

# OLD TESTAMENT 1

## UNIT EIGHT THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

### THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK

- The Wilderness Period
  - The thirty-eight years spent travelling between Sinai and the Jordan River.
  - A period of great national failure.
  - Ideal government structures for Israel established (Ezekiel).
  
- The Pilgrimage of the People of God
  - Israel's rejection of an ideal.

# THE IDEAL FOR ISRAEL

## ➤ NUMBERS 1-4: THE IDEAL

- Each Israelite clan contributes to the wider whole.
- The book begins on a high note of national discipline.
- The presence of God is the sole guarantee of victory.
- The cloud is God's manifested presence, to save and judge Israel.

## ➤ NUMBERS 5:1-10:10: PURITY

- Removal of anything which threatens to contaminate or carry impurity.
- Israel defined as a covenant community of twelve tribes in whose midst the divine presence dwells.

## ➤ NUMBERS 10:11-22:1: GOD'S GRACE IN THE WILDERNESS

- God leads Israel through the wilderness.
- God provides the Israelites with food in the form of manna and quails.
- God provides water from the rock.
- God delivers the Israelites' enemies into their power.
- God leads Israel to the very threshold of the promised land.

## THE REJECTION OF THE IDEAL

- Numbers 10-22 also shows the effects of Israel's behaviour in the wilderness.
- Only Caleb and Joshua will survive to enter the promised land.
- Although Moses is chief of the community, his patience is continually tested.
- Chapters 15-20: Transition to a new generation.
- The exodus generation will not survive due to the disobedience and unbelief at Kadesh Barnea.
- The new generation would eventually show the same failings as the old.

## THE NEW GENERATION

- THE TRANSITION FROM THE OLD TO THE NEW GENERATION
  - The turning point is a victory over the Canaanites at Hormah, where the Israelites had previously been defeated.
- NUMBERS 22-36: TOWARDS CANAAN
  - These chapters deal with the impending conquest of Canaan.
  - Numbers 26: A new census is taken – the forty years of wandering are over.
  - Chapters 28-36 give further instructions and laws, land east of the Jordan is assigned.

### ➤ MOSES' SUCCESSOR?

- Joshua, famed for his courage and faith, will take much of Moses' role.
- Priestly authority is given to the family of Eleazar.

## CONCLUSION

- The wilderness years were years of testing, occasional faithfulness and repeated faithlessness.
- The way forward in the wilderness was by God's guidance – this was the only way to enjoy the blessings of the promised land.