

IMMERSE: BEGINNINGS

Week 9 – NUMBERS – “WHY??? WASTED???”

August 8, 2021

What led up to the events in the book of Numbers? What’s the backstory? GOD!!! The Abrahamic Covenant! God delivered the Jewish people along with Gentiles (“mixed multitude”) from Egypt because of God’s promises in the covenant that He cut with Abraham.

And, here they are at the foot of Mt. Sinai. And, we as students of Scripture, are attempting to picture it and understand!

The Hebrew word for Numbers is – *b’midbar* – in the desert/in the wilderness! The book of Numbers only records the events during the 2nd year of their journey – in the wilderness – and events during the 40th year!!!!!! Nothing in between!!!! WHY?

The children of Israel had been camping along the way to Mt. Sinai from Egypt for approx. 60 days. At Mt. Sinai they camped for approx. 11 months. And now, they’re breaking camp in preparation to set up camp on their way to the land of promise which they’d been told was the land of milk and honey! It’s an 11-day journey to the border of the land of promise.

The book of Numbers, in the first 10 chapters speaks to how GOD made provision in preparation for the orderly march into the land with TWO MILLION people!!!

Census - God commissioned Moses at the tabernacle to take a census in preparation for war against Israel enemies (Num. 1:3). Males of 20 years and older: 603,550 (Num. 1:46).

Before they departed from Mt. Sinai, there was the appointment of the Levites to their service.

The tribes were arranged around the Tabernacle regarding camping and traveling through the wilderness with Judah setting out first (Num. 10:14).

And, the second Passover, after the first Passover in Egypt, was celebrated on the 14th day of the first month in the second year (Num. 9). GOD told them to keep the Passover as an everlasting memorial (Ex. 12:14). And, for the people to remember God’s glorious, miraculous deliverance from Egypt...was what God had told them to do throughout the OT – REMEMBER how I delivered you....

God had told them....

Num. 9:15-17, 23 – *Now on the day that the tabernacle was raised up, the cloud covered the tabernacle...from evening until morning it was above the tabernacle like the appearance of fire. So, it was always: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night. Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, after that the*

children of Israel would journey; and in the place where the cloud settled, there the children of Israel would pitch their tents...At the command of the LORD they remained encamped, and at the command of the LORD they journeyed; they kept the charge of the LORD, at the command of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

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Finally, in chapter 10, the Israelites set out from the shadow of Mount Sinai for Canaan.

Num. 10:11-12 - Now it came to pass on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle of the Testimony. ¹² And the children of Israel set out from the Wilderness of Sinai on their journeys....

PICTURE IT!! The glory of God – the cloud – was taken up from above the tabernacle!

Num. 10:1-2, 4 - And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ² “Make two silver trumpets for yourself; you shall make them of hammered work; you shall use them for calling the congregation and for directing the movement of the camps.... ⁴ , then the leaders, the heads of the divisions of Israel, shall gather to you. ⁵ When you sound the advance, the camps that lie on the east side shall then begin their journey. ⁶ When you sound the advance the second time, then the camps that lie on the south side shall begin their journey; they shall sound the call for them to begin their journeys.

In preparation for their journey God had told them...

Num. 10:9 - When you go to war in your land against the enemy who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, and you will be remembered before the LORD your God, and you will be saved from your enemies.

Num. 10:14-28 - The standard of the camp of the children of Judah set out first according to their armies; ... ¹⁷ Then the tabernacle was taken down; and the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari set out, carrying the tabernacle. ¹⁸ And the standard of the camp of Reuben set out according to their armies; ... ²¹ Then the Kohathites set out, carrying the holy things. (The tabernacle would be prepared for their arrival.) ²² And the standard of the camp of the children of Ephraim set out according to their armies; ... ²⁸ Thus was the order of march of the children of Israel, according to their armies, when they began their journey.

We find Moses having a conversation with Hobab...

Num. 10:29-33 ²⁹ Now Moses said to Hobab the son of Reuel (the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, “We are setting out for the place of which the LORD said, ‘I will give it to you.’ Come with us, and we will treat you well; for the LORD has promised good things to Israel.” ³⁰ And he said to him, “I will not go, but I will depart to my own land and to my relatives.” ³¹ So Moses said, “Please do not leave, inasmuch as you know how we are to camp in the wilderness, and you can be our eyes. ³² And it shall be, if you go with us—indeed it shall be—that whatever good the LORD will do to us, the same we will do to you.” ³³ So they departed from the mountain of the LORD on a journey of three days; and the ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them for the three days' journey, to

search out a resting place for them. GOD searched out a resting place for them. Why did it take three days?

Num. 10:34-36 - ³⁴ *And the cloud of the LORD was above them by day when they went out from the camp.* ³⁵ *So it was, whenever the ark set out, that Moses said: "Rise up, O LORD! Let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You."* ³⁶ *And when it rested, he said: "Return, O LORD, to the many thousands of Israel."*

"ARE WE THERE YET?" They traveled three days to find their first place of rest!!!

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Num. 11:1 - *Now when the people complained, it displeased the Lord; for the Lord heard it, and His anger was aroused.*

After only three days, the people are already complaining against God? Sounds familiar! Ex. 15:22-24 - *...they went three days into the desert and found no water.... So, the people murmured against Moses.*

WHAT WAS THEIR BEEF? Their beef might very well have been - "WHERE'S THE BEEF?" Num. 11:4-6 - *Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: "Who will give us meat to eat? 5 We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; 6 but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!"*

And, Moses...who had spoken hopefully (???) to Hobab - ? is now complaining to God, ¹⁴ *I am not able to bear all these people alone, because the burden is too heavy for me.* ¹⁵ *If You treat me like this, please kill me here and now—if I have found favor in Your sight—and do not let me see my wretchedness!* (Num. 11:14-15)

God provided! AND, we see the beginning of a "Burger King" franchise...

Num. 11:16- *So the Lord said to Moses: "Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; bring them to the tabernacle of meeting, that they may stand there with you. 17 Then I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit (the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit) that is upon you and will put the same upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone. 18 Then you shall say to the people, 'Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat; for you have wept in the hearing of the Lord, saying, "Who will give us meat to eat? For it was well with us in Egypt." Therefore the Lord will give you meat, and you shall eat. 19 You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, 20 but for a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you, because you have despised the Lord who is among you, and have wept before Him, saying, "Why did we ever come up out of Egypt?"*

"WHO DIED AND LEFT YOU BOSS?"

Num. 12:1ff - Aaron and Miriam spoke against Moses for marrying an Ethiopian!? Perhaps this woman was Zipporah (Midianite); or perhaps Moses married an Ethiopian woman following Zipporah's death.

“Has God only spoken through you, Moses?” God defended Moses – “He is faithful in all My house. I speak with him face-to-face”. Miriam became leprous and was shut out of the camp/exiled for seven days.

Num. 13:1 to Num. 20:13 – events took place in and around Kadesh Barnea!!!!!! WHY so much time – 7.5 chapters worth of time!!!! WHY? The twelve spies checked out the land of promise... after God had told them to *GO IN AND POSSESS THE LAND THAT I HAVE GIVEN YOU* – past tense “I have GIVEN YOU... that I have ALREADY GIVEN you.” (Deut. 1:8). TAKE NOTE – 7.5 chapters devoted to time spent at Kadesh Barnea – when they were on the way to the land of promise – of milk and honey?

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Numbers 13 – Spies sent into Canaan... by WHOM?

Num. 13:1-2 - *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² ‘Send men to spy out (search out; explore) the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel; from each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, every one a leader among them.’*

God told the children of Israel to GO IN AND POSSESS THE LAND!! So, WHY are we reading that God seems to be directing the men to spy out the land??

Deut. 1:19-33 (READ) – *...every one of you came near to me and said, ‘Let us send men before us and let them search out the land... Moses responded, ‘the plan pleased me well; so I took twelve of your men....*

Moses took their suggestion!!!!!! And MOSES gave them direction - Num. 13:18-20 - *and see what the land is like: whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, few or many; ¹⁹ whether the land they dwell in is good or bad; whether the cities they inhabit are like camps or strongholds; ²⁰ whether the land is rich or poor; and whether there are forests there or not. Be of good courage. And bring some of the fruit of the land.” Now the time was the season of the first ripe grapes.*

In Num. 13:1-2 – another Burger King scenario? Essentially God said, “Have it your way....” This was in the plan of God. God used the report of the spies as a test of Israel's faith.

Num. 13:27- *We went to the land where you (MOSES) sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. ²⁸ Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there.*

Num. 13:30 - *Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, ‘Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it.’*

Num. 13:31-33 - *But the men who had gone up with him said, ‘We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we.’ ³² And they gave the children of*

Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, 'The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. ³³ There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.'

Might there have been RAMIFICATIONS?

(Read Hebrews 3 through Hebrews 4:10)

Num. 14:22-23, 29, 33-34 ...all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness have put Me to the test...they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it. ...The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above....And your sons shall be wanderers in the wilderness forty years and bear the brunt of your infidelity until your carcasses are consumed in the wilderness. According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days for each day you shall bear your own guilt one year, namely forty years....

Num. 20:14 to Num. 22:1 – Israel traveled from Kadesh to the plains of Moab on the side of the Jordan across from Jericho.

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Num. 22:1 - Then the children of Israel moved, and camped in the plains of Moab on the side of the Jordan across from Jericho. Kadesh Barnea is 148 miles from Jericho. It took the children of Israel 37+ years to travel 148 miles! And, it took them 11 days to travel 195 miles from Mt. Sinai to Kadesh Barnea!

(Kadesh (kadosh – holy) Barnea (barnea means “desert of wandering”) – “the holy place in the desert of wandering.” God Who is holy judges sin and there are consequences. AND God is bringing them through the wilderness.

And here, in the midst of the wilderness, God gives us a massively significant Biblical principle that we ALL NEED to grasp.

The account of Balaam

Num. 22:2 to Num. 24:25 – the blessing of Israel by Balaam.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLE!

Num. 22:1-3 - Then the children of Israel moved, and camped in the plains of Moab on the side of the Jordan across from Jericho. ² Now Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. ³ And Moab was exceedingly afraid of the people because they were many, and Moab was sick with dread because of the children of Israel. ... (King Balak of Moab was bent out of shape over Israel!) ⁵ Then he sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor at Pethor, which is near the River in the land of the sons of his people, to call him, saying: “Look, a people has come from Egypt. See, they cover the face of the earth, and are settling next to me! ⁶ Therefore please come at once, curse this people for me, for they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall be able to

defeat them and drive them out of the land, for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed.”

Num. 22:18 to end of chapter

Num. 22:18-40

Num. 23:7-10, 19-24

Num. 24:1 - *Now when Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel (pour out His grace upon them [Zech. 12:10]; carry them on eagle’s wings as God has made Israel the apple of His eye – the FOCUS of His protection!! God had already blessed Israel – Gen. 12:3; Gen. 18:18.*

Num. 24:1-14

Num. 25:1-18 – Israel’s harlotry in Moab...on the side of the Jordan across from Jericho!

Num. 25:1-3 - *Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. ² They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. ³ So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel.*

Israelite men were enticed by the women of Moab. God sent a plague after Phineas, a priest among the Jewish people, stood up for righteousness. ...*the plague was stopped among the children of Israel. ⁹ And those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand.*

Was Israel, as a nation, RESTORED at this time? NO! Was Israel, as a nation, righteous, in a right relationship with God? NO! Individual Jewish people were in a

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right relationship with God (Gen. 15:6). The nation of Israel will not be restored until the end of the tribulation (Zech. 12:10).

In the book of Numbers, the nation of Israel is NOT restored. Are there individuals who have a relationship with God? YES – Moses, Joshua, Caleb.... BUT GOD is faithful and He is delivering on His promises to them for the good of the world and for THE GLORY OF GOD!

HE will still choose Israel (Isa. 14:1). They will be RESTORED!

The Abrahamic covenant is the GLUE of the Scriptures:

The Abrahamic Covenant forms the FRAMEWORK for understanding God’s end time program!

The Abrahamic Covenant will not be fulfilled until the Millennial Kingdom. . .

SO – everything is moving along on this timeline – with the ABRAHAMIC COVENANT undergirding it/supporting it.

The Jews won’t have all the land promised to them UNTIL the Millennial Kingdom.

We cannot dismiss the promises that God has made to national Israel. And, the blessing aspect of the promises – we as Gentile believers have been grafted into!

Balaam prophesied the arrival of a powerful ruler Who would arise from Israel in the future and gain victory over Israel's enemies. The symbols of His reign would be a "star" and a "scepter."

Num. 24:17-18 – Inspired by God, Balaam prophesied, *I see Him* (the powerful ruler), *but not now* (He will come sometime in the future); *I behold Him, but not near* (as it concerns place, time, kinship); *a Star* (*ko-chav* – a blazing, a shining – as in the GLORY of God! Perhaps what the Magi saw?!) *shall come out of Jacob* (Israel); *a Scepter* (a rod, a staff, a symbol of authority) *shall rise out of Israel, and batter the brow of Moab* (King Balak's empire), *and destroy all the sons of tumult* (confusion, chaos, unrest).

18 "And Edom shall be a possession; Seir also, his enemies, shall be a possession, while Israel does valiantly.

Perhaps the two comings of the Messiah are noted through the Star and the Scepter (to Bethlehem at His first coming; and then when Jesus stands in VICTORY on the Mount of Olives at the end of Armageddon [Zech. 14:4]).

The Messiah will come against all opposition to His rule and reign.

Num. 26:1 to Num. 36:13 – the experience of the second generation of Israel in the plains of Moab in anticipation of the conquest of the land of promise!

Only the 2nd year and 40th year of the wilderness experience were recorded. Some say that all the years in between were wasted years. What do you say?