

12.39a Writing the Pentateuch; Choosing Joshua (Numbers 33:50–56; 27:12–23; Deuteronomy 3:21–29; 31:1–18, 23–30)

✓ “Check” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows.

[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that should not be read aloud. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional needed materials.
- Thorns; pricks
- Nancy Ganz’s treatment of this story is excellent in *Numbers: A Commentary for Children*, published by Shepherd Press, 2006.

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Tips and terms are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *Pentateuch*: the first five (*penta*) books of the Bible; also called the books of Moses and the Books of the Law
- *to witness against*: evidence that proves someone’s guilt; in today’s lesson, God’s Word witnesses against Israel
- *by lot*: to choose randomly by pulling or throwing out of a container to decide a question or choice
- *to commission*: to grant authority to carry out a particular task
- *Urim (and Thummim)*: stones in the high priest’s breastplate used to determine God’s will in a particular situation; the actual method of making the determination is unclear

Scripture: (NASB)

Numbers 33:50 Then the LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan *opposite* Jericho, saying, 51 “Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘When you cross over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, 52 then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their figured stones, and destroy all their molten images and demolish all their high places; 53 and you shall take possession of the land and live in it, for I have given the land to you to possess it. 54 You shall inherit the land by lot according to your families; to the larger you shall give more inheritance, and to the smaller you shall give less inheritance. Wherever the lot falls to anyone, that shall be his. You shall inherit according to the tribes of your fathers. 55 But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall come about that those whom you let remain of them *will become* as pricks in your eyes and as thorns in your sides, and they will trouble you in the land in which you live. 56 And as I plan to do to them, so I will do to you.’”

[27:1–11 deals with the issue of the daughters of Zelophehad, which we will not cover in these lessons.]

12 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go up to this mountain of Abarim, and see the land which I have given to the sons of Israel. 13 When you have seen it, you too will be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother was; 14 for in the wilderness of Zin, during the strife of the congregation, you rebelled against My command to treat Me as holy before their eyes at the water.” (These are the waters of Meribah of Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.)

15 Then Moses spoke to the LORD, saying, 16 “May the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation, 17 who will go out and come in before them, and who will lead them out and bring them in, so that the congregation of the LORD will not be like sheep which have no shepherd.” 18 So the LORD said to Moses, “Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; 19 and have him stand before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and commission him in their sight. 20 You shall put some of your authority on him, in order that all the congregation of the sons of Israel may obey *him*. 21 Moreover, he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the

Urim before the LORD. At his command they shall go out and at his command they shall come in, *both* he and the sons of Israel with him, even all the congregation.” 22 Moses did just as the LORD commanded him; and he took Joshua and set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation. 23 Then he laid his hands on him and commissioned him, just as the LORD had spoken through Moses.

Deuteronomy 3:21 I commanded Joshua at that time, saying, ‘Your eyes have seen all that the LORD your God has done to these two kings; so the LORD shall do to all the kingdoms into which you are about to cross. 22 Do not fear them, for the LORD your God is the one fighting for you.’ . . . 28 But charge Joshua and encourage him and strengthen him, for he shall go across at the head of this people, and he will give them as an inheritance the land which you will see.’ 29 So we remained in the valley opposite Beth-peor.

31:1 So Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel. 2 And he said to them, “I am a hundred and twenty years old today; I am no longer able to come and go, and the LORD has said to me, ‘You shall not cross this Jordan.’ 3 It is the LORD your God who will cross ahead of you; He will destroy these nations before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua is the one who will cross ahead of you, just as the LORD has spoken. 4 The LORD will do to them just as He did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites, and to their land, when He destroyed them. 5 The LORD will deliver them up before you, and you shall do to them according to all the commandments which I have commanded you. 6 Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you.”

7 Then Moses called to Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, “Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land which the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall give it to them as an inheritance. 8 The LORD is the one who goes ahead of you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.”

9 So Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. 10 Then Moses commanded them, saying, “At the end of every seven years, at the time of the year of remission of debts, at the Feast of Booths, 11 when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place which He will choose, you shall read this law in front of all Israel in their hearing. 12 Assemble the people, the men and the women and children and the alien who is in your town, so that they may hear and learn and fear the LORD your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law. 13 Their children, who have not known, will hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live on the land which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess.”

14 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, the time for you to die is near; call Joshua, and present yourselves at the tent of meeting, that I may commission him.” So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves at the tent of meeting. 15 The LORD appeared in the tent in a pillar of cloud, and the pillar of cloud stood at the doorway of the tent. 16 The LORD said to Moses, “Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers; and this people will arise and play the harlot with the strange gods of the land, into the midst of which they are going, and will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them. 17 Then My anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and hide My face from them, and they will be consumed, and many evils and troubles will come upon them; so that they will say in that day, ‘Is it not because our God is not among us that these evils have come upon us?’ 18 But I will surely hide My face in that day because of all the evil which they will do, for they will turn to other gods. . . .

23 Then He commissioned Joshua the son of Nun, and said, “Be strong and courageous, for you shall bring the sons of Israel into the land which I swore to them, and I will be with you.”

24 It came about, when Moses finished writing the words of this law in a book until they were complete, 25 that Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying, 26 “Take this book of the law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may remain there as a witness against you. 27 For I know your rebellion and your stubbornness; behold, while I am still alive with you today, you have been rebellious against the LORD; how much more, then, after my death? 28 Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, that I may speak these words in their hearing and call the heavens and the earth to witness against them. 29 For I know that after my death you will act corruptly and turn from the

way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days, for you will do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger with the work of your hands.”

Introduction/Review:

As Moses’ time on earth drew to a close, he continued to complete his God-given jobs: he sent out soldiers to war against Midian, a nation that had caused Israel to worship false idols; he assigned land for two and one-half tribes (Reuben, Gad, one-half Manasseh) on the east side of the Jordan River; he set up three of the six cities of refuge; and he told all twelve tribes how they were to provide for the Levites. Throughout all these experiences, Moses reminded the people of God’s commands to them.

Story:

Writing the Pentateuch

What are the first five books of the Bible? [Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.] They are called the books of the law or the Pentateuch, for God, as well as giving the history of His people, gave His law in these books. God gave the words of these five books to Moses, so they are sometimes called the books of Moses. Moses needed to complete the writing before his death.

These books were important, for they were to teach the people the fear of the Lord. When He was done, Moses would give the writings to the priests, the Levites, and to all the elders of Israel and command them, “At the end of every seven years, at the Feast of Booths, when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD, you shall read this law to all Israel. Assemble the men, women, children, and the alien so that they may hear and learn and fear the LORD your God. You must be careful to observe all the words of this law as long as you live on the land which you are about to possess.”

Prophesying idolatry

Moses commanded the Levites, “Preserve this book of the law beside the ark of the covenant of God.” Then he uttered some severe words—prophetic words: “Call to me all the elders and officers so that they may hear me call heaven and earth to witness against them. I have seen how rebellious and stubborn you are against the LORD. How much more will you rebel after I die? You will act corruptly and turn from God’s way. Your rebellion will bring you dire consequences—the LORD’s anger.” Moses spoke the truth, for even we know how bent on doing evil Israel was.

God continued His commands through Moses: “When you cross over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, you must drive out all the inhabitants and destroy all the ✓pictures of their idols on stones, all their molten images of silver and gold, and all their temples that they build on high places. Own the land and live in it, for I have given it to you. Divide the land by lot according to the size of your families: larger areas go to tribes with more people, and smaller areas to tribes with fewer people. But beware: if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land, those who remain will become as pricks in your eyes and as thorns in your sides, and they will trouble you. Eventually, you will be thrust out of the land as they are being expelled.”

Appointing a successor

Then, speaking directly to Moses, the LORD announced, “You are about to go up to this mountain and see the land which I have given to Israel. When you have seen it, you, like Aaron, will die because you rebelled against My command to treat Me as holy before the congregation at Meribah. You may not enter the land.”

Moses answered, saying, “Will you appoint a man over the congregation who will lead them out and bring them into the land so that they will not be like sheep that have no shepherd?”

“Take Joshua, the son of Nun,” the LORD replied. “He is a Spirit-filled man. Commission him to be leader.”

Now, what do we know about Joshua? When the Amalekites fought against the feeble soon after Israel had left Egypt, he was the leader in that war. (That’s the battle in which Moses held up his hands.) Joshua was a helper to Moses on Mount Sinai and at the tent of meeting. He was a spy, with Caleb, who gave a good

report and did not discourage the people.

Commissioning Joshua

God had more to say about the transfer of authority: “Have Joshua stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and commission him in their sight. You shall put some of your authority on him so that all the congregation of the sons of Israel may obey him. He will get his instructions from Eleazar the priest, who shall ask God by use of the Urim. At Joshua’s command the congregation shall war.”

Moses did what the LORD commanded him and took Joshua before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation. Then he laid his hands on Joshua and commissioned him. This is what he said: “I am a hundred and twenty years old. I am no longer able to come and go, and the LORD has said to me, ‘You shall not cross this Jordan.’ However, the LORD will cross ahead of you. With Joshua as your leader, He will destroy these nations before you, and you shall live in Canaan. The LORD will do to the nations and their land just as He did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites, when He destroyed them. Be strong and courageous; do not be afraid, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you.”

What encouragement those words must have been to Joshua, but more encouragement came from Moses’ lips. He repeated two more times, “Do not fear them all the kingdoms in Canaan, for the LORD your God is the one fighting for you. Be strong and courageous, for you shall lead this people into the land which the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them. The LORD will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.”

Prophesying apostacy

Then God Himself took part in this commissioning service. He said to Moses, “You and Joshua present yourselves at the tent of meeting, that I may commission Joshua.” So when Moses and Joshua went to the tabernacle, the LORD appeared at the doorway in the pillar of cloud. The LORD’s words to Moses were almost exactly what Moses had told the people: “Moses, you are about to die, and this people will worship the strange gods of the land where they are going. They will forsake Me and break My covenant. Then I will be angry against them, and I will forsake them. They will be consumed. Many evils and troubles will come upon them so that they will wonder, ‘Is it because our God is not with us that these evils have come upon us?’ But I will surely not pay attention to them because they will have done evil in turning to other gods.”

What a sad state of affairs! After receiving good from the hand of the Lord year after year, and after receiving His laws in audible and written form, they would forsake Him within a relatively short time. God would be patient with them for centuries, but eventually He would drive them out of the land.

Oh, let us keep ourselves reminded of all that the Lord does for us; let us stay faithful to Him.

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:
The Hebrew name *Joshua*, like the Greek name *Jesus*, means Saviour.
- We must stay in the Word so that we remain faithful to God and His commands.

Activities:

- Play dough: thorns; the numeral 5; the cloudy pillar
- Snack: “Be-strong-and-courageous” barbells made from pretzel sticks with cheese squares, grapes, or olives on each end. (See photo at <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/522769469232533222/>.)
- Review questions: (Game: Write all the students’ names on separate folded pieces of paper and place them in a container. Also, write two sets of numbers 1 through 5 on pieces of paper; fold these papers and place in another container. Draw “lots” from the names container to see who may answer the

question. If that student answers correctly, [s]he draws a numbers “lot” for points. The student with the most points wins the game.)

1. What are “the books of Moses”? [The Pentateuch; the books of the law; the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.]
2. The books of the law were to teach the people what? [The fear of the Lord.]
3. How often were all the people to assemble to hear the reading of the books of the law? [Every seven years at the feast of booths.]
4. Where was this book of the law to be kept? [Beside the ark of the covenant.]
5. Israel was to destroy what items in the land of Canaan? [All items of worship in Canaan—pictures, molten images, and temples on the high places.]
6. How was the land to be divided? Who would get the larger or smaller share? [By lot; more populous tribes would get more land; smaller tribes would get less.]
7. Whom did God choose to be the new leader of Israel? [Joshua.]
8. What sad thing did both Moses and God say the Israelites would do? [Worship the gods of the land and forsake the Lord.]
9. Tell one thing Moses said to encourage Joshua when he commissioned him. [God would fight against the enemies as He had against Sihon and Og; Joshua should not fear the enemies; he should be strong and courageous; the LORD would go with him; God would not fail or forsake him.]
10. Where did God Himself commission Joshua? [In the cloud at the tabernacle.]

Memory Verse[s]:

- Exodus 20:1–17. An enlarged copy of the words, the “Exodus 20:1–17” song sheet, and motions are in Lesson 12.15 or on the “Lessons” and “Songs” pages at teachingthebibleto kids.org. “Stop! It’s the Law,” a song that teaches only the basic Ten Commandments, is found on the same “Songs” page.

Handwork:

- Print and have students color the clip art picture of Deuteronomy 31:6 found at <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/40/f5/6d/40f56dd0a9f3fa5467747bad38376cce.jpg>.

Pentateuch

to witness

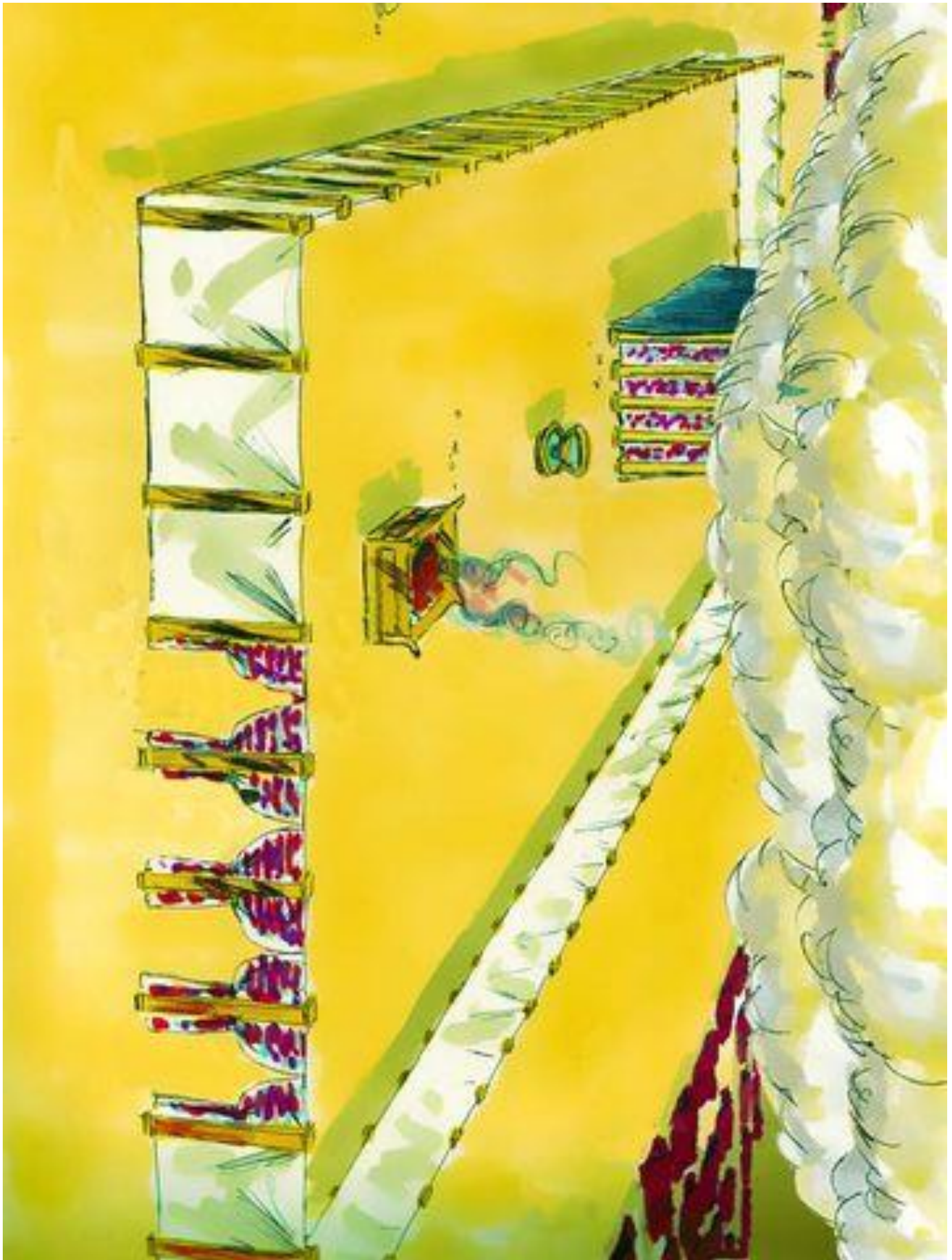
by lot

to commission

Urim and Thummim







<http://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/moses-joshua/>