



# Shaqah

*“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”  
Colossians 2:8*

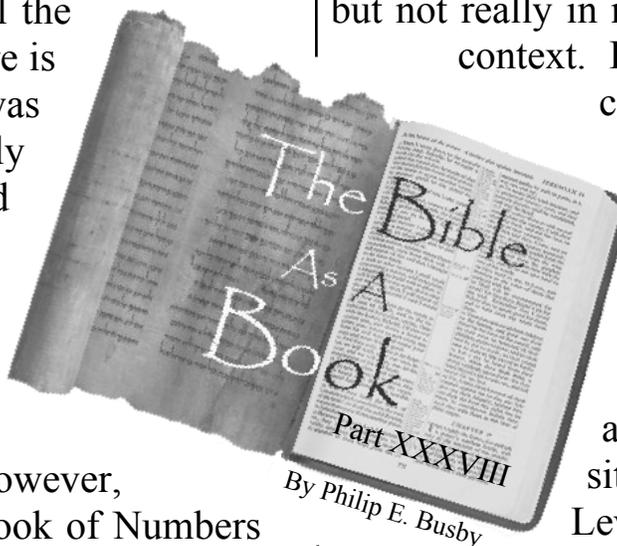
In our last segment, we finished our overview of the book of Leviticus, and this brings our study to the book of Numbers. Of course, the book of Numbers is the fourth of the five books of the Torah, and again is a book written by Moses. As we began our study of Leviticus, I made the statement that of all the books in the Torah, there is no argument Leviticus was given to Moses directly by God. This was based on the fact Leviticus is composed almost entirely of direct commandments from God which Moses was to give to the people. However, when it comes to the book of Numbers we are, of course, still talking about a book that was given by God, but it's more of a recording of events where God instructed the nation than it is just direct commandments!

While not disputing the idea that all five of the Torah books really are law, there can be little argument Genesis is almost pure history. This is true of a large

part of Exodus as well, because even the ordinances in Exodus are given in the framework of telling us commandments that were given and then subsequently carried out in a real-time kind of way. When it comes to Leviticus, we do have some things happening in a real-time way but not really in much of a chronological context. It is done more in the

context that a certain incident took place which precipitated God giving or being asked to give instructions for how to handle such situations, and God's answer to the situation is then laid out. Leviticus is just more of a

pure law book in that if a person wants to know how the various day by day operations should take place or be handled at the temple or among the people, Leviticus is a good place to look for raw instructions which should be applied. This is why the book has a name directly associated with the tribe called to the priesthood. Numbers now takes us back to more of the Exodus way of laying out



laws, but there is an important difference. Numbers also has some unique qualities to it, and part of that aspect is why it has the name it does.

Of course, Numbers is named for the fact it has a lot of exactly that - numbers. With the truth of it being given in a framework of day by day living, it also has a lot of information one might simply describe as a how to organize the chosen nation handbook. This is in no way saying it is just a book of statistics, because that is the uniqueness. It may be hard for some people to see it this way, but Numbers tells us more about the facts of how things were carried out from the perspective of the people. In this way it gets back to a more historical feel, but unlike Genesis where, more times than not, we are following the lives of specific people important to the story of how it all came to this, or Exodus where we are dealing with making the children of Israel into a nation, Numbers talks more to the point of being an individual living in the nation. Thus, the name "Numbers" is not really about the idea we are given statistics, but that while Moses would need to continue to lead the nation, the individuals, who were numerous, had to start taking on the daily tasks of following, and in doing so, congealing into what God's commandments were trying to form them into! The fact the people, or at least certain individuals of the nation, very quickly let this truth go to their heads, shows how the people needed experience in the Law. The nation as a whole were/are the chosen nation of God, but this did not mean they had outgrown their need to learn and be

taught by Moses. The fact various incidences took place where people stepped out-of-bounds and a heavy price was paid, along with things that show us Moses and Aaron now stood in a bit of a different position once the Law was in place, are dealt with in this book.

Maybe the best way to think of the book of Numbers is to say we really make a transfer from a bird's-eye view of looking at the nation for what it was being shaped into, to a more on the ground walk among the people, point of observation. This inevitably brings us to times and items some find very mundane, but I like to encourage people to read this book more from the understanding I just pointed to. As the book opens and we are told of the specific offerings brought by each tribe, instead of thinking about this as just reading through redundant numbers, the details of which could have been condensed by simply saying each tribe's leaders brought so much of this and that, think about it as if you are watching each tribe bringing these items and presenting them to The Lord. While reading through the placements of the tribes around the tabernacle and their numbers, think about if you were in Moses' shoes, one of the leaders organizing all this, or just an individual living it. If you've read through the preceding books, you should be able to close your eyes and think about what the tabernacle generally looked like, which direction the gate faced, etc. Think about if you were a mother, father, or child who was part of this tribe or another waiting to hear where your camp should be set up.

What I'm saying is, the difference is in the fact the book of Numbers is where we stop just talking about the how and why a nation specifically was formed in order to serve God's purposes and start talking about what happened after it was! Generally, this is where the Bible really stops telling us why we need a specific perspective only a God-created culture could bring, and starts giving us the chance to live that culture - so to speak. Now, I don't mean to suggest that all people should come to live as the Jews lived, live, or your own interpretation of what living under the Law should look like. Far too many people easily slide down into this kind of thinking, and it ends up becoming something individuals, groups, and/or whole organizations start teaching as necessary for salvation. The fact God limited many things to only those in the nation, as well as the fact much of the Law is impossible to follow without the temple, shows us that's not what God wanted to accomplish by giving the Law. However, using the information that is given from here forward to figure out how to live your own personal life among whatever culture we may live in, while also gaining a clearer view to see the plan of God coming to pass for the world as a whole, is a big part of what the Bible was given to us for!

This truth is why I've said there is much we need to learn by watching the unfolding developments of the Jewish people. At the same time, I always warn that my teaching can seem to be harsh on

the Jews. Ironically, I've dealt with both sides of this issue as I have been accused of giving them too much credit at times, as well as being too hard on them at others. The point is, we must understand that to the Jews these Laws were given, but they were given so we could all take time to put ourselves in the shoes of the chosen nation in order to see the world from a specific perspective, which God could then focus on showing us the truth through. This is why I say the most important aspect of all is that we remain Biblical. Now, what does that mean? It means no matter how much we may study what the Jews have been, what they have come through, what they have become, what the religion of Judaism teaches, and what their interpretation of God's Laws teaches, only the actual Bible can give us the truth of what is right and what is wrong. Whether Jew or non-Jew, we can agree and even highly respect much of what the nation stands for, teaches, represents, etc. We can also vehemently disagree, but what we never can dispute and always need to be reaching for is what does the Law actually teach! All physical ordinances of the Law aside, what was it actually intended to bring out in an individual life? Therein lies the key to obtaining a true perspective God gave us His Word to form!

Numbers takes us specifically to the point that it's not about judging the Jews for what they have and haven't done right. It's not about questioning any people or individual. It's about questioning ourselves! It also is not about finding a

legalistic way to live our lives that will appease a god who wants us to complete certain formulas or accomplish certain goals. It's about looking into the nature of The One True God, seeing His thoughts, which are not our thoughts, and His ways, which are not our ways. (Isa. 55:8) Looking at the nation of chosen people is about seeing just how hard it is to live in God's ways in a world that continually insists on running contrary to them. Seeing how sometimes the nation's failures were due to pure disobedience, and sometimes they were about not taking the time to have the right perspective before acting, is important. Sometimes life is about being left with no choice but to do the best we can in following God in whatever circumstances our choices have brought us to. The chosen nation has faced this truth and demonstrated both failure and success in it on many occasions, even right before our eyes today!

If we really get the point, the Bible is about showing us what might have been and contrasting that with what has actually taken place. It's about seeing how God dealt with certain individuals very harshly, not because they did something so much worse than another, but because of the mindset in which they took their actions and the responsibility expected of that person, while others, who did what in our eyes might seem much worse, were given grace beyond our belief. As I said before, it's about making it personal and walking in the shoes of those in the nation to gain a deeper insight and right perspective that can guide our daily choices as we live, and the opportunity to do this starts, in earnest,

right here in the book of Numbers!

Moving to more technical issues about Numbers, I'll repeat another thing I said in talking about Leviticus, and that is how there was no point in really discussing the time period between it and the book of Exodus, because chronology was/is not what Leviticus is about. This remains true in discussing any time period between Leviticus and Numbers. Leviticus simply ends by telling us that what we've just read are the commandments God gave as Moses talked with Him at Mount Sinai, and Israel was expected to follow them. The book of Numbers goes back to giving a specific year and month for the beginnings of what the book tells, and because of this we can go back to look at how Numbers' time period lines up with the book before Leviticus, which is Exodus. If you go back to the end of Exodus you find it ends with the setting up of the tabernacle for the first time, and its last words are almost like the ending of a story in that it tells how when the pillar of cloud/fire lifted from the tabernacle, Israel followed it; and when the pillar stopped, Israel stopped to set up camp. It's as if to say, "and that's how their lives went on from there!" However, if we back up to the seventeenth verse of Exodus' last chapter, we are told the final event truly described - which was the setting up of the tabernacle - happened on the first day of the first month of the second year of Israel being free from Egypt. Thus, that is where we are in the timeline at that point.

Comparing that to the book of

# Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

In our last segment, we talked about the decision Abram and Sarai made to have a child using Sarai's handmaid Hagar and many of the ramifications this choice had, including the fact Hagar herself was not willing to submit to the typical position of a handmaid in this situation. This brought us to the story of Hagar fleeing Abram's house and being met in the way by an angel who explained to her what a mistake it was to run from the situation. The angel also assured Hagar the child she would give birth to would be a great people, and he speaks to the kind of people they would be. This brought us through Genesis chapter 16 verse 12, and we will begin this segment with verse 13.

Verse 13 begins to tell us Hagar's thought pattern after the angel had apparently left her. One interesting note to keep in mind is that the angel in no way returned Hagar to Abram's house. Getting back, and thus the decision to go back or go forward with her original intent for coming out here in the first place was totally up to Hagar. Hagar would obviously recognize she had spoken to an angel of God and give credit to the fact God had heard her cry. In return, she would serve God and do as she was told by the angel. Because she felt this way, she would name the well where the angel met her "Beer-lahai-roi." The meaning of this name can be interpreted as being, "The well of the vision of life."

However, the reason for why she named the place this is better shown in interpreting the name as simply meaning, "The well of Him that liveth and seeth me." This, of course, is to point out that God truly lives, and while this is a truth we may keep in our minds, it is one we often don't keep front and center as we get caught up in our day by day lives. Hagar was caught up in the circumstances of the moment and not looking at the long-term situation as she ran from Abram's house. God, Who has an indisputable view of what the future held, had sent His angel to show her the long term was more important than the moment of discomfort. This was truly being the God Who heard and knew her situation, for He had a vision of what life overall is about, which is something we are too small to see.

Verse 14 tells us this is, in fact, the name the well ended up keeping, and gives us some details to help us understand where this is located. The fact the well keeps this name shows us how much this incident with Hagar was not trivial. Just how often do you think a woman in that day and culture was allowed to name something as important as a well and have the name stick? It could be said that Ishmael's later presence in this area had some to do with this, but this well is, at the very least, part of the realm of influence that Abram (by then Abraham) had at the time Rebekah is brought back to marry Isaac. Isaac even seems to be specifically living around this area by that

time, and Genesis 24:62 records, "And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahai-roi; for he dwelt in the south country." To be clear on the fact this is the same place with the same name, I'll point out the place is identified as a well. This means the "Beer" part of the name would be redundant to use here. You could simply translate this verse as saying Isaac came from, "the way of the well of the vision of life," and there is something very appropriate that the initial meeting of Isaac (Abraham's son through Sarah) and his new bride would come very near this same place where the angel had turned back Hagar, who was at that time carrying Abram's son Ishmael.

Now, verse 15 is something we covered last time in talking about the fact Hagar returned and gave birth to a male child just as the angel had said she would. Also, that son's name was, in fact, called what the angel had told Hagar it should be in spite of the fact Hagar would have been the lowest person in the situation to choose the child's name. This is especially true when considering this was the son born so Sarai could have a child through Abram who would be the heir to the house. While God gave grace to Hagar, it is also true that Abram and Sarai had come to terms with the fact they had made a mistake. In many ways, it was as if the child at this point was very clearly Hagar's son to take care of and claim as her own. While I know Abram's later words in speaking with God might indicate to some that Abram was still looking to use Ishmael as his heir, I don't believe this was the all of what Abram was saying.

Again, we return to the fact of how small we are and how even a man of such great faith as Abram was still human! Abram was, for good reason, overwhelmed at the fact God still intended to bring a son through him and Sarai at the age they had reached by that point in time, but Abram's words in chapter 17 verse 18 are more about the idea that he did not wish to see Ishmael left out than they are about hoping God would not actually perform the miracle of giving him another son directly through Sarai. Abram believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. (Rom. 4:3) Thus, when looking at what some see as doubt in Abram and Sarai, we must put our feet in Abram's shoes and think about what verse 16 of chapter 16 tells us. Abram was 86 years old even by the time Ishmael was born, and Sarai was only 10 years younger than him. It would be another 14 years before Isaac would be born, so how would you feel if you were in this situation? Could you hold on to God's promise without even so much as a doubt? Yet Abram and Sarai had to hold on to the fact God was going to do what He said, and them trying to take matters into their own hands was not right in spite of how hard it was to wrap their heads around the way it could still be possible for the two of them to have a child!

This is the point we leap ahead to in starting chapter 17 verse 1, for we are told in this verse Abram was 99 when God, once again, comes to speak to him about the development of the chosen nation. Even at this age, God's instructions to Abram are to, first off, recognize that God was The Almighty and not just some general power. This was not an accusation that Abram did

not already recognize this fact; this was the truth we all still face. No matter how long we live and serve God there is still more of Him we need to know. There is still a greater depth to how much we can understand that He and only He is the all powerful God Who created everything and can do anything! The next thing God says to Abram goes hand in hand with this, as God tells Abram to walk before Him in perfection. Abram, for all the years he had lived, still had the day by day choice of walking before God or going his own way.

I just keep saying it because it is a point so many in our modern religious thinking have forgotten or never understand in the first place, and that is - as long as we still live in the here and now we are not saved! Why? Because we can choose at anytime to turn from God and walk in a path that is not in a relationship with Him. There is no magical ticket of salvation we can obtain and carry with us. We do not build up points toward salvation which if we obtain enough of will make up for the fact we chose toward the end of our lives to forget about our faith in God. For all Abram had been through, he still needed to choose to walk with God day by day. He also needed to strive for even greater perfection than he had already achieved, which was greater by far than most of us can honestly claim to be even close to. Growing in the knowledge and wisdom it takes to be perfect as God is perfect is a job without end, especially in a world of continual strife and sinfulness!

Verse 2 keeps us on that track of

talking about Abram not having an heir at this point other than the fact Ishmael had been born. God tells Abram that if he will continue to choose Him, God would make His covenant with him. That covenant also had directly to do with multiplying Abram, not just in a minor way, but “exceedingly.” This had to do with building that chosen nation. Abram was not just about having an heir for his house to continue, but an heir to the covenant that would create a great nation of people! Upon hearing this, Abram, very humbled by the fact he stood before the direct blessing and presence of God, fell on his face. God goes on to speak to the point of Abram having a choice, in emphasizing that as far as God was concerned, He had made up His mind Abram was the man. There was to be no doubt that if Abram was not the man through which the covenant came about, it would not have been God's doing but only because Abram refused to follow and trust God to see that this great task took place.

In other words, Abram was not in competition with anyone else for the job. The timing in what was going on in Abram's life was happening in a way that was still just as God intended it to happen. God was not looking for Abram to prove himself in some way before God was willing to use him. This is an overlooked point in the story, because, again, if we were in Abram's shoes, we would likely be wondering if the fact we had done something or failed to do something was the reason it seemed the ball had not really started rolling as yet and the promised heir had not been born! Again, let us not forget

that Abram was almost 100 years old at this point. His human mindset had to be wondering what the reason was for God making such great promises to use his life while allowing what seemed like a very large part of his life, and certainly his youth, slip by without much of anything happening in the way of developing a large family, much less anything that might resemble a nation!

It is here that we finally come to that point I have continued to emphasize in this study that it actually took many years into Abram's life to get to. It is here that God gives the words to Abram that his seed would not only become a great nation, but Abram would be the father of many nations! As much as Abram might have wondered how even the promise of a nation could come through him, now God was making clear Abram would father many nations. God just keeps emphasizing how solid His promises to Abram were no matter what the outward circumstances might make it appear. Abram's life would spread out to effect the world generations far beyond him, and verse 5 is where the big moment happens! In this verse, God physically emphasizes the fact by changing Abram's name. Remembering it took long into Abram's life for this revelation to become the big story is why I have tried to continually use the name Abram, in talking about the verses leading up to this point.

You see, just as we talked about in the naming of Ishmael, parents are responsible for naming us. In the case of Ishmael, of course, there is the fact God had told Hagar what the name should be; but for most of us, our parents name us simply

based on various criteria affecting them at the time. Traditionally, parents of many cultures tend to name their children on the basis of something that surrounds the circumstances of the child's birth. This can be such a thing as something a mother sees directly after giving birth to the child. This was often the case of native Americans, and why people who speak English think natives had names such as running horses, or soaring eagle. In truth, the name of the person was a word the English tongue had trouble pronouncing and there was/is no way to translate it into the weak language English is, except to literally say what the name meant.

Now, in other cases parents named children on the basis of what they thought the child meant to them, or would mean or do in this life. We often see this in the naming of children in the Bible. Most of Jacob's sons were named for the circumstances that surrounded the fact Rachael and Leah had gotten into a bit of a competition with each other over bearing children for Jacob. However, because English is such a weak language, as is the case with so many of the languages of our world today, there can be little done to name a child with this kind of expressiveness today. Thus, modern parents will often pour through books of children's names looking at what a name means in order to pick something. Others will just go by what they think sounds good or one that, for whatever reason, they believe "fits" the child. Then there is very often the naming of a child for the simple fact some other family member had or has the name.

# What About God's Chosen People?

## Part XII

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

*"Is it true that the Jews are God's chosen people? I have a Christian friend who says the Jews were not God's chosen people."*

In our last segment, we came down to talking about what a force the Greeks became as they took over the empire, not just in the aspect of power, but in culture. While the Greeks made very quick and sudden changes to the world through the work of Alexander the Great, his death brought what might seem like a weakness in the one world government idea. However, what it revealed was that centralized government did not turn out to be such a driving force behind unifying the world as culture! This is an interesting point because there are hundreds of years between the Tower of Babel incident that caused man to separate one from another, and that had everything to do with why various cultures exist. While the Assyrians seemed to have a view of diverse cultures being a problem with uniting the world, they believed the way to combat this issue was through forcefully intermingling people to destroy the uniqueness of various cultures. When this backfired on that empire and the Babylonians took power, they chose total force and centralization of government as the solution.

In fairness, the Babylonians found that for them force worked quite well, but it still angered those they ruled over as well as

those they threatened; and when God opened the door of opportunity, the Medes and Persians came sweeping in. As we have discussed, this empire tried to embrace diverse cultures instead of forcing them out, but they still wanted to centralize power over the world. This angered the Greeks and led to the Medes and Persians' demise. It would sound downright ignorant to say the Greeks did not believe in force; but Alexander, being the most successful in using force on a military level since the Babylonians, either believed in converting culture through the simple spread of the Greek culture, or he just wanted to share what he believed to be the superior and/or helpful culture of the Greeks across the world. One way or another, this led to a revolution that happened, in many ways, right under the noses of the factions who fought for control of the Greek empire following Alexander's death.

As these Greek kings fought between themselves for governing power over territory, the common man, who they seemed to pay little attention to, was becoming enamored with the Greek culture itself. Some might argue this is not how it happened because these kings were very into the Greek way of doing things. However, their actions were more in the simple arrogance that most of the empires had, which was that their culture was simply the best and anyone with half a brain would see it. It was not actually until a time into

their rule that anyone seemed to truly pay attention to the fact people were responding to the idea Greek culture was an attractive thing, and certain rulers realized what an advantage in maintaining an empire they had right in front of them!

Why does all this matter to our study of the Jews being God's chosen nation? Simply put, for all the work people like Ezra and Nehemiah did to stress the importance to the Jews that they needed to be a peculiar people, the Jews were by no means immune to the Greek allure! We have some, and will talk more as we go, about the fact certain Greek rulers did make forceful attempts to cause their culture to be the only culture. However, it is very important we be clear on the fact that long before any Greek power attempted to force the Jews to abandon the Laws of God, there were already those in the nation who believed this was the way to go! The truth we must keep in mind is that the Greeks had the success they had at pinning down (or believing they could) those of the chosen nation who refused to totally give up God's Laws for Greek culture, because the Greeks had support for the base idea of making all the world Greek among people living all throughout their empire, including the Jews!

This is where our study turns to a term that is commonly used to refer to the process of making the world Greek, and that term is "Hellenization." Many may be familiar with this term while others may not. However, if one asks why understanding this term is good for this study, it is because the term has roots which go all the way back to the Greeks' beginnings as a people, and going over the

basics of the story should give a good perspective on why there were those among the Jews who believed the Greeks' ways could be integrated into, if not simply replace, the Word of God!

Now, I hate to turn back the clock on our study, but we have to return again, at least for a minute, to the Tower of Babel and talk about a subject we've talked about before. I've always thought that outside the fact we have so much prophecy in our day coming to pass before our very eyes, one of the biggest things that proves the Bible is true is that all cultures tell the story of the flood, and that event was followed very quickly by the confounding and the separation of people across the earth. It is only logical that after the confounding various people's stories go off in various directions, but the flood is the major event they all can go back to as if it was the beginning of the world we now know, and in many ways it is!

On that thought, one of the things I find most interesting in looking at the myths of various cultures is the fact they tend to intermingle the creation story with the flood of Noah's day to the point Noah coming off the ark was the creation. In many cases this is because people didn't know or did/do not want to admit that God had to destroy the world with a flood because man's sinfulness had become so great. Those who don't want to maintain the truth resisted it right from the start with the Tower of Babel idea, and even the "church" does not like, nor often does it teach the truth of man's corruption correctly. This is because people don't know how to elevate humanity out of a situation where The One True God of creation had to

come down to destroy it because man tried to go on without God in their lives, in the same way they still desire to this day, and it led to utter corruption. To do so leaves no room for man's self improvement without total surrender to God. Thus, in many cases the story is not that there was a world before the flood (at least not one where people were just like us) that failed to handle the responsibility the knowledge of good and evil brought. Instead of an ark that the one righteous man left on the earth walked out of with His family and the animals, which had all survived only because of a plan God gave in order to provide humans a second chance to get it right, the story goes that something such as an egg hatched and out of it came all that is living, including man himself, or at least the people that gave birth to the world of people that now exists.

I also like to point out how much we still attempt to simply twist the story today and call it scientific. The modern theory of evolution says there was some big bang that took place and everything evolved from there by a miracle far harder to accept than the fact there is a God Who created everything. Then whether a flood or a natural disaster caused by a comet or the like, there was an event that took out the great lizards which were evolving to rule the world and made room for the evolution of humans to be the dominate species. All this desperation to explain our past without totally throwing away all of the story line the Bible tells us is the truth, speaks to why the Greeks had a culture that became so popular. Especially in the earlier days, so close to the flood and Tower of Babel event,

the facts about there being a flood and only one family surviving was well known. Greek mythology, instead of attempting to ignore the fact there was a pre-flood world, recognized that man was corrupted. However, it tells the tale in a way that says the humans on this side of the flood didn't just get a second chance but a rebirth - so to speak.

The part people really like is that it still avoids admitting mankind is a being created by an Almighty God Who has the right to judge us. It does this by winding together a story that, in the end, says humans descended from gods themselves for the most part. What is even better is that the mythology begins with the base idea that what was suppose to be powerful gods, actually ended up being displaced by their later offspring. This part of the tale gives humans hope that they too can one day rise up to displace, equal, or at least outgrow the need for any god(s) and become the ultimate masters of themselves, if not everything! This boils down what Nimrod and his cohorts at the Tower of Babel tried to instill as a way of keeping humans together, which was an attempt to teach that humans could literally outgrow their need for God, into a very workable story line. As seen through humanistic eyes, the Greek ways had real potential to bring the world back together and reverse the effect of the confounding of language. Even the Greek language itself was an attractive, sophisticated, and organized language people desired to use; so Greek culture seemed to have it all. This is what the beast has been and is all about to this very day!

Now, here's how their story backs up to get us to where the term "Hellenize" came from. By the time Greek culture began to be spread, the Greeks had a collection, or what we term a "Pantheon," of gods that lived on Mt. Olympus in Greece. There were twelve of these gods, and the male deity Zeus was basically the guy in charge. That guy thing I just said is important because that's the other element of the Greek gods that really attracted people. Most of the world's gods were animals, part animal, and/or just the powers of nature such as the sun, moon, wind, etc. Even the depictions of these gods, or what we'd call idols, that came to be looked at as the rulers of such powers, often had animal or part animal forms or some varied imagery. However, the gods of the Greeks, while some had their strange fanciful features, were at their core the epitome of human form in ways many even today would agree was/is a prime specimen. The females were the picture of ideal feminine beauty, and the male gods were images of athletic and muscular men. The images of those in the pantheon that varied from this truth were done so as a simple way to denote this god or that god's failure in being one of the true "good guys," or some aspect of their character/nature the Greeks felt needed to be emphasized.

Now, the story of how the Olympic gods came to be is that there were gods before them called Titans. These gods were not everything one would want in a god, so the Olympic gods destroyed, imprisoned, and generally did away with most all of them. Where did these Titans come from? Well that's the part of the story that really fits with what the rest of the world already

believed because, not going into all the details, the Titans were basically the result of there being primordial gods just doing their thing. The two major primordial Greek gods are the basis of all false religion, including evolution, telling us there is no True God and all this just came about in a way that means we don't have to answer to anyone. Why? Because ultimately the sky is our father and the earth is our mother. This is why environmentalism is looked at so wrong. It's not that God gave us a home we have a responsibility to be good stewards of, it's only the physical truth that if we don't take care of the planet to some degree, we will find ourselves with no livable environment!

False religions the world over feared the power of the sun, or sky in general, and mother earth had to be appeased in order to be blessed with food and shelter. Even those at the Tower of Babel believed this basic idea! However, in the Greek mythology they are just what they are, powers just doing what they do for the most part, and their creation of the Titans left the Titans with no obligation to respect them. No matter how much they may have had to face the fact these primordial gods were in truth, powers, the challenge for the Titans was only in how to harness the power for their own use. The same would go for the Olympic gods brought about by the Titans. The Titans had made plenty of mistakes, and the Olympic gods were almost obligated to deal with those mistakes. If you're a human who desires there to be a higher power that can provide great things for you, you want that power to be something that is not perfect, because then you have an opportunity at self-

improvement not just without them but in spite of them. There really is no moral obligation unless you feel inclined to become so powerful yourself that you can deal with the mistakes the higher powers may have or might make. That's a story most humans like immensely!

This is where the flood story comes into play. The primordial gods were basically places or things. Male deities, such as the sky, and female deities, like the all too familiar mother earth, gave birth to Titans. Two brothers out of the Titans named Prometheus and Epimetheus are important to our story. Two other Titans, a male and a female of course, would give rise to twelve gods of Olympia, but Prometheus is generally credited with creating humans to begin with. At the same time the Olympian god Zeus is said to have directed the gods in piecing together what Greek mythology claims to be the first woman, named Pandora. She is a mirror of Eve, for Eve was first in taking of the fruit God told Adam humans were not to take of. We clearly see this in that Pandora is famous for opening a box (which is said to actually be a bad translation of the fact it was a bottle) that released the evil of and/or on humanity. Prometheus' brother Epimetheus got together with Pandora and gave birth to a female named Pyrrha. Prometheus paired up with an inferior female deity (the category of which I won't go into an explanation of here), and gave birth to a male named Deucalion. In all this we already see an intermingling of gods and humans.

Next is the part of the story that really elevates the Olympic gods, because this is where we see these later gods actually being

portrayed as the more intelligent and responsible ones, if you will. Humans, as they had come about by that time, weren't doing so good. Thus, the Olympian god Zeus is said to be responsible for destroying humans with a flood. Of course, most all the evil Zeus was destroying was caused by Pandora's irresponsible actions and was not really to be blamed on all humans, or the idea of humans existing. However, Zeus was tired of how high-minded the lowly irresponsible humans had become! This is in sharp contrast to the words in Genesis that tell us it grieved God that He had made man because man had chosen sin over the righteousness God desired to teach them from the beginning. (Gen. 6:5-8) While God was saddened by the fact His righteousness demanded He not allow humans to continue in this way and the only answer was to destroy His most precious creation, Zeus gives post-flood humans a need to outgrow their gods if for no other reason than to protect themselves!

Again, to shorten a story, Deucalion and Pyrrha are said to be the only two survivors of this flood, other than the gods themselves, of course. How? Deucalion's father Prometheus is said to be able to see the future, and he had warned his son to build a chest in which Deucalion and Pyrrha could ride out the flood, which they did. In the end, the chest finally landed on the only mountaintop that had not been covered by the water, and Zeus' deluge was not a permanent condition on the earth, so dry ground was eventually available once again. This is actually a quite accurate portrait of the ark because the ark was not as much a boat, like many are taught, as it was a gigantic box made watertight. Its purpose

was not to be sailed but to survive by bobbing on the water's surface. The other obvious part of the story is the mountaintop landing. God's Word tells us God had to cause the waters to recede for Noah to land on Mount Ararat because the flood had covered even the highest mountain, but the concept is the same as to where the post-flood world for humanity started.

Where the important difference comes in is that the Biblical story tells us God found one righteous man and saved humanity using that faithful servant, who would save himself; wife; three sons; and their three wives, by following God's instructions. What the Greek myth leaves one with are two individuals, who essentially escaped, whether worthy of it or not! However, these two survivors were also not just human but descendants from the gods themselves. Both their fathers were Titans, and Deucalion's mother was a being of power one way or another. While Pyrrha's mother was Pandora (the one responsible for releasing evil in the world), Pandora was said to be formed by each of the gods contributing something to her creation!

One interesting note about Pandora's box (or bottle) is that the one thing she kept inside was hope. Her daughter and son-in-law would now have the job of bringing hope to the earth, as everything had been destroyed by the flood. It is said that after consulting with wise powers, the two found they could do so by throwing the bones of their mother over their shoulders. This was concerning until they realized their true

mother was the earth, not the latter gods that had "birthed" them! Thus, they only needed to throw rocks or dirt over their shoulders and the earth would restore life according to their desire. Some say this is how human life was restored as the rocks Deucalion threw became men and the ones Pyrrha threw became women. However, what is interesting is that one way or another these two beings are credited with directly giving birth to a very familiar number of offspring - six. Three boys and three girls!

This Greek myth gives us exactly the same number of people to repopulate the earth as what the Bible tells us came off the ark. If one goes with the story that the rock throwing created other people, this just helps with the long held humanistic idea that there are superior people and inferior people living intermingled on the earth. The inferior humans are the ones who the earth just brought about, and the superior humans came from the six offspring of the two individuals who descended from the gods and survived the flood. This is the point where we finally get to the Hellenization term, because the Greeks believed they had descended directly from one of the three sons. The truth is they were right in that at least the original people who left the Tower of Babel for the region of the world the Greeks lived in descended from Noah's son Japheth. However, the name of the son the Greek story gives is Hellen! Thus, all "true" Greeks were called "Hellenes," and the spreading of their grand ideas to the rest of the world came to be known as Hellenization.

In all this we need to be clear on the fact that for all the contamination the truth had suffered, the basic knowledge that all groups of people came from a family or couple who survived a worldwide, or at least a great flood, was still intact by the time of Alexander. Literally cultures the world over have some kind of flood story, but God was ahead of all this contamination in giving us the true story in His Word, which He made readily available by entrusting it to a specific nation that He located at the crossroads of the world and even took into the very heart of the arising beast. Thus, what we see is not that the problem was the true story became completely lost and unavailable, but that many people are just not seeking and, in many cases, don't want the truth. What they want is a story that gives man power to do his own thing without God's "interference." The false narrative of the Greeks gave what man generally wanted, and still wants, but with an organization that other cultural myths lacked and which the humanistic mind liked a lot!

The whole idea that our originating forces were powers that could be manipulated, gods could be outgrown and/or overthrown, because at least some humans were practically gods to begin with, was very attractive. The thought there were inferior humans that need to be ruled over by gods or godlike rulers who were practically obligated to organize ruling governments over large populations was excellent, and it all was taking man back to the obligations of the Tower of Babel! Of course, there would always continue to be fighting over who the ultimate ruler(s) should be. However, that brings us to what

might be the most attractive thing about the Greek story, which is something the religions such as the Egyptian's lacked. The Greeks thought of all true Greeks as being superior humans, but beyond that typical truth it did not really attempt to define who the godlike humans were in all. In Egyptian thought, only Pharaoh's, possibly their families, and priests were godlike or superior; but in the Greek thinking, godlike qualities were determined through things such as athletic ability. Their games, which honored the Olympian gods, were not even like our modern iteration of these games in that there was no first, second, third recognized with medals and records to be broken. They were more about every competitor striving to be their best. This is a thought our modern games try to embody in certain ways, but the Greeks were the originators of the participation trophy. Wreaths of olive branches were given as prizes for participation as long as it was believed the person truly put forth their very best effort and honored the gods in doing so.

With or without the winners' podium, the point of the games were still to show who was strongest, fastest, etc. It was not to say everyone was a god or godlike, but the all inclusive thinking basically said anyone might be a god or godlike individual. If one doubts how purely this thinking goes back to the Tower of Babel's original religious thought which kept all people working together, one should stop to consider the fact that Nimrod was considered godlike on the basis he was a mighty hunter! (Gen. 10:8-10) People followed his leadership in some ways with the hope of gaining his stature. This also takes us directly into the most innovative part of the Greek idea, and

that is the government part. Though many will claim the Greeks were the inventors of democracy, no one can prove there was no other culture that did not believe in the idea that many of the citizens of a community should get a say. However, this speaks again to the fact the Greeks put it all together in a neat package. There was a balance between giving control to the people at large, which avoided saying everyone wasn't godlike or capable of it, and at the same time recognizing there were people who should be in governing power on the basis they were!

Democratic ideas may very well be the best way for people to attempt to govern themselves and a truth we will have to live with until The Messiah returns. However, the real truth is the very best form of government is also the very worst form of government because that form is a total monarch. This is due to the fact it all simply depends on who the monarch is. For all the human failings there have been some good monarchs, but the reason many fear this form of government is because a good monarch can very easily switch to being or having a very bad monarch at anytime. The fact this led many people to fear the power of a total monarch is why some of the world will moan when Jesus comes back to rule the world, for when He does there will be nothing any man can do about it. Nonetheless, we will then have a perfect monarch Who can and will rule everything in perfection whether anyone agrees or not!

That being said, the democracy idea was a key part to the Hellenistic thought

that made it so attractive because it deals, as well as anything can, with what the confounding of language had caused. This is why I stress when teaching the facts about the confounding causing people to separate across the earth in groups that divide along the family lines of the three sons of Noah, that God did not confound the language so man would do this! The choice to not separate at all was still in man's hands, but it would require people to settle down and begin to look at each other's ideas, not just be led around by those believed to rightfully be rulers. The fact man chose to separate along family lines shows man attempted to keep together the largest groups they could control, because if man was going to separate into distinct groups, it most logically should have divided along the lines of those who found common ground, interests, etc. Certainly the choice to fight with one another as opposed to allowing the free exchange of ideas between groups was man's idea; and while it might seem ironic or strange that the Greeks more than any of the other empires had so much infighting in light of all their unifying ideas, there is actually a good reason for it. No matter how much man may like to think and build philosophies that teach otherwise - humans need God!

Until next time, may we each continually choose to be the people God wants us to be!

***Questions submitted to the Institute,  
answered by Philip E. Busby.***

Simply put, the reasons and ways we receive our name in this life can be many, but the point is, your parents, or some human chose your name. This is true even in cases where individuals have changed their name to something else, essentially naming themselves. However, it is something very special to be given a name by God! Revelation 2:17 tells us each individual that makes it to that place Jesus said He was leaving this earth to prepare so that where He is we may be also, will be given a name on a little white stone. These will be names only God knows and are not revealed on this earth, so I am not suggesting the names God directly gave to the people He did are those white stone names. However, as much as the names we receive in heaven are about God saying to us we are truly His children, the names God gives to people while here on this earth are very special in making it clear God knows what our life will mean to this world as we live in the here and now!

In talking about what a name means, especially when it comes to someone's name such as Abram, it is only fair to point out we can not be sure if we understand what the name fully meant in the original language and at that time, because we might be seeing what the name came to mean in hindsight of what the person's life turned out to be. This is actually an issue with the name of Jesus. People make the argument our English spelling of the name, specifically the use of the letter "J," means we are not really using the true name the angel told Mary and Joseph The Messiah would be called. However, this is a simple misunderstanding of how Hebrew matches

up with Greek and eventually into English the name came. Some argue that even Yeshua does not include Yahweh, which is the closest we come to having a specific name for God in Hebrew. However, we must first be clear on the fact Yeshua is just a transliteration of the name. Transliteration is simply the attempt to take a word out of one language and into another, using the new language's letters in a combination that might cause the tongue to pronounce the word in a way that sounds more like the original language. With that, allow me to simply point out language is first and foremost verbal and transliteration does not often do a good job. Why? Because different languages simply sound very different, and that's the main reason we don't understand a person speaking a language we don't know.

I find it strange that the argument over the name often gets into how related the name "Jesus" is to the name "Joshua," when "Joshua" means, "Yahweh is salvation." Joshua transliterates to "Yehoshua," and Yeshua would seem to be just a slight shortening of this. The truth is that while many say Yeshua means just, "Salvation," the fact Joshua's name clearly contains a direct reference to Yahweh, means there's no reason to say Yeshua does not contain direct reference to Yahweh as well. Due to major linguistic changes over the centuries, no one can really say with certainty what the exact verbal pronunciation of the name The Messiah carried through His earthly life was. Thus, what people who argue about The Messiah's true name really lose track of is the hindsight issue and the way words come to mean things. Whether we use the

name Jesus or Yeshua, we are using a name that today we understand to mean “deliverer,” or as most would translate it, “Saviour.”

We need to simply listen to what Jesus said in John 5:39 “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.” In verse 43 Jesus says, “I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.” So before anyone goes off worried about whether they truly can be saved and/or respect The Messiah because they don't really know what to call Him in their particular language, just remember that Jesus came to lead us to The Father. In other words, He did not just come claiming to be a man with authority, but a tool in His Father's hand. If we understand this, it does not matter if we think Jesus or Yeshua or some variation of this needs to be used in order to literally translate to something more like, “The Son of Yahweh.” It is likely impossible to settle on a true word in every language that means something so solidly this, and/or teach everyone Hebrew; but we know The One True God does not make it difficult on us when it comes to identifying Him, for Moses was told at the burning bush, our God is, “I Am.” Jesus came to offer Himself as whatever we needed Him to be, and what we needed was The Lamb only God Himself could be!

Obviously, there is much more that could be said about this issue, but I have digressed from our point about Abram's

name being changed here in Genesis 17 verse 5, and I want to get back to the fact we may not know the fullness of what this name change meant. As we understand it today, the name “Abram” means “high father.” This was already a very appropriate name considering the job God had for him to be the father of the chosen nation, and again, I emphasize how much this was God's focus for using Abram's life. However, Abram was a man, and as a man he had made choices such as the one that brought about the birth of Ishmael. He would go on to make choices, not the least of these would be to take another wife after Sarai's death and have six more sons. (Gen. 25:1-4) God had made a covenant with Abram which He wanted Abram, as well as future generations, to know was rock solid. God would bless and prosper everything Abram did. There would be a son born to accomplish the task of creating the chosen nation, but all the sons of Abram would become more in this world than just another individual. Thus, God would add to Abram's name calling him “Abraham.” For all intents and purposes this was changing the name to mean, “father of many.” God also points out in this verse, this is not just to say he would be the father of many people, but just as his name had meant “high father” in reference to the fact he would be the father of a chosen nation, changing his name to “father of many” is in reference to the fact he would be the father of many nations!

This had to be astounding to Abram, and is part of the reason God led up to this by telling Abram to just keep striving to be

more perfect. God will not put on us more than we can bear; but when He chooses to use us, He often pushes us further than we might expect. Why? Because God loves us and wants us to grow. There is no better way to grow us than to use us and push us further than before. In doing so, God causes those who truly desire Him, to grow ever upward in our righteousness, because we know the stronger we become the more easily we can handle the load that is put upon us. Now, this may sound like a way to break most people, and God has no doubt been blamed by many an individual for pushing their life or the life of someone they know too far, and being the reason the individual no longer serves God. However, this is why God tells us He does not put more on us than we can bear. (I Cor. 10:1-13) Unless we want to accuse God of being a liar, we need to remember, if God allowed it, it was something we could handle! If anyone uses it as a reason to walk away from God, it was their choice not to be used of God in the way God desired to use their life, not that God pushed the person too far! This is the truth in that we each have to make our own choices, and choosing to serve God is not just about going to heaven to live forever, it is about wanting to be what God created us to be!

Now, getting back to our verses, God tells us what I just covered above about this name change, which is that Abraham would be fruitful in all he did, not just in that one specific way God wanted to use him in making a chosen nation. Many nations, ruled by their own kings and not just under the jurisdiction of others, would come from Abraham. Verse 7 clarifies another important point in that the covenant

God was making with Abraham would be not just with him but with those who would come from him. This, again, is that point about how much all this was not just about Abraham being a great man of God whom God wanted to bless, but about an overall plan of God in and for this universe! God even specifies He will be their God in each of their generations. This is an important point because in God needing to chastise those He loves, the future would hold many events that in the human mind would seem both good and bad. (Heb. 12:5-18) The misunderstanding, ignorance, or all-out refusal to believe this is why it is easy for some in our modern time to claim God has rejected His chosen nation and replaced it with something such as the church. If we believe what God tells Abraham here, we know this is a fallacy, because God says this is an everlasting covenant. It does not matter what happened in and among all those who can't claim direct blood relationship to Abraham. There is nothing in these verses that tells us God would be no one's God but those who came through Abraham! However, for those who are part of this covenant, whether they like, accept it or not, the God of Abraham is their God!

Of course, none of this is to say everyone who is from Abraham will be saved, for only those who choose faith will be saved at the end of this world. What it does mean is that there is a responsibility the seed of Abram has, and they will not just be judged on the basis of this responsibility, their lives will be used in ways God would not use others, even if they choose not to listen to God. This truth shows up in no greater way than in the chosen nation itself. As I have talked about

on many occasions, no matter if the nation was attempting to serve God or rejecting Him, God was still using them to accomplish something in His plan. This is something only God could calculate without violating man's free will, but the specific example I like to go to is that people will tell you the nation of Israel fell not long after Jesus came because they had rejected The Messiah. The truth is Jesus was sent when He was because He was their last and certainly best hope of not falling. Would it have made a difference if they had accepted Jesus? Of course, but just exactly what the outcome of this would have been we can only speculate on. What we should see clearly is, the falling of the nation would have happened when it did, even if Jesus had not come at all.

Verse 8 is where we see a very physical part of the promise, and this part was in no way new. God told Abraham that the land he stood on, which was the land of Canaan, would also belong to Abraham's seed. This had been part of the promise since those first instructions to Abraham about leaving the area of Mesopotamia to come here. This was primarily because God intended this land to be the steady home of the chosen nation, and certainly this southern region where Abraham mostly lived and journeyed in would be the home of the nation, even at times when the rest of the land wasn't really held by them. However, the fact Abraham would be the father of many nations would ensure that his descendants would always hold the lion's share of all this land.

Through history one can point to different times when this land was ruled over by those who would not immediately be recognized as Abraham's direct descendants, but it was still mostly populated by his seed, nonetheless. One can also look at times when the land was not well populated at all but the majority of those in the land were still Abraham's line, because no population outside Abraham's descendants truly survived as a people, nor were later people able to make this their home. This is why if we return to the truth that God is not a liar in any way, shape, or form, we have to believe the Jews ability to so miraculously return to this land in great numbers from all over the world today is proof they are the chosen nation. While the descendants of mostly Ishmael may be a great number of the population, God's explanation as to what kind of people they would be speaks to why they remained so prominent throughout history's shifts. However, if one applies the truth of the fact the Jews have been the only people in the world to more than once assert their presence in this area with great success in spite of Ishmael's descendants, it only emphasizes how much the Jews have to be the chosen nation or the Bible is just a book of fables!

Until next time, Shalom!

Numbers' opening words we see details, once again, about how the lives of Israel went forward after getting in place all the physical items necessary for living under the Law. Without moving from the spot where they first set up the tabernacle at Sinai, we are told God continues to speak to Moses, and the specific time is given as being the first day of the second month of the second year of freedom from Egypt. This makes it pretty clear that there is precisely one month from the last detailed event of Exodus to the opening events of Numbers. To be clear, this is not to say all of Leviticus chronologically takes place between these books, and the fact it is put between the two in the arrangement of the Torah should not be mistaken as this. Much of the Law given in Leviticus is necessary for the administration of the tabernacle right from the start, and was given to Moses alongside the instructions for how to build the tabernacle.

As I said, Leviticus is not about chronology or even - for lack of a better term - storytelling. However, I do think this is why Exodus ends with a kind of, that's the way it happened, wording. The end of Exodus focuses on how the tabernacle got built. Leviticus gives us details about the specific ordinances God wanted the nation to follow overall. This is why Leviticus even talks a lot about things the nation would not or could not do until they got to and settled into the promised land. This gives us a real picture of what the Law was trying to create and the kind of people the nation should end up being. At the same time, where Moses

leaves off in Exodus shows us the people still had to get there. However, that journey would not be like the journey to Sinai in order to receive the Law, that journey would be shaped by the Laws God had now given the nation!

The information in Numbers, as well as Deuteronomy, tells us what happened before we leave the Torah and get into those books such as Joshua, Judges, etc., which are truly considered pure books of history. It is no accident that Numbers is a separate book from Exodus because we have turned a corner at this point in spite of the fact Numbers begins just a month after Exodus ends. That being said, this might bring up the issue in some people's minds as to why the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy are still part of the Torah. Of course, some would simply point to the truth that both these books were mostly written by Moses and it's only logical that they be grouped with the first three. I agree this really makes logical sense when one stops to consider all five books of the Torah were written down and in place for who knows how long before the book of Joshua was truly looked at as even being "Scripture," but this simply speaks to a truth we have covered in this series, which is that the Torah is the true core and not just the beginning of the Bible!

Many would simply agree these last two books of Moses belong with the first three because they do still contain a lot of instructions or parts of the Law, and I agree this is the real argument for the fact they are not separated from the Torah as

just history books. That being said, there is a depth to this which we need to look at. As I already touched on, the books of Genesis and Exodus tell us the why and how the nation came to be, but these books of Numbers and Deuteronomy tell us what they did after being established. These last two books do more than just give us more ordinances in the framework of daily events, they take us back to the point of Genesis! Think about it, Genesis as a compact individual work, and to be even more specific we could look at just the first chapters before you get to Abraham and you'll see that fractal thing I like to talk about. For those not familiar with fractals, the shorthand is that there is an amazing phenomena in nature and man can even replicate it in art. If one looks at the overall surface of the earth you'll see all kinds of bumps because there are hills even mountains and valleys. If one looks at the surface of glass one would say it's smooth. The truth is, you're just not looking close enough. If looked at under a powerful enough microscope, the surface of glass is very rough and even inconsistent just like the surface of the earth.

No matter how deep or how far out man goes into God's creation, they find there are repeating patterns that for all the repetition, interplay to create a vast variety of things and systems! This truth can be shown in art. True fractal art starts with a specific shape and keeps putting that shape together until you end up with the same shape made up of all the smaller pieces of that shape. However, one can expand on

this in a variety of ways. One of the most popular things to do in our present time is to combine photographs of various things in a way that when one steps back far enough you can't make out any individual photo, but together they make an entirely different picture. This is because everything we see is made up of various colors or the lack there of. We pick up on depth of field in our vision by looking for shadow and light, and this is assisted by having two eyes slightly separated from one another. I know, some of you are wondering where the point is in all this, and the point is that God built the world so we could afford to interact. In other words, there are things we can depend on. How did man make it to the moon? By studying basic principles of physics which are constants!

This truth of repetition and dependability are not just so we can interact, but I want to emphasize the "afford" to interact, because that's the real point. I was just talking to someone the other day about the fact children in our modern time can play video games that are very real to life. For all the fun this can be, there is also a danger in that children more and more do not see the difference between real life and what happens in a video game. The big, obvious, and important difference is that when you die in a video game you simply press a button and start again. When you die in real life there's no coming back. If we lose this truth, which playing too many video games can do to us, we stop thinking about

the true consequences of our actions! Why? Because of that basic building blocks of all things truth. How we perceive things is made of the same stuff whether playing an interactive game we see on a screen or looking at the real world. When God created the universe He gave us an environment to interact with and a body with specific sensory perception in which to do it. Those perceptions our body experiences are processed by our mind which along with our soul is not physical and will not simply die when our body does. We can't press a restart button when we die, but this truth of mind and soul means physical death is a chance at a fresh start.

Adam and Eve were not going to die because they had The Tree of Life to eat from, but when they took of The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil they became responsible for knowledge they would not handle in perfection. This made it necessary for humans to die in order to have a chance at that fresh start without the mistakes we've made in this life forever dragging us down. That's the afford to interact thing I was talking about. However, the fresh start after death doesn't mean anything of value if in our lives we do not choose to return to the place where Adam and Eve started. At first glance that makes no sense because we can't return to where they were. Well, not exactly, but upon further review of the picture we see that is not entirely true because the plan of God has been working to get us right back to that place, and the building blocks of our existence are all based on the same principles. In truth, we still have the same

basic choice Adam and Eve had. We will have to choose if going back to the basic principles of living in a place of total submission to God's instructions for how to live our lives is something we want to do permanently or not. We show how we feel about whether we want this or not by the way we choose to respond to the relationship God is offering us to have with Him, and that includes the actions we choose to take as He instructs us!

This takes us back to my point about the book of Numbers. The children of Israel had to decide if they wanted to be God's chosen nation. On their journey to receive the Law, and even at Mount Sinai itself, they did some things that almost got them killed, but God spared them, mostly at the request of Moses, and they went on. By the book of Numbers we have moved into more of the part of their journey that represents the time in our lives between that point an individual makes the personal choice God is what they are going to yield their lives to and the point we actually reach heaven. What really changes is not the basics of life itself, but that our responsibility to listen and follow God in order to live our lives according to God's will and not our own or by what the world wants, goes from God asking us if that's what we want to do, to what is expected of us. This is the commitment many people don't want to make, and even though they may have committed to some formulated version of what they believe will save them, they won't make it to heaven if they don't take their faith in God seriously.

Israel had made it to Mount Sinai,

said they would follow God's instructions, and now they had received those instructions. The story Numbers begins to tell is on the other side of the commitment, and the consequences of the choices they made from thereon were going to be much greater than they had been. While this book tells us a few stories where people let the fact they were the chosen nation go to their heads, its real point is to show us what it truly means to live for God! We far too often want to think and teach about living for God as being filled with blessings from the stance of being able to say, "I'm deserving because I'm a child of God!" We don't seem to get the message that all people are children of God; what we have done is chosen to actually live our lives as one! The responsibility is immediately a very real thing, while the rewards can seem to be nonexistent at the time or too far off to matter. This is what Israel had trouble with. After the tabernacle was in place one of the first Laws they had to follow was the holding of the Passover, and a chapter not too far into Numbers makes reference to this fact. However, the big mistake this book shows us they made was not that they failed to follow some ordinance of the Law, but that they refused to believe God when He was ready to send them in and begin conquering the promised land.

This brings us to the discussion of how much time the book of Numbers covers, because the truth is, it would seem it wouldn't have covered much time at all if Israel had believed God. Numbers begins in the second month of the second

year out of Egypt, and the events of Israel sending spies who found what they did in Canaan, which precipitated the people disobeying God and being told they would wander in the wilderness for 40 years, takes place right around five months later. Because they disobeyed, there is about a 38 year time period that Numbers covers but gives little to no information on because they were just years of Israel living in the wilderness for no reason that was dynamic to God's plan. After their refusal to go into Canaan there are a few events of importance, but then the story does not truly begin again until the time comes for Israel to travel around the south end and on to the east side of the Dead Sea, a journey they were not originally going to take as a way to enter the land. Due to all this, a book which might have only covered a very short couple of years or more of traveling to, conquering, and settling into the south of Canaan, ended up being a book that covers about 40 years. Thirty-eight years were almost of no significance to the record, and the final year or so only about getting to the new place where the nation would enter Canaan instead of the original place, which they had gotten to in only a few months after setting up the tabernacle for the first time.

Let's stay in God's Word!