

INTERACTIVE TRAVEL GUIDE

DESTINATION: *Numbers 15-36*

Numbers is named for the census of the Exodus generation taken at Mount Sinai (Num 1) and for the census of the generation born in the wilderness taken on the plains of Moab (Num 26). This book is of special historical interest as furnishing us with details as to the route of the Israelites in the wilderness and their principal encampments.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

- c. 1527 B.C.
Moses is born
- c. 1487 B.C.
Moses flees Egypt for Midian
- c. 1446 B.C.
The Israelites cross the Red Sea and arrive at Mt. Sinai
- c. 1445 B.C.
The law is given at Mount Sinai
- c. 1445-1405 B.C.
Events in Numbers
- c. 1407 B.C.
Return to the wilderness of Zin and the instructions of Deuteronomy
- c. 1406 B.C.
Forty years of wandering in the wilderness
- c. 1405 B.C.
Israel enters the Promised Land under Joshua

TRIP PLANNER:

The Book of Numbers can be divided into two sections. The second section covers the failure of one generation to enter the Promised Land. It also covers the reorganization of a new generation that enters into the Promised Land.

1. Failure in the wilderness – Numbers 15-19
2. Failure on the way to Moab – Numbers 20-25
3. Israel reorganized and renumbered – Numbers 26-27
4. Seasonal offerings to be kept – Numbers 28-30
5. Land apportioned on both sides of Jordan – Numbers 31-36

NOTE: Another way to look at the book of Numbers is by the generations. Part 1 deals with the first generation in the wilderness (1 – 25) and Part 2 deals with the second generation entering the Promised Land (26 – 36).

PLACES OF INTEREST:

Cities of Refuge – In Middle Eastern culture, the taking of a life, even by accident, was to be avenged by a member of the victim's family. God established six (6) Levitical cities to be set aside as cities of refuge. A person guilty of unintentional manslaughter could escape blood revenge by fleeing to one of these cities.

Edom – The country of Edom began at a line from the south end of the Dead Sea stretched to the Arabian Desert areas to the east. From this line, Edom claimed all the land south to the Red Sea, and farther along the east coast of the Red Sea. Today this area is called Negev, south Israel, and among the driest regions in Israel. The King of Edom refused passage through this land.

Heshbon – The city of Sihon king of the Amorites. It was here that Sihon was defeated because he declared war on Israel and refused to let them pass through his land. Later this city became a Levitical city.

Hormah – Located in the extreme South of ancient Palestine, earlier called Zephath. Here the invading Israelites were defeated by the Canaanites. Later the Israelites defeated the Canaanite king Arad.

King's Highway – In the ancient world, the King's Highway was a major trade route running from Egypt across the central Sinai Peninsula, north through what is now western Jordan, and into Syria.

Meribah – In the wilderness of Zin at Kadesh (the place where Miriam - Moses' sister - was buried). It was here that Moses struck the rock instead of speaking to the rock as God had commanded – thus misrepresenting God to the people. As a result, Moses and Aaron were not allowed to go into the Promised Land.

Mount Hor – The scene in the Bible of Aaron's death, situated "in the edge of the land of Edom". Since the time of Josephus it has been identified with the Jebel Nebi Ijarun ("Mountain of the Prophet Aaron"), a twin-peaked mountain 4780 feet above the sea-level (6072 feet above the Dead Sea) in the Edomite Mountains on the east side of the Jordan-Arabah valley.

PEOPLE OF INTEREST:

Baal of Peor – The Moabite god who appears both as a male sun-god and a female moon-goddess. His name means "lord of Peor", referring to Mount Peor on the left bank of the river Jordan, the center of his cult. Baal is mentioned widely in the Old Testament as the primary pagan idol of the Phoenicians, which was often associated with the heathen goddess Ashtaroath. The worship of Baal was accompanied with lascivious rites (1 Kings 14:24), the sacrifice of children in the fire by parents (Jer.19:5), and kissing the image (1 Kings 19:18; Hos 13:2).

Balaam – Balaam of Mesopotamia was an internationally known soothsayer and prophet who specialized in animal divination. It was believed that these prophets could manipulate the will of the gods. He was hired by Balak to influence the will of the God of Israel. God would not allow Balaam to speak against Israel and used a donkey to speak to him, mocking his ability to communicate with the gods.

Balak – King of the Moabites who hired Balaam the prophet to destroy Israel through spiritual means. He knew that Israel had defeated his friend Sihon at Heshbon and was afraid.

Dathan & Abiram – Sons of Eliab. Levite who, with his brother Abiram and with Korah, was consumed by fire from heaven.

Joshua – There were two possible candidates – Caleb and Joshua. God himself choose Joshua to succeed Moses. The qualification for the job was the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Korah – Son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi. Levite leader, with Dathan and Abiram, of the unsuccessful revolt in the desert against the exclusive priesthood of the Aaronic family and against the leadership of Moses; the rebels were consumed by fire and earthquake, and perhaps had duties as doorkeepers and singers in the Temple.

The Daughters of Zelophehad – Hebrew law passed on the inheritance of the father through the sons. Because Zelophehad had no sons, his daughters made a case to have the inheritance given to them. Moses took their case to the Lord and the Lord honored their request.

Zimri – A Hebrew man who became involved with a Midianite woman named Cozbi (possibly a priestess of Baal). Their offense (possibly their marriage ceremony) was committed at the door of the tabernacle in full view of the congregation. They were killed by Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, with a javelin.

FUN FACTS:

Book of Wars of The Lord – An early collection of songs and writings known today only by its mention in Numbers 21:14, 15. The fact that numbers draws from other early Hebrew writings shows that the ancient Hebrew people had other literature in addition to Scripture.

Bronze Serpent – Today, this is known as the symbol of the medical profession. It was a symbol of the cross. When God sent venomous snakes into the camp of Israel, anyone who looked upon the Bronze Serpent would live.

High Places of Baal – Sacred areas on hilltops, where sacrifices and rituals were held these rural 'temples' were simple, open spaces, without idols but with a pile of stones serving as an altar. A sacred tree was not uncommon. A local priest would attend to the altar, and be supported by the locals. Some of these 'high areas' became quite popular, and the number of priests then increased.

Levite Cities – The Levites were to be separate from the rest of the population for the holy service of God. They had their own separate allotment of land and their own cities (48 total). The cities were distributed throughout the land as a symbol that God was present among His people.

Sabbath – Sabbath is derived from the Hebrew word meaning "to cease" or "to rest". The Sabbath is the seventh day in the Hebrew calendar or Saturday.

Vow – A vow to God is a voluntary commitment to do something that pleases Him or to abstain from certain practices to demonstrate devotion to Him. A vow made to the Lord is binding and must be fulfilled. The Nazarite vow is an example of this.

MAPS:

Figure 1: The Levitical Cities



Figure 2: Journey from Kadesh to Moab

