

**The Refining Years**  
**Historical Background of Judges: Part 2**

After standing at the edge of the Promised Land, the Israelites had to turn around and head back into the desert. What would they learn in their forty years in the desert that would prepare them for conquering the Promised Land under Joshua? Just how specific was their training and instruction? Did Israel really know what God expected of them? Were the lessons clear? Were they wise? Let's look.

Stop and Pray - Show me, God, what You expected from Israel. Reveal to me what You expect from me that I might be a holy witness of You to my world.

1. Instruction manuals are great tools. Or are they? Do you usually read instruction manuals? Why or why not?

Read Deuteronomy, chapters 2-8.

2. In an attempt to bolster Israel's confidence, what are some things God taught them about Himself? Summarize what each passage tells you about God.  
Deuteronomy 2:7; 29:5-6

Deuteronomy 2:14-15

3. Let's look at how God prepared the fearful hearts of His people during their wanderings in the desert for the time when they would take over the Promised Land.
  - a. When the spies came back and gave their report, what were their major fears (Numbers 13:28-29)?
  - b. For what other peoples had God provided a land (Deuteronomy 2:4-6, 8-12, 19-22)? How did He do it?

- c. What successes did Israel have and how would each success encourage Israel for the future conquest of the Promised Land?  
Deuteronomy 2:24-25, 36

Deuteronomy 3:3-6, 11

Deuteronomy 3:21-22

Deuteronomy 7:17-24

- 4. Not only did God reveal Himself and calm the peoples' fears, but He also gave Israel rules of war for the conquest of the Promised Land.
  - a. What is God's role and what is Israel's role (Deuteronomy 7:23-24)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. What are they to do before they go to war (Deuteronomy 20:1-9)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. With whom are they to war (Deuteronomy 20:10-18)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 5. God gave Israel specific instructions for setting up His holy nation as a priesthood to the world around them. What did they need to do to make sure their allegiance to God and their witness to the world stayed pure? Summarize what we can apply to our world.  
Deuteronomy 6:10-19

Deuteronomy 7:1-11, 24-26

Numbers 33:51-54

*Note:* Look at a map of ancient Israel and its surrounding nations. Israel was an ideal location for God to set up a holy nation. The major peoples of the ancient world surrounded Israel. Due to the deserts and landscape of the region, they all needed to travel through Israel in order to trade with one another. There were very few towns and roads in Israel due to the limited number of water sources and to a landscape full of mountains and deserts. If Israel's few cities were filled with people, who accurately represented God and demonstrated the goodness of God's law and His provision by their obedience, they would have a huge positive influence on people. God was trying to create an accurate witness to Himself in the ancient world.

6. Part of setting up His holy nation involved removing the Canaanites from the land.
  - a. For each passage below answer:
    - What were God's reasons for destroying the inhabitants and their possessions completely?
    - What are the warnings Israel and we should take to heart?
    - What does it mean to us as witnesses to our world?

Genesis 15:16

Numbers 33:55-56

Deuteronomy 6:14-15

Deuteronomy 7:4

Deuteronomy 9:4-6

- b. Why would God want them to destroy their enemies *immediately* without giving pity? What is it about the *timing* that benefits Israel?

7. Reflect on all you have studied in this lesson. If the Promised Land represents the spiritual life of the believer, why is it important to have no mercy when getting our enemies out of the land?
  
8. What have you learned that you can apply to your own life? Write out your insights in the first person, such as I will..., I must....
  
9. How merciless have you been on the enemies in your land? Have you obeyed fully? What steps will you take this week to stop coexisting with them and to set up your life as a holy nation to represent God accurately to your world?

Final Thoughts: Did the people have specific instructions for how, when, and why to take care of their enemies? Yes! Did they obey? That's what we will look at next week. What were the consequences? That's what we will look at for the remainder of this study. How does it apply to us? You will be surprised how deeply it does. There is so much here that will protect us, preserve us, and prepare us to be accurate witnesses of God to our world. There is also much that Satan will not want us to learn, for it will make us victorious over his schemes. What a victory God promises we will have, if we will only obey!

Pray - God, please help me to be a diligent student of Your Holy Scripture. Help me to persevere until You have taught me all that You have for me. Enable me, Lord, through Your wise Word to be a holy witness of You to my world.

Kyna Ritchie (original 2002; revised 2013)