

INTRODUCTION: NUMBERS 4

- Last time we introduced the revelation that Numbers is like a betrothal
- Numbers begins with Israel choosing separation from all other nations to be with God and ends at the border of a new identity as God's people
- In-between is the wilderness, the desert, the place of transition
- The place of preparation for Israel
- God prepares them to be His bride and the test of the wilderness is that of faithfulness... will Israel be faithful to God
- The first thing God does is prepare them for battle by organizing the nation of Israel into a military force
- Then He prepares them for worship by organizing the Levites

Chapter 4 God commands Moses to count the Levites by family

Numbers 4:1–15 (NKJV)

4 Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: ²“Take a census of the sons of Kohath from among the children of Levi, by their families, by their fathers' house, ³from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, all who enter the service to do the work in the tabernacle of meeting. ⁴“This *is* the service of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of meeting, *relating to* the most holy things: ⁵When the camp prepares to journey, Aaron and his sons shall come, and they shall take down the covering veil and cover the ark of the Testimony with it. ⁶Then they shall put on it a covering of badger skins, and spread over *that* a cloth entirely of blue; and they shall insert its poles. ⁷“On the table of showbread they shall spread a blue cloth, and put on it the dishes, the pans, the bowls, and the pitchers for pouring; and the showbread shall be on it. ⁸They shall spread over them a scarlet cloth, and cover the same with a covering of badger skins; and they shall insert its poles. ⁹And they shall take a blue cloth and cover the lampstand of the light, with its lamps, its wick-trimmers, its trays, and all its oil vessels, with which they service it. ¹⁰Then they shall put it with all its utensils in a covering of badger skins, and put *it* on a carrying beam. ¹¹“Over the golden altar they shall spread a blue cloth, and cover it with a covering of badger skins; and they shall insert its poles. ¹²Then they shall take all the utensils of service with which they minister in the sanctuary, put *them* in a blue cloth, cover them with a covering of badger skins, and put *them* on a carrying beam. ¹³Also they shall take away the ashes from the altar, and spread a purple cloth over it. ¹⁴They shall put on it all its implements with which they minister there—the firepans, the forks, the shovels, the basins, and all the utensils of the altar—and they shall spread

on it a covering of badger skins, and insert its poles. ¹⁵ And when Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is set to go, then the sons of Kohath shall come to carry *them*; but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. “These *are* the things in the tabernacle of meeting which the sons of Kohath are to carry.

The 3 Levite clans are counted separately

- God instructs Moses to take a census of the sons of Kohath and Gershon of all men between the ages from 30 to 50, but of the sons of Merari he simply says number them
- The Rabbi’s teach this is because the tribes of Kohath and Gershon had greater responsibility than the tribe of Merari
- The reason why the duties of the tabernacle were to be done by those between the ages of 30 and 50 is because it was hard, physical labor
- The sons of Kohath are given the responsibility of moving the Tabernacle
- When the cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night moved, Aaron and his sons would come into the Tabernacle and take down the veil between the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place
- They would cover the Ark of the Covenant with the veil and put the poles into the rings to carry the Ark
- They would put a covering of badger skins (humanity) over the veil and over the badger skins they would put a blue cloth (under heaven)
- It was a picture of Jesus in their midst... the Presence of God covered in humanity, under the authority of heaven
- After the priests completed breaking down the Holy of Holies and all the furnishings, the Kohathites would come in, pick up the furniture touching only the poles and move the Tabernacle

Numbers 4:16–20 (NKJV)

¹⁶ “The appointed duty of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest *is* the oil for the light, the sweet incense, the daily grain offering, the anointing oil, the oversight of all the tabernacle, of all that *is* in it, with the sanctuary and its furnishings.” ¹⁷ Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: ¹⁸ “Do not cut off the tribe of the families of the Kohathites from among the Levites; ¹⁹ but do this in regard to them, that they may live and not die when they approach the most holy things: Aaron and his sons shall go in and

appoint each of them to his service and his task. ²⁰ But they shall not go in to watch while the holy things are being covered, lest they die.”

- Notice... the duty of Eleazar was the oil for the lamps, the sweet incense and the anointing oil
- They had the recipe to make these things and they were lost after the temple was destroyed and the families were dispersed
- However, they were recently discovered and this discovery is one of the signs to the Rabbis that the third temple will be rebuilt soon

Vs. 21 begins the next section of scripture referred to as “NASO”

- “NASO” means “to lift up the head” and the Rabbi’s teach that we are elevated in our relationship to God as we are counted for service
- You could say... God is “counting” on us
- “NASO” is speaking of the Census
- God is counting those who belong to Him, the Levites
- REMEMBER: The LORD said the Levites belong to God so God is requiring Moses to give an account for what belongs to God
- I want to reinforce... God knows what belongs to him... the count is for Moses to know what belongs to God
- The best example I can give is tithing... God says the tithe belongs to Me... He knows what it is
- Therefore, giving 10% to the LORD is for us to know and recognize what belongs to God (in the case of the Levites... their lives belonged to God)

Numbers 4:21–28 (NKJV)

²¹ Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²² “Also take a census of the sons of Gershon, by their fathers’ house, by their families. ²³ From thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, you shall number them, all who enter to perform the service, to do the work in the tabernacle of meeting.

²⁴ This *is* the service of the families of the Gershonites, in serving and carrying: ²⁵ They shall carry the curtains of the tabernacle and the tabernacle of meeting *with* its covering, the covering of badger skins that *is* on it, the screen for the door of the tabernacle of meeting, ²⁶ the screen for the door of the gate of the court, the hangings of the court which *are* around the tabernacle and altar, and their cords, all the furnishings for their service and all that is made for these things: so shall they serve. ²⁷ “Aaron and his sons shall assign all the service of the sons of the Gershonites, all their tasks and all their service. And you shall appoint to them all their tasks

as their duty. ²⁸ This *is* the service of the families of the sons of Gershon in the tabernacle of meeting. And their duties *shall be* under the authority of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.

- The sons of Gershon were responsible for the Tabernacle itself
- Again, the age to serve is from 30 to 50 because the work was physically demanding

Numbers 4:29–33 (NKJV)

²⁹ “As for the sons of Merari, you shall number them by their families and by their fathers’ house. ³⁰ From thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, you shall number them, everyone who enters the service to do the work of the tabernacle of meeting. ³¹ And this *is* what they must carry as all their service for the tabernacle of meeting: the boards of the tabernacle, its bars, its pillars, its sockets, ³² and the pillars around the court with their sockets, pegs, and cords, with all their furnishings and all their service; and you shall assign *to each man* by name the items he must carry. ³³ This *is* the service of the families of the sons of Merari, as all their service for the tabernacle of meeting, under the authority of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.”

- The sons of Merari were responsible to transport the hardware for the Tabernacle
- Not a physically demanding job... but still an important one and still a job that was assigned to the Levites and not to the entire nation

Numbers 4:34–49 (NKJV)

³⁴ And Moses, Aaron, and the leaders of the congregation numbered the sons of the Kohathites by their families and by their fathers’ house, ³⁵ from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, everyone who entered the service for work in the tabernacle of meeting; ³⁶ and those who were numbered by their families were two thousand seven hundred and fifty. ³⁷ These *were* the ones who were numbered of the families of the Kohathites, all who might serve in the tabernacle of meeting, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the commandment of the LORD by the hand of Moses. ³⁸ And those who were numbered of the sons of Gershon, by their families and by their fathers’ house, ³⁹ from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, everyone who entered the service for work in the tabernacle of meeting—⁴⁰ those who were numbered by their families,

by their fathers' house, were two thousand six hundred and thirty. ⁴¹ These *are* the ones who were numbered of the families of the sons of Gershon, of all who might serve in the tabernacle of meeting, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the commandment of the LORD. ⁴² Those of the families of the sons of Merari who were numbered, by their families, by their fathers' house, ⁴³ from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, everyone who entered the service for work in the tabernacle of meeting—⁴⁴ those who were numbered by their families were three thousand two hundred. ⁴⁵ These *are* the ones who were numbered of the families of the sons of Merari, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses. ⁴⁶ All who were numbered of the Levites, whom Moses, Aaron, and the leaders of Israel numbered, by their families and by their fathers' houses, ⁴⁷ from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, everyone who came to do the work of service and the work of bearing burdens in the tabernacle of meeting—⁴⁸ those who were numbered were eight thousand five hundred and eighty. ⁴⁹ According to the commandment of the LORD they were numbered by the hand of Moses, each according to his service and according to his task; thus were they numbered by him, as the LORD commanded Moses.

- Notice again... their assignments were given by God and communicated by Moses
- God appointed which families were responsible, what they were responsible for and who the overseer would be
- But they saw their assignments as coming from God
- AND there were 8580 total Levites sharing in the work of the Tabernacle which means it was not a burden because they served when their turn came up
- The rest of the time they were supported by the people and lived a rested life
- That's how God works... He calls all of us to help so none of us are burdened with serving the LORD... rather serving the LORD is a joy, a privilege, a great honor

Numbers 5:1–4 (NKJV)

5 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²“Command the children of Israel that they put out of the camp every leper, everyone who has a discharge, and whoever becomes defiled by a corpse. ³You shall put out both male and female; you shall put them outside the camp, that they may not defile

their camps in the midst of which I dwell.”⁴ And the children of Israel did so, and put them outside the camp; as the LORD spoke to Moses, so the children of Israel did.

- Chapter 5 deals with 3 types of defilement that would undermine the health and safety of the nation of Israel
- Physical Defilement (vs. 1-4)
- Willful Transgression (lawlessness – vs. 5-10)
- Potential Unfaithfulness (vs. 11-31)
- The first is health related and has to do with public safety
- Vs. 2 those with infection skin diseases, bodily discharges or any other type of physical defilement were expelled from the camp
- The word “leper” (vs. 2) is “tsara’ at” and refers to infectious skin diseases
- We do not know if this was actually leprosy
- Leprosy was not discovered until 1873
- What we do know is the Rabbi’s considered “tzara’ at” a physical manifestation of a spiritual disease which was a punishment from God
- Jesus confronted this misrepresentation of God by healing lepers

Numbers 5:5–10 (NKJV)

⁵ Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ⁶ “Speak to the children of Israel: ‘When a man or woman commits any sin that men commit in unfaithfulness against the LORD, and that person is guilty, ⁷ then he shall confess the sin which he has committed. He shall make restitution for his trespass in full, plus one-fifth of it, and give *it* to the one he has wronged. ⁸ But if the man has no relative to whom restitution may be made for the wrong, the restitution for the wrong *must go* to the LORD for the priest, in addition to the ram of the atonement with which atonement is made for him. ⁹ Every offering of all the holy things of the children of Israel, which they bring to the priest, shall be his. ¹⁰ And every man’s holy things shall be his; whatever any man gives the priest shall be his.’ ”

- Next is willful transgression (breaking the law)
- Lawlessness undermines the health and well-being of the community
- The word sin is “chattat” and it is a willful disobedience of God’s law in word, thought or deed

- Those who wronged a brother were to confess their wrong and make restitution
- If they stole, they were to repay it and add 20%
- They were to pay it to the victim or a close relative if the victim was no longer around
- If the victim had no close relative, it went to the priests
- This had to be done before the priest could make a sacrificial offering to the LORD for the transgression
- This is why Jesus said in Matthew 5:24... if you are bringing an offering to be sacrificed and you remember you've committed a transgression against your brother... leave your gift and be reconciled to your brother
- Jesus was applying this command from Numbers 5
- He wasn't referring to any offense, but a willful breaking of God's law

Numbers 5:12–15 (NKJV)

¹²“Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘If any man’s wife goes astray and behaves unfaithfully toward him, ¹³ and a man lies with her carnally, and it is hidden from the eyes of her husband, and it is concealed that she has defiled herself, and *there was* no witness against her, nor was she caught—¹⁴ if the spirit of jealousy comes upon him and he becomes jealous of his wife, who has defiled herself; or if the spirit of jealousy comes upon him and he becomes jealous of his wife, although she has not defiled herself—¹⁵ then the man shall bring his wife to the priest. He shall bring the offering required for her, one-tenth of an ephah of barley meal; he shall pour no oil on it and put no frankincense on it, because it *is* a grain offering of jealousy, an offering for remembering, for bringing iniquity to remembrance.

- The final is for suspected adultery
- There are no witnesses, no proof and yet a spirit of jealousy comes upon the husband
- The word “jealous” means “zealous vigilance” and it refers to the behavior of suspecting something and thus you start watching the person
- Hidden adultery undermines the health of the community of families and jealousy undermines the health of the marriage
- God provides a way to deal with jealousy... a “put up or shut up” option to establish once and for all the innocence of the suspected person

Numbers 5:16–28 (NKJV)

¹⁶ ‘And the priest shall bring her near, and set her before the LORD. ¹⁷ The priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel, and take some of the dust that is on the floor of the tabernacle and put *it* into the water. ¹⁸ Then the priest shall stand the woman before the LORD, uncover the woman’s head, and put the offering for remembering in her hands, which *is* the grain offering of jealousy. And the priest shall have in his hand the bitter water that brings a curse. ¹⁹ And the priest shall put her under oath, and say to the woman, “If no man has lain with you, and if you have not gone astray to uncleanness *while* under your husband’s *authority*, be free from this bitter water that brings a curse. ²⁰ But if you have gone astray *while* under your husband’s *authority*, and if you have defiled yourself and some man other than your husband has lain with you”—²¹ then the priest shall put the woman under the oath of the curse, and he shall say to the woman—“the LORD make you a curse and an oath among your people, when the LORD makes your thigh rot and your belly swell; ²² and may this water that causes the curse go into your stomach, and make *your* belly swell and *your* thigh rot.” ‘Then the woman shall say, “Amen, so be it.” ²³ ‘Then the priest shall write these curses in a book, and he shall scrape *them* off into the bitter water. ²⁴ And he shall make the woman drink the bitter water that brings a curse, and the water that brings the curse shall enter her *to become* bitter. ²⁵ Then the priest shall take the grain offering of jealousy from the woman’s hand, shall wave the offering before the LORD, and bring it to the altar; ²⁶ and the priest shall take a handful of the offering, as its memorial portion, burn *it* on the altar, and afterward make the woman drink the water. ²⁷ When he has made her drink the water, then it shall be, if she has defiled herself and behaved unfaithfully toward her husband, that the water that brings a curse will enter her *and become* bitter, and her belly will swell, her thigh will rot, and the woman will become a curse among her people. ²⁸ But if the woman has not defiled herself, and is clean, then she shall be free and may conceive children.

- Now, you can see... if the woman had committed adultery, she would have confessed her adultery because all of Israel knew God was real and whatever the LORD said would come to pass
- NOTE: Only the woman was tested... why? Two reasons...
- If the man was guilty of adultery, he wasn’t taken to the priest... he was simply stoned
- Second, the woman is the protector over the rights to her body

- When a woman is married, she willingly gives the rights of her body to her husband... exclusively
- In fact, in the New Testament Paul makes it clear the husband's body belongs to the wife and the wife's body belongs to the man
- To give the rights of her body to another man is adultery (equal to idolatry by giving yourself to another)
- To give the rights of her body to another man without the Covenant of marriage was considered fornication
- To sell the rights of her body to another man was considered harlotry
- If a man forced himself upon her, it was a violation and considered rape
- Thus I believe a woman's right over her body begins with her right to remain faithful to her current or future husband
- If she commits fornication and conceives, the woman willingly accepts the consequences of her sin, new life in her body has a right to live
- That is how a sane culture lives
- NOTE: It was considered a judgment from God to be childless because of sin and often a childless woman was suspected of sexual sin
- Thus if the woman was barren and declared innocent, then her barrenness was not because of sexual sin

Numbers 5:29–31 (NKJV)

²⁹ 'This *is* the law of jealousy, when a wife, *while* under her husband's *authority*, goes astray and defiles herself, ³⁰ or when the spirit of jealousy comes upon a man, and he becomes jealous of his wife; then he shall stand the woman before the LORD, and the priest shall execute all this law upon her. ³¹ Then the man shall be free from iniquity, but that woman shall bear her guilt.' "

- This is the first mention of God's order in marriage
- God says the wife is under her husband (the word authority is not in the original text)...not to control her, but to cover her, to protect her and to provide the structure for peace to exist in the home
- When a wife goes astray, she takes herself out from under her husband which the Rabbi's teach is madness, insanity
- She is unprotected, peace leaves her home
- If she defiles herself through adultery, she breaks her Covenant with her husband... she bears guilt, but the man is free
- This is the nature of deception... when you allow yourself to believe a lie

- The woman may believe she is pursuing her individual freedom, but in fact she is bringing a curse upon herself and it begins when the woman goes astray, removes herself from under her husband's covering

Numbers 6:1–8 (NKJV)

6 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When either a man or woman consecrates an offering to take the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself to the LORD, ³ he shall separate himself from wine and *similar* drink; he shall drink neither vinegar made from wine nor vinegar made from *similar* drink; neither shall he drink any grape juice, nor eat fresh grapes or raisins. ⁴ All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, from seed to skin. ⁵ ‘All the days of the vow of his separation no razor shall come upon his head; until the days are fulfilled for which he separated himself to the LORD, he shall be holy. *Then* he shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow. ⁶ All the days that he separates himself to the LORD he shall not go near a dead body. ⁷ He shall not make himself unclean even for his father or his mother, for his brother or his sister, when they die, because his separation to God *is* on his head. ⁸ All the days of his separation he shall be holy to the LORD.

- A Nazirite is someone who wanted to separate himself or herself from this world because they are so intense in their desire to pursue God
- They would take a vow of separation which would include no drinking of anything fermented, not drinking wine or the ingredients used to make wine, not cutting their hair, not touching death
- Women are mentioned, but before they could take a Nazirite vow they had to ask permission from their father or husband
- A Nazirite vow could be a lifestyle choice, but was often for a specific period of time

Numbers 6:9–12 (NKJV)

⁹ ‘And if anyone dies very suddenly beside him, and he defiles his consecrated head, then he shall shave his head on the day of his cleansing; on the seventh day he shall shave it. ¹⁰ Then on the eighth day he shall bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons to the priest, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting; ¹¹ and the priest shall offer one as a sin offering and *the* other as a burnt offering, and make atonement for him, because he sinned in regard to the corpse; and he shall sanctify his head

that same day. ¹² He shall consecrate to the LORD the days of his separation, and bring a male lamb in its first year as a trespass offering; but the former days shall be lost, because his separation was defiled.

- Now if you were defiled by touching death during your Nazirite vow, God makes a way for you to begin again
- So it is... if you defile yourself in your relationship to God, God makes a way for you to begin again

Numbers 6:13–21 (NKJV)

¹³ ‘Now this *is* the law of the Nazirite: When the days of his separation are fulfilled, he shall be brought to the door of the tabernacle of meeting. ¹⁴ And he shall present his offering to the LORD: one male lamb in its first year without blemish as a burnt offering, one ewe lamb in its first year without blemish as a sin offering, one ram without blemish as a peace offering, ¹⁵ a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and their grain offering with their drink offerings. ¹⁶ ‘Then the priest shall bring *them* before the LORD and offer his sin offering and his burnt offering; ¹⁷ and he shall offer the ram as a sacrifice of a peace offering to the LORD, with the basket of unleavened bread; the priest shall also offer its grain offering and its drink offering. ¹⁸ Then the Nazirite shall shave his consecrated head *at* the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and shall take the hair from his consecrated head and put *it* on the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offering. ¹⁹ ‘And the priest shall take the boiled shoulder of the ram, one unleavened cake from the basket, and one unleavened wafer, and put *them* upon the hands of the Nazirite after he has shaved his consecrated *hair*, ²⁰ and the priest shall wave them as a wave offering before the LORD; they *are* holy for the priest, together with the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the heave offering. After that the Nazirite may drink wine.’ ²¹ “This is the law of the Nazirite who vows to the LORD the offering for his separation, and besides that, whatever else his hand is able to provide; according to the vow which he takes, so he must do according to the law of his separation.”

- In any group of people, you always have those who really take their relationship with God seriously... even for a season of time
- I think it’s wonderful that God recognizes this and gives instructions to those who really want to go further in their commitment to the LORD

Numbers 6:22–27 (NKJV)

²² And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²³ “Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, ‘This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: ²⁴ “The LORD bless you and keep you; ²⁵ The LORD make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; ²⁶ The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace.” ’ ²⁷ “So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them.”

This is the most famous blessing in the Hebrew Scriptures

- It was the privilege of the priests to bless Israel and through Israel the world in the name of the LORD
- It must be noted, this blessing was not from the priest... it was from the LORD and it was given through the priest and thus it was believed God was present during the blessing (so the people were to close their eyes)
- When it comes to spiritual gifts and the power of the Spirit... we are not the ones blessing the people with healing or with a Word from God... it is all from the LORD and it is being given through us

The blessing is a three-fold blessing

- Each blessing invokes the movement of God towards His people and His activity on their behalf
- God initiates and the people receive
- God blesses and the people receive protection
- God shines His face upon the people (deals kindly) and the people receive grace (chesed)
- God looks upon the people (bestows favor) and the people receive peace (shalom)
- While the priests would speak this blessing, they would make the letter “shem” (the name of God) with their hands (Spock from Star Trek)
- It was their way of putting the name of God on the children of Israel

Chapters 1-9 are Preparation for the Journey through the wilderness

This Sunday we will talk about this preparation in more depth... specifically about the way God structures our lives for success

Does it guarantee success? Only if we live under God’s covering as a wife is to live under her husband’s covering... but more on that Sunday!