

# *Numbers*



“And he spoke to Korah and all his company, saying,  
“Tomorrow morning the LORD will show who is His, and who  
is holy, and will bring him near to Himself; even the one whom  
He will choose, He will bring near to Himself.”

Numbers 16:5

## Welcome to the Book of Numbers!

To begin your study of Numbers, meditate on the book's content represented in the overview chart below. What are the two major movements of the book? How does each subsection give information that clarifies the two major movements? In Chapters 1-10, we observe the specific preparations for journey. Why do you think each of these would be necessary for any godly journey? Chapters 10-36 describe the journey wanderings as God tests the commitment of the Israelites. Note again the theme phrase at the bottom of the overview chart: God's people as they walk. How would you describe your walk?

NUMBERS

Wander

Journey Prepared

Warriors	Levites	Purity	Worship
1:2,3,19	3:12,13; 4:49	5:6,7; 6:21	10:13,35,36
1-2	3-4	5-6	7-10

Journey Wanderings

Sinai to Moab	Events at Moab
12:1-3; 14:22-33	25:1-3; 26:64,65
10-21	22-36

*"God's people as they walk!" 33:1*

The book of Numbers gives us a wealth of spiritual truth and insight into what it means to walk in a manner worthy of that which we have been called. God is in the process of purifying a people for Himself. He does so through testing the faith of His children. Two key verses are prominent. We have chosen 33:1 reflecting the wandering events of the book. We have chosen 9:17 that states the most important preparation for any journey: understanding and knowing the desire and direction of God Most High!

### Open your heart as you read!

God has a plan for our life of following, and it involves obedience with a preview to our entrance into the promised land. God's premise for a holy life is devotion, and this devotion must permeate every area of our walk. Grumbling and complaining of any kind is ultimately directed at God, who oversees all of the details and circumstances of our lives!



## KEY BACKGROUND on the book of Numbers

### AUTHOR

The internal and external evidences clearly support the fact that Moses, the great leader and law giver of Israel, is the author. The internal evidence for Mosaic authorship can be seen from the author's knowledge of Egyptian manners and customs (13:1-2). Outside of the Old Testament, the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, confirms Mosaic authorship (Luke 24:27; John 5:46-47).

### DATE

In Numbers 1:1, the book begins with a census on the first day of the second month of the second year after the Exodus (1443 B.C.) and ends in the eleventh month of the fortieth year (Deuteronomy 1:3). The writing of this book was concluded at the end of the wilderness wanderings (1425 B.C.), although parts may have been written as the events transpired.

### OTHER BACKGROUND

This fourth book of Moses is called Numbers, from its Greek title, because on two different occasions a census or 'numbering' of God's people was taken (Chapters 1 and 26). The name of the book in the Hebrew is in the wilderness, a phrase which occurs in the first verse and is perhaps a more accurate designation than the familiar English title. The Hebrew title actually explains what this book is all about: the wanderings of the Israelites in the wilderness and the disobedience that got them there.

The wandering in Numbers takes up where the exiting in Exodus left off. Five characters dominate the action of the book: Moses, Aaron, Miriam, Joshua, and Caleb. To prevent you from wandering and wandering through this book, the wanderings of the Israelites may be geographically broken down into three sections:

**1-14 From Sinai to Kadesh      15-20 In the Wilderness      21-36 From Kadesh to Moab**

### Why study the book of Numbers?

In Numbers, an eleven-day trip required forty years to complete, all because of sin and disobedience. For the Christian, the pilgrimage through life is often made as difficult as the Jews' forty-year trek through the desert. Many potential blessings are detained or even deleted out of the Christian's life because of disobedience. It is possible for the Christian to never attain the full richness of his inheritance in Christ in this life just as all but two of those adults who left Egypt never enjoyed the richness of the inheritance awaiting them in the promised land.

As the wilderness where Israel wandered is littered with the corpses of a disobedient people who never obtained their inheritance, so too the history of Christianity is littered with disbelieving people who never appropriated all they had in Christ and received their full inheritance. There are people who have for all practical purposes become worthless as far as service for God is concerned because they wasted their lives wandering aimlessly when they should have been winning the war purposefully. To such a people, and for those who wish to avoid the same folly, the book of Numbers was written.

[Genesis](#) opens with God's pre-eminence and closes with a promise of deliverance. [Exodus](#) begins with the problem of bondage and closes with the pathway to freedom. [Leviticus](#) begins with the peaceway of sacrifice and closes with the premise that devotion to God is imperative! [Numbers](#) starts with a plan to number the people and closes with a preview of the promised land (35:10).



# Numbers Chapter Chart

## CENSUS & THE CAMP

Read Chapters 1-2

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
1		
2		

### KEY QUESTIONS:

1. What were the particulars of the census? What do they teach us about God's interest in His people?

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2. What was the special consideration for Levites and why?

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3. Why was the camp arranged as it was? What was the spiritual significance?

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### What about today?

1. What is the degree of God's interest in the particulars of your life?

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2. Is God's dwelling place central in your life?

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3. How would you describe the order (or lack of it) in your camp?

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Chapter	Title	Key Verse
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

**KEY QUESTIONS:**

1. What was the purpose of the ransom money?

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2. How do you feel about the 'law of jealousy'? What was its purpose?

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3. What was a 'Nazarite vow'? What was it for?

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4. What was the purpose of the Levites?

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5. How was Israel led?

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**What about today?**

1. Israel was led in specific and spectacular ways! How are we led similarly in our spiritual lives?

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2. How do you measure up to the standards for worship in this section?

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3. Do you feel that all of these demands for purity are fair?

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Chapter	Title	Key Verse
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		

**KEY QUESTIONS:**

1. How did Israel know when it was time to depart?

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2. What was the first complaint?

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3. The second complaint?

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4. The third?

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5. What was the reason for the plague?

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6. What do we learn about Moses in this section?

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7. What is the greatest lesson Israel needed to learn? (Note 14:39-45)

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**What about today?**

1. Recall Moses' reaction to the circumstances of this section. In what ways are you a Moses?

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2. In what ways a Miriam or Aaron?

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3. In what ways do you act like the congregation?

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Chapter	Title	Key Verse
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		

**KEY QUESTIONS:**

1. Why do you think that the laws of chapter 15 are listed where they are?

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2. What is the symbolism of the tassels and blue cord?

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3. Why was Korah's rebellion so serious?

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4. What was the reason for this plague?

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5. What is happening relative to Aaron in 16 and 17?

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6. What do the duties of the priests reveal?

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7. In what way did Moses not treat God as holy when he sinned?

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**What about today?**

1. Which laws do you think have most specific application to you?

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2. How would Korah's rebellion manifest itself today?
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3. What do you learn from this section about your duties as a priest of God?
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BALAAM ENCOUNTER

Read Chapters 22-25

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
22		
23		
24		
25		

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. Who was Balak? Balaam?
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2. Why was Balak requesting Balaam's services and what were they?
- 
- 
3. Did Balaam know God?
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4. What does the encounter with the donkey and Balaam reflect upon this book thus far?
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5. What was the sin of Peor? The consequences? The remedy?
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6. What do we learn about leadership in the congregation (compare 31:16)?
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### What about today?

1. The zeal of Phineas was commendable. What was the basis for it? The result of it?

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2. What would be the attitude of Phineas toward the church today? What it be toward your life?

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## PREPARING FOR CANAAN

Read Chapters 26-30

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
26		
27		
28		
29		
30		

### KEY QUESTIONS:

1. Here we have the second census of the people. Why was it necessary and how did it differ from the first?

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2. What were the people instructed to remember? What is the significance? Why was a restatement necessary?

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3. Why do you think there was an emphasis on the content of 30:1-16?

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### What about today?

1. We need to be aware of our offerings to God. What are they? (see Romans 12:1,2)

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2. Where do you stand on making and keeping vows?

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Chapter	Title	Key Verse
31		
32		
33		
34		
35		
36		

**KEY QUESTIONS:**

1. Why was vengeance upon the Midianites necessary? (read 25:16-18 for a previous command).

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2. What was the outcome for Balaam?

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3. What is the lesson here as we live as soldiers in Christ?

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4. Notice a key verse of the book in this section (33:1).

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5. Note the emphasis on remembrance (33:1-49).

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**What about today?**

1. What specific principles of walking do you learn from 33:1-42?

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2. Which ones do you feel apply specifically to your life today?

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# **WARRIORS & WARFARE**

God has called His people to war! We are to respond to this call in His Strength. 'Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.' (Ephesians 6:10-13)

The call is out; the battle is on! But before you charge out to 'take possession', consider these three very important points:

## **Recognize Your Enemy**

Ephesians 2:2; Ephesians 6:11, 12; 1 Peter 5:8, 1 John 4:1

## **Recognize Your Source of Strength**

Exodus 15; Isaiah 40:29-31; 41:10; Acts 1:8; John 16:33; 1 John 5:4,5

## **Remember That The Outcome Has Already Been Decided!**

2 Peter 3:7; 10:30; 17-18; 1 John 2:17; Revelation 20:10-21:5

This acrostic, based on the book of Numbers, will help you glean applicable truths for spiritual warfare.

**C**ount each warrior - Numbers 1:2,3 -- Each individual is important!

Also Judges 7:1-7; Ephesians 4:7, 15-16.

**E**stablished leadership is from God -- Numbers 1:1,4,17 -- '...These men who had been designated...' Also, Numbers 12:8; 27:15-18; Romans 13:1-4 (human government); Hebrews 13:7,17.

**N**ever abandon your position -- Numbers 2:1; 3:6; 16:3 -- 'Be what God wants you to be, and where He wants you to be' Also, Romans 12:3-10; Ephesians 4:7, 11-13.

**S**et out.

**U**nder the direction of the Most High -- Numbers 9:15-23 -- Move when He moves -- Stay when He stays! Also, Matthew 4:19-20; John 10:3-5, 27.

Never **S**hrink Back! -- Numbers 13:27-32 -- Unbelief has grave consequences!  
1 Timothy 6:12; Hebrews 3:7 - 4:2; Hebrews 10:38.

# IT'S HARD TO BE HUMBLE!

As we near the end of our concentrated study of the Pentateuch and Moses, let's not neglect to examine a very important verse which reveals a characteristic from the life of Moses that is very much needed today. Numbers 12:3 reveals: "Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth."

Why is this verse significant? How does one attain this quality of life known as 'humility'? To begin, let's verify from Scripture Moses' humility.

## **Moses Humbled Himself:**

In the sight of the people...Numbers 14:5; 16:4

On behalf of the people...Exodus 32:10-13; 30-32; Numbers 14:12-20; 16:22

Concerning his authority as leader...Numbers 11:28-29

Before the presence of God...Exodus 34:8-9

As we see from these examples, Moses demonstrated true humility. But how does a person become humble? This usually happens one of two ways: either humble yourself or be humbled! Neither thought is pleasurable, but humility is required of a servant of God (Micah 6:8), and humbling yourself is much less 'humiliating' than being humbled.

The following passages list several examples of each.

## **On Humbling Yourself:**

...Abraham...Genesis 13:8-9

...Hezekiah...2 Kings 19:14-19

...Ezra...Ezra 9:3-15

...Mordecai/Esther...Esther 4:1; 4:15-16

...David...Psalm 37:1-11

## **On Being Humbled:**

...Pharaoh...Exodus 12:31-32

...Samson...Judges 16:21, 25, 28

...Saul...1 Samuel 15:24-28

...Nebuchadnezzar...Daniel 4:35

Don't be deceived into thinking humbling yourself is a once-for-all accomplishment!

**Moses** humbled himself in the previously listed examples, but did not humble himself and obey God when he was told to speak to the rock. Instead, he struck it in anger and was humbled by being forbidden to enter the promised land.

**Job** humbled himself (Job 1:20-21), but was again to be humbled by God in Chapters 38-41 (resulting in Job 42:1-6).

For those who desire to be godly, the choice is not whether or not to be humble (James 4:6); the choice lies in how we are humbled. See James 4:10 for the right way to be humbled before God!

In conclusion, study John 13:1-17 carefully for a beautiful illustration (as well as a very important lesson) concerning humility.

# PITFALLS IN WANDERING

Philippians 2:5-8 commands us to “have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” The result of this kind of living is found in verse 9: ‘Therefore also God highly exalted Him...’

As we walk before the Lord Christ, we often fall into the same sins as our fathers before us. Here are several we have noted for your own personal evaluation. Are you falling into pits as you wander? What do you learn from each reference?

## **COMPLAINING...Do you?**

Numbers 11:1  
Lamentations 3:39  
Jude 16

## **SPEAKING AGAINST AUTHORITY...What about you?**

Numbers 12:1,2  
Jude 8

## **WALKING BY SIGHT...In what ways do we?**

Numbers 13:14  
2 Corinthians 5:7  
1 Thessalonians 4:1  
2 John 6

## **PRESUMPTION...Some your-life examples?**

Numbers 14:43,44  
Psalm 19:13  
2 Peter 2:10

## **REBELLION...Present-day evidences?**

Numbers 20:8-11; 27:14  
Luke 6:46  
Acts 5:32  
1 Peter 1:22

## **DISCOURAGEMENT...What discourages you?**

Numbers 32:7-9  
Joshua 1:7  
Psalm 27:14

## **IDOLATRY...What idols have you kept?**

Numbers 25:1-13  
1 John 2:15-17  
1 John 5:21