



Numbers

An Epic Biblical Camping Trip



Unless you're a math nerd, studying a book called "Numbers" probably sounds pretty boring. But since God wrote this book, and since it fits into the larger picture of Scripture leading to Jesus, it is anything but boring! Just as the Israelites confront difficult choices (trust God's promises or not?) in a difficult place (the wilderness), we face the same issues in a modern-day context. As Paul said in Romans 15.4: "*Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*"

Important Notes about the Book:

- **Its Name.** The name "Numbers" probably comes from the two recorded censuses (chs. 1-4, 26). However, in the Hebrew Bible the name of the book is "In the Wilderness" which better captures its essence.
- **Its Composition.** Numbers is an interesting combination of narrative and law code. What appears at first like a random grab bag is actually a strategic testament to God's faithful love. For example, right after the disastrous chapters of 13-14, God begins chapter 15 by saying "When you come into the land you are to inhabit..." Even after the rebellious first generation refused to go into the land, God is still reaffirming His commitment to fulfill His promises.
- **Its Organization.** Numbers is based on three big story cycles: when the Israelites were at Mt. Sinai (Chapters 1-10), at Kadesh-Barnea in the Wilderness of Paran (13-19), and at the Plains of Moab (22-36). Two short travel logs fill in the cracks (10-12, 20-21). This pattern is similar to Genesis, which can be roughly summed up by the three major cycles of Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph, each introduced by the formula: "These are the generations of..." (Gen. 11.27, 25.19, 37.2). Also, Deuteronomy is based on three long speeches by Moses (Deut. 1-4, 5-28, 29-30).
- **Its Timeline.** God speeds up and slows down the account to concentrate on what He considers important. Chapters 1-10 happen during a twenty day timespan, from the census to the Israelite departure from Sinai. Chapters 10-13 occur within about three months, from Sinai to Kadesh. Chapters 14-19 cover 38 years, all the years of wandering! Chapters 20-36 cover eleven months, from leaving Kadesh (the second time) to the beginning of Deuteronomy. See pg. 3 for more details.
- **Its Message:** Trust that God is faithful to His promises. Numbers 14.7-9.

What to Look for:

- **The character of God.** Yahweh defines Himself in Exodus 34.6-7. He is "*a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.*" How is that character demonstrated in the book of Numbers?
- **God's promises to Abraham.** God began to pledge Himself to Abraham in Genesis 12.1-7. Those promises became the fixed points on the roadmap of Israel's history. How do we see those promises in the background of Numbers?
- **The faithlessness of God's people.** We will read about division, idolatry, and rebellion - even on the part of the Israelite leaders. What caused it to happen? What warnings are here for us, both as a church and as individuals?
- **The need for Jesus.** How will Jesus' work be greater than what Moses and Aaron accomplished? How is He a greater intercessor than the ones in this book? How does the book as a whole point towards His sacrifice?

NUMBERS

WILDERNESS STORIES:

ISRAEL'S REBELLION: GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

RECALLED BY THE

PROPHETS & POETS & APOSTLES

ISAIAH 43
PSALMS 78, 95, 106
1 CORINTHIANS 10
HEBREWS 3-4

WARNING
GOD IS FAITHFUL TO HIS PROMISES, BUT WILL LEFT HIS PEOPLE CAULK AWAY AND FACE THE CONSEQUENCES.

EXODUS OF ISRAEL

COVENANT AT MTSINAI

COVENANT BROKEN

TABERNACLE & PRIESTS

PROMISED LAND

1-10a MT. SINAI

1-7 ISRAEL NUMBERED & ARRANGED

8-10 CENSUS

REUBEN - 49,531
SUDAN - 42,500
GAD - 40,500
JUDAH - 74,600
LEVI - 32,000

LEVITES

PRIESTS

JUDAH

5-10 LAWS ABOUT CRIMINAL PUNISH

10b-12 TRAVEL

10 PEOPLE COMPLAIN

WE'RE TIRED OF TRAVELING IN THE DESERT. WE WANT TO GET TO EGYPT!

IT WAS BETTER IN EGYPT!

12 PHARAH & AARON OPPOSE MOSES

WHAT PUNISHES GOD'S ANGRY PEOPLE? (NUMBERS 16)

13-19 WILDERNESS OF PARAN

13-14 SITES EXPLORE THE PROMISED LAND

CALEB & JOSHUA

NO! GOD WILL SWEAR US!

WE CAN'T TAKE IT! WE'VE DESERVED THIS!

LET'S GO BACK TO EGYPT!!!

THIS GENERATION WILL DIE BARRING IN THE DESERT. ONLY THEIR CHILDREN WILL ENTER THE LAND.

REMEMBER YOUR PROMISE TO ABRAHAM!

16-17 REBELLION OF KORAH

AARON & MOSES

YOU'RE GONE TOO FAR, MOSE! WHO ARE YOU TO LEAD US?

20-21 TRAVEL

20 PEOPLE COMPLAIN & MOSES REBELS

YOU REBELS! MUST WE BRING WATER OUT OF THIS ROCK?

WE'RE THIRSTING!

MOSES, YOU WILL NOT ENTER THE PROMISED LAND EITHER.

21 A STRANGE SYMBOL: GOD'S WISDOM IN THE FORM OF A SOURCE OF LIFE

THE BRONZE SNAKE

22-36 PLAINS OF MOAB

22-23 BALAM & THE KING OF MOAB

CURSE ISRAEL FOR ME!

BALAM

BALAK

IF ONLY I COULD CURSE ISRAEL! GOD HAS BLESSED THEM AND I CAN'T CHANGE IT!

THE ANGELS TRY!

24-25 A STAR WILL COME OUT OF JACOB... A SCYTHER WILL ARISE OUT OF ISRAEL!

26-30 THE NEXT GENERATION OF PREPARES TO ENTER THE LAND

THE ANGELS TRY!

THE ANGELS TRY!

31-35 TRIBES BEGIN TO SETTLE

36 VICTORY OVER ENEMIES

NEW TESTAMENT: MATTHEW 23:35
LUKE 11:17
ROMANS 11:26-27
1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-11
HEBREWS 3:7-4:11

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Israel's Timeline: Dates From Egypt to Canaan

Date	Event & Location	Scripture Reference
1st year, 1st month, 14th day	First Passover (in Egypt)	Exodus 12.18
1st year, 1st month, 15th day	Exodus from Egypt	Exodus 12.2, 18 Numbers 33.3
1st year, 3rd month, 15th day	Arrival at Mount Sinai	Exodus 19.1
2nd year, 1st month, 1st day	Tabernacle erected	Exodus 40.2
2nd year, 1st month, 8th day	Ordination of priests completed	Leviticus 9.1
2nd year, 1st month, 12th day	Dedication offerings for altar end	Numbers 7.78
2nd year, 1st month, 14th day	Second Passover since Exodus	Numbers 9.5
2nd year, 2nd month, 1st day	First census commanded	Numbers 1.1
2nd year, 2nd month, 14th day	Delayed Passover	Numbers 9.11
2nd year, 2nd month, 20th day	Departure from Mount Sinai	Numbers 10.11
2nd year, 5th month	First generation arrives at Kadesh* Spies sent out to Canaan	Numbers 13.20, 26
40th year, 1st month	Second generation arrives at Kadesh	Numbers 20.1
40th year, 5th month, 1st day	Aaron dies on Mount Hor	Numbers 33.38
40th year, 11th month, 1st day	Moses speaks at plains of Moab†	Deuteronomy 1.1-3
41st year, 1st month, 10th day	Israelites enter Canaan	Joshua 4.19

* Israel wandered in the wilderness for 38 years from the time they first left Kadesh until the men of war died and Israel crossed the Zered brook (Deut. 2.14). 40 years in total (Deut. 2.7).

† It's an 11 day journey from Mt. Sinai to Kadesh (Deut. 1.2). A short journey turned into 40 years!

Outline of Numbers

- **Mt. Sinai (1-10a)**
 - Israel is numbered and arranged (1-4)
 - Warriors are counted, except for Levites (1)
 - The camp layout is given (2)
 - Levites are counted and given specific jobs (3-4)
 - Ritual purity laws (5-10)
 - Cleansing the people who live in God's camp (5-6)
 - The tabernacle and Levites are consecrated (7-8)
 - Passover is celebrated, God lives with His people and directs their movements (9)
 - The silver trumpets are made to direct the people (10a)
- **Travel (10b-12)**
 - Israel leaves Mt. Sinai (10b)
 - The people complain & Moses gets some help (11)
 - Division between Moses and his siblings (12)
- **Wilderness of Paran (13-19)**
 - The spies are sent out, come back with bad report, the people rebel (13-14)
 - Laws about future sacrifices, different kinds of sins, Sabbath-breaker, tassels (15)
 - Rebellion of Korah, Dathan, Abiram; Aaron's staff buds (16-17)
 - Laws about the duties and privileges of the priests and Levites (18)
 - Laws about cleansing from death (19)
- **Travel (20-21)**
 - Yikes: Miriam and Aaron die, people complain and Moses cracks, Edom refuses Israel (20)
 - Success in battle against Arad, Amorites, and Bashan; people complain, bronze serpent (21)
- **Plains of Moab (22-36)**
 - God protects Israel from Balaam and Balak (22-24)
 - Israel abandons God for Baal worship! (25)
 - Census for the new generation (26)
 - Laws about life in the land (27-30)
 - Daughters of Zelophehad, Joshua appointed to succeed Moses (27)
 - Laws about offerings: both for regular occasions and special feast days (28-29)
 - Laws about vowing (30)
 - Midianites are attacked for seducing Israel (31)
 - Two tribes do not want to cross over the Jordan (32)
 - Israel's journey from Egypt to Canaan is documented; command to drive out Canaanites (33)
 - Laws about life in the land (34-36)
 - Land boundaries and tribal chiefs who would divide the land (34)
 - Levite cities & cities of refuge (35)
 - Daughters of Zelophehad (36)