

NUMBERS

LITERARY TYPE: Historical Narrative. The Hebrew name for the book is 'Bemidbar', which means 'in the desert/wilderness'. The name of the book, Numbers, comes from the two census that are taken.

AUTHOR: The author is not mentioned in the text itself, but tradition credits Moses as the author for the reasons stated in the Genesis LADROCK (as to why he is the author of the whole Torah) and also the following additional reasons:

- Numbers 3:1 *'Now these are the records of the generations of Aaron and Moses at the time when the LORD spoke with Moses at Mt Sinai.'*
- Numbers 33:2 Here we have evidence to show that Moses documented details about the journeys of the Israelites during their time in the wilderness, and these journeys are listed. If he was documenting these, it's a fair consideration that he documented all of the content of the book.
- The detailed eyewitness account could have only been provided by Moses.

DATE: The content of this book covers approximately 40 years of history – from camping at Mt Sinai (around 1446BC) to camping on the edge of the Promised Land, after a whole generation has died in the wilderness (around 1406BC). Moses likely kept a journal of records and collated them into this book, possibly whilst camped opposite the Promised Land in 1406BC.

RECIPIENTS: The Israelites – the current generation and the generations to come.

OCCASION:

- To keep a historical account of the nation of Israel as they moved from Mt Sinai towards the Promised Land. This record can be passed on to future generations.
- To show that God chastens His people when they disobey.
- To continue revealing the attributes of God by showing:
 - His perseverance in covenant keeping
 - The balance between His grace and wrathful chastening
- To foreshadow the sacrifice of Christ through symbolism (ie. Red Heifer and bronze serpent)

CONTENT SURVEY:

PART ONE - Israel at Sinai: Preparation (1:1-10:10)

Census of people (1)

Assigning campsites around the Tabernacle (2)

Census of Levites, their duties assigned (3-4)

Standards for purity (5)

Nazirites (6)

Offerings for Tabernacle from Israel's leaders (7)

Dedication of Levites (8)

Firey cloud, silver trumpets (9:1-10:10)

PART TWO - From Sinai to Kadesh: Frustration (10:11-20:13)

Departure from Sinai (10:11-36)

Complaints and solutions (11)
Miriam and Aaron criticise Moses (12)
Rebellion at Kadesh-barnea (13-14)
Additional laws (15)
Rebellion of Korah, Dathan, Abiram (16)
Aaron's staff buds (17)
Duties of Levites (18)
Purification by ashes of red heifer (19)
Moses strikes the rock (20:1-20:13)

PART THREE - From Kadesh to Moab: Anticipation (20:14-36:13)

Edom denies passage to Israel (20:14-20:21)
Death of Aaron (20:22-20:29)
Bronze serpent (21:1-9)
Israel defeats Sihon and Og (21:10-21:35)
Balak and Balaam (22-24)
Israelites seduced by Moabites (25)
Second census of people (26)
Joshua to succeed Moses (27)
Regulations for worship and vows (28-29)
Regulations for vows (30)
Israel defeats the Midianites (31)
Settlement of Transjordan tribes (32)
Review of wilderness journey (33)
Settlement of Canaan described (34-36)

KEY VERSE:

Numbers 14:30-31 "Not one shall come into the land where I swore that I would make you dwell, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun. But your little ones, who you said would become a prey, I will bring in, and they shall know the land that you have rejected."

Sources: Willmington's Bible Handbook and SOTW lectures