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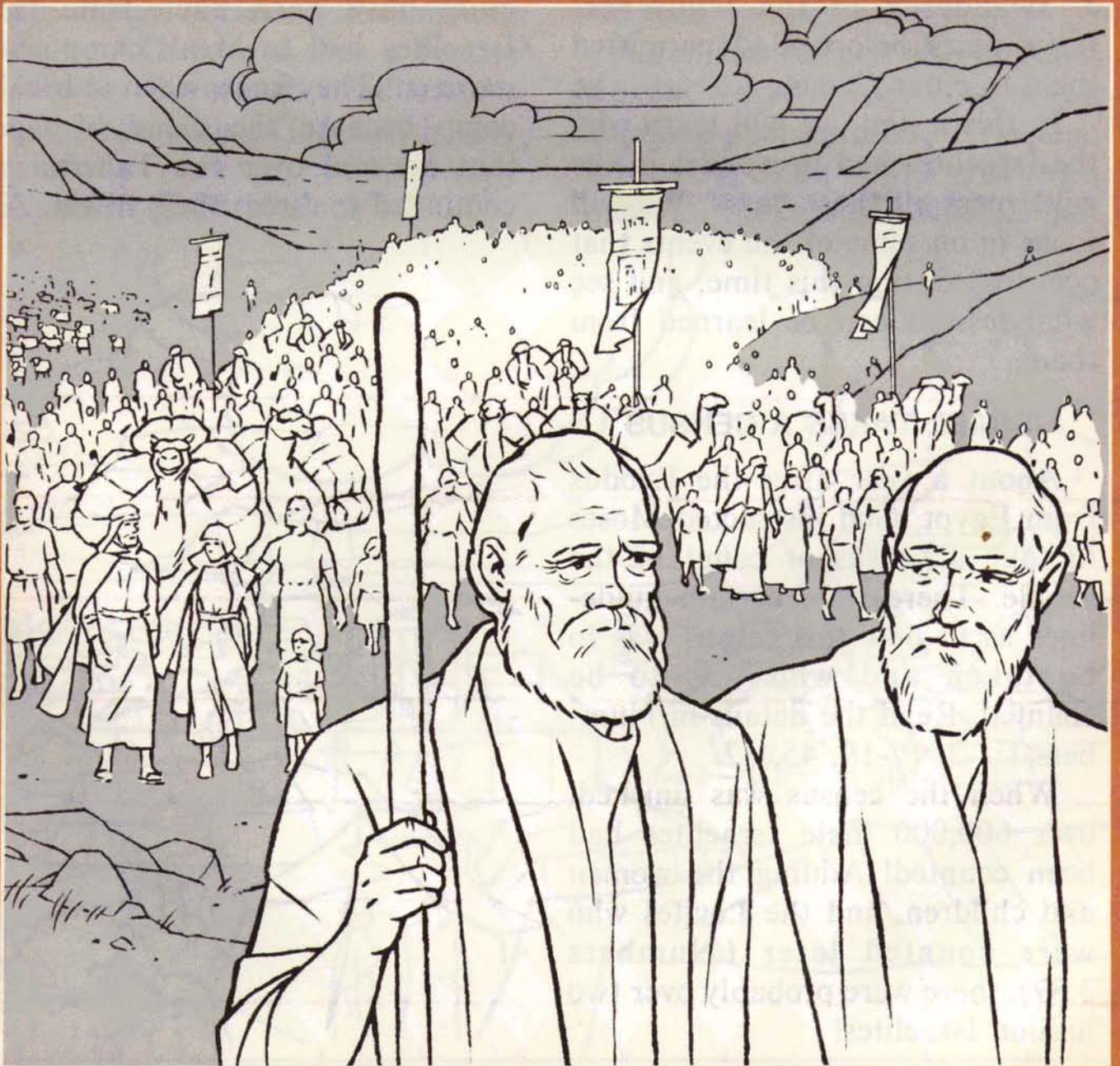
LEVEL 4

BIBLE

LESSONS



LESSON 7



The Wanderings of Israel

THE WANDERINGS OF ISRAEL

After leaving Egypt, the Israelites wandered in the wilderness forty years before God permitted them to enter Canaan.

In this lesson, we will learn why the Israelites had to wander in the wilderness all those years. We will focus in on some of the events that occurred during this time, and see what lessons can be learned from them.

ISRAEL TAKES A CENSUS

About a year after the Exodus from Egypt, God instructed Moses to take a census or count of the people. There were certain guidelines as to how this census was to be taken and who was to be counted. Read the details in Numbers 1:1-2, 17-19, 45, 47.

When the census was finished, over 600,000 male Israelites had been counted! Adding the women and children, and the Levites who were counted later (Numbers 3:39), there were probably over two million Israelites!

Imagine what a difficult task it must have been each time the Israelites had to break camp and move on! They knew when to break camp because the cloud of God that hovered over the Tabernacle continued to direct their travel. As



long as it remained over the Tabernacle, they camped. But, whenever the cloud rose and began to move, the Israelites knew it was time to leave.

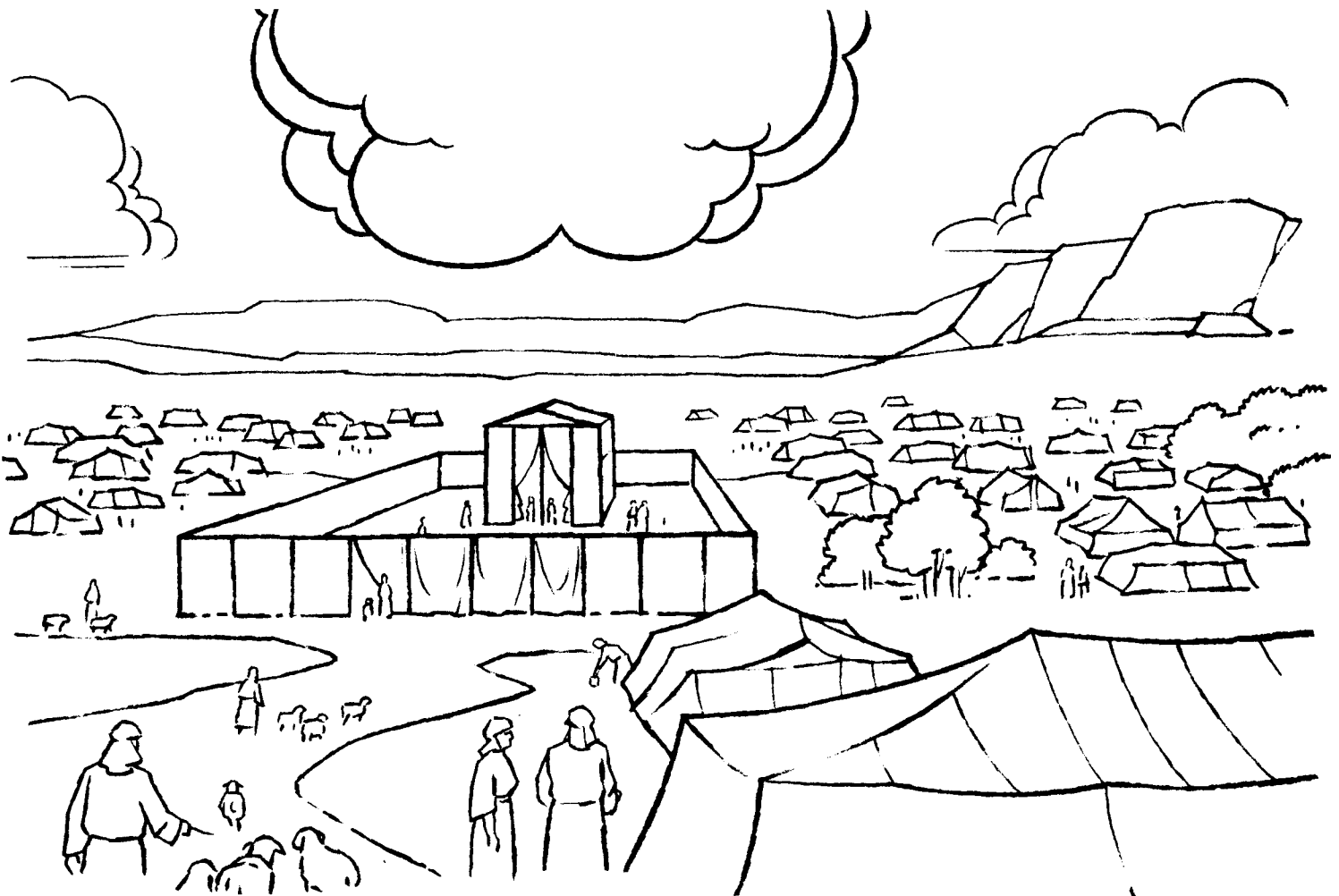
With such a large number of people, everything had to be done in a precise and orderly manner. So God showed Moses how to organize and assign duties to the various families. There was even a certain order in which each tribe left the camp. Everything God does is very carefully planned, without any confusion (I Corinthians 14:33).

MIRIAM AND AARON CRITICIZE MOSES

Moses' brother Aaron and his sister, Miriam, became quite upset because of the Ethiopian woman he had married. They spoke against Moses and criticized him.

"Moses should never have married that woman," they said.

Aaron and Miriam also said that Moses was taking too much authority upon himself. "Has God indeed spoken only through Moses?" they said. "Has he not



spoken through us also?”

Aaron and Miriam should have known better than to be critical of a servant of God—especially the one that God had put over them in authority.

Suddenly, God spoke to Moses, Aaron and Miriam. “Come to the Tabernacle at once!”

After they entered the Tabernacle, God told Aaron and Miriam to step forward.

“Listen carefully,” God angrily told them. “I am the One who chooses My servants. Let me assure you that Moses is My servant. I speak directly to him, not through dreams or visions. Why, Miriam and Aaron, were you so foolish as to speak against My servant Moses?”

As punishment for their sin, what happened to Miriam? For the answer read Numbers 12:10 and fill in the blanks. “And the _____ departed from off the _____; and, behold, _____ became _____, _____: and _____ looked upon _____, and, behold, she was _____.” (Leprosy is a deadly disease. You may wish to look up the word in an encyclopedia to learn more about it.)

Aaron said to Moses, “Please help us. Please don’t hold this

foolish deed against us. Ask God to heal our sister.”

Moses then called out to God, “Please heal Miriam. Be merciful and forgive her and Aaron of their sin, and take this horrible disease from her.”

God answered Moses, saying, “Because of Miriam’s disrespect for authority, she must be sent away from the camp for seven days.”

Having spent that week thinking about her sin and repenting, Miriam was brought back into the camp, completely healed.

Aaron and Miriam learned an important lesson—that criticizing and speaking evil of God’s servants is rebellion against God’s government. It is the same as speaking evil against God.

SCOUTS SENT INTO CANAAN

After Miriam was brought back into the camp, the Israelites moved further north. The cloud led them to an area called Kadesh.

When the Israelites had set up camp there, God instructed Moses, saying, “Choose twelve leaders—one from each of the twelve tribes. They are to go ahead into the land of Canaan and bring back a report of the land.”

Moses then passed on the information to the twelve men he had selected. "You twelve are to go up into Canaan as scouts," he said. "Carefully observe everything. View the land and see what kind of people dwell there. Note whether the land will produce good crops and what types of buildings there are. Bring back samples of the crops that grow in the land. Be brave and of good courage, for God is with you!"

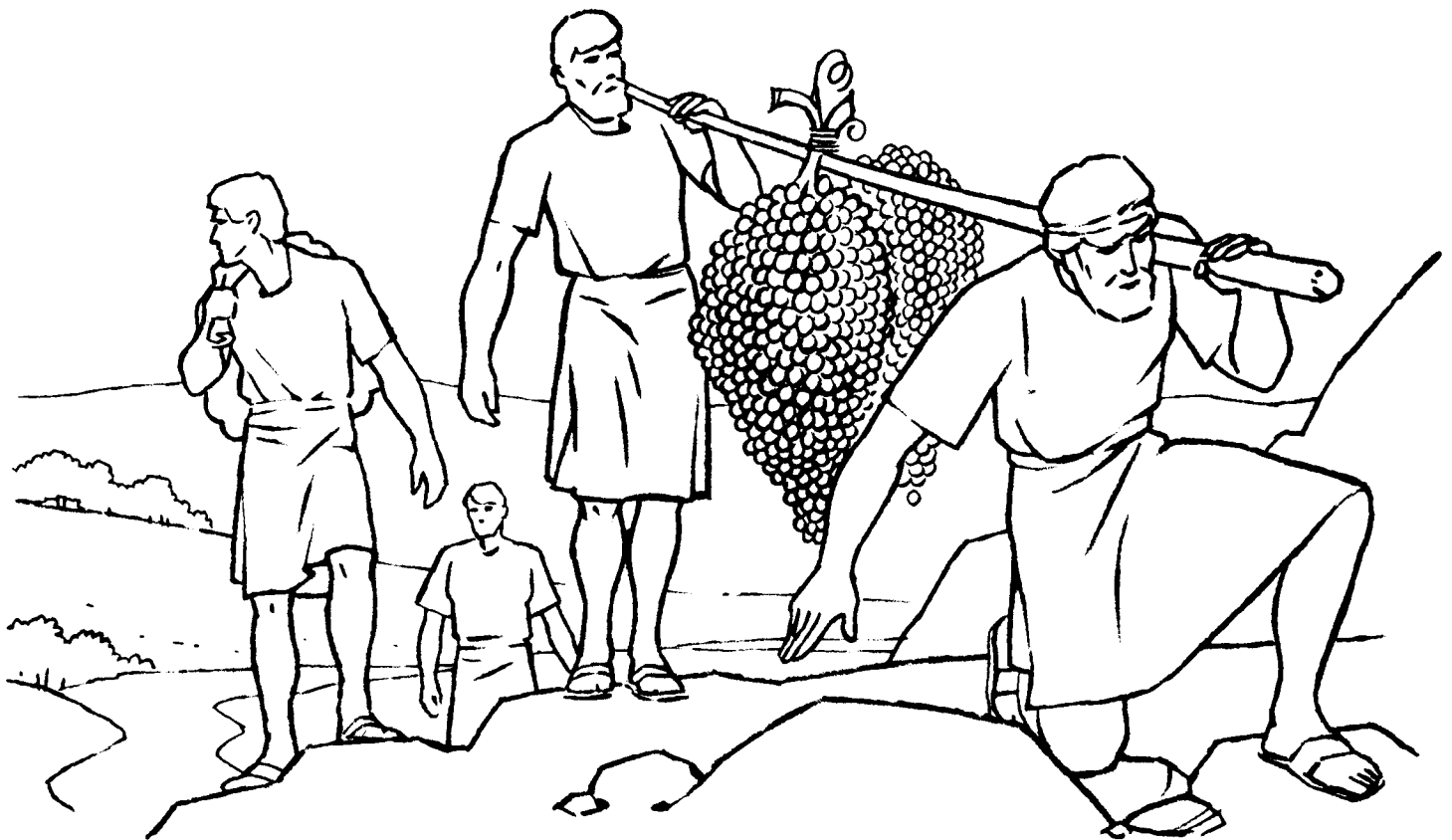
After many miles of traveling through the blazing sun, the scouts reached the land of Canaan. They could not believe what they saw!

The land was beautifully green and rich with fine crops.

At one point during their journey, the scouts cut a cluster of grapes from a branch. The cluster was so large, they had to hang it on a pole which was carried on the shoulders of two men!

As the twelve men proceeded through the various cities, they took careful note of how numerous the people were, and whether they were warlike, peaceful, strong or weak.

At the city of Hebron, the scouts spotted men who looked taller than ordinary men. As the scouts came



nearer and nearer, the men appeared taller and taller. The scouts' eyes grew wider as they realized that these men were giants almost twice their size! These giants were the descendants of Anak, the father of a race of giants (Numbers 13:22).

During their expedition, the scouts gathered figs and other food samples. They finally returned to camp, forty days after their departure.

TEN SCOUTS TELL A LIE

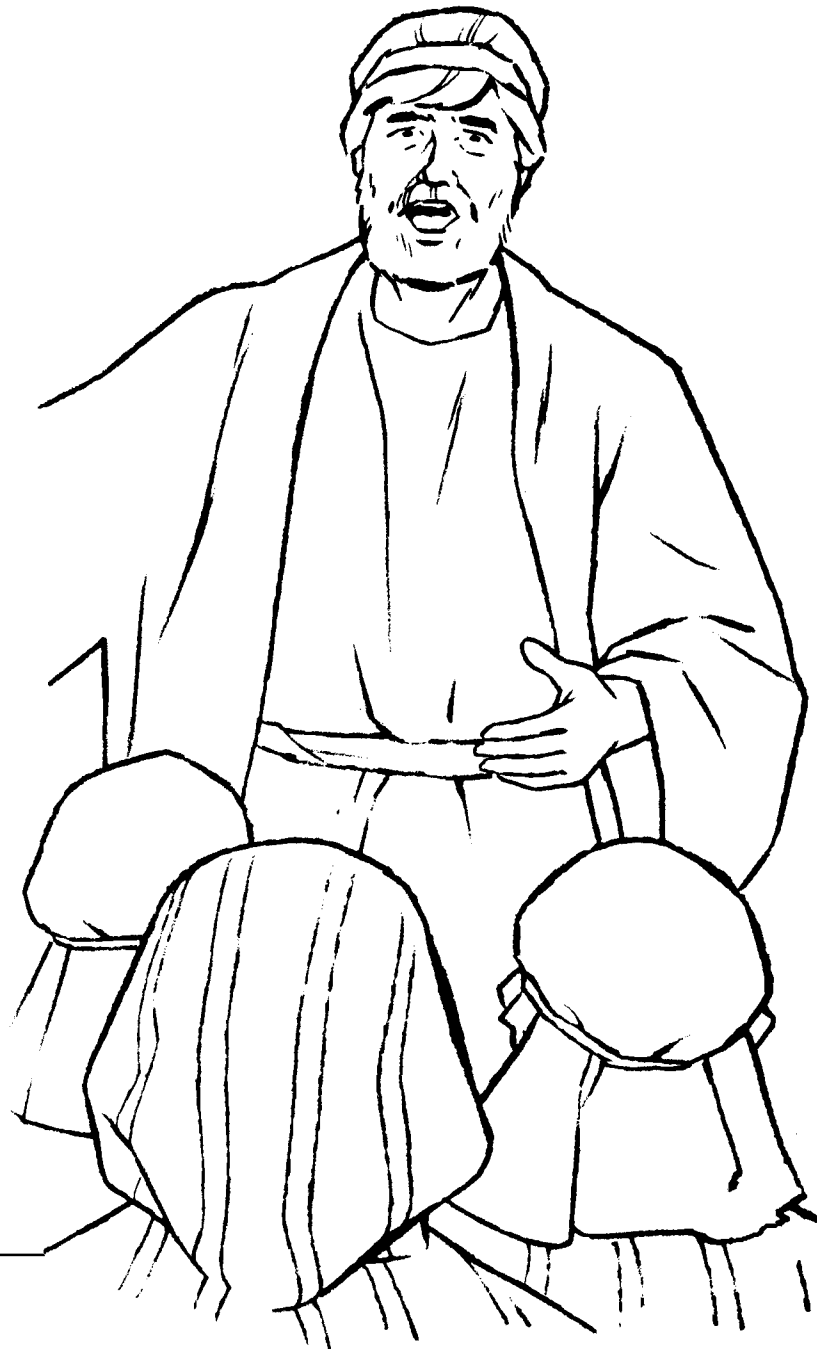
As leaders of the expedition, Joshua and Caleb were the first to report to Moses. "It is a good land," they said. "Large areas are fertile, growing abundant crops as you can see from what we brought back." After giving more details, they then gave the other scouts the opportunity to add to their account.

"The land is fertile as Joshua and Caleb have said," added one scout. "But they did not tell you that the men we saw were all giants. The cities have tall, thick walls around them with large armies behind them."

The people listening to the scouts were startled by what they heard. Panic soon set in. Caleb, the scout from the tribe of Judah, stepped

forward and tried to quiet the people.

"Please listen to me!" he shouted. "This man you just heard does not speak for all of us. He is lying. Not all the cities have high, thick walls and not all the people are giants. God can help us overcome anyone in Canaan!"



The other ten scouts continued to add lies about what they had seen. Only Joshua and Caleb told the truth and had faith that God would take care of any obstacles along the way. Read Numbers 14:7-8 and fill in the blanks. "And they _____ unto all the _____ of the _____ of _____, saying, The _____, which we _____ through to _____ it, is an _____ land. If the _____ delight in us, then he will _____ us into this _____, and give it us; a _____ which _____ with _____ and _____."

Many of the Israelites continued to complain and express their desire to return to Egypt. Some began to talk about finding a new leader.

The crowd grew more restless and soon began throwing stones at Moses, Aaron, Joshua and Caleb. More stones and heavier stones began to pelt them, when suddenly a blinding flash of light came from inside the Tabernacle. As the ground shook, the shouting ceased.

Moses pleaded with God not to kill all the people for their rebellion. God extended His mercy and decided to spare them. But they

would still have to pay a penalty for their sin.

God told Moses that even though two years had passed since the Israelites left Egypt, and Canaan was only a short distance away, they would spend another thirty-eight years wandering in the wilderness.

The Israelites would wander in the wilderness a total of forty years. That would be one year for each day that the scouts searched Canaan. During that time, all those who were then twenty years of age and older, except for Joshua and Caleb, would die in the wilderness.

The people also witnessed another example of the seriousness of lying and stirring up rebellion. The ten scouts who lied about Canaan suddenly collapsed and died!

Not wanting to wander in the desert thirty-eight more years, many of the Israelites left early the next morning and tried to enter Canaan against God's orders. But they found themselves in the middle of an ambush. The Amalekites and Canaanites slaughtered most of these rebellious Israelites. A few who were severely injured made it back to Kadesh to tell about their horrifying experience.

These examples are recorded for us in the Bible so that we can learn from them. It is best to learn from the mistakes of the Israelites and not to repeat them ourselves. Let's try not to be like the Israelites who were constantly being punished for their rebellion and disobedience.

Do You Remember?

1. God instructed Moses to take a _____ or count of the people of Israel. The male Israelites alone numbered over _____.
2. _____ was stricken with a terrible disease called _____ after she criticized Moses.
3. Criticizing and speaking evil against God's servants is _____ against God's government.
4. Moses sent _____ scouts to search the land of _____.
5. Only _____ and _____ gave honest reports of what they saw.

KORAH WANTS MORE AUTHORITY

Not long after the Israelites finally left Kadesh, another terrible event occurred.

There was a man named Korah who was a first cousin to Moses

and Aaron. Korah strongly felt that he should be in a position of great responsibility. His desire for more power and authority grew to the point of wanting Moses' position as leader of all Israel!

Over a period of time, Korah was able to convince high-ranking Israelites that Moses and Aaron had too much power. Eventually 250 Israelite leaders agreed to join him and his three friends Dathan, Abiram and On. These men were envious of Moses and Aaron and conspired against them.

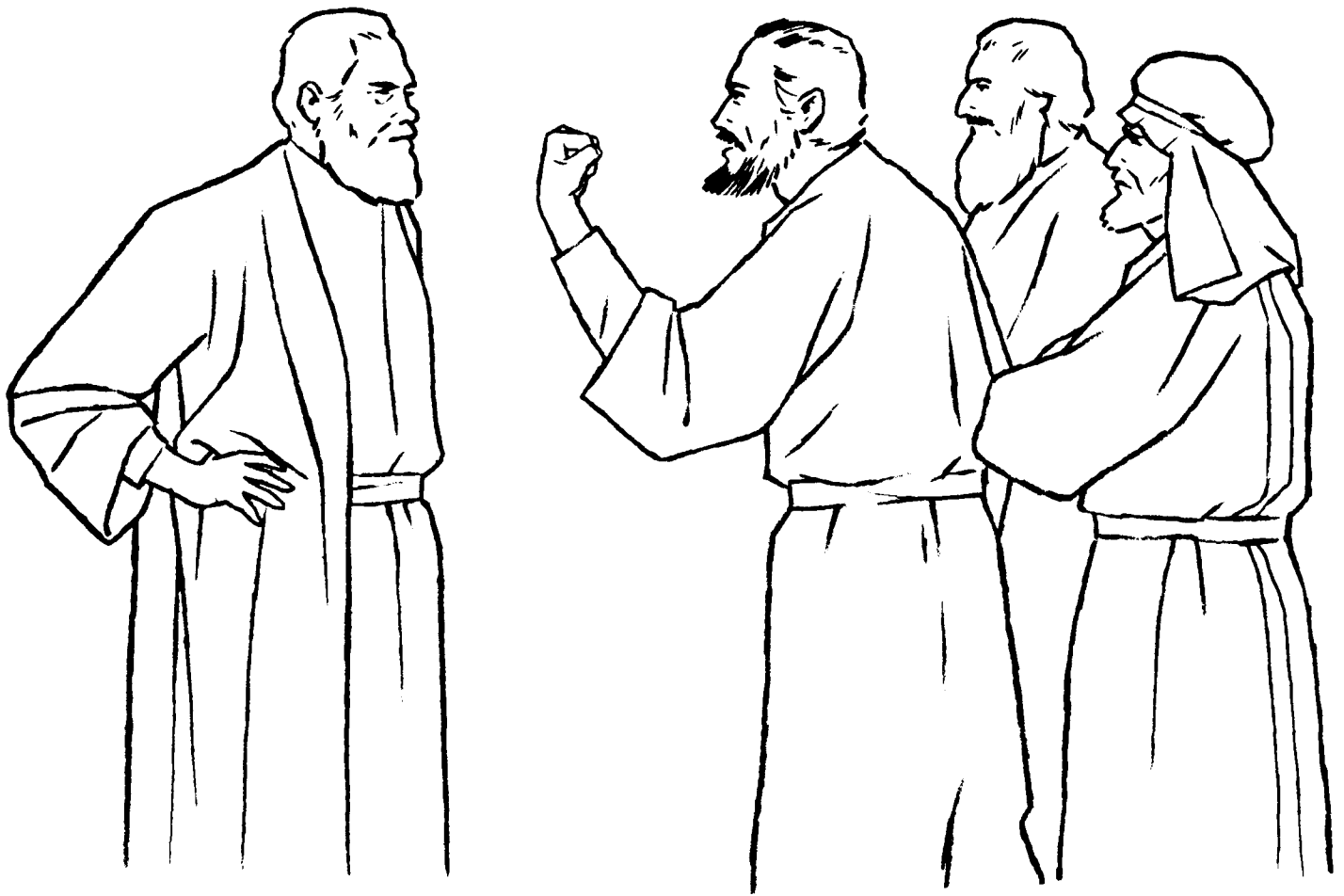
One morning, all these ambitious men gathered before Moses' tent. With Korah as their leader, they came to demand of Moses that some changes be made in the government.

Korah said, "Ye take _____ upon you, seeing all the _____ are holy, every one of them, and the _____ is among them: wherefore then _____ ye _____ yourselves _____ the _____ of the _____?" (Numbers 16:3.)

They accused Moses of taking too much authority upon himself.

Moses was quite shocked by this attitude and knew he must seek God's help.

Moses turned to Korah and said, "Go home. You and your followers



return in the morning with censers. Aaron and the priests will do the same. God will then show us whom He has chosen as His servants.”

In the morning, God saw that Korah and his followers were still in total rebellion against Him and His government. God told Moses and Aaron to separate themselves from the people, for He would soon destroy them all. But Moses pleaded with God not to punish all the people because of the evil deeds of a few.

God then told Moses to warn the people to stay away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Soon the earth began to tremble and a deep pit formed next to their tents. All at once, the three men and their families, except their children, were swallowed up by the earth! What a horrible sight to behold. Many Israelites frantically fled for their lives!

Then, bolts of fire suddenly struck and killed all 250 of Korah’s followers. How plainly God shows

us that rebellion against His government will not be allowed!

MOSES LOSES HIS TEMPER

The Bible doesn't give many details about the movement and activities of the Israelites during the years that followed Korah's rebellion.

We pick up the story again just months before the forty years of wandering is fulfilled. Those who were under twenty at the time the scouts gave their evil report thirty-eight years before, had since grown up. They would soon enter the Promised Land, the land of Canaan.

The Israelites were now camped at Kadesh. When they were camped at Kadesh many years earlier, there was plenty of water. But conditions had changed in thirty-eight years, and now many of the springs had long since dried up.

Faced with a severe water shortage, a large crowd gathered outside Moses' tent.

"We want water!" they shouted.

"Why have you brought us out here to die?" others cried.

As Moses and Aaron listened to the angry crowd, they realized that they needed God's help. They

immediately entered the Tabernacle and bowed their faces to the ground in prayer.

In Numbers 20:8, God told Moses, "Take the _____, and _____ thou the _____ together, thou, and _____ thy _____, and _____ ye unto the rock before their _____; and it shall _____ forth his _____, and thou shalt _____ forth to them _____ out of the _____: so thou shalt give the _____ and their beasts _____."

Moses took the rod and walked toward the rock. The people were still very angry and quickly gathered around Moses and Aaron and followed them.

As Moses stood with Aaron on the rock, he angrily shouted to the mob, "Listen you rebels! Must we fetch you water out of this rock?"

Moses then lifted the rod and sharply struck the rock twice. As water gushed out from the rock, the crowd shouted with delight.

But God was not pleased with Moses and Aaron. Their attitude was not right. They seemed more concerned about teaching Israel to respect them rather than showing God's power and causing them to respect Him.

"I told you to speak to the rock,"



God said to Moses. "But you let your anger interfere with my instructions. Instead, you struck the rock as if your way was better.

"You and Aaron gave the people the impression that it was through your power, and not Mine, that water would come from the rock.

"As a result of your disobedience and failure to give honor to Me for the miracle, you and Aaron will not be allowed to enter Canaan with your people!"

Moses and Aaron were terribly

disappointed, but they knew they had sinned. They repented and God forgave them, but they still had to pay the penalty.

We can see from this incident that God is not a respecter of persons, no matter who they are. God expects obedience from everyone, including His chosen servants.

Look up the following scriptures, which show that God is not a respecter of persons, and then fill in the blanks.

Romans 2:11: "For there is _____ of _____ with God."

Colossians 3:25: "But he that doeth _____ shall _____ for the _____ which he hath done: and there is _____ of _____."

The more we know and understand God's truth, the more He expects of us. We cannot afford to think we are better than others just because we know God's way. We have a greater responsibility to obey God and keep His commandments.

Even though Moses and Aaron were not permitted to enter Canaan, they will undoubtedly be given great responsibility in the government of God in the World Tomorrow!

