

Numbers

In a word: Refining **In a sentence:** How does God refine a rebellious people to make them holy?

Themes

• Land

- In a very real sense this entire book is the working out of the dynamic in Moses prayer in Exodus 33:14-16..."If you will not go with me, don't bring us up to the land" - Most of us would be fine with that deal.. land but no Yahweh, but Moses is not.
- Remember land isn't the goal- land is a mini Eden 2.0- a location for relationship and mission (to show the nations and to extend Yahweh's glory)

• Dwelling/Temple/Relationship

- Numbers shows how belief/unbelief is the core of relationship with Yahweh and sin flows from unbelief. Further the book shows how God is committed to fixing the broken relationship with humanity and so will go to great lengths to patiently refine his people and keep his plan on track.
- Also note, that God's presence is what we most need but is inherently dangerous to us because of our contamination by sin and death.

• Royal Priesthood, Image of God & Redemption

- Numbers shows the inability of the law to change the human heart, but the commitment of God to restore his image in his people by teaching them to trust him.
- Also note- because of Israel's unbelief they are unable to fulfill their royal-priesthood role to the nations- thus we continue looking for someone who can fulfill the Adamic role of extending God's glory over creation as a royal priest.

• Royal Seed & War of the Seeds

- The beginning of the conquest continues the theme of the war of Satan's children with Yahweh's children. References to Anakim/Rephaim/Nephilim point to this.
- Balaam's prophecy is going to talk explicitly about this seed.

• Blessing/God is With Us/God Fights for Us

- Note especially the blessing being poured out on Israel as they increase in Number and move toward the land.
- Also note the refined generation begins to see God fight for them. The distrust of the first generation was their fear of the inhabitants, they forgot that Yahweh will fight for them and it's not about them.

• Covenant & Faith

- It is interesting and important to note that this book focuses so intensely on belief as the key component of all the failures in the book.

- The fact that this portion comes right after Sinai and before the reiteration of the law is meaningful- it is basically showing the main problem of the people is their unbelief- and their disobedience to the law is not really an issue of action but of a lack of love/faith- this fits perfectly with Deuteronomy's emphasis on the heart.

Structure

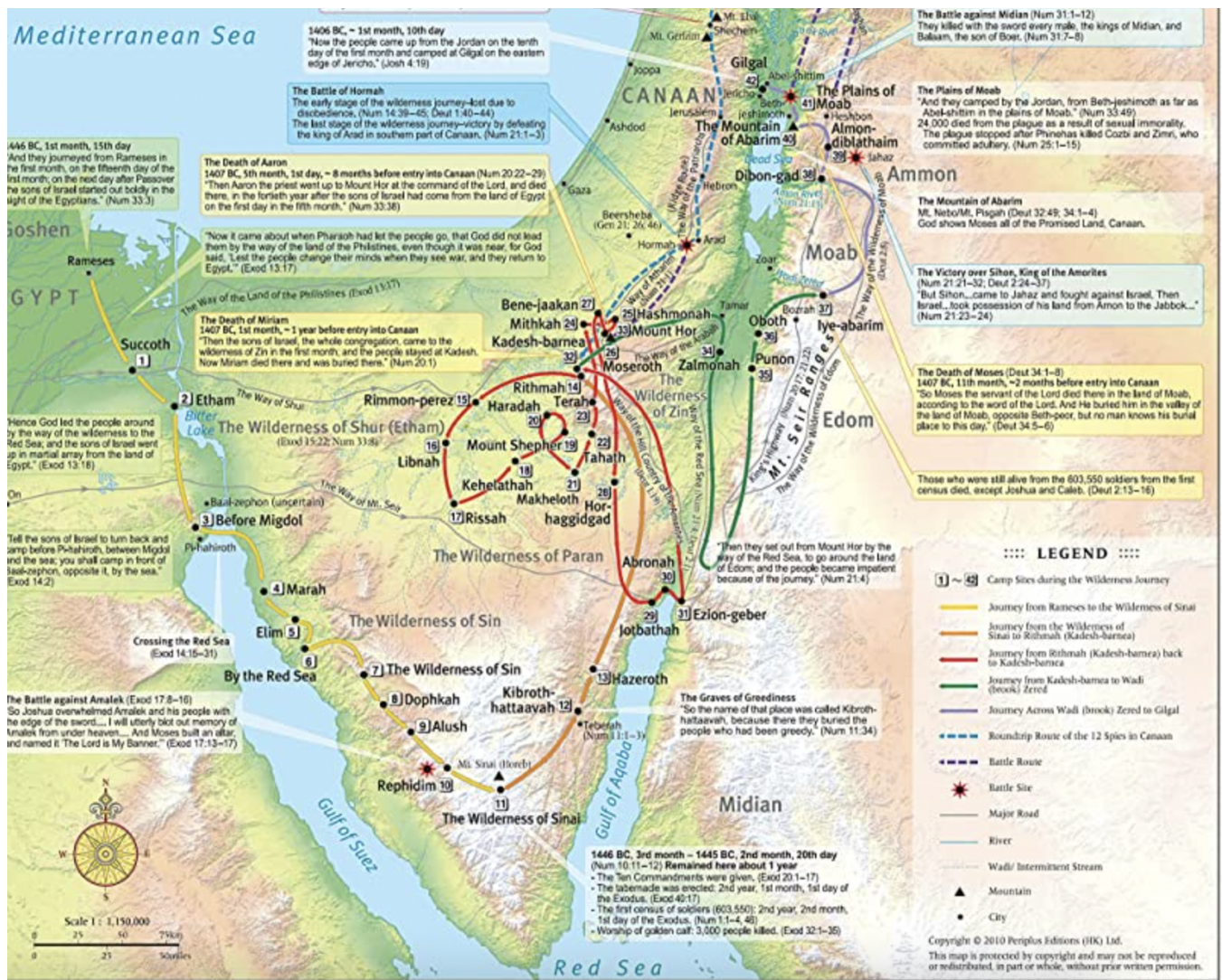
- Structured Around the Two Generations
- 1-24 Generation 1 (rebellious and unbelieving)
 - 1-10a Still at Mt. Sinai
 - 10b-19 In the Wilderness of Paran (going toward the promised land)
- 20-25 Transition between Generations (moves to plains of Moab)
 - 26-36 Generation 2 (zealous and believing)
- A Exod. 15:22–25 transformation of water from bitter to sweet
 - B 17:1–7 water from the rock
 - C 17:8–16 Amalekite–Israelite war
 - D 18 leadership relief for Moses
 - E 18:27 the Midianite Hobab, Moses' father-in-law
 - F 19:1–2 arrival at Sinai

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- F' Num. 10:11–23 departure from Sinai
 - E' 10:29–32 the Midianite Hobab, Moses' father-in-law
 - D' 11 leadership relief for Moses
 - C' 14:39–45 Amalekite–Israelite war
 - B' 20:1–13 water from the rock
 - A' 21:16–18 the spring

Exegetical Notes

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- 1-24 Generation 1 (rebellious and unbelieving)
 - Chapters 1-10 are mostly good, then 11-25 is bad
 - Chapter 1-4 (Physical and Spiritual Census) Military Census
 - Abraham's promise is getting fulfilled.
 - Note: the levites are the tabernacle guards (think no Nadab and Abihu repeat) this goes back to Exodus 32 when the Levites were the ones zealous and ready even to kill other Israelites to stop the plague after the golden calf.
 - The military camp layout
 - this points to God being central and that God will protect them, this is abnormal from a military standpoint
 - this shows Jacob's prophecy coming true.
 - Gershon- soft coverings (v21-26)
 - Kohath- Furniture (v27-) most honorable position
 - Merari- frames and post (infrastructure)
 - the Levites are like a new adam in a new garden
 - Chapter 5- 6 (Purity in the Camp)
 - Good sermon on Numbers 5- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=enl9KAKNwzI>

- We know this is a single cohesive unit dealing with purity in the camp because of "The Lord spoke to Moses" repeated four times 5:1, 5, 11, 6:1 linking things together.
- We also know this because of the summary in verse 3- the key idea is that God is dwelling in the camp so they must be pure.
- Israel's success is not about leadership or military but how they live in relationship to God
- 5:6- the guilt offering here is what the servant pays for in Isaiah 53
- the issue with the water test is a spiritual revelation that will happen- probably through the psychological pain of it
- these regulations would speak a language to other nations spies
- Nazirite is about a person who voluntarily separates themselves for God
- **The Aaronic blessing recalls the Genesis blessings and Exodus 34:6-7 and God's Abrahamic blessing. This also explains the third commandment.**
- this blessing is a mini-climactic moment of the result of all the time at Sinai.
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- 6:27 leads all the way up to Sinai but the next chapter is a flashback--- so then this is an awesome culmination
- Chapter 7:1-9:14 (A Flashback)
 - this is now flashback to Exodus 40
 - this is talking about the offerings at the tabernacle
 - note that Judah is fronted
 - note that NOW Moses is able to go in which he wasn't able to do in Exodus 40.
 - light on the showbread is meant to be a symbolic representation of Numbers 6 Aaronic blessing, probably why it appears here.
 - idea is that the people should continually have the light of Yahweh's relational presence on them.
- Chapter 9:15-
 - 9:15-23- the cloud is not the tip of the spear the ark of the covenant it, also note seven times "at the command of the lord"
 - 10:11- Israel doesn't actually get to Paran until 12:16- so this is a summary but then everything here is on the way to Paran.
- Chapter 10
- Chapter 11 background-color:: green
 - 11:1- This generation teaches us about unbelief mainly starting chapter 11- note that the first sin mentioned is complaining- and we think "why is God so harsh?" but think about it- the goal of the Exodus was to restore relationship and God has literally moved heaven and earth to bring the people to himself and now they are whining- but the thing that's so bad is that they reveal what their hearts really love, and its not Him. It's that they want comforts and convenience- and by the

way- what "evils" are they complaining about? Heat and hunger probably- but before we judge too quickly- what do you complain about most often, I wouldn't be surprised if heat and hunger were pretty high up on the list.

- 11:1- Make sure to remember the kindness, graciousness and love of God is never pitted against wrath- the wrath is the expression of his love that will not let anything ruin his relationship with his people.
- 11:2- "they cried out" echoes their cries in Exodus and is going to reinforce the point of Numbers- Egypt wasn't the biggest problem, they are their own biggest problem (i.e. their unbelieving hearts)
- 11:2- it's important to note how Moses is often seen praying to intercede for the people- this is important for understanding the role of a priest and so especially of Jesus, but don't forget that our ultimately destiny was and is to be both royal and priestly, and so I think sometimes we forget that god has placed us in our communities among a grumbling and unbelieving people and we have a responsibility to pray for them and to bless our communities first and foremost in this way.
- 11:3 Taberah means "burning" and is the same as the word in 11:1 "the fire of Yahweh **burned**"
- 11:3 Note the meaning of the place names because it helps paint the bleak picture and direction of the book- places and place names are important for getting the OT.
- 11:4- note the contrast between the "riff-raff" and the "sons of Israel" seems to distinguish this as a separate group and I think it is already evidencing Moses' understanding that "not all Israel is Israel" and that "it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham" but either way both groups led to sin
- 11:4- echoes of Gen 3 everywhere
 - 11:4- the incident centers on eating and craving
 - 11:4- אָרַב same root as Eve's craving in [[Genesis]] 3:6! This is going to be a keyword until 11:34 when it is used to name the campsite
 - 11:4- they want meat- which is introduced as food post-fall
 - 11:5- in Gen 3 it was "a delight to the eyes" which uses the same "craving" word and then pairs it with eyes just as here.
- 11:6 the hebrew is short and whiny like a toddler.
- 11:7- guess where the only other occurrence of "bdellium" is in the OT...Genesis 2
- 11:10 "each at the door of his tent" is meaningful here. The last time it was used was when the people each bowed down "at the door of his tent" to worship as God talked with Moses at the tent. This is a reversal.
- 11:10- literally it reads, "but in the eyes of Moses it was evil"- there is ambiguity here..is God's anger bad in Moses eye's? Or is the people's grumbling?

- I think what is going on is intentional blurring of Moses' response to show that sin is contagious (he begins to complain) and that he is maybe starting to show some cracks too, but note the difference in his struggle with sin vs. the unbridled unbelief of the "riff-raff"
- 11:11- Moses uses the same word, its not "dealt ill" but "done evil to"- he's accusing God of doing evil.
- 11:11 "your servant"- he is making himself look better, wordplay on exactly the word repeated over and over to Pharaoh
- 11:11-15- note how Moses uses "I" over and over and over. And apparently takes onto himself the burden "where will I get meat" ...he has totally forgotten that God has provided perfectly, God has not wronged him, and God is the one who fights and provides.
- 11:11-15- in light of the genesis echoes we can hear echoes of Adam's blaming God for giving him Eve in Moses' complaint.
- 11:16-17- the verb "take their stand" is normally in a military battle- I think again there are supposed to be overtones of God vs. Moses here..but God is way kinder than Moses deserves and says he will allow the load to be shared. Hear these verses in father to toddler tones, Yahweh is being very kind.
- 11:20 until it makes you "nauseated"
- 11:20 "because you have rejected Yahweh"- you see here the core issue of this episode and the core issue of unbelief. This is a sad verse.
- 11:21-22 Moses is still not in his right mind.
- 11:23- this is a pointed rebuke..over and over and over again Moses was told to stretch out his hand over Egypt to mimic God who was stretching out his hand against the Egyptians, and so the question "Is my arm shortened" should truly sting for Moses.
- 11:24-30- this passage also highlights the unbelief of the first generation...can you imagine not answering this summons like Eldad and Medad?!? but Moses response is actually awesome- he seems to be back in his right mind, and he sets the foundation for later understandings of the Spirit resting on god's people. Basically at this period in history God appears to only have his Spirit rest on leaders in order to empower them for specific leadership functions, but Moses dreams of a day when the Spirit will fully and permanently rest on every single follower of the lord.
- 11:34- "Graves of Desire" is the name of that camp site.. almost like an extended and example and commentary of Israel re-falling like Adam and Eve.
- Chapter 12
 - 12:1- I think what we are starting to see in this story is three things..
 - the spread of the complaining
 - the depth of the rebellion in the hearts of the people

- the repetition of the pattern of sin from Genesis (i.e. undermining of authority structures)
- 12:1- keep in mind this took place before Moses was encountered by Yahweh, there doesn't seem to be any indication that Yahweh instructed him to divorce her.
- 12:1 You would think Aaron has learned his lesson from his sons...?
- 12:1 Third Feminine Singular- Miriam is the main driver here.
- 12:10-15 the punishment of Miriam seems to indicate that she has more of an instigating role-which fits exactly with what we know of Aaron ("I just threw this into the fire and the golden calf popped out!"). This fits perfectly with the theme we have been observing of a repeat of the fall in Genesis 3
- Chapter 13
 - 13:20- keep this language in mind- the land is going to be described in Edenic terms, (because it's going to play the role Eden was supposed to..a home base for yahweh's glory to go out and cover the whole earth)
 - 13:23-24 "the valley of the vine" is what they named it because it was a massive yield- it's being described like a return to Eden.
 - 13:27-33 a few things to note in this section
 - interesting that Nephilim show up again after we saw all the Genesis links- I think this is highlighting that the same battle between the seed of the serpent and God's plan is continuing in this way. I also think in the same way Satan was attempting to derail God's plan in Gen 6 he is doing the same here but with the land.
 - interesting to note that Caleb's assertion is looked on with favor even though he sounds pretty confident in themselves- just a neat example of how trust in the Lord doesn't always look passive.
 - **this moment will become pivotal for understanding unbelief for Israel- unbelief begins with cravings, leads to acting on those cravings, and ends with paralyzing fear and distrust (same pattern as Gen 3-4, Eve's sin leads eventually to Cain's fearful "whoever sees me will kill me!")**
- Chapter 14 background-color:: green
 - 14:1-3 notice how relational this is- they don't trust that God is really doing good to them. and they don't appreciate the exodus because they don't care about being able to worship Yahweh and be near him.
 - 14:4 they want to reverse the Exodus!!!
 - 14:7-9 Joshua and Caleb GET it
 - 14:11 note once again that it's all relational- why don't they trust and love me?
 - 14:13-19 this is an incredible model of how to pray- Moses reasons from God's character for God's glory and prays honestly for people who have

wronged him in so many ways.

- 14:26-35 - this idea can be overplayed but this does seem like an example where God's judgment is simply to give people over to what they want. The wanderings and death in the desert were what the people asked for...and they will get it.
- Note they go on the road back to Egypt just not the whole way
- Chapter 15
 - there is a logic here- defeat leads to laws that fix problems
 - 3 part structure here'
 - these laws answer yes to "will they **ever** enter?"
- Chapter 16
 - echoes of psalm 2 and these are seed of the serpent against God's anointed
 - this is a satanic egalitarian impulse, this fits with standard Satanic plotting
 - 2 stories same structure
- Chapter 17
 - Why does Aaron's staff bud? A reminder / warning
 - See Num 16:3 -41 they still don't trust gods vindication!! So it still had to bud
- Chapter 18
 - Priests job to keep and guard
 - Aaron will bear guilt
 - This is a response to question of end of 17
 - Logic of tithe- each tribe gives 10% to Levi and 10% to priests
- Chapter 19
 - Red heifer - useful for after a bunch of dead people in the camp
 - Instant coffee cleansing- basically when there are tons of dead bodies from the plague this allows people to be cleansed by any other clean person and not need a priest necessarily.
- Chapter 20
 - This is the beginning of the transition to new generation
 - This is 38 years forward from Chapter 19
 - ch 20-21 has Two mirror images- death, complaint, conflict (moving from old to new generation)
 - Mirrors exodus 17 but it's worse now
 - They complain but this ain't the promised land- they lost promised land earlier
 - Note: "speak" to rock
 - **I think much of this is showing that Sinai doesn't give them a new heart but a clear law**
 - Israel wants to take a shortcut but they get turned away- this is like the final defeat of the old generation
 - Aarons death is the last breaths of the final generation

- Chapter 21
 - Bronze serpent - pole can mean banner standard or signal - which Isaiah uses to describe new exodus that the messiah will be lifted up as a banner (11:10)
 - There is something going on here with the cause of their death being lifted up and done away with - also linked with gen 3 maybe? Experiencing the effects of the curse - embodying the curse on the pole
 - It is no coincidence that this is the picture God gives the people when he begins the final cleansing of the old generation.
 - Chronicles tells us that the people worshipped this serpent(!)
 - We do this exact thing all the time (!) when we exalt people, traditions, stuff, or anything we link special power to.
 - Jesus references this passage in talking with nicodemus and links it with Isaiah 53 and then again I'm John 8:28 and then in John 12
 - Deut 2-3 comments on this section
 - Og is linked to genesis 6 and giants- seed of the serpent vs. seed of the woman
 - They had a defeat at Hormah before but now they have victory
 - Defeat of Og shows the reverse of the fear of the giants they had previously ((see deut. 2:30)
- Chapter 22 background-color:: green
 - Next few chapters basically answer this question-- God has started to give physical victory to the new generation but is he powerful enough to handle a spiritual attack?
 - Balak/Moab sees Israel's power and is scared
 - Balsam is basically a spiritual hitman who will allow Moab to defeat them.
 - Genesis 12 Abrahamic covenant is now in tension with the serpent's plans
 - Anyone who curses Abraham is in the line of the cursed serpent and his seed.
 - Balaam is not saved but somehow had genuine access to the spiritual realm and even Yahweh
 - Balaam wants the money though even though Yahweh tells him no - Balaam essentially finagles his way in.
 - V22-30 is meant to be funny
 - Donkey can see but he can't, donkey speaks and Balaam can't,
 - Balaam is going to become just like this donkey in his three prophecies and balak ia hiring him but the Angel of the lord is in control
 - He still wants the money but he can't say anything other than what Yahweh says
- Chapter 23
 - Oracle 1
 - Israel is set apart to yahweh
 - Abrahamic covenant being fulfilled in numerous nation ((he wants to be like them)

- 23:11- is funny
- Oracle 2
- God is not lying about the promise to Abraham
- God won't turn away from them because of their sin
- God is their victorious warrior ((horns of wild ox)- can't do any curse or spiritual harm to them
- Balaam now réitérâtes the promise to Judah - they will conquer all peoples
- These are the first fruits of the conquest- it is by faith and god is going to fight for the people- not that they are going to do it through military might
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- Chapter 24
 - Third oracle
 - No sacrifices this time- but god still prompting him
 - Balaam begins comparing the camp of Israel to Eden ((garden planted trees and rivers all echo gen 1-2)
 - V7 they will enjoy covenant blessings
 - V7 the future king will be triumphant and god will fight for him
 - The king will have his own exodus from Egypt
 - V9 ties it genesis 49- this is the king from the line of Judah
 - Oracles follow past present and future generally
 - Now balaam wont get paid by balaak
 - And there is a final oracle in the "latter days" this will become a technical term for the time when messiah rises up
 - The "him" is the king from prior
 - Star and scepter are from genesis 49:10 and talks about rule - note crush the head- also points forward to David in 2 Samuel 6
 - Dominion is a perfect Adam
 - But we find out later than balaam does have one more trick up his sleeve- use sexual immorality
- Chapter 25
 - Now we move back to a "meanwhile" scene - this is a low point and mirrors exodus 32- while god is being kind Israel is committing spiritual adultery
 - This was orchestrated by Balaam
 - V10 this is the beginning of showing the zeal of the new generation
 - Aarons grandson— this is the anti-Nadab and Abihu- God is transforming his people.
 - It should have been the levites doing this-where are they?
 - Final failure and first moment of second generations faithfulness
 - See psalm 106 - calls this counted to him as righteousness and this was done by faith

- **Zimri (the man Phineas speared) is the last death recorded in numbers - this was the final plague before census of new generation**
- 26-36 Generation 2 (zealous and believing)
 - 26-Census
 - Only 2000 less than first census but this is all new people- so it's god keeping his promise
 - This is again a military census but purity is what matters
 - 27- Laws about land
 - This shows the new generations passion about the land
 - 28-29 various Laws about feasts
 - Why repeat these?- to remind the new generation they are a sacred people, in a sacred space, following sacred time (emphasizing their total devotion to the lord)
 - 30- Vows
 - Dealing with hierarchy of authority and how leaders should protect people from foolish vows
 - (This is where an authority figure should have said this to jethro but there is no king at that time)
 - 31- Moses last mission- Battle at midian
 - Why are they fighting midian? This goes back to the sexual trick of Moab-
 - What do we do with god commanding to kill young boys and sexually active women?
 - God doesn't owe life to anyone- when we are born we are already under the wages of sin. This is what happened in the flood too - god isn't wrong to take life or even command his people to take life.
 - These passages strangeness/uncomfortableness to us show how little we understand sin and it's depths
 - Notice- not a man missing- Abrahamic blessing. Purity leads to victory not military might.
- Chapter 32-36- these all deal with land- **the new generation cares about the land because they believe they will receive it!**
 - Two tribes don't want to come in which angers Moses but then they show their zeal to go in to the land.
 - 33- a recent history of Moses remembering his life with Israel - the goal is to create Hope in the people that the lord has promised them more than the wilderness where they are at
 - Motivation to obey the first time
 - 34- boundaries ((these are prof of god promises being followed through on))
 - 35- manslaying and murdering
 - This is akin to modern day prison
 - And it limits their prison term and trusts to god the just amount of time

- Avenger of blood is a specific person not just anyone who finds them
- 36- why end with this story???
- Showing again the zeal of the second generation - behaving as if they already own the land - big note of hope
-