

God's Glory in God's Word: Numbers

The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. (Num 6:24-26)

Origin of the Name:

From the Greek Septuagint: Arithmoi

From the Vulgate: Numeri

See the two censuses taken – Chapter 1 and Chapter 26

Themes of Numbers

ORDER

Chapter 1: The Census

Chapter 2: Arrangement of the Camp

Chapter 3 and 4: Specific Duties assigned

Chapter 26: Another Census

Chapter 34: Land Boundaries

Chapter 34: Land for the Levites

SANCTIFICATION

Chapter 5: Rules for Unclean People

Chapter 6: Nazirite Vow

WORSHIP

Chapter 7-8: Consecration of the Tabernacle

Chapter 9: Celebration of the Passover

WRATH

Korah's Rebellion

And Moses said, "Hereby you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these works, and that it has not been of my own accord. If these men die as all men die, or if they are visited by the fate of all mankind, then the LORD has not sent me. But if the LORD creates something new, and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into Sheol, then you shall know that these men have despised the LORD." And as soon as he had finished speaking all these words, the ground under them split apart. And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the people who belonged to Korah and all their goods. So they and all that belonged to them went down alive into Sheol, and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly. (Num 16:28-33)

Chapter 13-14 – The Spies, Rebellion, and Judgment

At the end of forty days they returned from spying out the land. (Num 13:25)

The Peoples' Response

And they told him, "We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. (Num 13:27)

However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. (Num 13:28)

Then 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 are." So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, "The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height. (Num 13:31-32)

And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?" And they said to one another, "Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt." (Num 14:2-4)

Joshua's and Caleb's Response

And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes and said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, "The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. If the LORD delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them." (Num 14:6-9)

The Lord's Response

But truly, as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD, none of the men who have seen my glory and my signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have put me to the test these ten times and have not obeyed my voice, shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers. And none of those who despised me shall see it. (Num 14:20b-23)

According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, a year for each day, you shall bear your iniquity forty years, and you shall know my displeasure.' I, the LORD, have spoken. Surely this will I do to all this wicked congregation who are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall come to a full end, and there they shall die." And the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned and made all the congregation grumble against him by bringing up a bad report about the land--the men who brought up a bad report of the land--died by plague before the LORD. (Num 14:34-37)

MERCY

And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them? I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they." But Moses said to the LORD, "Then the Egyptians will hear of it, for you brought up this people in your might from among them, and they will tell the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that you, O LORD, are in the midst of this people. For you, O LORD, are seen face to face, and your cloud stands over them and you go before them, in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if you kill this people as one man, then the nations who have heard your fame will say, 'It is because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land that he swore to give to them that he has killed them in the wilderness.' And now, please let the power of the Lord be great as you have promised, saying, 'The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and the fourth generation.' Please pardon the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of your steadfast love, just as you have forgiven this people, from Egypt until now." Then the LORD said, "I have pardoned, according to your word. (Num 14:11-20)

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Command of Israel

At the command of the LORD the people of Israel set out, and at the command of the LORD they camped. As long as the cloud rested over the tabernacle, they remained in camp. Even when the cloud continued over the tabernacle many days, the people of Israel kept the charge of the LORD and did not set out. (Num 9:18-19)

Command of Events

Consider what Balak said to Balaam:

Come now, curse this people for me, since they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them from the land, **for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed.**" (Num 22:6)

And Consider what God said to Balaam:

And God came to Balaam and said, "Who are these men with you?" And Balaam said to God, "Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent to me, saying, 'Behold, a people has come out of Egypt, and it covers the face of the earth. Now come, curse them for me. Perhaps I shall be able to fight against them and drive them out.'" God said to Balaam, "You shall not go with them. You shall not curse the people, for they are blessed." (Num 22:9-12)

Consider what history says concerning Balaam:

In Balaam we have the pagan counterpart to Moses the man of God. This idea has become clearer in a recent archaeological discovery of texts bearing Balaam's name at Deir 'Allah in Jordan. The discovery of these prophetic texts in Aramaic (dated variously from the mid-eighth through the sixth centuries BC) shows how famous Balaam was in the ancient Near East even centuries after his death. Balaam was an internationally known prophet, a diviner who was expert in examining the entrails of animals and in watching the movement of birds to discover the will of the gods.

Allen, Ronald B.; Allen, Ronald B.. Numbers (The Expositor's Bible Commentary) (Kindle Locations 2329-2333). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

Consider that a donkey saw what this “prophet” and “diviner” could not:

But God's anger was kindled because he went, and the angel of the LORD took his stand in the way as his adversary. Now he was riding on the donkey, and his two servants were with him. And the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road, with a drawn sword in his hand. And the donkey turned aside out of the road and went into the field. And Balaam struck the donkey, to turn her into the road. Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on either side. And when the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she pushed against the wall and pressed Balaam's foot against the wall. So he struck her again. Then the angel of the LORD went ahead and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right or to the left. When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam. And Balaam's anger was kindled, and he struck the donkey with his staff. Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?" And Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you have made a fool of me. I wish I had a sword in my hand, for then I would kill you." And the donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey, on which you have ridden all your life long to this day? Is it my habit to treat you this way?" And he said, "No." Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, with his drawn sword in his hand. And he bowed down and fell on his face. And the angel of the LORD said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to oppose you because your way is perverse before me. The donkey saw me and turned aside before me these three times. If she had not turned aside from me, surely just now I would have killed you and let her live." Then Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, "I have sinned, for I did not know that you stood in the road against me. Now therefore, if it is evil in your sight, I will turn back." And the angel of the LORD said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but speak only the word that I tell you." So Balaam went on with the princes of Balak. (Num 22:22-35)

Consider the result of Barak's request - Balaam's “curse” delivered to Israel:

How lovely are your tents, O Jacob, your encampments, O Israel! Like palm groves that stretch afar, like gardens beside a river, like aloes that the LORD has planted, like cedar trees beside the waters. Water shall flow from his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters; his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. God brings him out of Egypt and is for him like the horns of the wild ox; he shall eat up the nations, his adversaries, and shall break their bones in pieces and pierce them through with his arrows. He crouched, he lay down like a lion and like a lioness; who will rouse him up? Blessed are those who bless you, and cursed are those who curse you." (Num 24:5-9)

Barak's desire for Balaam to curse Israel resulted in his own curse:

And he took up his discourse and said, "The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor, the oracle of the man whose eye is opened, the oracle of him who hears the words of God, and knows the knowledge of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down with his eyes uncovered: I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth. (Num 24:15-17)

Command of Everything**For what does Balaam tell Barak about the Lord?**

God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it? (Num 23:19)

NEXT WEEK: DEUTERONOMY

God's Glory in God's Word: Numbers

The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. (Num 6:24-26)

Origin of the Name:

From the Greek Septuagint: Arithmoi

From the Vulgate: Numeri

See the two censuses taken – Chapter 1 and Chapter 26

Themes of Numbers

ORDER

Chapter 1: The Census

Chapter 2: Arrangement of the Camp

Chapter 3 and 4: Specific Duties assigned

Chapter 26: Another Census

Chapter 34: Land Boundaries

Chapter 34: Land for the Levites

SANCTIFICATION

Chapter 5: Rules for Unclean People

Chapter 6: Nazirite Vow

WORSHIP

Chapter 7-8: Consecration of the Tabernacle

Chapter 9: Celebration of the Passover

WRATH

Korah's Rebellion

And Moses said, "Hereby you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these works, and that it has not been of my own accord. If these men die as all men die, or if they are visited by the fate of all mankind, then the LORD has not sent me. But if the LORD creates something new, and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into Sheol, then you shall know that these men have despised the LORD." And as soon as he had finished speaking all these words, the ground under them split apart. And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the people who belonged to Korah and all their goods. So they and all that belonged to them went down alive into Sheol, and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly. (Num 16:28-33)

Chapter 13-14 – The Spies, Rebellion, and Judgment

At the end of forty days they returned from spying out the land. (Num 13:25)

The Peoples' Response

And they told him, "We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. (Num 13:27)

However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. (Num 13:28)

Then 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 are." So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, "The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height. (Num 13:31-32)

And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?" And they said to one another, "Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt." (Num 14:2-4)

Joshua's and Caleb's Response

And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes and said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, "The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. If the LORD delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them." (Num 14:6-9)

The Lord's Response

But truly, as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD, none of the men who have seen my glory and my signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have put me to the test these ten times and have not obeyed my voice, shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers. And none of those who despised me shall see it. (Num 14:20b-23)

According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, a year for each day, you shall bear your iniquity forty years, and you shall know my displeasure.' I, the LORD, have spoken. Surely this will I do to all this wicked congregation who are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall come to a full end, and there they shall die." And the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned and made all the congregation grumble against him by bringing up a bad report about the land--the men who brought up a bad report of the land--died by plague before the LORD. (Num 14:34-37)

MERCY

And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them? I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they." But Moses said to the LORD, "Then the Egyptians will hear of it, for you brought up this people in your might from among them, and they will tell the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that you, O LORD, are in the midst of this people. For you, O LORD, are seen face to face, and your cloud stands over them and you go before them, in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if you kill this people as one man, then the nations who have heard your fame will say, 'It is because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land that he swore to give to them that he has killed them in the wilderness.' And now, please let the power of the Lord be great as you have promised, saying, 'The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and the fourth generation.' Please pardon the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of your steadfast love, just as you have forgiven this people, from Egypt until now." Then the LORD said, "I have pardoned, according to your word. (Num 14:11-20)

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Command of Israel

At the command of the LORD the people of Israel set out, and at the command of the LORD they camped. As long as the cloud rested over the tabernacle, they remained in camp. Even when the cloud continued over the tabernacle many days, the people of Israel kept the charge of the LORD and did not set out. (Num 9:18-19)

Command of Events

Consider what Balak said to Balaam:

Come now, curse this people for me, since they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them from the land, **for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed.**" (Num 22:6)

And Consider what God said to Balaam:

And God came to Balaam and said, "Who are these men with you?" And Balaam said to God, "Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent to me, saying, 'Behold, a people has come out of Egypt, and it covers the face of the earth. Now come, curse them for me. Perhaps I shall be able to fight against them and drive them out.'" God said to Balaam, "You shall not go with them. You shall not curse the people, for they are blessed." (Num 22:9-12)

Consider what history says concerning Balaam:

In Balaam we have the pagan counterpart to Moses the man of God. This idea has become clearer in a recent archaeological discovery of texts bearing Balaam's name at Deir 'Allah in Jordan. The discovery of these prophetic texts in Aramaic (dated variously from the mid-eighth through the sixth centuries BC) shows how famous Balaam was in the ancient Near East even centuries after his death. Balaam was an internationally known prophet, a diviner who was expert in examining the entrails of animals and in watching the movement of birds to discover the will of the gods.

Allen, Ronald B.; Allen, Ronald B.. Numbers (The Expositor's Bible Commentary) (Kindle Locations 2329-2333). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

Consider that a donkey saw what this “prophet” and “diviner” could not:

But God's anger was kindled because he went, and the angel of the LORD took his stand in the way as his adversary. Now he was riding on the donkey, and his two servants were with him. And the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road, with a drawn sword in his hand. And the donkey turned aside out of the road and went into the field. And Balaam struck the donkey, to turn her into the road. Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on either side. And when the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she pushed against the wall and pressed Balaam's foot against the wall. So he struck her again. Then the angel of the LORD went ahead and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right or to the left. When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam. And Balaam's anger was kindled, and he struck the donkey with his staff. Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?" And Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you have made a fool of me. I wish I had a sword in my hand, for then I would kill you." And the donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey, on which you have ridden all your life long to this day? Is it my habit to treat you this way?" And he said, "No." Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, with his drawn sword in his hand. And he bowed down and fell on his face. And the angel of the LORD said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to oppose you because your way is perverse before me. The donkey saw me and turned aside before me these three times. If she had not turned aside from me, surely just now I would have killed you and let her live." Then Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, "I have sinned, for I did not know that you stood in the road against me. Now therefore, if it is evil in your sight, I will turn back." And the angel of the LORD said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but speak only the word that I tell you." So Balaam went on with the princes of Balak. (Num 22:22-35)

Consider the result of Barak’s request - Balaam’s “curse” delivered to Israel:

How lovely are your tents, O Jacob, your encampments, O Israel! Like palm groves that stretch afar, like gardens beside a river, like aloes that the LORD has planted, like cedar trees beside the waters. Water shall flow from his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters; his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. God brings him out of Egypt and is for him like the horns of the wild ox; he shall eat up the nations, his adversaries, and shall break their bones in pieces and pierce them through with his arrows. He crouched, he lay down like a lion and like a lioness; who will rouse him up? Blessed are those who bless you, and cursed are those who curse you." (Num 24:5-9)

Barak’s desire for Balaam to curse Israel resulted in his own curse:

And he took up his discourse and said, "The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor, the oracle of the man whose eye is opened, the oracle of him who hears the words of God, and knows the knowledge of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down with his eyes uncovered: I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth. (Num 24:15-17)

Command of Everything**For what does Balaam tell Barak about the Lord?**

God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it? (Num 23:19)

NEXT WEEK: DEUTERONOMY

God's Glory in God's Word: Numbers

The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. (Num 6:24-26)

Origin of the Name:

From the Greek Septuagint: Arithmoi

From the Vulgate: Numeri

See the two censuses taken – Chapter 1 and Chapter 26

Themes of Numbers

ORDER

Chapter 1: The Census

Chapter 2: Arrangement of the Camp

Chapter 3 and 4: Specific Duties assigned

Chapter 26: Another Census

Chapter 34: Land Boundaries

Chapter 34: Land for the Levites

SANCTIFICATION

Chapter 5: Rules for Unclean People

Chapter 6: Nazirite Vow

WORSHIP

Chapter 7-8: Consecration of the Tabernacle

Chapter 9: Celebration of the Passover

WRATH

Korah's Rebellion

And Moses said, "Hereby you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these works, and that it has not been of my own accord. If these men die as all men die, or if they are visited by the fate of all mankind, then the LORD has not sent me. But if the LORD creates something new, and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into Sheol, then you shall know that these men have despised the LORD." And as soon as he had finished speaking all these words, the ground under them split apart. And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the people who belonged to Korah and all their goods. So they and all that belonged to them went down alive into Sheol, and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly. (Num 16:28-33)

Chapter 13-14 – The Spies, Rebellion, and Judgment

At the end of forty days they returned from spying out the land. (Num 13:25)

The Peoples' Response

And they told him, "We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. (Num 13:27)

However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. (Num 13:28)

Then 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 are." So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, "The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height. (Num 13:31-32)

And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?" And they said to one another, "Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt." (Num 14:2-4)

Joshua's and Caleb's Response

And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes and said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, "The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. If the LORD delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them." (Num 14:6-9)

The Lord's Response

But truly, as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD, none of the men who have seen my glory and my signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have put me to the test these ten times and have not obeyed my voice, shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers. And none of those who despised me shall see it. (Num 14:20b-23)

According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, a year for each day, you shall bear your iniquity forty years, and you shall know my displeasure.' I, the LORD, have spoken. Surely this will I do to all this wicked congregation who are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall come to a full end, and there they shall die." And the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned and made all the congregation grumble against him by bringing up a bad report about the land--the men who brought up a bad report of the land--died by plague before the LORD. (Num 14:34-37)

MERCY

And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them? I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they." But Moses said to the LORD, "Then the Egyptians will hear of it, for you brought up this people in your might from among them, and they will tell the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that you, O LORD, are in the midst of this people. For you, O LORD, are seen face to face, and your cloud stands over them and you go before them, in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if you kill this people as one man, then the nations who have heard your fame will say, 'It is because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land that he swore to give to them that he has killed them in the wilderness.' And now, please let the power of the Lord be great as you have promised, saying, 'The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and the fourth generation.' Please pardon the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of your steadfast love, just as you have forgiven this people, from Egypt until now." Then the LORD said, "I have pardoned, according to your word. (Num 14:11-20)

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Command of Israel

At the command of the LORD the people of Israel set out, and at the command of the LORD they camped. As long as the cloud rested over the tabernacle, they remained in camp. Even when the cloud continued over the tabernacle many days, the people of Israel kept the charge of the LORD and did not set out. (Num 9:18-19)

Command of Events

Consider what Balak said to Balaam:

Come now, curse this people for me, since they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them from the land, **for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed.**" (Num 22:6)

And Consider what God said to Balaam:

And God came to Balaam and said, "Who are these men with you?" And Balaam said to God, "Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent to me, saying, 'Behold, a people has come out of Egypt, and it covers the face of the earth. Now come, curse them for me. Perhaps I shall be able to fight against them and drive them out.'" God said to Balaam, "You shall not go with them. You shall not curse the people, for they are blessed." (Num 22:9-12)

Consider what history says concerning Balaam:

In Balaam we have the pagan counterpart to Moses the man of God. This idea has become clearer in a recent archaeological discovery of texts bearing Balaam's name at Deir 'Allah in Jordan. The discovery of these prophetic texts in Aramaic (dated variously from the mid-eighth through the sixth centuries BC) shows how famous Balaam was in the ancient Near East even centuries after his death. Balaam was an internationally known prophet, a diviner who was expert in examining the entrails of animals and in watching the movement of birds to discover the will of the gods.

Allen, Ronald B.; Allen, Ronald B.. Numbers (The Expositor's Bible Commentary) (Kindle Locations 2329-2333). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

Consider that a donkey saw what this “prophet” and “diviner” could not:

But God's anger was kindled because he went, and the angel of the LORD took his stand in the way as his adversary. Now he was riding on the donkey, and his two servants were with him. And the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road, with a drawn sword in his hand. And the donkey turned aside out of the road and went into the field. And Balaam struck the donkey, to turn her into the road. Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on either side. And when the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she pushed against the wall and pressed Balaam's foot against the wall. So he struck her again. Then the angel of the LORD went ahead and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right or to the left. When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam. And Balaam's anger was kindled, and he struck the donkey with his staff. Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?" And Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you have made a fool of me. I wish I had a sword in my hand, for then I would kill you." And the donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey, on which you have ridden all your life long to this day? Is it my habit to treat you this way?" And he said, "No." Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, with his drawn sword in his hand. And he bowed down and fell on his face. And the angel of the LORD said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to oppose you because your way is perverse before me. The donkey saw me and turned aside before me these three times. If she had not turned aside from me, surely just now I would have killed you and let her live." Then Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, "I have sinned, for I did not know that you stood in the road against me. Now therefore, if it is evil in your sight, I will turn back." And the angel of the LORD said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but speak only the word that I tell you." So Balaam went on with the princes of Balak. (Num 22:22-35)

Consider the result of Barak's request - Balaam's “curse” delivered to Israel:

How lovely are your tents, O Jacob, your encampments, O Israel! Like palm groves that stretch afar, like gardens beside a river, like aloes that the LORD has planted, like cedar trees beside the waters. Water shall flow from his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters; his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. God brings him out of Egypt and is for him like the horns of the wild ox; he shall eat up the nations, his adversaries, and shall break their bones in pieces and pierce them through with his arrows. He crouched, he lay down like a lion and like a lioness; who will rouse him up? Blessed are those who bless you, and cursed are those who curse you." (Num 24:5-9)

Barak's desire for Balaam to curse Israel resulted in his own curse:

And he took up his discourse and said, "The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor, the oracle of the man whose eye is opened, the oracle of him who hears the words of God, and knows the knowledge of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down with his eyes uncovered: I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth. (Num 24:15-17)

Command of Everything**For what does Balaam tell Barak about the Lord?**

God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it? (Num 23:19)

NEXT WEEK: DEUTERONOMY

God's Glory in God's Word: Numbers

The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. (Num 6:24-26)

Origin of the Name:

From the Greek Septuagint: Arithmoi

From the Vulgate: Numeri

See the two censuses taken – Chapter 1 and Chapter 26

Themes of Numbers

ORDER

Chapter 1: The Census

Chapter 2: Arrangement of the Camp

Chapter 3 and 4: Specific Duties assigned

Chapter 26: Another Census

Chapter 34: Land Boundaries

Chapter 34: Land for the Levites

SANCTIFICATION

Chapter 5: Rules for Unclean People

Chapter 6: Nazirite Vow

WORSHIP

Chapter 7-8: Consecration of the Tabernacle

Chapter 9: Celebration of the Passover

WRATH

Korah's Rebellion

And Moses said, "Hereby you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these works, and that it has not been of my own accord. If these men die as all men die, or if they are visited by the fate of all mankind, then the LORD has not sent me. But if the LORD creates something new, and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into Sheol, then you shall know that these men have despised the LORD." And as soon as he had finished speaking all these words, the ground under them split apart. And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the people who belonged to Korah and all their goods. So they and all that belonged to them went down alive into Sheol, and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly. (Num 16:28-33)

Chapter 13-14 – The Spies, Rebellion, and Judgment

At the end of forty days they returned from spying out the land. (Num 13:25)

The Peoples' Response

And they told him, "We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. (Num 13:27)

However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. (Num 13:28)

Then 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 are." So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, "The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height. (Num 13:31-32)

And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?" And they said to one another, "Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt." (Num 14:2-4)

Joshua's and Caleb's Response

And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes and said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, "The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. If the LORD delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them." (Num 14:6-9)

The Lord's Response

But truly, as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD, none of the men who have seen my glory and my signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have put me to the test these ten times and have not obeyed my voice, shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers. And none of those who despised me shall see it. (Num 14:20b-23)

According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, a year for each day, you shall bear your iniquity forty years, and you shall know my displeasure.' I, the LORD, have spoken. Surely this will I do to all this wicked congregation who are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall come to a full end, and there they shall die." And the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned and made all the congregation grumble against him by bringing up a bad report about the land--the men who brought up a bad report of the land--died by plague before the LORD. (Num 14:34-37)

MERCY

And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them? I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they." But Moses said to the LORD, "Then the Egyptians will hear of it, for you brought up this people in your might from among them, and they will tell the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that you, O LORD, are in the midst of this people. For you, O LORD, are seen face to face, and your cloud stands over them and you go before them, in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if you kill this people as one man, then the nations who have heard your fame will say, 'It is because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land that he swore to give to them that he has killed them in the wilderness.' And now, please let the power of the Lord be great as you have promised, saying, 'The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and the fourth generation.' Please pardon the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of your steadfast love, just as you have forgiven this people, from Egypt until now." Then the LORD said, "I have pardoned, according to your word. (Num 14:11-20)

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Command of Israel

At the command of the LORD the people of Israel set out, and at the command of the LORD they camped. As long as the cloud rested over the tabernacle, they remained in camp. Even when the cloud continued over the tabernacle many days, the people of Israel kept the charge of the LORD and did not set out. (Num 9:18-19)

Command of Events

Consider what Balak said to Balaam:

Come now, curse this people for me, since they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them from the land, **for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed.**" (Num 22:6)

And Consider what God said to Balaam:

And God came to Balaam and said, "Who are these men with you?" And Balaam said to God, "Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent to me, saying, 'Behold, a people has come out of Egypt, and it covers the face of the earth. Now come, curse them for me. Perhaps I shall be able to fight against them and drive them out.'" God said to Balaam, "You shall not go with them. You shall not curse the people, for they are blessed." (Num 22:9-12)

Consider what history says concerning Balaam:

In Balaam we have the pagan counterpart to Moses the man of God. This idea has become clearer in a recent archaeological discovery of texts bearing Balaam's name at Deir 'Allah in Jordan. The discovery of these prophetic texts in Aramaic (dated variously from the mid-eighth through the sixth centuries BC) shows how famous Balaam was in the ancient Near East even centuries after his death. Balaam was an internationally known prophet, a diviner who was expert in examining the entrails of animals and in watching the movement of birds to discover the will of the gods.

Allen, Ronald B.; Allen, Ronald B.. Numbers (The Expositor's Bible Commentary) (Kindle Locations 2329-2333). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

Consider that a donkey saw what this “prophet” and “diviner” could not:

But God's anger was kindled because he went, and the angel of the LORD took his stand in the way as his adversary. Now he was riding on the donkey, and his two servants were with him. And the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road, with a drawn sword in his hand. And the donkey turned aside out of the road and went into the field. And Balaam struck the donkey, to turn her into the road. Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on either side. And when the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she pushed against the wall and pressed Balaam's foot against the wall. So he struck her again. Then the angel of the LORD went ahead and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right or to the left. When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam. And Balaam's anger was kindled, and he struck the donkey with his staff. Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?" And Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you have made a fool of me. I wish I had a sword in my hand, for then I would kill you." And the donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey, on which you have ridden all your life long to this day? Is it my habit to treat you this way?" And he said, "No." Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, with his drawn sword in his hand. And he bowed down and fell on his face. And the angel of the LORD said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to oppose you because your way is perverse before me. The donkey saw me and turned aside before me these three times. If she had not turned aside from me, surely just now I would have killed you and let her live." Then Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, "I have sinned, for I did not know that you stood in the road against me. Now therefore, if it is evil in your sight, I will turn back." And the angel of the LORD said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but speak only the word that I tell you." So Balaam went on with the princes of Balak. (Num 22:22-35)

Consider the result of Barak's request - Balaam's “curse” delivered to Israel:

How lovely are your tents, O Jacob, your encampments, O Israel! Like palm groves that stretch afar, like gardens beside a river, like aloes that the LORD has planted, like cedar trees beside the waters. Water shall flow from his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters; his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. God brings him out of Egypt and is for him like the horns of the wild ox; he shall eat up the nations, his adversaries, and shall break their bones in pieces and pierce them through with his arrows. He crouched, he lay down like a lion and like a lioness; who will rouse him up? Blessed are those who bless you, and cursed are those who curse you." (Num 24:5-9)

Barak's desire for Balaam to curse Israel resulted in his own curse:

And he took up his discourse and said, "The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor, the oracle of the man whose eye is opened, the oracle of him who hears the words of God, and knows the knowledge of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down with his eyes uncovered: I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth. (Num 24:15-17)

Command of Everything**For what does Balaam tell Barak about the Lord?**

God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it? (Num 23:19)

NEXT WEEK: DEUTERONOMY

God's Glory in God's Word: Numbers

The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. (Num 6:24-26)

Origin of the Name:

From the Greek Septuagint: Arithmoi

From the Vulgate: Numeri

See the two censuses taken – Chapter 1 and Chapter 26

Themes of Numbers

ORDER

Chapter 1: The Census

Chapter 2: Arrangement of the Camp

Chapter 3 and 4: Specific Duties assigned

Chapter 26: Another Census

Chapter 34: Land Boundaries

Chapter 34: Land for the Levites

SANCTIFICATION

Chapter 5: Rules for Unclean People

Chapter 6: Nazirite Vow

WORSHIP

Chapter 7-8: Consecration of the Tabernacle

Chapter 9: Celebration of the Passover

WRATH

Korah's Rebellion

And Moses said, "Hereby you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these works, and that it has not been of my own accord. If these men die as all men die, or if they are visited by the fate of all mankind, then the LORD has not sent me. But if the LORD creates something new, and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into Sheol, then you shall know that these men have despised the LORD." And as soon as he had finished speaking all these words, the ground under them split apart. And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the people who belonged to Korah and all their goods. So they and all that belonged to them went down alive into Sheol, and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly. (Num 16:28-33)

Chapter 13-14 – The Spies, Rebellion, and Judgment

At the end of forty days they returned from spying out the land. (Num 13:25)

The Peoples' Response

And they told him, "We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. (Num 13:27)

However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. (Num 13:28)

Then 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 are." So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, "The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height. (Num 13:31-32)

And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?" And they said to one another, "Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt." (Num 14:2-4)

Joshua's and Caleb's Response

And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes and said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, "The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. If the LORD delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them." (Num 14:6-9)

The Lord's Response

But truly, as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD, none of the men who have seen my glory and my signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have put me to the test these ten times and have not obeyed my voice, shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers. And none of those who despised me shall see it. (Num 14:20b-23)

According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, a year for each day, you shall bear your iniquity forty years, and you shall know my displeasure.' I, the LORD, have spoken. Surely this will I do to all this wicked congregation who are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall come to a full end, and there they shall die." And the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned and made all the congregation grumble against him by bringing up a bad report about the land--the men who brought up a bad report of the land--died by plague before the LORD. (Num 14:34-37)

MERCY

And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them? I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they." But Moses said to the LORD, "Then the Egyptians will hear of it, for you brought up this people in your might from among them, and they will tell the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that you, O LORD, are in the midst of this people. For you, O LORD, are seen face to face, and your cloud stands over them and you go before them, in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if you kill this people as one man, then the nations who have heard your fame will say, 'It is because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land that he swore to give to them that he has killed them in the wilderness.' And now, please let the power of the Lord be great as you have promised, saying, 'The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and the fourth generation.' Please pardon the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of your steadfast love, just as you have forgiven this people, from Egypt until now." Then the LORD said, "I have pardoned, according to your word. (Num 14:11-20)

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Command of Israel

At the command of the LORD the people of Israel set out, and at the command of the LORD they camped. As long as the cloud rested over the tabernacle, they remained in camp. Even when the cloud continued over the tabernacle many days, the people of Israel kept the charge of the LORD and did not set out. (Num 9:18-19)

Command of Events

Consider what Balak said to Balaam:

Come now, curse this people for me, since they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them from the land, **for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed.**" (Num 22:6)

And Consider what God said to Balaam:

And God came to Balaam and said, "Who are these men with you?" And Balaam said to God, "Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent to me, saying, 'Behold, a people has come out of Egypt, and it covers the face of the earth. Now come, curse them for me. Perhaps I shall be able to fight against them and drive them out.'" God said to Balaam, "You shall not go with them. You shall not curse the people, for they are blessed." (Num 22:9-12)

Consider what history says concerning Balaam:

In Balaam we have the pagan counterpart to Moses the man of God. This idea has become clearer in a recent archaeological discovery of texts bearing Balaam's name at Deir 'Allah in Jordan. The discovery of these prophetic texts in Aramaic (dated variously from the mid-eighth through the sixth centuries BC) shows how famous Balaam was in the ancient Near East even centuries after his death. Balaam was an internationally known prophet, a diviner who was expert in examining the entrails of animals and in watching the movement of birds to discover the will of the gods.

Allen, Ronald B.; Allen, Ronald B.. Numbers (The Expositor's Bible Commentary) (Kindle Locations 2329-2333). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

Consider that a donkey saw what this “prophet” and “diviner” could not:

But God's anger was kindled because he went, and the angel of the LORD took his stand in the way as his adversary. Now he was riding on the donkey, and his two servants were with him. And the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road, with a drawn sword in his hand. And the donkey turned aside out of the road and went into the field. And Balaam struck the donkey, to turn her into the road. Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on either side. And when the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she pushed against the wall and pressed Balaam's foot against the wall. So he struck her again. Then the angel of the LORD went ahead and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right or to the left. When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam. And Balaam's anger was kindled, and he struck the donkey with his staff. Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?" And Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you have made a fool of me. I wish I had a sword in my hand, for then I would kill you." And the donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey, on which you have ridden all your life long to this day? Is it my habit to treat you this way?" And he said, "No." Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, with his drawn sword in his hand. And he bowed down and fell on his face. And the angel of the LORD said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to oppose you because your way is perverse before me. The donkey saw me and turned aside before me these three times. If she had not turned aside from me, surely just now I would have killed you and let her live." Then Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, "I have sinned, for I did not know that you stood in the road against me. Now therefore, if it is evil in your sight, I will turn back." And the angel of the LORD said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but speak only the word that I tell you." So Balaam went on with the princes of Balak. (Num 22:22-35)

Consider the result of Barak's request - Balaam's “curse” delivered to Israel:

How lovely are your tents, O Jacob, your encampments, O Israel! Like palm groves that stretch afar, like gardens beside a river, like aloes that the LORD has planted, like cedar trees beside the waters. Water shall flow from his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters; his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. God brings him out of Egypt and is for him like the horns of the wild ox; he shall eat up the nations, his adversaries, and shall break their bones in pieces and pierce them through with his arrows. He crouched, he lay down like a lion and like a lioness; who will rouse him up? Blessed are those who bless you, and cursed are those who curse you." (Num 24:5-9)

Barak's desire for Balaam to curse Israel resulted in his own curse:

And he took up his discourse and said, "The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor, the oracle of the man whose eye is opened, the oracle of him who hears the words of God, and knows the knowledge of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down with his eyes uncovered: I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth. (Num 24:15-17)

Command of Everything

For what does Balaam tell Barak about the Lord?

God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it? (Num 23:19)

NEXT WEEK: DEUTERONOMY

God's Glory in God's Word: Numbers

The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. (Num 6:24-26)

Origin of the Name:

From the Greek Septuagint: Arithmoi

From the Vulgate: Numeri

See the two censuses taken – Chapter 1 and Chapter 26

Themes of Numbers

ORDER

Chapter 1: The Census

Chapter 2: Arrangement of the Camp

Chapter 3 and 4: Specific Duties assigned

Chapter 26: Another Census

Chapter 34: Land Boundaries

Chapter 34: Land for the Levites

SANCTIFICATION

Chapter 5: Rules for Unclean People

Chapter 6: Nazirite Vow

WORSHIP

Chapter 7-8: Consecration of the Tabernacle

Chapter 9: Celebration of the Passover

WRATH

Korah's Rebellion

And Moses said, "Hereby you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these works, and that it has not been of my own accord. If these men die as all men die, or if they are visited by the fate of all mankind, then the LORD has not sent me. But if the LORD creates something new, and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into Sheol, then you shall know that these men have despised the LORD." And as soon as he had finished speaking all these words, the ground under them split apart. And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the people who belonged to Korah and all their goods. So they and all that belonged to them went down alive into Sheol, and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly. (Num 16:28-33)

Chapter 13-14 – The Spies, Rebellion, and Judgment

At the end of forty days they returned from spying out the land. (Num 13:25)

The Peoples' Response

And they told him, "We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. (Num 13:27)

However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. (Num 13:28)

Then 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 are." So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, "The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height. (Num 13:31-32)

And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?" And they said to one another, "Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt." (Num 14:2-4)

Joshua's and Caleb's Response

And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes and said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, "The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. If the LORD delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them." (Num 14:6-9)

The Lord's Response

But truly, as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD, none of the men who have seen my glory and my signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have put me to the test these ten times and have not obeyed my voice, shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers. And none of those who despised me shall see it. (Num 14:20b-23)

According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, a year for each day, you shall bear your iniquity forty years, and you shall know my displeasure.' I, the LORD, have spoken. Surely this will I do to all this wicked congregation who are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall come to a full end, and there they shall die." And the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned and made all the congregation grumble against him by bringing up a bad report about the land--the men who brought up a bad report of the land--died by plague before the LORD. (Num 14:34-37)

MERCY

And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them? I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they." But Moses said to the LORD, "Then the Egyptians will hear of it, for you brought up this people in your might from among them, and they will tell the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that you, O LORD, are in the midst of this people. For you, O LORD, are seen face to face, and your cloud stands over them and you go before them, in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if you kill this people as one man, then the nations who have heard your fame will say, 'It is because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land that he swore to give to them that he has killed them in the wilderness.' And now, please let the power of the Lord be great as you have promised, saying, 'The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and the fourth generation.' Please pardon the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of your steadfast love, just as you have forgiven this people, from Egypt until now." Then the LORD said, "I have pardoned, according to your word. (Num 14:11-20)

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Command of Israel

At the command of the LORD the people of Israel set out, and at the command of the LORD they camped. As long as the cloud rested over the tabernacle, they remained in camp. Even when the cloud continued over the tabernacle many days, the people of Israel kept the charge of the LORD and did not set out. (Num 9:18-19)

Command of Events

Consider what Balak said to Balaam:

Come now, curse this people for me, since they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them from the land, **for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed.**" (Num 22:6)

And Consider what God said to Balaam:

And God came to Balaam and said, "Who are these men with you?" And Balaam said to God, "Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent to me, saying, 'Behold, a people has come out of Egypt, and it covers the face of the earth. Now come, curse them for me. Perhaps I shall be able to fight against them and drive them out.'" God said to Balaam, "You shall not go with them. You shall not curse the people, for they are blessed." (Num 22:9-12)

Consider what history says concerning Balaam:

In Balaam we have the pagan counterpart to Moses the man of God. This idea has become clearer in a recent archaeological discovery of texts bearing Balaam's name at Deir 'Allah in Jordan. The discovery of these prophetic texts in Aramaic (dated variously from the mid-eighth through the sixth centuries BC) shows how famous Balaam was in the ancient Near East even centuries after his death. Balaam was an internationally known prophet, a diviner who was expert in examining the entrails of animals and in watching the movement of birds to discover the will of the gods.

Allen, Ronald B.; Allen, Ronald B.. Numbers (The Expositor's Bible Commentary) (Kindle Locations 2329-2333). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

Consider that a donkey saw what this “prophet” and “diviner” could not:

But God's anger was kindled because he went, and the angel of the LORD took his stand in the way as his adversary. Now he was riding on the donkey, and his two servants were with him. And the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road, with a drawn sword in his hand. And the donkey turned aside out of the road and went into the field. And Balaam struck the donkey, to turn her into the road. Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on either side. And when the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she pushed against the wall and pressed Balaam's foot against the wall. So he struck her again. Then the angel of the LORD went ahead and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right or to the left. When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam. And Balaam's anger was kindled, and he struck the donkey with his staff. Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?" And Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you have made a fool of me. I wish I had a sword in my hand, for then I would kill you." And the donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey, on which you have ridden all your life long to this day? Is it my habit to treat you this way?" And he said, "No." Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, with his drawn sword in his hand. And he bowed down and fell on his face. And the angel of the LORD said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to oppose you because your way is perverse before me. The donkey saw me and turned aside before me these three times. If she had not turned aside from me, surely just now I would have killed you and let her live." Then Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, "I have sinned, for I did not know that you stood in the road against me. Now therefore, if it is evil in your sight, I will turn back." And the angel of the LORD said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but speak only the word that I tell you." So Balaam went on with the princes of Balak. (Num 22:22-35)

Consider the result of Barak's request - Balaam's “curse” delivered to Israel:

How lovely are your tents, O Jacob, your encampments, O Israel! Like palm groves that stretch afar, like gardens beside a river, like aloes that the LORD has planted, like cedar trees beside the waters. Water shall flow from his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters; his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. God brings him out of Egypt and is for him like the horns of the wild ox; he shall eat up the nations, his adversaries, and shall break their bones in pieces and pierce them through with his arrows. He crouched, he lay down like a lion and like a lioness; who will rouse him up? Blessed are those who bless you, and cursed are those who curse you." (Num 24:5-9)

Barak's desire for Balaam to curse Israel resulted in his own curse:

And he took up his discourse and said, "The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor, the oracle of the man whose eye is opened, the oracle of him who hears the words of God, and knows the knowledge of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down with his eyes uncovered: I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth. (Num 24:15-17)

Command of Everything**For what does Balaam tell Barak about the Lord?**

God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it? (Num 23:19)

NEXT WEEK: DEUTERONOMY