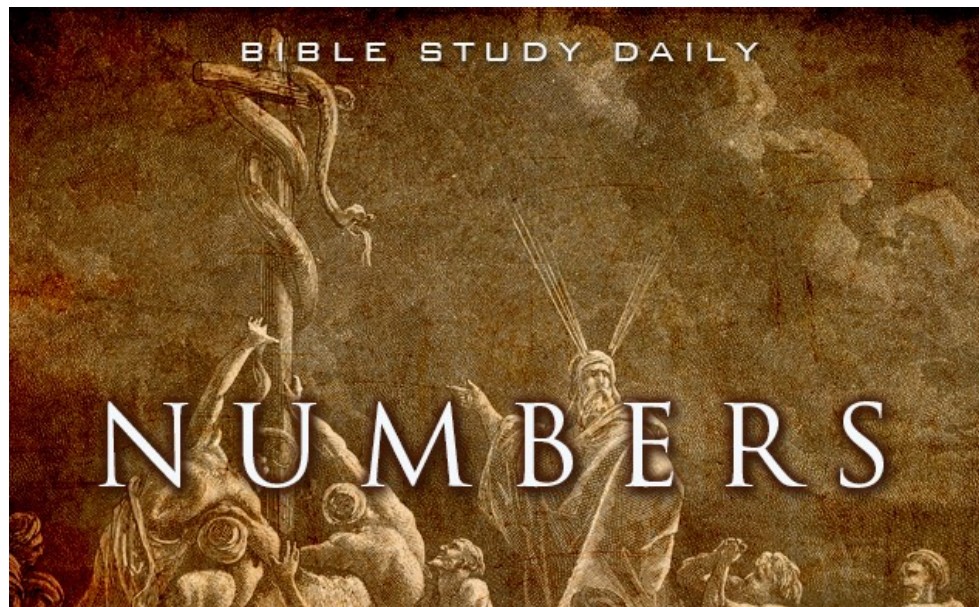




BIBLE STUDY DAILY



This document contains the introduction to the book of Numbers as well as my study notes for the book.



Name

The English title “Numbers” is derived from the Septuagint name “Arithmoi” because of the two military censuses (chapter 1 & 26). The Hebrew title, Bemidbar, means “In the Wilderness” and describes the geographical setting for much of the book.

Author

The book of Numbers does not explicitly say that Moses is the author. However scholars have traditionally held that Moses is the author. We know that Moses kept a journal (33:2) and the phrase “The Lord spoke to Moses” is used 31 times.

Genre

Law

Literary Form

Historical Narrative

Time Frame

Numbers continues the Exodus story. It begins about one month after the close of Exodus, or about a year since the Israelite’s departure from Egypt. It covers nearly 39 years of the Israelite’s wanderings from Mt Sinai to the plains on the eastern side of the Jordan river.

Emphasis

The book of Numbers emphasizes 5 major themes about God and the relationship between God and the people of Israel:

- The holiness of God
- The sinfulness of mankind
- The requirement of obedience to God
- The tragic result of disobedience to God
- The faithfulness of God to His covenant with Israel

Outline

- Preparation for travel (1:1-10:10)
- Journey to Kadesh Barnea (10:11-14:45)
- Journey to the plains of Moab (15:1-22:1)
- The Moabites and Balaam (22:2-25:18)
- Preparations for entering the Promised Land (26-36)

What I Noticed Today (Numbers 1-2)

Numbers 1

Numbers 1 opens with the phrase “The Lord spoke to Moses.” This is a key phrase for the book as it is repeated some 65 times. What follows is either divine revelation or instruction.

In the case of Number 1:1, the phrase is followed by God’s instructions for the first census of the tribes and the duties of the Levites.

In verses 1-19 the Lord ordered Moses to take a census of the people of Israel on the first day of the second month of the second year after the people left Egypt:

- The census was completed by tribe numbering the men 20 years old and older who could serve in Israel’s army.
- Moses and Aaron were to be assisted in the work of completing the census by specific men, one from each tribe, that were the heads of their clans.
- They counted one by one the men over 20 years old just as the Lord commanded.

In verses 20-46 the census counts by tribe are listed:

- Verses 20-21 the tribe of Reuben 46,500.
- Verses 22-23 the tribe of Simeon 59,300.
- Verses 24-25 the tribe of Gad 45,650.
- Verses 26-27 the tribe of Judah 74,600.
- Verses 28-29 the tribe of Issachar 54,400.
- Verses 30-31 the tribe of Zebulun 57,400.
- Verses 32-33 the tribe of Joseph 40,500.
- Verses 34-35 the tribe of Manasseh 32,200.
- Verses 36-37 the tribe of Benjamin 35,400.
- Verses 38-39 the tribe of Dan 62,700.
- Verses 40-41 the tribe of Asher 41,500.
- Verses 42-43 the tribe of Naphtali 53,400.
- Verses 44-46 the grand total of men 20 years old and older of the 12 tribes 603,550.

Note: The total was 603,550 men. Assuming these men were married with an average of two children an estimated total population of 2-3 million people is quite possible.

In verses 47-54 The Levites were exempted from inclusion in the census and from serving in the army because they were responsible for the care and transport of the tabernacle.

In verse 55 the chapter concludes with a confirmation that the Israelites did everything God had commanded.

Numbers 2

In Numbers 2, the Lord gave Moses and Aaron instructions for ordering the arrangement of the tribes in the camp.

- In verses 1-2 the Lord told Moses and Aaron the tribes were to camp around the tent of meeting with their banners beside the respective flags of their tribes.

Note: There were four banners (or “standards” in some translations), one for each group of three tribes. These banners were placed alongside the flags of the individual tribes.

- Verses 3-9 on the east side were the tribes of Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun.

Note: Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun were the fourth, fifth, and sixth sons of Jacob by Leah.

- Verses 10-17 on the south side were the tribes of Reuben, Simeon, and Gad.

Note: Reuben and Simeon were the first and second sons of Jacob by Leah. Levi, the third son of Leah was not included because of their special placement serving God. Gad, the first son of Leah’s handmaid, was included in this group.

- Verses 18-24 on the west side were Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin.

Note: Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin were the sons of Jacob by Rachel.


- Verses 25-31 on the north side were the tribes of Dan, Asher, and Naphtali.

Note: Dan and Asher were the sons of Rachel’s handmaid. Asher was the second son of Leah’s handmaid.

- In verses 32-34 the total of the tribes was 603,550, not counting the Levites. The Israelites did everything the Lord commanded.

Note: The details of Numbers 2 demonstrate God is a God of organization. He dictated the order and placement of each of the tribes around the tribe of Levi who was in the center of the camp. The Levites themselves were stationed around the perimeter of the tabernacle to create a safety zone protecting the people from coming too close the tabernacle.

Note: If you were to look down on the entire encampment from above, based on the size of each tribe, they would form the basic shape of a cross with God in the very center.



Note: God's presence in the pillar of cloud and tower of fire could be seen by the entire nation, while the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies represented God's throne among His chosen people.

Some thoughts for additional consideration:

- *At this time God lived in the center of the people's life and was visible to them night and day. We also have God in the center of our lives in the form of the Holy Spirit, who is available to us night and day!*

What I Noticed Today

(Numbers 3-4)

Numbers 3-4 include God's instructions to Aaron and his sons, and to the Levites regarding their priestly duties.

Numbers 3

Numbers 3 describe the duties of the Aaron's sons in some detail.

In verses 1-4 contains the family record of Aaron. He had four sons who were anointed and ordained to serve as priests: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. Nadab and Abihu died when they presented unauthorized fire before the Lord, leaving Eleazar and Ithamar to serve as priests with their father, Aaron.

In verses 5-10 the Lord spoke to Moses telling him to bring the Levites forward to help Aaron with the duties of caring for the tabernacle.

Note: Aaron was a Levite. All priests were Levites but not all Levites were priests.

Note: God describes their duties to include ministering to the priests, guarding the furnishing of the tabernacle, and keeping guard over the people of Israel as they minister before the tabernacle.

In verses 11-13 The Lord explained to Moses the reason for the selection of the Levites as a ransom for all the firstborn of Israel. The entire tribe of Levi became the substitutionary sacrifice in service to God when God struck down the firstborn throughout Egypt.

In verses 14-39 the Lord spoke to Moses ordering him to take a census of all the clans of the tribe of Levi:

- The sons of Levi were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.
- Gershon's sons were Libni and Shimei. There were 7,500 males a month old or more. They camped behind the tabernacle on the west side. The Gershonites were responsible for guarding and transporting the tabernacle itself.
- Kohath's sons were Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. There were 8,600 males a month old or older. The Kohathites camped on the south side of the tabernacle. The Kohathites were responsible for guarding and transporting the sacred tabernacle furnishings.
- Merari's sons were Mahli and Mushi. There were 6,200 males a month old or older. The Merari camped on the north side of the tabernacle. The Merari were responsible for caring for and transporting the equipment needed to erect the tabernacle.
- Moses, Aaron, and his sons performed the duties related to the sanctuary. They camped on the east side of the tabernacle.
- The total number of Levite males a month old or older was 22,000.

Note: Recall, the Levites were left out of the prior census which was for inclusion in the military, because the Levites were excluded from serving in the military.

In verses 40-51 the Lord told Moses to take a census of every Israelite firstborn male a month old or older. The Levites were the Lord's in place of every firstborn.

- The number of firstborn males was 22,273.
- For the 273 firstborn males of Israel over the number of firstborn Levites the Lord ordered a five-shekel price to redeem the Israelites be paid to Aaron and his sons.
- So Moses collected the redemption money of 1,365 shekels of silver and gave it to Aaron and his sons just as the Lord commanded.

Note: The 1,365 shekels of silver would have been over 170-lbs of silver!

Numbers 4

Numbers 4 is devoted to the Kohathites and their detailed responsibilities in caring for and transporting the holy elements of the tabernacle.

In verses 1-3 the Lord spoke to Moses telling him to complete a census of the Kohathite males between 30 and 50 years of age who were qualified to work in the tent of meeting.

In verses 4-20 the Lord gave explicit instructions regarding the care and transport of the holy objects in the tent of meeting.

- When it was time to move, Aaron and his sons were to go in and take down the veil and cover the ark of the testimony with it. This should then be covered with Manatee skin and blue cloth.
- Each item was carefully wrapped in hides to protect them and then in cloth.
- The Kohathites transported the holy furnishings, but no one was allowed to touch them directly except the priests. (We'll see what happened to someone who touched the ark of the covenant in II Samuel 6:3-7, and 1 Chronicles 13:10.)
- Eleazar was specifically given responsibility for the oil for the lamp, the fragrant offering, the grain offering, and the anointing oil. He had oversight of the entire tabernacle and all its contents.
- The Lord spoke to Moses once again warning him to not let anyone but a priest touch the holy things. Aaron and his sons must cover everything holy and the Kohathites could then carry them, but they are not allowed to look at them or touch them or they will die.

In verses 21-28 the duties of the Gershonites are described:

- The Lord spoke to Moses telling him to take a census of the Gershonite males between 30-50 years old.
- They are to transport the tabernacle curtains, the screen for the entrance of the tent of meeting, the courtyard hangings, and the screen to the entrance to the courtyard.

- They are under the direction of Ithamar the priest, son of Aaron.

In verses 29-33 the duties of the Merarites are described:

- The Lord spoke to Moses telling him to take a census of the Merarite males between 30-50 years old.
- They are responsible for carrying the tent of meeting, the supports of the tabernacle, the bases, crossbars, and posts.
- They are under the direction of Ithamar the priest, son of Aaron.

In verses 34-49 the census of the Levites is summarized:

- There were among the Kohathites 8,300 males over 1-month-old, and 2,750 between 30-50 years old.
- There were among the Gershonites 7,500 males over 1-month-old, and 2,630 between 30-50 years old.
- There were among the Merari 6,200 over 1-month-old, and 3,200 between 30-50 years old.
- There was a total of 8,580 men between 30-50 years old registered to work and each had his assigned duties in transporting items of the tabernacle.

Note: God established a hierarchy to care for the tabernacle. Aaron was in charge overall while his sons Eleazar and Ithamar served with him as priests. Eleazar was chief over the chiefs of the Levite clans and the tabernacle guards. Ithamar was responsible for the work of the Gershonites and Merari.

Some thoughts for additional consideration:

- *Once again we see the incredible detail and organization that God established for the nation Israel in their service to Him. It is important to note that God's promised blessings are contingent on the people following all the specific direction He provided.*

What I Noticed Today (Numbers 5-6)

Numbers 5

Numbers 5 restates some of what we read in Leviticus.

In verses 1-4 because God lived inside the camp He required the people to remain clean so anyone who had become defiled need to remain outside the camp until they were restored (Leviticus 13-14).

In verses 5-10 for those had had committed a sin, as soon as they were made aware of their sin they needed not only to confess their sin (Leviticus 6:1-7) but to also make restitution plus a 20% penalty. It was not enough to say you were sorry and move on, you must also make restitution for the offense. If the person was no longer alive restitution was to be paid to the priests.

In verses 11-31 the test for unfaithfulness is an interesting one. If a man became suspicious of his wife having an affair he could bring her before the priest who would, through the ceremony, determine whether or not she had been unfaithful. God takes marriage vows very seriously. Breaking the vow, even when in secret, is known to God, and He punished the guilty and exonerated the innocent.

- If a man becomes jealous of his wife believing that she has been unfaithful to him he must bring to the priest with a grain offering.
- The priest will bring her forward standing before the Lord swear an oath that she has not been unfaithful. The priest will pronounce a curse on her if she has been unfaithful. He will write the curses on a piece of a scroll and wash them off into bitter water.
- The priest will then make her drink the bitter water and if she has been unfaithful the water will cause bitter suffering. If she has not been unfaithful, the bitter water will have no effect on her.

Note: The woman would be brought to stand before the Lord because He is the judge who knows whether any unfaithfulness occurred, even in secret.


Numbers 6

Numbers 6 focuses on the Nazarite vow and God's blessing upon the people.

Note: Nazarite comes from the Hebrew word *nazir* which means "consecrated" or "separated." So the Nazarite vow was a voluntary vow that a man or woman could take to dedicate themselves to God for a period of time or even a lifetime. (We'll see an example when we read Samson's story in Judges.)

In verses 1-21 the Lord spoke to Moses and gave him instructions regarding the Nazirite vow:

- During the period of the vow, the person was to follow rules similar to a priest to



remain clean: they were to avoid wine, grapes, and wine vinegar.

- They were not cut their hair.
- They were not to come in contact with a dead person.
- If someone died near them they must shave their heads and make a sin and burnt offering to make atonement for his sin. He must rededicate his vow by bringing a lamb as a restitution offering.
- If any conditions of the vow were violated, then the term of their vow started all over.
- When the vow was completed, a burnt offering (for consecration), a sin offering (for purification), and a fellowship offering (for celebration) were made for them by the priest.
- The Nazarite was to shave his head at the entrance to the tent of meeting and take the hair and put it on the fire under the fellowship offering.
- The priest is to take the boiled shoulder from the ram, one unleavened cake, and one unleavened wafer and present them as a wave offering before the Lord.
- After that, the Nazirite may drink wine.

In verses 22-27 the chapter concludes with the Lord's blessing to the people through Aaron and his sons. God promises to bless the people who are faithful to Him, keep them, look upon them with favor, be gracious to them, and give them peace!

Some thoughts for additional consideration:

- *We are able to receive God's promised blessing directly because Jesus is our high priest who sits at the right hand of the Father!*

What I Noticed Today (Numbers 7)

Numbers 7

Numbers 7 is the longest chapter in the Pentateuch and the second longest chapter in the entire Bible. It certainly feels like it when we read it doesn't it? All this repetition – 12 times we read the same articles and animals being presented. This is one of those chapters that we have a tendency to skip over without paying too much attention to, but there are some interesting things to note.

Note: Numbers 7 looks back one month to the day when the tabernacle had been completed and Moses had anointed and consecrated all its contents.

In verses 1-9 the tabernacle had been erected based on gifts from the people, and it had been anointed. Now the people came together to offer materials needed for the transport and operation of the tabernacle.


- The tribal leaders brought as offerings to the Lord, six covered carts and twelve oxen. One cart for every two leaders and one ox per leader
- The Lord told Moses to accept these offerings to be used in the service of the tent of meeting by the Levites.
- The oxen and carts were given to the Gershonites and the Merari because they had all the heavy tabernacle fixtures to carry. The Kohathites were not given oxen and carts because they were responsible for carrying the holy things which were to be carried on their shoulders. (We'll see how important this is when we get to 2 Samuel 6:1-15.)

In verses 10-84 each day for twelve days the sons of the chiefs of each tribe brought identical offerings forward: a silver plate and basin filled with flour and oil for a grain offering; a golden dish full of incense; a bull, a ram, a lamb for a burnt offering; a male goat for a sin offering; two oxen five rams five male goats, and five male lambs for a peace offering. Grain, burnt, sin, and peace offerings were all brought forward to complete the dedication of the tabernacle.

Note: The order that the tribes came forward with their offerings is the same order that the tribes were listed in their encampment (Numbers 2:3-32).

In verses 84-88 the gifts offered to the Lord are summarized:

- 12 silver plates.
- 12 silver bowls.
- 12 gold bowls full of incense.
- Livestock for the burnt offering: 12 bulls, 12 rams, 12 male lambs with grain offerings, and 12 male goats for the sin offering.
- Livestock for the fellowship offering: 24 bulls, 60 rams, 60 male goats, and 60



male lambs.

In verse 89 when Moses entered the tent of meeting, he heard the voice of the Lord speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on top of the ark of the testimony, between the two cherubim.

Note: Numbers 7:89 fulfills God's promise from Exodus 25:22.

Some thoughts for additional consideration:

- *God made note of each individual by name, the details of every offering that was brought forward, and received the offerings individually. God cares about us as individuals!*

What I Noticed Today (Numbers 8-9)

Numbers 8

Numbers 8 is focused on the Levites: their dedication and their retirement. The Levites are a substitute for the first-born of Israel. All the first-born belong to God, but the Levites are given as a substitute to Aaron in service to God. Here the Levites are cleaned, they shave their beards, and sin and burnt offerings made on their behalf. Finally, the Levites are offered to God as a wave offering. In this way, the Levites were separated from the people of Israel in service to God.

In verses 1-4 the lamps are set up in the tabernacle:

- The Lord spoke to Moses telling him to have Aaron set up the lamps and lampstand (the menorah) just as God had commanded.

In verses 5-26 the Levites were consecrated:

- The Lord spoke to Moses instructing him to bring the Levites forward and cleanse them by sprinkling them with purification water, have them shave their entire bodies, and wash their clothes.
- Two young bulls were to be brought as an offering.
- The first, with its grain offering mixed with oil, was a sin offering.
- The second bull was a burnt offering.
- The Levites were to present themselves to the Lord and lay hands on the head of the bull as it was sacrificed in recognition of the substitutionary atonement.
- The Levites were then to be presented to the Lord because they belong to the Lord.
- The Lord had given the Levites to Aaron and his sons to perform the work at the tabernacle on behalf of the Israelites.
- Moses and the Levites did everything the Lord commanded to purify and consecrate the Levites for their service.
- The Levites were to actively serve in the tabernacle from the time that they were 25 years old until they were 50 years old. At that time, they were no longer to serve in the tabernacle but were to continue to minister to the brothers and serve as guards.

Note: We saw in Numbers 4 that the Levites did not begin their duties until age 30, so the first five years of service were likely in training. Their likely trainers were the men who were over 50.

- **Note:** A comparison between the priests and the Levites who served the priests: the priests were made holy, the Levites were cleansed; the priests were anointed,

the Levites were sprinkled; the priests were given new garments, the Levites only washed their clothes.

Numbers 9

Numbers 9 established the Passover celebration as a remembrance of God's judgment on the first-born of Egypt, and his passing over the house of Israel.

In verses 1-14 the second Passover is celebrated on the first month of the second year after the Israelites left Egypt.

- The Passover was to be observed at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month.
- There were some men who were unclean on the Passover day so they came to Moses asking what they should do. Moses inquired of the Lord.
- The Lord said those that were unclean at the time of the celebration, or away on a journey, were to wait one month and then celebrate the Passover on the fourteenth day at twilight.
- The person who is not unclean or on a journey, and fails to celebrate the Passover is to be cut-off from his people.
- A foreigner who lives among the Israelites and wishes to celebrate the Passover should be allowed to do so.

In verses 15-23 the cloud representing the Lord settled over the tabernacle:

Note: The chronology of this section jumps back two weeks from the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month of the second year, to the first day of that month to when the tabernacle was completed (see Numbers 7:1).

- On the day the tabernacle was completed, the cloud settled over the tabernacle and remained until nightfall when a pillar of fire appeared.
- At the command of the Lord the people broke camp, and at the command of the Lord they stopped and made camp.
- They never knew how long they would be in one place. Sometimes a day or two, and sometimes they would be in one place for weeks.

Some thoughts for additional consideration:

- *The people had to place their full trust and faith in God, never knowing when the command would come to move out or stop. They had to obey God at all times. They had to wait on God. And they had to follow God.*
- *We must be ready to do the same today. We must put our full faith and complete trust in God. We must obey Him at all times. We must wait on Him. And we must follow Him.*

What I Noticed Today

(Numbers 10-11)

Numbers 10

Numbers 10 provides the final instructions in preparation of the Israelites setting out on their journey to the Promised Land.

In verses 1-10 God instructs Moses to have silver trumpets made. These trumpets are the last bit of preparation before the Israelites set out on their journey to the Promised Land.

The trumpets had six purposes:

- Long blasts of both trumpets to summon the congregation,
- Long blasts of only one trumpet to summon the chiefs (clan leaders),
- Short blasts to have the tribes set out on the march.
- Short blasts to sound an alarm for war.
- To mark the beginning of a month.
- When offerings were being made.

The trumpets were to be blown by priests, and each time they were blown it was to be a reminder to the people of God's blessing.

In verses 11-28 depart from the Sinai and begin their journey to Kadesh Barnea (Numbers 10:11-14:45):

- On the twentieth day of the second month in the second year, the cloud lifted up above the tabernacle and the people set out leaving the Wilderness of the Sinai and stopping when they arrived at the Wilderness of Paran.
- The tribe of Judah set out first, followed by the tribe of Issachar, and the tribe of Zebulun.
- The tabernacle was then taken down carried by the Levites of the Gershonite and the Merarite clans.
- The tribe of Reuben set out next, then Simeon's tribe, and the tribe of Gad.
- The Levite clan of Kohathites then set out carrying the Ark of the Covenant and the other holy furnishings.
- The tribe of Ephraim set out next, followed by the tribe of Manasseh, and the tribe of Benjamin.
- The tribe of Dan set out next, followed by the tribe of Asher, and finally the tribe of Naphtali.

Note: About a year has passed since the people arrived at Mt. Sinai, and now the

cloud lifted up and the people set out on their march in an orderly fashion with the cloud of God leading the way.

In verses 29-32 we are now introduced to Hobab the son of Reuel the Midianite:

- Moses invites Hobab to join the Israelites on the journey, ostensibly to be a guide to the Israelites (vv. 31-32).

Note: I'm confused by this. Why would Moses want to ask someone else to guide the nation in the desert when he was being led by God? On the other hand, by inviting Hobab along, Moses is inviting him to join God's family, leavening behind his old ways to follow God.

Note: Hobab is described as being Moses's father-in-law. But we know from Exodus 18 that Moses' father in law is Jethro. Reuel is another name for Jethro. The Hebrew word (*hoten*) translated father-in-law means any male in-law. So it is most likely that Hobab is Jethro's son, and therefore, is Moses' brother in law, and Zipporah's brother.

In verses 32-36 the Israelites set out on a three-day journey with the Ark of the Covenant travelling ahead of them. The cloud of the Lord was above them by day.

Numbers 11

Numbers 11 is a story about the Israelites complaining to God once again.

In verses 1-3 the people began to complain openly before the Lord about the hardships they were enduring. The Lord was angry and his fire consumed the outskirts of the camp. The people cried out to Moses who prayed to the Lord on their behalf and the fire of the Lord died down.

In verses 4-9 another group of malcontents complained they didn't have meat and vegetables like they had in Egypt:

- They complained that all they had to eat was the manna that God supplied every day.


Note: Here God is supplying them with manna and a certain group complained that they don't have meat like they used to have in Egypt. Really? Have they forgotten already the oppression they endured at the hands of the Egyptians?!

In verses 10-15 the Lord is angry with the people, and so is Moses:

- Moses asked the Lord, why He was bringing this trouble on him. Moses said the Lord had created these people and said he could not bear responsibility for these people himself. Moses even told the Lord if He was going to deal with him like this, just kill him now.

In verses 16-17 God has Moses bring forth 70 elders whom He anoints with some of the Spirit that was on Moses. These men were to help Moses bear the burden of the people.

Note: Moses wanted to have the Lord take away the burden of leadership, and if not to kill him. But the Lord's response was to establish a leadership structure that allowed Moses to delegate leadership responsibility to the 70 elders.



In verses 18-23 the Lord told Moses to tell the people to purify themselves and get ready to eat meat.

- The Lord told Moses that because the people had rejected Him, He would give the people meat to eat for a full thirty days until they are sick of eating meat.
- Moses wonders how in the world this will happen since he doesn't think there is enough meat in all the camp to do this. The Lord reminds Moses His power is not limited.

In verses 24-30 prior to the Lord sending the meat, Moses gathered the 70 elders in front of the tent of meeting as the Lord had instructed:

- The Lord took some of the Spirit that was on Moses and put it on the 70 elders.
- As the Spirit rested on them they prophesied but never prophesied again.
- Two men, Eldad and Medad, who were listed among the elders had not come before the tabernacle yet the Spirit of the Lord rested on them and they prophesied also. Joshua complained to Moses thinking this was wrong, but Moses said he wished all the Lord's people had the Spirit to prophesy.

In verses 31-35 the Lord sent quail for the people to eat:

- A strong wind blew and the Lord brought them quail, enough to eat for a month.
- While they were still eating the quail the Lord's anger burned against them and struck them with a plague killing off all the people who had the craving for the meat.
- They named the place Kibroth-hattaavah (which means "graves of craving").
- From Kibroth-hataavah they journeyed to Hazeroth (south of the desert of Paran).

Some thoughts for additional consideration:

- *I am always struck by how organized God is in leading the people of Israel. Every detail is communicated to Moses who leads the people. As long as they obey and follow God's instructions life is good. But there were those who complained, they caused others to complain, and in so doing some of the people rejected God's blessing.*
- *As a body of believers, we tend to do the same thing today. We complain about God's blessing, about His leadership, and in so doing we display a poor witness to younger believers and those who do not yet know God.*

What I Noticed Today (Numbers 12-13)

Numbers 12

Numbers 12 opens up with Miriam and Aaron speaking against Moses because he had married a Cushite woman.

Note: Cushites were from Ethiopia, and we know Moses' wife Zipporah was a Midianite. It is unclear how or when the Cushite woman became Moses' wife. Miriam and Aaron seem to be taking on a position of superiority over Moses because of his marriage to the Cushite woman.

In verses 2-3 Miriam and Aaron seem to be jealous that Moses is the one who God speaks to and who God has chosen to lead the Israelites! But Moses is a humble man and says nothing to refute these attacks.

In verses 4-8 God hears their grumbling and in no uncertain terms, He lays it out to Aaron and Miriam.

- The Lord calls Moses, Aaron, and Miriam to appear before the tent of meeting and the cloud descended over the entrance to the tent.
- The Lord called Aaron and Miriam forward. The Lord, referring to Moses, said he was My servant, faithful in all my households, and that He speaks to him directly and openly.

In verses 9-16 the Lord is clearly angry with Aaron and Miriam. He leaves them but in leaving He strikes Miriam with leprosy. Aaron pleads with Moses to intercede on Miriam's behalf. Despite their actions, Moses steps forward and prays for Miriam, but God says she needs to be put outside the camp for seven days before she can return.

Note: Miriam being sent outside the camp followed the requirements of Leviticus 14:1-32.

- After Miriam was brought back inside the camp at the end of seven days the Israelites left Hazeroth and camped in the Wilderness of Paran.

Numbers 13

Numbers 13 opens with what seems like God telling Moses to have men go and spy out the Promised Land.

Note: In Deuteronomy 1:19-25 we learn that really it was the people of Israel who wanted to go spy out the land. I think as we read Numbers 13 God is allowing them to spy out the land for themselves. After all, God has already told them what the land looked like and promised it to them, so it makes more sense to think that the people wanted to see it for themselves.

In verses 1-16 the Lord spoke to Moses to send men to scout the land of Canaan.

- Leaders from each tribe were called forward.
- Moses renamed Hoshea son of Nun, Joshua.
- Moses gave them specific instructions to go to the Negev and then up into the hill country.
- They were to determine whether the people there were strong or weak, whether the land was good or bad, are they living in cities or encampments, and whether there are there trees or not. Additionally, Moses commanded them to bring back some fruit of the land because it was time for the first grape harvest.
- So the men went up from the Wilderness of Zin to Rehob. They went through the Negev up to Hebron. In the Valley of Eschol, they cut a branch of grapes so large that two men had to carry it.
- At the end of 40 days they returned.

In verses 24-33 the men reported what they had seen to Moses and Aaron and the Israelites:

- They said it was a good land, flowing with milk and honey.
- But, the people there are large and live in fortified cities.
- They saw the descendants of Anak living there (supposedly giants).
- Amalekites were living in the Negev.
- The Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites live in the hill country.
- The Canaanites live by the sea and along the Jordan river.
- Caleb spoke up saying they must go up and conquer the people and take possession of the land.
- 10 of the 12 spies said they should not go up into the land. They gave negative reports about the land.
- They claimed they had seen descendants of Anak from the Nephilim there.

Note: Nephilim (means “fallen ones”) mentioned in Genesis 6:4 were the offspring of angels and the daughters of men. They were large in stature. They would have been killed in the Genesis flood so the spies’ report is most likely an exaggeration.

Note: 10 of the 12 spies saw only the problems, not the great opportunities that lay before them. Except for Joshua and Caleb, they lacked faith that God would give them the land as He had promised.

Some thoughts for additional consideration:

- *Jealousy and a feeling of superiority often imbed itself in our beliefs and ultimately in our actions. It is easy enough to recognize when we start grumbling and complaining to God that someone else has something we don’t!*
- *Here we see the impact of leaders on their tribes. Their lack of faith caused their tribes to fear going forward to claim what God had promised. And as we shall see the result of these leader’s lack of faith was an entire nation wandered in the desert for the next 40 years!*

What I Noticed Today (Numbers 14-15)

Numbers 14

Numbers 14 continues in the aftermath of the story of the spy's report to the nation of Israel.

In verses 1-4 The people turned against Moses and Aaron based on the false report from 10 of the spies. They said they would have been better off dying in Egypt than in the wilderness. They even cried out against the Lord saying He brought them to the wilderness to die by the sword. They even thought they should pick a new leader and return to Egypt.

Note: Had they already forgotten the oppression they suffered at the hands of the Egyptians? Had they forgotten how the Lord had saved them through the miracle at the Red Sea, and provided manna for them every day for two years?

In verses 5-10 Moses and Aaron fell face down before the Israelites. Joshua and Caleb tore their clothes, which was a sign of grief or mourning, and spoke the truth to the people once again. But the people rejected Caleb and Joshua as well. They even planned to stone them all, but the glory of the Lord appeared to all the Israelites at the tent of meeting.

Note: In rejecting Moses and Aaron, and Caleb and Joshua, the people are rejecting God.

In verses 11-38 God, is understandably furious with the people, threatening to kill all those who have rejected Him, and start over with Moses to make a new bigger, stronger nation.

- But Moses stepped in and pled for forgiveness on their behalf.
- God relented and forgave them, but the consequence of their unbelief is to wander the desert for 40 years until all the unbelievers 20 years old and older have died.
- Caleb and Joshua were singled out by the Lord for having a different spirit than the rest of the Israelites. They followed the Lord completely and would be allowed to enter the Promised Land.
- The rest would bear the consequences of their sins; they would wander in the desert 40 years, one year for each day the spies were in the land.
- The ten spies who lied to the people turning them away from God were struck by a plague and killed by the Lord.

In verses 39-45 Moses reported all the Lord's words to the Israelites and they were struck with grief.

- They admitted they were wrong, and wanted to proceed into the Promised Land.

- Moses warned them not to go because the Lord was not with them because they had rejected Him.
- But they went up to the hill country anyway and the Amalekites and Canaanites came down, attacked them, and drove them to Hormah (about 8 miles away).

Numbers 15

Numbers 15 begins with God assuring the people that He will take them to the Promised Land and establishes the laws about grain, burnt, peace, and drink offerings they should prepare as they enter the new land.

In verses 1-16 the Lord spoke to Moses and told him to instruct the Israelites regarding the burnt and freewill offerings they were to bring to the Lord.

- All the Israelites were to follow these procedures as well as any foreigner who lived among them who wished to make offerings to the Lord.

In verses 17-21 the Lord spoke to Moses and told him to give the Israelites instructions regarding firstfruits offerings.

In verses 22-29 the Lord spoke to Moses and told him to instruct the Israelites regarding sin offerings the people were to make to the Lord.

Note: The instructions in this section covered sins of omission whereas the sins offerings in Leviticus 4:13-21 covered sins of commission.

- God gives them laws about unintentional sins and the need to atone for their sins through grain and sin offerings.

In verses 30-36 God gives instructions for those who sin defiantly:

- For those who reject God and sin on purpose, God demands they be cut off from the people.
- As an example, one man broke the Sabbath by working (picking up sticks for a fire). The Lord ordered the Israelites to stone the man outside the camp. He was stoned by the community just as the Lord ordered.

In verses 37-41 the Lord instructed the Israelites to place tassels on their clothing to help them remember the Lord's commands.

- A tassel with a blue cord was to be sewn on the corners of their garments to help them remember the Lord's commands and to remain faithful to Him.

Note: There is a dramatic progression in these two chapters. In chapter 14 the people's unbelief led to rebellion, their rebellion led Moses to intercede for them, Moses' intercession led to God's forgiveness, and God's forgiveness led to their arrogance. In chapter 15 God's assurance led to their obedience, but their obedience turned to sin, in their sin God gave them a small item (tassels) as a remembrance to seek and obey Him.

Some thoughts for additional consideration:

- *How fortunate we are to have God's grace and mercy! I see people's lies about God weakening the faith and even turning people away from God causing them*



to sin.

- *We have the Jesus, as our great intercessor, pleading for us before the Father. We promise to do better, we intend to obey, but in our own strong wills, we still run against what God wants for us! We can be so much like the people of Israel, stiff-necked, and stubborn, wanting to follow God but leaning on our own understanding instead of Him!*

What I Noticed Today (Numbers 16-18)

Numbers 16

Just a chapter ago God restated the laws for unintentional and intentional sin and even had the people sew tassels on their garments to remind themselves to follow God's laws and remain holy.

As Numbers 16 opens, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rebelled against Moses and Aaron and brought 250 chiefs of the congregation with them.

- They claimed everyone in the assembly was holy.
- They accused Moses and Aaron of exalting themselves above the assembly.


Note: The Lord exalted Moses and Aaron, they did not appoint themselves to these leadership roles. The rebel's envy and selfish ambition would be their undoing.

In verses 4-40 the Lord passes judgement on those who rebelled against Moses and Aaron:

- Moses instructed Korah and his followers to appear the next morning before the Lord with firepans and incense.
- Then the Lord would choose who was to be set apart for leadership.
- The rebels were Levites, given the privilege of serving God at the Tabernacle, but they wanted more. They wanted to be priests as well.
- Moses sent for Abiram and Dathan but they refused to come. They claimed Moses had taken them from the land of milk and honey (Egypt) to die in the wilderness.

Note: Abiram and Dathan were from the tribe of Rueben.

- Moses was angry and asked the Lord not to accept their offering.
- He told Korah and his followers to appear the next day before the Lord and the Lord would judge between them and Aaron.
- The next day Korah and his followers appeared before the Lord and the Lord told Moses and Aaron to separate themselves from them so He could destroy them all.
- Moses and Aaron fell face down interceding on behalf of the people.
- Moses warned the people to move away from Korah, Abiram and Dathan.
- Moses said if these rebels were swallowed up by the earth along with all that belongs to them they will know that they had despised the Lord.
- The earth opened up and destroyed Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and their families.

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- Fire came out from the Lord and consumed all 250 men who came out against Moses and Aaron.
 - The Lord spoke to Moses instructing him to have Eleazar son of Aaron remove the firepans from the debris because they were holy. They were then to hammer the firepans into plating for the altar and present them to the Lord.

In verses 41-50 the next day the Israelite community came forward complaining to Moses and Aaron:

- You would think that would get everyone's attention but the very next day the congregation comes out grumbling against Moses and Aaron again.
- They complained that Moses had killed the Lord's people the day before.

Note: Once again the people are blaming Moses and Aaron for something the Lord did.

- The Lord was angry and wanted to destroy the people immediately.
- Moses again humbled himself and interceded with the Lord for the people. He told Aaron to hurry and make atonement for the people because of their sin against the Lord.
- But before Aaron could make atonement for the people God sent a plague that killed another 14,700 people who had come out against Moses and Aaron.
- As Aaron made atonement for the people the plague stopped and Aaron returned to the tabernacle.

Note: The censer with incense was symbolic of prayer so Aaron was standing between the living and the dead in the midst of the people making intercession for them. Where Aaron stood the plague of the Lord stopped.

Numbers 17

Aaron's authority as high priest had been challenged in Numbers 16, so in Numbers 17 the Lord provides a dramatic confirmation of His choice of Aaron as high priest.

In verses 1-9 the Lord spoke to Moses and instructed him to have one staff be brought from each of the tribes with their tribal name written on the staff. Aaron's name was to be written on the staff from the tribe of Levi.

- Moses placed the staffs before the Lord in the tabernacle.
- From these, God will select who He want to minister to Him.
- The next day Aaron's staff has not only budded out but produced ripe almonds. God has made it very clear who He has chosen!

In verses 10-13 the Lord instructed Moses to place Aaron's staff back in front of the ark of testimony as a reminder that the Lord had chosen Aaron, and there were severe consequences for rebelling against God's chosen.

Numbers 18

Perhaps because of the rebellion related in Numbers 16-17 the Lord restated in Numbers 18 the covenant between He and Aaron and his sons, as well as the covenant between He and the Levites.

In verses 2-7 the Lord describes the roles of the priests and the Levites:

- Aaron and his son are responsible for the priesthood.
- The Levites are responsible for assisting in front of the tabernacle, but they must not come near the sanctuary equipment or the altar.
- The priesthood is a gift from God. Anyone who is not authorized who comes near the sanctuary will be put to death.

In verses 8-11 the Levites were to receive a portion of the offerings in return for their service to the Lord. Anyone who is ceremonially clean in your house may eat it.

In verses 12-19 the Lord also gave the Levite the firstfruit offerings from the harvest including the olive oil, wine, and grain. The Lord also gave the Levites the firstborn of all the animals, except for the firstborn of the ox, sheep, or goats. The firstborn of the ox, sheep, and goats are holy. Their fat must be offered to the Lord as a pleasing aroma, and the meat belonged to the Levites.

In verses 20-24 The Lord told Aaron the Levites would not have an inheritance of land, but they would receive a tithe from the Israelites in return for their service to the Lord.

In verses 25-32 the Lord spoke to Moses instructing him to tell the Levites they must pay a tithe of what they received to the Lord:

- The tithe of the Levites was a tenth (tithe) of the tenth (tithe) provided by the Israelites.
- The tithe of the Levites presented to the Lord must be the best of what they receive. It will be credited to them as though they had grown. What remained could be eaten or drunk anywhere the Levites chose.

Some thoughts for additional consideration:

- *Leaders today face many of the same issues faced by Moses and Aaron. There will be those who will come up against us, filled with selfish ambition and envy, they will lie and sway others into open rebellion against God. Like Moses, we would be wise to pray for those who come up against us, and let God deal with those who rebel against Him.*

What I Noticed Today

(Numbers 19-20)

Numbers 19

Numbers 19 deals with how someone who had become ceremonially unclean could become clean.

In verses 1-10 the Lord spoke to Moses and instructed him to have the Israelites bring an unblemished red cow that had never been worked.

Note: Although this was a sin offering (v. 9) it was not to atone for sin, but to purify the person who had become contaminated.

- The bull was to be brought to Eleazar (Aaron's son). He will take the bull outside the camp and the bull will be slaughtered in his presence.
- Eleazar must take some of the blood and sprinkle it before the tent of meeting seven times and then burn the bull on the altar.
- The priest is to take cedar, hyssop, and crimson yarn and burn it on the fire with the bull.
- Then the priest must wash his clothes and bathe. He may then re-enter camp but is unclean until evening.
- A man who is clean is to gather up the ashes of the bull and deposit them outside the camp in a ceremonially clean place. The ashes are to be kept for the preparation of the water for the impurity ceremony.

In verses 11-22 the Lord describes the purification process for someone who has become unclean:

- The person touches a human corpse will be unclean for seven days. He is to purify himself with the water on the third day and will be clean on the seventh day.
- Anyone who touches a human corpse and does not purify themselves is unclean. They defile the tabernacle and are to be cut off from their people.
- This law covers someone who enters a tent in which someone has died, anyone who touches a person killed by the sword, or even someone who touches a human bone.
- To be purified someone who is clean must mix some of the ashes of the burnt sin offering and mix them with water. Then using hyssop sprinkle the tent, furnishings, and people.
- The unclean person must be sprinkled on the third and seventh days.
- Then they must wash their clothes and bathe, and they will be clean in the evening.

- The person who sprinkles the water of impurity is unclean. He must wash his clothes and will be unclean until evening.

Numbers 20

Numbers 20 jumps forward in time 40 years. All the Israelites over 20 years old who had left Egypt had died in the wilderness except for Miriam, Aaron, and Moses.

In verse 1 the Israelites entered the Wilderness of Zin in the first month of the fortieth year and settled in Kadesh. Miriam died and was buried there.

Note: Miriam died when they arrived at Zin because she had spoken against God regarding Moses (Numbers 12).

In verses 2-13 Moses brought forth water from the rock:

- There was no water there and the whole congregation came up against Moses and Aaron again!

Note: These are the sons and daughters of those who left Egypt and they are still thinking things were better under the oppression of the Egyptians. They complained to Moses and Aaron in the same way their parents had complained 40 years before.

- Moses and Aaron fell facedown before the Lord and the Lord told Moses to take the staff in the sight of the community with Aaron and speak to the rock.
- They were to tell it to bring forth water. Instead, Moses calls the people rebels and strikes the rock twice.
- Water gushed out and the people water their flocks.
- The Lord told Moses and Aaron because they did not trust Him to show His holiness to the Israelites they would be denied entrance to the Promised Land.
- The waters there were named “*Meribah*” which means “*quarreling*” because it was there that the Israelites quarreled with the Lord.

Note: The Lord, in His mercy, brought forth water from the rock even though Moses didn’t follow his command exactly. Moses had drawn attention to himself by striking the rock rather than allowing the miracle of the Lord to speak for him.


In verses 14-21 the Edomites deny the Israelites permission to cross their land:

- As the Israelites got closer to the Promised Land they attempted to cross through Edom on the King’s Highway, but were denied passage by the king of Edom.
- The king of Edom even sent troops out to the border, so the Israelites turned away from them.

Note: The Edomites were descendants of Esau while the Israelites were descendants of Jacob. It seems the issues between the tribes remain even after 400 years!

In verses 22-29 Aaron’s death is recorded:

- The Israelites turned away from Edom and went to Mt. Hor on the border of Edom.

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- The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron and said Aaron would not be allowed to go into the Promised Land because he had quarreled with God at Meribah.
 - The Lord directed Moses to take Aaron and his son Eleazar to the top of the mountain where he was to strip Aaron of his priestly garments and give them to Eleazar.
 - So Moses did as the Lord commanded; stripping Aaron of his priestly garments and giving them to Aaron's son, Eleazar.
 - Aaron died there on the top of the mountain.
 - Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain, and the whole Israelites nation mourned Aaron's death for 30 days.

Some thoughts for additional consideration:

Leadership can be a heavy burden. People complain and come up against the leaders God has appointed out of selfish ambition, envy, and fear. Ultimately, though, leaders are responsible for their conduct and for obeying God in all they do. With great privilege comes great responsibility!

What I Noticed Today

(Numbers 21-22)

Numbers 21

In Numbers 21, after their period of mourning the death of Aaron, the Israelites set out toward Canaan.

In verses 1-3 the Canaanite king of Arad heard the Israelites were coming his way so he fought against Israel and captured some prisoners.

- The Israelites made a vow to the Lord that they would utterly destroy the Canaanites if the Lord would give them victory.
- The Lord listened to their plea and gave them a complete victory and the Israelites named the place Hormah (“destruction”).

Note: The word “destroy” (*hāram*) means the destruction would be as an offering to God—they would keep nothing for themselves.

In verses 4-9 the Israelites sinned once again by speaking against Moses and God.

- They were unhappy with the lack of water and despised the manna that God had been providing for all their years in the desert.
- Rather than warning them, God immediately sent judgment in the form of poisonous snakes.
- For the first time, the people admitted their sin and asked Moses to pray to God to intercede on their behalf.
- The Lord instructed Moses to make a pole with a snake on top and when anyone was bitten if they looked to the pole they would survive.

Note: Those who looked on the pole with the snake were healed by faith!

In verses 10-20 travelled to Moab:

- The Israelites set out from Oboth and camped in the wilderness on the east side of Moab. From there they travelled to the Zered Valley. From there they travelled to Arnon River on the border between the Moabites and the Amorites.

Note: Verse 14 the “Book of the Lord’s Wars” is a reference to what is assumed by scholars to be an early recording documenting God’s victories on behalf of the Israelites.

- The Israelites went to Beer where according to the song God miraculously provided water once again, but this time by having the leaders dig a well with their scepters.

Note: This scripture records the first song of the people of Israel in recognition of the water that God provided.

- From Beer the Israelites travelled to the wilderness of Mattanah, then to Nahaliel, to Bamoth, and on to the valley in the wilderness near the Pisgah highlands

In verses 21-35 the Israelites encountered the Amorites, who were descendants of Noah's son Ham through Canaan.

- They asked permission to pass through the land on the King's Highway.
- The king of Sihon refused to give them permission and came out against the Israelites with his army.
- God gave Israel victory over the Amorites.
- They took possession of the land from Arnon up to the Ammonite border.
- The Israelites lived in the cities including Heshbon, the city of Sihon king of the Amorites.

Note: The poem sung in verses 27-30 was originally an Amorite poem describing their victory over Moab, but now the Israelites were using it as a victory song over the Amorites.

- Next the Israelites came up against the people of Og, king of Bashan, and God gave the Israelites victory over Bashan. The Israelites took possession of the land of Bashan. (*see also Deuteronomy 31:1-11*)

Numbers 22

In Numbers 22 we are introduced to Balaam. Balaam was a Gentile soothsayer or prophet who made his living by making predictions. The leaders of Moab and Midian tried to hire Balaam to curse Israel so they could defeat the Israelites.

In verses 1-4 the Israelites left Heshbon and camped in the plains of Moab across the Jordan River from Jericho. The Moabites were terrified of the Israelites.

In verses 4b-8 Balak, king of Moab, sent a message to Balaam asking him to come and put a curse on the Israelites so that he would be able to defeat them. When the messengers arrived Balaam told them to spend the night and he would tell them what the Lord said in the morning.

Note: In those days each country had their own gods. It seems that Balaam knew that the Lord was the God of the Israelites.

In verses 9-12 God comes to Balaam and spoke to him directly. God told him not go with these people, and not curse the Israelites because they are blessed.

In verses 13-21 Balaam followed God's directions and refused to go with the men or to curse the Israelites:

- When Balaam refuses to curse the Israelites, Balak sent messengers of higher rank to offer Balaam even more money to put a curse on the Israelites.
- Balaam says there is no amount of money to convince him to go against the command of the Lord my God. He tells the messengers to spend the night and once again he will consult with God.

- God came to Balaam that night and told him he could go with the men but only do what I (God) tell you.

Note: God was not giving Balaam permission to go and curse the Israelites at Balak's request. God was giving Balaam permission to go meet with Balak and speak to him the words God gave him.

- The next morning, without waiting for the men to come to him, Balaam set off with his donkey to meet the men of Moab.

Note: Balaam spoke of "the Lord" in verse 8, but after the Lord spoke directly to him Balaam refers to the "Lord my God" in verse 18.

In verses 22-35 Balaam journeys to meet with Balak:

- God was angry that Balaam was going so God sent an angel to stand in Balaam's path.
- His donkey could see the angel but Balaam could not.
- Twice the donkey turned away to avoid the angel and Balaam beat the donkey.
- Finally, they got to a place in the path that was too narrow for the donkey to turn to the side so the donkey laid down and Balaam beat the donkey a third time.
- The angel opened the mouth of the donkey who spoke to Balaam (imagine what the king's officials, Balaam, and his servants thought of a talking donkey!).
- The Lord opened Balaam's eyes and he saw the angel with the drawn sword.
- The angel accused Balaam of having a perverse heart (he was only in it for the money). Balaam admitted his sin and said he would return if what he was doing was evil.
- The angel tells Balaam to go on but to be careful to only say what God tells him to say!

Note: The real reason the Lord was angry with Balaam as he journeyed to meet Balak was the intention of his heart was not on serving God, but the financial gain.


In verses 36-41 Balaam meets with Balak:

- Balak heard Balaam was coming he went out to meet him at the border of his territory.
- Balaam defended his delay saying he could only speak what the Lord tells him. He must speak only the message God puts in his mouth.

Note: In verse 38 Balaam repeats the instruction from God to underscore that what he says is coming from God.

- Balaam went with Balak to Kiriath-huzoth where Balak sacrificed cattle and sheep.
- The next morning Balak took Balaam to Bamoth-baal on the outskirts of the people's camp.

Note: Bamoth-Baal means the "high place of Baal." It was the center of Baal



worship.

Some thoughts for additional consideration:

- *So often I behave like the Israelites! I take for granted the blessings that God provides. Then sometimes I behave like Balaam – I obey part of what God tells me, but not everything.*

What I Noticed Today (Numbers 23-25)

Numbers 23-24

Numbers 23-24 recount Balaam's four oracles, or prophecies, to Balak, king of Moab.

Numbers 23

We know from the end of chapter 22 that Balak took Balaam to the top of Mount Attarus known as Bamoth-baal (which means "the high place of Baal"). Baal was the god of the Moabites. At the top of the mountain, they could see "a fraction of the people" (Numbers 22:41).

In verses 1-6 once there Balaam had Balak prepare seven altars and seven sacrifices of bulls and rams. These were sacrifices to Baal not to God.

- Balaam announced that he would go some distance away and look for a sign from God.
- Rather than giving Balaam a sign, God put words in Balaam's mouth telling him what to say.

Balaam's First Oracle

In verses 7-12 Balaam delivered his first oracle.

- The first oracle focused on God's people, Israel.
- There are four important statements about the Israelites: God's people are innocent not cursed, they are separated/distinctive, they are numerous, and they are a righteous people with an eternal hope!
- Balak complained that he had brought Balaam there to curse Israel but Balaam had blessed them. Balaam defended himself saying he could only speak what the Lord told him to say.

Balaam's Second Oracle

In verses 13-26 Balaam delivered his second oracle:

- Balak moved them to Mt. Pisgah from which they could see most of the Israelite camp and the Promised Land.
- Another seven altars were built and sacrifices made to Baal.
- The Lord met Balaam once again and put words in his mouth.
- The second oracle focused on God as the source of Israel's blessing. God is described as truthful, faithful to fulfill His promises, He is their guardian, and He is powerful enough to slay any enemy.
- Balak told Balaam not to bless or curse the Israelites, but Balaam said he must

speak the words the Lord gave him.

Numbers 24

Balaam's Third Oracle

In Numbers 23:27-24:14 Balaam delivered his third oracle:

- Balak moved the group once again, this time to the top of Peor, the center of Baal worship in Moab, overlooking the desert, where he could see each of the Israelite camps.
- Balak hoped that this change of location would allow God to put a curse on the Israelites.
- Seven altars were built and sacrifices made as before.
- Balaam realized that God intended to bless Israel.
- This time, Balaam didn't go off to look for omens, but stayed and the Spirit of God came upon him. Balaam's eyes were opened, he heard the Word of God, and he saw a vision from the Almighty. In this third oracle, Balaam described the eight specific ways God would bless the Israelites:
 - Their homes and land will be beautiful.
 - Their homes and lands will be fruitful.
 - Their resources will be abundant.
 - Their leaders will be exalted.
 - Their Deliverer is God Himself.
 - Their strength is like an ox.
 - Their victory over enemies will be complete.
 - Their courage and security are assured.
 - Their blessings are guaranteed by the promise of God.
- Balak was furious that Balaam had blessed the Israelites these three times and said while he was prepared to reward Balaam it was the Lord who had denied his reward.
- Balaam said again that he could only speak what the Lord told him regardless of the promised reward. But before he left Balaam told Balak what God said would happen to Moab.

Balaam's Fourth Oracle

In verses 15-25 Balaam delivered his fourth oracle:

- Balaam's fourth oracle focused on the coming Deliverer, the Messiah, Jesus Christ! He described the Deliverer's reign and the future dominion of the Israelites.
- The star will come from Jacob and a scepter will arise from Israel and destroy

Moab and Edom (Seir is another name for Edom).

- Amalek will be destroyed.
- The Kenites would be taken captive by the Assyrians.
- Ships of Kittim will destroy Asshur (Assyria) and Eber.
- When he had finished speaking, Balaam returned to his homeland.

Note: WOW! We see a Gentile soothsayer whom God directs to speak four oracles: about God's people, about the character of God, about God's blessings to His chosen people, and finally, about the future of God's people and the coming of the Messiah!

Numbers 25

In Numbers 25 we see the Israelite men who sought Moabite women who invited the Israelites to their pagan sacrifices, they ate, and bowed down to Baal.

Note: In Numbers 31:16 we'll see that this came at the direct suggestion of none other than Balaam!

In verses 1-5 Some of the men of Israel became disobedient:


- The Israelites were camped in the Acacia Grove (lower Jordan River).
- Some of the men began to have sex with the Moabite women.

Note: Sex was part of the Canaanite fertility rites (1 Kings 14:22-24) and part of their worship service.

- The women then invited the men to attend the sacrifices to their gods, ate with them, and bowed down to worship the Canaanite gods.
- The Lord's anger burned against them, and He ordered Moses to execute the men who had worshipped Baal in broad daylight before the Lord. So Moses ordered Israel's judges to execute all the men who had worshipped Baal.

In verses 6-15 Phineas intervened on behalf of the Israelites:

- God was understandably furious and ordered the judges to kill all the men who yoked themselves to Baal. A plague came upon the camp.
- Phineas, the grandson of Aaron, saw one of these men and his Moabite wife and killed them by driving a spear through them both. The man's name was Zimri son of Salu, leader of the Simeonites.
- His action stopped the plague but 24,000 had died.
- The result of Phineas' zealous action was that God granted a covenant of peace to him and all his generations.
- In verses 16-18 The Lord ordered Moses to attack the Midianites and kill them because they had brought treachery into the Israelite camp when they caused the Israelites to worship Baal.



Some thoughts for additional consideration:

- *God's purpose and plan will not be thwarted. He will not be stopped by pagan sacrifices or incantations. He will do what he has promised, exactly how he promised. But God is a jealous God, and He will not tolerate those who are not faithful to Him!*

What I Noticed Today

(Numbers 26-27)

Numbers 26

Note: The plague from Numbers 25 killed the last of the Exodus generation (except for Moses, Caleb, and Joshua).

Numbers 26 deals with the second census God ordered of the men 20 years old and over capable of going to war.

In verses 1-4 The Lord instructed Moses and Eleazar, Aaron's son, to take a census of the men of Israel over 20 years old who can serve in the army.

In verses 5-51 the census by tribe is recorded, with a total of 601,730 men over 20 years old able to serve in the army.

Note: It's interesting that the population grew dramatically while in Egypt, but during the 40 years of wilderness wanderings the population of fighting men remained almost unchanged: 603,550 left Egypt, now there are 601,730 to go forward into the Promised Land.

In verses 52-65 the Lord issued instructions for the division of the Promised Land: larger tribes were to receive larger inheritances, smaller tribes are to receive smaller inheritances, with the land divided by lot.


Note: It is interesting that in the listings of the tribes Dathan and Abiram from the tribe of Korah, and Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu were singled out because they rebelled. The only other people singled out were the two men who spied out the land and had the faith to trust that God would give them the Promised Land: Joshua (which means Jehovah is Salvation) and Caleb (which means whole-hearted).

Numbers 27

Numbers 27 establishes the inheritance for the five daughters of Zelophehad and records the commissioning of Joshua to succeed Moses.

In verses 1-11 the Lord provides an inheritance for the daughters of Zelophehad:

- Zelophehad, a descendant of Manasseh, the son of Joseph died in the desert with no sons.
- The daughters (Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah) came before Moses, Eleazar, the priests, and the community asking for their father's inheritance since he had died in the desert and had no sons.
- The Lord transferred the inheritance of their father to the daughters.
- This established the law for a daughter to receive an inheritance in the case of a family having no sons.
- If the man dies with a son or daughter his inheritance should be given to the



man's brother. If he has no brothers his inheritance should be given to his father's brothers. If his father has no brothers the inheritance should go to the nearest relative.

In verses 12-22 the mantle of leadership was transferred to Joshua as Moses' successor:

- The Lord allowed Moses to see the Promised Land from Mt. Abarim and reminded him that he could not go in because of his rebellion in striking the rock at the Wilderness of Zin (Numbers 20:12).
- The first thing Moses does is express concern for the people by asking God to appoint a new leader.

Note: Verse 17 has an interesting feature; the use of two antonyms. "go out before them and come in before them," and "lead them out and lead them in." Antonyms in Hebrew were a way of expressing totality. Moses is asking God to appoint a man who can lead the people and care for them in every situation.

- The Lord's answer is Joshua, who is full of the Spirit, will be the next leader of the nation.
- Moses is to bring Joshua before the priests and the congregation, and commission him by the laying on of hands. In doing this, Moses transfers authority to lead the people to Joshua.
- Moses did as the Lord instructed. He had Joshua stand before Eleazar the priest, and the entire Israelite community laid hands on him and commissioned him as the leader of the Israelites.

Some thoughts for additional consideration:

- *I am struck by this final section of Numbers 27. Moses is reminded of his rebellious sin by God and the punishment of not being able to enter the Promised Land. Moses's first thought is not for himself to beg and plead but to ask God to appoint a leader who will be able to take the people into the land.*
- *This, to me, is the sign of a leader who truly cares about the people God has entrusted to him. He has recognized and accepted his own shortcomings, yet his first concern is for the people and their future. This is the kind of leader we should endeavor to be!*

What I Noticed Today

(Numbers 28-29)

Numbers 28-29

Numbers 28-29 give instructions to the new generation for the daily offerings (Exodus 29), the Sabbath (Exodus 20), monthly offerings (Number 10), and the feasts of Passover (Exodus 12), Weeks (Leviticus 23), Trumpets (Numbers 28), Atonement (Leviticus 16), and Booths (Leviticus 23). All these had been given previously to the Exodus generation at Mt. Sinai.

Note: The word “regular” is used 17 times in these two chapters, stressing the importance of regular worship before the Lord. In addition, there are the special times of worship that must not be neglected.

Numbers 28

In verses 1-8 the Lord spoke to Moses and gave him instructions regarding the burnt, grain, and drink offerings to be given daily.

In verses 9-10 the Lord gave Moses instructions for the burnt, drink, and grain offerings to be made on the Sabbath.

In verses 11-15 the Lord gave Moses instructions for the burnt, grain, and drink offerings to be offered on the first day of each month.

In verses 16-25 the Lord gave Moses instructions for celebrating Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread beginning on the fourteenth day of the first month of the year, and continuing for seven days.

In verses 26-31 the Lord gave Moses instructions for the burnt, grain, and drink offerings to celebrate the Feast of Weeks.


Numbers 29

In verses 1-6 the Lord gave Moses instructions for the burnt and grain offerings to celebrate the Festival of Trumpets on the first day of the seventh month. These offerings were to be in addition to the regular first of the month offerings.

In verses 7-11 the Lord gave Moses instructions for the burnt and grain offerings to celebrate the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) on the tenth day of the seventh month. These offerings were to be in addition to the regular daily offerings.

In verses 12-40 the Lord gave Moses instructions for the burnt and grain offerings to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles (or the Feast of Booths) from the fifteenth day of the seventh month through the twenty-second day of the seventh month. These offerings were to be in addition to the regular daily offerings.

- All these offerings were in addition to their regular freewill burnt, grain, or drink offerings, or their fellowship offerings.



Note: Provisions were made for the burnt, grain, drink, and fellowship offerings. Each with its own meaning and purpose*:

- Burnt Offering symbolized the atonement or reconciliation secured by the sacrifice of Christ.
- Grain Offering symbolized the giving of thanks for the atoning sacrifice and the dedication of one's life because of the atoning sacrifice.
- Drink Offering symbolized the pouring out, the sacrificing of a person's life in thanksgiving for the substitute sacrifice.
- The Fellowship Offering symbolized the believer seeking to grow in the fellowship and peace of God—all because of the substitute sacrifice that brought about the atonement or reconciliation with God.

* Preacher's Outline and Sermon Commentary

Some thoughts for additional consideration:

- *Each of these offerings points to Jesus Christ, our Savior, who made atonement for our sins, reconciling us to God. As we study, as we gather together, we should be ever mindful of the sacrifice God made in sending His Son to die on the Cross for us!*

What I Noticed Today (Numbers 30-31)

Numbers 30

Numbers 30 deals with vows and pledges.

Note: In English we often use the words “vow” and “pledge” interchangeably, but they are two different words in Hebrew with distinct meanings. The word “vow” (*neder*) is a promise to do something while the word “pledge” (*'issār*) is a promise *not* to do something.

Note: The point of this chapter is that vows and pledges made to God were serious business. They were promises that once made, must be kept. It was better not to make such a promise than to make the promise and not keep it.

In verses 1-8 Moses spoke to the leaders of the Israelites saying the Lord commanded them to honor any vow or oath (pledge) they made. They must do whatever they have promised.

- If a young woman living at home made a pledge or a vow, her vow could be cancelled by her father if he did so on the day he heard about it. If he did nothing, the vow would stand.
- The same rule applied to a woman who marries while her vow or pledge is in effect; her husband could cancel her vow or pledge on the day he heard about it. If he did nothing, the vow would stand.

In verses 9-16 Moses explains the regulations for vows made by a widow or divorced woman, and repeats the regulations for vows made by a married woman:


- A widow or divorced woman who made a vow or pledge must stand by her vow. She is no longer under the authority of a husband or father.
- If a married woman made a pledge or a vow, her vow or pledge could be cancelled by her father if he did so on the day he heard about it. If he did nothing, the vow or pledge would stand.
- If a husband cancelled the vow or pledge sometime after hearing about it, he would bear the guilt associated with cancelling it.

Numbers 31

Numbers 31 describes the Holy war directed by God between Israel and Midian.

In verses 1-6 the Lord told Moses to execute vengeance for the Israelites against the Midianites. This would be Moses' last campaign, afterwards, he would die.

- Moses ordered 1,000 men from each tribe, 12,000 total to prepare for war.
- The soldiers went with Phineas, son of Eleazar, who had the Lord's holy objects and signal trumpets.



Note: The army was led into battle by Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the priest, and vessels from the sanctuary. In this way the Lord was going in front, leading the army into battle.

In verses 7-12 the men engaged in battle with the Midianites:

- 1,000 men from each tribe went up against the Midianites and conquered them all.
- Along with the list of kings that were killed, Balaam the prophet was singled out. Balaam, the man who had just a short time before had God speak through him, had ultimately made the decision to reject God!
- The Israelites took the Midianite women and children captive, plundered their flocks and property, and burned all the cities.

In verses 13-18 Moses and Eleazar went to meet the returning Israelite soldiers:

- Moses was angry with the commanders of the army because they let the Midianite women live.
- He reminded them that it was the Midianite women who had acted treacherously and led many of their men away from God. This had brought God's judgment in the form of the plague that killed 24,000 people (Numbers 23-24).
- Moses ordered all the male children and women who had had sexual relations killed. The young virgin women were allowed to live.

In verses 19-24 the men and spoils of war had to be cleansed:

- All of the men who had killed a person or touched a dead body were ceremonially unclean and must remain outside the camp for seven days and be purified. All their garments, leather, and articles of wood also had to be purified before they could be allowed back inside the camp.
- Eleazar instructed the soldiers to pass all the metals (gold, silver, bronze, iron, tin, and lead through the fire and it would be clean. It was then to be purified with the purification water.
- Anything that cannot withstand the fire must be washed and it will be clean.

In verses 25-47 the spoils of war are distributed amongst the tribes:

- The spoils of war were divided up according to a precise formula determined by the Lord.
- Half of the spoils were to go to the army and half to the people.
- From the army one in every 500 animals and people were to be the Lord's, and from the people's share, one in 50 were to be the Lord's.

In verses 48-54 when the commanders realized not one of the Israelites had been killed in the battle, they recognized God's protection and brought a freewill offering of gold and other jewelry.

- Moses and Eleazar received the offering and it amounted to 420 pounds of gold.

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- They brought it into the tent of meeting as a memorial before the Lord for His faithfulness and blessing upon the Israelites.

Some thoughts for additional consideration:

- *There are those that no matter what we do or say will reject God. Balaam witnessed his donkey speaking, saw the angel of the Lord, and had God himself speak through him, yet he remained resolute in his unbelief. We cannot control someone else's decision to believe in and follow our Lord and Savior. We can, however, make sure they hear the Word, and have the opportunity to come to a saving knowledge of Christ!*

What I Noticed Today

(Numbers 32-33)

Numbers 32

Numbers 32 describes the conversation between the leaders of the tribes of Reuben and Gad and Moses. The people of Reuben and Gad like the land of Jazer and Gilead because it is suitable for all their cattle, and persuade Moses to let them have this land as their inheritance.

In verses 1-5 the Gadites and Reubenites came to Moses, Eleazar, and the Israelites leaders asking that the land they were in (the Transjordan) be given to them as an inheritance.

Note: the places described in Numbers 32:3 all lie between the Arnon River in the south and the Jabbok River in the north.

In verses 6-15 at first Moses accused them of not wanting to go to war to help their brothers take the Promised Land and sinning like their forefathers by discouraging others from taking the land the Lord had promised them.

In verses 16-32 the Gadites and Reubenites promised to help all the other tribes settle in their territory first and then return to their land. They would build pens for their livestock and place their families in the fortified cities and then help their brothers take the Promised Land.

- Moses agreed with their plan on the condition that they help the rest of the tribes gain their possession. He told Eleazar that if they helped the Israelites take possession of Canaan they could have the land east of the Jordan, but if they did not then they must accept land in Canaan.

In verses 33-38 Moses allotted to Gad Reuben and the half-tribe of Manasseh the land west of the Jordan River that had belonged to the Amorite kings Sihon and Og:


- The Gadites occupied the area that had belonged to Sihon.
- The half-tribe of Manasseh occupied the land north of the Gadites.
- The Reubenites occupied the land to the south of Gad.

Numbers 33

Numbers 33 is one of those chapters with Moses recounting 40 years of wilderness journeys. (With all the “and they set out” I’m tempted to skim along!)

The history of the Israelites is described in verses 1-49:

- The Lord brought them out of Egypt to Mt. Sinai (vv.1-15).
- Then the Lord brought them right up to the edge of the Promised Land and they refused to go in (vv. 16-36).

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- Moses described their desert wanderings, ending back at the edge of the Promised Land (vv. 37-49).

Note: The unbelief of the Exodus generation had wasted 40 years, cost hundreds of thousands of lives, and countless missed opportunities!

In verses 50-56 Moses speaks to the Israelites for the final time as the Lord gives specific instructions for when they have crossed over the Jordan River into the Promised Land:

- They are to drive out their enemies, destroy their idols, take over the land, and only then are they to divide the land.
- The land is to be divided by lot, with a larger inheritance going to larger tribes.
- They must drive out the inhabitants of the land. If they fail to do so, the Lord will do the Israelites, what He had planned to do to them.

Some additional thoughts for consideration:

- *While this plan of Reuben and Gad seems logical on its face it seems to me like they have settled for the material possession of the land versus crossing over into the Promised Land where they would have enjoyed God's promised blessings. They accepted what they could see rather than accept on faith the promise of a better land across the Jordan.*
- *God requires obedience first, then blessing!*
- *How tempting it is sometimes to look at the opportunity right before us and reject God's best that may be out of sight, but just ahead across the river! How much of God's best are we missing out on, because we lack the faith to follow Him with the full confidence that God's best is better than our best!*

What I Noticed Today

(Numbers 34-36)

Numbers 34

Numbers 34 deals with the boundaries of the Promised Land and the assignment of tribal leaders.

In verses 1-15 the Lord gives Moses a description of the boundaries of the Promised Land:

- The Lord spoke to Moses instructing him regarding the boundaries of the Promised Land.
- The boundary on the southern side ran from the Dead Sea at the border of Edom and run westward across to the Mediterranean Sea.
- The western border was the Mediterranean Sea.
- The northern border ran from the Mediterranean Sea on the west near Mount Hor and ends at Hazar Enan (70 miles northeast of Damascus).

Note: This is not the same Mount Hor where Aaron died (Numbers 33:8), but another mountain about 10 miles north of the city of Byblos.

- The eastern border began at Hazar Enan in the north and ran south to the Dead Sea.
- These borders were for the nine and a half tribes who were to cross over the Jordan since the Reubenites, Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh received their inheritance on the eastern side of the Jordan.

In verses 16-29 the Lord assigns leaders from each tribe to distribute the land:

- The Lord spoke to Moses saying the land was to be distributed by Eleazar the priest and Joshua son of Nun.
- One leader from each tribe was assigned to distribute the land.

Note: Of the 12 tribal leaders listed, only Caleb has been mentioned before (Numbers 13:6, 14:30).

Numbers 35

Numbers 35 deals with God's provision for the Levites.

In verses 1-5 the Lord spoke to Moses commanded the Israelites to give cities within their inheritance to the Levites

- The Levites were to live among the people so they could be available to minister to them. Therefore, a total of 42 cities were to be devoted to the Levites. In addition, the Levites were to be given a plot of pastureland surrounding the cities for the livestock.

- God also gave the Levites six cities of refuge, for a total of 48 cities to be given to the Levites.

In verses 9-34 the Lord spoke to Moses giving him instructions for the cities of refuge:

- There were to be six cities of refuge: 3 in Canaan and 3 east of the Jordan.
- These cities were where someone who had killed someone could flee until a trial to determine their guilt could be held.
- Those who murdered with intent were to be killed by “the avenger of blood.” The avenger of blood is the nearest relative or kinsman.
- Those who killed someone accidentally (manslaughter) were to remain in the city of refuge, and as long as they remained there they were safe from the avenger of blood.
- The murderer was to be put to death after a trial. When the trial did occur God did not allow someone to be convicted on the testimony of a single witness. Furthermore, there was no fine one could pay “as a ransom” for the life that was taken. God insisted that the guilty be punished and that the punishment be carried out by the avenger of blood so that the land would not be polluted or defiled.

Numbers 36

Numbers 36 deals with the inheritance of the daughters of Zelophehad.

In verses 1-12 Moses gave instructions at the Lord’s command regarding the inheritance of the daughters of Zelophehad:

- These were the daughters who had been given an inheritance because there were no male heirs (Numbers 27).
- The tribe’s concern was if they were to marry outside the tribe their inheritance would transfer to another tribe.
- The Lord’s intention was that the land inherited by a tribe remain in that tribe, so the daughters were instructed simply to marry within their own tribe.
- The daughters of Zelophehad did as the Lord instructed and married their cousins, descendants of Manasseh, son of Joseph.

In verse 13 the book of Numbers closes with the confirmation that these are the commandments and rules that God gave Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan river.

Some additional thoughts for consideration:

- *God cares deeply for those who serve in ministry. He is also concerned for the purity of the population. Justice must be administered or the people and the land will suffer. We also see God’s concern for the integrity of the inheritance, and the fairness in the treatment of women.*