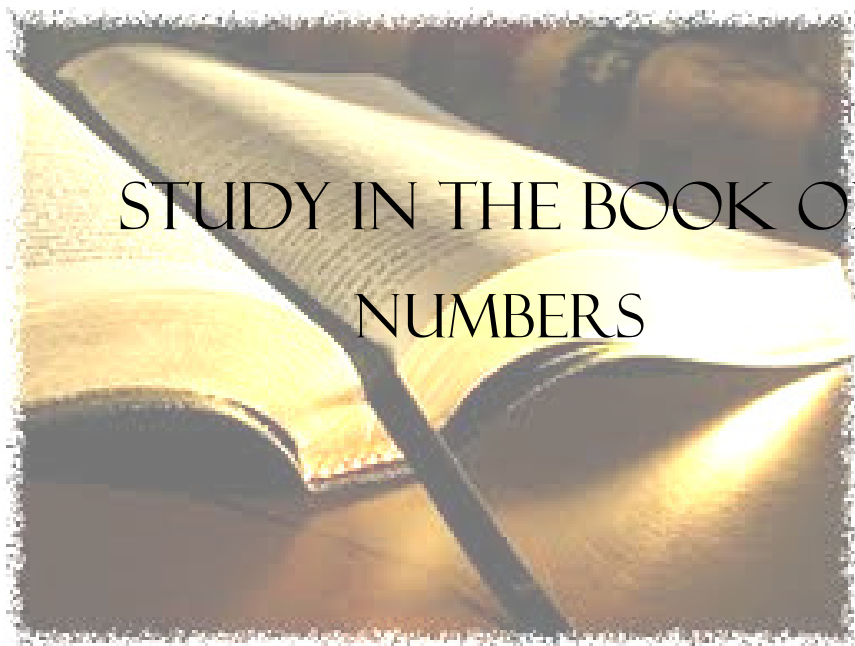




CHRISTIAN RESOURCES



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STUDIES IN NUMBERS – PART 1

PREPARATION FOR THE JOURNEY

INTRODUCTION

Every Book of the Bible is a record of God speaking to mankind, as we turn to the Book of Numbers it is not exception **(1:1)** The Lord spoke to Moses and the closing words in **(36:13)** these are the commandments which the Lord commanded Moses.

1. THE AUTHOR.

Moses has always been taken as the author of Numbers and there were four witnesses to that:

- A. THE JEWS AND THE SAMARITANS OF THE 5TH CENTURY BC ALSO DEFENDED MOSES' AUTHORSHIP.
- B. JEWISH TRADITION OF SUBSEQUENT CENTURIES ALSO DEFENDED MOSES' AUTHORSHIP
- C. JESUS AND THE NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS
(Matt 8:4, 19:8 Mk 1:44, 7:10 Luke 5:14, 16:31)
- D. THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

2. THE TITLE

The title comes from the Greek word *Arithomo*, in **Chapter 1 and 36** there are two numberings of the people of Israel.

3. THE RELATIONSHIP OF NUMBERS TO THE PENTATEUCH.

The first five books of Moses constitute a whole, and Numbers is the 4th essential contribution

IN **GENESIS** GOD'S **SOVEREIGNTY** IS STRESSED

IN **EXODUS** GOD'S **MERCY** IS STRESSED.

IN **LEVITICUS** GOD'S **HOLINESS** IS STRESSED

IN **NUMBERS** GOD'S **PATIENCE** IS STRESSED

IN **DEUTERONOMY** GOD'S **LORDSHIP** IS STRESSED

4. BROAD SURVEY OF NUMBERS

Numbers divides itself into three main sections:

- A. AT MOUNT SINAI (1:1-10:10)
This section records the preparation for the journey and it took a few weeks.
- B. TO MOAB (10:11-22:1)

This section records the journey through the wilderness and lasted about 39 years.

C. AT MOAB (22:2-36:13)

This section records the events at the gate into the Promised Land and lasted only a few months.

In the 1st section the main emphasis is on organization

In the 2nd section the main emphasis is on testing and failure

In the 3rd section the main emphasis is on reorganization

5. SUMMARY OF NUMBERS

Numbers tells the story of Israel's journey from Mt. Sinai to the plains of Moab onto the border of Canaan, it tells of the rebellion of God's people of their murmurings and then of their subsequent judgement. However for those 39 years in the desert God cared for them. There are number of spiritual truths to be gained as we wander through Numbers.

NUMBERS

PART 1

PREPARATION FOR THE JOURNEY

(Chapter 1:1-10:10)

1. ORDER AND ORGANIZATION (1:1-4:49)

The first prominent truth in these chapters in the order and planning of God.

A. THE ORDER OF INVENTORY (1:1-54)

At this point in their history everything pointed to a goal not yet attained, which was the occupation of the Promised Land. The advance day was now eminent, almost 1.5 million people had moved out of Egypt and the first order from God was given(**v.2**) take a census, the reasons were due to logistic problems, they were of fantastic proportions, exceeded only by the infinite resources of God. With this census Moses and Aaron were to be helped by the heads of each tribe (**v4:16**) and in (**v19**) it says that the Lord commanded, so we notice Moses' absolute obedience and so the count for the men of war begins and the total number was **603,550** in **v46**. The tribe of Levi, however, was not counted because their task was not to go to battle; they had to take care of the tabernacle and the ministering of the services (**v15-53**). And then in **v.54** it says the Israelites did all that the Lord commanded.

LESSONS TO BE LEARNED.

- a) Our God is a God of order
- b) Each child of God is part of a large body known by the Lord
- c) Each person has a part to play in the plan of God.

B. THE ORDER OF ENCAMPMENT (2:1-34)

With 1.5 million people there had to be order and efficiency and so in **Chapter 2** we are given details as to where each tribe should camp.

- a) *The East campers (2:3-9)*
Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun
- b) *The South campers (2:10-16)*
Reuben, Simeon, and Gad.
- c) *The camp of Levites (2:17)* - In the middle
- d) *The West campers (2:18-24)*
Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin
- e) *The North Campers (2:25-31)*
Dan, Asher, and Naphtali.

Notice how **Chapter 2** concludes in **v.34** the Israelites did everything that the Lord commanded Moses, they found their designated places and stuck to them, no one was

allowed to move from where God had placed them.

SUMMARY

1. The value God sets on good order

There was to be efficiency and the elimination of uncertainty and a smooth running of everything, there was to be no jostling for position.

2. The centrality that is always given to God.

God is always the centre of everything

C. THE ORDER OF MINISTRY (3:1-4:49)

If the success of Canaan depended on the obedient hearts of the Israelites, then certain things had to be carried out, true worship had to be cultivated, spiritual growth has to take place, and so in **Chapter 3** we find God's planning for the priests and Levites and also of how they were to march through the wilderness. The priests and Levites were the two different classes of ministers, with the Levites ministering to the priests (3:6). They

assisted mainly in the outward elements of the worship service, while the priests performed the ceremonial exercises of the worship.

a) The priests, sons of Aaron (3:1-4)

Here is a sad note, having identified the four sons of Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar, Nadab and Abihu, having died. **NB. The lesson was challenging sin destroys service.** They went against Lev.10:1. And it was therefore a reminder that no sin ever goes unjudged, not even God's servants are exempt from judgement. Furthermore they had no children and were therefore disqualified.

b) The Levites

i. Their general service (3:5-10)

Moses was publically to assign the Levites to Aaron's sons, and they were to serve in the tabernacle, the one condition is in v.9, they were to be wholly given to Him.

ii. Their divine ordainer (3:11-13)
v.11 says "They are mine"

iii. Their numbers and duties (3:14-39)

Then Moses was commanded to number the Levites, in the same way the others were numbered for war, the Levites were numbered for service, and their numbers were 22,000.

iv. Their substitutionary position (3:40-51)

The Lord then revealed a very close relationship between His sovereign appointment of the Levites to service and His sovereign redemption of the Israelites from bondage, the numbers of the first born sons who were born between the time of the Exodus and the census was 22,273, the number of the Levites was 22,000, in other

words the Lord made a one for one substitution.

v. Duties of sons of Levi amplified (number of males)

i) Kohath (4:1-20)

- Their number :2750
- Charge: They were put in charge of looking after the main furnishing of the tabernacle (table, candle stick, ark, altar)

ii) Gershon

- Their number: 2630
- Charge: They had to look after the large tabernacle including the curtains, coverings, screens and the hangings.

iii) Merari

- Their number:3200
- Charge: They had charge of the boards, poles sockets and pins, all that held up the tent and so we see the details that God has laid down and the ministry of the Levites. They were impressed with the meticulous care with which God's work must be undertaken

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vi. Summary of census of Levites (4:46-49)

The Levites were to serve faithfully during the days of encampment and carry the burdens on the march.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 4

Throughout this chapter there are four lessons stressed:

1. The unapproachable holiness of the sanctuary
2. The rebuke of casualness sometimes
3. The need for each one to do their part
4. We serve as a servant.

NUMBERS

PART 1

PREPARATION FOR THE JOURNEY (CONTINUED)

2. CLEANSING, CONSECRATION, AND FINAL INSTRUCTION

(5:1-10:10)

INTRODUCTION

The first four chapters record God's directions to Moses regarding the preparation of the journey: **Chapter 1** - Count the men. **Chapter 2** - Arrange the tribes in the camp. **Chapter 3** - Take care of the tabernacle. But now the directions are aimed more at the individual.

A. PUT OUT THE UNCLEAN (5:1-4)

God had placed the tabernacle at the very centre of the camp, everything centers around the tabernacle. When the Lord settles there, uncleanness and sin cannot also be there.

- a) The leper
- b) A discharge
- c) Those defiled by the dead.

The Israelites obeyed.

B. JUDGE THE GUILTY (5:5-31)

Having stressed that God and sin cannot dwell together, God now legislates what must be done when actual sin occurs among the people.

E.g. Those suspected of adultery, the man was to bring his wife to the priest in order to bring the accused woman before God and then he would give her bitter water to drink, if she was innocent the water would not harm her, if she was guilty her body would begin to swell. **Jenson: "How wonderful a society whose supreme court is God Himself."**

C. SEPARATE YOURSELVES (6:1-27)

What a contrast to Chapter 5, the Lord now deals with a situation when an Israelite wanted to come into close fellowship with God and voluntarily become a Nazirite.

- a) Separation from:
 - i. Wine: Because the vine products as a whole were classified as luxurious and sumptuous living, the Nazirine would be willing to surrender those temporal niceties.
 - ii. Hair: The Israelites custom appears to have been short hair, so the custom of the Nazirites was to let their hair grow long so that they would be clearly noticed in society

- iii. Ceremonial cleanliness: (v.6-12) Provision was made if they came near a dead body. All bore special witness to the pilgrim and to self-dedication and purity of life of the Nazirite.

- c) Separation unto principle.
v.2+3 tell us that the Nazirite was separated unto the Lord, so there was separation from, so that there might be separation unto, and closes in v.22-29 with that famous blessing of Aaron.

D. OTHER GIFTS (7:1-88)

A real measure of the genuineness of the Christian living for God is their liberality in giving

- a) Wagons (v.1-9)

This presentation was a voluntary gesture that took Moses by surprise. 6 wagons and four oxen were given to the Merarites and 4 wagons and 8 oxen were given to the Gershonites the Kohathites got nothing. These gifts catered for the whole area of transport.

- b) Offerings for the altar (v.10-88)

Together with the wagons and the oxen, other costly gifts were offered; each prince brought some gift, tribe by tribe. In these verses the listing of the gifts were given and each tribe gave the same. The lesson is they gave of their best, only the best is good enough for God.

- c) The voice from the Mercy Seat (v.89)

While God had many ways of speaking utterance was one of them and the place was from the Mercy Seat of the Arc. **Jensen: "What kind of service should we offer, cold, formalistic, dead? With no contact with the living God. It should be service in a place where God dwells and where He speaks with His people, voice is the key."**

5. TRANSITIONAL SECTION (8:1-4)

On the symbolism of the lamp stand (**Lev.24:1-4**). In addition to the voice this section shows us that there must be light from God.

6. CLEANSE THE LEVITES (8:5-26)

The vessels chosen to serve God must be clean, in Chapter 3:5 the choice of the Levites was described in Chapter 4:4 the duties of the Levites were listed, but now the order for cleansing them is described and there are four steps

- a) Sprinkle water on them
- b) Shave off the hair on their bodies
- c) Wash their clothes
- d) Offer two bulls as a sin offering

SUMMARY

From Chapter 8 we learn of the 4 characteristics which should mark any person serving Jesus.

1. Pure in heart
2. Sacrificial in service
3. Undivided loyalty to Christ
4. Total obedience

7. KEEP THE PASSOVER (9:1-14)

Now the Lord tells Moses to celebrate the Passover as a remembrance of God's deliverance out of Egypt. God wanted them all to celebrate the Passover (**v.2**), there were to be no exceptions (**v.5**) they did so. Sadly some found themselves in unfortunate circumstances E.g. they had touched a dead body, and so Moses asked guidance from God, the Lord tells him everybody must participate, but the unclean must do it one month later.

8. FOLLOW YOUR LEADERS (9:15-10:10)

In the previous nine chapters we have seen six things:

- 1 They were numbered
- 2 They were organized meticulously.
- 3 They have been sanctified
- 4 They have been given adequate spiritual leaders
- 5 They have given gifts to God.
- 6 They have celebrated the Passover.

And now the one last thing they had to do before they set out on the journey, was to follow their leaders.

a) Divine leaders: signals of sight (9:15-23)

The God of all creation was going to lead them through the desert, the visible object was the cloud and the fire, certainly this cloud was miraculous.

- i) It never dissipated
- ii) It didn't move according to normal meteorological functions.
- iii) At night it took the form of a fire.
Do not move until God tells you

b) Human leaders: signals of sound. (10:1-10)

In these ten verses we see communication from God clear as it may be is often missed, and therefore the sons of Aaron were given the task of blowing two trumpets, not only as a marching symbol, but also to announce other functions. E.g. If the two trumpets were blown the congregation came to the tent of meeting (**v.3**), if one trumpet was blown, just the leaders must gather (**v.4**), when one alarm type blast sounded only the Eastern tribes must move (**v.5**)

CONCLUSION (1:1-10:10)

And so their preparation has now ended and they are ready for the journey.

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

Introduction

PART TWO - THE JOURNEY

(Numbers 10:11 - 22:1)

1) SINAI TO KADESH – A PERIOD OF UNBELIEF (10:11 - 14:45)

a) A good start (10:11-36)

19 days After the Census was taken, the cloud moved from over the Tabernacle to tell Moses and the people of Israel that the time for their departure had come.

v.11 “the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle of the Testimony”

The route which they took was in a north-easterly direction towards Paran. It would’ve taken about 12 days.

The order in which they were to march had already been given to them from God.

From v.14-28 we see the part played by the Cohathites and the Gershinites, and the Merarites.

But in v.29, in addition to the guidance of God, there was also a human guide, his name was Hobab who knew the area well (v.29-32). Moses says to him in v.31, “you can be our eyes”.

At first Hobab did not want to. But after being reassured by Moses, he went.

Later they rested at a place called Kibroth-Hattaavah. As they slowly moved there were 3 very important things happening:

- a) The Ark went in front (10:33)**
- b) The cloud went over them (10:34)**
- c) Moses was praying for them (10:35,36)**

And so a good start was made in the journey.

b) First casualties (11:1-35)

We will notice that the sin of murmuring developed, which arose from their unbelief and their ingratitude.

a) The first murmuring (11:1-3)

(v.1) “now the people complained about their hardships in the hearing of the Lord”

Instead of being grateful they complained. And v.2 tells us that the Lord heard it, and He sent fire among the people. The people appealed to Moses who then prayed for them, and the fire abated.

b) The second murmuring (11:4-9)

The 2nd murmuring concerned their food. They complained about the gift of manna, and they longed for the food of Egypt – for the fish, the cucumbers, onions, and garlic. Moses is almost driven now to despair. He cries out to God in despair, and he asks why God has placed them as their leader.

But the Lord told Moses to do something very practical. He must choose 70 elders (11:16-25), and they must assist Moses in leadership. At the same time there were two men who wanted to take over from Moses (Eldad v.26-30, and Medad). When this was reported to Moses (v.29) we see the amazing humility of Moses who ordered that nothing be done to the men. But God is a gracious God, and from v.31-33, to supplement the manna, He sent quails. The birds would fly, and they would take as many as they want to eat...and they were happy.

c) Rebellion of two leaders (12:1-15)

Moses was incredible. Day after day he had to carry these people. They have complained about the food, they have complained about the way and the hardships, but now they complain about Moses.

a) Accusations (12:1-3)

Very sadly the accusation came from Mirriam & Aaron (his own brother and sister). The accusations were intended to degrade Moses, by suggesting that he had gone against the Word of God in marrying a Cushite woman, but there was nothing wrong with that.

Exodus 34:16 - and you take of their daughters for your sons, and their daughters whose after their gods and make your sons whose after their gods.

Numbers 12:5 - And the Lord came down in a pillar of cloud and stood at the entrance of the tent and called Aaron and Miriam, and they both came forward. 6 And he said, "Hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream. 7 Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. 8 With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles, and he beholds the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" 9 And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, and he departed.

The other purpose of this accusation was to upgrade themselves.

12:2 - And they said, "Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?" And the Lord heard it.

And they said, "has the Lord spoken only through Moses, hasn't He also spoken through us". And the Lord heard this.

v.3 "Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on earth"

He did not react in anyway negatively.

b) The trial and verdict (12:5-14)

To touch God's leaders is serious.

God called the 3 out of the tent of meeting, and God judged them.

Moses was upheld as God's man, and Merriam was struck with leprosy. But again the humility of Moses comes to the fore, v.13 "O God, please heal her!"

Aaron's punishment would be guilt, that he would cause his sister to get leprosy, and that he had rebelled against God's leader Moses.

d) Reconnaissance and report (12:16 - 13:33)

The journey continued northwards, and the next stop was Hazeroth, and then Kadesh. Ch.12 & 13, will give us the record of the spies who were chosen, who went into the promised land, and the two different reports which were handed in.

a) The spies chosen (13:1-16)

"The LORD said to Moses, send some men to explore the land of Canaan"

There was one spy from each tribe.

b) Information wanted (13:17-20)

Moses makes very clear to the spies what he required;

- i) They had to look at the land.

Was it fertile, or desert, or wooden? What sort of land was it?

- (i) The people

Were they strong, or weak, or few, or many?

- (ii) The cities

Were they temporary camps or permanent fortresses?

The Lord wanted them to face up to the ultimate test of their faith. Would they trust Him and go? Or would they be afraid and stay.

c) Places spied (13:21-24)

They moved up and down the land. They went to the wilderness of Zin, up to Hamath in the north, also to Hebron, and finally into the Valley of Escol. From this beautiful valley they brought back samples of grapes, pomegranates, and figs.

d) Report given (13:25-29)

At the end of 40 days, they return to Moses and to Aaron. They said the land was very beautiful, but impossible to capture. The report was full of pessimism and defeatism.

e) Two opposite recommendations (13:30-33)

However, there were two men who were different; Joshua and Caleb. They saw the same land, people and cities; but they came to a different conclusion.

e) People's decision and God's judgement (14:1-45)

a) The sin of unbelief and rejection (v.1-4)

"That night all the people of the community raised their voices and wept"

And they said, "if only we had died in Egypt, why is the Lord bringing us to this land."

The nation heard the report of the spies, and they said the situation was helpless and hopeless. So they began to cry and weep, and murmur against Moses. They said it would've been better to die in the dessert. The sin was one of despair, despondency, and unbelief.

b) Last appeal to the people (v.5-10)

"Then Moses and Aaron fell face-down in front of the whole Israelite people and began to pray"

They acknowledged the sinfulness of the people, and they urged the people not to be afraid, and Joshua and Caleb made one last appeal.

But in v.10, the people wanted to stone them to death.

c) First announcement of judgement (v.11-12)

The Lord now responds, and God was going to send a plague among the people.

d) Last appeal to God (v.13-19)

We see again the greatness of Moses. He makes a last appeal to God to show mercy to them;

- (i) The heathen will laugh if you judge them.

They will say you brought us out of Egypt, but you can't take us into Canaan. Don't make the heathen laugh.

(ii) Reveal Your power.

e) Second announcement of judgement (v.20-25)

God graciously answered Moses in v.20, "I will forgive them, but, everyone who saw the miracles in Egypt is going to die and not enter into the Promised Land"

f) Third announcement of judgement (v.26-35)

The Lord makes it clearer now; every single person 20 years and older who left Egypt, is going to die in the desert.

g) First fulfilment of the judgement (v.36-38)

The spies who gave the bad report were struck down dead with the plague. Only Joshua and Caleb did not die.

h) Response of the people (v.39-45)

"They mourned bitterly, they were crying, they were sorry; but it was not going to last. At the hands of the Amalekites and the Canaanites more than 600 000 died.

2) DESERT WANDERINGS - DIVINE CHASTENING (15:1 - 19:22)

The next 37 years were going to be years of transition in three ways:

(i) Geographically

Sadly they would not go forward or backwards. They stood still for nearly 40 years

(ii) Population wise

Those who had come out of Egypt 20 years and older would die and be buried in the desert, with the result that there would be a whole new generation.

(iii) Spiritually speaking.

They were 40 years of disobedience and idolatry

a) God's legislation re-affirmed (15:1-41)

God now spoke again to Moses (v.1) and God saw the need of pointing the new generation into two directions:

a) By re-statement (v.1-31)

God would direct them to the Promised Land, and also to the Law which had been given at Mount Sinai.

In v.3-10 they again underlined the Law, including burnt offerings, drink offerings.

v.11-16, who the way into communion with God would be through the substitutionary atonement by blood.

v.17-21, the festivals stressed the factor of thanksgiving to God for His providence.

v.22-29, what they had to do when sin was committed unintentionally.

And so the Law was re-stated, nothing new but there is a new generation now.

b) In demonstration (v.32-36)

In Ex 31:15, and Nu 31:14, it says, "Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall surely be put to death".

A man was found gathering wood on the Sabbath day. He was brought to Moses, and the Law of God said stone him to death, and he was.

c) Help for remembering (v.37-41)

The stoning of that man was one of God's methods of teaching His people that you must obey God's Word. The other way was that on their garments there were tassels hanging from the four corners, it was to be in the colour of blue, and was also a reminder that they must obey the Law.

So the first thing that happens on the journey is that God's legislation is re-affirmed.

b) God's leaders challenged (16:1-50)

Already Miriam and Aaron have rebelled against their brother Moses, but now there was an even more serious rebellion.

a) The challenge (v.1-3)

250 men under 4 leaders, Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and On; they said that Moses was holding onto power, therefore they wanted to replace Moses and Aaron.

b) Moses' response and the test (v.4-17)

v. 4 – "When Moses heard it, he fell on his face"

Even though he was Israel's top leader, he responds with amazing humility and he asks that a test be given.

Korah and his followers were to bring some bowls with some fire and incense, and God would make it clear who was to be His leader.

c) The day of reckoning (v.18-40)

The glory of God appears, and the Lord said, "Separate yourselves from this assembly so I can put an end to them at once".

Moses humbly asks God for mercy. The ground on which they were standing collapsed, they were swallowed up by the ground. It was clear – i.e. don't rebel against those who God has put in control.

d) Further consequences (v.41-50)

41 - But on the next day all the congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and against Aaron, saying, "You have killed the people of the Lord."

This time God sent a plague where 14700 died.

God had indeed vindicated His leaders.

c) God's High Priest vindicated (17:1-13)

a) Presentation of the rods (v.1-7)

A situation was now set up for a visible sign of God's unmistakable vindication of Aaron as the high priest; but also of God's disapproval of the people's murmuring.

v.1 - The Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

Each tribe was to be represented by one rod or branch of an almond tree, upon which was inscribed the name of the tribe.

The rod would always symbolize leadership. The 12 rods were then laid in the tabernacle before the ark. At the appointed time, the rod of the man of God's choosing would begin to blossom. And that would settle the issues once and for all, as to who God wanted to be high priest.

b) Budding of Aaron's rod (v.8-11)

The next day brought the answer. When Moses entered the tabernacle, he saw that it was Aaron's rod that had blossomed. It was a clear confirmation from God that the Lord wanted Aaron.

The other 11 rods were then returned to the tribes; and God had spoken.

c) The effect (v.12-13)

The effect upon the people was a sense of hopelessness. They said, "we are all lost", and they feared retribution.

d) God's priests and Levites provided for (18:1-32)

a) Access to holy things (v.1-7)

We see in these verses how God clarifies the position which Aaron and his family are given. It also will show them of their great responsibilities to serve in the tabernacle. "I give your priesthood as a gift".

For Aaron and his family it was a huge honour,

v.7 - And you and your sons with you shall guard your priesthood for all that concerns the altar and that is within the veil; and you shall serve. I give your priesthood as a gift, and any outsider who comes near shall be put to death."

b) Priestly pre-requisites/privileges (v.8-20)

In these verses they were reminded of the very high demands that were placed upon them, of different meals which were to be remembered, and above all they were banned to own land.

The behaviour of the sons of Levi, in 1 Sam 2:12-17 would show the great danger of being covetous.

c) Tithe for the Levites (v.21-24)

This was also taught earlier in Lev 27:30-33

Both Nehemiah and Malachi had to remind the people of this.

d) Levites' tithe for the priests (v.25-32)

v.32 - And you shall bear no sin by reason of it, when you have contributed the best of it. But you shall not profane the holy things of the people of Israel, lest you die.

This is very important!

In our giving to God we always give only of the very very best.

e) God's people offered cleansing for mass defilement (19:1-22)

This section we are dealing with has to do with the years of wandering in the dessert. And besides what has been stressed already, the choice of spiritual leaders is very important.

In ch19 there is the provision of cleansing which off course would be necessary because so many people were dying.

a) Preparation of the water for impurity (v.1-10)

Where they had touched a dead body, they would need to be cleansed. There had to be also the sprinkling of blood, the burning of a heifer and cedar wood; which when we read makes us thank God for Jesus that we don't have to do this.

b) Cases needing the water for impurity (v.11-16)

There are 3 mentioned:

(i) When they touched a dead body.

(ii) When they touched the grave of a dead man.

(iii) When they went into a tent in which the dead person lay.

You would then need to be sprinkled with this water.

11 "Whoever touches the dead body of any person shall be unclean seven days.

16 Whoever in the open field touches someone who was killed with a sword or who died naturally, or touches a human bone or a grave, shall be unclean seven days.

c) Procedure for application (v.17-22)

This chapter cries out for fulfilment. The inadequacy of this whole procedure is sad.

Heb 10:22 - let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

It is a great section reminding us of the perfect work of Jesus.

This now ends the dessert wanderings, after 40 years the time has come to a close. There is now a new generation, and they will go and make a new start.

3) KADESH TO MOAB - A NEW GENERATION AND A NEW START (20:1 - 22:1)

Introduction

The 40 years of wandering in the dessert is now almost over. It is now the first month of the 40th year from the time they moved out of Egypt. And so there time has arrived for a new start; the old generation under judgement has now passed away, and the new generation was ready to begin.

a) First signs of retiring leadership (20:1-20)

Their leaders who had brought them out of Egypt are now coming to the end of their lives.

a) Death of Miriam (v.1)

While the people stayed at Kadesh waiting for their final instructions Miriam die and was buried. Nothing is said of the cause of the occasion or the affect of her death.

v. 1 And the people of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh. And Miriam died there and was buried there.

b) Moses and Aaron fail at Meribah (v.2-13)

It was a huge challenge for Moses. Four and 40 years he had endured tremendous hardship.

*v.2 Now there was no water for the congregation. **And they assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron.***

His patience and his love was tested yet again. There was no bitterness.

*v.6 Then Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the entrance of the tent of meeting and **fell on their faces. And the glory of the Lord appeared to them,** 7 **and the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,** 8 "Take the staff, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and **tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water.** So you shall bring water out of the rock for them and give drink to the congregation and their cattle."*

But in a moment of weakness Moses hit the rock with his staff twice, and he said, "must we bring out water?"

There are three aspects that we must remember:

(i) There was a quick temper of unkindness.

(ii) There was the danger of glorifying himself.

(iii) There was obedience.

4) v. 10 Then Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels: shall we bring water for you out of this rock?"

The penalty announced by God, was very harsh.

v. 12 And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them."

This is a clear reminder to us of what happens when a believer fails – it is serious.

a) Moses' envoys fail in negotiation (v.14-21)

Moses now tries to get permission from the King of Edom, for him to lead the Israelites through the territory into the Promised Land. But it was refused.

v. 21 Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his territory, so Israel turned away from him.

b) Aaron dies (v.22-29)

When the Israelites reached Mt. Hor, it was there that Aaron died at the age of 123. His garments were then placed on his eldest son Eleazar, and he would become the new high priest.

Chapter 20 is a very strong reminder to us of the double weakness of the priests; that of sin, and that of mortality - and that is what draws us to Jesus.

Heb 7: 23 The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, 24 but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. 25 Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

26 For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. 27 He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. 28 For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

While the priests like Aaron and Moses failed and died, the Lord Jesus is perfect. He is alive and he never sinned, hallelujah!

And so after 40 years the leadership is changing with the death of Aaron & Miriam.

b) Successful advances to the Plains of Moab (21:1 - 22:1)

a) Against the King of Arad (v.2-3)

In v.2 the Israelites made a vow;

v. 2 And Israel vowed a vow to the Lord and said, "If you will indeed give this people into my hand, then I will devote their cities to destruction." 3 And the Lord heeded the voice of Israel and gave over the Canaanites, and they devoted them and their cities to destruction. So the name of the place was called Hormah.

b) With a brazen serpent (v.4-9)

Yet again for the enemies of discouragement and murmuring reared themselves up. God in judgement send a plague, and after Moses' intercession he was told to erect a standard and place a fiery serpent on that standard; and anyone who hoped would live. In this old testament story of the gospel is again portrayed; as we look to the cross we are forgiven.

John 3:14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. 16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

c) To Mt Pisgah in unhindered march (v.10-20)

They moved on from one place to the next very quickly, and nothing hindered their progress.

d) Farther north in successive conquests (21:1 - 22:1)

As they got nearer to the Promised Land, they were given grace to conquer king Sihon, and finally they reached the plains of Moab – opposite the city of Jericho.

v. 1 Then the people of Israel set out and camped in the plains of Moab beyond the Jordan at Jericho.

CONCLUSION

The journey is now over; god has brought them through the desert, and all that is now needed is for a new song to be taught, they will elect a new leader, and enter the Promised Land.

PART THREE

We now come to the 3rd & final section of Numbers, where the Israelites are at the Gate. A number of things need to be done for them to enter into the Promised Land.

- (i) A new census
- (ii) A new leader appointed to replace Moses
- (iii) The Law finalized
- (iv) Trans-Jordan Business
- (v) The distribution of the land

AT THE GATE OF THE LAND (Numbers 22:2 - 36:11)

II) THE PROBLEMS (22:2 - 25:18)

When God promised to give the land of Canaan to His people, He promised that it would be a land of milk & honey; but it would not be easy.

1) Opposition from without (22:2 - 24:25)

a) Curse on Israel sought (22:2-40)

The main actors here were Balak, the king of Moab; Balaam, the soothsayer (prophet) from Mesopotamia; and God.

Fear gripped the heart of king Balak, and that initiates the story. He had seen how the Israelites had defeated everyone in their way, and he was afraid. Therefore he tried to find a method of cursing Israel; and he looked to Balaam to curse Israel.

Throughout the Bible Balaam is condemned:

2 Peter 2: 15 Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing,

Jude 11 Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion.

Revelation 2: 14 But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality.

b) Blessing on Israel given (22:41 - 24:25)

While Balak wanted to curse Israel, God overruled; and Balaam could not for conscience sake curse Israel.

i) The first message (22:41 - 23:12)

22: 41 And in the morning Balak took Balaam and brought him up to Bamoth- baal, and from there he saw a fraction of the people.

23: 1 And Balaam said to Balak, "Build for me here seven altars, and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams." 2 Balak did as Balaam had said. And Balak and Balaam offered on each altar a bull and a ram. 3 And Balaam said to Balak, "Stand beside your burnt offering, and I will go. Perhaps the Lord will come to meet me, and whatever he shows me I will tell you." And he went to a bare height, 4 and God met Balaam. And Balaam said to him, "I have arranged the seven altars and I have offered on each altar a bull and a ram." 5 And the Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth and said, "Return to Balak, and thus you shall speak." 6 And he returned to him, and behold, he and all the princes of Moab were standing beside his burnt offering. 7 And Balaam took up his discourse and said,

*"From Aram Balak has brought me,
the king of Moab from the eastern mountains:*

'Come, curse Jacob for me,
and come, denounce Israel! '
8 How can I curse whom God has not cursed?
How can I denounce whom the Lord has not denounced?
9 For from the top of the crags I see him,
from the hills I behold him;
behold, a people dwelling alone,
and not counting itself among the nations!
10 Who can count the dust of Jacob
or number the fourth part of Israel?
Let me die the death of the upright,
and let my end be like his!"
11 And Balak said to Balaam, "What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies, and behold, you
have done nothing but bless them." 12 And he answered and said, "Must I not take care to speak what the
Lord puts in my mouth?"

ii) The second message (23:13-26)

23: 11 And Balak said to Balaam, "What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies, and behold,
you have done nothing but bless them." 12 And he answered and said, "Must I not take care to speak what
the Lord puts in my mouth?" 13 And Balak said to him, "Please come with me to another place, from which
you may see them. You shall see only a fraction of them and shall not see them all. Then curse them for me
from there." 14 And he took him to the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars and
offered a bull and a ram on each altar. 15 Balaam said to Balak, "Stand here beside your burnt offering, while
I meet the Lord over there." 16 And the Lord met Balaam and put a word in his mouth and said, "Return to
Balak, and thus shall you speak." 17 And he came to him, and behold, he was standing beside his burnt
offering, and the princes of Moab with him. And Balak said to him, "What has the Lord spoken?" 18 And
Balaam took up his discourse and said,

"Rise, Balak, and hear;
give ear to me, O son of Zippor:
19 God is not man, that he should lie,
or a son of man, that he should change his mind.
Has he said, and will he not do it?
Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?
20 Behold, I received a command to bless:
he has blessed, and I cannot revoke it.
21 He has not beheld misfortune in Jacob,
nor has he seen trouble in Israel.
The Lord their God is with them,
and the shout of a king is among them.
22 God brings them out of Egypt
and is for them like the horns of the wild ox.
23 For there is no enchantment against Jacob,
no divination against Israel;
now it shall be said of Jacob and Israel,
'What has God wrought! '
24 Behold, a people! As a lioness it rises up
and as a lion it lifts itself;
it does not lie down until it has devoured the prey
and drunk the blood of the slain."
25 And Balak said to Balaam, "Do not curse them at all, and do not bless them at all." 26 But Balaam
answered Balak, "Did I not tell you, 'All that the Lord says, that I must do'?"

iii) The third message (23:27 - 24:13)

23: 27 And Balaam answered Balak, "Did I not tell you, 'All that the Lord says, that I must do'?" 27 And Balak
said to Balaam, "Come now, I will take you to another place. Perhaps it will please God that you may curse
them for me from there." 28 So Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, which overlooks the desert. 29 And

*Balaam said to Balak, "Build for me here seven altars and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams."
30 And Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered a bull and a ram on each altar.*

*24: 1 When Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he did not go, as at other times, to look for omens, but set his face toward the wilderness. 2 And Balaam lifted up his eyes and saw Israel camping tribe by tribe. And the Spirit of God came upon him, 3 and he took up his discourse and said, "The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor,
the oracle of the man whose eye is opened,
4 the oracle of him who hears the words of God,
who sees the vision of the Almighty,
falling down with his eyes uncovered:
5 How lovely are your tents, O Jacob,
your encampments, O Israel!
6 Like palm groves that stretch afar,
like gardens beside a river,
like aloes that the Lord has planted,
like cedar trees beside the waters.
7 Water shall flow from his buckets,
and his seed shall be in many waters;
his king shall be higher than Agag,
and his kingdom shall be exalted.
8 God brings him out of Egypt
and is for him like the horns of the wild ox;
he shall eat up the nations, his adversaries,
and shall break their bones in pieces
and pierce them through with his arrows.
9 He crouched, he lay down like a lion
and like a lioness; who will rouse him up?
Blessed are those who bless you,
and cursed are those who curse you."
10 And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he struck his hands together. And Balak said to Balaam, "I called you to curse my enemies, and behold, you have blessed them these three times. 11 Therefore now flee to your own place. I said, 'I will certainly honor you,' but the Lord has held you back from honor." 12 And Balaam said to Balak, "Did I not tell your messengers whom you sent to me, 13 'If Balak should give me his house full of silver and gold, I would not be able to go beyond the word of the Lord, to do either good or bad of my own will. What the Lord speaks, that will I speak'?*

iv) The fourth message (24:14-25)

*25: 14 And now, behold, I am going to my people. Come, I will let you know what this people will do to your people in the latter days." 15 And he took up his discourse and said,
"The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor,
the oracle of the man whose eye is opened,
16 the oracle of him who hears the words of God,
and knows the knowledge of the Most High,
who sees the vision of the Almighty,
falling down with his eyes uncovered:
17 I see him, but not now;
I behold him, but not near:
a star shall come out of Jacob,
and a scepter shall rise out of Israel;
it shall crush the forehead of Moab
and break down all the sons of Sheth.
18 Edom shall be dispossessed;
Seir also, his enemies, shall be dispossessed.
Israel is doing valiantly.
19 And one from Jacob shall exercise dominion
and destroy the survivors of cities!"
20 Then he looked on Amalek and took up his discourse and said,*

*"Amalek was the first among the nations,
but its end is utter destruction."
21 And he looked on the Kenite, and took up his discourse and said,
"Enduring is your dwelling place,
and your nest is set in the rock.
22 Nevertheless, Kain shall be burned
when Asshur takes you away captive." 23 And he took up his discourse and said,
"Alas, who shall live when God does this?
24 But ships shall come from Kittim
and shall afflict Asshur and Eber;
and he too shall come to utter destruction."
25 Then Balaam rose and went back to his place. And Balak also went his way.*

2) Opposition from within (25:1-18)

Satan is our arch-enemy; he is powerful and he is clever. When one way fails, he will find another way to achieve his purposes.

Balaam would not curse Israel. But another scheme was put forward, whereby council was given to Israel, which would cause their downfall.

The strategy was; let Israel be the cause of their own fall.

a) The sin

The Moabites were also involved in this strategy.

25: 17 "Harass the Midianites and strike them down, 18 for they have harassed you with their wives, with which they beguiled you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of the chief of Midian, their sister, who was killed on the day of the plague on account of Peor."

31: 16 Behold, these, on Balaam's advice, caused the people of Israel to act treacherously against the Lord in the incident of Peor, and so the plague came among the congregation of the Lord.

And the plan was for the daughters of Moab to seduce the men of Israel, have sex with them; and that would lead Israel to worship their gods,

25: 3 So Israel yoked himself to Baal of Peor. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.

e.g. Zimri & the Midianite woman Cosby

25: 6 And behold, one of the people of Israel came and brought a Midianite woman to his family, in the sight of Moses and in the sight of the whole congregation of the people of Israel, while they were weeping in the entrance of the tent of meeting. 7 When Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose and left the congregation and took a spear in his hand

a) The judgement of Israel

25: 4 And the Lord said to Moses, "Take all the chiefs of the people and hang them in the sun before the Lord, that the fierce anger of the Lord may turn away from Israel."

God's anger was poured out on Israel, and 24000 people died.

1 Cor 10: 18 Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar?

And included in that judgement was the slaying of Zimri and Cosby.

b) The atonement

25: 8 and went after the man of Israel into the chamber and pierced both of them, the man of Israel and the woman through her belly. Thus the plague on the people of Israel was stopped.

Atonement came by representative death, and representative righteousness. The guilty leaders were hung, and

atonement was made.

c) The judgement of Midian

25: 17 "Harass the Midianites and strike them down,

There was further judgement on both Israel and Medianites.

Conclusion

All this happened at the gate as they were about to enter into the Promised Land. Judgement has been given, and now the new census will be taken, a new leader appointed, and they will enter into the Promised Land.

AT THE GATE OF THE LAND (continued)

Introduction

These final chapters will give us a record of the last minute preparations, which needed to be made before going into the Promised Land.

II) PREPARATION (26:1 - 30:16)

1) A new census taken (Organisation) (26:1 - 27:11)

In God's work it is important to have good organization, always.

a) The census (26:1-51, 63-65)

In Ch.1 the first census was taken, mainly for organizational purposes; but now the second census would help them divide up the Promised Land to the various tribes.

b) Principles and land assignments (26:52-62)

Each tribe was given land in proportion to its population, and the land allocated was determined by lot (v.55).

55 But the land shall be divided by lot. According to the names of the tribes of their fathers they shall inherit.

The land had to carry the name of the ancestor of the tribe; and only the Levites were not given land.

c) The rights of heiresses (27:1-11)

Zelophehad had no sons, but only 5 daughters (27:1).

Chapter 27

The Daughters of Zelophehad

1 Then drew near the daughters of Zelophehad the son of Hepher, son of Gilead, son of Machir, son of Manasseh, from the clans of Manasseh the son of Joseph. The names of his daughters were: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.

Because the land was given to the sons, the daughters appealed to Moses, and the 5 daughters were given land.

The organization was now complete.

2) New leader identified (Leadership) (27:12-23)

The time had come for the fulfilment of the judgement of Moses' sin at the waters of Merihbah (20:10-13).

10 Then Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels: shall we bring water for you out of this rock?" 11 And Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice, and water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their livestock. 12 And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the

people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them." 13 These are the waters of Meribah, where the people of Israel quarreled with the Lord, and through them he showed himself holy.

He was instructed to climb up the Mountain of Abarin, to Mount Nebo. He had a view of the Promised Land (Deut 34:1-3);

1 Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. And the Lord showed him all the land, Gilead as far as Dan, 2 all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the western sea, 3 the Negeb, and the Plain, that is, the Valley of Jericho the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar.

...and now he would die.

God's choice was for Joshua to take over (v.18-20).

18 So the Lord said to Moses, "Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him. 19 Make him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and you shall commission him in their sight. 20 You shall invest him with some of your authority that all the congregation of the people of Israel may obey.

The organization has been done, the new leader has been put in place, and now they will deal with their spiritual life.

3) The Law of God finalised (Spiritual life) (28:1 - 30:16)

a) The law of offerings (28:1 - 29:40)

The real key to their success in conquering the land of Canaan lay with their fellowship with God. Therefore a complete set of regulations for the offerings was given; and by bringing the offerings to God, the people were symbolically yielding themselves to the Lord.

b) Laws of vows (30:1-16)

Now the Lord gives final instruction concerning the making of vows. (v.2) tells us that these vows were never to be broken. There would be a positive and negative aspect, and especially when woman made vows, they were subject to the head of the tribe.

III) TRANSJORDAN BUSINESS (31:1 - 32:42)

1) Decimation of Midianites (Chapter 31)

When the Israelites moved into Canaan, they were to be God's agents on the judgement declared against the Medianites (25:16-18).

16 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 17 "Harass the Midianites and strike them down, 18 for they have harassed you with their wives, with which they beguiled you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of the chief of Midian, their sister, who was killed on the day of the plague on account of Peor."

The judgement was because the sin of enticing the Israelites to immorality and idolatry.

2) Allotment of Trans-Jordan land (Chapter 32)

The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Half-Manasseh did not want to live in Canaan; they wanted to live on the other side of the Jordan. This had potential for causing great division among the Israelites. Therefore Moses very wisely said, they must first come with everyone else, help them all settle in the Promised Land; and only then go to the land that they wanted. Very wise advice from Moses.

IV) RECAPITULATION (33:1-49)

This chapter will merely summarize all that has happened, from the time they left Egypt (33:1);

1 These are the stages of the people of Israel, when they went out of the land of Egypt by their companies under the leadership of Moses and Aaron.

up to the point where they reached the Jordan (33:49).

49 they camped by the Jordan from Beth-jeshimoth as far as Abel-shittim in the plains of Moab.

V) ANTICIPATION (33:50 - 36:13)

Everyone is now ready, and the eyes of the Israelites are directed to the Promised Land.

1) The task at hand (33:50-56)

It was not going to be easy, they still had to drive out all the inhabitants of the land, then they needed to destroy all their images, and demolish all the high places.

2) Then the allotment of the land (34:1 - 36:13)

a) Outer limits of the land (34:1-29)

In (v.3-5) the South;

(v.6) the West;

(v.7-9) the North;

(v.10-12) the East.

b) Levite cities (35:1-8)

1 The Lord spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho, saying, 2 "Command the people of Israel to give to the Levites some of the inheritance of their possession as cities for them to dwell in. And you shall give to the Levites pasturelands around the cities. 3 The cities shall be theirs to dwell in, and their pasturelands shall be for their cattle and for their livestock and for all their beasts. 4 The pasturelands of the cities, which you shall give to the Levites, shall reach from the wall of the city outward a thousand cubits all around. 5 And you shall measure, outside the city, on the east side two thousand cubits, and on the south side two thousand cubits, and on the west side two thousand cubits, and on the north side two thousand cubits, the city being in the middle. This shall belong to them as pastureland for their cities.

6 "The cities that you give to the Levites shall be the six cities of refuge, where you shall permit the manslayer to flee, and in addition to them you shall give forty- two cities. 7 All the cities that you give to the Levites shall be forty- eight, with their pasturelands. 8 And as for the cities that you shall give from the possession of the people of Israel, from the larger tribes you shall take many, and from the smaller tribes you shall take few; each, in proportion to the inheritance that it inherits, shall give of its cities to the Levites."

c) Cities of refuge (35:9-34)

(35:9-34)

These cities would demonstrate 2 of the characteristics of God;

i) God's righteousness in punishing sin.

ii) God's grace in forgiveness.

d) Preservation of land inheritances within tribes (36:1-13)

Conclusion

The book of Numbers closes with the people waiting to hear the trumpet, telling them to march into the Promised Land. It was not going to be easy, but in (10:29) God promised He would be with them.

As we survey this book, there are 4 big lessons we learn.

1) We are saved in order to serve

If the emphasis of Exodus is on being saved, then the emphasis of Numbers is on serving.

2) God is a God of order.

3) God always honours faith.

4) There are certain sins to which we are tempted to surrender to:

a) The sin of unbelief

b) The sin of rebelliousness

c) The sin of jealousy

Amen.