

# VIA EMMAUS: A CHRIST-CENTERED WALK THROUGH THE BIBLE

## Numbers: In the Wilderness (6)

*The LORD is slow anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the third & the fourth generations.*

Numbers 14:18

### Who: Did Moses author the Pentateuch?

- **Internal Testimony** (Lev. 1:1; Num 33:2; Deut 31:9, 24) – **Num 12:3 or Deut 34?**
- **Canonical Testimony** (Mark 7:10; Luke 24:27, 44-47)
- **Historical Evidence**<sup>1</sup>
  - o A copper snake was found in a tent shrine in Timna dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> C. BC
  - o In the Jordan Valley, an inscription was found that mentioned Balaam
  - o Israel's boundaries in Canaan match those in Egyptian texts (13-15<sup>th</sup> C. BC)
  - o The censuses find parallels in other ANE countries (18-20<sup>th</sup> C. BC)
- Weakness of competing theories: "Composition theories" have become less accepted.

### Why 'Numbers'?

- From the Greek translation. Based on the 2 censuses found in the book (ch. 1-4; 26)
- Hebrew title: "in the wilderness." Based on **Numbers 1:1**.

### When: Time in the Pentateuch

- Genesis 12-50: 100+ years Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph et al
- Exodus: 1 year From the call of Moses thru 10 plagues to Mt Sinai
- Leviticus: 0 years No chronological time
- Numbers: 38 years Compare **Numbers 1:1** with **Deuteronomy 1:3**
- Deuteronomy: 0 years No chronological time; 3 sermons from Moses to Israel

### What: Literary Structure

- Genesis: All Narrative
- Exodus: Narrative (1-19; 24; 32-34); Instruction (20-23; 25-31; 35-40)
- Leviticus: Almost Entirely Instruction (Lev. 10 is the exception)
- Numbers: Half Narrative & Half Instruction
- Deuteronomy: Covenantal Document
  - o **Narrative:** Spies report; Sihon & Og Defeated; Korah's rebellion; Balaam
  - o **Instruction:** Censuses; Reiterations of the Law; Calendar of sacrifices; Vows
  - o **Chronological Account from Sinai to Plains of Moab**

Law-Giving	at Sinai	Exodus 19:1-Numbers 10:10
Journey	from Sinai to Kadesh	Numbers 10:11-12:16
Law-Giving	at Kadesh	Numbers 13:1-19:22
Journey	from Kadesh to Moab	Numbers 20:1-22:1
Law-Giving	on the Plains of Moab	Numbers 22:2-Deuteronomy 34

### Key Themes

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<sup>1</sup>Examples taken from the [ESV Study Bible](#), p. 257. For a thorough, evangelical explanation of biblical parallels with the Ancient Near East (ANE), see K.A. Kitchen, [On the Reliability of the Old Testament](#).

## 1. The Land

- 1:1-3** Preparing for War – Entrance into the Land
- 1:1-10:11** First 10 chapters outline Israel's preparation for the Promised Land
- Arrangement of the camp (2:1-34)
  - Duties of the Levites (3:1-4:49)
  - Further laws of God's holy people (5:1-8:26)
  - The Second Passover (**9:1-14**)
  - The presence of the Lord will lead Israel (**9:15-23**)
- 13:1-14:45** Spies, Sedition, and Slaughter
- God's judgment upon Israel's unbelief (14:20-38)
  - God's promise remains (15:2)
- 15:1-36:13** Waiting for the Land
- Balaam's Oracles (22-24; esp. **24:3-9, 15-25**)
  - The 2<sup>nd</sup> Census (26)
  - Reuben & Gad Settle East of the Jordan (32)
  - Boundaries & Cities of Refuge (34-35; 36:9)

## 2. Descendants : Numerous and (Un)Holy

- 2:1-34** Offspring that outnumber the stars = 603,550
- 3:1-36:13** People who are still wrestling with the holiness of God
- 26:1-65** A whole new generation (v. 51 = 601, 730)

## 3. Covenant Relationship : *"You shall be my people, I will be your God."*

1. God's Abiding Presence with Israel (9:15-23)
2. Israel's Relentless Unbelief
  - People complain (11:1-15; 20:2-9)
  - Miriam and Aaron oppose Moses (12:1-16)
  - Israel rebels against God's word (13-14)
  - Korah leads an insurrection against Moses (16:1-50)
  - People whore after Midian's women (25:1-9; cf. 31:16)
  - Moses strikes the rock (20:10-13)

### Why does Moses include all of this?

- For the Next Generation : **Deuteronomy 31:24-32:47**
  - For you and I : **1 Corinthians 10:1-13; cf. Romans 15:4**
3. Faithfulness of God
    - The Bronze Serpent (**21:4-9**; cf. John 3:14-16)
    - Balaam's Inability to Curse Israel (22-24; esp. **23:7-10, 23:24; 24:17**)
    - The Raising Up of Joshua (**26:63-65**; cf. Deut. 1:34-40)
    - The Promise of an Inheritance Remains (**36:9**)

## 4. International Relations : Outworking of Genesis 12:1-3

- 21:21-35** God curses / destroys those who oppose Israel – Sihon / Og
- 24:9** God will bless those who bless Israel