

# Numbers 1-25



9am & 10:30am Gatherings, Holy Trinity City  
Term 3, 2013

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## **Numbers 1-25 Bible Study Guide**

The Hebrew title of this book means “in the wilderness”.

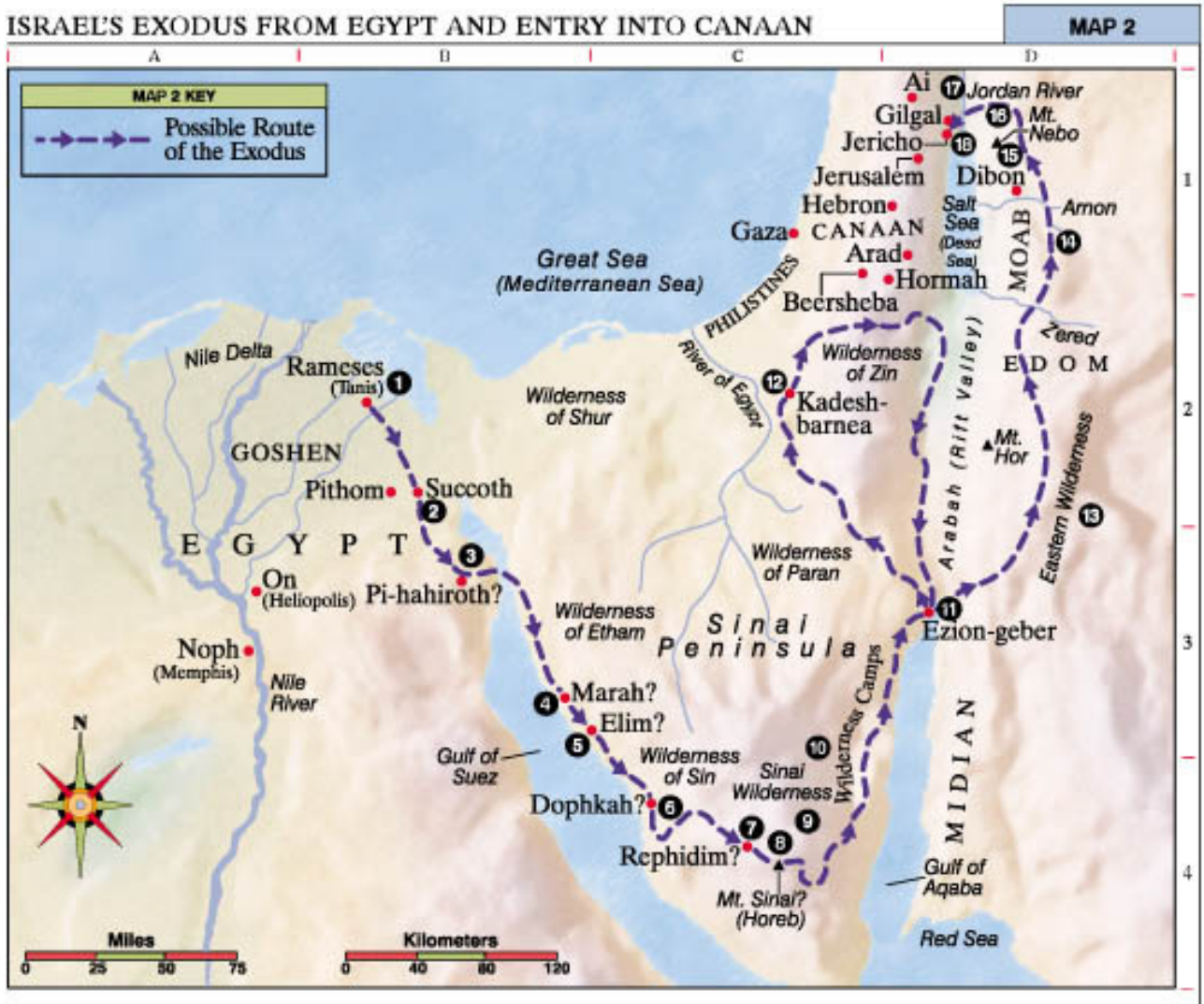
Far from being full of boring numbers and lists, Numbers is actually a fascinating and important story. It covers the 40 year period of Israel’s history spent wandering in the wilderness between Mt Sinai and the plains of Moab.

The Israelites had been brought out of Egypt by God’s mighty hand, and He had led them to Mt Sinai where they received the law (after they had been redeemed), which instructed the people how they were to live as God’s holy people. This is the focus of Leviticus. Numbers is the outworking of God’s faithfulness to the promises He made to Abraham (Genesis 12), and the moulding of Israel into the holy people of God. It focuses on the Promised Land and Israel’s journey towards it, and the role of faith and obedience for God’s people.

There are episodes throughout Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers that show repeating cycles of rebellion, grace, law-giving and obedience. They highlight God’s faithful, gracious and holy character and the persistent sinfulness of His people. The fact that Numbers is an example of law mixed with narrative reminds us that God’s saving work among his Old Testament people Israel concerns us too- it is also our story. Numbers points forward to the New Testament, through the people, the priests, the land of promise and God’s decisive acts to save his people from the consequences of their own rebellion, and ultimately finds fulfilment in Jesus. It reminds us that now is the time to obey God in holiness and faithfulness in response to his saving work through Jesus.

# 4 | Numbers: 1-25 Bible Study

A map that might be helpful for your journey through the book of Numbers:



# 1 The Holy God Dwelling Among His People

## Numbers 1:1-10:10

1. Who do you live with? Does living with them change how you behave in any way?

### ***Read Numbers 1:1-4 and 1:44-51***

2. As the book of Numbers begins, where are the people of God?
3. What does God command (and for what purpose)?
4. The total number of Israelites in v46 might be literal or symbolic, but regardless is a large number. What is the significance of such a large number at this point in Israel's history?
5. ***Read Numbers 2:1-34*** to yourself and use it to draw a diagram of the Israelite camp below.

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### ***Read Numbers 5:1-4***

6. Why does God give this command?

7. What does this tell us about God?

### ***Read Numbers 6:22-7:3***

8. What were some of the roles of the priests?

9. What does this tell us about God's relationship with his people?

### ***Read Numbers 8:15-9:5***

10. What reminders of the Exodus does God give the people?

11. Why does He remind them?



## 2 Study 2: A Shaky Start To The Journey Numbers 10:11-12:16

*Having just set out, Israel encounters a number of difficulties on their journey before arriving at the border of Canaan (the Promised Land).*

1. What do you tend to complain about the most?

**Read Numbers 10:33-12:16**

2. How did the journey start off (10:33-36)?

3. Describe the events of 11:1-12:16 using the table below:

Passage	Person/ people	Complains about	God's response
11:1-3			
11:4-9, 18- 20, 31-34			
11:10-17, 24-30			
12:1-16			

4. How does this remind you of the journey from Egypt to Mt Sinai (**Exodus 15:22-16:30**)?

5. When are you tempted to complain against God's provision (like the Israelites) or about God's servants (like Aaron and Miriam)? When are you tempted to doubt God's provision (like Moses)?
  
6. What do we learn about Moses from the following passages?
  - a) 11:10-15
  
  - b) 11:21-30
  
  - c) 12:3
  
  - d) 12:7-8
  
  - e) 12:13-15
  
7. What do we learn about God from this passage?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. Look at **Hebrews 3:1-6**. How does Moses point forward to Jesus?

*Thank God for his generous provision for your material needs. Thank God for your Christian leaders and pray for them that they might continue to serve faithfully and with humility. Thank God for His Son Jesus, who is considered worthy of more glory than Moses.*

## 3 Study 3: To Trust Or Not To Trust Numbers 13-14

*Israel is literally on the edge of the Promised Land, ready to enter it.*

1. When are you tempted not to believe or trust God?

### ***Read Numbers 13:1-33***

2. What were the men from each tribe sent to do?

3. What did they find? What was significant about their findings?

### ***Read Numbers 14:1-45***

4. What two options did the Israelites have (13:30-14:9)?





## 4 Study 4: Challenging God's High Priest

### Numbers 16-17

*As part of God's judgement for it's unbelief,  
Israel is wandering in the desert.*

1. Why are you thankful for your Christian leaders?

#### ***Read Numbers 16-17***

2. Who were those that opposed Moses and Aaron?
3. What were their complaints (16:3 and 16:13-14)?
4. Does this remind you of previous incidents?
5. How many times do Moses and Aaron fall facedown in this passage?  
When do they do it and why?
6. Why does God send the plague on the people in 17:41-50?



## 5

## Study 5: The Rock And The Snake

### Numbers 20-21

*Almost forty years has passed since the people refused to trust and obey God on the edge of the Promised Land. Now a new generation (the children and grandchildren of those who had failed to trust God) find themselves once again on the edge of the Promised Land, with the same choice before them.*

1. When have you been disappointed by not getting something that you had been looking forward to for a long time?

***Read Numbers 20:1-13 and 20:22-29***

2. Why is Miriam's death mentioned in 20:1?

3. What is familiar about this situation?

4. How does God respond?

## **16** | **Numbers: 1-25 Bible Study**

5. What did Moses and Aaron do?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. What did Moses and Aaron do wrong? What was their punishment?

### ***Read Numbers 21:4-9***

7. Why does God send the snakes to bite the people?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. How does God show them grace?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. What did the people need to do to be saved?

***Read Numbers 21:1-3, 21:21-24 and 21:31-22:1***

10. Israel is finally on the move towards the Promised Land. What do we learn about the source of their military success (compare with Numbers 14:39-45)?

***Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 and John 3:14-15***

11. How do these passages shed light on Numbers 20-21, and the way these incidents pointed forward to Jesus?

*Thank God for Jesus, who is our Rock and the source of our salvation.*

6

# Study 6: Balak And Balaam (And The Talking Donkey Story)

## Numbers 22-24

*Having defeated some of the kings and nations south and east of the Promised Land, the Israelites are now camped at the foot of the mountains of Moab (and they stay here until the end of the book of Numbers).*

1. Have you ever tried to manipulate God to do what you want?

### **Read Numbers 22**

2. Compare Balak and Balaam using the table below:

	<b>BALAK</b>	<b>BALAAM</b>
Who was he?		
What was he like?		
What did he do?		

3. What was God's response to Balak's request?

4. What does the story about the donkey demonstrate about Balaam and about God?

5. In four groups, read and summarise Balaam’s oracles (prophecies) and the outcomes of them. Each group look at one of them and then share together.

Numbers 23:1-12	
Numbers 23:13-26	
Numbers 23:27- 24:11	
Numbers 24:12-25	

6. What common themes are there?

## **20** | Numbers: 1-25 Bible Study

### ***Read Genesis 12:1-3.***

7. How are each of the parts of God's promise to Abraham fulfilled in these chapters?

### ***Read Genesis 3:15, 17:6, 35:11, 49:9-12.***

### ***Compare with Numbers 24:7-9 and 24:17.***

8. Who is Balaam speaking about?

### ***Read Galatians 3:6-14.***

9. What does it mean for us to be blessed by God now?

*Thank God that He communicates clearly, not only through donkeys but more so through the Bible. Thank God that He is faithful to His promises of salvation and blessing, that are ultimately fulfilled in Jesus.*

## 7

## Study 7: Will They Ever Learn? (A Fatal Mistake)

### Numbers 25

*Though they themselves were not yet born or were only children when God led His people out of Egypt to Mt Sinai, the current generation of Israel have just been reassured of God's blessing and faithfulness to His promises (Numbers 22-24). They are still camped on the plains of Moab, waiting to enter the Promised Land.*

1. Who or what are you tempted to worship other than God?

#### **Read Numbers 25**

2. Fill in the table describing what these people did, and the outcomes of their actions:

	Israelite men (25:1-9)	Phinehas (25:7-13)
What they did		
How God responded and why		

## **22** | Numbers: 1-25 Bible Study

***Read Numbers 31:1-24*** to see the end of the story...

3. Who did God hold responsible for this episode? (Numbers 25:1-2, 4-5, 16-18, 31:1, 15-16)

4. What do we learn about God in this chapter?

***Read Hebrews 4:15.***

5. How is Jesus the true high priest and the true Israelite?

***Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-13.***

6. What do we learn from this episode and from the whole book of Numbers?

*Thank God for Jesus who, though tempted in every way that we are, never sinned.*

*Pray the Lord's Prayer together.*

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your Name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.  
Amen.**

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