion and death.
5. They thought that because they had confessed their sin, God would change His mind and give them victory. Moses warned them, but they ignored his warning, proving that they were not walking by faith in the power of the Spirit. The men advanced to the top of the hill, and the enemy defeated them.

**Numbers 16–17 Korah Defies Moses and Aaron**

1. The “gainsaying (saying against) of Korah” is mentioned in Jude 11 as one of the marks of false teachers in the last days. We see a united rebellion against the authority of Moses and the priesthood of Aaron.
2. Korah was a Levite who was not content to assist in the tabernacle; he wanted to serve as a priest as well (v. 10). Moses and Aaron did not defend themselves; they let God do the defending. The next day God stepped in and judged the rebels. Fire from the Lord killed the followers and the earth opened up and swallowed the leaders and their possessions. In 26:11 we learn that Korah’s family was not destroyed. This explains why we have psalms titled “For the sons of Korah” (Ps. 84, 85, 87, 88). Apparently Korah’s descendants were content to be humble ministers and not priests, for they wrote in Ps. 84:10 (nkjv), “I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.”
3. God was now going to declare once and for all the authority of Aaron’s priesthood. Moses instructed each tribe to bring a rod, a dead stick to be placed before the ark in the tabernacle. God announced that the rod that blossomed would indicate the one He had chosen for the priesthood. Verse 8 tells us that Aaron’s rod not only budded, but it blossomed and bore fruit! The other rods were still dead, and each of the princes took back his dead rod, leaving Aaron’s rod to be placed in the tabernacle as a testimony to the nation’s rebellion and God’s appointment of Aaron as the high priest. The budding of the rod is a beautiful picture of the Resurrection of Christ. By means of the Resurrection, God has declared that Christ is His Son and the only Priest that God accepts.

**Numbers 18-19 The roles and privileges of the priests and Levites**

1. These chapters are a reminder of the roles and privileges of the priests and Levites.

**Numbers 20-21 Moses Strikes the Rock**

1. In many places in Scripture, God is pictured as a Rock; and 1 Cor. 10:4 makes it clear that the Rock in Exodus and Numbers is a picture of Christ. The people could not live without water, nor can we live today without the water of life (John 4:13–14; 7:37–39). In the Bible, water for drinking is a type of the Holy Spirit, who comes within and satisfies our spiritual thirst. In Ex. 17 God told Moses to smite the rock, picturing our Lord’s death on the cross. But here He told him to speak to the rock, for Jesus Christ died but once. All we need do now is ask, and He will give of His Holy Spirit (John 7:37–39).

**Numbers 21 Christ the Uplifted Brazen Serpent**

1. The people had sinned once again. How strange that Moses should make another serpent when it was serpents that caused all the trouble to begin with! But the serpent of brass pictures Christ, who became sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21). The people had prayed, “Take away the serpents!” But God’s method was to overcome the sting of death by faith. “Look and live!”