

A Study in the Book of Numbers



By Cecilia Perh



Entrusting the Word
to the Faithful

Book	Genesis	Exodus	Leviticus	Numbers	Deuteronomy
Key Idea	Beginnings	Redemption	Worship	Wandering	Renewed Covenant
The Nation	Chosen	Delivered	Set Apart	Directed	Made Ready
The People	Prepared	Redeemed	Taught	Tested	Re-taught
God's Character	Powerful, Sovereign	Merciful	Holy	Just	Loving Lord
God's Role	Creator	Deliverer	Sanctifier	Sustainer	Rewarder
God's Command	"Let there be!"	"Let My people go!"	"Be holy"	"Go in!"	"Obey!"

Numbers in the Pentateuch

Genesis	Exodus	Leviticus	Numbers	Deuteronomy
ORIGINS of the nation	DELIVERANCE of the nation	LIFE of the nation	TEST of the nation	REMINDERS to the nation
THEOCRACY BORN	THEOCRACY ESTABLISHED	THEOCRACY ESTABLISHED	THEOCRACY TESTED AND PREPARED FOR THE NEW HOME	

COVENANT
IS AMPLIFIED
 “Keep my covenant to be a peculiar treasure:
 “Kingdom of priests”
 “holy nation”
 (Exo. 19:5-6)

LAWS
ARE PRESCRIBED
 “which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD”
 (Lev. 18:5)

Irvin L. Jensen, p 102
 (Jensen’s Survey of the OT)

Numbers is the story of God leading His people, Israel, through wildernesses on their way to Canaan, the rest land He promised.

The journey moves from Mount Sinai to the plains of Moab, opposite Jericho.

- It was a brief journey in the dark unknown, demanding the utmost in trust and patience (Numbers 1:1-10:10).**
- It is a long, aimless wandering in judgment for unbelief, consuming all but two of first census, 20 years and above (Numbers 10:11-20:29).**
- It is a new and swift journey by the next generation with a few of the old leaders, to enter into the land of rest and blessing (Numbers 21:1-36:13)**

Numbers: Journey to God's Rest



The Generation of Those Who Had Come Out of Egypt

Preparation

- organization
- consecration
- instruction

The Test

- of faith
- of obedience

The Judgment

- wandering
- death

Wilderness

SINAI

KADESH

A New Generation

Reorganisation

- repair

Plains of Moab

MOAB



The theme of Numbers is the consequence of disbelief and disobedience to the holy God. The Lord disciplined His people but remained faithful to His covenant promises in spite of their fickleness.

Numbers displays the patience, holiness, justice, mercy, and sovereignty of God toward His people.

It teaches that there are no shortcuts to His blessings – He uses trials and tests for specific purposes.

Numbers was written to trace the history of Israel’s wanderings from Sinai to Moab. But the fact that there was almost no record of the 38 years of wandering shows that Numbers is a very thematic history. It selects those events that are important to the development of God’s redemptive program. The sins of the first generation were written as a reminder and a warning to the second generation. They must implicitly trust God before they can possess the land of blessing.

Theme and Purpose

The Old Generation			The Tragic Transition				The New Generation																						
1	4	5	10:10	10:11	14	15	16	17	20	21	25	26	30	31	33	34	36												
Counting and Ordering of the People			Cleansing of the People			Complaints and Disbelief of the People			Instructions for Life in Canaan			The Rebellion of Korah			Aaron, the Levites and Moses			Serpent of Brass and Story of Balaam			Second Census and Laws of Israel			Settling east of Jordan			Preparations for Settling in Canaan		
Preparation			Preparation			Postponement			Postponement			Promise			Promise			Promise			Promise			Promise					
Waiting			Waiting			Wandering			Wandering			Waiting			Waiting			Waiting			Waiting			Waiting					
Census, Instruction, Travel			Census, Instruction, Travel			-			-			-			Travel, Census, Instruction			Travel, Census, Instruction			Travel, Census, Instruction			Travel, Census, Instruction					
At Sinai			At Sinai			To Moab			To Moab			To Moab			At Moab			At Moab			At Moab			At Moab					
Sinai to Kadesh			Sinai to Kadesh			Wilderness			Wilderness			Wilderness			Kadesh to Moab			Kadesh to Moab			Kadesh to Moab			Kadesh to Moab					
Preparation for the Journey			Preparation for the Journey			The Journey			The Journey			The Journey			At the Gate of the Land			At the Gate of the Land			At the Gate of the Land			At the Gate of the Land					
About 2 months (39%)			About 2 months (39%)			38 years (17%)			38 years (17%)			38 years (17%)			A few months (44%)			A few months (44%)			A few months (44%)			A few months (44%)					
Mobilizing the People Numbers 1-9			Mobilizing the People Numbers 1-9			Displeased with His People Numbers 10-19			Displeased with His People Numbers 10-19			Displeased with His People Numbers 10-19			Reading a New Generation Numbers 20-36			Reading a New Generation Numbers 20-36			Reading a New Generation Numbers 20-36			Reading a New Generation Numbers 20-36					
Getting Ready to Possess the land			Getting Ready to Possess the land			Steps to Disqualify Self from Serving the ORD			Steps to Disqualify Self from Serving the ORD			Steps to Disqualify Self from Serving the ORD			An Examination of their Readiness to enter the Lord's Land			An Examination of their Readiness to enter the Lord's Land			An Examination of their Readiness to enter the Lord's Land			An Examination of their Readiness to enter the Lord's Land					
Structuring			Structuring			Testing			Testing			Testing			Enduring			Enduring			Enduring			Enduring					

Leviticus covered only one month, but Numbers stretches over almost 39 years (about 1444 BC to 1405 BC – traditional dating).

It records Israel's movement from the last 19 days at Mt Sinai (1:1; 10:11) to the arrival in the plains of Moab in the 40th year (22:1; 26:3; 33:5; Deut 1:3).

Most of this time was spent wandering in and around Kadesh-barnea. Their tents occupied several square miles whenever they camped since there were over 2.5 million people. God miraculously fed and sustained them in the desert – He preserved their clothing and gave them manna, meat, water, leaders, and a promise.

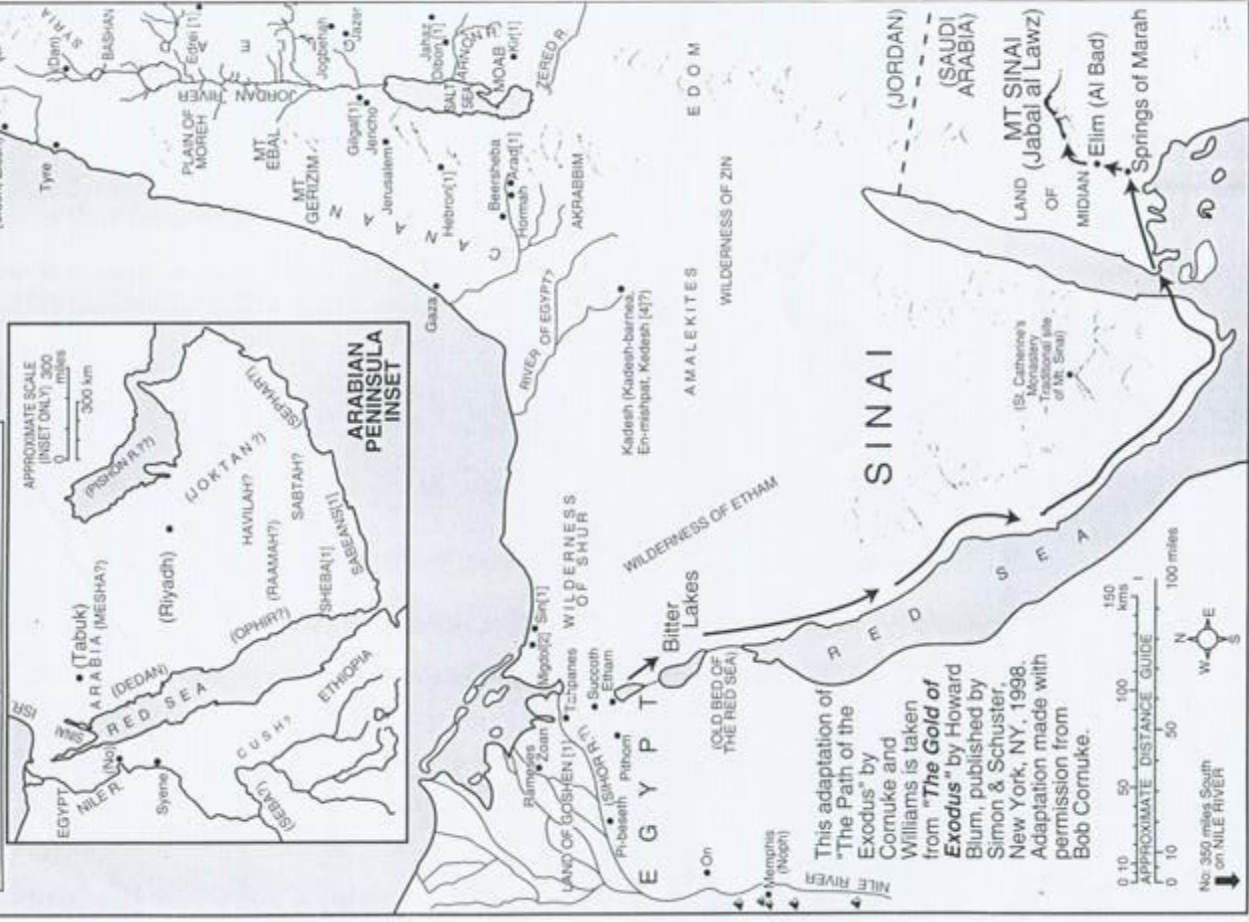
Date and Setting of the Book of Numbers



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

MAP SUPPLEMENT TO BIBLE MAP INSERT
NEW LOCATION OF MT. SINAI - SEE PAGE 4; AA-38-14 FOR GRID LOCATION

Era of the Exodus & Wandering
 Adapted from "The Path of the Exodus"
 C.A. 1997 by Cornuke and Williams



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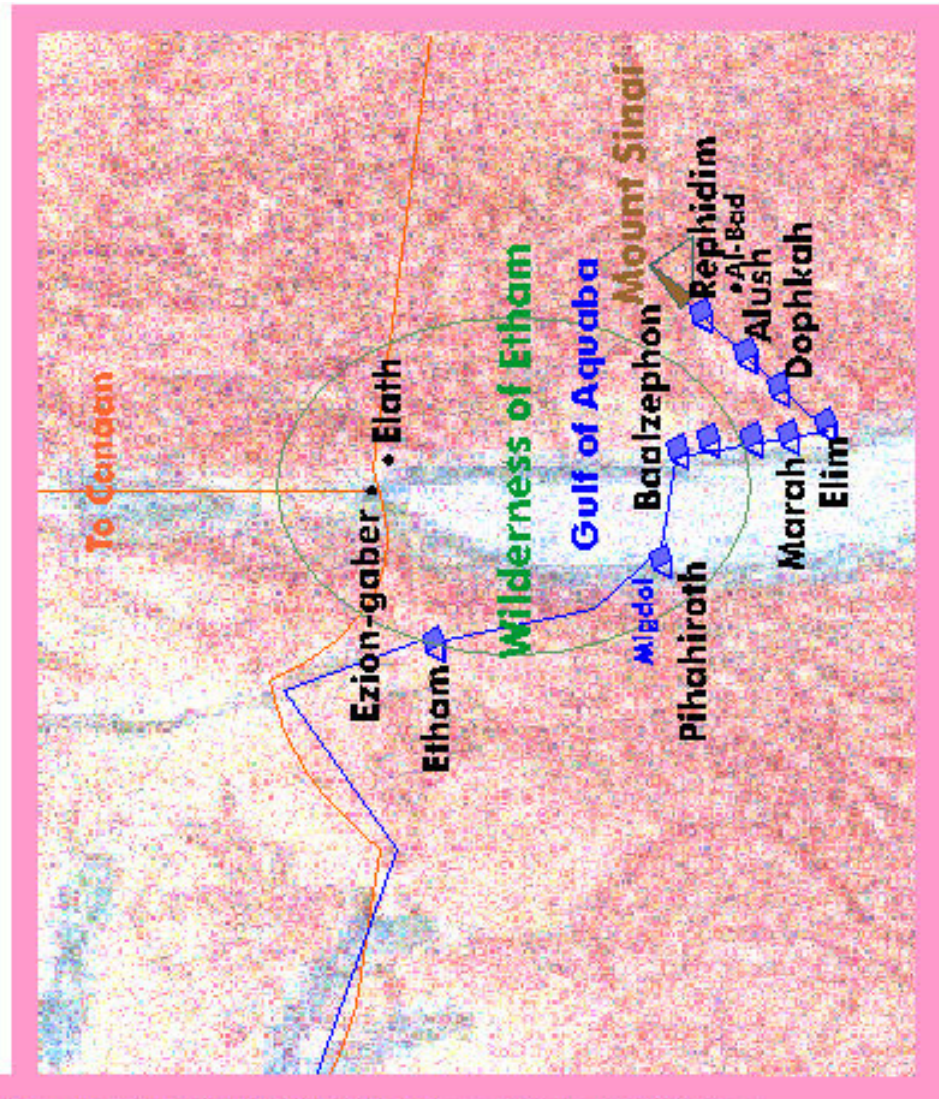
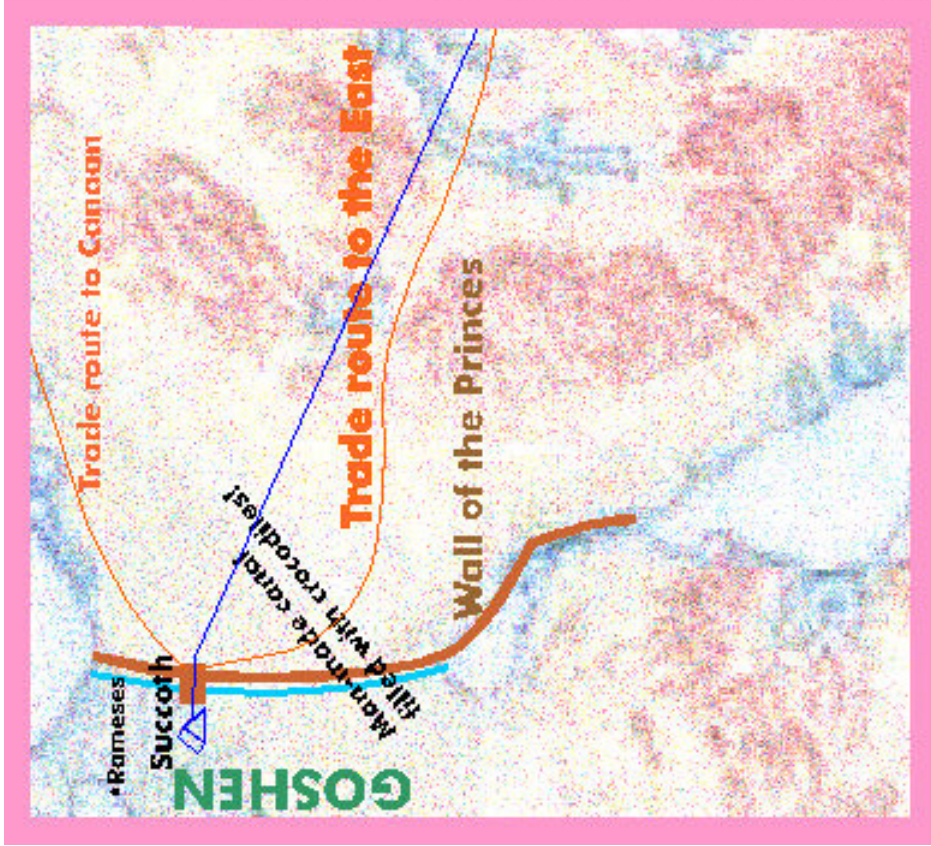
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- **Moses' preparation of conquest involved four stages:**
 - **Celebrating the Passover (9:1-14)**
 - **Numbering the Soldiers (chapter 1)**
 - **Organizing the Tribes (chapter 2)**
 - **Assigning the Priestly Duties (chapters 3-4)**
- **The events in Numbers 7:1-9:15 precede the events in Numbers 1-6**
 - **Numbers 1:1 - Then the LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tent of meeting, on the first of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt,**
 - **Numbers 9:1 - Thus the LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt,**

Historical Setting



The 12 tribal leaders began to bring their gifts on that day (Numbers 7:1), a procedure that lasted 12 days



- This is the second year of Israel's National History (traditional dating, 1444 BC).



- The tabernacle was erected on the 1st day of the 1st month of Nisan (Exodus 40:2,17).
- The 12 Tribal Leaders began to bring their gifts on that day (Numbers 7:1), a procedure that lasted 12 days.
- On the 13th day, the Levites were consecrated (Numbers 8) and on the 14th day they celebrated the Passover (Numbers 9:1-14) – the last Passover they celebrated until Joshua led them into the Promised land nearly 40 years later (Joshua 5:10).

Historical Setting



35,400

BENJAMIN

40,500

EPHRAIM

32,200

MANASSEH

ASHER

41,500

DAN

62,700

NAPHTALI

53,400

54,400

ISSACHAR

74,600

JUDAH

57,400

ZEBULUN

45,650

GAD

46,500

REUBEN

59,300

SIMEON

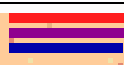
GERSHONITES

7,500

West



TABERNACLE



East

LEVITES

North

MERARITES

6,200

South

KOATHITES

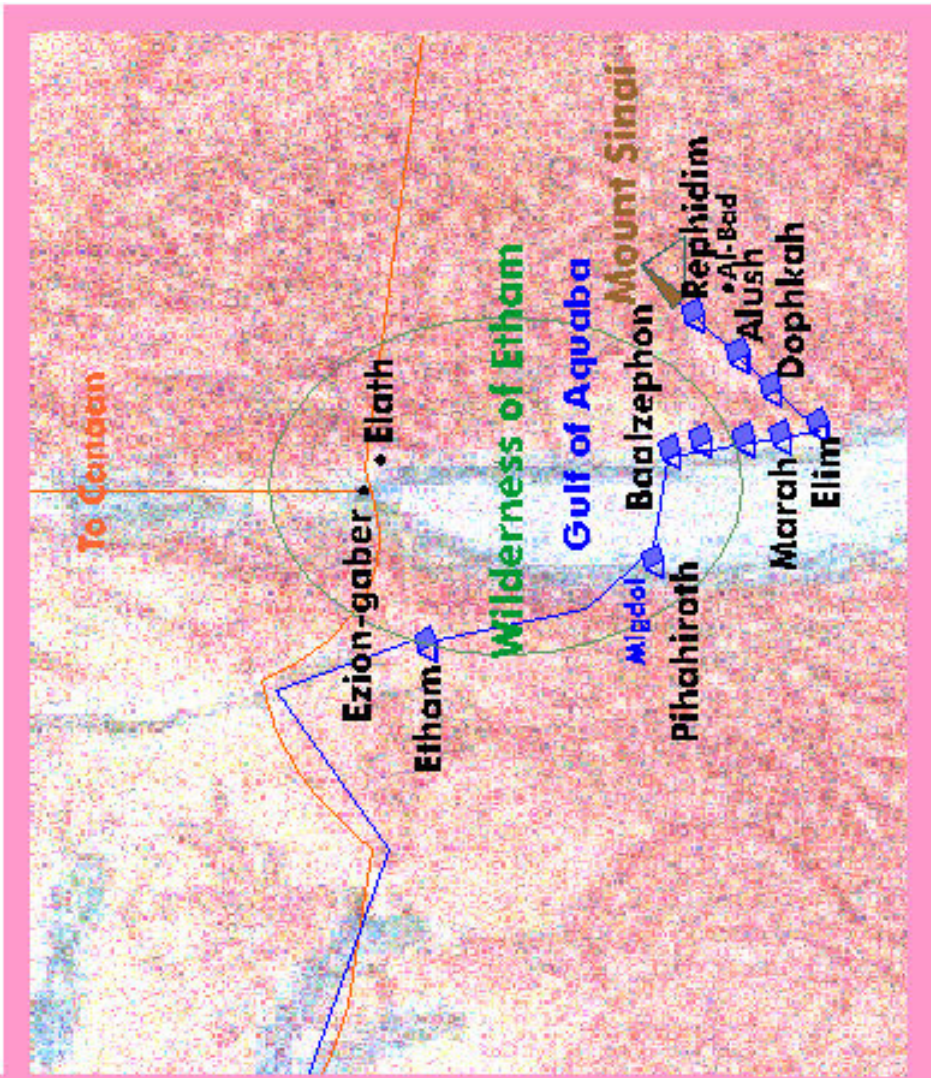
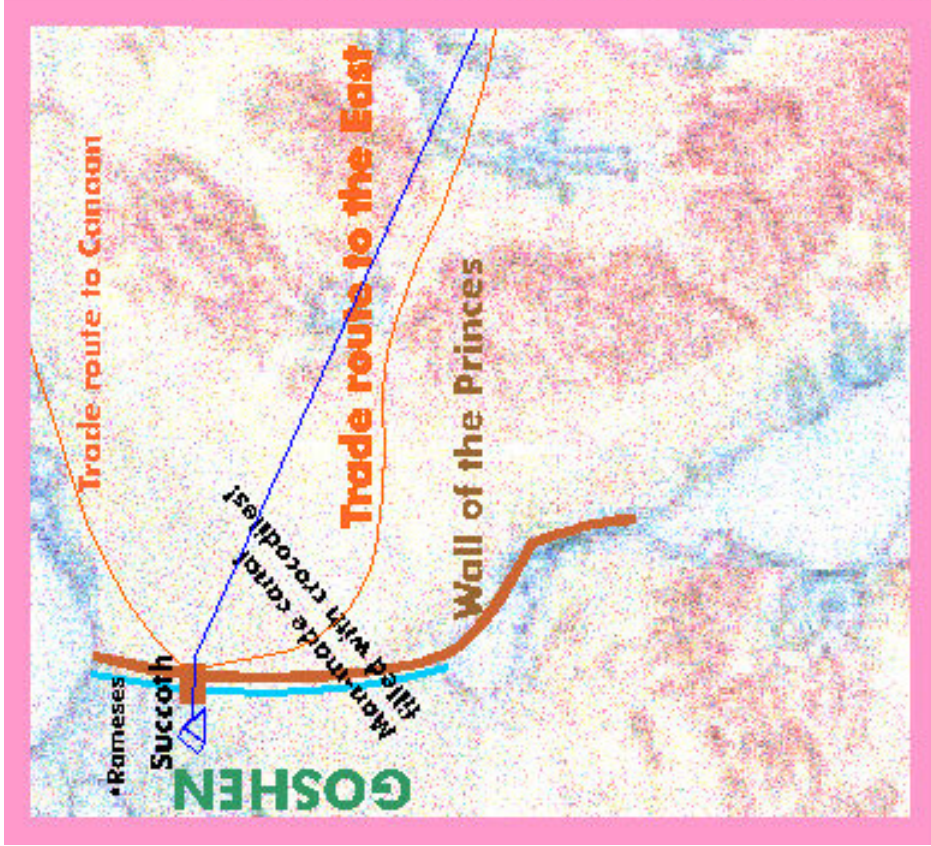
8,600

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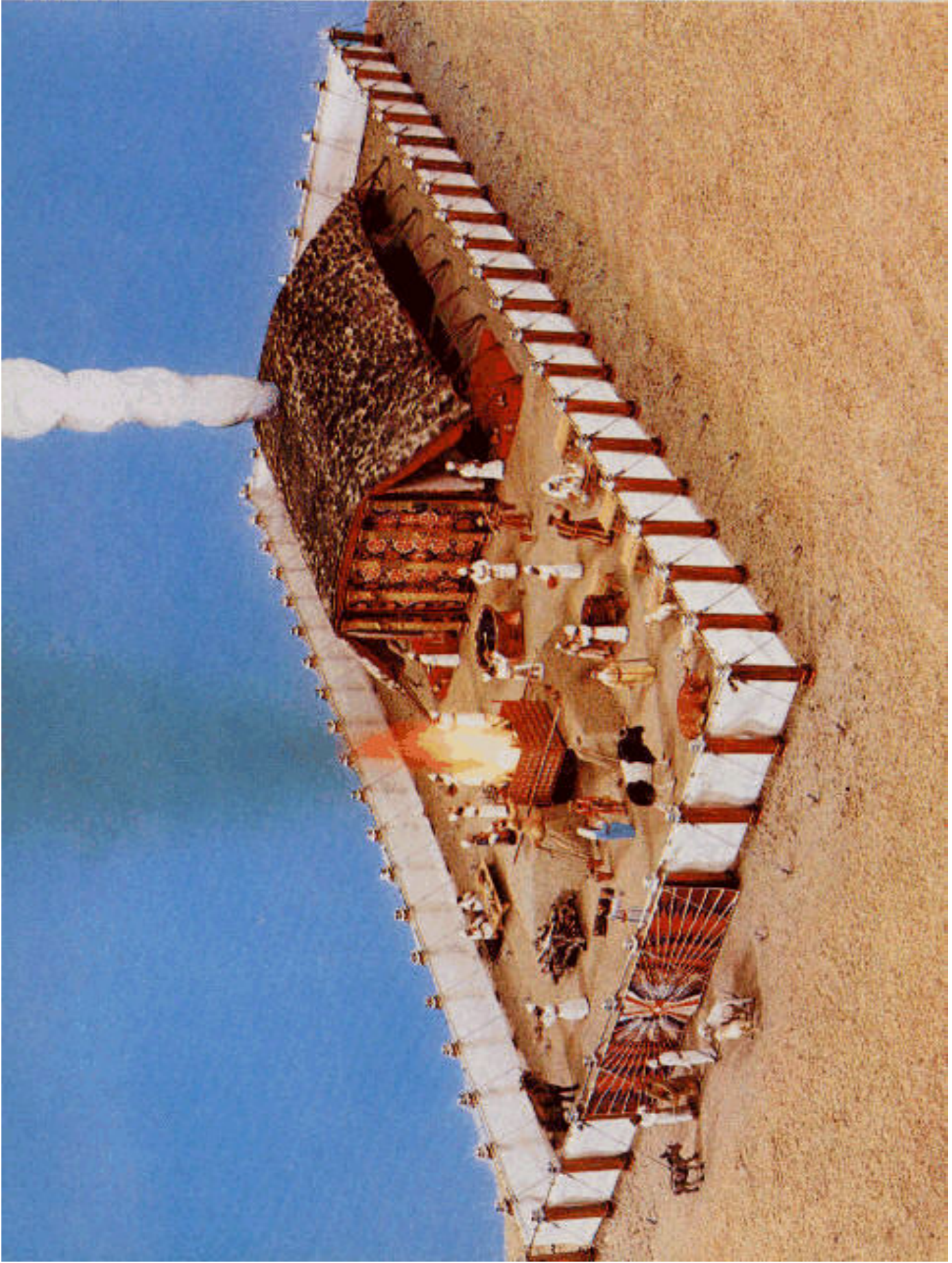


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Historical Setting



I. At Sinai: Obeying the Lord (1:1-9:14)

1. **Numbering the Soldiers (1:1-54)**
2. **Organizing the Tribes (2:1-34)**
3. **Assigning the Duties (chapter 3-4)**
4. **Purifying the People (chapter 5-6)**
5. **Dedicating the Tabernacle (chapter 7-8)**
6. **Celebrating the Passover (9:1-14)**

II. To Kadesh: Tempting the Lord (9:15-12:16)

1. **The Camp Marches (9:15-10:36)**
2. **The People Complain (chapter 11)**
3. **Aaron and Miriam Criticize Moses (chapter 12)**

III. At Kadesh: Rebellious Against the Lord (chapter 13-14)

1. **Exploring the Promised Land (chapter 13)**
2. **Refusing the Claim the Land (14:1-9)**
3. **Turning away from the Land (14:10-45)**

Numbers: Man's Failure and God's Faithfulness (Num 14:8-9) (Wiersbe)



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

Numbers 6 - In this chapter we have,

I. The law concerning Nazarites,

- 1. What it was to which the vow of a Nazarite obliged him (Num_6:1-8).**
- 2. A remedial law in case a Nazarite happened to be polluted by the touch of a dead body (Num_6:9-12).**
- 3. The solemnity of his discharge when his time was up (Num_6:13-21).**

II. Instructions given to the priests how they should bless the people (Num_6:22, etc.).

Matthew Henry on Numbers 6



v1-8 Separation Described

- 1 **Again** the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "**Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them, 'When a man or woman makes a special vow, the vow of a Nazirite, to dedicate himself to the LORD, 3 he shall abstain from wine and strong drink; he shall drink no vinegar, whether made from wine or strong drink, neither shall he drink any grape juice, nor eat fresh or dried grapes.**"
- 4 **All the days** of his separation he shall not eat anything that is produced by the grape vine, from *the seeds even to the skin.*

Numbers 6 – A Separated people



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

The Law of the Nazirite (Chap. 6)

6:1-8 The word "Nazirite" comes from a root meaning "to separate." **The vow of a Nazirite** was a voluntary vow which a man or woman could make for a specified period of time. The Mishna states that a Nazirite vow could last as long as 100 days, but the usual length was thirty days. In some rare cases, people were Nazirites for life - e.g., Samuel, Samson, John the Baptist. The vow contained three provisions: (1) He would **neither . . . eat nor drink** of the fruit of the **grapevine**—including **vinegar, wine, grape juice, grapes or raisins** (vv. 2-4); (2) he would not cut his hair (v. 5); (3) he would **not go near a dead body** (vv. 6-8).

Wine speaks of human joy. Long hair, being a shame for a man, is a sign of humiliation. A **dead body** causes defilement.

Thus the Nazirite was, and is, an enigma to the children of this world. To be joyful, he withdrew from joy; to be strong, he became weak; and in order to love his relatives, he 'hated' them (Luk 14:26).

Believer's Bible Commentary on Numbers 6:1-8

Num 6:2-8 - When either man or woman ... shall vow a vow of a Nazarite - that is, “a separated one,” from a Hebrew word, “to separate.” It was used to designate a class of persons who, under the impulse of extraordinary piety and with a view to higher degrees of religious improvement, voluntarily renounced the occupations and pleasures of the world to dedicate themselves unreservedly to the divine service. The vow might be taken by either sex, provided they had the disposal of themselves (Num_30:4), and for a limited period - usually a month or a lifetime (Jdg_13:5; 16:17). We do not know, perhaps, the whole extent of abstinence they practised. But they separated themselves from three things in particular - namely, from wine, and all the varieties of vinous produce; from the application of a razor to their head, allowing their hair to grow; and from pollution by a dead body. The reasons of the self-restrictions are obvious. The use of wine tended to inflame the passions, intoxicate the brain, and create a taste for luxurious indulgence. The cutting off the hair being a recognized sign of uncleanness (Lev_14:8, 9), its unpolled luxuriance was a symbol of the purity he professed. Besides, its extraordinary length kept him in constant remembrance of his vow, as well as stimulated others to imitate his pious example. Moreover, contact with a dead body, disqualifying for the divine service, the Nazarite carefully avoided such a cause of unfitness, and, like the high priest, did not assist at the funeral rites of his nearest relatives, preferring his duty to God to the indulgence of his strongest natural affections.

Robert Jamieson on Numbers 6:2-8



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

v1-8 Separation Described

5 'All the days of his vow of separation no razor shall pass over his head. He shall be holy until the days are fulfilled for which he separated himself to the LORD; he shall let the locks of hair on his head grow long. 6 All the days of his separation to the LORD he shall not go near to a dead person. 7 He shall not make himself unclean for his father or for his mother, for his brother or for his sister, when they die, because his separation to God is on his head. 8 All the days of his separation he is holy to the LORD.

Numbers 6 – A Separated people



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

Letting the hair grow, therefore, was not a sign of separation, because it was the Israelitish custom to go about with the hair cut; nor a practical profession of a renunciation of the world, and separation from human society (Hengstenberg, pp. 190-1); nor a sign of abstinence from every appearance of self-gratification (*Baur* on *Amo_2:11*); nor even a kind of humiliation and self-denial (*Lightfoot*, *Carpzov. appar.* p. 154); still less a “sign of dependence upon some other present power” (*M. Baumgarten*), or “the symbol of a state of perfect liberty” (*Vitringa*, *obss.* ss. 1, c. 6, §9; cf. *Num_6:22, 8*). The free growth of the hair, unhindered by the hand of man, was rather “the symbol of strength and abundant vitality” (cf. 2Sa_14:25-26). It was not regarded by the Hebrews as a sign of sanctity, as Bähr supposes, but simply as an ornament, in which the whole strength and fulness of vitality were exhibited, and which the Nazarite wore in honour of the Lord, as a sign that he “belonged to the Lord, and dedicated himself to His service,” with all his vital powers.

(Note: In support of this explanation, *Oehler* calls to mind those heathen hair-offerings of the Athenian youths, for example (*Plut. Thes.* c. 5), which were founded upon the idea, that the hair in general was a symbol of vital power, and the hair of the beard a sign of virility; and also more especially the example of Samson, whose hair was not only the symbol, but the vehicle, of the power which fitted him to be the deliverer of his people.)

Keil and Delitzsch on Numbers 6:5



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

Num 6:7 - He shall not make himself unclean for his father or for his mother, for his brother or for his sister, when they die,.... Aben Ezra adds also, for his wife, and for his daughter, and for others; what even the priests of the Lord, the common priests might do, a Nazarite might not, not come near any of his relations when dead, as to touch them, to close their eyes, or wash their bodies, and provide for their funeral, and attend that, or to be where they were; in this respect they were upon a level with the high priest, who was forbid the same, which shows how sacred these persons were; see Lev 21:1; this may instruct spiritual Nazarites to abstain from the company and conversation of sinners, dead in trespasses and sins, and from all dead works and sinful actions, which, as they are deserving of death, are defiling: because the consecration of his God is upon his head; or that which shows him to be consecrated to God, and separated to his service, is upon his head, namely, his long hair: the Targum of Jonathan renders it, "the crown of his God"; so Aben Ezra observes, that some say that the word "Nazarite" is derived from "Nezer", a crown, in proof of which this passage is produced; and in this respect the Nazarites were not only types of Christ our King and high priest, who is a priest on his throne, and has on his head many crowns, but of the saints who are freed from the power and dominion of sin, and are made kings and priests unto God.

John Gill on Numbers 6:7



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

v9-12 Separation Defiled

9 **'But if** a man dies **very suddenly** beside him and he defiles his dedicated head of **hair**, **then he shall shave his head on the day when he becomes clean; he shall shave it on the seventh day.** 10 **Then on the eighth day he shall bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons to the priest, to the doorway of the tent of meeting. 11 And the priest shall offer one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering, and make atonement for him concerning his sin because of the dead person. And that same day he shall consecrate his head, 12 and shall dedicate to the LORD his days as a Nazirite, and shall bring a male lamb a year old for a guilt offering; but the former days shall be void because his separation was defiled.**

Numbers 6 – A Separated people



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

Num 6:9 - And if any man die very suddenly by him,.... In the place where he is, whether house or field, a public or private place, in the tent where he is, as ... "suddenly through ignorance' understanding it of a chance matter, as when one man is killed by another, not wilfully and through malice, but without intention and design... **and he both defiled the head of his consecration:** or the consecration of his head, his Nazariteship, that is, his hair, he being polluted by the dead, through being where it was: **then he shall shave his head in the day of his cleansing;** which was the seventh day from his defilement, as follows: **on the seventh day he shall shave it;** for so many days was a person unclean that had touched a body, of had been where one was, and on the seventh day he was to be cleansed, Num_19:11; and this was one way of cleansing the Nazarite, cutting off his locks of hair, which were to grow long, and made him to be a Nazarite; and shave his head for his pollution by the dead, put an end to his Nazariteship; and he was obliged to begin again, and his hair being polluted, must be shaved, and new hair grow to make him a Nazarite again: thus by one single breach of the law of God a man becomes guilty of all, and liable to its curse, and his legal righteousness becomes insufficient to justify him before God, and therefore his own righteousness must be renounced by him in the business of justification; and which, Ainsworth suggests, is the mystery of the Nazarite's head being shaved when polluted.

John Gill on Numbers 6:9

 Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

Num 6:12 - The position of the Nazarite, therefore, as *Philo, Maimonides*, and others clearly saw, was a condition of life consecrated to the Lord, resembling the sanctified relation in which the priests stood to Jehovah, and differing from the priesthood solely in the fact that it involved no official service at the sanctuary, and was not based upon a divine calling and institution, but was undertaken spontaneously for a certain time and through a special vow. The object was simply the realization of the idea of a priestly life, with its purity and freedom from all contamination from everything connected with death and corruption, a self-surrender to God stretching beyond the deepest earthly ties, “a spontaneous appropriation of what was imposed upon the priest by virtue of the calling connected with his descent, namely, the obligation to conduct himself as a person betrothed to God, and therefore to avoid everything that would be opposed to such surrender” (Oehler). In this respect the Nazarite's sanctification of life was a step towards the realization of the priestly character, which had been set before the whole nation as its goal at the time of its first calling (Exo_19:5); and although it was simply the performance of a vow, and therefore a work of perfect spontaneity, it was also a work of the Spirit of God which dwelt in the congregation of Israel, so that Amos could describe the raising up of Nazarites along with prophets as a special manifestation of divine grace.

Keil and Delitzsch on Numbers 6:12

 Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

v13-21 Separation Fulfilled

13 **Now** this is **the law of the Nazirite when the days of his separation are fulfilled, he shall bring the offering to the doorway of the tent of meeting.** **14 And he shall present his offering to the LORD: one male lamb a year old without defect for a burnt offering and one ewe-lamb a year old without defect for a sin offering and one ram without defect for a peace offering, 15 and a basket of unleavened cakes of fine flour mixed with oil and unleavened wafers spread with oil, along with their grain offering and their libations. 16 Then the priest shall present *them* before the LORD and shall offer his sin offering and his burnt offering. 17 He shall also offer the ram for a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD, together with the basket of unleavened cakes; the priest shall **likewise** offer its grain offering and its libation.**

Numbers 6 – A Separated people



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

Num 6:13-17 - When one's time of consecration was over, the Nazirite was to take to the tabernacle a year-old male lamb... for a burnt offering, a year-old ewe lamb... for a sin offering, and a ram... for a fellowship offering. These, accompanied by grain offerings and drink offerings and a basket of unleavened bread... made of fine flour and oil and wafers spread with oil, constituted the formal announcement of his termination of Nazirite dedication. The sin offering was to atone for any sins unwittingly committed during the period of consecration (cf. Lev 5:1-6). The burnt offering was to symbolize complete surrender to the Lord (cf. Lev 1:10-13). And the fellowship offering was to speak of the fact that the Nazirite and the Lord were in perfect harmony (cf. Lev 3:6-11; 7:11-14).

Bible Knowledge Commentary on Numbers 6:13-17

v13-21 Separation Fulfilled

18 'The Nazirite shall then shave his dedicated head of hair at the doorway of the tent of meeting, and take the dedicated hair of his head and put it on the fire which is under the sacrifice of peace offerings. 19 And the priest shall take the ram's shoulder when it has been boiled, and one unleavened cake out of the basket, and one unleavened wafer, and shall put them on the hands of the Nazirite after he has shaved his dedicated hair. 20 Then the priest shall wave them for a wave offering before the LORD. It is holy for the priest, together with the breast offered by waving and the thigh offered by lifting up; and afterward the Nazirite may drink wine.' 21 This is the law of the Nazirite who vows his offering to the LORD according to his separation, in addition to what e/se he can afford; according to his vow which he takes, so he shall do according to the law of his separation."

Numbers 6 – A Separated people

 Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

I. The general character of a Nazarite: it is a person *separated unto the Lord*, Num_6:2. Some were Nazarites for life, either by divine designation, as Samson (Jdg_13:5), and John Baptist (Luk_1:15), or by their parents' vow concerning them, as Samuel, 1Sa_1:11. Of these this law speaks not. Others were so for a certain time, and by their own voluntary engagement, and concerning them rules are given by this law. A woman might bind herself with the vow of a Nazarite, under the limitations we find, Num_30:3, where the vow which the woman is supposed to vow unto the Lord seems to be meant especially of this vow. The Nazarites were,

1. **Devoted to the Lord during the time of their Nazariteship, and, it is probable, spent much of their time in the study of the law, in acts of devotion, and instructing others. An air of piety was thereby put upon them, and upon their whole conversation.**
2. **They were separated from common persons and common things. Those that are consecrated to God must not be conformed to this world. They distinguished themselves, not only from others, but from what they themselves were before and after.**

Matthew Henry on Numbers 6:1-21



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

3. **They separated themselves by vowing a vow.** Every Israelite was bound by the divine law to love God with all his heart, but the Nazarites by their own act and deed bound themselves to some religious observances, as fruits and expressions of that love, which other Israelites were not bound to. Some such there were, whose spirits God stirred up to be in their day the ornaments of the church, the standard-bearers of religion, and patterns of piety. It is spoken of as a great favour to their nation that God *raised up of their young men for Nazarites, Amo_2:11.* The Nazarites were known in the streets and respected as *pure than snow, whiter than milk, Lam_4:7.* Christ was called in reproach a Nazarene, so were his followers: but he was no Nazarite according to this law; he drank wine, and touched dead bodies, yet in his this type had its accomplishment, for in him all purity and perfection met; and every true Christian is a spiritual Nazarite, separated by vow unto the Lord. We find St. Paul, by the persuasion of his friends, in complaisance to the Jews, submitting to this law of the Nazarites; but at the same time it is declared that the Gentiles should *observe no such thing, Act_21:24, Act_21:25.* It was looked upon as a great honour to a man to be a Nazarite, and therefore if a man speak of it as a punishment, saying for instance, “I will be a Nazarite rather than do so or so,” he is (say the Jews) a wicked man; but he that vows unto the Lord in the way of holiness to be a Nazarite, lo, *the crown of his God is upon his head.*

Matthew Henry on Numbers 6:1-21

 Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

II. The particular obligations that the Nazarites lay under. That the fancies of superstitious men might not multiply their restraints endlessly, God himself lays down the law for them, and gives them the rule of their profession.

1. **They must have nothing to do with *the fruit of the vine*, Num_6:3, 4.** They must drink no wine nor string drink, nor eat grapes, no, not the kernel nor the husk; they might not so much as eat a raisin. The learned Dr. Lightfoot has a conjecture (Hor. Heb. in Luc. 1.15), that, as the ceremonial pollutions by leprosy and otherwise represented the sinful state of fallen man, so the institution of the order of Nazarites was designed to represent the pure and perfect state of man in innocency, and that the tree of knowledge, forbidden to Adam, was the vine, and for that reason it was forbidden to the Nazarites, and all the produce of it. Those who gave the Nazarites wine to drink did the tempter's work (Amo_2:12), persuading them to that forbidden fruit. That it was reckoned a perfection and praise not to drink wine appears from the instance of the Rechabites, Jer_35:6. They were to *drink no wine*,

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- (1.) That they might be examples of temperance and mortification. Those that separate themselves to God and to his honour must not gratify the desires of the body, but keep it under and bring it into subjection. Drinking a *little wine for the stomach's sake* is allowed, to help that, 1Ti_5:23. But drinking much wine for the *palate's sake*, to please that, does by no means become those who profess to walk not *after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*
- (2.) That they might be qualified to employ themselves in the service of God. **They must not drink, lest they should forget the law (Pro_31:5), lest they should err through wine, Isa_28:7.** Let all Christians oblige themselves to be very moderate in the use of wine and strong drink; for, if the love of these once gets the mastery of a man, he becomes a very easy prey to Satan. It is observable that because they were to drink no wine (which was the thing mainly intended) they were to eat nothing that came of the vine, to teach us with the utmost care and caution to avoid sin and every thing that borders upon it and leads to it, or may be a temptation to us. Abstain from all appearance of evil, 1Th_5:22.

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2. **They must not cut their hair, Num_6:5.** They must neither poll their heads nor shave their beards; this was that mark of Samson's Nazariteship which we often read of in his story. Now,

(1.) This signified a noble neglect of the body and the ease and ornament of it, which became those who, being separated to God, ought to be wholly taken up with their souls, to secure their peace and beauty. It signified that they had, for the present, renounced all sorts of sensual pleasures and delights, and resolved to live a life of self-denial and mortification. Mephibosheth in sorrow trimmed not his beard, 2Sa_19:24.

(2.) Some observe that long hair is spoken of as a badge of subjection (1Co_11:5, etc.); so that the long hair of the Nazarites denoted their subjection to God, and their putting themselves under his dominion.

(3.) By this they were known to all that met them to be Nazarites, and so it commanded respect. It made them look great without art; it was nature's crown to the head, and a testimony for them that they had preserved their purity. For, if they had been defiled, their hair must have been cut, Num_6:9. See Jer_7:29.

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3. They must not come near any dead body, Num 6:6, 7. Others might touch dead bodies, and contracted only a ceremonial pollution by it for some time; some must do it, else the dead must be unburied; but the Nazarites must not do it, upon pain of forfeiting all the honour of their Nazariteship. They must not attend the funeral of any relation, no, not father nor mother, any more than the high priest himself, because *the consecration of his God is upon his head*. Those that separate themselves to God must learn,
- (1.) To distinguish themselves, and do more than others.
 - (2.) To keep their consciences pure from dead works, and not to touch the unclean thing. The greater profession of religion we make, and the more eminent we appear, the greater care we must take to avoid all sin, for we have so much the more honour to lose by it.
 - (3.) To moderate their affections even to their near relations, so as not to let their sorrow for the loss of them break in upon their joy in God and submission to his will.
See Mat_8:21, 22.
4. All *the days of their separation* they must be *holy to the Lord, Num 6:8*. This was the meaning of those external observances, and without this they were of no account. **The Nazarites must be devoted to God, employed for him, and their minds intent upon him; they must keep themselves pure in heart and life, and be in every thing conformable to the divine image and will; this is to be holy, this is to be a Nazarite indeed.**

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III. The provision that was made for the cleansing of a Nazarite, if he happened unavoidably to contract a ceremonial pollution by the touch of a dead body. No penalty is ordered by this law for the wilful breach of the foregoing laws; for it was not supposed that a man who had so much religion as to make that vow could have so little as to break it presumptuously: nor could it be supposed that he should drink wine, or have his hair cut, but by his own fault; but purely by the providence of God, without any fault of his own, he might be near a dead body, and that is the case put (Num_6:9): If a man die very suddenly by him, he has defiled the head of his consecration. **Note,** Death sometimes takes men away very suddenly, and without any previous warning. A man might be well and dead in so little a time that the most careful Nazarite could not avoid being polluted by the dead body; so short a step is it sometimes, and so soon taken, from time to eternity. God prepare us for sudden death! In this case,

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1. He must be purified from the ceremonial pollution he had contracted, as others must, upon the seventh day, Num_6:9. Nay, more was required for the purifying of the Nazarite than of any other person that had touched a dead body; he must bring a sin-offering and a burnt-offering, and an atonement must be *made for him*, Num_6:10, 11. This teaches us that sins of infirmity, and the faults we are overtaken in by surprise, must be seriously repented of, and that an application must be made of the virtue of Christ's sacrifice to our souls for the forgiveness of them every day, 1Jo_2:1, 2. It teaches us also that, if those who make an eminent profession of religion do any thing to sully the reputation of their profession, more is expected from them than others, for the retrieving both of their peace and of their credit.
2. He must begin the days of his separation again; for all that were past before his pollution, though coming ever so near the period of his time set, were lost, and not reckoned to him, Num_6:12. This obliged them to be very careful not to defile themselves by the dead, for that was the only thing that made them lose their time, and it teaches us that *if a righteous man turn away from his righteousness, and defile himself with dead works, all his righteousness that he has done shall be lost to him, Eze_33:13.* It is all lost, all in vain, if he do not persevere, Gal_3:4. He must begin again, and do his first works.

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IV. The law for the solemn discharge of a Nazarite from his vow, when he had completed the time he fixed to himself. Before the expiration of that term he could not be discharged; before he vowed, it was in his own power, but it was too late after the vow to make enquiry. The Jews say that the time of a Nazarite's vow could not be less than thirty days; and if a man said, "I will be a Nazarite but for two days," yet he was bound for thirty; but it should seem Paul's vow was for only seven days (Act_21:27), or, rather, then he observed the ceremony of finishing that vow of Nazariteship from which, being at a distance from the temple, he had discharged himself some years before at Cenchrea only by the ceremony of cutting his hair, Act_18:18. When the time of the vowed separation was out, he was to be made free,

1. Publicly, at the door of the tabernacle (Num 6:13), that all might take notice of the finishing of his vow, and none might be offended if they saw him now drink wine, who had so lately refused.
2. It was to be done with sacrifices, Num 6:14. Lest he should think that by this eminent piece of devotion he had made God a debtor to him, he is appointed, even when he had finished his vow, to bring an offering to God; for, when we have done our utmost in duty to God, still we must own ourselves behind-hand with him. He must bring one of each sort of the instituted offerings.

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- (1.) A burnt-offering, as an acknowledgment of God's sovereign dominion over him and all he had still, notwithstanding his discharge from this particular vow.
- (2.) A sin-offering. This, though mentioned second (Num_6:14), yet seems to have been offered first (Num_6:16), for atonement must be made for our sins before any of our sacrifices can be accepted. And it is very observable that **even the Nazarite, who in the eye of men was purer than snow and whiter than milk, yet durst not appear before the holy God without a sin-offering.** Though he had fulfilled the vow of his separation without any pollution, yet he must bring a sacrifice for sin; for there is guilt insensibly contracted by the best of men, even in their best works - some good omitted, some ill admitted, which, if we were dealt with in strict justice, would be our ruin, and in consequence of which it is necessary for us to receive the atonement, and plead it as our righteousness before God.
- (3.) A peace-offering, in thankfulness to God who had enabled him to fulfil his vow, and in supplication to God for grace to preserve him from ever doing any thing unbecoming one that had been once a Nazarite, remembering that, though he was now freed from the bonds of his own vow, he still remained under the bonds of the divine law.

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(4.) To these were added the meat-offerings and drink-offerings, according to the manner (Num_6:15, 17), for these always accompanied the burnt-offerings and peace-offerings: and, besides these, a basket of unleavened cakes, and wafers.

(5.) Part of the peace-offering, with a cake and wafer, was to be waved for a wave-offering (Num_6:19, 20); and this was a gratuity to the priest, who had it for his pains, after it had been first presented to God.

(6.) Besides all this, he might bring his free-will offerings, such as his hand shall get, Num_6:21. More than this he might bring, but not less. And, to grace the solemnity, it was common upon this occasion to have their friends to be at charges with them, Act_21:24.

Lastly, One ceremony more was appointed, which was like the cancelling of the bond when the condition is performed, and that was **the cutting off of his hair, which had been suffered to grow all the time of his being a Nazarite, and burning it in the fire over which the peace-offerings were boiling, Num_6:18.** This intimated that his full performance of his vow was acceptable to God in Christ the great sacrifice, and not otherwise. Learn hence to *vow and pay to the Lord our God, for he has no pleasure in fools.*

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 Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

The Aaronic Blessing

22 **Then** the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 23 "Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, 'Thus you shall bless the sons of Israel. You shall say to them:

24 The LORD bless you, and keep you;

25 The LORD make His face shine on you,

And be gracious to you;

26 The LORD lift up His countenance on you,

And give you peace.'

27 **So** they shall invoke My name on the sons of Israel, and **I then** will bless them."

Numbers 6 – A Blessed people



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

Num 6:23-27 - *The form of blessing the people.*

Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the congregation of Israel, etc. — This passage records the solemn benediction which God appointed for dismissing the people at the close of the daily service. The repetition of the name “Lord” or “Jehovah” three times, expresses the great mystery of the Godhead - three persons, and yet one God. **The expressions in the separate clauses correspond to the respective offices of the Father, to “bless and keep us”; of the Son, to be “gracious to us”; and of the Holy Ghost, to “give us peace.”** And because the benediction, though pronounced by the lips of a fellow man, derived its virtue, not from the priest but from God, the encouraging assurance was added, “I the Lord will bless them.”

Robert Jamieson on Numbers 6:22-27



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

Num 6:22-27 - The Law of the Priestly Blessing

In pronouncing God's favor on the people, the priest was to use a formula for blessing. This beautiful blessing may be only a model, as the so-called "Lord's Prayer" is a model for prayer, but **its purpose is clear: it communicates the desire of the Lord to invest His people with His name.** The name of the Lord is tantamount to the Lord Himself so that this blessing becomes a petition that God might live among His people and meet all their needs. He alone can **ble**ss His people, **keep** them, look on them with favor (**make His face shine and turn His face toward them**), **be gracious to** them, **and give** them peace.

Bible Knowledge Commentary on Numbers 6:22-27



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

Num 6:22-26 - The Priestly or Aaronic Blessing. - The spiritual character of the congregation of Israel culminated in the blessing with which the priests were to bless the people. The directions as to this blessing, therefore, impressed the seal of perfection upon the whole order and organization of the people of God, inasmuch as Israel was first truly formed into a congregation of Jehovah by the fact that God not only bestowed His blessing upon it, but placed the communication of this blessing in the hands of the priests, the chosen and constant mediators of the blessings of His grace, and imposed it upon them as one portion of their official duty. The blessing which the priests were to impart to the people, consisted of a triple blessing of two members each, which stood related to each other thus: The second in each case contained a special application of the first to the people, and the three gradations unfolded the substance of the blessing step by step with ever increasing emphasis. - The *first* (Num_6:24), “Jehovah bless thee and keep thee,” conveyed the blessing in the most general form, merely describing it as coming from Jehovah, and setting forth preservation from the evil of the world as His work. “The blessing of God is the goodness of God in action, by which a supply of all good pours down to us from His good favour as from their only fountain; then follows, secondly, the prayer that He would keep the people, which signifies that He alone is the defender of the Church, and that it is He who preserves it with His guardian care” (Calvin).

Keil and Delitzsch on Numbers 6:22-26



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The second (Num_6:25), “Jehovah make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee,” defined the blessing more closely as the manifestation of the favour and grace of God. The face of God is the personality of God as turned towards man. Fire goes out from Jehovah's face, and consumes the enemy and the rebellious (Lev_10:2, cf. Num_17:10; 20:3; Exo_13:22; Psa_34:17), and also a sunlight shining with love and full of life and good (Deu_30:20; Psa_27:1; Psa_43:3; 44:4). If “the light of the sun is sweet, and pleasant for the eyes to behold” (Ecc_11:7), “the light of the divine countenance, the everlasting light (Psa_36:10), is the sum of all delight” (Baumg.). **This light sends rays of mercy into a heart in need of salvation, and makes it the recipient of grace.**

The third (Num_6:26), “Jehovah lift up His face to thee, and set (or give) thee peace” (good, salvation), set forth the blessing of God as a manifestation of power, or a work of power upon man, the end of which is peace (*shalom*), the sum of all the good which God sets, prepares, or establishes for His people. **לַאֲשֵׁר יִלְוֶה אֱלֹהִים לְפָנָיו**, to lift up the face to any one, is equivalent to looking at him, and does not differ from **לְפָנָיו יִלְוֶה אֱלֹהִים** (Gen_43:29; 44:21). **When affirmed of God, it denotes His providential work upon man. When God looks at a man, He saves him out of his distresses (Psa_4:7; 33:18; 34:16).**

Keil and Delitzsch on Numbers 6:22-26



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

Num 6:22-27 - THE TRIUNE BLESSING

Here we find the Trinity in the Old Testament. God the Father is the source of all blessing. The Lord Jesus is the One who makes His face to shine upon us. The Holy Spirit lifts up His countenance upon us and gives us peace. This is the only way we can come to God and experience the peace of God. He is the One who makes these things real to our hearts.

The triune God gives them this blessing. The census has been taken, and they all know their pedigree. The standards have been raised; so they all know where they belong. They are to follow their standard, and they are to camp in their assigned place in the camp with their own tribe and their own family. The camp has been cleansed. Now the Lord blesses them. It is the only way God can bless.

Many churches today are not experiencing the blessing of God. The problem is that they are not properly prepared for the march. They are trying to start out without first setting things in order. They are like a soldier who forgot to put on his belt one morning. Believe me it is pretty hard to march and carry a gun without your belt or suspenders! And there are churches like that, my friend. They are starting out before things are set in order. Paul is writing to the church when he says, "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1Co 14:40). Know your pedigree; that is, know you are a child of God; know your standard; know what your gift is and use it for Him; and keep your life clean.

What a wonderful blessing there is here. **God the Father keeps us; the Son makes His face to shine upon us—He is the light of the world; God the Holy Spirit gives us peace.** What a glorious chapter this is!

J Vernon McGee on Numbers 6:22-27



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful



The Aaronic Blessing

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Numbers 6 – A Blessed people



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Detailed Outline of the Book of Numbers

I. Preparations for Travel (Numbers 1:1-10:10)

- A. The First Census (chapter 1)
- B. The Order of the Tribes (chapter 2)
- C. The Census and Duties of the Levites (chapters 3-4)
- D. Cleansing and Consecration (chapters 5-6)
- E. The Tabernacle Service (chapters 7-8)
- E. The Supplementary Passover (chapter 9:1-14)
- F. The Fiery Cloud and the Silver Trumpets (chapters 9:15-10:10)

II. The Journey to Kadesh Barnea (Numbers 10:11-14:45)

- A. The Departure from Sinai (chapters 10:11-36)
- B. The Rebellion of the People (chapter 11)
- C. The Rebellion of Miriam and Aaron (chapter 12)
- D. Spying out the Promised Land (chapter 13)
- E. God's Judgment on Unbelief (chapter 14)

III. The Journey to the Plains of Moab (Numbers 15:1-22:1)

- A. Covenant Statutes Reviewed (chapter 15)
- B. The Rebellion of Korah (chapter 16)

- C. The Budding of Aaron's Rod (chapter 17)
- D. The Responsibility of Priests and Levites (chapter 18)
- E. The Red Heifer Sacrifice (chapter 19)
- F. The Waters of Meribah, Edom, Aaron's death (chapter 20)
- G. Journey to Moab (chapters 21:1-22:1)
- F. Balak and Balaam (chapters 22:2-24:25)
- G. The Idolatry of Israel (chapter 25)

IV. Final Preparations for Entering Canaan (Numbers 26:1-36:13)

- A. The Second Census (chapter 26)
- B. Daughters of Zelophehad (chapter 27:1-11)
- C. Joshua appointed as Moses' Successor (chapter 27:12-23)
- D. Laws concerning Offerings and Vows (chapters 28-30)
- E. The War against Midian (chapter 31)
- F. Inheritance of Eastern Tribes (chapter 32)
- G. Resume of the journey from Egypt (chapter 33:1-49)
- H. Final Instructions about Conquest and Inheritance (chapters 33:50-36:13)