

## Bible Study Notes and Questions on the Book of Numbers

Overview: The English name, **Numbers**, the fourth book of Moses is a translation of the Latin "Numeri" which itself is a translation of the Greek Septuagint title "Arithma" because of the census in **Chapters 1 & 26** and other numerical data in the book. The Hebrew title is "Bemidbar" meaning "In the wilderness" which is much more descriptive of the entire book. Whilst there are various views about who wrote this book the defence for Moses being the main author is well documented. The possible date for this book being completed is 1406 BC.

The Book of **Numbers** has continued the narrative where **Exodus** has left off by a gap of one month. In **Exodus 40:17** the tabernacle was fully put in place "*on the first month in the second year on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was reared up.*" The instructions given in Leviticus follow on before the beginning of **Numbers**. **Numbers 1:1** says "*And the LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of the congregation, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt*". **Numbers** takes up the story of Israel's journey from Mount Sinai to the plains of Moab east of the River Jordan.

The book begins with a commandment from the Lord to number the males from twenty years old and upward who were able to go forth to war (**1:3, 45**). In the first census the military strength of Israel came to 603550 (**1:46**). The Lord gave Moses instructions of strategic mobility for a crowd of over two million people which covered a quadrangle area of about twelve square miles with the tabernacle in the heart of the camp. The Levites were appointed to take up the services in the tabernacle. They were not called to military service. Having made such preparations, the advance can continue to the border of Canaan. The march has been divinely ordered with the Lord himself leading the mighty host by the pillar of cloud over the tabernacle. God was always present despite their grumblings (**35:34**). The move forward to reach Kadesh (**13:26**) led to the promised land of Canaan being in sight. Sadly, Israel was not able to enter the promised land because of unbelief and disobedience (**Hebrews 3:7-19**). Judgment from God fell on that entire generation from twenty years and upwards which led to the period of wandering for forty years when everyone of that generation died. Their carcasses fell in the wilderness (**14:26-39**). Only Joshua and Caleb were able to enter the promised land with a new generation that regathered at Kadesh. There is a renumbering of Israel's military strength to give 601730 (**26:51**). There is an advance to the plains of Moab that led to the final preparations for Israel to go forward to enter and possess the promised land.

There are important lessons to be learnt from **Numbers** where the New Testament refers to this book emphatically such as in **1Corinthians 10:1-12 & Hebrews 3:7-4:7**. This book has warned us against lust and rebellion against God. There is a lesson for us as Christians to examine ourselves to see if we are really following the Lord, being pilgrims on a journey doing what God has called us to do, rather than being disobedient wanderers that have lost sight of God's direction. May we learn from the mistakes the children of Israel have made and therefore we do not repeat them. The Book of **Numbers** is very important for our spiritual edification showing Christians how to walk with the Lord to make spiritual progress.

A writer on **Numbers** in the New Bible Commentary (Page 170 Col 2) has said: "Thereby Israel has learned that Yahweh alone was sovereign and that no act of rebellion and no attempt to share allegiance with another god would pass unjudged. It was, however, the discipline and chastisement of love"

### Questions on the Book of Numbers

**Section 1: Chapters 1 & 2:** The Census and order of the tribes.

**Chapters 3 & 4:** The duties of the Levites.

**Q.1)** How did God want Moses to number the children of Israel? See **1:1-19**.

**Q.2)** Show the way God commanded Moses to number each tribe of the children of Israel. See **1:19-46**. Consider A) Who were numbered? B) Write down the figures of each tribe.

**Q.3)** Show the responsibilities of the Levites in **1:47-54**.

**Q.4)** Read carefully through **chapter 2**.

A) Write down the names of the tribes of the children of Israel and which side of the tabernacle did they pitch their tents. It is helpful to draw a diagram.

B) Show the numbering of each tribe.

C) Write down the order in which the tribes set forth.

**Q.5)** Read **3:1-13**. What was known of the tribe of Levi?

**Q.6)** Show where the sons of Levi pitched their tents around the tabernacle. You could draw a diagram. See **3:14-39**.

A) Write down the names of the sons of Levi and their families. See **3:17-20**.

B) Who were numbered among the Levites? Write down the actual numbering.

See **3:22, 28, 34**.

C) Show the responsibilities specifically given to the sons of Levi. See **3:25-26, 31-32, 36-37**.

**Q.7)** Read carefully **3:39-51**. What was significant about the first born?

**Q.8)** Show the Levites that were allowed to work in the tabernacle. Read **4:1-3, 37, 45-49**.

**Q.9)** What is known of the service of the sons of Levi in the tabernacle.

A) The sons of Kohath. Read **4:4-20**. B) The sons of Gershom. Read **4:21-28, 38-40**.

C) The sons of Merari. Read **4:29-33, 42-44**.

**Section 2: Chapter 5 & 6:** Civil and religious dates. **Chapter 7:** Dedication of the altar.

**Chapter 8:** The Levites set apart for service in the tabernacle. **Chapter 9:** Observance of Passover (**9:1-14**); Knowing when to journey (**9:15-23**). **Chapter 10:1-10:** The trumpets.

**Q.1)** Who were the people put out of the camp? Why was this necessary? See **5:1-4**.

**Q.2)** What must a man or woman do, having sinned against the Lord? See **5:5-10**.

**Q.3)** Read **5:11-31**. A) Why did a man bring such a charge against his wife? See **5:11-16, 29-31**. B) What happens to the woman if she has been unfaithful to her husband?

C) Show the result of the test if the woman is innocent of all wrongdoing.

**Q.4)** What was required of a man or woman in taking a Nazarite vow? See **6:1-21**.

Consider A) In what way a man or woman has been set apart? (**6:1-8**) B) How did a Nazarite act when defiled? (**6:9-12**) C) When the days of his separation are fulfilled? (**6:13-21**).

**Q.5)** How did God want to bless his people? Read **6:22-27**.

**Q.6)** Read through **Chapter 7**. A) What do we know of the dedication of the altar? See **7:1-11**.

B) Can you see three significant things as a result of each prince offering his offerings?

See **7:12-88**. You may wish to make a list of the sacrifices offered. C) Where did the Lord speak to Moses? See **7:89**. How does this help us as believers to hear the voice of God?

**Q.7)** What can we learn about the candlestick in **8:1-4**?

**Q.8)** Read **8:5-26**. Show how the Levites were set apart for service in the tabernacle. Consider how God works in our lives to enable us to serve him effectively. See also **Romans 12:1-2**.

**Q.9)** Show the importance of keeping the Passover in **9:1-14**. How did God provide for those who could not keep the Passover at the appointed time? See **9:6-12** and **Exodus 12:24-27**.

**Q.10)** What was the purpose of the pillar of cloud and fire covering the tabernacle in **9:15-23**?

**Q.11)** How were the silver trumpets used? See **10:1-10**.

**Section 4: Chapter 10:11-36:** Journeying according to God's order for each tribe.

**Chapters 11 & 12:** Complaints. **Chapters 13 & 14:** The spies sent to view the promised land leading to the refusal of the people to enter the land.

**Q.1)** Write down the order that God had commanded his people to keep when on their journey. See **10:11-28**.

**Q.2)** What had Moses sought to add to the journeying in **10:29-36**? Show the significance of the ark of the covenant. Did Moses really need to turn to Hobab for help in **10:29-32**?

**Q.3)** Read **Chapters 11 & 12** and show A) How the people complained (**11:1-6**) B) The complaints of Joshua (**11:28-29**) C) The complaints of Aaron, Miriam (**12:1-2**) and Moses (**11:10-15, 21-23**) D) How did God respond to all the complaints made? See **11:16-20, 23, 24-27, 31-34; 12:4-10, 14-15**.

**Q.4)** What was known of the spies in **13:1-16**?

**Q.5)** Where did the spies go in the land of Canaan? See **13:21-24**.

**Q.6)** What did the spies discover in Canaan? See **13:17-33**.

**Q.7)** What was the report of the land given by the spies? See **13:26-33**.

**Q.8)** Read carefully **14:1-10**. A) Show the attitude of the children of Israel towards the report of ten spies regarding the land (**14:1-4, 10**). B) How did Moses and Aaron respond? (**14:5, 10**) C) Show the view of Joshua and Caleb regarding the land (**14:6-9**).

**Q.9)** What had the Lord intended to do to his rebellious people in **14:11-12**?

**Q.10)** How did Moses respond in prayer in **14:13-19**? What can we learn from Moses' prayer in his appeal to God?

**Q.11)** Show the response of the Lord to the prayer of Moses. Consider the judgment that God brings on his people. See **14:20-38** and also **Hebrews 3:7-19; 4:1-11**.

**Q.12)** How did the children of Israel act after the words from Moses had come from the Lord? See **14:39-45**.

**Section 5: Chapter 15:** Religious duties. **Chapters 16 & 17:** The rebellion of Korah.

**Chapters 18 & 19:** Offerings and sacrifices. **Chapter 20:** Conclusion to the time in Kadesh.

**Q.1)** Read carefully **Chapter 15**. A) What were the offerings God required of his people to make when they enter the promised land? See **15:1-21**. B) What is a heave offering? (**15:19-21**). C) What did God command his people to do when they had sinned ignorantly? (**15:22-29**).

D) Show how the law dealt with people who sinned deliberately in **15:30-31**. E) How did God regard the sabbath day in this incident? (**15:32-36**). F) Why did the Lord insist on making fringes in the borders of garments? (**15:37-41**).

**Q.2)** Read carefully **16:1-35** and consider the following questions: A) What was the complaint of Korah, Dathan and Abiram? See **16:1-3, 12-14**. B) How extensive was this rebellion? See **16:1-2**. C) What responsibilities did Korah have being a Levite? See **16:1, 8-11**. D) Show how Moses dealt with this rebellion. See **16:4-18, 22, 26-30**. E) Show the judgment given by the Lord on these evil men. See **16:20-21, 23-24, 26, 30-35**.

**Q.3)** Show the significance of the censers in **16:36-40**.

**Q.4)** Read **16:41-50**. Show how Moses and Aaron reacted to save the lives of the congregation. What measure of judgment did come from the Lord in the serious rebellion from all the congregation? See **16:46-49**.

**Q.5)** How did the Lord confirm to Moses the ministry of the Aaronic priesthood? See **17:1-13**. Consider how spiritual leadership can be recognised. See also **1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9**.

**Q.6)** Read carefully **18:1-7**. What have these scriptures shown us about the involvement of the service of the priesthood? Compare the work of Jesus Christ the Great High Priest. See also **Hebrews 5:1, 9-10; 7:25-28; 9:11-12, 26**.

**Section 5 continued.**

**Q.7)** The service of the priesthood can be seen as a gift to Aaron and his sons in **18:7**. Is that true for our service to be seen as a gift? See also **Exodus 36:2; Matthew 25:15; Luke 19:13; Romans 12:6-8; 1Corinthians 12:7; 1Timothy 1:12-14; 4:6, 14; 2Timothy 1:6; 1Peter 4:10.**

**Q.8)** Read **18:8-32**. A) What has the Lord given to the Levites in view of the fact they do not have an inheritance in the land? See **18:8-24**. B) Show the significance of the firstborn in **18:15-18**. C) What kind of heave offering has been offered to the Lord in **18:25-32**? Consider what the Levites are entitled to eat of this heave offering.

**Q.9)** What does the sacrifice of the red heifer teach us in **19:1-10**?

**Q.10)** Read **19:11-22**. Show the significance of the water of separation/purification. Why is the Lord so particular in seeing the unclean person cleansed? See also **John 15:3; 2Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Ephesians 5:25-27; 1John 1:5-2:2.**

**Q.11)** Read **Chapter 20**. A) How did Moses and Aaron react to the complaints of the children of Israel? See **20:1-6**. B) Why did Moses and Aaron fail to do what God commanded in **20:7-13**? See also **Psalms 106:32-33** and consider why God did not allow Moses and Aaron to enter the land. C) What is Edom's attitude towards the children of Israel? See **20:14-21**. D) What was significant about the death of Aaron in **20:22-29** compared to the death of Miriam in **20:1**? See also **20:33-38**. Can you say what Moses, Aaron and Miriam represented?

**Section 6: Chapter 21:1-22:1:** The journey of Israel to come to the plains of Moab.

**Chapter 22:2-24:25:** Prophecies of Balaam. **Chapter 25:** Idolatry at Baal Peor.

**Chapter 26:** Renumbering of the tribes of Israel.

**Q.1)** How did Israel react when king Arad had taken some Israelite prisoners? See **21:1-3**.

**Q.2)** What can we learn from **21:4-9**? Why did the children of Israel become so discouraged? Look back to **Chapter 20**. Show the significance of the fiery serpent. See also **Isaiah 45:22; John 3:14-15; 12:32-34; 2Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 12:2.**

**Q.3)** If you can find a map available try to trace the journey of the children of Israel from **21:1** to the land of the Amorites. See **21:1-35; 22:1**. Looking carefully in this chapter, can you see any improvement in Israel's response to the Lord. See **21:7, 17, 24-30, 33-35**.

**Q.4)** Why did the kings Sihon and Og refuse to let Israel pass through their lands? See **21:21-24, 33-35**.

**Q.5)** Read **Chapters 22-24** and attempt to answer these questions

A) Consider the fear Moab had of the children of Israel. See **22:1-6**.

B) What do we know of the character of Balak king of the Moabites?

See **22:1-7, 10-17, 36-41; 23:13, 25-30; 24:10**.

C) Look carefully at Balaam's relationship with God. See **22:7-14, 18-35; 23:4-5, 12, 16, 26; 24:2, 13-14**. In view of the prophecies he has given is he a genuine believer? It is helpful to read **Numbers 31:8, 15-16; 2Peter 2:15-16; Jude 11; Revelation 2:14** to give an indication of his true character and motives. See also **Romans 14:22-23; 1Timothy 6:9-10**.

D) Show from these specific prophecies that Balaam gave to Balak what God had revealed regarding Israel. See **23:7-10, 18-24; 24:3-9, 15-24**.

**Q.6)** Read **Chapter 25**. A) Why did Israel sin so grievously against God in **25:1-5**? Bear in mind what Balaam had done to contribute to this wickedness. See again **Numbers 31:15-16 & Revelation 2:14**. B) Show the judgment God brought upon Israel. See **25:4-5, 8-9**. C) What two things had stirred Phinehas to take prompt action? See **25:6-15**. In what ways did God bless Phinehas? D) Why did the Lord tell Moses to vex the Midianites? See **25:16-18**.

**Q.7)** Read **Chapter 26**. Compare the renumbering of each tribe to the numbering in **Chapter 1**. It is helpful to write a list of the tribes. Why were Joshua and Caleb able to survive in **26:64-65**?

**Section 7: Chapter 27:** Laws of inheritance and Joshua to be leader of the congregation.

**Chapters 28 & 29:** Instructions for various sacrifices to be offered especially for the feast days.

**Chapter 30:** Making vows. **Chapter 31:** Retribution against Midian. **Chapter 32:** The inheritance of two and a half tribes east of the Jordan. **Chapters 33 & 34:** The journey from Egypt to the promised land given to Israel. **Chapter 35:** Cities for the Levites and cities of refuge. **Chapter 36:** Further laws on inheritance.

**Q.1)** Read **27:1-11 & 36:1-13**. What do we understand about the right of daughters to inherit?

**Q.2)** How did Moses react when told of his impending departure? See **27:12-17**.

**Q.3)** What do we know of Joshua's ability to be leader of the children of Israel? Read **27:18-23**.

**Q.4)** Read **Chapters 28 & 29**. Show the different offerings that have been specified especially for the feasts.

**Q.5)** Read again **Chapters 28 & 29**. Can you see what the purpose God had in these offerings in view of his condemnation of such abuse of them in **Isaiah 1:11-18 & Amos 5:21-24**? What did God really require in and through these offerings?

**Q.6)** Read **Chapter 30**. What can be the danger of making vows? See **Psalms 50:14; Ecclesiastes 5:1-5; Matthew 5:33-37; 12:36**.

**Q.7)** Is it possible even to make vows void today and not just as an Israelite custom? Read again **Chapter 30**.

**Q.8)** Show why this destruction of Midian was justified. Read **31:1-18**.

**Q.9)** Why was God particular about being clean after the battle against Midian? See **31:19-24**.

**Q.10)** What did Israel do with the prey they received from destroying Midian? Show how God had been good to his people. See **31:25-54**.

**Q.11)** Read **Chapter 32**. A) Why did the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh want to settle east of the Jordan? See **32:1-5**. B) Show Moses' response to the possession requested. Read **32:6-15**. C) What did these tribes promise Moses so that they could receive their inheritance east of the Jordan? See **32:16-33**. D) Describe what each tribe did in this land promised in **32:34-42**. E) Consider whether these tribes made the right choice of settling east of the Jordan. See also **1Chronicles 5:18-26**.

**Q.12)** Read **33:1-49**. Look carefully at the journey of the children of Israel. Can you see any significant places mentioned on this journey?

**Q.13)** Read **33:50-56**. What instructions and warnings did Moses give to the children of Israel regarding the promised land?

**Q.14)** What was known of the inheritance to be given to the children of Israel? Read **34:1-29**. New Testament scripture in several places teaches us of a promised inheritance. What is really the inheritance that Israel and the Church should be entering into? See also **Acts 20:32; Romans 8:17; Galatians 3:29; Hebrews 6:11-12; 11:8-16; 1Peter 1:3-5**. In view of Israel being given an earthly inheritance what lessons can we learn to prepare and claim our true inheritance? Are there any warnings that need careful attention? See **Hebrews 3:1-19; 4:1-11**.

**Q.15)** Where did the Levites have an inheritance? Read **35:1-8**.

**Q.16)** What was the purpose of the cities of refuge? Read **35:6-34**

**Q.17)** Show the legal rights of the revenger of blood has to bring judgment on a murderer? See **35:16-28**.

**Q.18)** Why was it essential to put a murderer to death? See **35:29-34**.

### Miscellaneous Questions on Numbers

**Q.1)** What is known of who God is in this book? The following references should be helpful but far from being exhaustive: **1:1; 6:22-27; 22:22, 28; 23:12, 26; 24:4, 13, 16; 25:10-12; 32:10-11.**

**Q.2)** Show why the children of Israel became rebellious against God being unwilling to enter the promised land. Can we learn from the warning of disobedience against God? Read especially **Chapters 11, 16, 17** and see also **1Corinthians 10:1-11.**

**Q.3)** What could have happened during the 38 years the children of Israel were left wandering in the wilderness? It is helpful to read **chapter 14.**

**Q.4)** What does this book teach us of the essential need of separation to God? See **chapters 19 & 25.**

**Q.5)** What spiritual lessons can we learn from this book to help us to serve the Lord more effectively? See also **1Corinthians 10:1-11.**

**Q.6)** Consider prophecy in the book of **Numbers** showing what has already been fulfilled and that which is still to come to pass. It is helpful to read **14:20-34; 21:8-9** (see also **John 3:14-15**); **22:1-24:25; 33:51-66.**

**Q.7) A)** Draw a diagram of the camp to show where each tribe of the children of Israel were allocated their position. Write alongside each tribe the number of men fit to go out to war. See **chapters 1,2,26.**

**B)** Draw a diagram of where the Levites were to camp around the Tabernacle. Show the numbering of the males from a month old (**3:14-39**) and the Levites called to service in the tabernacle from thirty to fifty years (**4:34-49**).

**C)** Why did God give such detailed directions where his people should camp and how to move forward?

**Q.8)** Consider what is known of the characters of Moses, Aaron, Miriam, Joshua & Korah.

**Q.9)** What spiritual lessons can be learnt from the Levites in their service in the tabernacle? Read **Chapters 3,4 & 8.**

**Q.10)** If possible in a small group of believers, discuss the character of Balaam. See again **chapters 22, 23 & 24.** It is also helpful to read **Numbers 31:8, 15-16; 2Peter 2:15-16; Jude 11; Revelation 2:14.**

**Q.11)** Show how God had provided for his people of at least two million in the wilderness. Consider how miraculous this provision must have been. What was the purpose of these wilderness miracles? You may wish to make a list of the miracles and who was involved in doing such miracles.

**Q.12)** Consider the importance of the need of sacrifices and offerings for God's people Israel. How should we as God's people today make sacrifices? See also **Hebrews 13:15-16; Romans 12:1; Philippians 4:18.**

## Bibliography

The list of resources available will be helpful in studying the scriptures. The author may not necessarily agree with all the views of the writers of the reading material.

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