

OLD TESTAMENT BIBLICAL LITERACY

Lesson 13

NUMBERS – PART ONE

I. BACKGROUND.

The FOURTH BOOK OF Moses is called “Numbers.” The Hebrew title for the book is translated “And he spoke.” It is simply the first word of the book used as a title. The Septuagint (the Hebrew translated into Greek) attached the title of “Arithmoi” to the book. This was the Greek word for “Numbers.” The Latin translation (“Vulgate”) used the word “Numeroi” which also means “Numbers.”

Unlike Leviticus, which consisted mostly of legal rules, Numbers interweaves historical accounts along with various legal rules.

II. OUTLINE.

A. Preparation for Leaving Sinai (1:1-10:10).

1. The census and structure of tribes (1-4).
2. The various laws (5-6).
3. Altar dedication offerings (7).
4. Levite dedication and rules (8).
5. The second Passover, the cloud, and use of silver trumpets (9-10:10).

B. Sinai to Moab (10:11-21).

1. Preliminary movement from Sinai (10:11 -36).
2. Unrest (11:1-15).
3. Provision of Quail (11:16-35).
4. Miriam’s leprosy (12).
5. The twelve spies (13-14).
6. Misc. commands (15).
7. Korah, Dathan and Abiram (16-17).
8. Priestly service (18).
9. Purification law (19).

10. Miriam and Meribah (20:1-13).
11. Edom's refusal to let Israel pass and Aaron's death (20:14-29).
12. Journey to Moab (21).

C. Events in Moab (22-36).

1. Balaam (22-24).
2. Baal-peor (25).
3. The second census (26).
4. Inheritance laws, the successor of Moses (27).
5. Offering rules, vows of women (28-30).
6. War against Midian (31).
7. Inheritance in Transjordan (32).
8. Israelite encampments (33:1-49).
9. Allotment of western territory, appointment of Levitical Refugee cities (33:50-36).

III. OVERVIEW

Numbers covers 38 years of Israel's history, from Mt. Sinai through the wilderness wanderings. In this class, we cover several matters of note:

- A. God is a holy God. He is to be treated as such. His people are to seek to be likewise-holy.

This is seen in Numbers in the recounting of the Nazarite Rules. It is similarly seen in the Lord's reaction to Aaron and Miriam criticizing Moses for marrying a "Cushite." Another clear indication is the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram in Numbers 16. They lodge multiple complaints against Moses and Aaron and God's response is swift and direct.

- B. God is a faithful God. In the midst of mere constant complaining, God delivers his people while tending to their needs. God provides food and water. God promises protection and victory which Israelite unbelievers refuse to accept. Even still, God winnows and prepares Israel for the ultimate delivery of the promise land.