

Bible Reading Notes  
**NUMBERS**

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## Numbers 1

**Numbers 1-10** records the preparations for the conquest of the Promised Land. The census would indicate the number of men they had who could go to battle.

**1:1** – This is now the fourteenth month since the exodus.

**Able to go to war** = Men between the age of 20 and 50.

**1:46 – 603,550** – Based on this number, it is estimated that Israel would have been around 2-2.5 million in total population.

**1:47-54** – The Levites were excluded from the census since they would be exempt from military duty.

A census may seem boring to read, but it reveals God's faithfulness in fulfilling his promise to Abraham to make his descendants into a great nation (Genesis 12:2). Praise the LORD today for his faithfulness to you and his people.

## Numbers 2

This chapter provides God's direction for arranging the camp and the order in which Israel will set out after breaking camp.

This kind of detailed direction is necessary when you are trying to organize and move a company of over two million people.

## Numbers 3

The earlier census did not count the Levites. God now gives direction for the Levites to be counted and their responsibilities to be revealed.

**3:4** – This incident is recorded in Leviticus 10.

**3:5-10** – The Levites' duties include guarding the tabernacle from unauthorized intruders and transporting the tabernacle when Israel moved.

**3:40ff** – Redemption of the firstborn looks back to the Passover and the claim of God that all the firstborn of Israel belong to him (Exodus 13:1). Instead of taking all the firstborn the LORD takes the Levites instead.

**3:43 – 22,273** probably is a reference to the number of the firstborn born since the exodus.

## Numbers 4

In today's reading the LORD gives instructions on packing and transporting the tabernacle.

Review – Levi was the third son of Jacob by Leah. He had three sons, Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. Aaron and Moses were from the clan of Kohath

**4:3 – thirty years old up to fifty years old** – These were the ages of active service at the tabernacle. Those younger and older Levites would be responsible for tending the land and flocks belonging to the tribe.

**4:4-20** - The Kohathites were responsible for the tabernacle furnishings. The priestly Kohathites had to pack them and the non-priestly Kohathites carried them.

**4:21-28** - The descendants of Gershon were responsible to transport the various curtains and coverings that made up the tabernacle. They were provided with two ox carts (7:7).

**4:29-33** – The sons of Merari were to carry the frame of the tabernacle. They were provided with four ox carts for this load (7:8).

## Numbers 5

These early chapters of Numbers are all preparation for Israel to leave Sinai. Part of that preparation is making sure that the camp is clean as defined by the LORD.

**5:1-4** – These conditions which cause uncleanness are referred to often in the Mosaic law.

**5:5-10** – Expansion of Leviticus 6:1-7. Restitution is required when you have sinned by taking property from another. **Vv. 8-10** is added for cases where there is no family living to receive the restitution.

**5:11-31** – This test for adultery is when there is a suspicion on the husband's part but there are no witnesses. The test is meant to show the seriousness of the sin of adultery.

**5:17 – dust** – This dust came from the presence of God and so would be useful in indicating the guilt or innocence of the woman.

**5:27-28** – If she is innocent, she will continue to be able to bear children. But if she is guilty, she will lose that ability. The inability to bear children in that culture was one of great shame.

## Numbers 6

The Nazarite vow indicated serious separation to the LORD. It would typically be for a set period though Samson and John the Baptist were Nazarites for life.

**6:9-12** shows the seriousness of keeping one's vow. Even if a circumstance happens outside of your control and your vow is broken, sacrifices are necessary because you have "sinned" or missed the mark of keeping your vow. Sin is not always intentional.

**6:22-27** – This is the basis for our practice of the LORD's Blessing at the end of the service. Through the pastor the LORD puts his name on his people and blesses them.

## Numbers 7

This chapter contains the record of the gifts and sacrifices provided by each of the tribes for the dedication of the tabernacle.

Each tribe brought the same gifts and offerings.

Throughout the Pentateuch we see the tribe of Judah gaining prominence. Notice that the first tribe to bring their gifts is Judah. 1,000 years later a member of that tribe, the Lamb of God, will give himself as a sacrifice and bring an end to the sacrificial system.

**V. 89** – Shows Moses' special relationship with the LORD as he hears the LORD speak to him from above the mercy seat.

## Numbers 8

Numbers 8 describes setting the Levites aside for their work assisting the priests.

The ceremony of dedicating the Levites was much simpler than the ordination of the priests since the Levites' status was lower than the priests. The Levites were "cleansed" so they would be able to come in contact with the holy objects of the tabernacle.

**8:16** – This is the application of the LORD's word in Numbers 3:40-43.

**8:19** – Levites had a twofold purpose – Assist the priests and protect the camp by guarding the entrance of the tabernacle from unauthorized entry resulting in the Lord's judgment (plague).

**8:23-26** – Retirement from their role of carrying the tabernacle was at the age of 50. Here they begin their service at 25 but in Number 4 the age is 30. It is thought by many that the Levites began service at 25 as apprentices and began carrying the tabernacle at 30.

## Numbers 9

Israel has now spent a year in the wilderness and the anniversary of the Passover has come.

**9:6-12** - Moses also deals with a situation of someone being unclean and so unable to observe the Passover. The LORD makes a provision for them to partake of the Passover a month later when they are clean.

**9:12** is referred to in John 19:36 about Christ as the Passover Lamb who kept all his bones.

**9:15ff** – The cloud and fire were visible evidences of the LORD's presence with his people. They also served to give direction to Israel concerning when it was time to break camp and establish a new camp.

## Numbers 10

This chapter covers the final preparation needed (silver trumpets) for Israel to leave Sinai and begin the journey to the Promised Land.

**10:11** – Israel had been at Sinai for 11 months (Exodus 19:1).

**10:11-28** – If you are moving almost 2 million people, there has to be order. This follows the order established by the Lord in Numbers 2.

**10:29** – **Hobab** was Moses' brother-in-law. It is uncertain when he came to the camp of Israel. Judges 1:16 implies that Hobab accepted Moses' invitation.

Imagine the joy and optimism Israel must have had as they left Sinai for the Promised Land. It would not last long.

## Numbers 11

This chapter begins a section of Israel complaining and rebelling against the LORD.

**11:1-3** – Refers to a general undefined complaining which results in a lesser judgment.

**11:3** – **Taberah** – This word means “burning.”

**11:4ff** – This second period of complaining was about their diet. They demanded that the LORD give them meat.

**11:5** – Note the nostalgia related to Egypt. The past usually looks better with time.

**11:10ff** - Moses is tired and stressed and responds sinfully. In response to Moses' situation the Lord graciously provides additional leaders.

**11:20** – **rejected the LORD** – Israel's complaining and longing for Egypt is nothing less than a rejection of the LORD and his covenant.

**11:29** - Moses' desire finds its fulfillment on Pentecost (Acts 2:17).

## Numbers 12

**12** – Now rebellion comes from Moses' own family.

**12:1** – Seems to be a recent marriage likely after Zipporah has died. But this is only the pretense used for the real issue.

**12:15** – Note that rebellion against the LORD's leader impacts the entire camp. All progress is stopped by Miriam and Aaron's rebellion. It is presumed that Miriam was healed after the seven days.

## Numbers 13

Time of great anticipation. They are finally on the edge of the Promised Land.

**13:1-2** – The sending out of the spies was at Israel's request (Deuteronomy 1:22-23).

**13:16** – **Hoshea** = He has saved. **Joshua** = The LORD has saved.

**13:20** – **season of the first ripe grapes** – It is mid to late July.

**13:28** – Anak - Also mentioned in v. 33.

**13:31** – This is the kind of report given by those who lack faith and only look from a purely human perspective.

## Numbers 14

**14:8** – Caleb and Joshua show they are men of faith in contrast to the other spies (13:31).

**14:9** – There is no reason to fear if the LORD is with you.

**14:11-12** – Very similar response from the LORD happened at the golden calf incident. Both episodes were tantamount to treason against the LORD.

**14:13-19** – Another episode of Moses acting as the mediator between Israel and the LORD.

**14:28-37** – Forgiveness does not mean there are no consequences.

**14:39-45** – Israel's rebellion is now compounded by their attempt to take the land in their own strength.

Israel's ongoing rebellion is used in the New Testament as a warning to us today (1 Corinthians 10:5; Hebrews 3:16-19).



## Numbers 15

**15:2** – **When** = Israel has been unfaithful, but the LORD is faithful to his covenant promises. After the current generation passes away, he will bring Israel into the Promised Land.

**15:3-10** – When they are in the land, they are to add grain, wine, and oil to their burnt and peace offerings.

**15:11-16** – Israel is a theocracy and the laws of the Lord are binding on all who live within her borders.

**15:22-29** – These reflect (with some changes) the provision made in Leviticus 4.

**15:32-36** – The man's sin is an example of a "high hand" sin (v. 30) in that it was intentional and done in defiance against the Lord.

## Numbers 16

This rebellion started with the Levites who wanted to serve as priests but also included a group of Reubenites who were angry about God's providence.

**16:16-19** – Only the priests were allowed to offer incense to the Lord. Whoever was not chosen by the Lord would face death for their rebellious sin (16:35)

**16:21** – Moses and Aaron served as mediators for Israel that they would not be consumed. See also v. 45.

**16:32** – At least some of the sons of Korah survived (Numbers 26:11).

**16:41-50** – Moses and Aaron acted as the true mediators for rebellious Israel stopping Israel's destruction.

## Numbers 17

**17:1ff** – The Lord provides one final witness that Aaron and his line are the true priests of God.

Just as in Numbers 11-12, rebellion against the Lord's leadership produces judgment.

**17:10** – This was an act of grace by God to stop the grumblings and his judgment, which worked (7:13).

## Numbers 18

**Numbers 18** – After the recent rebellion by Levites, the Lord reviews the duties of the priests and Levites.

**18:8-20** – The provisions given to the priests for support.

**18:19 – covenant of salt** – salt was viewed as indestructible and so a fitting symbol of God’s covenant.

**18:21-24** – The Levites would be supported by the various tithes the people would bring.

**18:25-32** – The Levites were also to tithe to the Lord from what they receive.

## Numbers 19

Having contact with a corpse resulted in ceremonial uncleanness.

Numbers 19 provides the means of cleansing. Since almost all of Israel will die in the wilderness, this will be an ongoing issue.

**19:1-10** – Directions for producing cleansing ash.

**19:11-22** – Instructions on how to cleanse an unclean person or tent.

## Numbers 20

**20:2-13** – Moses becomes sinfully exasperated with Israel, and he does not follow the Lord’s direction. It is a serious sin which results in Moses and Aaron not being allowed to enter the Promised Land.

**20:13** – Psalm 95:8-11 recounts this incident as a warning to not follow Israel’s example. It is also referenced in Hebrews 4:3, 5.

**20:14 – brother Israel** – Because Edom was the descendants of Esau while Israel was the descendants of Jacob, both children of Isaac.

**20:28** – According to Numbers 33:38, Aaron died forty years after Israel left Egypt.

## Numbers 21

**21:1ff** – This marks the beginning of the conquest of the land east of the Jordan River.

**21:4-9** – We see the Lord’s righteous judgment against his people as well as his grace. The bronze serpent pointed forward to Christ (John 3:14-15) but was later used by Israel as an object of worship (2 Kings 18:4).

**21:21ff** – Israel’s victory over Sihon and Og would have struck fear in the hearts of the Canaanites and given confidence to Israel about conquering the land.

**21:23** – According to Deuteronomy 2:30, the Lord hardened Sihon’s heart so that Sihon would be given into Israel’s hands.

**21:29 – Chemosh** – This is the name of the god of Moab.

## Numbers 22

The defeat of Sihon and Og has caught the notice of Balak, king of Moab. Out of fear for his own empire he sends for Balaam a well-known seer with the reputation to be able to curse Israel and doom them.

**22:5 – Pethor** – This city is in Northern Syria about 400 miles from Moab.

**22:20 – only do what I tell you** – This theme of only speaking what the Lord says is repeated throughout this account (22:35, 38; 23:3, 12, 28; 24:13).

**22:22** – Why was God angry after telling Balaam he could go? Because Balaam did not intend to obey the Lord by speaking only what the Lord told him (v. 32). He was going to get the money and honor Balak offered him. Peter refers to this in 2 Peter 2:15.

## Numbers 23

**23:10** – Balaam prays that he could be like the people of Israel.

**23:13 – to another place** – Balak seems to believe that a different place or perspective on Israel will bring about a different result.

**23:19** – God does not lie or change His mind. The first blessing on Israel will not be changed and his covenant promises to Israel will remain.

## Numbers 24

Conclusion of the Balaam narrative.

**24:9 – Blessed...cursed** – Balaam reiterates the promise God gave to Abraham in Genesis 12:3.

**24:17 – Star** – Balaam's fourth oracle looks forward to Israel's king who would defeat Moab. This looks to David (2 Samuel 8:2) and Christ (Psalm 72:8-11; Matthew 2:2).

**24:20-24** – These verses look forward to the time of David when he would overcome these nations as he expanded his kingdom.

**24:21 – Kenite** – This was a nomadic tribe of the area. Moses' father-in-law was a member of this tribe according to Exodus 2:16.

**24:24 – Kittim** – Refers to the Philistines on the Mediterranean coast; **Assher** - Commentators have suggested that this refers to either Assyria or a nomadic tribe in the area of Mt. Sinai.

**24:25** – In Numbers 31:8 we are told that Balaam was killed when Israel took Midian.

## Numbers 25

**25:1-9** – This incident was instigated by Balaam according to 31:16, perhaps when the Lord prevented Balaam from cursing Israel.

**25:7-8 – Phinehas** – In Psalm 106:30-31, Phinehas is commended for his action.

**25:17 – Harass the Midianites** – This will be accomplished in Numbers 31.

## Numbers 26

This chapter records the 2<sup>nd</sup> census of Israel during their wilderness time. This census is to determine the amount of land each tribe will receive in the Promised Land.

**26:51** – During the forty years in the wilderness the numbers of Israel had dropped by 1,820 (Numbers 1:46).

**26:64-65** – All the first generation had died in the wilderness. It is time to enter the land.

## Numbers 27

**27:1-11** – In a patriarchal culture the Lord’s directions would have been viewed as very “progressive.” Numbers 36 provides the rest of the account.

**27:12-14** – This was accomplished in Deuteronomy 34.

**27:20, 23** – This is the equivalent of our ordination service where a church officer is invested with authority by the laying on of hands.

## Numbers 28

**Numbers 28-29** gives a summary of the sacrifices the Lord required during the year including the daily, weekly, monthly, and then yearly sacrifices at the feast days.

**28:6** - These commands had already been given in Leviticus at Mt. Sinai but are given again as Israel prepares to enter the Promised Land.

## Numbers 29

**29:7** – **Afflict yourselves** is a reference to fasting.

**29:12-38** – **Feast of Booths** was the high point of Israel’s calendar as seen in the length of the feast and the number of sacrifices made. These sacrifices pointed forward to Christ and have been fulfilled by him as he gave himself once for all time for our salvation (Hebrews 10).

## Numbers 30

**Chapter 30** deals with the importance of keeping vows.

**30:2** - All lawful vows are to be kept. This is the same point that Jesus makes in Matthew 5:33.

**30:3-16** - A daughter or wife’s vow can be vetoed by her father or husband since they are the head of the home. Part of submission is not making vows outside of the father’s or husband’s approval.

## Numbers 31

**31:2** – The Lord now pronounces judgment on the Midianites for their sin of seducing Israel into idolatry. Their sin is recorded in Numbers 25.

**31:8** – **Balaam** was the originator of the idea of seducing Israel with idolatry (v. 16) and so faces his judgment as well.

**31:49** – Not a single casualty among the Israelites in the battle!

## Numbers 32

**32:1** – This was the land conquered in Numbers 21, the kingdoms of Sihon and Og (32:33), east of the Jordan River.

**32:6-15** – Moses is having a flashback to 38 years earlier fearing that Reuben and Gad are trying to avoid going into the Promised Land.

**32:23** – **Your sin will find you out** – Because the Lord is all knowing and will not put up with unfaithfulness among his people.

## Numbers 33

**Numbers 33** is a recollection of the various stages of Israel's forty-year journey from Egypt to the Promised Land.

**33:51-53** – Israel's mission from the Lord. This will be led by Joshua.

**33:55-56** – The results for Israel if she fails to complete God's mission for her.

## Numbers 34

**Numbers 34** – This is all in preparation for entering the land of Canaan. The Lord gives the boundaries of the land he is giving to his people and the names of the chiefs who will divide it among the 10 tribes.

## Numbers 35

**Numbers 35** allocates cities for the Levites since they will have no inheritance like the other tribes.

**35:7** – The Levites will receive 48 cities for their possession. Six of them will be Cities of Refuge (35:9-34).

**35:12 – Avenger** – Close male relative to the deceased who would seek to avenge the death of the relative.

**35:15 – Cities of Refuge** are for people who have killed unintentionally and are seeking safety from someone trying to avenge the blood of the deceased.

**35:30** – This is another statement of a biblical principle of requiring two witnesses.

## Numbers 36

Numbers ends with the application of a key principle to the situation of the daughters of Zelophehad we read about in Numbers 27.

**36:7, 9** – Key principle = The inheritance of a tribe cannot be transferred to another tribe. This is an important point to make as Israel prepares to enter the land and gain their inheritance.

