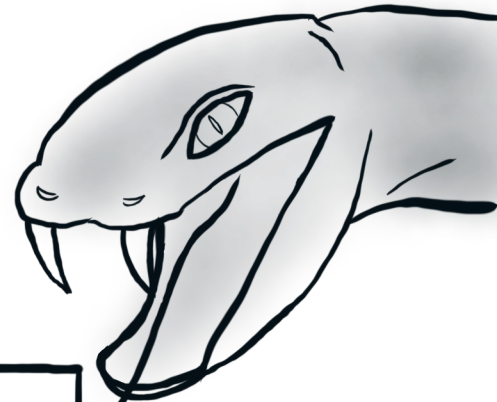
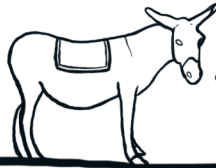


NUMBERS

CHAPTER

31



CHARACTERS

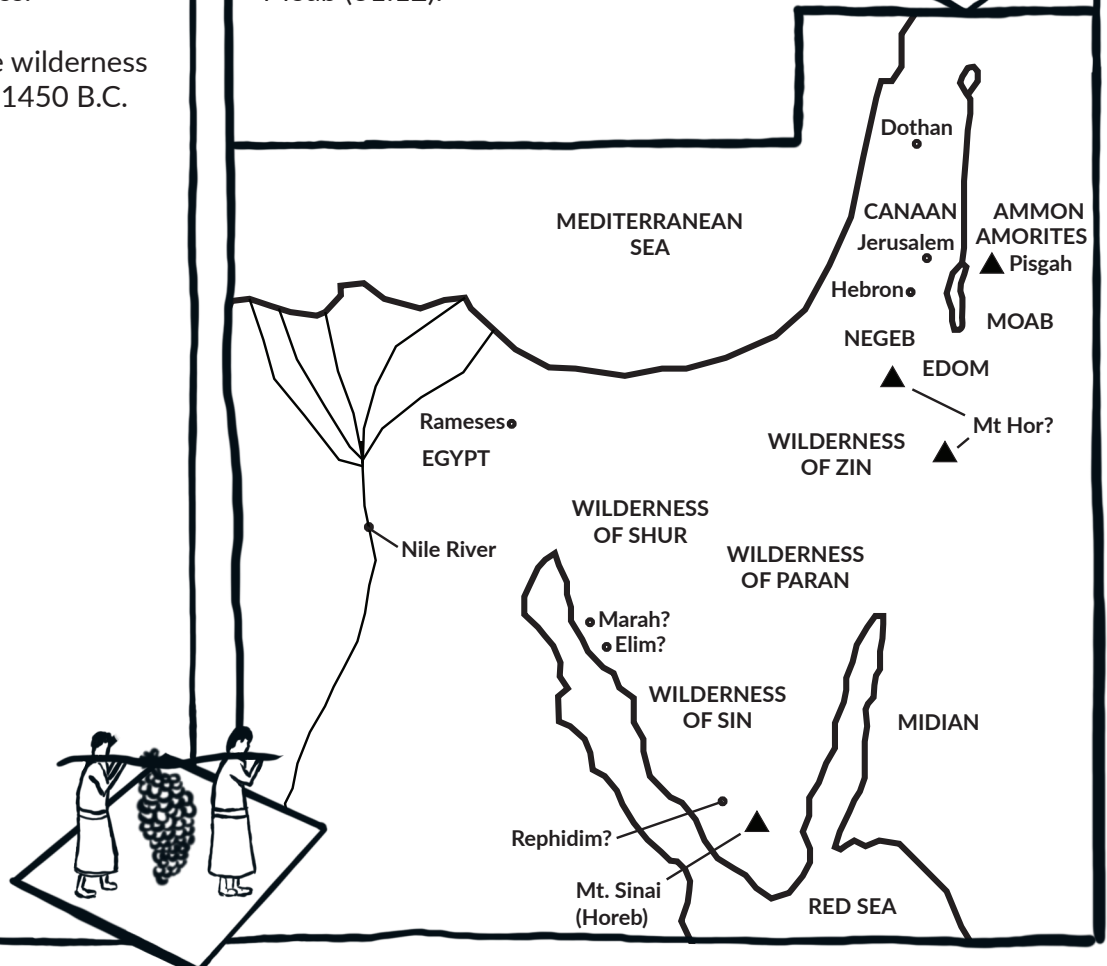
- **Midianites** – The Midianites were idolatrous people who encouraged the Israelites to worship false gods. In Numbers 25, God sent a plague on Israel because they allowed the Midianites to lead their hearts away from Him.
- **Moses** – God selected Moses to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and guide them to the land of Canaan.
- **Eleazar** – Aaron's son who became High Priest after his death.
- **Phinehas** – Eleazar's son and grandson of Aaron.

WHEN

- These events occurred towards the end of the Israelites' 40 years of wandering in the wilderness.
- The Israelites were in the wilderness from approximately 1490-1450 B.C.

WHERE

- The Israelites were camped northeast of Pisgah on the plains of Moab (31:12).





OUTLINE

- GOD'S JUDGEMENT ON MIDIAN (31:1-54):

- + As a punishment for intentionally leading Israel into idolatry (Numbers 25), God told Moses to make war with the Midianites.
- + 1,000 soldiers were selected from each of the 12 tribes.
- + They killed the kings of Midian, all the male citizens, and Balaam the diviner who devised the plan to encouraged the Israelites into idol worship (31:16).
- + All the women, children, and animals were taken captive before the towns were burned.
- + The Israelites brought the captives to Moses and Eleazar, but Moses became angry with the officers because they spared many of the women who were responsible for enticing the men of Israel into idolatry.
- + Moses told the officers to kill all the captives except the virgin women.
- + The soldiers were then told to remain outside the camp and perform the 7 days of cleansing required for those who came into contact with dead bodies (Num 19).
- + All the spoils of war were also required to go through a cleansing process.
- + The spoils were divided, with half given to the warriors and the other half given to the congregation of Israel.
- + A percentage of the plunder was given to Eleazar as a contribution to the Lord, and another portion was given to the Levites for their work at the Tabernacle.
- + The total plunder and persons amounted to 675,000 sheep, 72,000 cattle, 61,000 donkeys, 32,000 virgin women.
- + Eleazar received 675 sheep, 72 cattle, 61 donkeys, and 32 women.
- + The Levities received 1 of every 50 animals and persons given to the congregation of Israel.
- + The Israelites suffered no casualties in their battles against the Midianites.
- + The warriors brought an offering to God of the gold they plundered which totaled 16,750 shekels (approximately 235 kg, 518 lbs).
- + The gold was put in the Tabernacle as a memorial for the people.

APPLICATION

- Wasn't it wrong and morally objectionable for God to kill all the male children of Midian?
- This story typically draws an emotional response from readers, but from a purely rational viewpoint there isn't anything in the story that shows God to be immoral.
- We need to remember God is the life giver and retains the right to take life if He chooses. We as humans don't have that right, so it's easy for us to feel like taking life is always morally wrong, but remember, we and God are not in the same position.
- Furthermore, if God saves the innocent, which the Bible tells us He does, the Midianite children were being taken out of an immoral world and going to live in Heaven with God.
- There would have been some pain associated with that journey, but pain, in itself, is not morally evil. Consider our practice of poking babies with needles to give them important medicine. It causes the baby momentary pain, but we consider it a long-term good.
- In light of these points, we should be careful before we accuse God of moral evil just because His actions are objectionable to us on the surface.