

Introduction & Overview

Overview

- Travel Log of the Israelites from Sinai to Canaan
 - This trip should take two weeks by foot... it takes forty years
 - It took 40 days to get Israel out of Egypt
 - It took 40 years to get Egypt out of Israel
 - So we covered about one year and 2 months since Israel left Egypt through the wilderness of Sinai (Numbers 1:1), through the receiving of the Law, the golden calf, the building of the tabernacle, consecration of the priests and all those laws. The end half of Exodus and all the way through Leviticus and the first half of Numbers covers about 1 year and 2 months. The second half of Numbers covers 40 years (Deuteronomy 1:3)
 - "on the first *day* of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt," (Numbers 1:1)
 - "In the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first *day* of the month" (Deuteronomy 1:3)
- A good understanding of Numbers will help you to have a good understanding of the rest of the Bible
 - We see the generational impact of people who are given the choice to take God's word, or choose not to obey God.
 - We see that God always finds a way to spare those who are loyal to Him, and spare a whole new generation and allow them to make their own decisions

Structure

- Three locations, with travel sections between them; three groups of character focal points at each stage
 - Chapter 1-10: Mt Sinai
 - Taking the first census and arranging the tribes (1-4)
 - Laws about ritual purity (5-10)
 - **Characters**
 - **Israel:** Numbered and arranged
 - **Levites:** Not numbered; arranged at the tabernacle

- **God:** Provides shelter when Israel moves, center of the camp when Israel stops - Protector and Guide
- Chapter 10-12: Traveling
 - Complain about Manna (11)
 - Miriam and Moses complain (12)
 - **Characters**
 - **Israel:** Complaining
 - **Levites:** Complaining (Aaron and Miriam)
 - **God:** Punishes the complaints
- Chapter 13-19: Wilderness of Paran
 - Twelve Spies (13-14)
 - Rebellion of Korah (16-17)
 - **Characters**
 - **Israel:** Rebel (kill Moses and go back to Egypt)
 - **Levites:** Rebel (Korah)
 - **God:** Bans first generation, Affirms Moses and Aaron
- Chapter 20-21: Traveling
 - Complain about water and Moses (20)
 - Bronze Serpent (21)
 - **Characters**
 - **Israel:** Complains
 - **Levites:** Aaron and Miriam die; Moses will die too
 - **God:** Judges, heals, fights
- Chapter 22-36: Plains of Moab
 - Balaam (22-25)
 - New Generation Census (26)
 - Tribes begin to settle (32-36)
 - **Characters**
 - **Israel:** Numbered again
 - **Levites:** Phineas is chosen
 - **God:** Blessing Israel through Balaam

Themes

- Israel's Rebellion vs God's Faithfulness
 - This book contains the majority of Israel's complaining:
 - Complain about Manna (11)
 - Complain about priesthood (Aaron, Miriam) (12)
 - Complain about the land (13-14)
 - Complain about Priesthood (Korah, Dathan) (16-17)
 - Complain about water (20)
 - God still provides and has mercy
 - Gives them Manna and water

- Gives them the bronze serpent
 - Promise of the Messiah
- OT References
 - Isaiah 63
 - Ezekiel 20
 - Jeremiah 7
 - Psalm 78
 - Psalm 95
 - Psalm 106
- NT References
 - 1 Corinthians 10
 - Hebrews 4-5
- God brings judgment... AND shows mercy
 - "Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in *His* goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off." (Romans 11:22)
 - Judgment by prohibiting them from entering the Promised Land, and yet mercy by leaving it open for their children
 - Judgment by serpents, and yet mercy by the bronze serpent
 - Judgment on Korah and his followers, and yet the sons of Korah author some of the Psalms in our Scripture
 - Judgment on Miriam with leprosy, and yet mercy when it went away in seven days

Symbols

Patristic Guides

- St. Gregory of Nyssa - "The Life of Moses"
- Origen - "Homilies on Numbers"
- Theodoret of Cyrus - "Questions on Numbers"

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