

# Book of Numbers

## Synopsis



## Introduction

Book No	4
Name	Numbers
Written By	Moses
Testament	Old
Category	Pentateuch
Date Written	Approx. 1450 - 1410 BC
Place Written	Sinai desert near to Canaan
Audience	To the people of Israel
Purpose	To tell the story of how Israel prepared to enter the promised land, how they sinned and punished, how they prepared to try again
History Covered	1278 - 1241 BC
Chapters	36
Verses	1288
Key Verse	<p>Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice;</p> <p>Surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it: (14:22, 23)</p>
Key People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Moses</li> <li>❖ Aaron</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Miriam</li> <li>❖ Joshua</li> <li>❖ Caleb</li> <li>❖ Eleazar</li> <li>❖ Korah</li> <li>❖ Balaam</li> </ul>
Key Places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Mount Sinai</li> <li>❖ Wilderness of paran</li> <li>❖ Kadesh</li> <li>❖ Arad</li> <li>❖ Edom</li> <li>❖ Ammon</li> <li>❖ Bashan</li> <li>❖ Plains of Moab</li> <li>❖ Moab</li> <li>❖ Gilead</li> </ul>

### Purpose of the Book

Numbers, which records the tragic story of Israel's unbelief, should serve as a dramatic lesson for all of God's people. God loves us and wants the very best for us. He can and should be trusted. Numbers also gives a clear portrayal of God's patience. Again and again he withholds judgment and preserves the nation. But his patience must not be taken for granted. His judgment will come. We must obey.

Numbers has two major divisions: 1) the section containing instructions while still at Sinai 2) the wilderness journey, which covers the itinerary from Sinai to the plains of Moab across the Jordan from the Promised Land. The instructions at Sinai deal with the preparation for the journey, and the rest of the book tells of the journey itself.

The section of Numbers that deals with the journey. The key points in this part are the accounts of the complaints, rebellions, and disobedience of the first generation, which led to their deaths. The second subsection narrates the preparation of the second generation for entry into the Promised Land. It begins with a new census (compare ch. 1), noting that the entire first generation, except Joshua, Caleb, and Moses, had died

in the wilderness. This section ends with the apportionment of the land among the tribes after they have entered the Promised Land.

One of the most familiar events in Numbers is the negative report of the ten spies, as opposed to the positive one of Joshua and Caleb. This resulted in severe chastisement. From this we learn the profound consequences that can sometimes develop from being faithless and negative.

When God speaks a promise, we need to respond with optimism, not pessimism. The repeated grumbings of the Israelites, even in light of God's continuous provision, show us the need to maintain an attitude of thankfulness to God, even when we have great needs (Phil. 4:6).

Numbers also shows us the side of God that He is slow to reveal—His anger. Though He is loving and merciful, He is also just. When mankind repeatedly rejects Him, He must issue judgment when His children repeatedly disobey, He must chastise, sometimes severely.

Numbers ends as it begins, with preparation. This new generation of Israelites was numbered and sanctified. After defeating numerous armies, they settle the east side of the Jordan River. Then they faced their greatest test: to cross the river and possess the beautiful land God promised them.

The lesson is clear. God's people must trust him, moving ahead by faith if they are to claim his promised land.

### Overview

- ❖ 4<sup>th</sup> book of the BIBLE, Old Testament and Pentateuch
- ❖ Numbers covers nearly 39 years. 1 to 10 covers 21 days and 10 to 33 covers 38 years
- ❖ Quoted 2 times in New Testament
- ❖ Numbers opens some 13 months after the Exodus.
- ❖ Numbers records the tragic story and consequences of Israel's unbelief.
- ❖ What could have been an 11 day journey turned into a 40 year ordeal.
- ❖ Numbers has more than 80 claims that "the Lord spoke to Moses."
- ❖ Because of the rebellion at Kadesh Barnea in accepting the report of 10 of the 12 spies while rejecting the reports of Joshua and Caleb, the generation of the exodus will not be the generation of the conquest.
- ❖ The mission of the spies lasted 40 days.

- ❖ God assigned one year of wandering for each day the spies spied out the land. With this time already elapsed since having left Egypt, that added about 38 more years.
- ❖ Almost nothing is recorded about the transition years after the rebellion at Kadesh Barnea.
- ❖ Kadesh Barnea was some 150 miles north of Mt. Sinai, and some 50 miles south of Beersheba, the southern gateway to Canaan
- ❖ Two census are taken in Numbers (1; 26):
  - The first census was taken in the second month of the second year after the Exodus numbering the first generation of post-Exodus Israelites
  - The second census was taken in the fortieth year after the Exodus numbering the second generation of post-Exodus Israelites
  - Both census were taken of Israelite men who were of fighting age (twenty years of age and older)
- ❖ The large numbers of Israelite adult males created an army of 600,000.

### Hebrew Names of GOD used in Numbers

❖ EL

❖ EL-ELYON

### Revelation of JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Christ is pictured in Numbers as the Provider. The apostle Paul writes concerning Christ that He was the spiritual Rock that followed the Israelites through the wilderness and gave them spiritual drink (1 Cor. 10:4). The rock that gave water occurs twice in the story of the wilderness (ch. 20; Ex. 17). Paul emphasizes the provision of Christ for the needs of His people whom He has delivered from bondage. The messianic figure of Israel's King is prophesied by Balaam in 24:17. Jesus Christ is the Messiah, according to the uniform witness of the New Testament, and the true King about whom Balaam speaks.

### Work of THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is spoken of directly in chapter 11. There the Spirit is depicted as performing two functions: anointing for leadership and inspiring prophecy. In verse 16 Moses is asking the Lord for help in his leadership duties. The response is that

Yahweh will take the Spirit that is upon Moses (identified in v. 29 as the Lord's Spirit) and pass it to his leaders. Even a leader like Moses was unable to do everything and needed Spirit-gifted leadership in the performance of his task.

When the Spirit is given to the elders, He causes prophesying (v. 25). Only the appointed seventy elders prophesy. When Joshua complains that two of the elders in the camp are also prophesying, Moses expresses the longing that all God's people would also receive His Spirit and prophesy. This hope of Moses is picked up in Joel 2:28–32 and is ultimately fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16–21) when the Spirit was poured out and made available to all.

## Mega Themes of Numbers

### CENSUS

Moses counted the Israelites twice. The first census organized the people into marching units to better defend themselves. The second prepared them to conquer the country east of the Jordan River.

People have to be organized, trained, and led to be effective in great movements. It is always wise to count the cost before setting out on some great undertaking. When we are aware of the obstacles before us, we can more easily avoid them. In God's work, we must remove barriers in our relationships with others so that our effectiveness is not diminished.

### REBELLION

At Kadesh, 12 scouts were sent out into the land of Canaan to report on the fortifications of the enemies. When the scouts returned, 10 said that they should give up and go back to Egypt. As a result, the people refused to enter the land. Faced with a choice, Israel rebelled against God. Rebellion did not start with an uprising, but with griping and murmuring against Moses and God.

Rebellion against God is always a serious matter. It is not something to take lightly, for God's punishment for sin is often very severe. Our rebellion does not usually begin with all-out warfare, but in subtle ways—with griping and criticizing. Make sure your negative comments are not the product of a rebellious spirit.

### WANDERING

Because they rebelled, the Israelites wandered 40 years in the wilderness. This shows how severely God can punish sin. Forty years was enough time for all those who held

on to Egypt's customs and values to die off. It gave time to train up a new generation in the ways of God.

God judges sin harshly because he is holy. The wanderings in the wilderness demonstrate how serious God considers flagrant disobedience of his commands. Purging our lives of sin is vital to God's purpose.

### CANAAN

Canaan is the Promised Land. It was the land God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the land of the covenant. Canaan was to be the dwelling place of God's people, those set apart for true spiritual worship.

Although God's punishment for sin is often severe, he offers reconciliation and hope—his love is truly amazing. Just as God's love and law led Israel to the Promised Land, God desires to give purpose and destiny to our lives.

## Life Lessons in Numbers

<b>Truth</b>	<b>Lesson</b>
<p><b>Growing in Godliness</b></p> <p>Building a life characterized by a constantly growing capacity for God is a vital message found in Numbers. Godliness grows as we are intentional in our pursuit of God. From the way we regard the community of God to the way we embrace the truths of our redemption, every aspect of godly living is important.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Encourage God's people in the work that God has given them, and be faithful with the gifts and calling that the Lord has given to you.</li> <li>❖ Keep worship and the presence of the Lord a central part of your life in Christ.</li> <li>❖ Trust in God's salvation (see John 3:14, 15). The bronze serpent was God's temporary means of salvation; Jesus is God's eternal means of salvation.</li> <li>❖ Honor the gifts of ministry the LORD has given to the church (Eph 4:10-13)</li> <li>❖ Gather frequently with GOD's people. Make the gathering of GOD's people a central part of your life in CHRIST</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Set apart certain regular times to celebrate GOD's redemptive acts on your behalf. Celebrate with all your heart</li> <li>❖ Look to JESUS sacrifice (John 3:14, 15) trust HIS death as sufficient to cover all your sin</li> <li>❖ Live so that others will know that you do not consider yourself as one of the worldly</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cultivating Dynamic Devotion</b></p> <p>Numbers continues to illustrate the importance of wholehearted devotion. In contrast to Israel's frequent unfaithfulness, the Nazirite Law and the lives of Caleb and Joshua provide outstanding examples of the kind of devotion that honors God.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Commit yourself to be wholly devoted to the Lord. God calls all of His people to be holy and separated to Him.</li> <li>❖ Ask the Lord to develop in you the same spirit that was in Caleb and Joshua. Believe that the Lord is with you, and move forward in faith!</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pursuing Holiness</b></p> <p>Numbers continues to teach us to walk in holiness and how to deal with sin. The seducing Midianites and the fiery serpents illustrate sin's vicious and virulent nature. In God's mercy and great love for His people, He deals aggressively with sin and calls His people to do likewise in their personal lives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Confess your sins, and seek to make restitution.</li> <li>❖ Receive God's provision of forgiveness, the cleansing of your sin through Jesus Christ (see 1 John 1:7, 9).</li> <li>❖ Deal aggressively with sin in your own life.</li> <li>❖ Earnestly ask the Holy Spirit to convict you of sin, and repent quickly.</li> <li>❖ Deal thoroughly with sin. Sin that is allowed to remain and grow may well become your undoing</li> </ul>

<p><b>The Walk of Faith</b></p> <p>God's people are to be content with God's provision. Discontentment exposes a lack of faith in God. Our loving Father knows our needs and will meet those needs in His perfect time. Faith learns to be willing to wait and to rest in His present provision.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Accept where God has placed you in His body.</li> <li>❖ Rest in the truth that He has placed you right where He wants you to be (1 Cor. 12:18).</li> <li>❖ Do not grumble or complain when you go through difficult times.</li> <li>❖ Understand that the Lord will use them to train and mature you (James 1:2-4).</li> <li>❖ Rejoice in the Lord who is your inheritance! He has given you His Son and eternal life.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Keys to Knowing God and His Ways</b></p> <p>Studying God's dealings with Israel will yield insight and understanding about God's character and His ways. Moses' prayer in Ex. 33:13 expresses the heart of a person who yearns and desires to know God. May it become your cry as well.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Recognize that not all problems or opposition is satanic. God Himself often opposes those contrary to His ways, seeking to correct us.</li> <li>❖ Understand that God is immutable, never changing in nature or character. He is wholly trustworthy (see Heb. 13:8).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Lessons for Leaders</b></p> <p>Crucial and valuable lessons for today's leaders can be found by examining the lives of the leaders in Numbers. Both their victories and their failures are given to instruct us so that we might learn to better lead God's beloved people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Share the load of ministry with others God has put under your charge in order to increase ministry, rather than limit it.</li> <li>❖ Be faithful to follow God's instructions fully.</li> <li>❖ Never take credit for something the Lord has done through you, but honor Him.</li> <li>❖ Seek the Lord about who you are to raise up as a successor to your leadership (see 2 Tim. 2:2).</li> </ul>

<p><b>Keys to relating authority</b></p> <p>Numbers says much about relationship to those who bear GOD's delegated authority. Some of GOD's most severe judgements come for israel's rebellion against moses and aaron. These incidents present clear lessons for believers today</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Do not talk against GOD's appointed leadership. It will bring HIS judgement and chastisement</li> <li>❖ Never align in rebellion against GOD's appointed leadership. HE hates and deals severely with this offense. Such rebellion often results in judgement on the rebellious community</li> </ul>
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### Praise Points in Numbers

- ❖ The Bible, the journal of the Israelites' journey with God;
- ❖ The privilege of entering his holy presence (4:18-20);
- ❖ HIS desire to bless us and give us peace (6:24-26);
- ❖ HIS gift of rest for us (10:33-36);
- ❖ HIS slowness to anger and his willingness to forgive sin (14:18);
- ❖ HIS attentiveness to the prayers of those who intercede for us (16:46-48);
- ❖ HIS provision (20:7-11) and protection (21:8-9), which foreshadow the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf; and
- ❖ HIS ability to turn evil into good (22:21-35).

### Worship Insights in Numbers

Journeys and journals go together. A journey without a journal becomes a forgotten trip. A journal without a journey is a record of a life going nowhere. Journals record for us and later generations where we've been and what we've done. The book of Numbers resembles a carefully recorded journal. It testifies to what God accomplished for his people in the wilderness and also teaches us about the many lessons the people learned along the way.

In a way, God created this journal as a travel guide for our own spiritual journey today. As we read of events that shaped people's practices and customs, we gain a greater understanding of our own walk with God.

We who live and worship in buildings of wood and stone no doubt lack this Israelite insight into worship. How are worshipers who keep the same address for years—perhaps even for a lifetime—supposed to understand concepts like traveling, camping, and following? By reading Numbers, we can gain greater insight into these ideas.

Finally, Numbers teaches us that worship involves meeting God along the way as well as at our destination. For despite the difficulties and unsettled life of a long journey, we realize that God is with us as we follow him.

Although God repeatedly showed himself as powerful, faithful, and caring, the Israelites consistently rebelled. They complained whenever disappointments came their way and often doubted God's ability to provide for them. As God responded to this constant faithlessness, he taught them two seemingly contrasting ideas about following him. First, God requires our worship. As humble servants we pay homage to our majestic Creator, who causes the earth to tremble and destroys his enemies. By covenant, the Lord possesses his people, and he is worthy of our offerings. Second, God requests our worship. God desires that we choose to worship him as much as we obey him out of obligation. Like the Nazirites, we are given opportunities to serve God voluntarily in worship, and we can freely offer him thanksgiving and praise as we recognize his kindness and love toward us. So we should offer worship not only because God is worthy but also because we want to freely and joyfully express our love for him.

- ❖ God sets apart some of his people to lead others in worship (1:49-50).
- ❖ Public demonstrations of our vows and commitments to God form a vital part of our worship (6:1-21).
- ❖ Music is a gift from God that can recall his salvation (10:8-10).
- ❖ We must not presume God's favor on our efforts simply because we have invoked his name (14:39-43).
- ❖ Symbols can help us recall God's deeds and commands (15:37-40) and his healing power (21:4-9).
- ❖ God can use his enemies to bring blessing on his people (23:1-12, 18-26; 24:1-9, 15-24).
- ❖ We should confess our sin and be purified as we enter God's presence (31:21-24).

## An Outline of Numbers

### **Part One: At Sinai: Num. 1:1-10:10**

- I. The Numbering and Arrangement of the Tribes: Num. 1:1-2:34
  - A. The Census and Its Officers: [Num\\_1:1-16](#)
  - B. The Result of the Census: [Num\\_1:17-46](#)
  - C. The Levites—A Special Case: [Num\\_1:47-54](#)

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- D. Each in His Appointed Place: [Num\\_2:1-2](#)
  - E. The Organization of the Camp and the March: [Num\\_2:3-34](#)
  - II. The Levites, Their Numbers and Duties: Num. 3:1-4:49
    - A. The Sons of Aaron: [Num\\_3:1-4](#)
    - B. The Levites—Servants to the Priests: [Num\\_3:5-13](#)
    - C. The Numbering of the Levites: [Num\\_3:14-39](#)
    - D. Standing in for the Firstborn: [Num\\_3:40-51](#)
    - E. The Sons of Kohath: [Num\\_4:1-20](#)
    - F. The Sons of Gershon: [Num\\_4:21-28](#)
    - G. The Sons of Merari: [Num\\_4:29-33](#)
    - H. To Each His Appointed Task: [Num\\_4:34-49](#)
  - III. The Cleansing and Blessing of the Congregation: Num. 5:1-6:27
    - A. The Exclusion of the Unclean: [Num\\_5:1-4](#)
    - B. The Question of Misappropriated Property: [Num\\_5:5-10](#)
    - C. Trial by Ordeal: [Num\\_5:11-31](#)
    - D. The Law of the Nazirite: [Num\\_6:1-21](#)
    - E. The Aaronic Blessing: [Num\\_6:22-27](#)
  - IV. The Offerings of the Israelite Princes: [Num\\_7:1-89](#)
    - A. The Spontaneous Giving: [Num\\_7:1-9](#)
    - B. The Offerings of the Chief Men: [Num\\_7:10-89](#)
  - V. The Consecration of the Levites: [Num\\_8:1-26](#)
    - A. The Golden Lampstand: [Num\\_8:1-4](#)
    - B. The Purification of the Levites: [Num\\_8:5-22](#)
    - C. The Age Limits for Service: [Num\\_8:23-26](#)
  - VI. The Passover at Sinai: [Num\\_9:1-14](#)
    - A. The Passover: [Num\\_9:1-5](#)
    - B. The Problem of Ritual Uncleaness: [Num\\_9:6-14](#)
  - VII. The Divine Provision for the March: Num. 9:15-10:10
    - A. The Cloud: [Num\\_9:15-23](#)
    - B. The Silver Trumpets: [Num\\_10:1-10](#)
- Part Two: In The Wilderness: Num. 10:11-21:35**
- VIII. From Sinai to Paran: Num. 10:11-12:16
    - A. Departure from Sinai: [Num\\_10:11-28](#)
    - B. Hobab and the Ark: [Num\\_10:29-32](#)
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- C. The Ark in the Vanguard: [Num\\_10:33-36](#)
  - D. Fire in the Camp: [Num\\_11:1-3](#)
  - E. The Spirit of Murmuring: [Num\\_11:4-10](#)
  - F. Moses' Complaint: [Num\\_11:11-15](#)
  - G. The Divine Response: [Num\\_11:16-24](#)
  - H. The Spirit of the Lord: [Num\\_11:24-30](#)
  - I. The Quail: [Num\\_11:31-35](#)
  - J. The Vindication of Moses: [Num\\_12:1-10](#)
  - K. Mercy Shown to Miriam: [Num\\_12:11-16](#)
  - IX. The Spies at Kadesh Barnea: [Num. 13:1-14:45](#)
    - A. The Choice of the Spies: [Num\\_13:1-20](#)
    - B. The Journey into Canaan: [Num\\_13:21-25](#)
    - C. The Return of the Spies: [Num\\_13:26-33](#)
    - D. Uproar and Revolt Among the People: [Num\\_14:1-10](#)
    - E. The Intercession of Moses: [Num\\_14:11-25](#)
    - F. The Sentence Passed on the People: [Num\\_14:26-38](#)
    - G. The Defeat at Hormah: [Num\\_14:39-45](#)
  - X. Various Laws and Regulations: [Num\\_15:1-41](#)
    - A. Instructions on Various Offerings: [Num\\_15:1-16](#)
    - B. The Law of the Heave Offering: [Num\\_15:17-21](#)
    - C. Offering for Unintentional Sin: [Num\\_15:22-31](#)
    - D. Violation of the Sabbath: [Num\\_15:32-36](#)
    - E. The Wearing of Tassels: [Num\\_15:37-41](#)
  - XI. The Rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram: [Num. 16:1-17:13](#)
    - A. The Issues at Stake: [Num\\_16:1-7](#)
    - B. Moses Rebukes the Levites: [Num\\_16:8-11](#)
    - C. Moses Defied: [Num\\_16:12-15](#)
    - D. The Showdown: [Num\\_16:16-24](#)
    - E. The Punishment of the Rebels: [Num\\_16:25-35](#)
    - F. The Censer Memorial: [Num\\_16:36-40](#)
    - G. The Plague: [Num\\_16:41-50](#)
    - H. Aaron's Rod that Budded: [Num\\_17:1-13](#)
  - XII. The Service of the Priests and Levites: [Num\\_18:1-32](#)
    - A. The Duties of Levi: [Num\\_18:1-7](#)
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**B.** The Revenues of the Priests: [Num\\_18:8-20](#)

**C.** The Revenues of the Levites: [Num\\_18:21-24](#)

**D.** The Priests' Tithes: [Num\\_18:25-32](#)

**XIII.** The Laws of Purification: [Num\\_19:1-22](#)

**A.** The Ashes of the Red Heifer: [Num\\_19:1-10](#)

**B.** General Rules as to Purification: [Num\\_19:11-13](#)

**C.** Special Rules of Purification: [Num\\_19:14-22](#)

**XIV.** From Kadesh to Moab: Num. [20:1-21:35](#)

**A.** The Incident at Meribah: [Num\\_20:1-13](#)

**B.** Edom's Refusal: [Num\\_20:14-21](#)

**C.** The Death of Aaron: [Num\\_20:22-29](#)

**D.** The Victory at Hormah: [Num\\_21:1-3](#)

**E.** The Bronze Serpent: [Num\\_21:4-9](#)

**F.** The Journey: [Num\\_21:10-20](#)

**G.** The Defeat of Sihon and Og: [Num\\_21:21-35](#)

**Part Three: In The Plains Of Moab: Num. [22:1-36:13](#)**

**XV.** The "Balaam" Incident: Num. [22:1-24:25](#)

**A.** Invitation and Refusal: [Num\\_22:1-14](#)

**B.** The Warning Voice of God: [Num\\_22:15-21](#)

**C.** The Donkey and the Angel: [Num\\_22:22-35](#)

**D.** Balaam and Balak: [Num\\_22:36-41](#)

**E.** The First Oracle: [Num\\_23:1-12](#)

**F.** The Second Oracle: [Num\\_23:13-26](#)

**G.** The Third Oracle: Num. [23:27-24:13](#)

**H.** The Farewell Message: [Num\\_24:14-25](#)

**XVI.** Various Laws and Incidents: Num. [25:1-31:54](#)

**A.** The Sin of Baal-Peor: [Num\\_25:1-5](#)

**B.** The Zeal and Reward of Phinehas: [Num\\_25:6-15](#)

**C.** The Punishment of the Midianites: [Num\\_25:16-18](#)

**D.** The Command to Moses and Eleazar: [Num\\_26:1-4](#)

**E.** The Second Census: [Num\\_26:5-51](#)

**F.** The Faithfulness of God: [Num\\_26:52-65](#)

**G.** The Inheritance of Daughters: [Num\\_27:1-11](#)

**H.** Moses and His Successor: [Num\\_27:12-23](#)

- I.** Daily Offerings: [Num\\_28:1-8](#)
- J.** Offerings for Sabbath and New Moon: [Num\\_28:9-15](#)
- K.** Offerings at Passover: [Num\\_28:16-25](#)
- L.** Offerings at the Feast of Weeks: [Num\\_28:26-31](#)
- M.** The Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement: [Num\\_29:1-11](#)
- N.** The Feast of Tabernacles: [Num\\_29:12-40](#)
- O.** The Law Concerning Vows: [Num\\_30:1-16](#)
- P.** The Defeat of Midian: [Num\\_31:1-12](#)
- Q.** The Return of the Warriors: [Num\\_31:13-18](#)
- R.** The Purification of the Army: [Num\\_31:19-24](#)
- S.** The Division of the Spoil: [Num\\_31:25-54](#)
- XVII.** Miscellaneous Topographical Narratives: [Num. 32:1-36:13](#)
  - A.** Request for the Territory of East Jordan: [Num\\_32:1-15](#)
  - B.** The Promises Made by Reuben and Gad: [Num\\_32:16-33](#)
  - C.** The Conquest of Gilead by Manasseh: [Num\\_32:34-42](#)
  - D.** The Journeys of Israel: [Num\\_33:1-4](#)
  - E.** From Rameses to Sinai: [Num\\_33:5-15](#)
  - F.** From Sinai to Ezion Geber: [Num\\_33:16-35](#)
  - G.** From Ezion Geber to Moab: [Num\\_33:36-49](#)
  - H.** Instructions for the Conquest of Canaan: [Num\\_33:50-56](#)
  - I.** The Appointed Boundaries of Canaan: [Num\\_34:1-15](#)
  - J.** The Appointment of Supervisors: [Num\\_34:16-29](#)
  - K.** Cities for the Levites: [Num\\_35:1-8](#)
  - L.** The Cities of Refuge: [Num\\_35:9-15](#)
  - M.** Definition of Manslaughter: [Num\\_35:16-25](#)
  - N.** Various Provisions and Warnings: [Num\\_35:26-34](#)
  - O.** Daughters' Rights of Inheritance: [Num\\_36:1-13](#)