

Matot Numbers - Bamidbar (30.2-32.42)

After God tells Moses that it is time for Moses to die, God chooses Joshua, son of Nun, to become the new leader of the Israelites. Moses appoints him in a ceremony in front of the entire community and then explains again all the offerings to be made to God at festivals. Later, Moses gathers the leaders from each of the twelve tribes of Israel and said, "This is what God commands: If a person makes a promise to God, that person shall fulfill that promise." He explains some of God's laws regarding the relationship between a man and his wife and father and daughters.

After war against the Midianites, the soldiers had to purify themselves. When they received their spoils, they gave some to God and Moses and the High Priest Eleazar and took it all to the Communion Tent as a remembrance for the Israelites before God.

Now the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad were rich with herds of cattle. They saw in good cattle grazing land in Yaazer and Gilead that was right outside the promised land of Israel. They asked Moses and Eleazar, if they could stay there rather than crossing over to exact land God promised the Israelites. Moses said, "Shall your brothers go to war while you safely stay here? Why do you want do turn the hearts of the Children of Israel away from the land God has given them? You are acting like your fathers who lied about what they saw in the promised land. Remember how angry that mad God? Remember the wandering in the wilderness for 40 years? If you hold back from God, God will make you stay in the wilderness even longer."

The sons of Reuben and Gad responded, "We want to build barns for our cattle and walled cities for our women and children. We will leave them here while we help bring the sons of Israel to the promised land. We promise to stay until each tribe has taken their inheritance in Israel since we will have taken our inheritance on this east side of the Jordan River."

Moses agreed, "If you will drive out the enemies across the river and help take possession, then you will be freed from your promise to live in the land of Israel. Then you may have this property before God." And so the women, children and animals of the tribes of Gad and Reuben stayed while the men went as a special forces, leading the war.

Questions: 1) What kinds of promises do you make with God? 2) Why does God want a specific land for the Israelites? 3) Why is keeping Israel important for everyone? **Illustration Ideas:** fulfilling a promise....war...the soldiers giving offerings...the land on the east side of the Jordan River...the sons of Reuben and Gad asking to settle outside the promised land