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Numbers, The Book of

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the sum of the letters of a Hebrew word and seeks to find some meaning. For example, the Hebrew letters of the name Eliezer, Abraham's servant, have a numerical value of 318. When Gen. 14:14 states that Abraham took 318 trained men to pursue the kings from the east, some Jewish commentaries interpret this to mean that Abraham had but one helper, Eliezer, since Eliezer has the numerical value of 318. Likewise, the number 666 in Revelation is often taken as a reverse gematria for the emperor Nero. The name Nero Caesar, put in Hebrew characters and added up following gematria, totals 666. Any interpretation based on gematria must be treated with care; such interpretation always remains speculative.

Joel F. Drinkard, Jr.

NUMBERS, BOOK OF Fourth in the chronological series of the Torah, Numbers carries the title *Bemidbar* ("in the wilderness") in the original Hebrew text. This is the initial word in the text, and it characterizes much of the ensuing history recorded in the book.

Though the descendants of Jacob were introduced to the covenant relationship with Yahweh, or the Lord, they chose their own way on many occasions. As a result, they faced God's judgment time and again. For their rebellion, disobedience, and lack of faith, the adults who left Egypt were sentenced to die in the wilderness, and their children took their place as the warriors and leaders who would later receive the promised land.

The book carries the title Numbers in English translations as a result of the early Greek title *Arithmoi* and the Latin title *Numeri*. In both instances, the title reflects a focus on the censuses taken to account for the number of fighting men in each tribe.

Numbers is a book of transition, in which the conditional nature of the Sinaitic covenant is most clearly demonstrated to the generation of adults who escaped Egyptian bondage. The older generation chose disobedience, which carried a death sentence in the wilderness. More time elapses historically in this book than the other books combined which relate to the exodus from Egypt (Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy). The nearly 40 years of wandering take place in Numbers as a result of Israel's disobedience and lack of faith in the covenant God, Yahweh.

This book is essential for understanding the reasons for the second giving of the command-

ments (see Exod. 20 and Deut. 5). Were it not for the death sentence on the adults, it would not have been necessary for Moses to reintroduce the Law and the commandments to another generation who would take the promised land.

Numbers also records historical details which are only alluded to by other biblical writers. In Ps. 95, for example, the writer gives the command, "Do not harden your hearts as at Meribah, as on that day at Massah in the wilderness" (HCSB). The context indicates a reference to Israel's choice to accept the spies' majority report (Num. 14). Another incident found in Numbers is the fashioning of the bronze snake (Num. 21). Jesus refers to this event during His instruction of Nicodemus.

Many individuals hold to a multiple authorship scheme for the Torah. No legitimate grounds exist, however, for presupposing that Moses did not record most of the events of the Exodus (Exod., Lev., Num.) during the time covered in this book. The internal and external evidence of Numbers points to Moses as the original author. See *Aaron; Balaam; Eleazar; Joshua; Moses; Pentateuch; Tabernacle; Tribes of Israel*.

Outline

- I. Heading out from Sinai (chaps. 1-10)
 - A. Separating the fighting men (chap. 1)
 - B. Separating the tribes for camp (chap. 2)
 - C. Separating the priests & Levites (chap. 3-4)
 - D. Separating from defilement (chap. 5)
 - E. Separating of the Nazirite (chap. 6)
 - F. Separating gifts of the leaders (chap. 7)
 - G. Separating of the Levites (chap. 8)
 - H. Separating for the Passover (9:1-14)
 - I. Separating and moving the camp (9:15-10:36)
- II. Heading Nowhere at Kadesh-barnea (chaps. 11-21)
 - A. Rebellion/judgment of fire (11:1-3)
 - B. Provision of quail (11:4-35)
 - C. Rebellion/judgment of Aaron/Miriam (chap. 12)
 - D. Provision of fruit from Canaan (13:1-25)
 - E. Rebellion/judgment of spies & adults (13:26-14:43)
 - F. Provision of miscellaneous instructions (chap. 15)

- G. Rebellion/judgment of Korah (chap. 16)
- H. Provision of miraculous work and further instructions (chaps. 17–19)
- I. Rebellion/judgment of Moses and Aaron (chap. 20)
- J. Provision of military victory (21:1-3)
- K. Rebellion/judgment by snakes (21:4-7)
- L. Provision of healing and victories (21:8-35)
- III. Heading into Trouble at Moab (chaps. 22–25)
 - A. Balaam's oracles (chaps. 22–24)
 - B. Israel's idolatry, immorality, and judgment (chap. 25)
- IV. Heading for the Promised Land (chaps. 26–36)
 - A. Initiating a second census (chap. 26)
 - B. Inheritance for Zelophehad's daughters (chap. 27)
 - C. Instructions to the new generation (chaps. 28–30)
 - D. Defeat of the Midianites and Balaam (chap. 31)
 - E. Israel's Transjordan tribes (chap. 32)
 - F. Moses' overview of the exodus (chap. 33)
 - G. Division of the lands in Canaan (chaps. 34–36) *Douglas K. Wilson, Jr.*

NUN 1. (Nūn) Father of Joshua (Exod. 33:11; Num. 11:28; 13:8,16). **2.** (Nūn) Fourteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet which serves as a heading for Ps. 119:105-112. Each verse of this section begins with “nun.”

NUNC DIMITTIS Latin phrase meaning “you can now dismiss.” The first words in Latin of Simeon's psalm of praise in Luke 2:29-32 and thus the title of the psalm. See *Benedictus; Magnificat*.

NURSE 1. Woman who breast-feeds an infant (Gen. 21:7; Exod. 2:7; 1 Sam. 1:23). In OT times children were often nursed as long as three years (1 Sam. 1:22-24). Weaning was often a time of celebration (Gen. 21:8). Generally a mother nursed her own child; though sometimes a wet nurse was employed (Exod. 2:7). A nurse might continue as an honored family member after the child was grown (Gen. 24:59; 35:8). Paul likened the gentleness of his

missionary approach to a mother nursing her children (1 Thess. 2:7). **2.** Woman who cares for a child such as a governess or nanny (Ruth 4:16; 2 Sam. 4:4). **3.** One who cares for the sick (1 Kings 1:2,4 NASB, RSV).

NURTURE KJV translation (Eph. 6:4) of the Greek *paideia* (disciple, instruction). The noun occurs elsewhere in the Pauline corpus only once (2 Tim. 3:16) which relates that all Scripture is profitable for “training (*paideia*) in righteousness.” To bring up children “in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4 HCSB) is to discipline and correct them as the Lord would.

NUTS See *Plants*.

NUZI (Nū' zē) City located in the northeast section of the Fertile Crescent, and then named Gasur, that flourished under Sargon shortly before 2000 B.C. Few cities that are not mentioned in the OT contribute to its understanding as significantly as Nuzi (modern Yorghana Tepe). Its most relevant history, as far as the OT is concerned, is its revival as part of the Hurrian kingdom, situated in the state of Mitanni, about 1500 B.C., about the time of the Israelites' bondage in Egypt. Twenty thousand Akkadian documents have been found at Nuzi that reflect primarily the legal, social, and economic situation of Mesopotamian culture about 2000–1400 B.C. The sociological importance of this discovery is estimated differently among scholars. Most scholars accept the value for general Near Eastern studies and biblical background, and some use the information to determine the date of the patriarchs and the literature about them according to biblical parallels with Nuzi customs.

Some parallels are more exact than others, but the following examples can be cited as relevant to patriarchal and later Israelite culture. Marriage customs of Nuzi and the patriarchs converge when we hear Rachel and Leah complain how their father Laban unfairly hoarded their dowry and left them nothing, contrary to provisions they expected under Nuzilike marriage arrangements (Gen. 31:14-16). In spite of this injustice, Laban later relied on the honor of Jacob to conform to the custom of not marrying additional wives (Gen. 31:50). In the case of infertility, both Rachel and Leah offered their maids as surrogate mates that would bear sons