

February 13

Numbers 26 and part of 27 (taken from tomorrow's reading)

Today you read about the second census taken. As mentioned in your Daily Bible, there are about 1800 fewer men above the age of 20, but an increase of 700 Levites to perform the religious service. The census was used not only to test military strength but to help with dividing the land of Canaan to the Israelites. One thing I wanted to draw your attention to in regards to this passage is seen in the last two verses in chapter 26. In commenting on the men 20 years and older of Israel, listed from the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho, we read:

*Not one of them was among those counted by Moses and Aaron the priest when they counted the Israelites in the Desert of Sinai. For the Lord had told those Israelites they would surely die in the desert, and not one of them was left except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun.*

Did you catch that? Just as the Lord had said, the only men remaining from the last census Moses and Aaron took were Caleb and Joshua. The other men had all died in the desert. The Lord made true to his promise: he honored Joshua and Caleb for their belief in the Lord to take the land of Canaan despite the opposition that seemed ahead. To the men who did not believe God, they missed out on seeing the goodness of the Lord fulfilled: to enter into the Promised Land. Believing God and his promises, no matter how long we have to wait for them to be fulfilled, ALWAYS pays off.

Because the content of today is so short I also wanted to cover the brief excerpt you will read tomorrow in Numbers 27. It deals with Joshua being named the successor to Moses. If you want to put me on pause for a moment, you can read the first three paragraphs for Numbers 27 listed on February 14.

Or, if you don't want to put me on pause and read it, that's ok too. I'll give you the sneak peek into the passage anyway. ☺

What we see here in verses 15-23 is the divine choice of Joshua to succeed Moses as the leader of the nation of Israel. Once again we need to take note of the fact that the choice belongs to God. As far as we can tell, Moses had no input in this - it was strictly God's decision. The people didn't vote - there was no heredity involved - it was God's choice.

Moses, because of his disobedience at the second Meribah, when he struck the rock two times instead of just speaking to it, has lost his opportunity to enter the land.

The next thing we need to see about the appointment of Joshua is the notation that this is necessary because Israel without a leader will be like sheep without a shepherd. I guess you need to know a tiny bit about sheep to really appreciate that remark. But sheep without a shepherd present you with some rather significant problems. They can't stay out of trouble - they won't stay together - they will be easy prey for any predator - they will probably starve to death - and their chances of survival for any

significant period of time are somewhere between slim and none. Israel needed a shepherd – and Joshua was the chosen one.

The last thing that I want to note for you is that God had been preparing Joshua for a very long time for this position. For nearly 40 years He had been the aide, the servant of Moses - in a very special apprenticeship, if you will. When Moses went to meet with God at the Tent of Meeting, Joshua went and sat outside - I wonder how much (if anything) he overheard of the amazing conversations that occurred between God and His servant Moses. Maybe he didn't hear anything at all, but he surely learned that God is willing to talk to a man, willing to lead a man who will follow Him and serve His people. Joshua had led the people into battle - years before, it had been Joshua down on the battlefield with the Amalekites while Moses was standing on the hill with his arms outstretched. Joshua had learned a very important lesson from that. Joshua had learned that the battle is the Lord's, that the glory is the Lord's, that if anything is accomplished, it is accomplished not by might nor by power but by the spirit of the Lord. Joshua had been one of the two spies (with Caleb) who brought back a favorable report of the Promised Land. He, with Caleb and Moses, had stood firm when the whole nation had threatened to stone them because they dared to trust in God. Joshua had learned from that that God is faithful and that sometimes you have to stand all by yourself - but that one plus God always constitutes a majority.

It was Joshua, you will remember, who had been disturbed when, in answer to the energy crisis that Moses was feeling, God had placed His spirit upon the elders. Do you remember the story? Two of the elders of Israel had not come to the meeting and so when the spirit of God fell upon them they were already in the camp and they began to prophesy there, and Joshua was the one who ran back and said, 'Moses, they are usurping your rights.' Joshua had learned from that experience, beside his mentor Moses, the truly godly leader is never jealous for his own position, and is always happy to see all of the gifts that God gives to others being used in ministry.

All of these things and many others, Joshua had learned by the side of his mentor Moses. Once again I want to underscore for us the importance of those kinds of godly apprenticeships. The way to learn how to be a leader in the household of faith is by standing beside a leader and learning from him or from her all that they can teach us about how to live godly, righteous and sober lives, and how to serve the Lord our God in faithfulness. May God give to each of us that kind of mentor. What a difference it will make in our lives.

When Moses, time after time, had found it necessary to intercede with God on behalf of his rebellious people, do you know who was listening? It was Joshua. Joshua learned to lead by being with his leader. Do you have a leader whom you are learning from? Is there someone who you admire who walks with God and does well at leading his people? Or, maybe think about this: If you are a leader, who is learning from you? Are the qualities they see in you going to help shape them to become good leaders themselves?