

The people of God, the Israelites, had refused to enter the Promised Land, so God had caused them to wander for 40 years in the desert. The people had not trusted God's plan and instead had chosen to listen to the report of ten leaders that caused fear to grip the people. Only Joshua and Caleb had returned to the people with great enthusiasm to trust God and move forward to possess the land God had promised. God had then declared that only Joshua and Caleb would go in to possess the land and that the other adults would die before this would happen. Aaron and Moses had also been given the same consequence because they had failed to honor God when Moses angrily hit the rock at Meribah instead of just speaking to it as God had commanded.

For 40 years the adults from the unbelieving generation had all died in the desert. Aaron had passed the priestly leadership on to his son, and then died on the top of Mount Hor after looking over at the distant land God had promised he would only get to see from a distance. Now Moses was to pass on his leadership to the next generation.

Before all the people, Moses laid hands on Joshua and proclaimed him the next leader of Israel. God filled Joshua with the spirit of wisdom and gave Moses the words to assure the people of their new leader. Moses gave a special prayer for God's blessing and recited a song from beginning to end before all the people. Moses reminded the people one last time of all the things God had done for them.

Then Moses began a special event that each father or leader would traditionally do just before he died. It was a custom in those days to give a blessing to each son. The blessing would be unique and speak of God's plan for each child and the pronouncement of a special blessing. In this ceremony the father would often give his final words of instruction and then pass on a blessing for the next generation. In this case, Moses had a blessing for each of the tribes of Israel. It is interesting to compare the blessings Moses gave with the original blessings that Jacob gave to each of his sons. In Genesis 49 Jacob, later known as Israel, begins this blessing process with his twelve sons, who later became the twelve tribes of Israel. The tradition of giving the blessing was extremely important in their culture and symbolic of passing their faith on to the next generation.

Once the blessings have been pronounced on all the tribes, it was time for Moses to hear the voice of the Lord again. Moses was reminded that he would only see the Promised Land from a distance due to his disobedience. God led Moses to the top of Mount Nebo where he saw a vast portion of the land God had ready for His people. Even though Moses was still a strong and healthy man at the age of 120, God said it was time for his death. Moses died on the mountain and God buried him. The people mourned the death of their leader, Moses, for the traditional 30 days. Then the people went to Joshua, who was to be the new leader for His people. The people were thankful that God had used such a mighty man as Moses to lead them, but now they were ready to accept God's new leader. This new generation, with Caleb and Joshua, was finally ready to take possession of the land God had promised them.

## Teacher's Notes

- I. **The final adults.**
  - A. Aaron's death.
  - B. Moses' reminder.
- II. **Leadership transfer.**
  - A. Joshua prepared.
  - B. Moses' prayer.
- III. **Each tribe blessed.**
  - A. Reflection of Jacob's blessings.
  - B. Final words.
- IV. **The death of Moses.**
  - A. Mountaintop view.
  - B. Timely passing.

## Activity

Help the students find the blessings Jacob gave each of his sons in Genesis 49. Compare them individually with the blessings Moses gave each tribe. Help the students understand that each son of Jacob had now grown into a tribe of thousands of people, yet God still had a special blessing for them. Discuss what type of blessings fathers could give their children today.

## Teacher Growth

Part of today's lesson focuses on the blessings a father gives his children. As a teacher you will become aware of the dilemma that some of your students face without a father in their homes. Be sensitive to the situations that your students may face. That does not mean you change the biblical account, but you may need to explain that just as Moses was not the "father" of all those people, God had made him like a spiritual father for them, and God still does that for families today.

## Scripture Passages:

Deuteronomy 32:48 – 34:12

## Memory Verse:

Deuteronomy 33:27 – *"The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."*





