

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

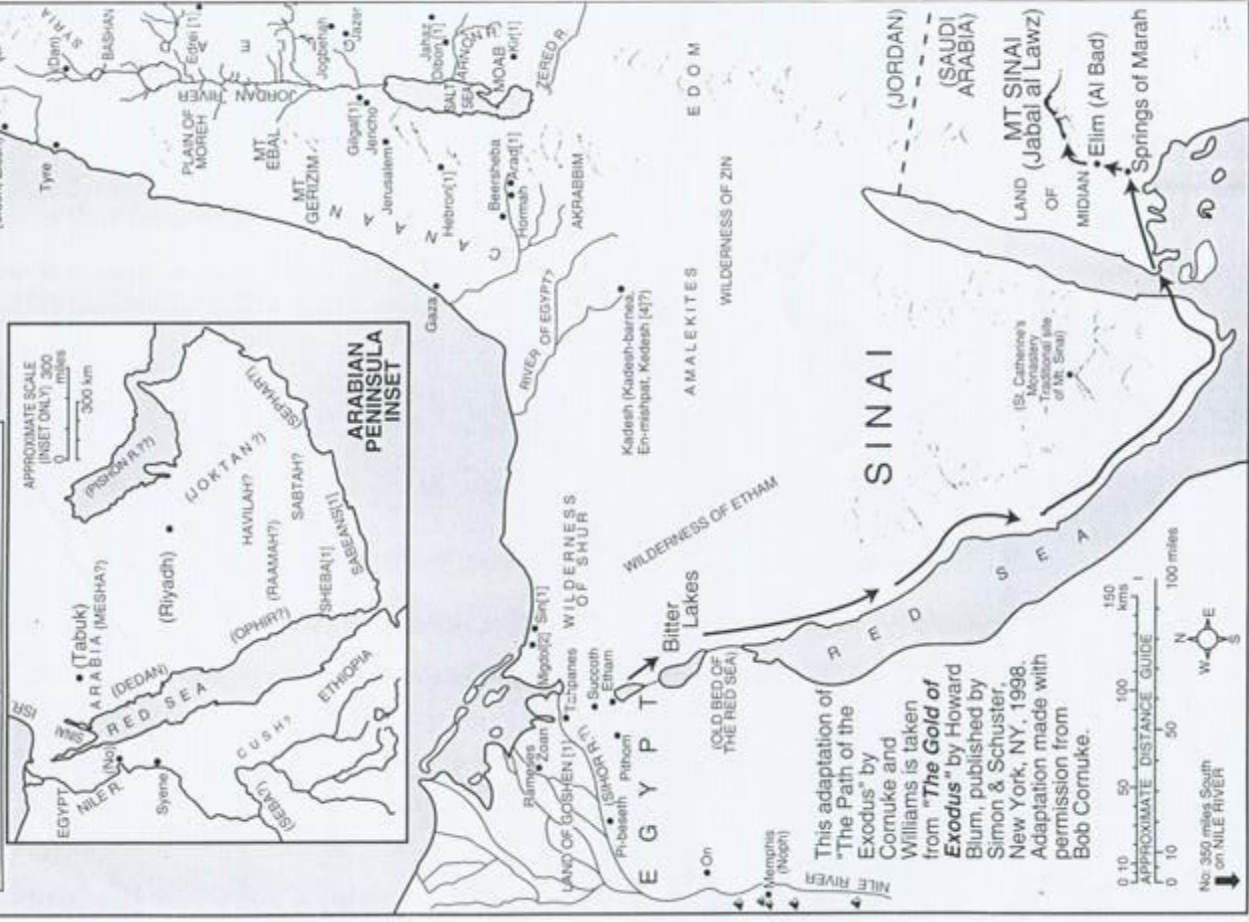
Date and Setting of the Book of Numbers



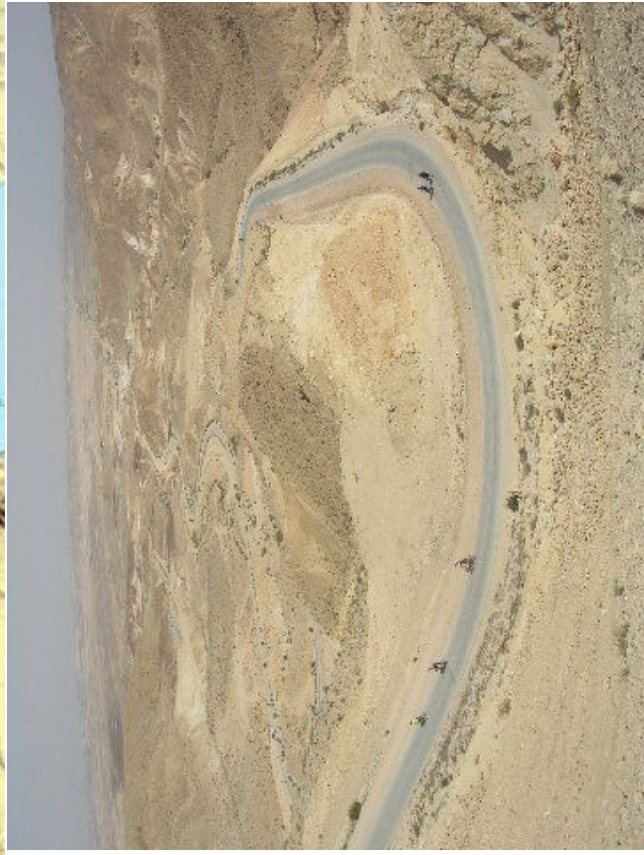
Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

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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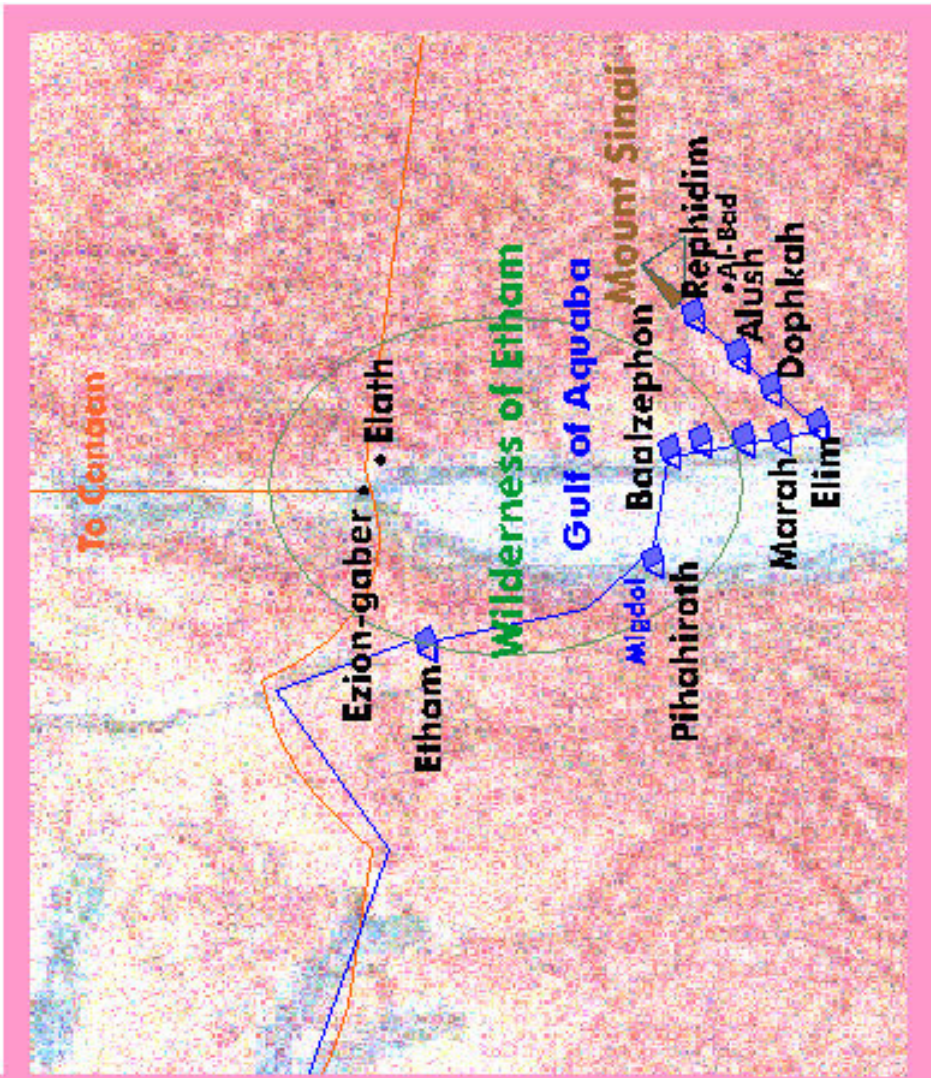
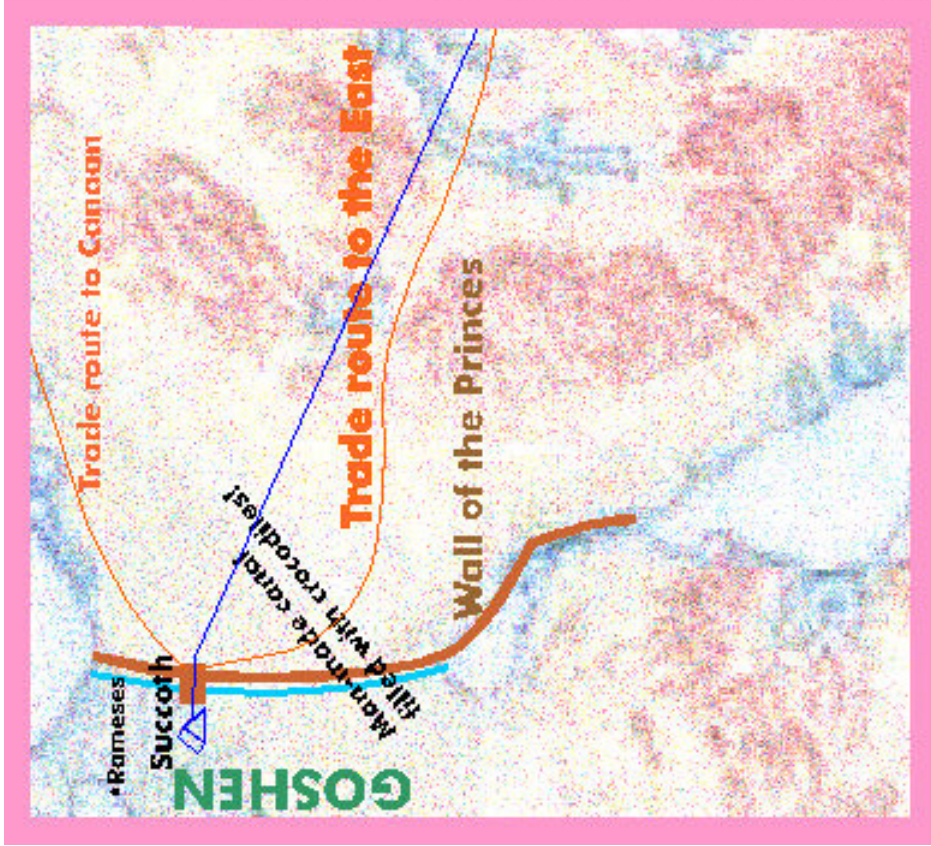
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- **Moses' preparation of conquest involved four stages:**
 - **Celebrating the Passover (9:1-14)**
 - **Numbering the Soldiers (chapter 1)**
 - **Organizing the Tribes (chapter 2)**
 - **Assigning the Priestly Duties (chapters 3-4)**
- **The events 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

MERARITES

6,200

North

West

GERSHONITES

7,500

East

LEVITES

South

8,600

KOATHITES

TABERNACLE



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

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

1. Numbering the Soldiers (1:1-54)
2. Organizing the Tribes (2:134)
3. Assigning the Duties (ch 3-4)
4. Purifying the People (ch 5-6)
5. Dedicating the Tabernacle (ch 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 (ch 11)
3. Aaron & Miriam Criticize Moses (ch 12)

III. At Kadesh: Rebellng Against the Lord **(ch 13-14)**

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

IV. In the Wilderness: Learning from the Lord (15:1-20:13)

1. About Sacrifices (15:1-31)
2. About Authority (15:32-17:13)
3. About Responsibility (ch 18)
4. About Purity (ch 19)
5. About Humility (20:1-13)

V. In Moab: A New Beginning from the Lord **(20:14-36:13)**

1. New Victories (20:14-21; 21:1-35)
2. A New Priest (20:22-29)
3. New Dangers (ch 22-25)
4. A New Generation (ch 26)
5. New Regulations (27:1-11)
6. A New Leader (27:12-23)
7. New Commitment to the Law (ch 28-30)
8. New Commitment to Battle (ch 31-32)
9. New Laws for the New Land (ch 33-36)



Numbers 12 - In the foregoing chapter we had the vexation which the people gave to Moses; in this we have his patience tried by his own relations.

- I. Miriam and Aaron, his own brother and sister, affronted him (Num_12:1-3).
- II. God called them to an account for it (Num_12:4-9).
- III. Miriam was smitten with a leprosy for it (Num_12:10).
- IV. Aaron submits, and Moses meekly intercedes for Miriam (Num_12:11-13).
- V. She is healed, but put to shame for seven days (Num_12:14-16).
And this is recorded to show that the best persons and families have both their follies and their crosses.

Matthew Henry on Numbers Chapter 12



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

v1-3 Miriam and Aaron Complain

1 **Then** Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses **because** of the Cushite woman whom he had married (**for** he had married a Cushite woman); 2 and they said, "Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us **as well**?" And the LORD heard it.

Numbers 12 – Complaining against God’s Servant



Num_12:1 - The Ethiopian woman whom he had married - (Hebrew, “Cushite,” compare Gen_2:13; Gen_10:6) It is likely that Zipporah Exo_2:21 was dead, and that Miriam in consequence expected to have greater influence than ever with Moses. Her disappointment at his second marriage would consequently be very great.

The marriage of Moses with a woman descended from Ham was not prohibited, so long as she was not of the stock of Canaan (compare Exo_34:11-16); but it would at any time have been offensive to that intense nationality which characterized the Jews. The Christian fathers note in the successive marriage of Moses with a Midianite and an Ethiopian a foreshadowing of the future extension to the Gentiles of God’s covenant and its promises (compare Psa_45:9 ff; Son_1:4 ff); and in the complaining of Miriam and Aaron a type of the discontent of the Jews because of such extension: compare Luk_15:29-30.

Albert Barnes on Numbers 12:1



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

Num 12:1 And Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses,.... Miriam is first mentioned, because she was first in the transgression, and so was only punished; Aaron was drawn into the sin by her, and he acknowledged his fault, and was forgiven: it must be a great trial to Moses, not only to be spoken against by the people, as he often was, but by his near relations, and these gracious persons, and concerned with him in leading and guiding the people through the wilderness, Mic_6:4, **because of the Ethiopian woman, whom he had married, for he had married an Ethiopian woman**; ... it was Zipporah herself, as Aben Ezra, Ben Melech, and so the Jerusalem Targum, which represents her not as truly an Ethiopian, but so called, because she was like to one; indeed she was really one; not a native of Ethiopia, the country of the Abyssines, but she was a Cushite, a native of Arabia Chusea, in which country Midian was, from whence she came; hence the tents, of Cushan, and the curtains of Midian, are spoken of together, Hab_3:7. Now it was not on account of Moses's marriage with her that they spoke against him, for that was an affair transacted in Midian some years ago, which at first sight may seem to be the case; nor because he now had divorced her, as Jarchi, which perhaps would have given them no uneasiness; and for the same reason, not because he abstained from conversation with her, that he might give up himself to the service of God in his house, and perform it in a more holy and faithful manner, which is the common sentiment of the Jewish writers: but rather, as it is thought by others, because of a suspicion they had entertained, that she had interested herself in the affair of the choice of the seventy elders, and had prevailed upon Moses to put in such and such persons into the list she had a mind to serve; at least this seems to be the case, for the displeasure was against Moses himself; they were angry with him, because he transacted that affair without them, and chose whom he pleased, without consulting them; and therefore, though they cared not to ascribe it entirely to him, and his neglect of them, they imputed it to his wife, as if she had overpersuaded him, or her brother through her means, to take such a step as he did.

John Gill on Numbers 12:1



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

Num_12:1-9. Miriam's and Aaron's sedition.

Num 12:1 - an Ethiopian woman — Hebrew, “a Cushite woman” - Arabia was usually called in Scripture the land of Cush, its inhabitants being descendants of that son of Ham (see on Exo_2:15) and being accounted generally a vile and contemptible race (see on Amo_9:7). The occasion of this seditious outbreak on the part of Miriam and Aaron against Moses was the great change made in the government by the adoption of the seventy rulers [Num_11:16]. Their irritating disparagement of his wife (who, in all probability, was Zipporah [Exo_2:21], and not a second wife he had recently married) arose from jealousy of the relatives, through whose influence the innovation had been first made (Exo_18:13-26), while they were overlooked or neglected. Miriam is mentioned before Aaron as being the chief instigator and leader of the sedition.

Num 12:2 - Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not also spoken by us? — The prophetic name and character was bestowed upon Aaron (Exo_4:15, Exo_4:16) and Miriam (Exo_15:20); and, therefore, they considered the conduct of Moses, in exercising an exclusive authority in this matter, as an encroachment on their rights (Mic_6:4).

Robert Jamieson on Numbers 12:1-2



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

v1-3 Miriam and Aaron Complain

3 (**Now** the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth.)

Numbers 12 – Complaining against God’s Servant



II. The wonderful patience of Moses under this provocation. The Lord heard it (Num_12:2), but Moses himself took no notice of it, for (Num_12:3) he was very meek. He had a great deal of reason to resent the affront; it was ill-natured and ill-timed, when the people were disposed to mutiny, and had lately given him a great deal of vexation with their murmurings, which would be in danger of breaking out again when thus headed and countenanced by Aaron and Miriam; but he, as a deaf man, heard not. When God's honour was concerned, as in the case of the golden calf, no man more zealous than Moses; but, when his own honour was touched, no man more meek: as bold as a lion in the cause of God, but as mild as a lamb in his own cause. God's people are the *meek of the earth* (Zep_2:3), but some are more remarkable than others for this grace, as Moses, who was thus fitted for the work he was called to, which required all the meekness he had and sometimes more. And sometimes the unkindness of our friends is a greater trial of our meekness than the malice of our enemies. Christ himself records his own meekness (Mat_11:29, *I am meek and lowly in heart*), and the copy of meekness which Christ has set was without a blot, but that of Moses was not.

Matthew Henry on Numbers 12:1-3



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

Num 12:3 - Now the man Moses was very meek - How could Moses, who certainly was as humble and modest as he was meek, write this encomium upon himself? I think the word is not rightly understood; עַנָּו anav, which we translate meek, comes from עָנָה anah, to act upon, to humble, depress, afflict, and is translated so in many places in the Old Testament; and in this sense it should be understood here: “**Now this man Moses was depressed or afflicted more than any man** **הָאָדָמָה** **haadamah, of that land.**” And why was he so? Because of the great burden he had to bear in the care and government of this people, and because of their ingratitude and rebellion both against God and himself: of this depression and affliction, see the fullest proof in the preceding chapter, Numbers 11 (note). The very power they envied was oppressive to its possessor, and was more than either of their shoulders could sustain.

Adam Clarke on Numbers 12:3

 Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

v4-8 The LORD Defends Moses

4 **And suddenly** the LORD said to Moses and Aaron and to Miriam, "You three come out to the tent of meeting." **So** the three of them came out. 5 **Then** the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud and stood at the doorway of the tent, and He called Aaron and Miriam. **When** they had both come forward, 6 He said,

"Hear **now** My words:

If there is a prophet among you,
I, the LORD, shall make Myself known to him
in a vision.
I shall speak with him in a dream.

Numbers 12 – Complaining against God’s Servant



v4-8 The Lord Defends Moses

7 Not so, with My servant Moses,
He is faithful in all My household;
8 With him I speak mouth to mouth,
Even openly, and not in dark sayings,
And he beholds the form of the LORD.
Why **then** were you not afraid
To speak against My servant, against Moses?"

Numbers 12 – Complaining against God’s Servant



Num 12:8 - With him will I speak mouth to mouth,.... And face to face, as he had done, Exo_33:11; in a free, friendly, and familiar manner, as one friend speaks to another, without injecting any fear or dread, and consternation of mind, which was sometimes the case of the prophets; or without a middle person, a mediator, as Aben Ezra, not by means of an angel, as in some cases, but the Lord himself spake to him: even apparently, and not in dark speeches; the word "apparently", or "vision", being opposed to "dark speeches", shows that this is not to be understood of the appearance or vision of an object presented to the sight, or to the mind, which is denied of Moses, though usual with other prophets; but of the vision, or plain sense and meaning of words, which are so plainly expressed, that the sense is easily seen and understood; it was not under figures and allegories, and parables and dark representations of things, that the law of the decalogue, and other laws, statutes, and ordinances, and the proclamation the Lord made of himself, as the Lord gracious, merciful, &c. were delivered unto Moses, but in plain words and clear expressions; not in such enigmatical, parabolical, and allegorical terms as many of the visions and prophecies of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Amos, and Zechariah, were exhibited to them; See Gill on Num_12:6, and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold: as he had at the burning bush, and at Mount Sinai, with the elders of Israel, and when the Lord proclaimed his name before him; at which several times it is highly probable he beheld the Lord, even the Lord Christ, in an human form, as a presage of his future incarnation, and as he might also after this: the Targum of Jonathan is, "the similitude which is after my Shechinah (or divine Majesty) he saw;" that is, his back parts, as Jarchi, and other Jewish writers, interpret it; but Bishop Patrick thinks the word not should be repeated from the preceding clause, and that the sense is, that he did not behold him in similitudes, nor did the Lord speak to him by them, as to other prophets, see Hos_12:10, **wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?** or against my servant, against Moses; against any servant of mine, but especially against Moses, so faithful in my house, so much approved of and honoured by me, and so superior to all other prophets.

John Gill on Numbers 12:8

 Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

v9-10 The LORD's Judgment

9 So the anger of the LORD burned against them and He departed.

Numbers 12 – Complaining against God's Servant

 **E**ntrusting the Word to the **F**aithful

Num 12:4-9 - Moses did not resent the injury done him, nor complain of it to God, nor make any appeal to him; but God resented it. He hears all we say in our passion, and is a swift witness of our hasty speeches, which is a reason why we should resolutely bridle our tongues, that we speak not ill of others, and why we should patiently stop our ears, and not take notice of it, if others speak ill of us. I heard not, for thou wilt hear, Psa_38:13-15. The more silent we are in our own cause the more is God engaged to plead it. The accused innocent needs to say little if he knows the judge himself will be his advocate.

- I. The cause is called, and the parties are summoned forthwith to attend at the door of the tabernacle, Num_12:4, 5. **Moses had often shown himself jealous for God's honour, and now God showed himself jealous for his reputation; for those that honour God he will honour, nor will he ever be behind-hand with any that appear for him.** Judges of old sat in the gate of the city to try causes, and so on this occasion the *shechinah* in the cloud of glory stood at the door of the tabernacle, and Aaron and Miriam, as delinquents, were called to the bar.
- II. Aaron and Miriam were made to know that great as they were they must not pretend to be equal to Moses, nor set up as rivals with him, v. 6-8. Were they prophets of the Lord? Of Moses it might be truly said, He more.
 1. It was true that God put a great deal of honour upon the prophets. However men mocked them and misused them, they were the favourites and intimates of heaven. God made *himself known to them*, either by dreams when they were asleep or by visions when they were awake, and by them made himself known to others. And those are happy, those are great, truly happy, to whom God makes *himself known*. Now he does it not by dreams and visions, as of old, but by the *Spirit of wisdom and revelation*, who makes known those things to babes which *prophets and kings* desired to see and might not. Hence in the last days, the days of the Messiah, the *sons and daughters* are said to *prophesy* (Joe_2:28), because they shall be better acquainted with the mysteries of the kingdom of grace than even the prophets themselves were; see Heb_1:1, Heb_1:2.

Matthew Henry on Numbers 12:4-9

 Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

2. Yet the honour put upon Moses was far greater (Num_ 12:7): My servant Moses is not so, he excels them all. To recompense Moses for his meekly and patiently bearing the affronts which Miriam and Aaron gave him, God not only cleared him, but praised him; and took that occasion to give him an encomium which remains upon record to his immortal honour; and thus shall those that are reviled and persecuted for righteousness' sake have a great reward in heaven, Christ will confess them before his Father and the holy angels.

(1.) Moses was a man of great integrity and tried fidelity. He is faithful in all my house. This is put first in his character, because grace excels gifts, love excels knowledge, and sincerity in the service of God puts a greater honour upon a man and recommends him to the divine favour more than learning, abstruse speculations, and an ability to speak with tongues. This is that part of Moses' character which the apostle quotes when he would show that Christ was greater than Moses, making it out that he was so in this chief instance of his greatness; for Moses was faithful only as a servant, but Christ as a son, Heb_ 3:2, 5, 6. God entrusted Moses to deliver his mind in all things to Israel; Israel entrusted him to treat for them with God; and he was faithful to both. He said and did every thing in the management of that great affair as became an honest good man, that aimed at nothing else but the honour of God and the welfare of Israel.

(2.) Moses was therefore honoured with clearer discoveries of God's mind, and a more intimate communion with God, than any other prophet whatsoever.

[1.] He shall hear more from God than any other prophet, more clearly and distinctly: With him will I speak mouth to mouth, or face to face (Exo_ 30:11), as a man speaks to his friend, whom he discourses with freely and familiarly, and without any confusion or consternation, such as sometimes other prophets were under; as Ezekiel, and John himself, when God spoke to them. By other prophets God sent to his people reproofs, and predictions of good or evil, which were properly enough delivered in dark speeches, figures, types, and parables; but by Moses he gave laws to his people, and the institution of holy ordinances, which could by no means be delivered by dark speeches, but must be expressed in the plainest and most intelligible manner.

[2.] He shall see more of God than any other prophet: The similitude of the Lord shall behold, as he hath seen it in Horeb, when God proclaimed his name before him. Yet he saw only the similitude of the Lord, angels and glorified saints always behold the face of our Father. Moses had the spirit of prophecy in a way peculiar to himself, and which set him far above all other prophets; yet he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he, much more does our Lord Jesus infinitely excel him, Heb_ 3:1, etc.

Matthew Henry on Numbers 12:4-9

 Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

- Now let Miriam and Aaron consider who it was that they insulted: *Were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? Against my servant, against Moses?* so it runs in the original. “**How dare you abuse any servant of mine, especially such a servant as Moses, who is a friend, a confidant, and steward of the house?**” How durst they speak to the grief and reproach of one whom God had so much to say in commendation of? Might they not expect that God would resent it, and take it as an affront to himself?
- Note, We have reason to be afraid of saying or doing any thing against the servants of God; it is at our peril if we do, for God will plead their cause, and reckon that what touches them touches the apple of his eye. It is a dangerous thing to offend Christ's little ones, Mat_18:6. Those are presumptuous indeed that are *not afraid to speak evil of dignities*, 2Pe_2:10.

III. God, having thus shown them their fault and folly, next shows them his displeasure (Num_12:9): The anger of the Lord was kindled against them, of which perhaps some sensible indications were given in the change of the colour of the cloud, or some flashes of lightning from it. But indeed it was indication enough of his displeasure that he departed, and would not so much as hear their excuse, for he needed not, *understanding their thoughts afar off*; and thus he would show that he was displeased. Note, The removal of God's presence from us is the surest and saddest token of God's displeasure against us. Woe unto us if he depart; and he never departs till we by our sin and folly drive him from us.

Matthew Henry on Numbers 12:4-9

 Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

v9-10 The LORD's Judgment

10 **But when** the cloud had withdrawn from over the tent, **behold**, Miriam was leprous, **as white as snow**. **As** Aaron turned toward Miriam, **behold**, she was leprous.

Numbers 12 – Complaining against God's Servant



Num 12:10 - And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle,.... Not from off the door of the tabernacle, as Aben Ezra, for that is implied in the last clause of Num_12:9, but from off that part of the tabernacle, the most holy place, where it had used to abide; but now it went up higher in the air, or removed at some distance from thence, which was a further indication of the sore displeasure of God; that as he would not stay with Aaron and Miriam at the door of the tabernacle, so neither would he suffer the cloud to continue over it, as it was wont to do, so long as they were there: and, behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow; was smote immediately with a leprosy by the Lord, as the hand of Moses was in a miraculous way, Exo_4:6; and as Gehazi was, who was smitten of God in like manner, 2Ki_5:27; in an ordinary and gradual leprosy, when it was all white, the man was clean, Lev_13:13; but in an extraordinary one, and which was immediately from God, and at once, in this case it was a sign it was incurable. Miriam only, and not Aaron, was smitten with a leprosy; though Chaskuni says, that some of their Rabbins were of opinion, that Aaron was; but this does not appear, nor is it likely that he should be thus defiled and dishonoured, being the priest of the Lord, and since he was not so deep in the transgression as Miriam, and was drawn into it by her, and also repented of it: **and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous;** he not only cast his eye upon her, as it were accidentally, and saw what was her case; but, as the priest of the Lord, looked upon her, as it was the business of his office to do, and perceived she was leprous, and was obliged to pronounce her so; and perhaps she was the first, after the law of the leprosy, that he was called to look upon, and pronounced her unclean, which must be a great mortification to him.

John Gill on Numbers 12:10

 Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

Num 12:10 - Miriam became leprous - It is likely Miriam was chief in this mutiny; and it is probable that it was on this ground she is mentioned first, (see Num_12:1), and punished here, while Aaron is spared. Had he been smitten with the leprosy, his sacred character must have greatly suffered, and perhaps the priesthood itself have fallen into contempt. **How many priests and preachers who deserved to be exposed to reproach and infamy, have been spared for the sake of the holy character they bore, that the ministry might not be blamed! But the just God will visit their transgressions in some other way, if they do not deeply deplore them and find mercy through Christ.** **Nothing tends to discredit the work of God so much as the transgressions and miscarriages of those who minister in holy things.**

Adam Clarke on Numbers 12:10

 Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

v11-12 Aaron's Plea to Moses

11 **Then** Aaron said to Moses, "Oh, my lord, I beg you, do not account *this* sin to us, in which we have acted foolishly and in which we have sinned. 12 Oh, do not let her be **like** one dead, whose flesh is half eaten away **when** he comes from his mother's womb!"

Numbers 12 – Complaining against God's Servant



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

Num 12:11 - And Aaron said unto Moses, alas, my lord!.... The word for "alas" is generally interpreted by the Jewish writers as a note of beseeching and entreating, as it is here by the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan, "I beseech thee, my lord," or "upon me, my lord", be all the blame; such was his tenderness to his sister, and the compassion he had on her; and such reverence and respect did he show to Moses his brother, though younger than he, because of his superior dignity as a prophet, and chief magistrate, and prime minister, and servant of the Lord, calling him "my lord": **I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us;** the punishment of it, bear not hard upon us, or suffer us to be punished in a rigorous manner, without interceding to the Lord for us, for the abatement of removal of it; such a powerful and prevailing interest he knew he had with God, that by his prayers their punishment would be mitigated, or not laid, or, if laid, removed: **wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned;** he owns they had sinned, but suggests, and so he would have it understood, that it was not through malice, and purposely and presumptuously, but through and ignorance, inadvertency and weakness, and hoped it would be forgiven.

Num 12:12 - Let her not be as one dead,.... As she was in a ceremonial sense, being to be shut up and excluded from the society of people, and as defiling by touching as a dead carcass; and, in a natural sense, her flesh, by the disease upon her, was become as dead flesh, putrid and rotten, and unless miraculously cured it would issue in her death: **of whom the flesh is half consumed, when he cometh out of his mother's womb;** like an abortive, or one stillborn, that has been dead some time in its mother's womb; and therefore when brought forth its flesh is almost wasted away, or at least half consumed: and in such a plight and condition was Miriam already, or quickly would be, through the force of her disease.

John Gill on Numbers 12:11-12



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

v13 Moses' Plea to the LORD

13 And Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "O God, heal her, I pray!"

Numbers 12 – Complaining against God's Servant



Num 12:13 - And Moses cried unto the Lord,.... With a loud voice, and with great earnestness and importunity, being heartily affected with the miserable condition Miriam was in: **saying, heal her now, O God, I beseech thee**; in the original text it is, "**O God now, heal her now**"; for the same particle is used at the close as at the beginning of the petition; and the repetition of it shows his earnestness and importunity that she might be healed directly, immediately, without any delay; and Moses uses the word "El", which signifies the strong and mighty God, as expressive of his faith in the power of God, that he was able to heal her; and at the same time suggests that none but he could do it; and so Aben Ezra interprets it, "thou that hast power in thine hand, now heal her;" this prayer is a proof of his being of a meek, humble, and forgiving spirit.

John Gill on Numbers 12:13

v14 The LORD's Mercy

14 **But** the LORD said to Moses, "**If** her father had **but** spit in her face, would she not bear her shame for seven days? Let her be shut up for seven days outside the camp, and afterward she may be received again."

Numbers 12 – Complaining against God's Servant



Num 12:14 - And the Lord said unto Moses,.... By a voice out of the cloud, though at a distance; unless it was by a secret impulse upon his spirit, darting such words into his mind as if he heard an audible voice: **if her father had but spit in her face;** or, "in spitting spitted"; spit much, and continued spitting till he had covered her face with spittle; which, as it would have been a token of anger and displeasure in him, an earthly father, who is meant, and of shame and disgrace to her; **so there is some likeness in spittle to leprosy, both being white, and in such a case to the abundance of it, her thus being covered with leprosy; and which came as it were from the mouth of the Lord, by his order and appointment, immediately, as spittle from a man, and like that, in a way of detestation and contempt, and to make abhorred and despised: should she not be ashamed seven days?** hide herself, and never appear in the family, and especially in her father's presence, because of the shame she was put unto, for the space of seven days; how much more ashamed then should she be, now her heavenly Father did spit in her face, and covered it with a white leprosy and for as long a time at least, or indeed longer? fourteen days, say the Targum of Jonathan, and Jarchi, but no more than seven are required, when more might have justly been, for her separation and shutting up from company and conversation: **let her be shut out from the camp seven days;** for so long the leper was to be shut up at the trial of his leprosy, and so long he was to be out of his tent at the cleansing of him, Lev_13:5, **and after that let her be received again;** into the camp and into society with her relations and friends.

John Gill on Numbers 12:14



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

v15-16 Miriam Disciplined

15 So Miriam was shut up outside the camp **for seven days**, and the people did not move on **until** Miriam was received again. **16 Afterward, however**, the people moved out from Hazeroth and camped in the wilderness of Paran.

Numbers 12 – Complaining against God’s Servant



Num 12:14-15 - Jehovah hearkened to His servant's prayer, though not without inflicting deep humiliation upon Miriam. "*If her father had but spit in her face, would she not be ashamed seven days?*" i.e., keep herself hidden from Me out of pure shame. She was to be shut outside the camp, to be excluded from the congregation as a leprous person for seven days, and then to be received in again. Thus restoration and purification from her leprosy were promised to her after the endurance of seven days' punishment. Leprosy was the just punishment for her sin. In her haughty exaggeration of the worth of her own prophetic gift, she had placed herself on a par with Moses, the divinely appointed head of the whole nation, and exalted herself above the congregation of the Lord. For this she was afflicted with a disease which shut her out of the number of the members of the people of God, and thus actually excluded from the camp; so that she could only be received back again after she had been healed, and by a formal purification. The latter followed as a matter of course, from Lev 13 and 14, and did not need to be specially referred to here.

Keil & Delitzsch on Numbers 12:14-15



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

Num 12:15 - And Miriam was shut out of the camp seven days,.... And so in later times lepers dwelt alone, and in a separate house, as long as the leprosy was upon them, see 2Ch_26:21; Miriam no doubt was healed at once, but, as a punishment for her sin, she was obliged to keep out of the camp of Israel for such a space of time: and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again; partly out of respect unto her, she being a prophetess, and one that went before them, and led them with Moses and Aaron, Mic_6:4; and partly for want of the cloud to direct them, which had departed at a distance from them.

John Gill on Numbers 12:15

Num 12:16 - And afterwards the people removed from Hazereth,
.... After seven days, where they had been so long at least; the cloud being returned to the tabernacle, and having been taken up, which was the signal for motion, the camps of Israel, in their order, removed and marched forward: and pitched in the wilderness of Paran; at a place in it called Rithmah, Num_33:18; which, according to Bunting, was eight miles from Hazereth, near to which was another place called Kadesh, or else this was another name of Rithmah, see Num_13:3; and now the Israelites were very near the land of promise, and from hence they sent spies to make their observations on it, and bring a report of it; and had it not been for their ill conduct in that affair, in all probability would have been quickly in it, but on that account were kept out thirty eight years longer: it was on the twenty eighth or twenty ninth of the month Sivan the Israelites came to this place, according to the Jewish writers, which month answers part of our May and part of June.

John Gill on Numbers 12:16



Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

Num 12:14 - If her father had but spit in her face - This appears to have been done only in cases of great provocation on the part of the child, and strong irritation on the side of the parent. Spitting in the face was a sign of the deepest contempt. See Job_30:10; Isa_50:6; Mar_14:65. In a case where a parent was obliged by the disobedient conduct of his child to treat him in this way, it appears he was banished from the father's presence for seven days. If then this was an allowed and judged case in matters of high provocation on the part of a child, should not the punishment be equally severe where the creature has rebelled against the Creator? Therefore Miriam was shut out of the camp for seven days, and thus debarred from coming into the presence of God her father, who is represented as dwelling among the people. To a soul who knows the value and inexpressible blessedness of communion with God, how intolerable must seven days of spiritual darkness be! But how indescribably wretched must their case be who are cast out into outer darkness, where the light of God no more shines, and where his approbation can no more be felt for ever! Reader, God save thee from so great a curse!

Adam Clarke on Numbers 12:14

 Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

Several of the fathers suppose there is a great mystery hidden in the quarrel of Miriam and Aaron with Moses and Zipporah. Origen (and after him several others) speaks of it in the following manner: -

1. Zipporah, a Cushite espoused by Moses, evidently points out the choice which Jesus Christ has made of the Gentiles for his spouse and Church.
2. The jealousy of Aaron and Miriam against Moses and Zipporah signifies the hatred and envy of the Jews against Christ and the apostles, when they saw that the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven had been opened to the Gentiles, of which they had rendered themselves unworthy.
3. The leprosy with which Miriam was smitten shows the gross ignorance of the Jews, and the ruinous, disordered state of their religion, in which there is neither a head, a temple, nor a sacrifice.
4. Of none but Jesus Christ can it be said that he was the most meek and patient of men; that he saw God face to face; that he had every thing clearly revealed without enigmatical representations; and that he was faithful in all the house of God.” This, and much more, Origen states in the sixth and seventh homilies on the book of Numbers, and yet all this he considers as little in comparison of the vast mysteries that lie hidden in these accounts; for the shortness of the time, and the magnitude of the mysteries, only permit him “to pluck a few flowers from those vast fields - not as many as the exuberance of those fields afford, but only such as by their odour he was led to select from the rest.” *Licebat tamen ex ingentibus campis paucos flosculos legere, et non quantum ager exuberet, sed quantum orodoratui supiciat, carpere.*

Adam Clarke on Numbers 12:14

 Entrusting the Word to the Faithful

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)