

*The Book Of:*  
**Numbers** *Hebrew Name  
ba'midbar  
"in the wilderness"*

**Structure and Outline**

<b>Preparing for the Promised Land</b>	Chapters 1:1—10:10
<b>From Sinai to Kadesh Barnea</b>	Chapters 10—12
<b>From Kadesh Barnea to Moab</b>	Chapters 13—21
<b>Miscellaneous Events in Moab</b>	Chapters 22—26

**I. What is Numbers?**

The English title "Numbers" comes from the Geek and refers to the two censuses in chapters 1-4 and 26. However, the Hebrew title more accurately reflects the contents of the book: "In the Wilderness." Interestingly, this is the only one of the first five books that does not derive its Hebrew name from the very first word of the book, but it is from the fifth phrase.

**II. Who Wrote Numbers?**

Traditional scholarship holds that Moses is the author of the first five books of Scripture (known as the Pentateuch), and there are no compelling reasons to believe otherwise. Even though Moses is referred to in the third person, this is a common practice in ancient writings. Moreover, much of the material within the book indicates a time of writing during the life of Moses. All indications are that it was composed near the conclusions of the wilderness wanderings, which puts the date, depending on when the Exodus is dated, at either around 1406 B.C. or 1220 B.C.

**Numbers** (continued)

**III. Why Was Numbers Written?**

Numbers contains censuses and a condensed narrative of the 40 years the Israelites spent in the wilderness. Beginning at Sinai, Numbers begins with preparations for the journey to Kadesh-barnea. Because of the people's refusal to enter Canaan, however, the next 40 years were spent wandering through the wilderness. The book ends with the nation of Israel encamped near the Jordan, poised to take possession of the Promised Land. Throughout this time, Israel is seen as a difficult and rebellious people. God is righteous, and disobedience is costly. However, God is the faithful provider and protector; He is the keeper of His covenant.

**Key Themes & Theology in Numbers**

• **The Faithfulness of God**

Numbers 11:31—35	God provides quail for food.
Numbers 14:20	God forgives Israel's rebellion.
Numbers 21:21—35	Israel defeats the Amorites.
Numbers 31:1—12	Israel defeats Midian.

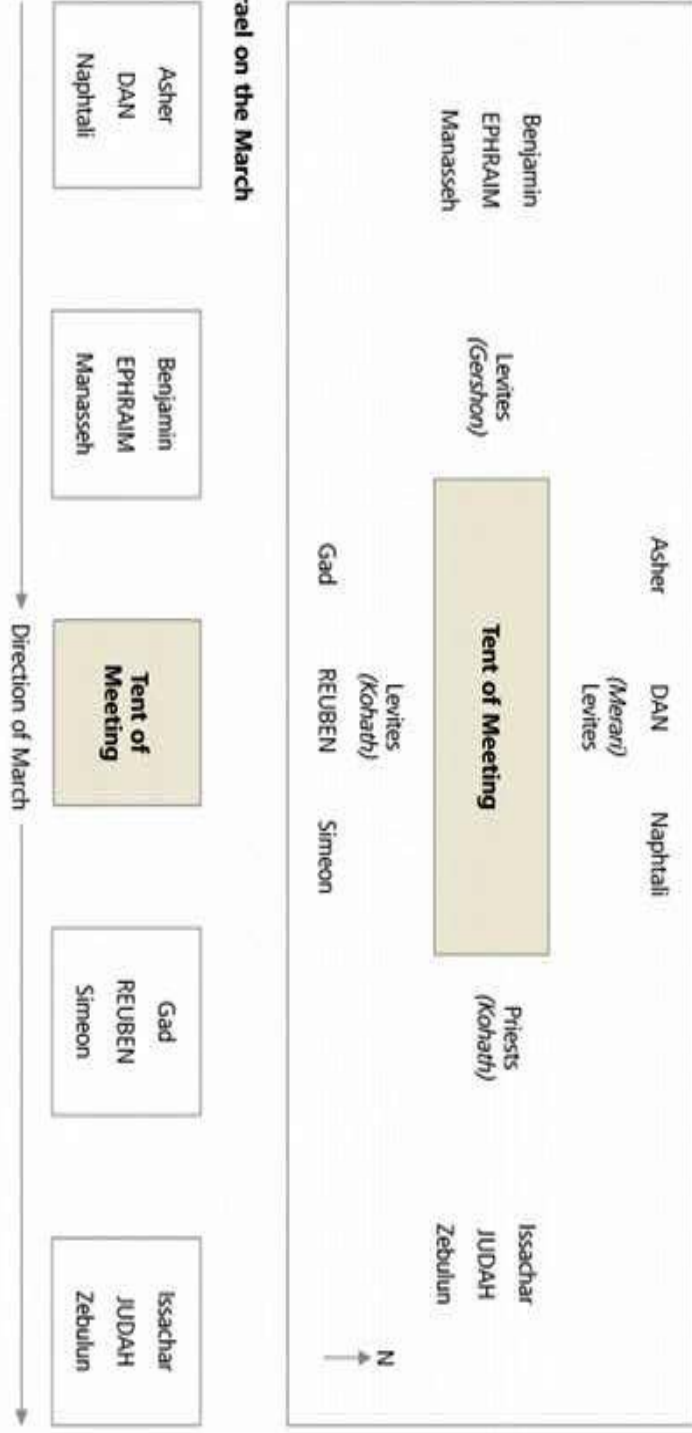
• **Disobedience Is Costly**

Numbers 20:8—13	Moses strikes the rock.
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• **The Rebelliousness of God's People**

Numbers 11	The people complain to Moses.
Numbers 12	Aaron & Miriam complain.
Number 13:25—29	Spies give a negative report.
Numbers 14:1—10	Israel regrets leaving Egypt.

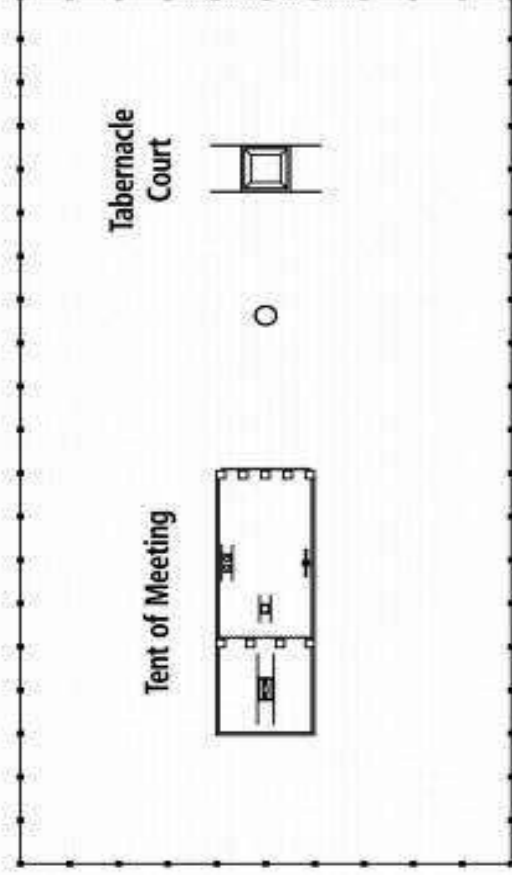
Both in camp and on the march, the tabernacle (guarded by the Levites) is always at the center, as God is at the heart of the nation. The Judah group has pride of place in the camp and leads the nation on the march (capital letters designate the lead tribe in each of the four groups).



### Positions and Duties of the Levites

The **Merarites** camped on the north, guarding and carrying the structural components of the tent and the court (frames, bars, pillars, bases, pegs, cords, etc.).

The **Gershonites** camped on the west, guarding and carrying the coverings, hangings, and entrance screens of the tent and the courtyard.



**Moses and the priests** camped on the east, guarding the tabernacle sanctuary and protecting Israel.

The **Kohathites** camped on the south, guarding and carrying the items within the tabernacle sanctuary (ark, table, lampstand, altars, vessels, and screen).