

In the beginning **GOD**
created the heaven and the earth.

Genesis 1:1

HOME STUDY

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SUMMER QUARTER

June, July, August 2026

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Editor in Chief: James M. Leonard, Ph.D.

Managing Editor: Michelle Birtasevic

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Compassion Restrains Anger

GLENN WEAVER

Which emotion rises more quickly in you—compassion or anger? We all want to experience compassion rather than anger, and that is especially true concerning our relationship with God.

From the time God's people left Egypt, they tried His patience. Even after God had delivered the Israelites from oppression at the hands of the Egyptians and guided them to the fruitful land that He promised them, they refused to trust God to defeat their enemies and give them the land. Moses interceded with God, thereby restraining His anger and keeping Him from destroying the rebellious nation (Num. 14:11-24).

That was not the only time Moses intervened when the people rebelled. After Israel made the golden calf, Moses interceded for the people. God responded positively to Moses, reaffirming the covenant that He had made earlier at Mount Sinai. In that declaration, God described His character as merciful, gracious, and slow to anger (Ex. 34:1-14). Israel would repeatedly test God's patience, showing the truth of God's self-description.

Israel finally entered the Promised Land under Joshua's leadership. After many military victories, Joshua gathered the people at Shechem and recounted what God had done for them (Josh. 24:2-13). He talked about God's care for the Israelite people from the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The nation faced many dangers along the way, but their compassionate God showed mercy and delivered them every time. God gave them land that was abundant with crops they did not plant.

Despite this gracious treatment, Israel continued to treat their privileged relationship with God contemptuously. When Samuel became old and his sons failed to exhibit the same character as he, the people demanded that Samuel appoint a king (1 Sam. 8:1-18). God recognized that it was not Samuel but God Himself whom the people were rejecting. Nevertheless, the Lord gave Samuel permission to appoint a king over Israel. This would lead to further blessings for humanity, for King Jesus would arrive through the line of Davidic kings.

In time, Israel began worshipping the idols of neighboring nations. They violated God's covenant, but God still had great plans for them (Jer. 3:11-20). The Lord promised to forgive them when they turned to Him. His anger would not last long, as He had plans to abundantly bless them. The Northern and Southern Kingdoms would become one Israel again, and the Israelites in exile would return. These blessings were not for Israel only; other nations would also gather at Jerusalem to worship the God of Israel.

God designed His covenant with Israel to help the people to be godly and faithful. Provisions in the covenant no-

PLEASE NOTE: Fundamental, sound doctrine is the objective of LifeStone Ministries, Union Gospel Press. The writers are prayerfully selected for their Bible knowledge and willingness to submit to the Spirit of Truth, each writing in his own style as enlightened by the Holy Spirit. At best we know in part only. "They received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

tified Israel when they were straying from Him. God sent Jeremiah to warn Israel that the covenant curses were coming (26:1-13). God would destroy Jerusalem, but He did not want to harm His people. He would not demolish the city if they turned to Him.

Because of their sinfulness, God judged the Israelites. But God's mercy is everlasting, and He did not reject His people (29:1-14). For seventy years, they would live in exile in Babylon, in peace with their conquering nation. Because God is a God of hope for His people, He would restore them to the land.

God does not turn a blind eye when His people suffer at the hands of oppressors. Jeremiah 30:1-11 offered a message of hope to the exiled Israelites. God would deliver them from captivity. The strong opposing nations were no match for God's might! Then, in Jeremiah 30:18-22, God declared that ruined Jerusalem would be rebuilt and that a godly Davidic king would rule them.

God declared that Israel's return from exile would be a time of joy (31:1-14). Young and old alike would sing and rejoice! Israel would be reconciled to God. They would reap a bountiful harvest. The Redeemer would welcome home the weak, the lame, and the helpless.

Israel experienced the travesty of self-centered leadership (Ezek. 34:1-16). Rather than caring for the flock, the leaders used their power to benefit themselves. The effects were devastating. But God, the Good Shepherd, would seek His scattered sheep and lead them home. This provides the background for Jesus' declaration in John 10 that He is the Good Shepherd who gathers His flock.

The prophet Hosea gave a heart-wrenching account of God's love for Israel. The Jews were determined, it seemed, to worship ev-



everything except God, who rescued them from bondage (Hos. 11:1-11). Israel committed idolatry while God continued to protect, provide, and bless. What thanks did they offer the Lord? They rejected Him, which led to suffering at the hands of invaders. But God promised to deliver them.

Micah 7:14-20 describes God's un-failing compassion for His people. God's greatness is revealed to all nations by His interactions with Israel. The might of the nations is nothing compared to God's overwhelming power. When His people sin, God's might is matched only by His overflowing mercy toward those who repent. The Lord has remained true to the promises He made to Abraham and the patriarchs.

God's character is the same today. He still has an intense anger toward sin, but He longs to reveal His abundant mercy to anyone who comes to Him with a repentant heart. No one is too far gone. Israel committed abominations, yet God was willing to forgive their iniquities.

We can learn from the Israelites. When they turned to the Lord, He forgave them. God wants to forgive and bless us too. He offers His compassion freely through trust in Jesus Christ and His death on the cross for our sins.

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

NUM. 14:11 And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?

12 I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.

13 And Moses said unto the LORD, Then the Egyptians shall hear *it*, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;)

14 And they will tell *it* to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou LORD *art* among this people, that thou LORD art seen face to face, and *that* thy cloud standeth over them, and *that* thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night.

15 Now *if* thou shalt kill *all* this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying,

16 Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness.

17 And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying,

18 The LORD *is* longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.

19 Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.

20 And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to thy word:

21 But *as truly as* I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD.

22 Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice;

23 Surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it:

24 But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.

NOTES

Moses Prays for Mercy

Lesson Text: Numbers 14:11-24

Related Scriptures: Exodus 32:7-14; Joshua 2:8-11;
Ezekiel 36:16-23; Joel 2:12-17; Hebrews 3:7-19

TIME: about 1443 B.C.

PLACE: Kadesh

GOLDEN TEXT—“Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now” (Numbers 14:19).

Lesson Exposition

According to a very common misunderstanding, the God of the Old Testament is harsh, exacting, and wrathful, while in contrast, the God of the New Testament exchanges wrath for mercy.

In our passage this week, we will see that God’s character is consistent throughout the two Testaments. Specifically, God reveals Himself to His people as One who unceasingly—and without contradiction—holds within His very nature both justice and mercy.

In fact, the plotline of the entire Bible arises precisely out of this tension. God’s perfect holiness demands perfection and wrathful judgment upon sin. At the same time, His perfect holiness binds Him to keep His covenant promises to His people.

Just as He would not allow Himself to forsake or destroy His Old Testament people, the Lord will not allow Himself to forsake or destroy us.

Numbers 14 describes the aftermath of a pivotal moment in Israel’s journey through the desert after their exodus from Egypt. After they had camped in the barren desert for well over a year (cf. Ex. 19:1; Num. 10:11-12), the people finally arrived at the border of Canaan, the Promised Land (cf. Gen. 12:1;

Ex. 3:1-12). In Numbers 13, the Lord told Moses to send twelve spies into the land to perform reconnaissance (vss. 1-20).

Although all twelve men confirmed that the land was bountiful (“surely it floweth with milk and honey”), they also reported that the current inhabitants of the land were exceedingly tall and strong and were unlikely to be defeated by anyone, especially Israel (vss. 25-33)!

Their doubt and fear infected the people, who said that they would rather abandon Moses and his foolhardy quest, elect a new leader, and go back to Egypt (14:1-4).

Do you ever find yourself, like Israel, doubting God’s intent to fulfill His promises? The remainder of this passage emphasizes that God’s trustworthiness is far greater than our doubt.

Despite Moses’ and Aaron’s public expressions of grief and objections from spies Joshua and Caleb, the people resisted nearly to the point of violent rebellion (vss. 5-10).

Amid the general uproar, the Lord’s presence descended in the form of a cloud and interrupted the chaotic scene (cf. Ex. 33:1-10).

THE THREAT OF GOD'S WRATH— Num. 14:11-12

The Lord began His dialogue with Moses by asking two parallel questions introduced by the repeated phrase “how long” (vs. 11). This repetition is a signal that the second phrase will clarify the first. Here, when the Lord accused His people of provoking Him, the specific thing He had in mind was their doubt, despite the gratuitous, miraculous signs He had performed in their midst.

We should not require additional evidence of God's faithfulness to ease our doubt. Instead, we should remember the evidence we already have, whether in the Bible, in our testimonies, or in the testimonies of others. While Israel was still in Egypt, the Lord showed ten signs (cf. Ex. 7:3) of His intent to free His people from bondage in the form of plagues (chaps. 7—12). The fifth of these plagues was a “pestilence” (translated “murrain” in 9:3) upon Egypt's livestock; the same word is used in Numbers 14:12 to refer to the Lord's specific judgment upon His people.

The unfaithful in Israel would suffer the same fate as Egypt's cattle, while the faithful would be miraculously spared. Only they would inherit the Lord's promise and flourish in the land.

THE THREAT OF TARNISHING GOD'S REPUTATION— Num. 14:13-19

Moses then began his portion of the dialogue. In his prayer, he appealed to both the Lord's concern for His reputation among the watching nations as a promise-keeping God (vss. 13-16) and the promise itself. The specific promise Moses referred to was that which the Lord made to him on Mount Sinai after He threatened to destroy His people following the golden calf episode (Num. 14:17-19; cf. Ex. 34:6-7).

What will the nations say (Num. 14:13-16)? Moses entreated the Lord to spare His people from the destruction they justly deserved. He reasoned that the watching nations—whether Egypt (vs. 13) or the inhabitants of Canaan (vs. 14)—would gossip with one another about the Lord's failure to fulfill His promise to Israel. If He destroyed His chosen people now in the wilderness, how would the nations know that the Lord was in fact able to keep His promise (vss. 15-16)?

Moses' appeal, therefore, was to God's own concern for His glorious reputation to remain unspoiled throughout the whole world (cf. vs. 21).

Praying for mercy based on God's character (Num. 14:17-19). The first part of Moses' appeal was based on a negative consequence: the nations' gossip about the Lord if He did not fulfill His promise to Israel. Moses then shifted to a positive request for the Lord to vindicate His own reputation. He asked that the same “power” (translated “might” in verse 13) that the Lord used to bring Israel out of Egypt would sustain them through the desert and take them all the way into the Promised Land.

In short, Moses argued that the Lord's power would be made great if He kept His promise despite His people's failure.

Moses based his request on the Lord's own previous statement about His unchanging character, which He made to Moses on Mount Sinai in the aftermath of the episode with the golden calf (Num. 14:18; cf. Ex. 32; 34:6-7). However, there are some key differences between the original statement in Exodus and Moses' shortened quotation of it here.

First, the Lord's original statement in Exodus included more words about His mercy and compassion and emphasized the extent of His exacting

judgment on future generations for present unfaithfulness. The focus of the Lord's self-description in Exodus appears to be the tension between mercy and justice within God's own character due to His refusal to minimize either characteristic.

Second, Moses' shortened quotation skipped over the Lord's initial declaration of His compassion; the first quality that Moses named is long-suffering, which refers to God's patience with us despite our failings.

Third, he omitted intervening phrases about the Lord's covenant mercy, instead emphasizing His forgiveness of transgression (the violation of God's law).

Finally, Moses' version slightly lowered the emphasis on the long-standing consequences of the present generation's unfaithfulness for subsequent generations. Numbers 14:18 reads "upon the children" as opposed to "upon the children, and upon the children's children" (Ex. 34:7).

The overall effect of Moses' paraphrase suited the situation. The present generation of Israelites had shown that they were unable to trust the Lord and His promises, despite the copious evidence they had of His trustworthiness. The Lord was threatening them with violent destruction (Num. 14:12, 15-16; cf. vss. 25-38).

Moses emphasized the Lord's own words about mercifully bearing away iniquity and transgression while minimizing the effect of the present generation's sin upon the upcoming generation (cf. vs. 19).

MERCY, JUSTICE, AND GOD'S PREROGATIVE—Num. 14:20-24

The Lord replied simply that He had granted Moses' request (vs. 20). In verses 21 through 24, however, we see two central themes arise that are inextricably tied to any discussion of God's mercy, whether in the Old or the New Testament.

First, God has committed to preserving His people collectively and ultimately through to the very end of history. He does this by means of pardoning their flagrant sin when they repent. But God always retains the right to pour out intermittent, historical judgments upon unfaithful individuals (vss. 21-23; cf. vss. 25-38).

Second, and intricately related to this first point, God's stated intention to preserve His people was realized historically in what comes to be known as the remnant. This is a reference to the small number of people whose outward actions demonstrated their trust in their undeniably trustworthy God (vs. 24).

May we, like Caleb, fully trust in the Lord's undisputed ability to deliver us.

—Blake Henriques

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. Lacking faith in God is the same as treating Him with contempt (Num. 14:11, 23).
2. God judges lack of faith because He has already amply demonstrated His faithfulness through His saving actions in the world (vss. 11-12).
3. When humans sin and do not repent, the result may be exile and death.
4. We can appeal to God for mercy based on His concern for His reputation as a promise-keeping God (vss. 13-16, 21).
5. When God swears to something, we can expect Him to follow through (vss. 16-17, 23).
6. God is committed to keeping promises and showing covenant mercy and impartial justice (vss. 18-24).

—Blake Henriques

FOR DAILY MEDITATION

MONDAY, June 1. Ex. 32:7-14.

Moses appeals to God's promise. If Moses had been selfish, then the deal God offered him would have been a good one. After He destroyed the Israelites because of their sin, He would start over with Moses and make him into a great nation. But Moses did not want the Israelites (including his brother and sister) to be destroyed. Instead, he begged God to show them mercy and to fulfill His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. As a result, the Lord relented. Because of Moses' selflessness, Israel was shown mercy.

TUESDAY, June 2. Isa. 63:7-14.

God's glory in His deliverance. Isaiah recounted how the Lord saved Israel from bondage in a powerful and miraculous way. He hoped to remind a rebellious nation of God's love and mercy so that they would come to their senses and return to Him. In times when we get off track, it is good to be reminded of the Lord's abiding love for us. He always welcomes us back with open arms when we repent.

**WEDNESDAY, June 3.
Ezek. 36:16-23**

God vindicates His name. Our parents perhaps told us as children when we did something wrong, "You made your bed; now lie in it!" The Israelites were sleeping in their bed of exile because of their sin. God could have left them there, but He knew how other nations were disparaging His name because of Israel's exile. They believed God was too weak to save them from the Babylonians. Despite everything they had done, He promised to restore the Israelites for the sake of His name.

THURSDAY, June 4. Joel 2:12-17.

A call to repentance. The call to repentance is always urgent. None of us knows the moment of our final breath. One can sense the urgency of Joel's call for Israel to repent. In essence, they were to drop everything and call out to God for mercy. When we are off track spiritually, nothing else is important—not family, work, or anything else. The call to repentance is a call to refocus. Nothing is more essential than a right relationship with God.

FRIDAY, June 5. Ps. 95:6-11.

Hard hearts. The psalmist recalled two incidents in Israel's history that encapsulated the state of their hearts (Ex. 17:1-7). Though God had given them manna and quail to eat (chap. 16), they soon found themselves out of water. Rather than trusting God, they complained to Moses and longed to go back to Egypt. A hardened heart refuses to trust or learn lessons. The psalmist taught that the only cure is humbly worshipping God.

SATURDAY, June 6. Heb. 3:7-19.

Unbelief—the source of hard hearts. It is easy to drift into unbelief. Being around the wrong people can allow nefarious thoughts and practices to creep into our lives. The writer of Hebrews encourages us to be in community with people who nurture our faith and to avoid cynics and unbelievers so that we can guard our hearts from drifting into unbelief.

SUNDAY, June 7. Num. 14:11-24.

Mercy and judgment. Moses pleaded for the Lord not to destroy the Israelites. Again, God responded with mercy but also judgment. While He spared their lives, He barred them from entering the Promised Land. Instead, because of their lack of trust, they would die in the desert.

—Jim Musser