
Chronological Study

Numbers 1:1-24:25, 33:1-49

Rexford MacGregor

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OUTLINE

Author	Moses
Focus & Objective	Disobedience and Wonderings
Time	~1444 B.C. – 1405 B.C.
The Old Generation (1:1-10:10)	
• Organization of Israel	1:1-4:49
• Sanctification of Israel	5:1-10:10
Disobedience, Judgement and Wonderings (10:11-25:18)	
• Disobedience En Route to Kadesh	10:11-12:16
• Disobedience and Judgement at Kadesh	13:1-14:45
• Disobedience in the Wilderness	15:1-19:22
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The New Generation's Obedience (26:1-36:13)	
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The Old Generation (1:1-10:10)***Organization of Israel: Numbers 1:1-4:49******Numbers 1***

Having delivered the nation from Egypt and Pharaoh, God brought the Nation of Israel to the Siani roughly ten months prior. On the *first of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt*, exactly one month after the Tabernacle was set up, during the intervening month, the Tabernacle and priests were consecrated or set apart for God in their duties and functions (Exodus 40:1, 17) and the nation celebrated the Passover for the first time since their exodus. ***Numbers 7:1, 9:1-2***

Numbers 7:1: Now on the day that Moses had finished setting up the tabernacle, he anointed it and consecrated it with all its furnishings and the altar and all its utensils; he anointed them and consecrated them also.

Numbers 9:1-2: Thus the LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying, 2 "Now, let the sons of Israel observe the Passover at its appointed time.

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From the record in Numbers 10:11, the nation is only nineteen days from beginning their journey to the Promised Land. God commanded Moses to take a census of the men of war (*twenty years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war*) and organize the camp in preparation for the rugged wilderness before them and the strong and well-fortified enemies they were to encounter.

The phrase, “*twenty years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war*” used fourteen times in the chapter, makes clear that the census was to organize the nation to be an army; to fight. When the census was completed by Moses and leaders from the twelve tribes, *all the numbered men were 603,550*. God instructed Moses not to include the Levites as they were responsible for the Tabernacle and serving the Lord. Moses did take a separate census of the male Levites, one month old and older. ***Numbers 1:47-50, 3:14-15***

Numbers 1:47-50: The Levites, however, were not numbered among them by their fathers' tribe. 48 For the LORD had spoken to Moses, saying, 49 "Only the tribe of Levi you shall not number, nor shall you take their census among the sons of Israel.

Numbers 3:14-15: Then the LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, saying, 15 "Number the sons of Levi by their fathers' households, by their families; every male from a month old and upward you shall number."

Numbers 2

After the census was completed, the nation was organized into tribes, surrounding the Tabernacle; God was to be the center of the life of the nation. The tribes were organized into four camps around the Levites who were positioned around and closest to the Tabernacle; each camp had a leading tribe:

East	Judah, Issachar, Zebulun
South	Reuben, Simeon, Gad
West	Ephraim, Manasseh, Benjamin
North	Dan, Asher, Naphtali

Numbers 3: Census of the Levites

Chapter 3 opens with *the generations of Aaron and Moses at the time the LORD spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai*. Aaron's sons are listed, as they will take over for Aaron as High Priest upon his death; Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's oldest two sons are mentioned, as is their death for offering *strange fire before the LORD in the wilderness of Sina; and they had no children*.

In verses 6 through 13, God takes the Levites from the nation of Israel into His services, instead of taking the firstborn of every family (verses 40-51). God gave the Levites to Aaron so *that they might serve him; to perform the duties for him and for the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, to do the service of the Tabernacle*.

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Verses 14 through 39 record the census, organization, and duties of the Levites, who totaled 22,000.

East	Moses, Aaron, & Aaron's sons	
South	Kohath	The ark, table, lampstand, altars, all the utensils of the sanctuary, and the screen
West	Gershon	Tabernacle, tent, coverings, doorway screens, the hangings of the court, and its cords
North	Merari	The frames of the tabernacle, bars, pillars, sockets, and all its equipment

Numbers 4: The Ministries of the Levites

God details the roles and responsibilities of each of the families of Levi and emphasizes the absolute necessity of following His commands precisely, in the manner in which He has set out the service. After conducting a census of the men of Levi aged one month and older, God establishes the working age for the family of Levi from thirty years to fifty years old.

God is insistent on being regarded and treated as holy. Three times the LORD repeats that only Aaron and his sons were allowed to see or touch the sacred implements within the sanctuary. Even then, those charged with caring for the holy things of the sanctuary were not to look upon or directly touch the sacred sanctuary articles except when and as prescribed by the LORD; failure to obey would consequently lead to death.

Sanctification of Israel: Numbers 5:1-10:10

Numbers 9:15-23: Cloud on the Tabernacle: God's Direct Leading

Once the Tabernacle was erected, the presence of the LORD was seen in the appearance of a cloud above the Tabernacle in the day and a pillar of fire in the evening. The movement of the cloud was a command from the LORD and dictated the movement of the people; when the cloud moved, the people broke camp and moved forward in the order previously prescribed by the LORD. When the cloud hovered, the people stopped and set camp. ***Numbers 9:22-23***

Numbers 9:22-23: Whether it was two days or a month or a year that the cloud lingered over the tabernacle, staying above it, the sons of Israel remained camped and did not set out; but when it was lifted, they did set out. 23 At the command of the LORD they camped, and at the command of the LORD they set out; they kept the LORD'S charge, according to the command of the LORD through Moses.

Disobedience, Judgement and Wonderings: Numbers 10:11-25:18

Disobedience En Route to Kadesh: Numbers 10:11-12:16

Numbers 10:1-10: Silver Trumpets

The movement of the nation was directed by the movement of the cloud and orchestrated by the sounding of silver trumpets. The trumpets served multiple purposes: to call the leaders together, to signal when each family was to move out on the march, and when going into battle for the LORD. In battle, the trumpet sound is a picture of a loud appeal to the LORD to deliver the enemy into the hands of His faithful servants; to fight the battle for them. **2 Chronicles 20:15**

2 Chronicles 20:15: *And he said, "Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the LORD to you: 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's.*

Numbers 10:11-36: Setting Out for the Promised Land

The remainder of chapter 10 details the breaking of camp for the nation and moving out in the manner ordained of the LORD, from the packaging and moving of the implements and articles of the Tabernacle by the sons of Levi to the order of the tribes.

Numbers 11:1-35: Troubles on the March

Chapter 11 opens with the people complaining about having only manna, which the LORD graciously provided, and not having any meat to eat. In their typical pattern of complaining, they questioned why they had ever left Egypt, thereby questioning the goodness and sufficiency of God. Their complaints kindled the anger of the LORD, and *the fire of the LORD burned among them, consuming some of the outskirts of the camp*. Witnessing the anger of the LORD, Moses interceded on behalf of the people, and as a result, the anger of the LORD subsided.

Although Moses interceded for the people, they were wearing on him and he complained to the LORD that the responsibility was too great for one man. God responded by giving Moses 70 other men to help him judge people, filling them with His Spirit, showing His power over the spirits of men by His Spirit.

For the complaining of the people the LORD, in His anger, sent the people quails and they had to eat quail for thirty days – until they were sick of the quail. God had given the quail in His anger, and before they had finished, *while their food was in their mouths, the anger of God rose against them and killed some of their stoutest ones*. There is a question did God strike those who instigated the complaining and let the people astray or did the LORD strike those who, upon seeing the quail, in following their carnal heart to satisfy their lusts began to eat the quail without removing the blood, as required. Likely it could be both. **Numbers 11:19-20; Psalm 78:27-32**

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Numbers 11:19-20: "You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, 20 but a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you; because you have rejected the LORD who is among you and have wept before Him, saying, "Why did we ever leave Egypt?"'"

Psalm 78:27-32: When He rained meat upon them like the dust, even winged fowl like the sand of the seas, 28 then He let them fall in the midst of their camp, round about their dwellings. 29 So they ate and were well filled, and their desire He gave to them. 30 Before they had satisfied their desire, while their food was in their mouths, 31 the anger of God rose against them and killed some of their stoutest ones, and subdued the choice men of Israel. 32 In spite of all this they still sinned and did not believe in His wonderful works.

Numbers 12:1-16: Miriam and Aaron Complain Against Moses

Not only did Moses have to contend with trouble with the people, but in chapter 12 he was confronted with jealousy and complaining from his older sister and brother, Miriam and Aaron; they were not pleased that Moses had married an Ethiopian woman.

From the text, it is apparent that Miriam was the instigator of the murmuring against Moses, Aaron, who previously demonstrated his weakness in leadership with the golden calf, joined in and spoke against Moses among the people. Their neigh saying of Moses would under mind the authority of Moses. God answers their challenge stating that He maintains a special relationship with Moses, unique to Moses. To challenge God's anointed is to challenge God, for which Miriam was struck with leprosy. Their repentance, with the gracious intercession by Moses, brought healing and restoration, but only after the regular seven days of exclusion for the cleansing of a leper.

Disobedience and Judgement at Kadesh: Numbers 13:1-14:45

Numbers 13:1-14:45: Rebellion Leads to Lost Opportunity

Chapters 13 and 14 detail the rebellion of the people in entering the Land of Promise. Moses had acquiesced to the murmurings of the people to send twelve spies into the land rather than following God's instructions. Upon their return, the negative report of ten of the spies dissuaded the people from taking the land. For their defiant act of rebellion, God destroyed the evil spies (*those men who brought out the very bad report of the land died by a plague before the LORD*), and those who followed them, who were 20 years of age and older, were destined to wander in the desert for forty years until every one of those who rebelled died in the desert. The two spies who were faithful to God, and believed His word, Joshua and Caleb, were promised to inherit the land.

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The morning following the rebellion, which God says they had done ten times, and seeing the formidable wilderness before them, the people tried to obtain favor from the Lord, saying, “*We have indeed sinned, but we will go up.*” God would have none of their hollow repentance, which was nothing more than tacit fear of the wilderness wonderings. God had presented them with the opportunity to walk by faith and accept His promises, which they rejected; therefore, they were to endure His judgment. **2 Corinthians 6:1-2; Hebrews 3:7-11, 4:7**

2 Corinthians 6:1-2: For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Hebrews 3:7-11: Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, 8 DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME, AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS, 9 WHERE YOUR FATHERS TRIED Me BY TESTING Me, AND SAW MY WORKS FOR FORTY YEARS. 10 "THEREFORE I WAS ANGRY WITH THIS GENERATION, AND SAID, "THEY ALWAYS GO ASTRAY IN THEIR HEART, AND THEY DID NOT KNOW MY WAYS"; 11 AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, 'THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST.'"

Hebrews 4:7: He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS."

Disobedience in the Wilderness: Numbers 15:1-19:22

Numbers 16:1-50: Korah's Rebellion

After God judged Miriam and Aaron for speaking against Moses and affirming that Moses was His chosen man, Korah, of the family of the Kohathites, was a cousin to Moses, attempted to unseat Moses and Aaron from their divinely appointed roles.

Korah and his family were priests and had charge of the holy things and access to the Holy Place, a very prominent position. Yet, he was not content in his role; he, like Absalom last, worked to undermine the authority of Moses so that he might usurp Moses and insert himself, and those with him, into positions of power.

Korah was able to convince Dathan and Abiram, who were heads of the tribe of Reuben, to join him. The three, being men of renown among the people, were able to seduce two hundred and fifty other leaders to join in their power move. The thirst for power and the hunger for control demonstrate the worst of mankind; showing pride, ambition, and emulation, which always leads to discord and chaos.

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God moved quickly to stop the rebellion of Korah and his followers, who were claiming Moses was taking all the power and glory for himself. God opened the earth *and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men who belonged to Korah with their possessions* (vs. 32), and *“Fire also came forth from the LORD and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering the incense* (vs 35). ***1 Samuel 15:22-23***

1 Samuel 15:22-23: Then Samuel said: "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king."

Unfortunately, the death of Korah did not end the rebellion. The next morning many came together to complain to Moses and Aaron, saying, they had *“caused the death of the LORD'S people.”* The people were saying, it was not right that Korah died; Korah was right, he was God's man.

Unlike previous times, where God told Moses HE was going to move in judgment, this time, the LORD had heard enough and sent a plague among the people and 14,700 people died in their rebellion. To stop the plague, Moses had Aaron make atonement for the people, who were rebelling against him. ***Romans 5:8***

Romans 5:8: But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Numbers 17:1-13: God Affirms Aaron

With the rebellion of chapter 16 directed toward Moses and Aaron, in chapter 17, God affirmed Aaron, like Moses, was His chosen man. He had the leaders of the tribes place their staffs in the Tabernacle overnight and in the morning Aaron's rod, which had been dead, sprouted leaves and almonds. This is a picture of the resurrection; that which was dead was brought back to life.

Numbers 18:1-32: The Duties of the Levites and the Priest Portion

Having affirmed Aaron to the priesthood, God gives Aaron charge and responsibility for everything that happens in or around the Tabernacle. God had given Aaron the sons of Levi as his assistants; he was to oversee their work and ensure everything was done properly, in accordance with the instructions of the LORD.

For their service, the sons of Levi were afforded all that came to the Tabernacle, except the firstborn of the ox, sheep, and goat, as they were holy to the LORD. But, unlike the rest of the tribes, the Levites were to receive no inheritance of the land when they entered the land; their inheritance was the LORD. ***Philippians 4:17-20***

Philippians 4:19 And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Disobedience En Route to Moab: Numbers 20:1-25:18

Numbers 20:1-29: The Death of Miriam and Aaron; More Rebellion

Chapter 20 opens with, *the people stayed at Kadesh*; the people were back where they had begun their wilderness march some thirty-eight years earlier. There is no detailed account of the wanderings of the nation in the wilderness provided, Numbers 33 provides a log of their journey; the Scriptures provide no real details of the actual wanderings.

The sentence ends with the simple statement, *Now Miriam died there and was buried there*. She had murmured against Moses (i.e., God), we are not told if she refused to enter the land with the other rebels thirty-eight years earlier, but either way, she lost out on the opportunity to enter the land.

The wanderings of thirty-eight had not changed the people from complaining against Moses and the Lord. Just as when they were encamped at Kadesh, they wanted for water and complained. The LORD heard their cry and told Moses and Aaron to assemble the people and speak to the rock that it might bring forth water, which Moses had previously struck and brought forth water.

Unfortunately for Moses, in his anger with the people, he struck the rock, and the rock sent forth water. But, in his action, Moses did not treat the LORD as holy in the eyes of the sons of Israel. For this error, God told Moses that he would not be allowed to Lead the people into the Promised Land. The rock is a type of Christ and was only to be struck once; Moses's actions ruined this picture. ***Romans 6:9-10***

Romans 6:9-10: knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

The chapter, which opens with the death of Miriam, concludes with the death of her brother, Aaron, and the installation of Eleazer, his oldest surviving son as the new High Priest. God states Aaron was not allowed to enter the Promised Land for his part in the rebellion against *My command at the waters of Meribah*. Aaron's inability to enter the Promised Land demonstrates the imperfection of the Levitical priesthood; the priesthood of Aaron could never make anything perfect nor continue in their role by reason of their sinfulness and death. As we are told in Hebrews 7, perfection and completeness in the priesthood is only to be found in the priesthood of Christ, Who being undefiled and unchangeable is able to serve forever.

Hebrews 7:23-25: The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, 24 but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. 25 Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

Numbers 21:1-35: Physical Victories and Moral Defeat

In chapter 21 we have the account of the victory of the nation over their first enemies. First, Israel defeated the Canaanites, who launched an unprovoked attack against Israel. Their next battle was against the Amorites, who refused to allow the nation to pass through their land and retaliated in attacking Israel, who in turn routed the Amorites through the power of the LORD.

Between their victories, we are given the record of the people complaining that God has abandoned them again.

Numbers 21:5: The people spoke against God and Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this miserable food."

The LORD responded to their complaints:

Numbers 21:6: The LORD sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died.

When the people acknowledged their sin to Moses, God instructed Moses to construct a bronze serpent and place the serpent on a pole so that anyone who would look at the serpent on the pole would be healed. Today, anyone who has been bitten by sin may look to Christ for salvation; they like the Children of Israel, must look in faith. ***John 3:14-18***

John 3:14-18: And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Numbers 22:1-24:25: The Story of Balaam

The story of Balaam and the Children of Israel is given in chapters 22 through 24. As the nation approaches Moab, the king of Moab, Balak, having heard of the destruction of the Amorites by Israel was *in dread of the sons of Israel* and sent for Balaam, who, according to Peter, was a prophet (or had been a prophet), to curse the nation. But God intervened to stop Balaam. ***Numbers 22:12-13; 2 Peter 2:15-16***

Numbers 22:12-13: God said to Balaam, "Do not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed." 13 So Balaam arose in the morning and said to Balak's leaders, "Go back to your land, for the LORD has refused to let me go with you."

2 Peter 2:15-16: forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; 16 but he received a rebuke for his own transgression, for a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet.

When the king heard of his refusal, he sent another delegation of greater men and offered greater rewards, which caught Balaam's ear. Balaam, initially listened to God, sort of. He told the king's representative that he could not, would not go and even if *Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not do anything, either small or great, contrary to the command of the LORD my God.* Although God had already told Balaam to not get involved with Balak, Balaam suggested the representative stay the night, again, and see if the LORD had anything else for him. The LORD appeared to Balaam at night and told him, if they come again, you can go with them *but only the word which I speak to you shall you do.* **Colossians 3:5; 1 Peter 5:2**

Colossians 3:5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

1 Peter 5:2: shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness

It appears that God is giving Balaam permission to go to Balak; He is not. God knows that Balaam is covetous and he is going to go, knowing that God had already told him not to have anything to do with Balak. Balaam is playing with sin thinking he can do God's bidding and play Balak for a handsome reward.

In the morning Balaam climbed on his donkey to meet Balak. Along the way, God intervened again; He withstood Balaam in a narrow pathway, causing his donkey to stop and lie down. When Balaam struck his donkey in anger, God opened the mouth of the donkey and the donkey talked to Balaam. Then God opened the eyes of Balaam to see the Angel of the Lord before him, which the donkey had seen; the Angel of the Lord told Balaam, that had the donkey not laid down, He would have struck Balaam dead. **Numbers 23:19**

Numbers 23:19: "God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent; has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"

Being confronted, Balaam offers to return home but the Angel of the Lord told him to go with the men but sternly warned Balaam not to say anything to Balak other than what He tells him to say. When Balaam arrived at Balak's location he proceeded to bless the nation each time Balak asked him to curse the people. God gave Balaam a blessing to pronounce on the nation, to the anger and dismay of Balak.

When Balaam had finished blessing Israel, God turned his attention to the people of Moab, Amalek, Kenite and pronounced curses and judgment on the nations. We will see later that although Balaam did not directly curse Israel, he did instruct Balak on how to entice the people to sin and thereby bring wrath upon themselves, for which he was judged. **Numbers 31:8, 16; Jude 11, Revelation 2:14**

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Numbers 31:8: They killed the kings of Midian along with the rest of their slain: Evi and Rekem and Zur and Hur and Reba, the five kings of Midian; they also killed Balaam the son of Beor with the sword.

Numbers 31:16: "Behold, these caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, so the plague was among the congregation of the LORD.

Jude 11: Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

Revelation 2:14: "But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality.