OLD TESTAMENT · THE LAW · BOOK 4 OF 66

Numbers

God is not a man, that He should lie (23:19)

36	Moses	c. 1445–1406 B.C.	Sinai to Moab
Chapters, 1,288 Verses	Author	About 39 Years	In the Wilderness

STRUCTURE

The Book in Four Parts

Numbers moves through three places: **Mount Sinai** (1–10), the **wilderness** between Kadesh and Moab (10–25), and the **plains of Moab** (26–36). It also tells of two generations: the old one that died in unbelief, and the new one that would enter the land.



Each bar shows that part's share of the 1,288 verses.

I · 1:1–10:10 · 394 verses

Set in Order at Sinai

The census, the camp, the Levites, and the cloud.

II · 10:11–14:45 · 155 verses

From Sinai to Kadesh

Murmuring, the spies, and the refusal to enter.

III · 15–25 · 336 verses

The Wilderness Years

Korah, Meribah, the brasen serpent, Balaam.

IV · 26–36 · 403 verses

The Plains of Moab

A new census, Joshua, and the land ahead.

DATES B.C. (APPROXIMATE)

Thirty-Nine Years in Numbers

Dates follow the early exodus (c. 1446 B.C., 1 Kings 6:1) and the months Numbers gives.

1:1
c. 1445
Second year, second month: the first numbering at Sinai

10:11
c. 1445
Twentieth day: the cloud lifts; Israel sets out

13–14
c. 1445
Kadesh-barnea: the spies, and forty years decreed

14:33
c. 1445–1407
About 38 years: the old generation dies in the wilderness

20:1
c. 1407
First month, fortieth year: back at Kadesh; Miriam dies

33:38
c. 1407
Fifth month: Aaron dies on mount Hor

22:1
c. 1406
The plains of Moab, across from Jericho

26
c. 1406
The second numbering: a new generation

NUMBERS 1 AND 26

Two Numberings, Two Generations

The men "from twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war" were counted twice, about thirty-nine years apart.

AT SINAI (1:46)	ON THE PLAINS OF MOAB (26:51)
603,550 men of war	**601,730 men of war**
second year	fortieth year
The generation that came out of Egypt	**Their children, who would enter the land**
1:1–3	26:63–64
Refused to enter at Kadesh	**"There was not left a man of them, save Caleb … and Joshua"**
14:1–4	26:65

The Levites were counted separately, every male from a month old: 22,000 at Sinai (3:39) and 23,000 on the plains of Moab (26:62).

The Camp of Israel

NUMBERS 2–3 · DIAGRAM

The Camp of Israel

God set the twelve tribes around the tabernacle, three on each side, with the Levites camped closest. The diagram shows each tribe, its leader and its number.

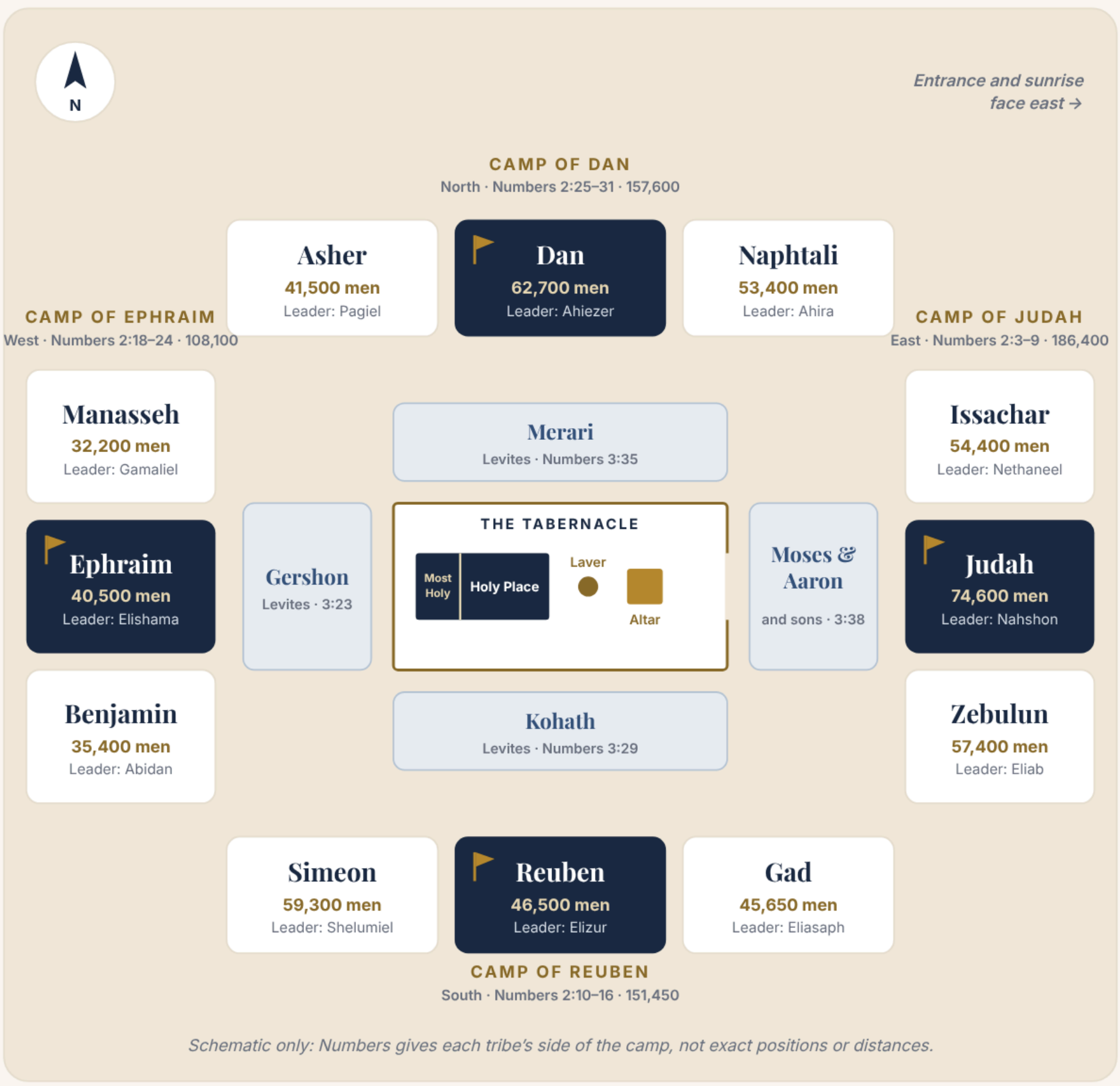
NUMBERS 2–3 · NUMBERS 10

The Camp of Israel

Twelve Tribes Around the Tabernacle

How Israel camped and marched in the wilderness, with God at the center

"Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by his own standard … far off about the tabernacle of the congregation shall they pitch." Numbers 2:2



NUMBERS 10:11–28

The Order of March

1	2	3	4	5	6
Camp of Judah	Gershon & Merari	Camp of Reuben	Kohath	Camp of Ephraim	Camp of Dan
Led the way	Carried the tabernacle	Second camp	Carried the holy things	Third camp	The rear guard
Num. 10:14	Num. 10:17	Num. 10:18	Num. 10:21	Num. 10:22	Num. 10:25

THE CENSUS · NUMBERS 1:46; 2:32

603,550

men twenty years old and up, able to go to war, not counting the Levites

EAST · 2:3–9
Camp of Judah
Judah, Issachar, Zebulun: 186,400. Marched first.

SOUTH · 2:10–16
Camp of Reuben
Reuben, Simeon, Gad: 151,450. Marched second.

WEST · 2:18–24
Camp of Ephraim
Ephraim, Manasseh, Benjamin: 108,100. Marched third.

NORTH · 2:25–31
Camp of Dan
Dan, Asher, Naphtali: 157,600. The rear guard.

> *"Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by his own standard, with the ensign of their father's house: far off about the tabernacle of the congregation shall they pitch."*
>
> Numbers 2:2 (KJV)

From Sinai to the Plains of Moab

NUMBERS 10–36 · MAP

From Sinai to the Plains of Moab

The map follows the journeys of Numbers. The gold line is the second year, the navy line the fortieth year, and the shaded circle the long years in the wilderness of Paran. The numbers match the cards below.

NUMBERS 10–36 · NUMBERS 33

From Sinai to the Plains of Moab

The journeys of the children of Israel

Second year to the fortieth year, c. 1445–1406 B.C.



Sinai to Kadesh-barnea Second year (10:11–12:16)	**Kadesh around Edom to Moab** Fortieth year (20–22)
About 38 years in the wilderness The unbelieving generation dies (14:33–35)	**Defeat at Hormah** Going up without the LORD (14:40–45)

"These are the journeys of the children of Israel, which went forth out of the land of Egypt with their armies under the hand of Moses and Aaron."

NUMBERS 33:1 (KJV)

Many of these places cannot be located with certainty; positions and the route line are approximate.

BibleStudyForAll.com · Map positions approximate · Scripture from the King James Version

1 10:11–12

Mount Sinai

The cloud is taken up; Israel sets out in the second year.

2 11:35–12:16

Hazeroth

Miriam and Aaron speak against Moses.

3 13:26; 14

Kadesh-barnea

The twelve spies return; the people refuse to go up.

4 14:44–45

Hormah

Going up without the LORD, they are smitten.

5 20:22–29

Mount Hor

Aaron dies; Eleazar wears his garments.

6 21:4; 33:35

By the Way of the Red Sea

Edom refuses passage, so Israel goes around.

7 21:4–9

The Brasen Serpent

Bitten by fiery serpents, "when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived."

8 21:21–31

Heshbon

Sihon king of the Amorites defeated.

9 21:33–35

Edrei

Og king of Bashan defeated.

10 22:1

The Plains of Moab

Camped by Jordan, over against Jericho.

11 22:41–24:25

Pisgah and the High Places

Balaam, hired to curse Israel, blesses them.

NUMBERS AT A GLANCE · PART 4 OF 6

Murmuring in the Wilderness and the Twelve Spies

A WARNING FOR US

Murmuring in the Wilderness

Again and again the people complained, and each time God answered with judgment and with mercy. Paul says "these things happened unto them for ensamples" (1 Corinthians 10:11).

1 · 11:1–3

Taberah

They complained, and fire burned in the camp until Moses prayed.

2 · 11:4–34

Kibroth-hattaavah

Tired of manna, they lusted for flesh; quails, then a plague.

3 · 12

Miriam and Aaron

They spoke against Moses; Miriam was leprous seven days.

4 · 14:1–4

Kadesh

"Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt!"

5 · 16

Korah

Rebellion against Moses and Aaron; the earth opened.

6 · 21:5–6

The Way around Edom

"Our soul loatheth this light bread": fiery serpents.

> *"The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression."*
>
> Numbers 14:18 (KJV)

NUMBERS 13–14

The Twelve Spies

Twelve men saw the same land. Ten saw giants; two saw God.

THE TEN	CALEB AND JOSHUA
"We be not able to go up against the people" 13:31	**"Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it"** 13:30
"We were in our own sight as grasshoppers" 13:33	**"If the LORD delight in us, then He will bring us into this land"** 14:8
Died by the plague before the LORD 14:37	**Lived to enter the land** 14:38; Joshua 14:6–14

NUMBERS 14:24

He Followed Me Fully

"But My servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed Me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went."

"So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:19).

The Serpent of Brass and Balaam's Blessings

NUMBERS 21:4–9

The Serpent of Brass

When the people spoke against God, fiery serpents bit them. God's remedy was simple: look and live.

> *"Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live."*
>
> Numbers 21:8 (KJV)

JOHN 3:14–15

Jesus Explains It

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

NUMBERS 22–24

Balaam: Hired to Curse, Made to Bless

Balak king of Moab paid Balaam to curse Israel from the high places. Each time, God turned the curse into a blessing.

1 **23:7–10**

The First Parable

"How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed?"

2 **23:18–24**

The Second Parable

"God is not a man, that He should lie"

3 **24:3–9**

The Third Parable

"How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!"

4 **24:15–19**

The Fourth Parable

"there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel"

Balaam blessed with his mouth but loved money in his heart. His counsel led Israel into sin at Baal-peor (31:16), and the New Testament warns against "the way of Balaam … who loved the wages of unrighteousness" (2 Peter 2:15).

Christ in Numbers, Key Themes and Key Verse

LOOKING FORWARD

Christ in Numbers

The New Testament points to Numbers again and again to show who Jesus is.

21:9 · JOHN 3:14–15

Lifted Up

Like the serpent on the pole, the Son of man was lifted up, and all who look to Him in faith live.

11:7–9 · JOHN 6:32–33

The True Bread

The manna pointed to “the true bread from heaven,” Jesus Himself.

20:11 · 1 CORINTHIANS 10:4

The Rock

“They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.”

24:17 · MATTHEW 2:2

The Star out of Jacob

The King foretold by Balaam; the wise men followed His star.

35:11 · HEBREWS 6:18

Our Refuge

Like the cities of refuge, Christ is the hope “we … have fled for refuge to lay hold upon.”

16:48 · HEBREWS 7:25

Between the Dead and the Living

Like Aaron with his censer, Christ “ever liveth to make intercession” for His people.

BIG IDEAS

Key Themes

God’s Faithfulness

God keeps His word to an unfaithful people.

14:18; 23:19

Unbelief

Unbelief kept a whole generation out of the land.

14:11, 22–23; Hebrews 3:19

God’s Guidance

The cloud and the ark led Israel every step.

9:15–23; 10:33–36

Order and Holiness

A camp set in order around God’s dwelling.

2:2; 5:1–4

Murmuring

Complaining against God brings His judgment.

11:1; 14:27; 21:5

Leadership

God upholds His chosen leaders: Moses, Aaron, Joshua.

12:7–8; 17:8; 27:18

Blessing

No one can curse whom God has blessed.

6:24–26; 23:8, 20

Sin Is Found Out

Sin brings consequences, even for Moses.

20:12; 32:23

A New Generation

God’s promise passes to the children.

14:31; 26:63–65

KEY VERSE

“God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?”

Numbers 23:19 (KJV)