

# Numbers

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**MEANING:** Numbers is derived from the two numberings of the people of Israel.

1. The generation of Exodus. Taken at Mt. Sinai (Numbers 1).
2. The generation that grew up in the wilderness. Taken on the plains of Moab (Numbers 26).

Note: The two census (numberings) took place some thirty-eight years apart.

**AUTHOR:** Moses

**TIME WRITTEN:** 1450 - 1410 B.C.

**POSITION IN THE BIBLE:**

- 4th Book in the Bible
- 4th book in the Old Testament
- 4th book in the Pentateuch
- 3 have preceded it. 62 to follow it.

**CHAPTERS:** 36

**VERSES:** 1,288

**WORDS:** 39,902

**KEY WORD:** Wanderings

**TWO KEY PASSAGES:**

1. **Numbers 14:22-23** - "Because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice,  
"they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it."
2. **Numbers 20:12**- "Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."

**KEY CHAPTER:** Numbers 14

1. The critical turning point of Numbers may be seen in Numbers 14 when Israel rejects God by refusing to go up and conquer the Promised Land.
2. God judges Israel "According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, namely forty years, and you shall know My rejection" (**Numbers 14:34**).

**OBSERVATIONS ABOUT NUMBERS:**

1. Numbers has also been called:
  - a. The "Book of the Journeyings."
  - b. The "Book of Murmurings."
  - c. The "Fourth Book of Moses."
2. Whereas Leviticus covers only one month, as will Deuteronomy, Numbers stretches over a period of almost thirty-nine years.
  - a. Numbers 1:1 - 10:11 covers a period of twenty-one days.
  - b. Numbers 10:1 - 33:38 covers a period of about thirty-eight years.
  - c. Numbers 33 - 38 through Deuteronomy 1:3 covers about six months.
3. Israel as a nation is in its infancy at the outset of the book, only thirteen months after the exodus from Egypt.
4. Numbers records the tragic story and consequences of Israel's unbelief.

5. For Israel, what would have been an eleven-day journey became a forty year ordeal.
6. Numbers has more than eighty claims that “the Lord spoke to Moses.”
7. Numbers covers Israel’s movement from the last twenty-one days at Mt. Sinai (1:1 - 10:11), the wandering around Kadesh Barnea, and finally the arrival in the plains of Moab in the fortieth year (22:1; 26:3; 33:50)
  - a. Their tents occupy several square miles whenever they camp since there are probably over two-and-a-half million people (based on the census figures in Numbers 1 and 26)
  - b. God miraculously feeds and sustains them in the desert.
    1. He preserves their clothing.
    2. He gives them manna.
    3. He gives them meat.
    4. He gives them water.
    5. He gives them leaders
    6. he gives them a promise. “According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, namely forty years, and you shall know My rejection” **Numbers 14:34.**
8. God must teach His people the consequences of irresponsible decisions.
  - a. The forty years of wilderness experience transform them from a rabble of ex-slaves into a nation ready to take the Promised land.
  - b. The three D’s of life: Decisions Determine Destinies!
9. Numbers may be divided into three sections:
  - a. The Old Generation. (1:1 - 10:10)
  - b. The Tragic Transition. (10:11 - 25:18)
  - c. The New Generation. (26 - 36)
10. The Old Generation. (1:1 - 10:10)
  - a. God’s instructions are very explicit, reaching every aspect of their lives.
  - b. He is the Author of order, not confusion, as is seen in the way he organizes the people around the tabernacle.
  - c. Turning from the outward conditions of the camp (1 - 4) to the inward conditions (5 - 10), Numbers describes the spiritual condition.
11. The Tragic Transition (10:1 - 25:18)
  - a. Israel follows God step-by-step until Canaan is in sight. Then in the crucial moment at Kadesh Barnea, they draw back in unbelief.
  - b. Their murmurings had already become incessant. “Now when the people complained, it displeased the Lord; for the Lord heard them” (**11:1**).
  - c. But their unbelief after sending out the twelve spies at Kadesh Barnea is something God will not tolerate.
    1. Their rebellion at Kadesh Barnea marks the pivotal point of the book.
    2. The generation of the Exodus will not be the generation of the conquest.
  - d. Unbelief:
    1. Brings discipline from God.
    2. Hinders god’s blessings.
  - e. Only Joshua and Caleb, the two spies who believed God, will enter Canaan.
  - f. Almost nothing is recorded about these transitional years.
12. The New Generation. (26 - 36)
  - a. When the transition to the new generation is complete, the people move to the plains of Moab, directly east of the promised Land (22:1).
  - b. Before they can enter the land they must wait until all is ready.

- c. Four major things take place:
  1. Here they receive new instructions.
  2. A new census is taken (the 2nd one in Numbers)
  3. Joshua is appointed as Moses' successor.
- 3. Some of the people settle in Trans-Jordan area.

## SUMMARY OF NUMBERS

### INTRODUCTION:

- A. Israel as a nation is in its infancy at the outset of the book, only thirteen months after the exodus from Egypt began.
- B. In Numbers, the book of divine discipline, it become necessary for the nation to go through the painful process of testing and maturation.
  1. God must teach His people the consequences of irresponsible decisions.
  2. The forty years of wilderness experience transforms them from a rabble of ex-slaves into a nation ready to take the Promised Land.
- C. The Book of Numbers begins with the old generation 1:1 - 10:10):
  1. Moves through a tragic transitional period (10:11 - 25:18)
  2. And ends with the new generation (26-36) at the doorway to the land of Canaan.
- D. There are Three Major Divisions in the Book.
  1. The Old Generation (1:1 - 10:10).
  2. The Tragic Transition. (10:11 - 28:18).
  3. The New Generation (26-36).

### THE OLD GENERATION. (1:1 - 10:10)

- A. The generation that witnessed God's miraculous acts of deliverance and preservation receives further direction from God while they are still encamped at the foot of Mount Sinai (1:1 - 10:10).
- B. God's instructions are very explicit, reaching every aspect of their lives.
  1. He is the Author of order, not of confusion. This is seen in the way He organizes the people around the tabernacle.
  2. The same is true in the New Testament.
    - a. **1 Corinthians 14:33** - "For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints."
    - b. **1 Corinthians 14:40** - "Let all things be done decently and in order."
- C. Turning from the outward conditions of the camp (1-4) to the inward conditions (5-10), Numbers describes the spiritual preparation of the people.

### THE TRAGIC TRANSITION. (10:11 - 25:18)

- A. Israel follows God step-by-step until Canaan is in sight.
  1. Then in the crucial moment at Kadesh Barnea, they draw back in unbelief.
  2. Their murmurings had already become incessant.
    - a. **Numbers 11:1** - "Now when the people complained, it displeased the Lord; for the Lord heard it."
    - b. Their unbelief after sending out the twelve spies at Kadesh Barnea is something God will not tolerate.
    - c. Their rebellion at Kadesh marks the pivotal point of the book of Numbers.

- d. The generation of the Exodus will not be the generation of the conquest.
- B. Unbelief brings discipline and hinders God's blessing.
  - 1. The old generation is doomed to literally kill time for forty years of wilderness wanderings—one year for every day spent by the twelve spies in inspecting the land.
  - 2. They are judged by disinheritance and death as their journey changes from one of anticipation to one of aimlessness.
  - 3. Only Joshua and Caleb, the two spies who believed God, enter Canaan.
- C. Almost nothing is recording about these transitional years.

### **THE NEW GENERATION. (26-36)**

- A. When the transition to the new generation is complete, the people move to the plains of Moab, directly east of the Promised Land (22:1).
  - 1. Before they can enter the land they must wait until all is ready.
  - 2. Here four major events take place.
    - a. They receive new instructions.
    - b. A new census (numbering) is taken.
    - c. Joshua is appointed as Moses' successor.
    - d. Some of the people settle in the Transjordan.
- B. Numbers seems to record a number of twos.
  - 1. It records two generation:
    - a. The old generation of the Exodus from Egypt. (1-14)
    - b. The new generation that will enter Canaan. (21-36)
  - 2. Two numberings (census) (1 and 26)
  - 3. Two journeyings. (10-14 and 21-27)
  - 4. Two sets of instructions. (5-9 and 28-36)
  - 5. It illustrates both the kindness of God and the severity of God.
    - a. **Romans 11:22** - "Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off."
    - b. The principles of God do not change from law to law, from the Old Testament to the New Testament.
    - c. Numbers teaches that God's people can move forward only as they trust and depend on Him, and it is still so today.