

Leviticus-Numbers

July 19, 2009

Glory of God (or “How Many is a 1000? Hint: 1000.”) Introduction/Numbers 1-10

I. Background on Numbers

Numbers is the fourth book of the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). It has several lists of numbers which gave rise to its current name. Basically, this book fills in gaps from the end of Exodus to the beginning of Deuteronomy.

The name Numbers is from the Septuagint Greek translation having the title in Greek of “*Arithmoi*.” The original Hebrew title was “and he said” from the first word in Hebrew, “*Wayyedabber*” in the book consistent with the Hebrew naming system for all five books of the Pentateuch. (NOTE: Exodus-Deuteronomy all start with “and” to show continuity of the books. “And” is a prefix in Hebrew “Wa.”) The Latin Title is *Liber Numeri*.

The following are four problems that some, hopefully not us, would associate with the book:

- Seeming lack of coherence as a book
- Dizzying variety of its contents
- Large number of people in the tribes of Israel
- Confusing story of Balaam.

An outline of the book might be:

- Israelites' Camp (Chapters 1-4)
- Exhortations to holy living/preparations to start from Mt. Sinai (5-10:11)
- Initial events on leaving the holy mountain (10:12-12)
- Great rebellion against God (13-14)
- Supplemental laws (15)
- Wandering around Kadesh-barnea (16-19)
- Travel to Moab (20-21)
- Story of Balaam and his interactions with the chosen people (22-25)
- New census (26)
- Additional instruction (27-36), interrupted by 31 (End of Balaam's story)

II. Purpose of First Ten Chapters.

As part of their preparation, the LORD gave strict guidelines to the Israelites regarding purity in the camp. He wanted them to have a life-style distinct from

the nations around them. He wanted them to be a holy people. From this, we should see the emphasis for personal purity and for the purity of our church.

These chapters cover one month, 20 days (see Num 10:11) after completion of the tabernacle. Key events included: First census of the nation, role of the Levites, purity of the camp, and receiving guidance for the journey. Now let's look at this section, chapter by chapter

III. Chapter 1

This occurs on the first day of second month of the second year after coming out of Egypt. The census of the men who are able to serve in the army is made, totally 603,550. This makes the total of Israelites probably in the range of two to three millions of people. How so many people could travel in the wilderness, whatever the route, is a mystery to modern man...actually an impossibility without the active support of God.

Chapter 2

The arrangement of the camp is discussed. Why is it important that such an arrangement be made? Is there any importance to the way it is arranged? Some claim that factors like "east is the place of rising sun, the source of hope and sustenance" is important, but the only thing that makes much sense is that this is the way that God wanted it.

Chapter 3-4

More detail is given concerning the Levites, starting with the sad story of Nadab and Abihu. The purpose of the Levites and sub-tribes is given. A Levite census is provided, showing 22, 273 people, where basically God takes them as the first born of all Israelites. Chapter 4 adds to chapter 3

Chapter 5

The following are discussed: Purity of the camp, restitution for wrong, and test for an unfaithful wife.

Chapter 6

The rules for the Nazarite is given. At the end the following well-known blessing is given:

Num 6:24

24 "The LORD bless you and keep you; 25 the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; 26 the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace." '

NIV

Chapter 7

Repetitious offerings are made for the dedication of the Tabernacle. In verse 89, we have an indication of how Moses heard the voice of God.

Chapter 8

Setting up the lights in the tabernacle and the purification of the temple.

Chapter 9

The Passover is discussed. Notice how the Israelite camp would see God as cloud that looked like fire from evening until morning. During the day, God was seen as a cloud; when He moved, the Israelites followed.

Chapter 10

The silver trumpets called the community to assembly and gave the command to begin moving. The Israelites leave Mt. Sinai on the twentieth day of the second month of the second year after leaving Egypt. Hobab/Reuel the Midianite goes with Moses...why would Hobab be of value to Moses and the Israelites.

NOTE: The Hebrew is not clear if Hobab or Reuel is the father-in-law of Moses. There is a bit of mystery concerning the name of Moses' father-in-law. Reuel and Jethro are given earlier. Both might be title as Reuel means "a friend of God" and Jethro means "excellence." Perhaps Hobab was his real name, and Raguel was his father. Perhaps Hobab was the son of Reuel and Jethro. Many possibilities exist that are consistent with the Scriptural references.

IV. Detail, Detail, and More Detail

When we read through information as documented in these 10 chapters, we have a hard time staying away. Why did God decided to put all of this in the Bible? We can certainly see the value to the original readers.

But how is it valuable to us? Certainly, 1 Corinthians 10 makes it clear that such events surrounding Moses and included in Scripture are important to us.

God gives us a detail blueprint in the Bible on how to live. Does He expect us to pay less attention to it than the Israelites did to their instructions? How does the Spirit help us? Are we led by the Spirit of God?

The Wilderness Journeys

