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Good Morning, Saints!

Today, we're going to look at Chapter 10 of the Book of Numbers. We left off last time with a description of how the Cloud led the Israelites thru the wilderness. It was the sign of God's presence with Israel. It was also to be Israel's navigation system. When the fire-cloud moved Israel moved and followed it. When the fire-cloud came to rest so did Israel. There could be no finer or simpler example of what it means to walk with God, to follow God. When He moves, we move. When He rests, we are to rest. All else is futility and meaningless activity.

Before we begin Chapter 10, let's revisit the greatest commandment for a moment.

SLIDE: Shema

I want to look again at the greatest commandment because Christians tend to forget what the commandment actually is. When Jesus was asked the question (Matthew 22), He responded by citing a verse from the Book of Deuteronomy:

"Hear O Israel: the Lord our God, The Lord is one.
Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all
your soul and with all your strength."

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

This passage is known as the 'Shema' – a Hebrew word which means to *listen* or to *hear*.

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SLIDE The Shema is sung today whenever Torah scrolls are taken out to read the synagogue. The custom is to recite it slowly and cover your eyes with your right hand,

Here is how it sounds (this is from a Christian website)

- http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Scripture/Torah/The_SHEMA/the_shema.html

SLIDE

There are TWO parts to the greatest commandment:

- (1) ***Believe*** that the ***GOD OF ISRAEL*** – not just any god – is the one true God, and
- (2) ***Love Him*** alone with all your being...

When asked what is the greatest commandment, Christians tend to recite the 2nd half of the commandment – “*Love your God with all your heart, etc.*” But is this enough? No, because...

- Buddhists could meet the 2nd part
- Hindus could meet it, Muslims could meet it
- Atheists could also if their god is money, or politics, or sex.

The first part of the commandment is *crucial* – you **MUST** love **THE TRUE GOD ALONE**. Unless you do this, the rest is futile.

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- Our goal is not to make Muslims better Muslims!

READ: Numbers Chapter 10

SLIDE: The Silver Trumpets

What we read in the first part of chapter 10 is the last preparation before Israel's march into the Wilderness begins. And the last bit of preparation is the fabrication of and details about the two Silver Trumpets. Now, it is unlikely that the entire camp could not hear Moses' voice, even when he shouted. So, the Silver Trumpets were blown at Moses' instruction in order to tell the people something was happening.

The trumpets were a little less than a cubit long¹ (about 18 inches), so they were not the three-foot long trumpets often depicted in drawing. They were a narrow tube of shaped silver, somewhat thicker than a flute, but with so much breadth as was sufficient for admission of the breath of a man's mouth: it ended in the form of a bell, like common trumpets.²

The purpose of the Silver Trumpets is similar to air raid sirens or a weather alerts on the radio – either that something

¹ Josephus, Antiquities, iii, 12.6.

² Ibid.

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important is about to happen or that you are to do something now. And verse 2 tells us exactly what that was:

1. SUMMON the community of Israel to an assembly, and
2. SIGNAL to various divisions of the encampment to set out as the Cloud went ahead.

SLIDE: SILVER TRUMPETS #2

The Israelites used several types of horns and trumpets, the most well now being the iconic 'shofars'. A shofars is an instrument made from the horn of a ram or other kosher animal. These Silver Trumpets are not different – they were made of silver according to the Lord's instruction. In Hebrew these Silver Trumpets are called 'hatsotserah' (Ha-tzo-tzrot), while shofar is the Hebrew word for an animal horn or antler. These trumpets were made of beaten silver and thus a shofar is NOT an earlier more ancient and primitive version of a hatsotserah, a metal trumpet, as some have supposed. Furthermore, their uses are different not so much in *what* they are used for, but rather WHO uses them. In the Bible, the common people use a shofar, but **the Silver Trumpets can ONLY be blown by priests.**

The silver trumpets were NOT musical instruments – they were a communication devise! They were used to sound an alarm! Verse 5 tells us that when the Silver Trumpets are used

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to signal for the divisions of Israel to move or to call an assembly. The direction either for marching or for resting was given by the Cloud in which was the Divine Presence. For actual signal to move, two silver trumpets were to be used by the sons of Aaron. A prolonged alarm indicated the commencement of the march. Then the Trumpets were sounded using 'teruah', or short blasts. When hearing this, it is the division that camps to the superior EAST side of the Tabernacle that is to spring into action: the division led by Judah. The 2nd round of teruah instructed those camped on the South (the 2nd most prestigious camping position), led by Reuben, to move, and then so on.

SLIDE: *"Let God arise and His enemies be scattered."*

OK – they're just about to set out from Mount Sinai. Then, the Cloud lifts and goes, and immediately the people went to work – Moses stood up and shouted: "Let God arise and His enemies be scattered."

- The Cloud's moving – Let's GO!

And the priests would grab **two silver trumpets** and sound a blast that would echo to the ends of the camp. Immediately, it

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was a bee-hive of activity. Tents coming down, packing up, priests and Levites started disassembling the Tabernacle.

- THE CLOUD IS MOVING – GET THE LEAD OUT – LET'S GO.

And, in a very short time, three million people set out in a specific order following the moving Cloud of God's Glory.

It seems that Moses' cry may have been echoed by all the people. If you can imagine the shout of three million people shouting at the top of their lungs – "Rise Up O Lord and Let thy enemies be scattered". The earth must have seemed to shake – a cry of triumph! Recall in I Samuel 4, just before a battle between Philistines and King Saul and his army, we read about this:

⁵ When the ark of the LORD's covenant came into the camp, all Israel raised such a great shout that the ground shook.⁶ Hearing the uproar, the Philistines asked, "What's all this shouting in the Hebrew camp?"

When they learned that the ark of the LORD had come into the camp,⁷ the Philistines were afraid.

However, God never intended that the Ark was to be used as a good luck charm! Israel lost the battle, Saul, Jonathan and the high priest's sons died, and the Ark was captured.

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SLIDES: GRAPHIC, JUDAH (Praise) leads the way.

Verse 11 begins the journey into the Wilderness toward the Promised Land. It begins on the 20th day of the 2nd month of the 2nd year after they left Egypt (that is, 13 months and 20 days after the Exodus). Recall that Israel's twelve tribes had been grouped into divisions of three tribes each, and each division was assigned a specific place when encamping around the Tabernacle and they had a specific order of movement when they set out.

Click: Also please recall that there were three clans of Levites, each with a specific responsibility.

Verses 14–28 choreographs the order of march. The trumpets blow and the first division – led by Judah – moves out. Judah is joined by the other two tribes associated with it, Issachar and Zebulun.

Click: As this was happening, the priests had to go into the tabernacle and wrap the Ark and the holy furniture, so that the Levites (specifically clan of Kohath) would not even see the items under penalty of death.

CLICK: Then, the Tabernacle itself was to be disassembled and the Levite clans of Gershon and Merari would load up the portion of the Sanctuary for which they were responsible and put it in carts. They would move out ahead of the clan of Kohath who would be carrying the Ark of the Covenant and other sacred furniture; in this way, the Tabernacle could be re-assembled at

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their stopping point, ready and waiting to receive the sacred furniture and the Ark when they arrived.

CLICK –After the Levite clans of Gershon and the Merari, the three tribes of the 2nd division led by Rueben would be assembled and fall into line.

CLICK: Next would be the clan of Kohath carrying the sacred furniture using poles on their shoulders, and then Aaron, Moses and other priests

CLICK: After them came the 3rd division led by Ephraim, and then at the rear of the column would be the 4th division led by Dan.

The arrangement of the camp and the order of march were set up and moved to create a cohesive and enormous army. They were going to have to take the Land of Canaan by force, the land promised to Abraham. All the prayer and worship and ritual and observance served as preparation and obedience.

ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE

All of a sudden, verse 29 has Moses appealing to an individual named Hobab, son of Moses' father-in-law, to come along with Israel on their journey. Hobab is thus Moses' brother-in-law and may have accompanied Moses' wife when she joined up with them. Hobab is reluctant to go and says he'd rather return to his native land, Midian. Moses wanted his help

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because he was obviously familiar with where they were going and the location of wells and pasture. But, Hobab says, *'I'd rather go back to my own land – I've got all my relatives there.'*

Then Moses essentially says something that shows his humility – he says *"We need help."* Real men evidently DO ask for help. Moses is saying that they could use some help in locating water. Furthermore, Moses promises that if you come with us, the Lord will be good to you!

But – wait a minute, Moses! Did you forget that you have the cloud guiding you? Don't you know that God is with you? Who needs a pair of Bedouin eyes? Really, Moses – you should be more spiritual.

- But, Moses demonstrates a principle that we – any perhaps mostly myself – need to practice: use your God-given common sense. Sometime we can get so spiritual that we think that an Arab leading us thru the wilderness is no use. But, Moses said – *'I need your help.'*

And so, they were led out, first of all by the Cloud that gave them the general direction. Then, the common-sense eyes of Hobab to find the best spots.

I have to admit that aometimes fall victim to the trap **praying over the obvious.** God points the direction. Sometimes I find myself praying for specifics, and God says: *'What are you doing here, I gave you a Hobab – listen to him.'*

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There's a time to pray, and there be a time to use common sense.

- That's not very spiritual, is it? You won't get invited to too many prayer breakfasts with that message.

You could appear on TBN if you wrote a book entitled "How the Cloud led me", but I don't think you'd get many invitations if you said '*... and an Arab went with us.*'

Sometimes, we in the charismatic churches crave the supernatural to the point of stupidity. God gave them the Cloud and the Bedouin tribesman, and they walked out into the wilderness. The Supernatural and common sense, they moved together.

THREE DAY JOURNEY

As we near the end of Chapter 10, we see that the first leg of their trek was a three-day journey, which means that at the most they traveled about 30 miles, probably less. However saying that it was a three-day journey does NOT mean that they traveled for three days. The vernacular of the day didn't usually express distance in miles or kilometers or cubits. Rather, distance was expressed in *time* – how long it normally took you to go from point A to point B. Today, we often do the same thing without thinking about it.

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- Someone will ask: *“how far is it from Hudson to Albany?”* and the answer will be something like *“about an hour”*. If you’re asking Jon Otterbeck, he’ll tell you *35 minutes”*.

A three-day journey was like saying "30 miles". So they may well have, and probably did, take more time than three days to cover that *“three-day journey”* distance due to the fact that they weren't used to striking camp; they were not seasoned travelers, and they had many children and the elderly and livestock with them.

Israel followed the fire-cloud. Though it doesn't say they stopped and camped each evening, certainly they would have to give the elderly and children rest. There was no hurry, no reason to hasten. Now, each time they stopped and camped overnight, they did NOT set up the Wilderness Tabernacle. It was only when the fire-cloud "rested" – only when they came to place where they were to camp for a while did they go through the arduous process of re-assembling the Tabernacle.

THE ARK LED THE WAY

Verse 33 sometimes is seen as a problem; it says that the Ark of the Covenant LED the column of Israelites.

“Thus they set out from the mount of the Lord three days’ journey, with the ark of the covenant of the Lord

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journeying **in front of them** for the three days, to seek out a resting place for them.”

In verse 17 of the same chapter, however, it says that the Ark traveled **in the midst** of Israel, with Judah leading the way. Rabbis disagree over what actually happened – some think that at times the Ark led, and at other times it did not. Verse 33 might be simply saying that the Ark "led" in a more general sense in that it was always the presence of God that went before Israel when they journeyed.

We really don't know but the order of march seems to suggest that it was normally in the middle of the column. However, the Ark may have led sometimes, depending on the situation. We do know, for instance, that when Israel was finally ready to cross the Jordan, the Ark definitely DID lead, because we're told that the moment the feet of those carrying the Ark touched the water on the eastern bank of the Jordan, the water got dammed up, upstream, and created a nearly dry river bed for Israel to cross.³

THE INVERTED NUNS

I want to get a little way into chapter 11 today, but first I want to point out something that very few people know about

³ Joshua 3

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in the text of chapter 10 – because it doesn't show up in English.

SLIDE: Take a look at this slide:

Numbers chapter 10, verses 35–35 is the famous shout of Moses:

Whenever the ark set out, Moses said,
"Rise up, LORD!
May your enemies be scattered;
may your foes flee before you."
Whenever it came to rest, he said,
"Return, LORD, to the countless thousands of Israel."

CLICK: This is the text in Hebrew. Notice the two letters that are circled. Now – Hebrew is written right to left, the opposite of English, so the passage starts in the upper right and ends in the lower left.

- Notice the two letters – or rather two instances of the *same* letter. The letter is the Hebrew letter 'NUN'.

However, in both instances, the letter **is written UPSIDE DOWN** and is not part of any work in the passage!

Why is this here? In the Torah (five books of Moses), an upside down letter 'nun; only occurs in this passage. However, it occurs seven times in Psalm 107. Why? Well, nobody knows for sure. Some rabbis say it was not written by Moses but a

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scribe who wanted to indicate that the passage is actually out of place from where Moses wrote it and should actually be shown 90 paragraphs earlier. – Perhaps.

Another possible explanation is that it separates the time at Sinai from the wandering in the wilderness for 38 years because of grumbling and unbelief. *It is to indicate that Chapter 11 was not what God wanted to happen.* It was meant to be a three-week journey from Mt. Sinai and then right up into the Promised Land.

However, the explanation that I like best is that Moses was indicating that this statement of 85 letters could stand alone as a *separate* Book because the context is so important and far reaching.

I believe that these 85 letters are a synopsis of the Gospel of Christ. The shout of Moses and the people "*Arise o Lord*" is the cry for both **Resurrection and the leading of the Holy Spirit.**

- And remember how the shout of Israelites in I Samuel when the Ark came into the camp **shook the ground.**

Could the shout of Moses, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Joshua, Ruth, Isaiah, Ezekiel and millions of departed saints who were awaiting the Messiah, have caused the rolling of the stone away from the Tomb? **Arise O Lord...**

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The next session will begin Numbers chapter 11, which starts a section of Torah that, for me, is one of the most fascinating and informative. It tells the story of the 38 years of Israel wandering in the Wilderness. And the next several chapters have as their common theme: *complaining, lack of faith, and outright rebellion*. They also record Yehovah's severe responses for these outrages against Him.

This section of the Torah also seemed to fascinate the Apostle Paul. He referred extensively to the Book of Numbers in his writings, particularly when he was writing and speaking to the Corinthians. Apparently, he saw great parallels between the behavior and condition of those Corinthians, Jew and gentile, who had come to belief in Christ and those Israelites who trekked around the wilderness of the desert.

Here's what Paul had to say when he compared the Christians of Corinth to the Israelites of the Exodus.

– **READ 1CORINTHIANS 10:1-12** –

The Torah issues many sober warnings to those who would follow the God of Israel; Paul, who was a well-educated Jewish rabbi, completely understood this. He also realized that the advent of Christ does not change God's attitude toward certain of our sinful actions. Disobedience does not somehow

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immunize a Believer against the possibility of divine punishment, although salvation is not necessarily at stake.

In Romans 15, Paul writes ".....whatever was written in the former days was written for our instruction....." What was written "*in the former days*" is referring to the Hebrew Bible, the Tanach – what we call the Old Testament. His point is that if God dealt severely with His set-apart and chosen people, why would you think He will not deal severely with His set-apart and chosen people in union with Messiah Jesus? Are we no longer subject to God's righteous anger?

We will see that virtually the first thing Israel does upon leaving Mt. Sinai is to complain and rebel. Even Moses will become a grumbler. Over the next 15 chapters, there are six identifiable rebellions, and every one of them was both real and represents a "type" of rebelling against God. Some of the rebellions were by the people in general, some by the tribal leaders, some by the Levites, and even some by Moses. Just as the seven churches of Revelation are both real and also types, so do the rebellions of the people of Israel in Numbers present us with a *pattern* that we can expect to occur within the church.

But for today, let's stick with the excitement in Chapter 10, which ends with the optimistic, prayerful, joyful shout of Moses, as they begin to strike camp for their journey to the Promised Land:

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"Then it came about when the ark set out that Moses said, "Rise up, O LORD! And let Thine enemies be scattered, And let those who hate Thee flee before Thee." 36 And when it came to rest, he said, "Return Thou, O LORD, To the myriad thousands of Israel."

That's a good phrase to say every morning!