

Numbers

Preparation to Occupy the Land									
Preparing the Old Generation		Postponement for Unbelief				Preparing the New Generation			
1:1–10:10		10:11–25:18				26–36			
God’s Faithfulness		Israel’s Faithlessness				God’s Faithfulness			
God’s Blessings		God’s Discipline				God’s Blessings			
Israel’s Commitment		Israel’s Complaining				Israel’s Commitment			
Order		Disorder				Reorder			
Mount Sinai		Wilderness				Moab			
20 Days		38 Years, 3 Months, 10 Days				ca. 5 Months			
Organization (1–4)	Sanctification (5:1–10:10)	To Kadesh (10:11–12:16)	Kadesh Sin (13–14)	Wilderness (15–19)	To Moab (20–21)	Moab Sin (22–25)	Provision for Land (26–27)	Offerings & Vows (28–30)	Final Preparations (31–36)

Key Word: Preparation

Key Verses: *Discipline*—“Not one of the men who saw my glory and the miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the desert but who disobeyed me these ten times—not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their forefathers...” (Numbers 14:22-23)

Blessing—“God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill? I have received a command to bless; he has blessed, and I cannot change it” (Numbers 23:19-20)

Summary Statement:

God prepared Israel to enter Canaan by showing that he would fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant only through believing Israelites.

Applications:

We as believers need to realize that God has given us everything we need to do his will, but disobedience deserves discipline.

God will get his will done either through us or in spite of us.

Are we characterized by commitment or complaining?

Numbers

Introduction

- I. **Title** The name for the book of Numbers comes from two censuses of Israel about 38 years apart. The first census was of the Exodus generation at Mount Sinai (Num 1) and the second recorded those on the plains of Moab born in the wilderness who later conquered Canaan (Num 26). The Hebrew title is "And He Said," taken from the first word of the book (וַיִּדְבֶּר *Wayyedabber*). However, Jewish writings usually refer to the writing as "In the Wilderness" from the fifth word of 1:1 (בְּמִדְבָּר *B^emidbar*).

II. Authorship

- A. **External Evidence:** Ancient Jewish, Samaritan, and Christian testimony uniformly claims that Moses authored the book of Numbers.
- B. **Internal Evidence:** Numbers states "the LORD spoke to Moses" more than 80 times, starting in 1:1. However, 33:2 gives the clearest reference to his authorship: "Now Moses wrote down the starting points of their journeys at the command of the LORD" (cf. 36:13). The book also evidences a consistency of style characteristic of a single author. Nevertheless, most critical scholars deny Mosaic authorship based upon the varying linguistic forms within the work (e.g., LaSor, 165).

III. Circumstances

- A. **Date:** Mosaic authorship places the writing in his lifetime (1525-1405 BC). The tabernacle was set up exactly one year after the Exodus (Exod 40:17) and Numbers picks up the story one month later (Num 1:1). Therefore, the time covered by Numbers begins one year after the Exodus (in 1444 BC) and covers the 38 year and nine month (Num. 10:11; Deut. 1:3; cf. LaSor, 163) wilderness wandering until just before the conquest of Canaan (beginning ca. 1405 BC). Moses probably kept a journal of the wanderings and compiled them shortly before his death in ca. 1405 BC.
- B. **Recipients:** Moses did not enter Canaan so the first readers were the Jews in the wilderness.
- C. **Occasion:** The nation had been redeemed from Egypt and constructed the tabernacle (Exodus), had learned about holy living (Leviticus), and thought it ready to possess the land. However, God knew that Israel was not ready (cf. Exod. 13:17) without more preparation, so he organized the people for conquest (1:1–10:10), though their unbelief prevented them from entering Canaan (10:11–25:18).

IV. Characteristics

- A. Numbers is the book of the wilderness wanderings. Exodus records the short journey from Egypt to Sinai, but Numbers chronicles the nearly 40-year wilderness journey.
- B. Numbers provides more census data about pre-exilic Israel than any book (Num 1, 26).
- C. Numbers illustrates truths twice in the New Testament (1 Cor. 10:1-12; Heb. 3:7–4:6).

Argument

While Leviticus relates to the nation's worship, Numbers records the nation's walk. Numbers records how God prepared Israel to walk with him in a covenant relationship (1:1–10:10) but the nation postponed the fulfillment of the promise of the land through unbelief, so God purged it of its rebellion (10:11–25:18). Nevertheless, due to God's faithfulness to his covenant, he prepared the next generation of Jews to enter the land (chs. 26–36). The narrative continually contrasts God's faithfulness with Israel's faithlessness. We are fickle, frazzled, fleeting and floundering but God is fair, fantastic, far-sighted and a faithful foundation.

Synthesis

Preparation to occupy the land

(God's faithfulness vs. Israel's faithlessness)

1:1–10:10

Preparing the old generation

1–4	Travel organization
1–2	Census/camp/march
3–4	Levite responsibilities
5:1–10:10	Sanctifying Israel
5–6	Separation
7:1–9:14	Worship
9:15–10:10	Divine guidance

10:11–25:18

Postponement for unbelief

10:11–12:16	To Kadesh
10:11-36	Leave Sinai
11	Quail
12:1-15	Miriam/Aaron oppose
12:16	Paran
13–14	Kadesh: Climactic unbelief
15–19	Wilderness
15	Offering/death penalty review
16	Korah
17–19	Priests-rod, roles, heifer
20–21	To Moab
20	Rock water
21	Sihon, Og, bronze snake
22–25	Moab
22–24	Balaam/Barak
25	Beth Peor

26–36

Preparing the new generation

26–27	Provision for land
26	New census
27:1-11	New inheritance law
27:12-23	New leader–Joshua
28–30	Offerings/vows
31–36	Final preparations
31–32	Transjordan conquered
33:1-49	Wanderings summarized
33:50–36:13	Canaan defined (boundaries, Lev./refuge cities, new inherit. law)

Outline

Summary Statement for the Book

The way God prepared Israel to enter Canaan was by showing that he would fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant only through believing Israelites.

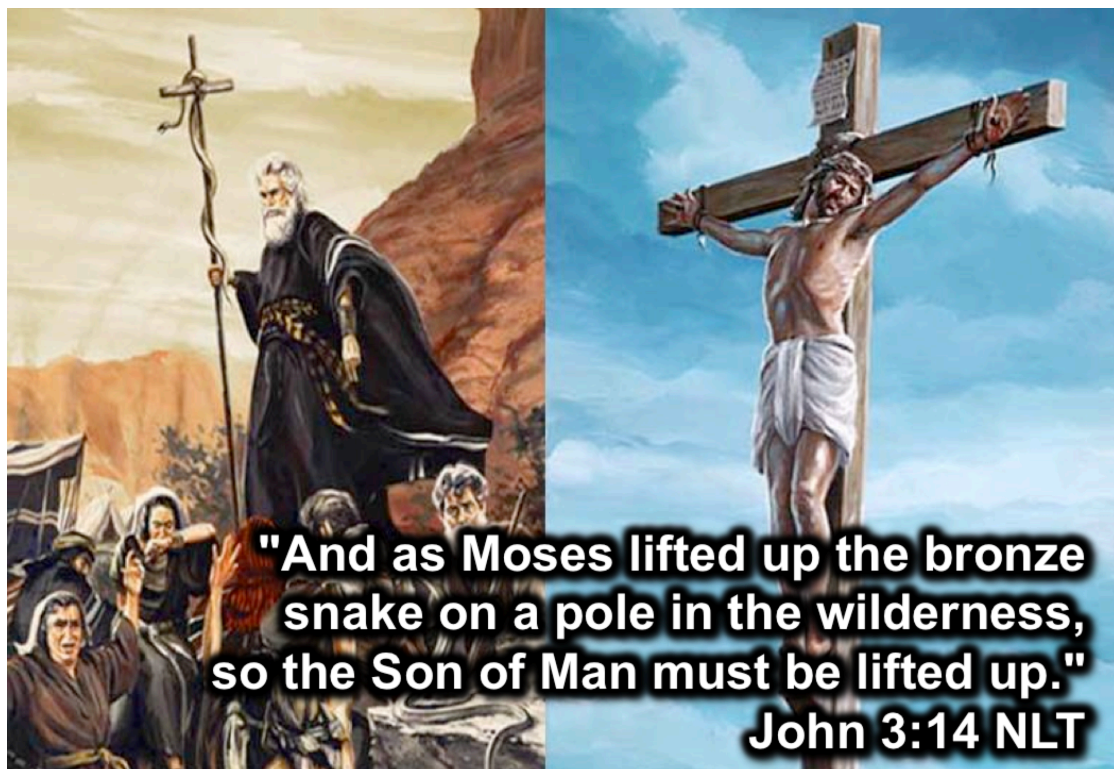
- I. The way God prepared Israel's old generation to enter Canaan was by fulfilling the covenant to Abraham through an orderly and holy nation (1:1–10:10; 20 days at Mount Sinai).
 - A. God organizes Israel's old generation and Levites for efficient travel through the wilderness and conquest of Canaan (Num 1–4).
 1. God organizes the people through an army census, camp arrangement, and marching order as his preparation to defeat the Canaanites (Num 1–2).
 - a. The first census in Israel numbers 603,550 soldiers to show God faithful to provide Israel an army to defeat the Canaanites (Num 1).
 - b. The camp planning and marching order affirms God's desire for an orderly people (Num 2).
 2. God organizes the Levites to care for and transport the tabernacle and redeems them for lifelong service that Israel would treat his holy things respectfully (Num 3–4).
 - a. God appoints the three Levite clans to care for the tabernacle so that Israel would treat the holy things respectfully (3:1-39).

- b. God substitutes Levites for the firstborn sons as compensation for sparing the firstborn Israelites at the Exodus to provide lifelong servants for the tabernacle (3:40-51).
 - c. God assigns the tabernacle transport to the three Levite clans to orderly move his holy things (Num 4).
- B. God sanctifies Israelites through separation, worship, and his guiding presence so they could enter Canaan as a holy nation (5:1–10:10).
- 1. Laws of holiness by separation preserve the camp's physical, social, spiritual, and marital purity (Num 5–6).
 - a. Make ritually unclean people live outside the camp to protect its *physical* purity (5:1-4).
 - b. Recompense for financial wrongdoing to protect Israel's *social* purity (5:5-10).
 - c. Test women suspected of adultery to protect Israel's *marital* purity (5:11-31).
 - d. Separate Nazirites to protect Israel's *spiritual* purity (6:1-21).
 - e. Bless the Israelites that God might separate them as his own unique people (6:22-27).
 - 2. Israel's sanctification through worship will give God his due honor (7:1–9:14).
 - a. Each tribe offers identical gifts at the tabernacle dedication as sanctified worship to honor God (Num 7).
 - b. The arrangement of the lighted lamps gives Israel more formerly unrevealed teaching about its worship (8:1-4).
 - c. The Levites' consecration provides divine approval for the worship of Israel (8:5-26).
 - d. God allows Passover for the ceremonially unclean one month later but only in the prescribed manner to encourage Israel to worship God in holiness (9:1-14).
 - 3. Israel's sanctification through God's guidance in the tabernacle cloud and assembly trumpets assures his presence so Israel might enter Canaan as a holy nation (9:15–10:10).
 - a. God guides Israel through the tabernacle cloud to sanctify the people with his presence and help them depend on him for direction (9:15-23).
 - b. Trumpets must be blown for meetings, battle, and feasts to recall his guiding presence (10:1-10).

II. The way God prepared believing Israelites for Canaan was by judging the old generation's unbelief and blocking their entry (10:11–25:18; 38-year wilderness wandering).

- A. God judges Israel's unbelief en route to Kadesh shown in complaining over manna and opposing leadership by Moses to affirm his just yet faithful guiding to Canaan (10:11–12:16).
- 1. Israel leaves Sinai at the LORD's command in original trust in God's guidance (10:11-36).
 - 2. God provides quail for the people when they complain about the manna but judges them with plagues for their rebellion to teach his grace balanced with justice (Num 11).
 - 3. God judges Miriam and Aaron for envy of Moses by briefly making Miriam leprous to show he approves of Moses (12:1-15).
 - 4. Israel leaves Hazereth north of Sinai and camps in the Desert of Paran to move closer to the Promised Land (12:16).
- B. God judges Israel's unbelief to enter Canaan from Kadesh by forbidding future entrance into the land to teach that his rest can be claimed only by faith (Num 13–14).

- C. God judges Israel's unbelief in the wilderness by resisting his leaders and teaches about priests for Israel to respect leaders and obey the covenant for God's nonstop presence (Num 15–19).
1. A review of offerings for thanksgiving and unintentional sins and a story of the death penalty for intentional sin show God's covenant requirements (Num 15).
 2. God kills Korah and his followers, 250 men, and 14,700 Israelites for opposing Moses and Aaron to warn Israel to obey his appointed leaders (Num 16).
 3. Priestly instructions remind Israel to obey and pay God's workers to maintain their purity for God's continued presence (Num 17–19).
 - a. God vindicates Aaron by making his rod bud before rebels who challenged his authority to provide a lasting memorial to obey his appointed leaders (Num 17).
 - b. The roles and salary of priests and Levites remind jealous Levites that only Aaron's offspring can be priests and remind the nation to care for God's workers (Num 18).
 - c. Priests must sacrifice a red heifer for ceremonial purification from corpses to maintain ritual cleanness in the nation for God's presence to abide with the people (Num 19).
- D. God judges Israel's unbelief by complaining en route to Moab yet still defeats the Transjordan nations (Num 20–21).
1. In the Desert of Zin, God judges Moses and Aaron for hitting a rock, Miriam and Aaron die, and Edom refuses passage to Israel all due to Israel's unbelief (Num 20).
 2. En route to Moab, Israel defeats Canaanites, Sihon of Heshbon, and Og of Bashan but defeat themselves by grumbling, yet God heals them with a bronze snake (Num 21).



- E. God judges Israel's sexual idolatry at Moab but still gives undeserved blessing through Balaam (Num 22–25).
1. Balak (king of Moab) doesn't turn God against Israel when he hires the pagan Balaam to curse Israel, but he blesses them to show God's commitment to Israel (Num 22–24).
 2. At Baal of Peor, Balak turns Israel against God by Moabite prostitutes and by idolatry that kills 24,000 before Phinehas atones for the sin due to God's hatred of defiant sin (Num 25).

III. The way God prepared the believing new generation for Canaan was by organizing them, reviewing offerings and vows, and outlining Canaan (Num 26–36; 5 months near Moab).

- A. God provides for the new generation to inherit the land by reorganizing them in a new census, new law of inheritance, and new leader (Num 26–27).
1. Israel's second census shows the new generation of 601,730 is barely smaller than the old generation 38 years earlier as God's provision of soldiers to defeat Canaan (Num 26).

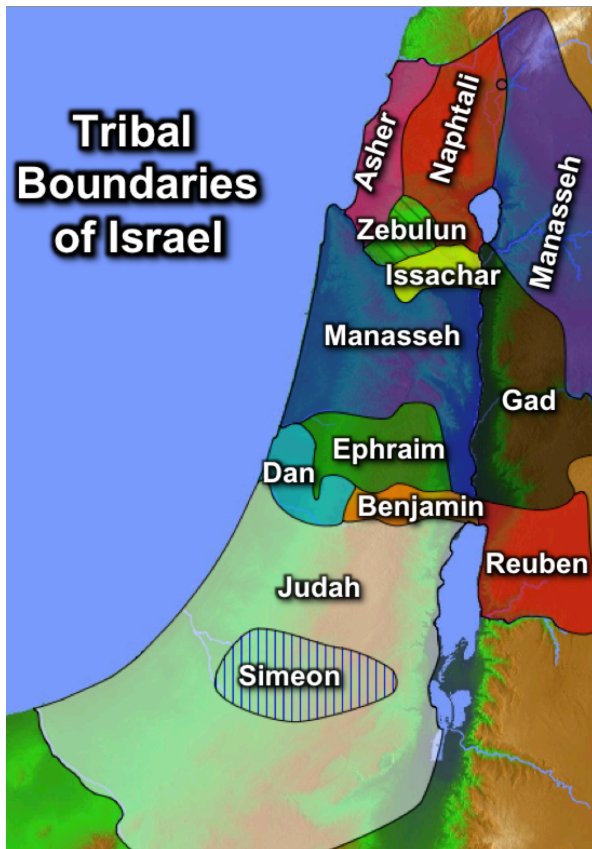
Population Changes in the Wilderness

Tribe	Numbers 1 (1444 BC) Start of Wanderings	Numbers 26 (1406 BC) End of Wanderings	Increase (Decrease)
Reuben	46,500	43,730	(2,770)
Simeon	59,300	22,200	(37,100)
Gad	45,650	40,500	(5,150)
Judah	74,600	76,500	1,900
Isaachar	54,400	64,300	9,900
Zebulun	57,400	60,500	3,100
Ephraim	40,500	32,500	(8,000)
Manasseh	32,200	52,700	20,500
Benjamin	35,400	45,600	10,200
Dan	62,700	64,400	1,700
Asher	41,500	53,400	11,900
Naphtali	53,400	45,400	(8,000)
Total	603,550	601,730	(1,820)

These numbers only include men at least 20 years old who served in the army (26:2, 4). Women, children, Levites and the handicapped were not counted. Assuming each soldier had a wife and an average of only one child puts the total population nearly 2 million. The tribe of Reuben decreased partly due to rebelling with Korah (26:8-9; cf. 16:1-35). The tribe of Simeon shrank the most. Perhaps this was due to the plague that killed 14,700 (16:49) and/or the tribe's immorality at Beth Peor, which killed 24,000 (25:9), as its leader Zimri was a Simeonite (25:14).

2. Inheritance goes to five daughters of Zelophehad, a man who died without sons, showing God's grace for those who would otherwise have no inheritance (27:1-11).
 3. God gives a leader to the new generation in Joshua's appointment to succeed Moses (27:12-23).
- B. The rules on offerings and vows sanctify the new generation to worship God (Num 28–30).
1. Offering regulations for daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly sacrifices help the new generation to worship God appropriately (Num 28–29).
 2. Regulations on women's vows highlight keeping promises made to God to help the new generation to worship God appropriately (Num 30).
- C. God defeats the Transjordan, summarizes his wilderness guidance, and defines land boundaries to prepare Israel to enter Canaan (Num 31–36).
1. The defeat of the Transjordan ends by destroying the Midianites but defining inheritances according to man's will reveals that God's inheritance is always best (Num 31–32).
 - a. Israel defeats the Midianites and divides the spoil for turning Israel away from the LORD at Peor to show God's jealous love for his people (Num 31).
 - b. The eastern two-and-a-half tribes receive their lands provided they fight in Canaan and forfeit their Canaan inheritance to show God's inheritance is always best (Num 32).
 2. A summary of God's faithful provision on Israel's journey from Egypt to Moab helps the people further trust in God for entrance into the land (33:1-49).

3. The land west of the Jordan (Canaan) is defined in boundaries, Levite towns, cities of refuge, and separate tribal areas to prepare Israel to enter the land (33:50–36:13).
 - a. The Western tribes are promised their inheritance in Canaan if they drive out the inhabitants to teach Israel that God's gifts involve human responsibility (33:50–34:29).
 - b. Forty-eight cities in Canaan are granted to the Levites, including six cities of refuge for fugitives of unintentional murders, to protect God's name from slander (Num 35).
 - c. Daughters inheriting land must marry within their tribal clan so every Israelite will retain his father's property and thus prevent mixing lands in a tribal area (Num 36).



Final Preparations (31-36)

- Transjordan Settled (31-32)
 - Midianites (31)
 - Inheritances (32)
- Wandering Summary (33:1-49)
- Canaan Defined (33:50–36:13)
 - Inheritance (33:50–34:29)
 - Levitical Cities (35)
 - Daughters (36)

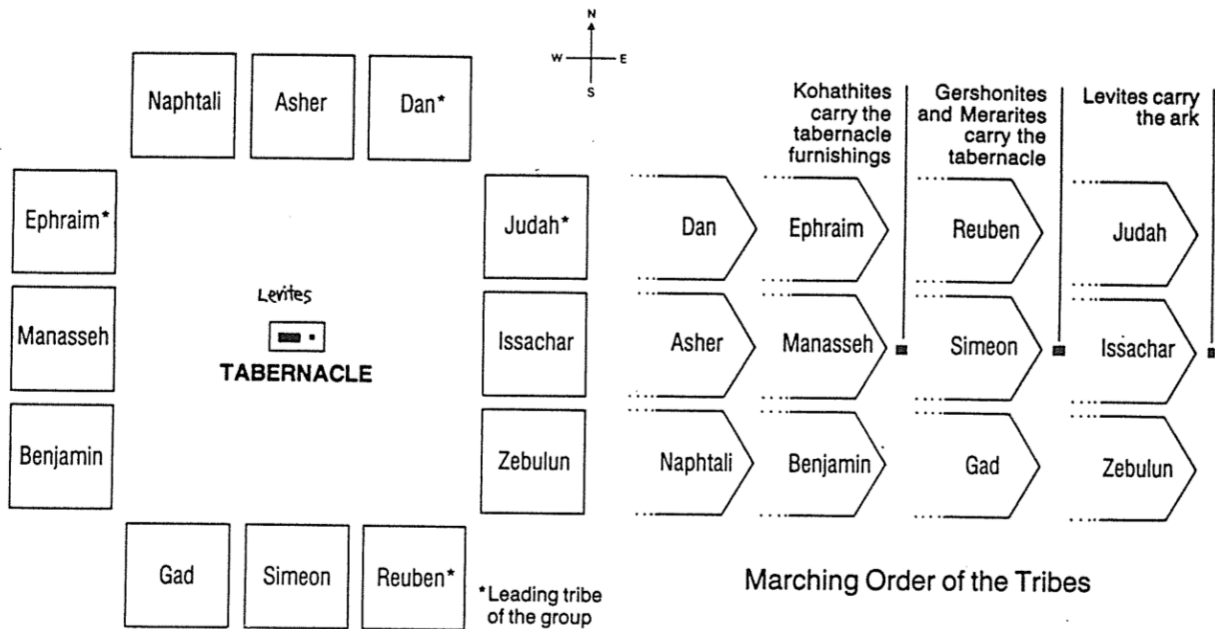
Encampment of the Tribes of Israel and Cities of Refuge

The Bible Visual Resource Book, 35

Numbers

Encampment of the Tribes of Israel

Numbers 2:1-31; 10:11-33



Cities of Refuge

Numbers 35:6-34; Joshua 20:1-9 (cf. p. 17/a)

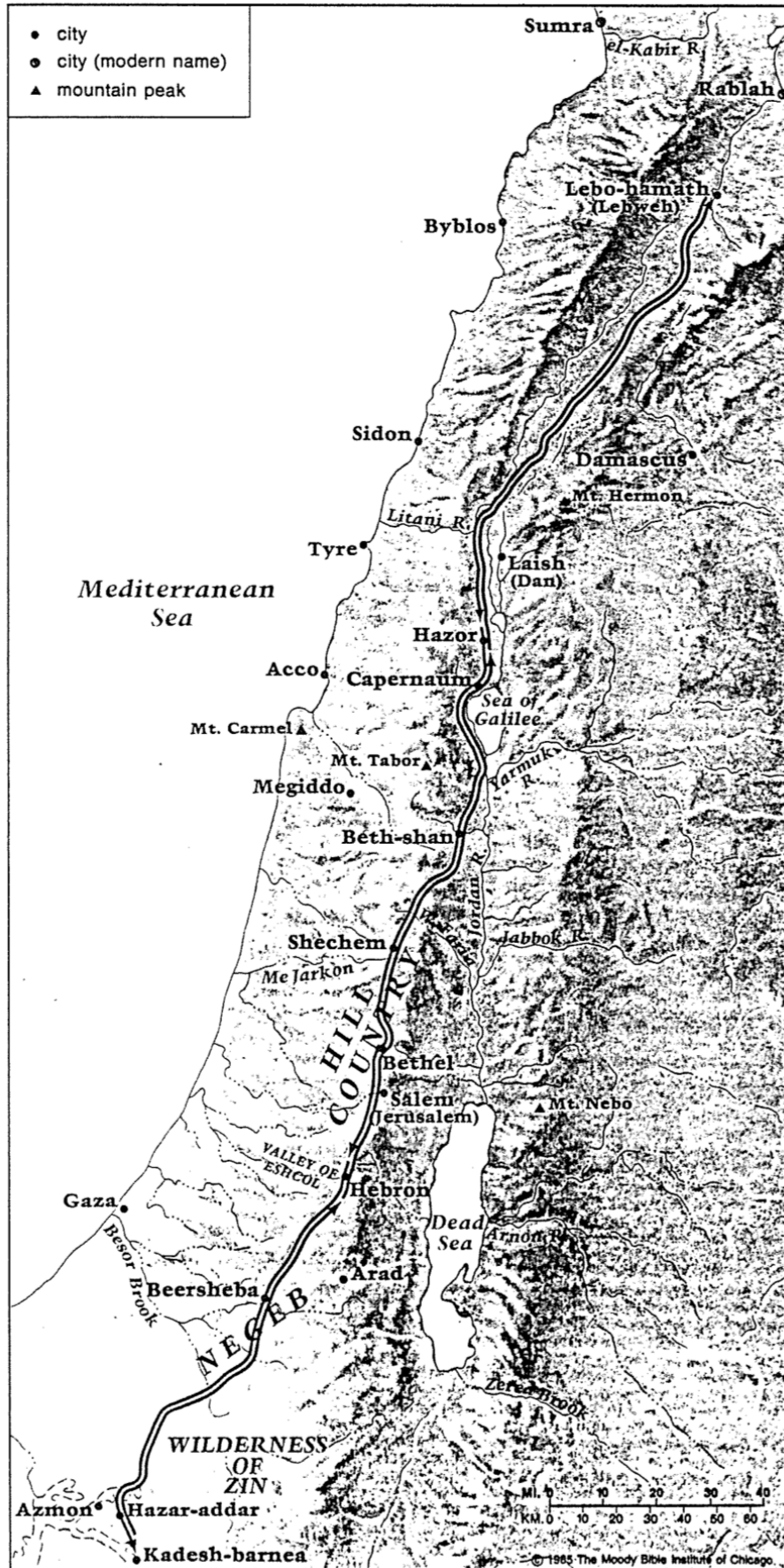
The idea of providing cities of refuge (Jos 20:1-9) for capital offenses is rooted in the tension between customary tribal law (retaliation or revenge, in which the blood relative is obligated to execute vengeance) and civil law (carried out less personally by an assembly according to a standard code of justice).

Blood feuds are usually associated with nomadic groups; legal procedures, with villages and towns. Israel, a society in the process of sedentarization, found it necessary to adopt an intermediate step regulating manslaughter, so that an innocent person would not be killed before standing trial. Absolution was possible only by being cleared by his hometown assembly, and by the eventual death of the high priest, which freed the offender from ritual pollution.



Journey of the Spies

Barry Beitzel, *The Moody Atlas of Bible Lands*, 93



Israel's Early Eastern Neighbors

John H. Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of the OT*, 2d ed., 71

Period	EDOM	MOAB	AMMON	AMALEK
FATHER	Esau: son of Isaac	Moab: son of Lot and his eldest daughter	Ben-Ammi: son of Lot and his second daughter	Amalek: son of Eliphaz, who was a son of Esau
EXODUS	The country was controlled to some degree by Amorites. Refused passage to the Israelites (Num. 20:14-21)	The country was conquered by Sihon and the Amorites (Num. 21:26) King Balak feared Israel and sought the services of Balaam to curse them (Num. 22)		Defeated by the Israelites at Rephidim (Exod. 17:8-16) Defeated the Israelites at Hormah following report of the spies (Num. 14:45)
JUDGES	c. 1350 Continued under the partial control of the Amorites (Judg. 1:35-36)	c. 1350 King Eglon oppressed Israel for 18 years Ehud delivered Israel by assassinating Eglon (Judg. 3:12-30)	c. 1350 Ally of Eglon of Moab c. 1100 B.C. Oppressed Israel for 18 years. Defeated by Jephthah (Judg. 10-12)	c. 1350 Ally of Eglon of Moab
UNITED MONARCHY	c. 1030 Saul took some cities from Edomite territory (1 Sam. 14:47) c. 1000 Conquered and subjugated by David (1 Chron. 18:12)	c. 1030 Saul took some cities from Moabite territory (1 Sam. 14:47) c. 1000 Conquered and subjugated by David (2 Sam. 8:2)	c. 1050 Nahash defeated by Saul at Jabesh-gilead (1 Sam. 11:1-11) c. 1030 Saul took some cities from Ammonite territory (1 Sam. 14:47) c. 990 Hanun defeated by David; Rabbah captured; Ammon subjugated (2 Sam. 12:26-31)	c. 1020 Agag defeated by Saul in southwest Palestine. Saul failed to destroy Amalek totally as the Lord had commanded (1 Sam. 15:1-9) c. 1010 Destroyed David's camp at Ziklag while he was gone. David pursued and wiped them out. This is last mention of them (1 Sam. 30)

Israel's Early Western Neighbors

John H. Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of the OT*, 2d ed., 73

	PHOENICIA	PHILISTIA
ORIGIN	Semitic Amorites	Aegean Sea people
PRE-JUDGES	c. 1500 Territory was divided between Hittite and Egyptian domination	Not yet in Palestine
JUDGES	<p>1400—Began slow rebellion, first against Egypt</p> <p>1380-1287—Mostly controlled by Hittites; control diminished until 1190</p> <p>1190—Invasion by sea peoples. Independent city-states established</p> <p>1100—Some control exercised by Tiglath-pileser I</p>	<p>1190—Defeated Hittites, destroyed capital. Defeated by Rameses III, settled on coast of Palestine. Five major cities: Gath, Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron</p> <p>11th cent—Controlled parts of at least Dan and Judah (Judg. 14:4; 15:11). Samson held somewhat in control</p> <p>1060—Overran Israel; captured ark (1 Sam. 4)</p> <p>1050—Israel subdued Philistia at Ebenezer (1 Sam. 7:7-14)</p>
SAUL	Political independence; cultural development	Philistines held in check through most of this period. They were defeated at Michmash by Jonathan and at Elah through David. Overran country at end after defeating and killing Saul at Mt. Gilboa
1000-900 B.C.	Golden Age	David defeated and subdued the Philistines (2 Sam. 5:17-25)
900-722 B.C.	<p>890—High Priest Ethbaal gains throne. Alliance with Israel continues with marriage of his daughter Jezebel to Ahab</p> <p>865—Paid tribute to Assyria—Ashur-nasir-pal II</p> <p>853—Joined 12-nation alliance against Shalmaneser III at Qarqar</p> <p>841—Shalmaneser III takes some cities. Assyrian tributary through end of period</p>	<p>Paid tribute to Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 17:11)</p> <p>Raided Judah during the reign of Jehoram (2 Chron. 21:16-17)</p> <p>805—Assyrian Adad-nirari III collected tribute; subjugated by Uzziah but invaded Judah during reign of Ahaz (2 Chron. 28:18); subdued by Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria</p>
722-570 B.C.	<p>725—During reign of Shalmaneser V, Luli of Sidon tried to unite Phoenicia in revolt</p> <p>701—Sennacherib responded by invasion—many cities taken, deportation, puppet ruler</p> <p>677—Revolt crushed by Esarhaddon—Sidon destroyed</p> <p>665—Baalit of Tyre revolted—suppressed by Ashurbanipal</p> <p>584-571—Nebuchadnezzar besieged & took Tyre</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Country subjugated and Gaza captured by Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:8)</p> <p>People captured and deported by Nebuchadnezzar</p>

Broken People

Henry Blackaby (1 of 2)

PROUD, UNBROKEN PEOPLE

BROKEN PEOPLE

Keep people at arms' length

Risk getting close to others/willing to take the risks of loving intimately

Quick to blame others

Accept personal responsibility -- can see where *they* were wrong

Unapproachable

"Easy to be entreated"

Defensive when criticized

Receive criticism with a humble, open heart

Concerned with being "respectable"

Concerned with being real

Concerned about what others think

All that matters is what God knows

Work to maintain image/protect reputation

Die to own reputation

Find it difficult to share their spiritual needs with others

Willing to be open/transparent with others

Want to be sure nobody finds out about their sin

Willing to be exposed (Once broken, you don't care who knows--nothing to lose!)

Have a hard time saying, "I was wrong; will you please forgive me?"

Are quick to admit failure and to seek forgiveness

When confessing sin, deal in generalities

Deal in specifics

Concerned about the consequences of their sins

Grieved over the cause/root of their sins

Remorseful over their sin -- got caught/ found out

Repentant over sin (forsake it)

When there is a misunderstanding or conflict, wait for the other to come and ask forgiveness

Take the initiative to be reconciled; see if they can get to the cross first!

Compare themselves with others and feel deserving of honor

Compare themselves to the holiness of God and feel desperate need for mercy

Blind to their true heart condition

Walk in the light

Don't think they have anything to repent of

Continual heart attitude of repentance

Don't think they need revival (think everybody else does!)

Continually sense their need for a fresh encounter with the filling of His Spirit

Broken People
Henry Blackaby (2 of 2)

**PROUD, UNBROKEN
PEOPLE**

BROKEN PEOPLE

Focus on the failures of others

Overwhelmed with sense of their own spiritual need

Self-righteous; have a critical, fault-finding spirit; look at own life/faults through a telescope but others with a microscope

Compassionate; forgiving; look for the best in others

Look down on others

Esteem all others better than self

Independent/self-sufficient spirit

Dependent spirit/recognize need for others

Maintain control; must be *my* way

Surrender control

Have to prove that they are right

Willing to yield the right to be right!

Claim rights

Yield rights

Demanding spirit

Giving spirit

Self-protective of time, rights, reputation

Self-denying

Desire to be served

Motivated to serve others

Desire to be a success

Desire to be faithful to make others a success

Desire for self-advancement

Desire to promote others

Driven to be recognized/appreciated

Sense of unworthiness; thrilled to be used at all; eager for others to get credit

Wounded when others are promoted and they are overlooked

Rejoice when others are lifted up

"The ministry is privileged to have me!"

"I don't deserve to serve in this ministry!"

Think of what they can do for God

Know that they have nothing to offer God

Feel confident in how much they know

Humbled by how much they have to learn

Self-conscious

Not concerned with self at all