



## Putting the Puzzle Pieces Together

Second Series: “Top Edge” Old Testament: The Law

Lesson #6: Numbers

### I. Introduction

A. Title: Septuagint translation called it “Numbers” because of its two census lists

B. Author:

Similar to the previous books, there is strong evidence that Moses wrote Numbers

1. Internal evidence:

- a. There are more than 80 references within the book to “the Lord spoke to Moses”
- b. Moses was a key eye witness – Numbers 33:2 “At the LORD's command Moses recorded the stages in their journey. This is their journey by stages:”
- c. Third person references were common in the ancient world

2. External evidence:

- a. New Testament passages refer to events and associate them with Moses. John 3:14, 1 Cor. 10:1-11, Heb. 3-4

C. Time Table: Covers 38 years and 9 months (Leviticus covered only 1 month). A direct journey (Sinai to Kadesh-bannea) would normally have taken 11 days. Dates: like 1444-1405 BC

Timetable After the Exodus		
Exodus from Egypt	15 <sup>th</sup> day of first month	Ex 12:2, 5; Num. 33:3
Arrival at Mt. Sinai	1 <sup>st</sup> day of the 3d month	Ex 19:1
Yahweh reveals himself at Sinai	3d day of 3d month	Ex 19:16
Completion of tabernacle	1 <sup>st</sup> day of 1 <sup>st</sup> month of 2d year	Ex 40:1, 16
Command to number Israel	1 <sup>st</sup> day of 2d month of 2d year	Num 1:1
Departure from Sinai	20 <sup>th</sup> day of 2d month of 2d year	Num 10:11
Arrival at Kadesh	1 <sup>st</sup> moth of 40 <sup>th</sup> year?	Num 20:1
Death of Miriam	1 <sup>st</sup> month of 40 <sup>th</sup> year?	Num 20:1
Death of Aaron and thirty days of mourning	1 <sup>st</sup> day of 5 <sup>th</sup> month of 40 <sup>th</sup> year	Num 20:29
Departure of Moab	1 <sup>st</sup> day of 6 <sup>th</sup> month of 40 <sup>th</sup> year?	Num 20:22; 21:4
Moses addresses Israel in Moab	1 <sup>st</sup> day of 11 <sup>th</sup> month of 40 <sup>th</sup> year	Deut 1:2-3
Death of Moses and thirty days of mourning	?	Deut 34:8
Joshua and Israel enter Canaan	10 <sup>th</sup> day of 1 <sup>st</sup> month of 41 <sup>st</sup> year	Josh 1:19

(A Survey of the Old Testament, p. 117)

## D. Purpose:

1. A demonstration of God's patience and faithfulness even in the face of Israel's rebellion
2. A further disclosure of God's nature – specifically His Holiness

## E. Thematic History

It is the history of Israel's wanderings from Sinai to Moab. But it only details selected events. "The Book of Numbers is not among the literary high points of the Old Testament." (An Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 87)

It is a difficult Old Testament Book in which to outline order and structure.

## II. The Census Numbers

## A. Census taking was common in the ancient near east. They were used for:

1. Recruiting manpower for war
2. To establish labor gangs
3. Create a basis for taxation

## B. For Israel, the census helped organize the former slaves into a unified community of God

## C. Census #1: Num 1:1 First generation of males 20 years and older

Census #2: Num 26 Post Exodus Israelites

Census Figures in Numbers 1 and 26				
<i>Tribes</i>	<i>Reference</i>	<i>Figures</i>	<i>References</i>	<i>Figures</i>
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	26:42-43	64,400
Asher	1:40-41	41,500	26:44-47	53,400
Naphtali	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)		

(A Survey of the Old Testament, p. 123)

“If these numbers are understood literally and the men of military age comprise approximately one-fourth of the population, then the projections for the total number of Israelites range anywhere from two to three million people. Supporters of a literal interpretation of the census figures note that this view corresponds well with Pharaoh’s fear of the rapidly multiplying Hebrews overrunning Egypt and with the promises made to Abraham about becoming a great nation (cf. Ex 1:7-12; Gen 12:2, 17:5-6).”  
 (A Survey of the Old Testament, p. 124)

**III. Outline**

Old Generation (1-12) – Mt. Sinai

Tragic Transition Period (13-20) – Wilderness

New Generation (21-36) – Plains of Moab

**A. Preparation for departure from Sinai (1-10:10)**

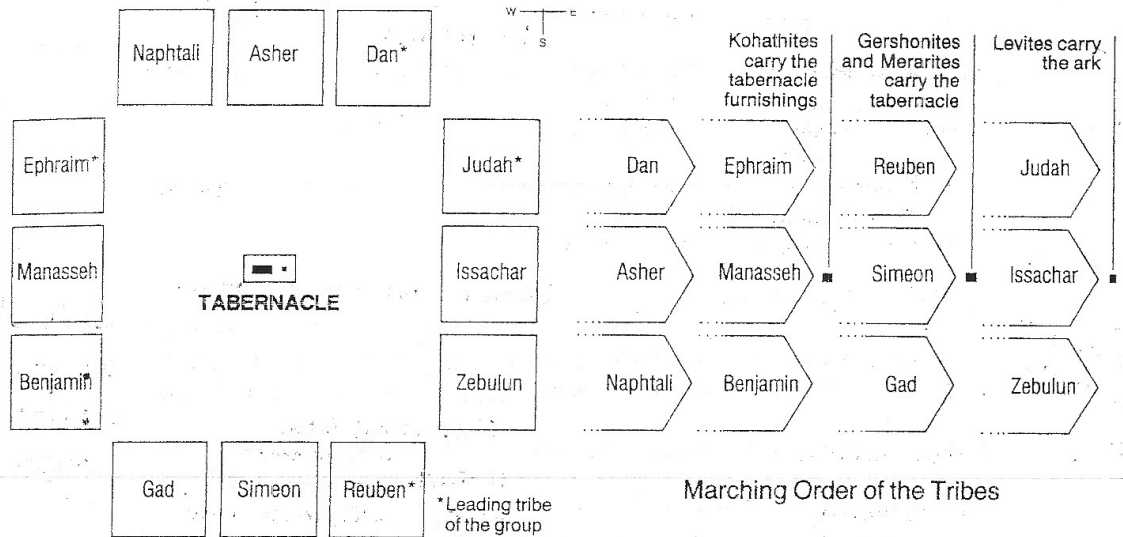
1. Numbering and arranging the tribes (1-4)
2. Special legislation (5-6)
3. Sanctification through worship (7-9:14) , donations, Levites consecrated, Passover celebrated
4. Divine guidance (9:15-10:10). The Cloud and Silver Trumpets

Nazarite Vow

Cloud leading Israel

**B. From Sinai to Kadesh (10:11 – 25:18)**

1. Arrangement of Tribes marching



2. Depart Mt. Sinai (10:11-36)
3. The people complain (11:1-9) circumstances, food
4. Moses complains (11:10-15)
5. God provides (11:16-35)
6. Miriam and Aaron rebel (12:1-16)

Quail

Plagues

12 Spies

7. The Twelve Spies (13-14)
  8. Review of the offerings (15) Korah
  9. Rebellion, Korah, against Moses (16) Smacked the Rock
  10. Role of priesthood (17-19)
  11. Miriam's death and Moses' sin (20-21) the Bronze Serpent The Bronze Serpent  
Jn 3:14
  12. Journey to Moab (21)
  13. Failure with the Moabites (22-25) Balaam and his donkey
- C. From Kadesh to the plains of Moses (26-36)
1. The second numbering (26)
  2. Special inheritance case – Zelophehad daughters (27, 36)
  3. Selection of Joshua (27)
  4. Regulation of offerings and vows (28-30) Cities of Refuge
  5. Conquest and division of Israel (31-36)
- Summary 33:1-49  
Division of land 33:50-34:29  
Special cities: 35:1-34

#### IV. So what?

Praise the Lord that God's intervention in our lives does not stop with the discipline. He does not abandon his people but even as He deals with their rebellion and sin – He gives hope! (Heb. 12:5-13)

#### Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think God was so specific with all His instructions to Israel (where to camp, how to march)?
2. In what way does the trip through the Sinai Peninsula remind you of the parenting phrase "we can do this the easy way or the hard way."
3. What is God's attitude regarding complaining?
4. Do you think God was harsh on Moses (denying him the right to go on into the Promised Land)? Why? Why not?

