

YOUTH



LEVEL 3

BIBLE

LESSONS



LESSON 11



Forty Years in the Wilderness

FORTY YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS

The Tabernacle was now finished. The pillar of a cloud that was over Mount Sinai was in the camp of Israel. The time had now come for the Israelites to continue their journey into Canaan, the Promised Land.

For many more years the Israelites would wander through the wilderness. They would have to learn many harsh lessons because of their disobedience toward God.

COUNTING THE ISRAELITES

Soon after the Tabernacle was finished, God told Moses to count the number of Israelites. God chose able men from each tribe to help Moses and Aaron. When they finished, they had counted more than 600,000 Israelite men. If we add the women and children, there may have been over two million Israelites in all!

Moving all these people from place to place was a lot of work. The Israelites, however, knew when to leave. The pillar of a cloud

that was over the Tabernacle would rise and begin to move.

God also told Moses how to give jobs to the different families. There was also a certain order in which each tribe left camp when it was time for the Israelites to travel.

THE ISRAELITES WANT MEAT

God had miraculously taken care of the Israelites, giving them water when they were thirsty and food when they were hungry. But the Israelites were not always thankful for their many blessings. Now many of the Israelites wanted more than manna.

“Give us meat to eat!” the people demanded. “We had fish, fresh fruits and vegetables in Egypt. All we ever have in this wilderness is manna!”

Moses heard all the complaining in the camp and went to God for help.

“Why have you given me all these problems?” Moses asked God. “Am I to be their father and

carry them as a little child to the Promised Land? They are all shouting for meat! Where will I get meat?"

"Bring me 70 of Israel's elders," God told Moses. "I will take some of my Spirit that is on you and give it to them. Then they will be able to help you care for all the people.

"As for meat," God continued, "I will give it to the people. Not just for a few days, but enough for a whole month. They will become sick of meat and not want it anymore. I will do this because they have rejected Me and want to return to Egypt!"

The next morning, God caused a strong wind to blow from the sea. Soon the sky was filled with quail. Even the ground was beginning to be covered with the birds. As you learned in the last lesson, quail are good to eat.

For two days the people gathered the quail. Many of them were quickly cooked for a great feast. But God was angry with the Israelites and sent a plague that killed many of the people.

Why did God send the plague?

The Israelites were only thinking about the quail. They quickly began to eat as many as they could. They wanted it so much, they for-



got about God. The Israelites learned that they should never complain or rebel against God.

MIRIAM AND AARON LEARN A LESSON

One day, Moses' brother Aaron and his sister Miriam complained about Moses. They thought that they should be in charge, too.

"God has not worked only through Moses," they said. "We should also lead and direct the people of Israel."

God heard what Aaron and Miriam were saying and became very angry. He spoke to Moses, Aaron and Miriam and told them all to meet at the Tabernacle. God had something to say to Aaron and Miriam.

When they arrived at the Tabernacle, God appeared before them in a pillar of a cloud. God then called for Aaron and Miriam to step forward.

"Listen carefully!" God angrily told them. "I am the One who chooses the leader of the people. I have chosen Moses to be my servant. And I speak to him. Why were you not afraid to speak against Moses?"

After God had finished speaking, the pillar of a cloud quickly lifted from the Tabernacle. Then

Miriam saw that something had happened to her skin. It was white as snow. Aaron quickly turned to see that Miriam had become a leper.

Aaron and Miriam knew they had sinned and angered God. They cried to Moses for help.

"Help us, Moses," Aaron pleaded. "Do not hold this foolish sin against us. Ask God to heal our sister Miriam."

Moses prayed to God to heal Miriam. "Be merciful and heal her of this disease," Moses prayed.

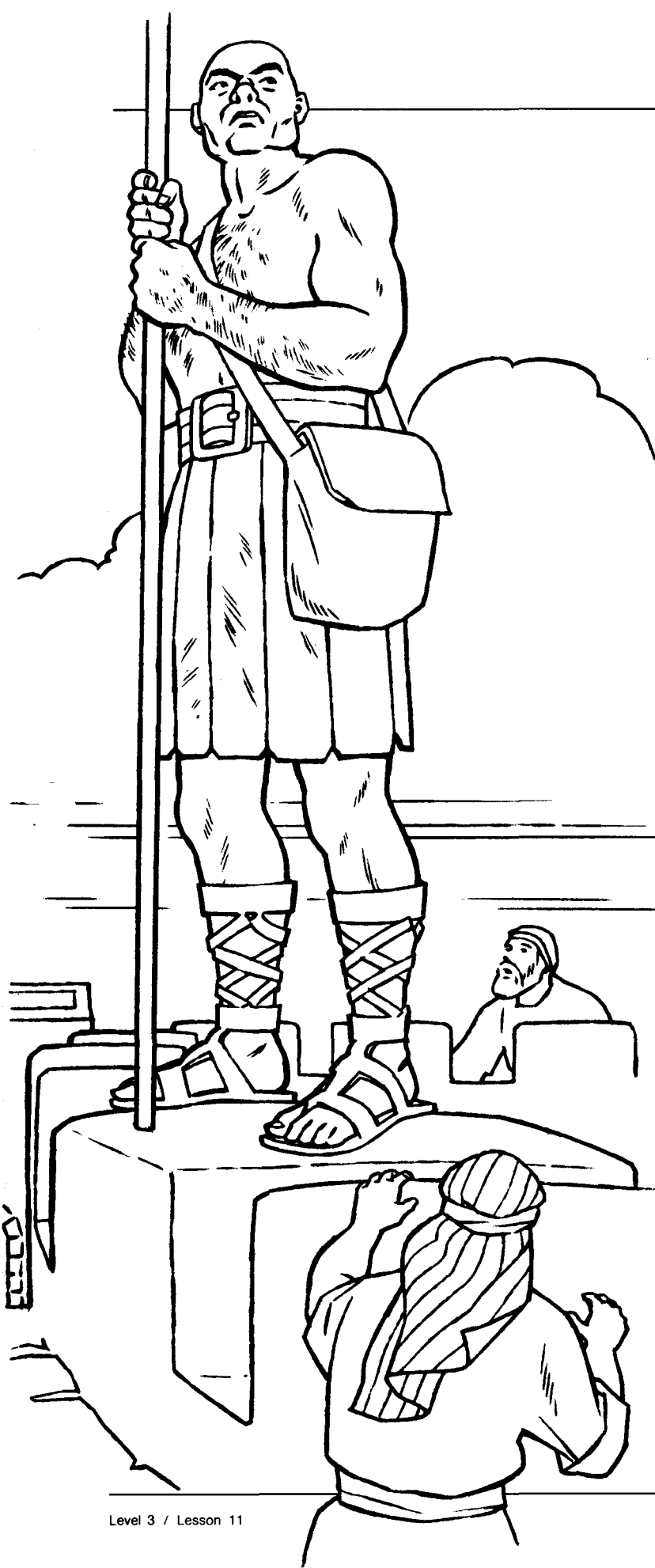
God answered Moses' prayer and said that He would heal Miriam. But she would have to spend seven days outside the camp. After that time she would be healed.

Miriam did stay outside the camp for seven days. During that time, she and her brother Aaron thought about their sin against God. They knew that by saying wrong things about God's servant, they had rebelled against God. It is the same as saying wrong things about God.

Aaron and Miriam learned their lesson, and at the end of the week Miriam was healed.

SCOUTS ARE SENT TO CANAAN

After Miriam had returned to camp, God led the Israelites to a



place near the land of Canaan. Now God was ready to give His people the land He had promised them.

God next told Moses to send 12 men to scout the land of Canaan.

“You are to go into Canaan as scouts,” Moses told the men. “Find out what kind of people live there. If the land has good crops, bring back some of the food that grows in the land. Also, see what kinds of buildings they have in their cities. Be brave and courageous, for God is with you!”

The scouts were very happy when they reached the land of Canaan. The land was beautifully green with plants, trees and many different crops.

As the scouts walked through some of the cities, they looked to see how many people lived there. When they came into the city of Hebron they were surprised to find men almost twice their size!

As they returned from Canaan, the scouts cut a large cluster of grapes to take back to show Moses and the people. The grapes were so big that they were hung on a thick pole and carried by two men! They also brought back pomegranates, figs and many other fruits from the land.

After scouting for 40 days, they

returned to the camp to tell everyone about the Promised Land.

Joshua and Caleb, as leaders of the group, spoke first. They told Moses that it was a good land and that God had blessed it. They showed him some of the grapes and figs they had gathered. Moses was very happy.

When Joshua and Caleb finished speaking, the other scouts gave their reports. "The land is good as Joshua and Caleb have told you," said one of the scouts. "But the people who live there are strong. The cities are large and have very high walls. We also saw giants in the land. We should not go there or we will be killed!"

Then Caleb spoke up, and said, "We should leave at once and take the land. We can do it with God's help!"

"We cannot go into the land. They are much stronger!" the scouts replied.

"If only we had died in Egypt," the Israelites began to complain. "Why did God bring us to this land to be killed? It would be better to return to Egypt."

The Israelites forgot the lesson God had taught them through Aaron and Miriam. They wanted a new leader who would take them back to Egypt. They did not want

Moses—the one God chose as their leader.

Moses and Aaron quickly fell face down and prayed to God. Then Joshua and Caleb again talked to the people.

"If God is pleased with us, He will give us the land!" they shouted to the people. "Do not rebel against God, and do not be afraid of the people in the land. God will drive them out!"

But the Israelites would not listen. Some of them wanted to throw stones at Moses and Aaron. This made God very angry.

Suddenly, there was a bright flash of light from the Tabernacle.

"How long will these people anger me?" God's voice boomed. "How long will they refuse to believe me, after all the miracles I have shown them?"

Then God told Moses He would destroy the nation of Israel. Instead, He would make a great nation from Moses and his family.

Moses asked God not to destroy the Israelites. "I know that your mercy is great," Moses said to God. "Please forgive the people of their sins."

God was merciful and heard Moses' prayer to save the Israelites. But they would still have to be punished. God told Moses

that even though they were near the Promised Land, they could not enter. They would now have to wander in the wilderness for many more years.

By the time the Israelites would reach the Promised Land, it would be 40 years since they left Egypt. Only after this time in the wilderness would God give the land to His people.

But some of the Israelites did not listen to God's words. They tried to go into the Promised Land. When they did, they were attacked by the Amalekites and many of the Israelites were killed or wounded.

Do You Remember?

1. What did God want Moses to do before leaving Mount Sinai? _____
_____.
2. The Israelites complained because they had no _____ to eat.
3. God sent _____ into the camp of Israel.
4. What happened after the Israelites ate the quail? _____

_____.
5. Miriam became a _____ because she and Aaron complained about _____.

6. How long did Miriam have to stay outside the camp?
_____.
7. How many scouts were sent into the land of Canaan?
_____.
8. The scouts found a large cluster of _____ that had to be carried on a _____ by _____ men!
9. Which two scouts gave a good report? _____ and _____.
10. How many years would the Israelites have to wander in the wilderness? _____.

KORAH DISOBEYS GOD

Later, as the Israelites wandered in the wilderness, a man named Korah started complaining about Moses. He and others thought that Moses and Aaron should not be the leaders of Israel. Korah, Dathan and Abiram and several other men had also forgotten the lesson of Aaron and Miriam. Now they would have to learn that lesson.

Korah soon caused many of the leading men to believe that Moses and Aaron should not be leaders. They wanted to be the leaders themselves. So one morning they all gathered in front of Moses' tent.

"You are not better than we are," Korah told Moses. "Why do

you put yourselves over the people as leaders?”

Moses was saddened to hear this from Korah. He told Korah and the others to go to their tents. “Tomorrow morning God will show who He has chosen as the leader of His people,” Moses added.

The next morning, Moses told the people to stay away from the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. The people obeyed and hurriedly ran for safety. Then the earth began to tremble. A deep hole opened in the ground next to the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. Then the three men and their families fell into the shaking hole and the ground closed over them. But God was merciful and saved the children.

Then bolts of fire struck and killed all those who followed Korah. Once again, God showed the people that He had chosen Moses to lead the Israelites.

WATER FROM A ROCK

After the death of Korah, the Israelites continued to wander in the wilderness. God continued to protect the Israelites and keep their clothes and shoes from wearing out.

Many years passed, and the Israelites finally returned to a place

near the land of Canaan. When the Israelites camped there years earlier, there was plenty of water. But now the water was gone.

“What will we do?” the people complained. “We will all die without water!”

The people soon became angry at Moses and gathered outside his tent. Moses and Aaron knew that they would need God’s help. They quickly went to the Tabernacle to ask God what to do.

“Take your rod,” God told Moses. “Then you and Aaron gather the people together, so they may see you speak to the rock. It will then pour out its water.”

But Moses and Aaron had become angry with the people. Instead of speaking to the rock, Moses hit the rock twice with his rod. When he did, God brought water out of the rock.

Soon there was a stream of pure, cool water rushing beside the camp. But Moses and Aaron knew they had disobeyed God.

“I told you to speak to the rock,” God said to Moses. “But you disobeyed. Instead, you struck the rock with your rod.

“Since you have failed to give honor to Me for the miracle,” God continued, “I will not allow you

and your brother Aaron to enter the Promised Land.”

Moses and Aaron were very sad, but they knew that God was right. They had sinned.

A few months later, Aaron died. Before his death, God told Moses to go with Aaron and Aaron’s son, Eleazar, up to a nearby mountain top. There God made Eleazar the new High Priest.

A PLAGUE OF SNAKES

The Israelites were almost finished with their journey. But they were still making the same mistakes they were making when their long journey began nearly 40 years earlier.

As they traveled along, they again began to complain. “Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread or water! We do not want this manna for food!”

God was angered by their complaining and sent poisonous snakes into the camp. The snakes went into people’s tents and throughout the camp. Many Israelites died from the bites of the snakes.

The people soon realized their mistake and came running to Moses for help. “We have sinned by speaking against God and against you, Moses,” the people said. “Ask God to take these snakes away from us!”



Moses prayed and asked God to take away the snakes. God then told Moses to have a large, bronze snake made and put on a pole in the middle of camp. Anyone who looked at the bronze snake would be healed of the snake bites.

GOD GIVES ISRAEL A NEW LEADER

Moses knew that he would not be able to go into the Promised Land. Moses also knew that the people would need a good leader, one who would look to God for help.

God told Moses that He had already found such a man. It was Joshua—one of the two scouts who had given a good report about the Promised Land. Joshua had been loyal to God and Moses for many years. Moses knew Joshua would be a good leader.

Now Moses had only to give the Israelites final instructions from God. Moses told the Israelites what God wanted them to do once they entered the Promised Land. He also reminded the people to stay close to God and to keep His commandments.

One day, God told Moses to go to the top of a high mountain that overlooked the Promised Land. From there Moses could see where

the Israelites would soon be living.

“This is the land I promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,” God said to Moses. “I have let you see it, but you will not go into the land.”

Soon after this, Moses died. Joshua now became God’s chosen leader over the Israelites. In our next lesson, we will learn what happened to Joshua and the Israelites as they began to enter the Promised Land.

Do You Remember?

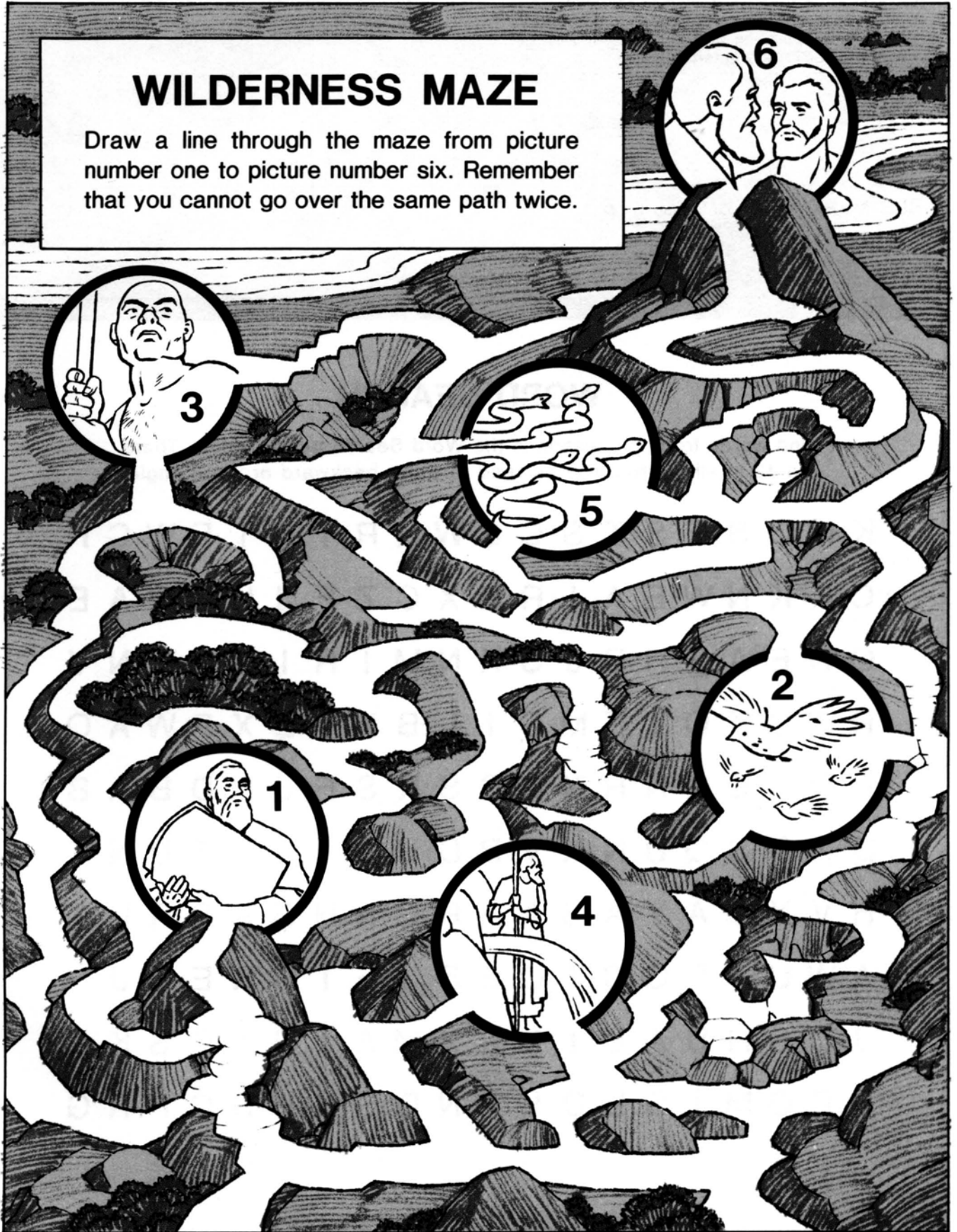
1. _____ started many Israelites complaining about Moses.
2. God commanded Moses to _____ to the rock.
3. What did Moses do after God told him to speak to the rock?

_____.
4. What came out of the rock?
_____.
5. God sent poisonous _____ into the camp of Israel.
6. What did God tell Moses to make so the people would be healed of the snake bites? ____

_____.
7. Who became the leader of the Israelites after Moses’ death?
_____.

WILDERNESS MAZE

Draw a line through the maze from picture number one to picture number six. Remember that you cannot go over the same path twice.



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BIBLE MEMORY

Galatians 5:14-15

WORD SEARCH

Find words from this lesson in the Word Search puzzle below. There are 12 in all. Words may be read forward, backward or at an angle.

K M O S E S T S C S W Q R Y P I E W C P
C K K N W E A I R N X C Z F J H W O A E
O W E A E H B J S K N M I R I A M W N V
R W O K O I E M S I L B N V Z X P W A Q
B H G E Q N R N C S S K S F J H D B A B
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