

Week Eleven

Days 71–77



Desert Wanderings Narrative: Numbers 23–32 |

Supplemental: Deuteronomy 24–31; Psalms 106–107, 111–113, 116–117

PROMISES MADE, PROMISES KEPT



Joshua and Moses on Mount Sinai

Numbers 23–24 continues the story about Balak trying to have Balaam curse the Israelites. God intervenes in these interactions and causes Balaam to bless Israel. Despite how things look, God’s power and providence will always prevail. This message is seen throughout the readings this week, especially when the Israelites’ sinning leads to their punishment.

- Although God intervenes and uses Balaam to bless the Israelites, this does not mean that Balaam was honorable. It appears that Balaam, in the end, seems to do what God wants, but he is not necessarily interested in doing God’s will.
- Israel continues to experience blessings as God intercedes for them. Poised to enter the Promised Land, the Israelites are living on the plains of Moab.
- The Bible says the Israelites “play the harlot” with the daughters of Moab. They invite the Israelites to the sacrifice of their gods.
- As new generations arise, new figures associated with disobedience and obedience arise among the Israelites. Phinehas is praised for rising up against the Israelites’ idolatry and infidelity.
- Moses makes it clear that when the people take possession of the Promised Land, the land will be divided according to the number in each tribe.
- Here, near the end of the Desert Wanderings, Moses lays his hands on Joshua in front of the community and appoints him as his successor. This act resembles the “laying on of hands” at a priestly ordination in the Church.
- In Deuteronomy 29, the Lord renews his covenant with his people. He renews his command not to turn to other gods because he knows that this is what they will want to do and what they will do.
- Moses and Joshua receive a powerful message from the Lord: “Be strong and of good courage” (Deuteronomy 31:6, 7; Joshua 1:6, 9).
- “Joshua” (or “Yeshua”) is the same name as “Jesus.” As Joshua leads the people across the Jordan River into the Promised Land, so Jesus leads the people of God through the waters of Baptism into the Promised Land of salvation.

