

## 1. AUTHOR

**Q.** What do you know about *Numbers* [From Greek Bible. Hebrew title: *'In the Desert'*]?

- *Mark 12:26 And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses [Gen – Deu, i.e. including Numbers], in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, ...*  
ESV

**A.** Moses. Numbers is the fourth part of the *'Book of Moses'* ca. 1406 BC. It is mainly narrative, but contains some regulations. It starts at Sinai, 13 months after leaving Egypt (1:1).

## 2. ONE KEY THEME - HOW THE LORD DEALS WITH HIS COVENANT PEOPLE IN THE DESERT, BETWEEN REDEMPTION AND THE PROMISED LAND.

## 3. A KEY VERSE?

- Numbers 14:22 ... *none of the men who have seen my glory and my signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have put me to the test these ten times and have not obeyed my voice, <sup>23</sup> shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers.*

## 4. FIVE KEY GROUPS OF PEOPLE

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Moses and Aaron (marred types of Christ)</li> <li>2. Joshua and Caleb (types)</li> <li>3. The faithful generation who enter the promised land (a key type)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. The unfaithful generation who die in the desert (another key type)</li> <li>5. Enemies: Balak, Balaam, Midianites and others (typical enemies of God's people)</li> </ul> |
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## 5. TEXTUAL STRUCTURE OF NUMBERS

NUMBERS		
Chapters	Content	
1-4	<b>Israel's unfaithfulness</b>	<b>First census: 603 thousand fighting men<sup>2</sup></b>
5-10		Purity regulations
10-12		Journey from Sinai to Kadesh-Barnea
13-20		<b>Rebellion<sup>3</sup></b>
20-22		<b>Wilderness wanderings from Kadesh to the plains of Moab</b>
22-25		<b>Balaam's 'curses', donkey etc. (leading to unfaithfulness in chapter 25)</b>
26		<b>Second census: 601 thousand fighting men</b>
27-30	<b>The LORD's faithfulness</b>	Preparations for the promised land, including Joshua to succeed Moses
31-32		Conquering the promised land East of the Jordan (Trans-Jordan)
33		40 stages of the journey from Egypt to the promised land
34-36		Regulations for taking up residence in the promised land

### NOTES ON TABLE:

Numbers contrasts the LORD's faithfulness with Israel's unfaithfulness. <sup>2</sup>The two censuses bracket all the travelling through various deserts. Sadly, the centrepiece between the censuses is Israel's rebellion<sup>3</sup> after the spies return from Canaan and their failure to grow during the 38 years of wilderness wanderings.

## 6. ONE COOL MAP



Hebrews 3:7 – 4:11 provides a commentary on Numbers.

 Suggestion: (At home, not now!) Read Hebrews first, then Numbers, then Hebrews again.

Hebrews 3:7-15 *Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,*

*“Today, if you hear his voice,*

<sup>8</sup> *do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,  
on the day of testing in the wilderness,*

<sup>9</sup> *where your fathers put me to the test  
and saw my works for forty years.*

<sup>10</sup> *Therefore I was provoked with that generation,  
and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart;  
they have not known my ways.’*

<sup>11</sup> *As I swore in my wrath,  
‘They shall not enter my rest.’”*

*<sup>12</sup> Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. <sup>13</sup> But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today”, that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. <sup>14</sup> For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. <sup>15</sup> As it is said, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”* ESV

**Q.** What lessons does the writer to the Hebrews draw from Israel's rebellion?

v8

v10

v11

v12

v13

v15 (emphasis by repetition)

## 7. ONE SHAPE – ROUND AND ROUND

God's faithfulness



Israel's unfaithfulness

## 8. GREAT EVENTS

Numbers consists of narrative framed by censuses and regulations. In the narrative:

- 6:22-27 The priestly blessing
- 11:1-3 Grumbling: Fire from God caused. Moses intercedes.
- 11:4-25 More grumbling: Quail, manna and 70 elders appointed to help Moses.
- 12 Aaron and Miriam rebel against Moses.
- 13 Spies report giants in Canaan.
- 14 The people rebel and refuse to take the promised land.
- 14 The 40 years of wandering starts.
- 16 Korah's rebellion.
- 20 More grumbling: The LORD provides water from a rock.
- 21 More grumbling: The bronze snake heals people. See John 3:14-15.
- 21,31-32 Conquering the promised land East of the Jordan (Trans-Jordan)

- 22-25 The LORD reverses Balaam's curses and blesses Israel.
- 27:12-23 Joshua takes over from Moses.
- 31 Conquest of Midian.

## 9. NUMBERS IS PART OF THE 'THE OLD COVENANT' OR SINAITIC COVENANT

This means that nowadays we do not have to obey all the regulations (literally).

However, Numbers models for us the Christian life, or lack of it!

## 10. JESUS IN NUMBERS?

**Q.** Where is Jesus in Numbers? **A.** Everywhere.

- Numbers 14:11 *And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them?"* ESV [Cf. John 12:37]
- John 3:14 *... as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.* ESV
- 1 Corinthians 10:3-4 [Our ancestors] *all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.* ESV
- Jesus is Joshua (in the Greek Bible). Yeshua is Joshua (in Hebrew and Aramaic): Numbers 27:16 [Moses:] *"Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation <sup>17</sup> who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be as sheep that have no shepherd."* – meaning Joshua initially, but fulfilled mainly by Jesus.
- Recall also Jesus' faithfulness in the desert (Matthew 4, Luke 4).

## 11. AND NOWADAYS?

- Warning about how there are two kinds of people: those who trust God and make it to the promised land, and those who die in the wilderness.
- Warnings about grumbling, opposing Moses (Christ).
- Many pictures of the Lord's faithfulness, mercy and closeness during our lives here on earth.

## 12. HOMEWORK: READ NUMBERS

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