

Bemidbar
"In the wilderness"

Torah Reading: Numbers 1:1 - 4:21

Haftarah Reading: Hosea 2:1-20

Study Notes

Numbers - Bemidbar

- Once again, because this is the first parasha in this, the fourth book of Moshe, the name of the Torah portion is also the Hebrew name for the book.
- The teachings in the second half of Shemot (Exodus) and Vayikra (Leviticus) originated at Mount Sinai. In Numbers, God spoke from the Tent of Meeting.
- The book of Numbers is the record of the revelation from God in the wilderness of Sinai, up to the border of the Promised Land, on the plains of Moab.
- Its legislation pertains to the sanctuary, the camp, purification of life, and includes many well-known teachings such as the Nazarite vow, the wearing of the fringes, the Aaronic Benediction, the ashes of the red heifer, and more.

Outline of Numbers

- Preparations to Enter the Promised Land (1:1-10:10)
- From Sinai to Kadesh (10:11-12:16)
- Forty Years Near Kadesh (13:1-19:22)
- From Kadesh to the Plains of Moab (20:1-22:1)
- Israel in the Plains of Moab (22:2-36:13)

Count #1 - Israelite Males

- Why did HaShem have Moshe count the Israelite males?
- The army - "there is an almost military aspect to the early chapters of Numbers: units are formed, leaders are appointed, marching orders are given, and instructions for encampment are issued."
- The miracle of existence - "in spite of decimation through suffering and persecution we have increased and multiplied"
- The camp of the Lord - the numbering helped facilitate the setting order of the camp configuration. (2:17)

"The Camp of Shekinah"

- The image being formed is that this isn't Israel's camp. It is God's camp.
- The war Israel was to fight was not just physical. It was also spiritual. Israel was commissioned by God to make His name known throughout the earth. He gave them a piece of property in which to carry out these "operations".
- There were strong spiritual forces set in opposition against Israel - the gods of the Canaanites. These physical idols represented the spiritual realities that Israel would go to war against.
- How are we to face these spiritual realities today? (Eph. 6:10-20)

- How does the arrangement of the tribes camping around the tabernacle symbolize the cross of Yeshua?

Count #2 - Levites

- The main duty of the levites was guard duty, the work of assisting the priests, and helping to move the Mishkan (Tabernacle).
- The watches - the Levites were put into watches. These were cycled through so everyone knew when they were to be on duty. Moshe divided the Levites and kohanim into 8 watches. In their day, Samuel and David, divided them into 24 watches.
- A clue to a riddle? Can watches give us a clue to the time of the birth of Yeshua? Read Luke 1 for a hint and some fun speculation.

Count #3 - The Firstborn

- Through grace, God had spared all of the Israelites firstborn males from death during Passover. Therefore all of the firstborn males belonged to him.
- God took the Levites from among Israel in place of the firstborn. For every firstborn male there was to be one Levite to replace him. (Num. 3:12 and 3:40).
- There were 22,000 Levites one month and older. There were 22,273 firstborn males one month or older. The extra 273 firstborns had to be redeemed at a price.

Rights of the Firstborn

- In ancient Near East culture the eldest son's special position was widely recognized.
- The Torah speaks of Israel as God's firstborn (Ex. 4:22).
- As such, Israel enjoys the unique position among the nations of the earth. That is one reason why God granted to Israel the inheritance of land. Other special privileges are spelled out in Romans 9:4-5.
- Read Numbers 8:15-19 and then Luke 2:22-24.