

THE RECOUNTING OF NUMBERS

I. Numbers 33:1-56

A. We've been *in the wilderness*, the book of Numbers, for the past three months. It's been like a crash course in Religion, History, Anthropology, Math, and today Geography. Lots of different places and faces. We learned a lot about the author, Moses. Likewise, Aaron & Miriam. And infamous characters too: Korah, Dathan, & Abiram, Balak and Balaam, Zimri & Kozbi; and the 10 spies who caused a revolt...

B. Chapter 26 covers the second census, taken 40 years after the first. If you read it, you'll see the numbers compiled for each tribe, minus women & children. Perhaps the most remarkable statistic is a comparison between the overall counts. The total in the first census was: 603,550. The total in the second census was: 601,730. The difference over 4 decades is a net loss of 1,820 men...

C. Why's this remarkable? Because so many died those 40 years! The golden calf incident; the fire judgment of Taberah; the foul quail ordeal; the spy debacle; casualties to the Canaanites; the Korah, Dathan, Abiram earth-swallowing event; torching of 250 censer-bearing wannabe priests; the water-testings at Marah, Massah, & Meribah; the fiery serpents; then the plague laid upon the Baal hookers and Israelite men. Plus those who died naturally. Tens of thousands died in the desert and yet the total census difference is less than 2,000. God's favor upon them in the desert is evidenced in that they were fruitful and multiplied! Even the sandals on their feet didn't wear out!

D. Chapter 27 is about the widowed daughters of Zelophehad (Zell-o-fee-had). Not wanting to be shut out Israel's inheritance, these widows appealed to Moses and God took care of them. *And God still holds a special place for widows and orphans!* Also in this chapter we learn Joshua will succeed Moses. Chapters 28 & 29 are about various kinds of offerings. *And to Whom do all OT offerings point? Jesus Christ our Lord!* Chapter 30 is about vows by both men and women with two verses covering the guys and 14 verses covering the gals. (*Just sayin'!*) Chapter 31 is about the vengeance God orders upon Midian. It documents the death of 5 kings along with Balaam the soothsayer; post battle of executions; dividing the plunder; and even specific counts of the livestock spoils. Chapter 32 is about the tribes of Reuben and Gad wanting to inherit land on the west side of the Jordan and because they, along with Manassah, were willing to fight the Canaanites on the east side until victory was achieved for all, this request was granted. Chapter 34 is about boundaries for the 12 tribes. *A good Bible will show these on a map.* Chapter 35 is about special cities for the Levites as well as cities of refuge. Chapter 36, the last chapter, is about the marriage of female heirs. This leaves us at Chapter 33 and a geographical recap of this whole desert journey...

E. At the end of every summer, I'd usually sit Nicole on my lap or next to me as she grew older and we'd recount all the things we did that summer. Bookmarked with the Memorial Day Parade and the Sweet Corn Festival Parade, we'd rehash the happenings of vacation, swim lessons, camping trips, sleepovers, blockbuster movies we watched, books she might've read, God Squad or Youth group events, and all the other fun highlights. Moses will do something like that for us today...

F. Numbers 33:1-56 (ESV) isn't meant to promote geographic monotony but a noteworthy summation of Israel in the wilderness...

1) V1-4a: 1 *These are the stages of the people of Israel, when they went out of the land of Egypt by their companies under the leadership of Moses and Aaron. 2* **Moses wrote down their starting places, stage by stage, by command of the LORD, and these are their stages according to their starting places. 3** *They set out from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month. On the day after the Passover, the people of Israel went out triumphantly in the sight of all the Egyptians, 4* **while the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn, whom the LORD had struck down among them. (Can you just picture this? Maybe from above by drone. 2.5 million Israelites, enslaved for 400 years, now exit this super power in mass while the grieving Egyptians bury their first born sons?! And why aren't the Israelites burying their first born sons? The blood of the Lamb! Selah!)**

2) V4b: *On their gods also the LORD executed judgments. (Demons, behind those Egyptian gods and goddesses, were summarily judged!)*

3) V5-8: 5 *So the people of Israel set out from Rameses and camped at Succoth. 6* **And they set out from Succoth and camped at Etham, which is on the edge of the wilderness. 7** *And they set out from Etham and turned back to Pi-hahiroth, which is east of Baal-zephon, and they camped before Migdol. 8* **And they set out from before Hahiroth and passed through the midst of the sea into the wilderness, (Where the Egyptian charioteers were drowned; where Miriam led a victory dance with her tambourine!) they went a three days' journey in the wilderness of Etham and camped at Marah. (Marah-where the bitter water's made sweet. Has God ever turned your bitterness into sweetness? I promise you He can and will!)**

4) V9: 9 *And they set out from Marah and came to Elim; at Elim there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they camped there. (It was God who led them from bitter water to an oasis. Marah vs Elim: Talk about a metaphor for what this life offers compared to heaven!)*

5) V10-14: 10 *And they set out from Elim and camped by the Red Sea. 11* **And they set out from the Red Sea and camped in the wilderness of Sin. 12** *And they set out from the wilderness of Sin and camped at Dophkah. 13* **And they set out from Dophkah and camped at Alush. 14** *And they set out from Alush and camped at Rephidim, (Massah) where there was no water for the people to drink. (So this time God leads them to where there is no water. And yes, He sometimes leads us to where there's no water, where only He can quench our thirsty souls. Any of you ever died from thirst?)*

6) V15-16: 15 *And they set out from Rephidim and camped in the wilderness of Sinai. 16* **And they set out from the wilderness of Sinai and camped at Kibroth-hattaavah. (It was here the people complained about the manna and clamored for meat. So God gave them quail. Lots of quail! They ate so much it left a foul taste in their mouths. Many died and were buried here at Kibroth-Hattaavah which means "Graves of Craving." Has God ever given you something you craved but later you wished He hadn't?)**

7) V17: 17 *And they set out from Kibroth-hattaavah and camped at Hazeroth. (This is where Moses' siblings, Aaron & Miriam rebelled against their brother. God wasn't happy and struck Miriam briefly with leprosy. But little brother, the humblest man on*

earth, interceded for his sis and God healed her. Ever spoken ill against someone and then had to eat your words? Ever been ripped apart by gossip but then chose to forgive those wagging tongues?)

* For verses 18-29 we have no other reference points in Scripture as to what takes place in these places. But we can guess: They ate manna and drank water the Lord provided. They fed and tended their livestock. They mended their tents. They made babies as proven by the second census. They worshiped at the Tabernacle where sacrifices were made for their sins. They followed the Pillar of Cloud by day and slept securely in the glow of the Pillar of Fire at night. And they kept moving...

8) V18: 18 *And they set out from Hazeroth and camped at Rithmah. (Near here in this desert of Paran the 12 spies were sent out. But the 10-spy revolt resulted in God banning Israel from entering the Promised Land and were sentenced to wander another 40 years in the wilderness. Sin, even sin that's been forgiven, has consequences!)*

9) V19-36: 19 *And they set out from Rithmah and camped at Rimmon-perez. 20* *And they set out from Rimmon-perez and camped at Libnah. 21* *And they set out from Libnah and camped at Rissah. 22* *And they set out from Rissah and camped at Kehelathah. 23* *And they set out from Kehelathah and camped at Mount Shepher. 24* *And they set out from Mount Shepher and camped at Haradah. 25* *And they set out from Haradah and camped at Makheloth. 26* *And they set out from Makheloth and camped at Tahath. 27* *And they set out from Tahath and camped at Terah. 28* *And they set out from Terah and camped at Mithkah. 29* *And they set out from Mithkah and camped at Hashmonah. 30* *And they set out from Hashmonah and camped at Moseroth. 31* *And they set out from Moseroth and camped at Bene-jaakan. 32* *And they set out from Bene-jaakan and camped at Hor-haggidgad. 33* *And they set out from Hor-haggidgad and camped at Jotbathah. 34* *And they set out from Jotbathah and camped at Abronah. 35* *And they set out from Abronah and camped at Ezion-geber. 36* *And they set out from Ezion-geber and camped in the wilderness of Zin (that is, Kadesh). (Miriam dies and is buried here. This is where the **water of Meribah** incident took place, where Moses struck the rock twice instead of commanding it to produce water. As a result, God kept him from entering the Promised Land. This is also where Edom, descendants of Esau, refuses Israel (**Jacob**) passage thru their territory. The enmity between these twins began in their mother Rebekah's womb!)*

10) V37-40: 37 *And they set out from Kadesh and camped at Mount Hor, on the edge of the land of Edom. 38* *And Aaron the priest went up Mount Hor at the command of the LORD and died there, in the fortieth year after the people of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, on the first day of the fifth month. 39* *And Aaron was 123 years old when he died on Mount Hor. 40* *And the Canaanite, the king of Arad, who lived in the Negeb in the land of Canaan, heard of the coming of the people of Israel. (Israel scored a victory over Arad and his Canaanite army. 40 years earlier they'd lost to these guys...)*

11) V41: 41 *And they set out from Mount Hor and camped at Zalmonah. (In this part of the journey the serpent plague happens and Moses raises a bronze snake on a pole to spare the bitten. Meeting with Nicodemus, Jesus compared this to Himself. Jesus would become the snake on the pole when lifted up on the cross so those poisoned by sin might look to Him for healing.)*

12) V42-44: 42 And they set out from Zalmonah and camped at Punon. **43** And they set out from Punon and camped at Oboth. **44** And they set out from Oboth and camped at Iye-abarim, in the territory of Moab. (Near here's Israel routs Amorite kings Sihon & Og...)

13) V45-47: 45 And they set out from Iyim and camped at Dibon-gad. **46** And they set out from Dibon-gad and camped at Almon-diblathaim. **47** And they set out from Almon-diblathaim and camped in the mountains of Abarim, before Nebo. (Mt. Nebo's where Moses will see into the Promised Land from a distance. Here he'll die and be buried by God.)

14) V48-49: 48 And they set out from the mountains of Abarim and camped in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho; **49** they camped by the Jordan from Beth-jeshimoth as far as Abel-shittim in the plains of Moab. (The Balaam-trap set for Israel with the prostitutes of Baal happens around here...)

15) V50-56: (Instructions for possessing the Land.) 50 And the LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho, saying, **51** "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you pass over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, **52** then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you and destroy all their figured stones and destroy all their metal images and demolish all their high places. **53** And you shall take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given the land to you to possess it. **54** You shall inherit the land by lot according to your clans. To a large tribe you shall give a large inheritance, and to a small tribe you shall give a small inheritance. Wherever the lot falls for anyone, that shall be his. According to the tribes of your fathers you shall inherit. **55** But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then those of them whom you let remain shall be as barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall trouble you in the land where you dwell. **56** And I will do to you as I thought to do to them."

G. While there won't be an exam on Israel's wilderness journey, here's some questions: Where has your journey of faith brought you? From when and where to now? If you're still drawing breath, your journey's still happening--God still has plans and purpose for you. Just as Jeremiah 29:11 (ESV) was written to the exiles headed to Babylon, it's also for us: **1 For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare (*Shalom*) and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.**

H. One might exclaim, "I can't do anything anymore, I'm just too old!" Nonsense! Can you pray? Can you join others to pray? Can you visit those who can't get out? Can you make a meal, make a call, make time for someone? Can you read Scripture and share encouragement with others, young and old? Pray Psalm 71:18 (NLT) "Now that I am old and gray, do not abandon me, O God. Let me proclaim Your power to this new generation, Your mighty miracles to all who come after me."

I. Another might exclaim: "I'm too young, no one will let me do anything!" Nonsense! Can you pray? Can you gather with others to pray? Can you serve by helping others who can't? Can you create vs merely consume? (e.g. *Music*) Can you study & work hard and pursue a career path that'll highly benefit others while glorifying the God who made and saved you? Yes you can! **1 Timothy 4:12 (NIV) says: **12** Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.**

J. Christ died that we might live. So live! Live for Him! Eat your manna! Drink from the Wellspring of Life! Keep moving! Christ rose from the dead. The same power that raised Him dwells in those who are His! Are you His? Don't you want to be? He invites you to be His--even now! So rise up! Get up! Move! Go! Serve! Pray!

*** Close with Prayer...**

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

Numbers 33:1-56 (ESV)

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set out from Ezion-geber and camped in the wilderness of Zin (that is, Kadesh). **37** And they set out from Kadesh and camped at Mount Hor, on the edge of the land of Edom. **38** And Aaron the priest went up Mount Hor at the command of the LORD and died there, in the fortieth year after the people of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, on the first day of the fifth month. **39** And Aaron was 123 years old when he died on Mount Hor. **40** And the Canaanite, the king of Arad, who lived in the Negeb in the land of Canaan, heard of the coming of the people of Israel. **41** And they set out from Mount Hor and camped at Zalmonah. **42** And they set out from Zalmonah and camped at Punon. **43** And they set out from Punon and camped at Oboth. **44** And they set out from Oboth and camped at Iye-abarim, in the territory of Moab. **45** And they set out from Iyim and camped at Dibon-gad. **46** And they set out from Dibon-gad and camped at Almon-diblathaim. **47** And they set out from Almon-diblathaim and camped in the mountains of Abarim, before Nebo. **48** And they set out from the mountains of Abarim and camped in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho; **49** they camped by the Jordan from Beth-jeshimoth as far as Abel-shittim in the plains of Moab. **50** And the LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho, saying, **51** "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you pass over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, **52** then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you and destroy all their figured stones and destroy all their metal images and demolish all their high places. **53** And you shall take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given the land to you to possess it. **54** You shall inherit the land by lot according to your clans. To a large tribe you shall give a large inheritance, and to a small tribe you shall give a small inheritance. Wherever the lot falls for anyone, that shall be his. According to the tribes of your fathers you shall inherit. **55** But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then those of them whom you let remain shall be as barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall trouble you in the land where you dwell. **56** And I will do to you as I thought to do to them."

Jeremiah 29:11 (ESV)

11 For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Psalms 71:18 (NLT)

"Now that I am old and gray, do not abandon me, O God. Let me proclaim Your power to this new generation, Your mighty miracles to all who come after me."

1 Timothy 4:12 (NIV)

12 Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.

Bonus Goodies

Numbers 33 - NIV Audio Bible

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1Yvby_zQt0

Psalm 135 - NIV Audio Bible

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yK5SBUMTAIs>

Demons and Idols - Ligonier Ministries

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/demons-and-idols>

How are Idols Connected to Demons? - GotQuestions.org

<https://www.gotquestions.org/idols-demons.html>

What is Spiritual Adultery? - GotQuestions.org

<https://www.gotquestions.org/spiritual-adultery.html>

Spiritual Adultery - Ligonier Ministries

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/spiritual-adultery>

A Friend on the Trail of Tears - Thomas S. Kidd (Desiring God)

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/a-friend-on-the-trail-of-tears>

[More Verses, Quotes, Excerpts, & Extras](#)

[Psalm 135:1-21 \(ESV\)](#)

1 Praise the LORD! Praise the name of the LORD, give praise, O servants of the LORD, **2** who stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God! **3** Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good; sing to His name, for it is pleasant! **4** For the LORD has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel as His own possession. **5** For I know that the LORD is great, and that our LORD is above all gods. **6** Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps. **7** He it is who makes the clouds rise at the end of the earth, who makes lightnings for the rain and brings forth the wind from his storehouses. **8** He it was who struck down the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and of beast; **9** who in your midst, O Egypt, sent signs and wonders against Pharaoh and all his servants; **10** who struck down many nations and killed mighty kings, **11** Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan, **12** and gave their land as a heritage, a heritage to His people Israel. **13** Your name, O LORD, endures forever, Your renown, O LORD, throughout all ages. **14** For the LORD will vindicate His people and have compassion on His servants. **15** The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of human hands. **16** They have mouths, but do not speak; they have eyes, but do not see; **17** they have ears, but do not hear, nor is there any breath in their mouths. **18** Those who make them become like them, so do all who trust in them. **19** O house of Israel, bless the LORD! O house of Aaron, bless the LORD! **20** O house of Levi, bless the LORD! You who fear the LORD, bless the LORD! **21** Blessed be the LORD from Zion, He who dwells in Jerusalem! Praise the LORD!

[Psalm 136:1-26 \(LSB\)](#)

1 Give thanks to Yahweh, for He is good, for His lovingkindness endures forever. **2** Give thanks to the God of gods, for His lovingkindness endures forever. **3** Give thanks to the Lord of lords, for His lovingkindness endures forever. **4** To Him who alone does great

wonders, for His lovingkindness endures forever; **5** to Him who made the heavens with skill, for His lovingkindness endures forever; **6** to Him who spread out the earth above the waters, for His lovingkindness endures forever; **7** to Him who made the great lights, for His lovingkindness endures forever: **8** the sun to rule by day, for His lovingkindness endures forever, **9** the moon and stars to rule by night, for His lovingkindness endures forever. **10** To Him who struck the Egyptians through their firstborn, for His lovingkindness endures forever, **11** then brought Israel out from their midst, for His lovingkindness endures forever, **12** with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, for His lovingkindness endures forever. **13** To Him who divided the Red Sea in two, for His lovingkindness endures forever, **14** and made Israel pass through the midst of it, for His lovingkindness endures forever, **15** but He overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea, for His lovingkindness endures forever. **16** To Him who led His people through the wilderness, for His lovingkindness endures forever; **17** to Him who struck great kings, for His lovingkindness endures forever, **18** and killed mighty kings, for His lovingkindness endures forever: **19** Sihon, king of the Amorites, for His lovingkindness endures forever, **20** and Og, king of Bashan, for His lovingkindness endures forever, **21** and gave their land as an inheritance, for His lovingkindness endures forever, **22** even an inheritance to Israel His servant, for His lovingkindness endures forever. **23** Who remembered us in our low estate, for His lovingkindness endures forever, **24** and has snatched us from our adversaries, for His lovingkindness endures forever; **25** Who gives food to all flesh, for His lovingkindness endures forever. **26** Give thanks to the God of heaven, for His lovingkindness endures forever.

Numbers 27:12-23 (ESV)

12 The LORD said to Moses, “Go up into this mountain of Abarim and see the land that I have given to the people of Israel. **13** When you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as your brother Aaron was, **14** because you rebelled against My word in the wilderness of Zin when the congregation quarreled, failing to uphold Me as holy at the waters before their eyes.” (These are the waters of Meribah of Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.) **15** Moses spoke to the LORD, saying, **16** “Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation **17** who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be as sheep that have no shepherd.” **18** So the LORD said to Moses, “Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him. **19** Make him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and you shall commission him in their sight. **20** You shall invest him with some of your authority, that all the congregation of the people of Israel may obey. **21** And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the LORD. At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the people of Israel with him, the whole congregation.” **22** And Moses did as the LORD commanded him. He took Joshua and made him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole congregation, **23** and he laid his hands on him and commissioned him as the LORD directed through Moses.

Leviticus 19:32 (NIV)

32 Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the LORD.

Proverbs 16:31 (ESV)

31 Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life."

Isaiah 46:4 (VOICE)

And when you are old, I will still be there, carrying you. When your limbs grow tired, your eyes are weak, and your hair a silvery gray, I will carry you as I always have. I will carry you and save you.

Census Comparison from the Book of Numbers

The NIV Study Bible

<u>Tribe</u>	<u>First Census</u>	<u>Second Census</u>
Reuben	46,500	43,730
Simeon	59,300	22,200
Gad	45,650	40,500
Judah	74,600	76,500
Issachar	54,400	64,300
Zebulum	57,400	60,500
Ephraim	40,500	32,500
Manasseh	32,200	52,700
Benjamin	35,400	45,600
Dan	62,700	64,400
Asher	41,500	53,400
Naphtali	53,400	45,400
	_____	_____
Total	603,550	601,730

- Chart from Numbers 26, *The NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, p. 227.