

Class Seven
Numbers
“A Tale of Two Generations”

1A Introduction

1B Title

1C The Hebrew title for the fourth book of the Pentateuch derives from the fifth word in the first verse in the Hebrew, *bemidbar*, _____ the location for most of the events of the book.

2C The English title derives from the Greek title in the Septuagint (LXX), *arithmoi*, “numbers” related to the two “_____” or _____ of the people taken at the beginning and toward the end of the book.

3C A census was taken as the nation left Sinai at the beginning of the book, and again as they prepared to enter the promised land.

2B Date and writer

1C Written approximately 38 years after the Exodus: 1408 BC

2C Two views of authorship:

1D Most evangelicals: _____ (Num 1:1; 33:2; 36:13; Matt. 8:4; John 1:45)

2D Critical Scholarship: _____ (see Introduction notes)

3B Addressees: The _____ that survived the divine discipline in the wilderness and who would enter the land.

4B Purpose

1C The book begins with the Israelites the second month of the second year after the exodus. The book ends with the Israelites in the 10th month of the fortieth year after the Exodus.

1D The second Passover occurred on the fourteenth day of the first month of the year and the nation departed from Egypt on the fifteenth day of the first month (Num 33:3; Ex 12:2, 6)

- 2D The tabernacle was first constructed at Mt. Sinai during the one year stay there after the Exodus (Ex 40:2, 17).
- 3D One month later the people departed for the Promised land (second month, second year, first day-2.1.02-Num. 1:1)
- 4D. Hill and Walton offer the following timetable for events after the Exodus:¹

Exodus from Egypt	15th day of 1st month	Exod. 12:2, 5; Num. 33:03
Arrival at Mount Sinai	1st day of 3d month	Exod. 19:1
Yahweh reveals himself at Sinai	3d day of 3d month	Exod. 19:16
Completion of tabernacle	1st day of 1st month of 2d year	Exod. 40:1, 16
Command to number Israel	1st day of 2d month of 2d year	Num. 1:1
Departure from Sinai	20th day of 2d month of 2d year	Num. 10:11
Arrival at Kadesh	1st month of 40th year?	Num. 20:1
Death of Miriam	1st month of 40th year?	Num. 20:1
Death of Aaron and thirty days of mourning	1st day of 5th month of 40th year	Num. 20:29
Departure for Moab	1st day of 6th month of 40th year?	Num 20:22; 21:4
Moses Addresses Israel in Moab	1st day of 11th month of 40th year	Deut. 1:2-3
Death of Moses and thirty days of mourning	?	Deut. 34:8
Joshua and Israel enter Canaan	10th day of 1st month of 41st year	Josh. 1:19

2C The book records their travels from _____ to the plains of _____, east of Jericho.

3C The travel was not direct. They moved from Sinai to Kadesh Barnea but failed to trust God and enter the land. This failure

¹ SOT, 133.

resulted in 38 years of discipline and death for the Exodus generation.

4C After 38 years God brought the second generation again to Kadesh, and then around the borders of Moab to enter the land.

5C This time was a period of _____ for the nation and _____ for the next generation to enter the land.

Ch. 1-14 _____ and _____ of the Exodus generation to enter the land.

Chs 20-36 Preparation of the next generation to enter from Moab.

6C Instructions for how the nation's _____ through the wilderness, how the priests and Levites were to operate with the mobile sanctuary, and preparation for conquest of the land.

7C The book describes the _____ and the _____ journey of the nation from Sinai to the promised land.

8C The book explains the consequences of _____, yet demonstrates God's _____ and _____ in light of Israel's disobedience, rebellion, apostasy, and complaining.

5B Theme

The importance that God's chosen people be set apart to Him in order to fulfill His purposes for the nation.

6B Structure

Chs 1-25 The First Generation March in the wilderness

Chs 26-36 The Second Generation march to the Promised Land.

7B The numberings in Numbers

1C. The design of the census in Numbers:²

1D. To ascertain and recruit manpower for war (Num 1:3)

2D To allot work assignments in the forced labor gangs and the worship in the tabernacle (Num 3:4)

² This following is adapted form Hill and Walton, SOT, 136.

- 3D To establish a basis for taxation (cf. Ex 30:11-16)
- 4D To order the Hebrew tribes in marching and camping formations (Num 2)
- 5D To contribute to the organization of former slaves into a unified people
- 2C. Two censuses are taken in Numbers (1; 26):
- 1D The first census was in the second month of the second year after the Exodus (Num 1:1) counting the Exodus generation of Israelites.
- 2D The second census was in the fortieth year after the Exodus counting the second generation of post-Exodus Israelites (Num 20:1, 22-29; 33:38)
- 3D Both counts were taken of Israelite men who were of fighting age (twenty years of age and older) Num 1:1-4; 26:1-4.

Census Figures in Numbers 1 and 26³

Tribe	Reference	Figures	Reference	Figures
Reuben	1:20-21	46,500	26:5-11	43,730
Simeon	1:22-23	59,300	26:12-14	22,200
Gad	1:24-25	45,650	26:15-18	40,500
Judah	1:26-27	74,600	26:19-22	76,500
Issachar	1:28-29	54,400	26:23-25	64,300
Zebulun	1:30-31	57,400	26:26-27	60,500
Ephraim	1:32-33	40,500	26:35-37	32,500
Manasseh	1:34-35	32,200	26:28-34	52,700
Benjamin	1:36-37	35,400	26:38-41	45,600
Dan	1:38-39	62,700	36:42-43	64,400
Asher	1:40-41	41,500	36:44-47	53,400
Naphatali	1:42-43	53,400	26:48-50	45,400
Totals		603,550		601,730
Average		50,296		50,144
High		74,600		76,500
Low		32,200		22,200

Greatest increase: Manasseh (20,500)

Greatest decrease: Simeon (37,100)

³ This chart is adapted from the charts by Walton and Hill, *SOT*, 137; and La Sor et al, *OTS*, 167; Wenham, *Numbers*, 60.

3C Significance of the Numbers in the Census:⁴

4C If the numbers are literal, and assuming the men represent about one-fourth of the population, then the number of the Israelites ranges from two to three million people.⁵

A literal understanding of the numbers is consistent with Pharaoh's fear of the rapidly increasing population of Israelites (Ex 1:7-12). t

5C Some argue that the numbers cannot be literal for the following reasons:

1D The line of march would be almost 100 miles long and several miles wide.

2D The Sinai wilderness did not have the ability to sustain such a large number of people and animals

3D Israel was unable to defeat the Canaanites

7B The travels of Numbers⁶

Journeys

Red Sea to Sinai	Sinai to Kadesh	Kadesh to Moab
Led by cloud Ex 13:21	Nu 10:11ff	
Victory over Egypt 14		cf. 21:21-35
Victory song 15:1-18	cf 10:35f	21:14-15
Miriam 15:20-21	12	20:1
People complain 15:23-24	11:1	21:5
Moses' intercession 15:25	11:2	21:7
Well 15:27		21:16
Mana and quails 16	11:4-5	
Water from rock 17:1-7		20:2-13
Victory over Amalek 17:8-16		cf. 21:1-3

⁴ For fuller discussions of this difficult matter see Wenham, *Numbers*, 60-66; Budd, *Numbers*, 6-9.

⁵ See also Wenham, *Numbers*, 59.

⁶ These are adapted from Wenham, *Numbers*, 16-17.

Jethro 18:1-12 cf. 10:29-32		
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Stops

Topic	Sinai	Kadesh	Moab
Divine promises	Ex 19:5-6; 23:23ff.	Nu 12:2	22:24
40 days	24:28	13:25	-
Rebellion	32:1-8	14:1ff	25:1-3
Moses' intercession	32:11-13	14:13-19	-
Judgment	32:34	14:20-35	25:4
Plague	32:35	14:37	25:8-9
Law of sacrifice	34:18ff; Lv. 1-7 etc.	15:1-31	28-29
Trial	Lv.24:10-23	15:32-36	27:1-11
Rebellion against Priests	Lv. 10:1-3	16:1-35	-
Atonement through priests and Levites	Ex 32:26-29	16:36-50	25:7-13
Priestly prerogatives	Lv. 6-7; 22	17-18	31:28-30; 35:1-8
Impurity rules	Lv. 11-16; Nu. 9:6-19; 14		31:35-9ff.
Census	Nu. 1-4	-	26

Exposition of Numbers

1A. God's Provision for the People: The Triumphal March to Kadesh. (1:1-25:18).

1B God Prepares the Nation for the March into the Land (1:1-10:36)

God organizes the nation in their tribal organization, the encampment and order of march. In the travel the Levites and priests are closest to the tabernacle as the substitutes for the first-born of the nation. The camp is purified as the dwelling place of God.

The encampment itself is analogous to the individual believer in the church age whose body is the Temple for the indwelling of Christ.

1C God instructs the people to be set apart to him for the march (1:1-10:10)

1D God organizes the first generation, 1:1-4:49

- 1E A census is taken as the first step in military organization. The total is _____ men, excluding the Levites.
- 2E Each tribe functions as its own _____.
- 3E Levites were not numbered but had responsibilities for guarding, caring for and protecting the Tabernacle.
- 4E Violation of the sanctity of the Tabernacle brought the _____. (3:4-10)
- 5E The Levites are counted from all ages. And organized according to the three clans of Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.
- Each clan has specific responsibilities in the care, transportation, and putting up and taking down the tabernacle.
- 6E The Levites substituted for the first-born of the nation. (3:29-51)
- 7E The arrangement of the tribes with the tabernacle in the center illustrates the set apart character of the nation with the Lord and the tabernacle at the center.

2D God instructs them on ritual purification 5:1-10:10

1E The camp is purified from things which ceremonially defile the camp. 5:1-4

2E Regulations for dealing with those who were unfaithful. 5:5-6:27

3E Description of events after the first census. (7:1-83)

Gifts from the tribes to support the travel of the Tabernacle.

Summary of the Tribal gifts.

- 1) Twelve silver dishes
- 2) Twelve silver bowls,
- 3) Twelve gold pans
- 4) shekels of silver for the utensils
- 5) Twelve golden pans full of incense
- 6) Twelve bulls
- 7) Twelve rams
- 8) Twelve male goats one year old for the sin offering
- 9) Twelve bulls
- 10) Twelve bulls for a burnt offering
- 11) Twelve rams for a burnt offering
- 12) Twelve male goats for a sin offering
- 13) 60 Bulls for a burnt offering
 - a) rams for a burnt offering and
 - b) male goats Moses spoke to the Lord in the tent of meeting 7:89

4E The Ceremonial purification of the Levites. 8:1-26.

Lighting the Menorah

Age and qualification of service

5E The Second Passover after the Exodus, 9:1-14.

Provisions for those excluded from observance emphasize the grace of God.

2C God leads the march from Sinai (10:11-10:35)

2B God disciplines the nation for rebellion and disobedience (11:1-25:18)

1C God instructs the nation, they rebel, God provides atonement, 11:1-20:29

1D God deals with the complaints and rebellions of His people with discipline and grace. (Num. 11:1-

1E Complaint One: _____ The people complain and God burns the edges of the camp until Moses prays. (Num 11:1-3)

2E Complaint Two: _____
_____ The people complain about the food. God graciously supplies leaders to help Moses and the people become ill because of their hunger lust. (11:4-35)

3E Complaint Three: The complaint of Miriam and Aaron against Moses. (2:1-16)

Miriam is disciplined with a skin disease until Moses intercedes.

The people move from Hazeroth to Paran

- 4E Failure One: The failure to believe God and follow Caleb and Joshua (13:1-15:41).

This represents a failure to understand God's will, to trust God's power, to follow God's leadership. Fundamentally the issue is understanding God's revelation.

Despite Israel's failure, God confirms the promise and graciously provides solutions to the sin through sacrifices and offerings. (15:1-41)

- 5E Failure Two: The failure of the Levites, the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and its aftermath. . (16:1-19:22)

God's punishment for sin.

God's gracious provision for the future.

God's reconfirmation of Aaron (17:1-13)

God's reconfirmation of the Levites (18:1-19:22)

The Duties of the Levites are defined. (18:1-31)

Regulations for Cleansing of the Temple.

The Red Heifer (19:1-13)

Purification by Sprinkling
(19:14-22)

6E Failure Three: The failure of Moses and
Aaron (20:1-13)

Miriam dies and does not see the Promised
Land (20:1)

Meribah: Moses reacts in anger to the
people's rebellion and strikes the rock twice
resulting in divine discipline and being
prohibited from God from entering the
promised land (20:2-13). Meribah means
"bitterness" because the people were bitter
with the Lord.

Edom refuses to let Israel move through the
land. 20:14-21

2C God provides hope after rebellion, 21:1-25:18

God provides victory for Israel as they approach the land
and defeat the Amorites under Sihon, and Bashan under
Og.

God's faithfulness is to His covenant to Abraham, not the
goodness or obedience of the people.

One of the strangest episodes regards the Balaam Oracles. Where Balaam is hired by Balak to curse Israel. He is prohibited by God to do this, but he gives Balak the plan to ultimately destroy Israel, by enticing them to intermarry with the women of Moab.

- 2A. God Prepares the Second Generation for entry into the Promised Land (26:1-36:10)
- 1B God prepares the second generation to enter the land, 26:1-32:
- 1C God instructs them to number the people, there are now 601,730 men., 26:1-65
- 2C God instructs the second generation on keeping set apart to Him. 27:1-30:16
- 1D God provides instruction to preserve property inheritance 27:1-11.
- 2D God designates Moses' successor, 27:12-23
- 3D God instructs the new generation on offerings, feasts, and vows, 28:1-30:16
- 5B God directs them in war against the Midianites (31:1-54)
- 6B God organizes the settlement of the Transjordan, 31:1-54

- 7B God warns the new generation and encourages them through a review of the journey through the wilderness. , 33:1-56
- 8B God anticipates entry into the Land and reviews laws related to the land. (34:1-36:13)