

# Numbers

# Numbers | Introduction

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Numbers picks up where Exodus and Leviticus leave off, the wilderness around Mt. Sinai. The people have been here about a year when this narrative begins.

After some organization and guidance from God, the people depart for the wilderness of Paran. It's on this trip that discord among the people begins to grow.



Here in Paran the people rebel, led by Korah of the Levites. Through this rebellion we learn that Aaron has been chosen by God when his staff blooms before the people.

Departing Paran, the people make their way to Moab. Their travels are marked by war, death, and continued rebellion, though God hears their prayers and remains faithful.



Here in Moab, just across the river from the land God had promised the Israelites, Balaam is sent to curse the people. But instead of curses we are only shown God's steadfast love as the curses fail, and the people prepare to enter the promised land.

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If God is the father and the Israelites His children, the book of Numbers narrates the toddler years. They are no longer infants living under general guidance and development, they are now learning the true nature of God and how to commune with Him. He has delivered them from bondage and given them law, how will they respond? Where is God leading them? The book of Numbers answers these questions while laying a foundation in their hearts. A promise was made, a King is coming, will their hearts be ready?

## Theme 1

**“The Lord spoke”  
found 45 times:**

1:1	4:17	8:23	16:23	25:16
1:48	4:21	9:1	16:36	26:52
2:1	5:1	9:9	16:44	28:1
3:1	5:5	10:1	17:1	31:1
3:5	5:11	13:1	18:8	33:50
3:11	6:1	14:26	18:25	34:1
3:14	6:22	15:1	19:1	34:16
3:44	8:1	15:17	20:7	35:1
4:1	8:5	16:20	23:17	35:9

**Israel’s relationship with:**

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3:4	16:40
3:11-12	17:4-5
5:2-3	18
5:5-10	19:20
6:8	20:8
6:22-27	20:13
7:89	21:2-3
10:10	21:16-18
11:10-15	22:9
11:18-20	25:13
11:33	27:13-14
12:6-8	28-29
14:12	30:2-4
14:20	30:6-7
15:1-12	30:10-11
15:27-28	33:53
16:31-35	35:34

**Israel’s relationship with:**

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3:7-10
5:7
5:11-31
11:26-30
12:1
15:24
15:33-36
18:8-20
27:8-11
30:5
30:8
30:12-15
32:18
35:2
35:9-34
36:9

**Israel’s relationship with:**

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9:14
10:29-32
12:1
15:14-16
15:26
15:29-30
19:10
25:17
31:28, 30
35:15

## Theme 2

**Obedience**

1:19	8:3	20:9	26:3-4
1:54	8:20-22	20:27	27:5
2:34	9:5	21:3	27:22-23
3:16	9:23	21:7	29:40
3:51	11:2	22:13	31
4:34	11:24	22:18	31:31
4:49	13:3	23:8	32:16-19
5:4	13:30	23:26	36:10

**Disobedience**

11:1	15:32
11:4	16:1-2
11:25?	16:41-42
13:31	21:5
14:2	25:3
14:28-29	27:13-14
14:40-41	32:5

# Numbers | 1-4

3:4  
3:11-12  
3:7-10



1:19 3:51  
1:54 4:34  
2:34 4:49  
3:16

The first four chapters of Numbers are all about organization. It's been a little more than a year since God brought the Israelites out of Egypt and gave them law on Mt. Sinai. They are now a large, strong group in the wilderness of Sinai...ready to begin a new era in Israel's history. God begins by creating order. A census is taken, camp is arranged, and the tribes are given duties as they prepare for their journey, both physically and spiritually towards God's promised land.

### Census of Israel's Warriors

<b>Reuben</b> 46,500	<b>Simeon</b> 59,300	<b>Gad</b> 45,650	<b>Judah</b> 74,600	<b>Issachar</b> 54,400	<b>Zebulun</b> 57,400	<b>Joseph</b> 40,500	<b>Manasseh</b> 32,200	<b>Benjamin</b> 35,400	<b>Dan</b> 62,700	<b>Asher</b> 41,500	<b>Naphtali</b> 53,400
<b>603,550</b>											

#### Q1

When do Moses and Aaron begin fulfilling God's instruction from 1:2?  
(1:1 → 1:18)

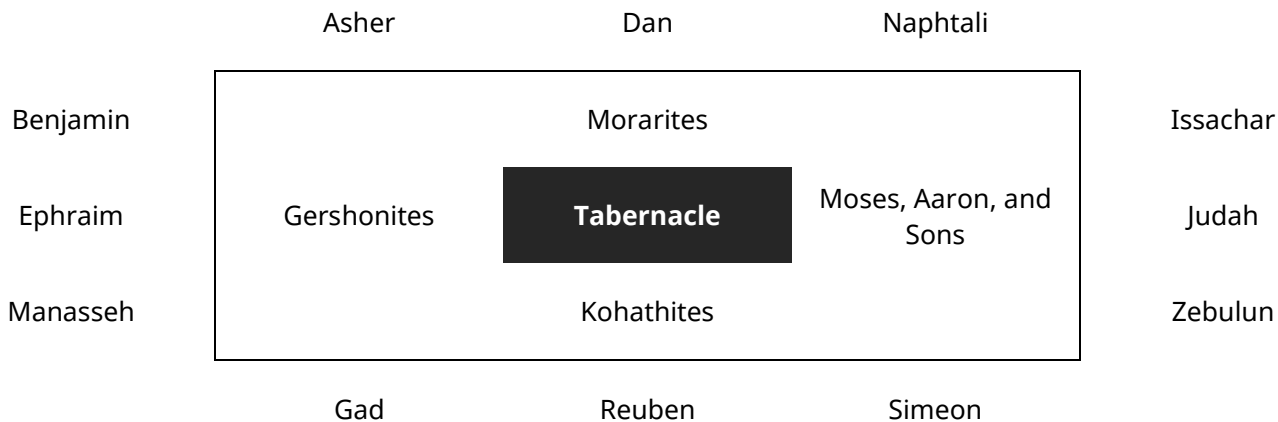
#### Q2

Which tribe is exempted from the census?  
(1:47)

#### Q3

Why are the Levites told to camp around the tabernacle?  
(1:53)

### Arrangement of the Camp



**Duties of the Levites****Aaron and His Sons**

Nadab	Abihu	Eleazar	Ithamar
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- Support and continue the priesthood (beginning with Aaron)
- Keep guard over Aaron and the entire congregation
- Minister to the tabernacle
- Guard the furnishings

**Gershon****7,500**

- The tent and its covering
- The screen at the entrance of the tent
- The hangings of the court
- The screen for the door of the court
- The cords

**Kohath****8,600**

- The ark
- The table
- The lampstand
- The alters
- Vessels of the sanctuary
- The screen

**Merari****6,200**

- Frames of the tabernacle
- Bars
- Pillars
- Bases
- Accessories
- Pillars around the court

**Q4**

Why were Nadab and Abihu killed?

(3:4)

**Q5**

What was the numerical difference between the Levites included in the census and the firstborn males of Israel?

(3:46)

**Thought Questions**

1. Why does God use the phrase "I am the LORD" so often when addressing the Levites?  
(49 times in the book of Leviticus, 3 times in Numbers 3 addressing the Levites)
2. What are the Levites to God? Why?  
(3:11-13; 3:40-51)
3. In chapters 3 and 4, what carried the penalty of death? If asked by a non-believer why this was so, what would you say?  
(3:4; 3:10, 38; 4:15, 19-20)

# Numbers | 5-9:14

5:2-3      6:8  
 5:5-10    6:22-27  
 5:7        7:89  
 5:11-31   9:14



5:4  
 8:3  
 8:20-22  
 9:5

Following the organization from chapters 1-4, God turns to instruction. What separates the holy from the unholy? How are wrongs made right, and what is the cost? How does Israel deal with each other, with God, and with outsiders? What is the tabernacle and how do they interact with it? All of these instructions are given in the wilderness of Sinai before the people begin their journey toward the promised land.

Unclean People (5:1-4)	Confession & Restitution (5:5-10)	A Test for Adultery (5:11-31)
<p><sup>1</sup>"The LORD spoke to Moses..."</p> <p>There is a separation between pure and defiled and it must be recognized.</p>	<p><sup>5</sup>"And the LORD spoke to Moses..."</p> <p>Wrongs should be made right, and the cost is great.</p>	<p><sup>11</sup>"And the LORD spoke to Moses..."</p> <p>A very specific ceremony must take place to determine the guilt of a potentially adulterous woman:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It is only for circumstances where there is <i>suspicion</i> of guilt. Proof of guilt is covered in the law.</li> <li>▪ It acknowledges something called "a spirit of jealousy" coming over the husband</li> <li>▪ It shows that matters of this nature are to be left up to God. Man cannot know.</li> <li>▪ The term "remembrance" is used several times</li> <li>▪ The punishment is the inability to bear children</li> </ul>		

**Q1**

Why do you think the priest is told to unbind the hair of the woman being examined?  
 (5:18)

**Q2**

If the woman is found to be unfaithful, why is her punishment different than elsewhere in the law?  
 (Lev 20:10 → Num 5:27)

**Q3**

What are the conditions of the Nazarite vow?  
 (Num 6)

**Q4**

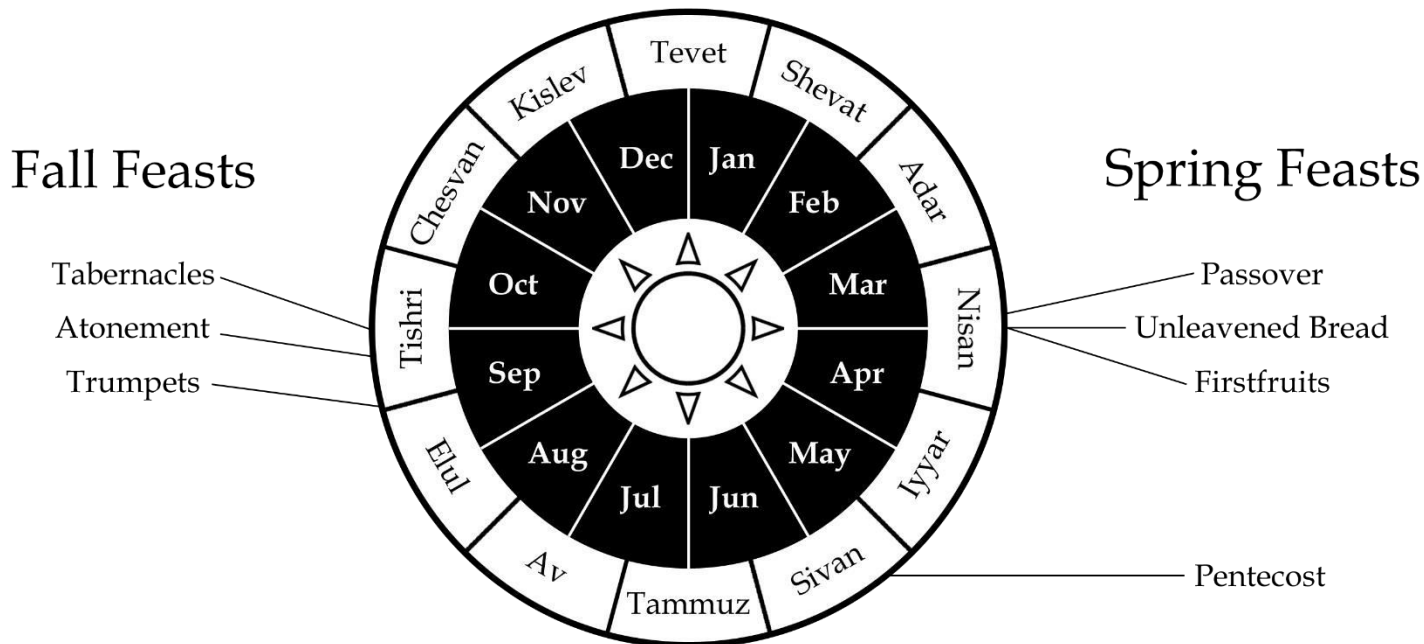
What are your observations from the detailed instructions given in chapter 7?  
 (Num 7)

**Q5**

List the general steps for cleansing the Levites:  
 (8:5-22)

**Q6**

What is the upper and lower age limit for Levitical service?  
 (8:23-25)



**Q7**

How does Moses answer difficult questions?

(9:6-7 – 9:8)

**Q8**

How do the Israelites deal with Gentiles wanting to observe Passover?

(9:14)

**Thought Questions**

1. What is the main point of all of the special instructions given to the Levites? Use at least 3 passages to support your answer:
  
2. Look ahead to other passages in Numbers that deal with Israel’s relationship with Gentiles. What do you see? (9:14; 10:29-39; 12:1; 15:14-16, 26, 29-30; 19:10; 25:17; 31:28, 30; 35:15)

# Numbers | 9:15–14:45

10:10      11:33  
 11:10-15    12:1  
 11:18-20    12:6-8  
 10:29-32    14:12  
 11:26-30    14:20



9:23    11:4  
 11:2    11:25?  
 11:24    13:31  
 13:3    14:2  
 13:30    14:28-29  
 11:1    14:40-41

Now that the people of Israel have been organized and given their final instructions, they set out for the wilderness of Paran, the place from which they will scout the promised land from God. It is in these chapters though that we see the heart of Israel revealed. They complain about their circumstances, kindle the anger of God, question their leadership, and ultimately turn from God through acts of faithlessness and rebellion. These chapters detail the backstory for the forty years of wandering in the wilderness.

## Q1

Do the people follow God's commands concerning movement with the tabernacle?  
 (9:23)

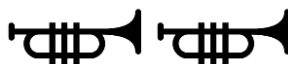
## Q2

Do the people follow God's commands concerning the breaking of camp?  
 (10:11-36)

## Q3

To this point in the narrative, how many times have the people disobeyed God?  
 (Num 1-10)

## The Silver Trumpets



10:1-10

- Made by hammer
- Used to summon the congregation and to break camp
- When both are blown, all the congregation shall gather at the entrance to the tent of meeting
- When one is blown, only the chiefs gather to Moses
- When an "alarm" is blown the first time, the east camps set out
- When an "alarm" is blown the second time, the south camps set out
- When gathering it shall be a long blast, no alarm
- Trumpets are managed by Levites
- This shall continue throughout generations, in war, in gladness, at feasts, at beginnings of months, over offerings, as a reminder before God that "**I am the LORD your God**".

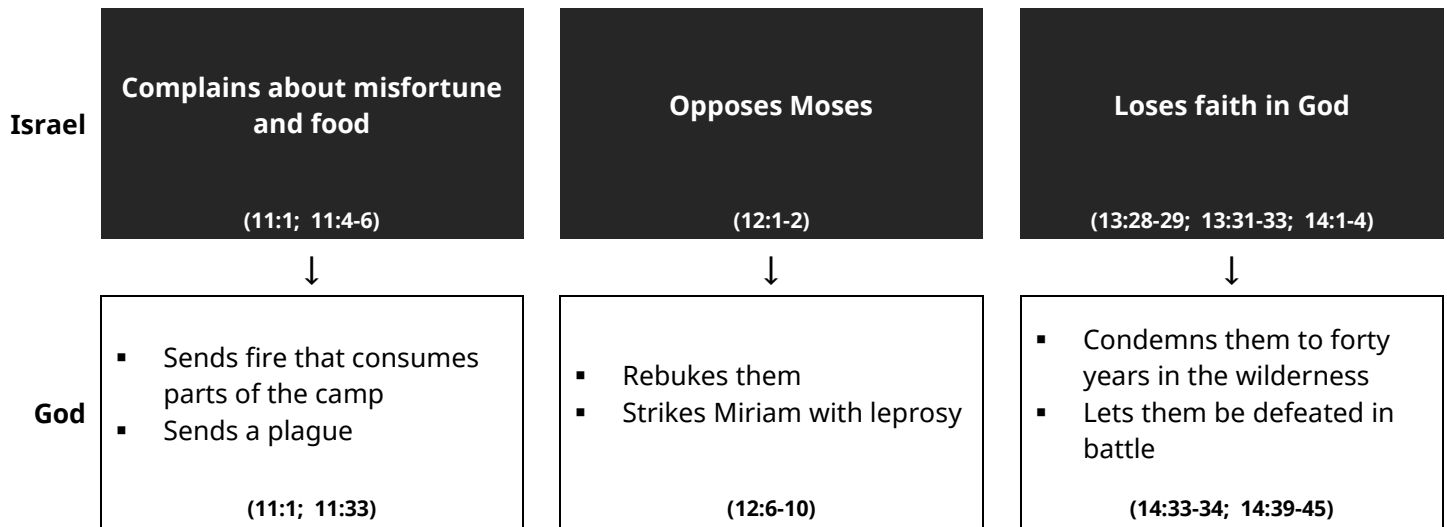
## Rebellion

(Num 11-14)

*"...kill me at once, if I find favor in your sight, that I may not see my wretchedness."*

*Moses in Num 11:15 (ESV)*



**Q4**

How many men does God give to Moses to share his burden?  
(11:16)

**Q5**

How long does Miriam remain leprous? Why?  
(Num 12:14-15; Lev 13)

**Q6**

Who are the only two spies who remained faithful to God?  
(13:30; 14:30)

**Thought Questions**

1. Why do you think God deals with the food complainers the way he does?  
(11:18-20; 11:31-35)
  
2. Were Aaron and Miriam justified in their opposition to Moses? Why or why not?  
(Ch 12)
  
3. 14:4 tells us that the people say to one another, "Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt." How do we, as Christians, do the same thing today?

# Numbers | 15-19







15:1-12    16:31-35  
 15:14-16    16:40  
 15:24    17:4-5  
 15:26    18  
 17:27-28    18:8-20  
 15:29-30    19:10  
 15:33-36    19:20



15:32  
 16:1-2  
 16:41-42

Having just sentenced the Israelites to forty years in the wilderness, God begins teaching the people how they should behave when they reach the promised land. This quickly transitions into instruction for their time in the wilderness, as they begin by breaking *current* laws. It is during this period of instruction that the first major rebellion takes form through a Levite named Korah, and we really begin to see the immaturity of the people of Israel. These chapters show us how God responds to faithlessness through swift punishment and constant teaching.

List the different types of instruction that are given from Num 15-19:

 (15:1-21)		 (15:37-41)	
 (15:22-31)		 (Ch 18)	
 (15:32-36)		 (Ch 19)	

## Korah's Rebellion

**Q1**

How many people rebelled along with Korah?  
 (16:2)

**Q2**

Why does Moses seem to be especially upset with this rebellion?  
 (16:7-11)

**Q3**

How does God respond?  
 (16:21; 16:45)

**Q4**

How do Moses and Aaron respond to God?  
 (16:22; 16:45-48)

### Thought Question

1. What caused this rebellion?



**“<sup>8</sup> On the next day Moses went into the tent of the testimony, and behold, the staff of Aaron for the house of Levi had sprouted and put forth buds and produced blossoms, and it bore ripe almonds.”**

**Num 17:8 (ESV)**

**“<sup>10</sup> And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Put back the staff of Aaron before the testimony, to be kept as a sign for the rebels, that you may make an end of their grumblings against me, lest they die.’”**

**Num 17:10 (ESV)**

God puts the open rebellion to rest by reasserting the leadership of Aaron, but the people are still uneasy. Their minds are not focused on what they’re seeing or hearing from God, only what they feel.

### Laws for Purification

Chapter 19 details purification laws for:

**v 7** |

**v 8** |

**v 10** |

**v 11** |

**v 14** |

**v 15** |

**v 16** |

**“<sup>10</sup> ...And this shall be a perpetual statute for the people of Israel, and for the stranger who sojourns among them.”**

**Num 19:10 (ESV)**

### Thought Questions

- Why do you think the punishment for “unintentional sin” is less severe than other sin?  
(15:22-31)
- What is a common theme between chapters 18 and 19? What does this teach us about God?  
(Hint: The Levites provide \_\_\_\_\_ between God and man. Uncleanliness is \_\_\_\_\_ from cleanliness.)

## Numbers | 20-25

20:8  
20:13  
21:2-3  
21:16-18

22:9  
25:13  
25:17



20:9  
20:27  
21:3  
21:5  
21:7

22:13  
22:18  
23:8  
23:26  
25:3

Now wandering in the wilderness, these chapters detail two of Israel's greatest enemies: death and Balaam. The former touches nearly every character mentioned, while the latter touches no one due to God's protection. Death is an obvious adversary, while Balaam can scarcely be recognized as an adversary in the pages of Numbers. Yet, both of these enemies present significant challenges to the people of Israel. How will they respond? What will they learn?

**Death**

**Of Miriam**  
(20:1)

Perhaps one of the first tangible pieces of evidence that no one from that generation would see the promised land.

**Of Moses' hope of the promised land**  
(20:10-13)

What a crucial and costly mistake Moses makes. We see its importance in God's response:

*"Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them."*  
Num 20:12 (ESV)

**Of Israel's power over other nations**  
(20:14-21)

Without God's divine interference, the people of Israel are no longer able to travel at will and conquer the nations around them.

**Of Aaron**  
(20:22-29)

For the same reason that Moses was never allowed into the promised land, Aaron was put to death. The way that he is taken is profoundly sad, and perhaps even shows that God did not desire it.

**Of Arad**  
(21:1-3)

On Israel's brief period of repentance, God gives the Aradites into the hands of Israel.

**Of complainers**  
(21:4-6)

**Balaam**

**Is summoned**  
(22:1-21)

Fearing the Israelites, Balak king of Moab summons Balaam to come and curse them.

**Q1**

How does Balaam respond?

**Is confronted by an angel**  
(22:22-41)

On his way to Balak, Balaam is confronted by an angel after first being scolded by a donkey (seriously).

**Q2**

Why did an angel confront Balaam?

**Gives his first oracle**  
(23:1-12)

After a brief ceremony, Balaam delivers his first oracle to Balak concerning the people of Israel.

*"...we loathe this worthless food."  
Num 21:5 (ESV)*

This is perhaps the most embarrassing of the complaints of the people, and results in many deaths through fiery serpents.

**Of Sihon and Og**  
(21:21-35)

Only through God's continual faithfulness and provisions are the Israelites able to succeed and continue in the wilderness.

**Of Israel's separation**  
(25:1-9)

Israel shows their unfaithfulness to God when they join themselves with the Moabites. God later uses the prophets to condemn these acts of "adultery" against Him.

**Of those slayed by Phinehas**  
(25:6-8)

Though Phinehas' zeal is commended by God, we still must acknowledge that sin has led to death.

**Of those "yoked" to Baal**  
(25:9)

The real problem of the Israelite's interaction with the Midianites was their submission to Baal. Numbers provides many examples of a proper relationship between God's holy people and foreign nations, this was not one of them.

**Q3**

Summarize Balaam's first oracle:

**Gives his second oracle**  
(23:13-30)

Having not received the message he was hoping for from Balaam, Balak changes his strategy by taking him to a higher location to see the threat the Israelites posed. From here, after an identical ceremony, Balaam delivers his second oracle.

**Q4**

Summarize Balaam's second oracle:

**Gives his third oracle**  
(24:1-14)

**Q5**  
Summarize this oracle:

**Gives his final oracle**  
(24:15-25)

**Q6**  
Summarize this oracle:

**Thought Questions**

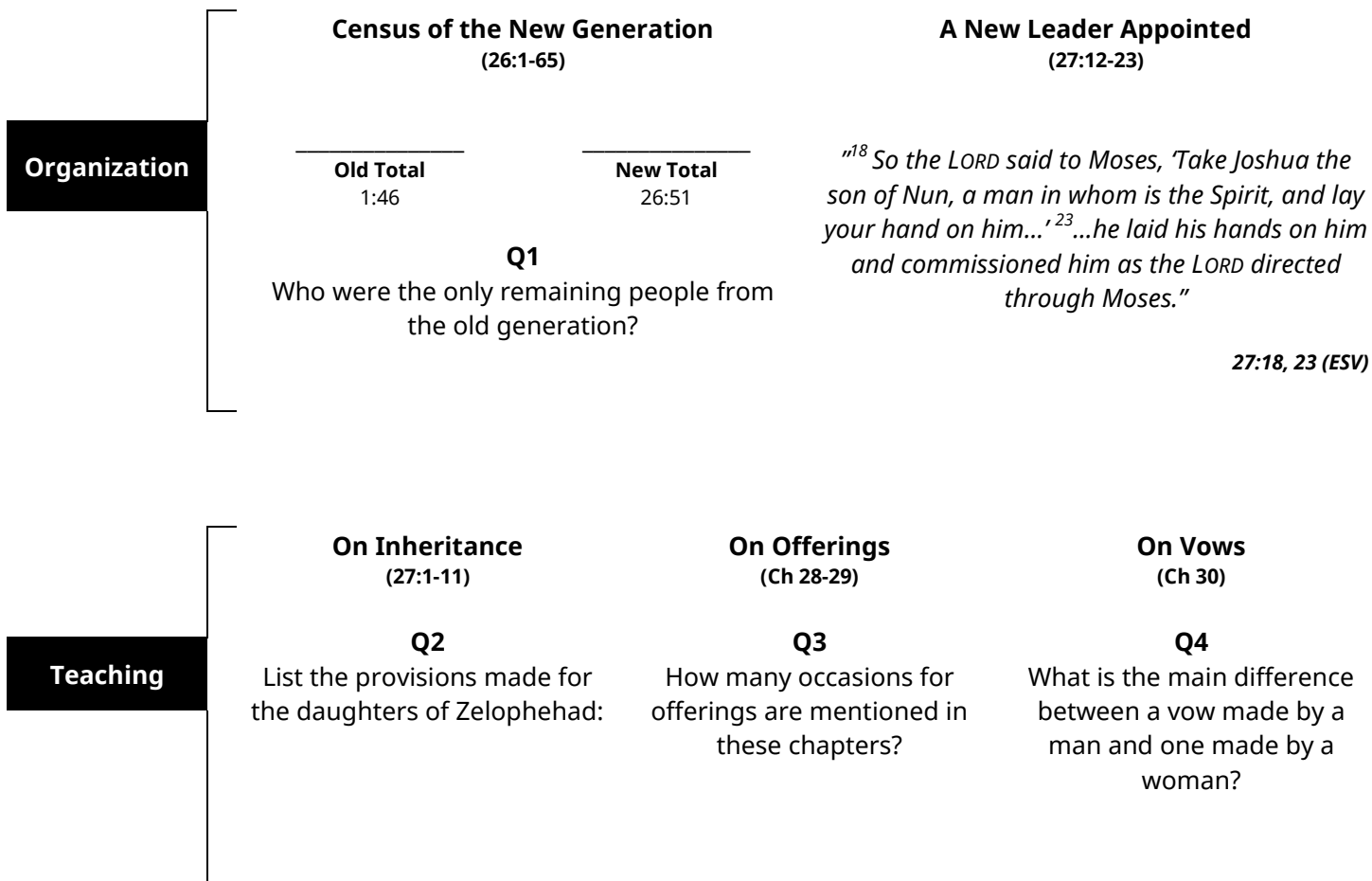
- (In Class Activity)** Analyze each instance of death/"death" from the list above. If an action led to the death, what was it and what motivated it? For all instances, what was the result of the death?
- (In Class Activity)** First, using *only* Numbers 22-24, summarize the character of Balaam. Use passages from those three chapters to support your claims. Then, find every reference you can of Balaam throughout the rest of the bible. Summarize his character again, using passages to support your claims.

# Numbers | 26-36

27:8-11	30:8	35:34	26:3-4	31
27:13-14	30:10-11	35:2	27:5	31:31
28-29	30:12-15	35:9-34	27:13-14	32:5
30:2-4	31:28, 30	36:9	27:22-23	32:16-19
30:5	32:18	35:15	29:40	36:10
30:6-7	33:53			

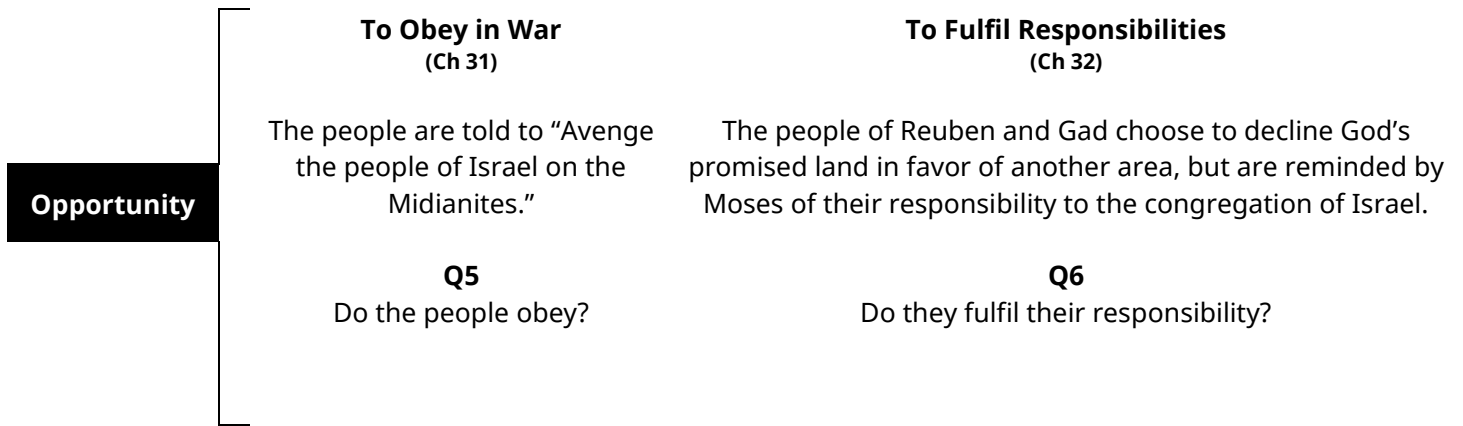


The last eleven chapters of Numbers are a retelling of the first twenty-five, only now with a new generation of Israelites. The last of the old generation have passed away and a new story begins much like the first: organization, followed by teaching, followed by opportunities for the people to show their faithfulness to God and inherit the promised land. The book ends with the initial plans for the people as they are to enter Canaan. It is during this instruction that the book ends and the stage is set for the final instructions from Moses, detailed in the book of Deuteronomy.



<sup>12</sup> The LORD said to Moses, 'Go up into this mountain of Abarim and see the land that I have given to the people of Israel.  
<sup>13</sup> When you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as your brother Aaron was, <sup>14</sup> because you rebelled against my word in the wilderness of Zin when the congregation quarreled, failing to uphold me as holy at the waters before their eyes.'"

**27:12-14 (ESV)**



### Looking Forward (Ch 33-36)

<b>What path was taken?</b> (33:1-49)	→	<b>How will they take the land?</b> (33:50-56)	→	<b>What will the boundaries be?</b> (34:1-15)	→	<b>Who will lead?</b> (34:16-29)	→	<b>What about the Levites?</b> (35:1-8)	→	<b>How are tough situations handled?</b> (35:9-34   Ch 36)
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### Thought Questions

1. What point do you think is being made by God’s detailed provisions for the daughters of Zelophehad?  
(27:1-11)
2. What would be some effects of the multitude of offerings the people were instructed to give?  
(Ch 28-29)
3. Why are there differences between men and women when making vows?  
(Ch 30)
4. What is the point of the “Cities of Refuge”? Why do you think this was necessary?  
(35:9-34)
5. Is the direction given to people of Gilead fair? Why or why not? What does this teach us?  
(Ch 36)