



**במדבר *Bamidbar* In the Wilderness**  
[Numbers 1.1—4.20](#) / [Hosea 2.1—22](#) / [John 1—2](#)

**In the Wilderness** The English title for Numbers is from two censuses taken, one at the beginning of the book and one at the end. The Hebrew title comes from [Numbers 1.1](#), which says that יהוה *YHVH* the LORD spoke to Moses במדבר *bamidbar*. מ *mem* from + דבר *dabar* speech/word/speaking/thing = מדבר *midbar* from the word/wilderness. The prefix ב *bet* in + מדבר = *bamidbar* in the wilderness. In the wilderness is where we are most open to the Word of God. In this book, ישראל *Yisra'el* Israel overcomes the doubts which lead to wandering and gains courage to enter the Land.



**Positive Commands** 248 of the 613 laws in תורה *Torah* Law/Instruction are positive.

The numerical value of במדבר is ב (2) + מ (40) + ד (4) + ב (2) + ר (200) = 248.

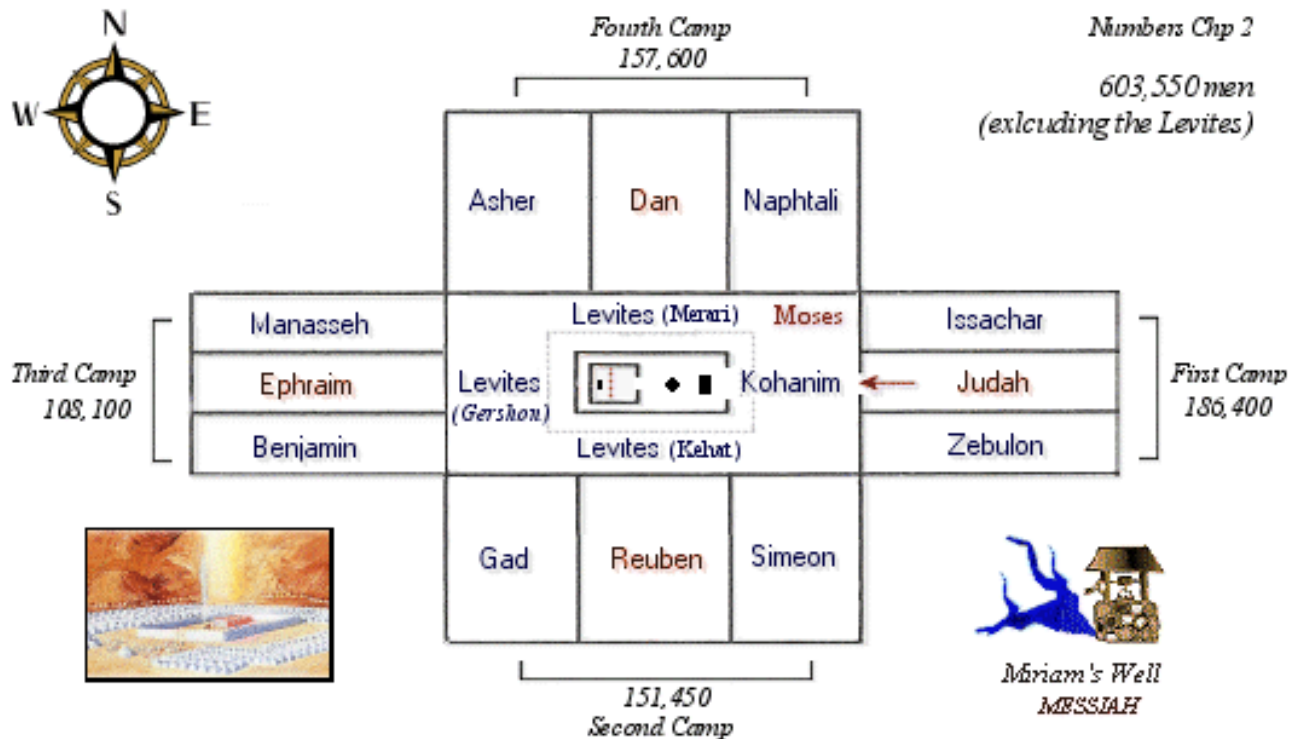
**Wilderness: Place of Despair** Some in the Bible have gone into the wilderness in a spirit of despair. In [Genesis 21.8-20](#), Hagar separates herself from her son Ishmael in the desert of Beersheba so she won't have to watch him die, but God saves her. ישראל miraculously escapes Egypt, but complains to Moses in [Exodus 14.11](#) that he just brought them into the wilderness to die. After they say this several more times, God says in [Numbers 14.35](#), "They will meet their end in this desert, here they will die." After Elijah defeats the priests of Baal, he flees to the desert of Beersheba. In [1 Kings 19](#), he wants to die, but an angel strengthens him with food and water.

**Wilderness: Place of Refuge** Unlike many in ישראל, Moses treasures his time in the desert meeting God, receiving תורה, and building the Tabernacle. Though Moses would leave the מועד אהל *Ohel Moed* Tent of Meeting after speaking with God, [Exodus 33.11](#) says that Joshua would not leave. David flees from Saul and makes the wilderness his haven. The Spirit in [Matthew 4.1](#) leads ישוע *Yeshua* Jesus/salvation into the desert, and He comes back prepared for ministry. In [Mark 6.31](#), ישוע intends to go with His disciples to a quiet place to get some rest. They are so busy ministering they don't even have a chance to eat. By getting away from distractions we can hear God better. We live במדבר and here is where God wants us to be a light.

**A Dry Place for God's Spirit** The wilderness is a place of barren dirt. Here is where God chooses to train **ישראל** to depend on Him. Our bodies are dirt. In our bodies is where God chooses to indwell His Spirit so we can learn to depend on Him.



**Lots of People and a Big Army** [Numbers 1](#) appoints heads of each tribe and counts each man of fighting age, 20 years old or more. That number ends up being just over 600,000, not counting Levites. Add in an equal number of women, plus boys and girls under twenty plus the elderly, and over 2,000,000 live in the wilderness! (chart from [www.hebrew4christians.com](http://www.hebrew4christians.com))



**Tabernacle and Tribes** In [Exodus 33.15](#), Moses tells God that he does not want to leave Mt. Sinai unless God goes with **ישראל**. The Tabernacle is God's presence with **ישראל** as they travel through the wilderness and enter the Land.



**Around the Tabernacle** The Levites are not counted in the census. They are to camp around the **משכן** [mishkhan](#) Place of Dwelling and **שמר** [shamar](#) guard it so that God's wrath will not fall on **ישראל**, [Numbers 1.53](#). Moses and the **כהנים** [kohanim](#) priests camp at the entrance on the east. The above [diagram](#) shows how the 12 tribes surround the Tabernacle as described in [Numbers 2](#). As the 12 tribes of **ישראל** surround the Tabernacle, so the 12 tribes of **ישראל** form the gates of the New Jerusalem when it comes down from heaven, [Revelation 21.12](#).

In [Genesis 49.8-12](#), Jacob tells **יהודה** [Yehuda](#) Judah/praised that his brothers will praise him, he will triumph over his enemies, and the scepter will stay with him until **שילה** [Shiloh](#) comes. **שילה** can mean Messiah, and **ישוע** is a King from **יהודה**. In [Revelation 5.5-6](#), **ישוע** the Lion of **יהודה** opens the scroll of seven seals, and the Lion is a Lamb. So it is fitting that the camp of **יהודה** faces the opening of the Tabernacle. With Moses, priests, and **יהודה** on the east side, we have Prophet, Priest, and King together, and **ישוע** fulfills all three. [Numbers 2.9](#) says that **יהודה** is the first to move out when the camp moves, ahead of all the rest. Praise goes first!

With **יהודה** on the east, facing the entrance to the Tabernacle, are the tribes of Zebulun and Issachar. [Deuteronomy 33.18-19](#) makes an interesting contrast between these two. Zebulun goes out and fights wars while Issachar stays in tents. Together, they find treasures in the sea and the sand, and bring people to the mountain. And these two tribes are commended in [1 Chronicles 12.33-34](#): Issachar for understanding the times and knowing what **ישראל** ought to do, and Zebulun for fighting with skill in many weapons and without a double heart. Each of us has a place in God's Kingdom. The one who fights should not look down on the one who studies, and vice-versa.

Names [Numbers 1.16-18](#) says that the princes around the Tabernacle are expressed/pointed out by their names. These charts show these princes' names and their interpretations.



**שמר** The Levites are to surround the **משכן** and **שמר** it. [Proverbs 7.2](#) says that we are to **שמר** God's commands and **תורה** as the **אישון** *eeshown* pupil of our eye. And [Deuteronomy 32.10](#) says that God keeps **ישראל** as the **אישון** of His eye. The eye is the most sensitive part of the body and the first we instinctively protect in an emergency. If something gets thrown at us, we tend to put our hands in front of our eyes. And through the **אישון** is how we perceive the world. God's **אישון** is **ישראל**. God wants our **אישון** to be **תורה** and we are to **שמר** it.



**Heavenly תורה** In [Deuteronomy 31.24-26](#), the Levites place the whole **תורה** which Moses has finished writing and put it in the ark, in the **משכן**. So by camping around the **משכן** they **שמר** the **תורה** too. Since the **משכן** is a copy of the true one in heaven, [Hebrews 9.24](#), it's possible **ישוע** is holding the heavenly **תורה** now!

**Seeing Inside** [Numbers 3](#) details how the sons of Levi will carry the Tabernacle. [Numbers 4](#) describes the how the various items are covered during transit so that no one else can even see them. But when **ישוע** dies, the curtain of the Temple is torn in two from top to bottom, [Matthew 27.51](#), and everyone can see into the Most Holy Place.

**The Priestly Line** Only the sons of Aaron are priests. In [Numbers 16](#), the Levi Korah rebels against Moses and the priesthood of Aaron. Moses asks Korah in verse 16 why his position as a Levi isn't enough and he needs to be a priest as well.

**One Year at Sinai** [Exodus 19.1](#) says that it was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> month after leaving Egypt that **ישראל** arrives at Sinai. [Numbers 10.11-12](#) says that it is in the 2<sup>nd</sup> month of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year that **ישראל** leaves Sinai and travels three days to find a new spot.

**A Big Camping Trip** Two to three million people need a lot of food, water, and wood for cooking. God provides food, water, and wood each day that would take a freight train about two miles long to supply. The camps around the **משכן** cover about 750 square miles. And when they walk, the line would be about 5,000 people and three miles wide.

**Restoration** [Hosea 2.1-22](#) is the Haphtarah portion. ([Hosea 1.10-11](#) in the English Bible is the same as [Hosea 2.1-2](#) in the Hebrew Bible.) In chapter 1, God has Hosea marry a harlot to make a point about how **ישראל** has acted the harlot in going after other gods. God says **ישראל** is not His people and He is not their God. Yet in verse 2.1 (Hebrew version), God promises that **ישראל** will be like the sand of the sea, and in the place where they were said not to be God's people, they will be called "children of the living God." Verse two adds that **בני-יהודה ובני-ישראל** *beney Yehuda oo-benay Yisra'el* children of **יהודה** and children of **ישראל** will go up out of the Land, for great will be the day of **יזרעאל** *Yizreal* Jezreel/God Sows/that which God planted.

Does this sound familiar? How often have you heard that the Jews are no longer God's people because they rejected Jesus? This is often followed up by Replacement Theology, that all the blessings promised to **ישראל** now apply to the Church. In an extreme example, a Jesuit priest once answered my question, "Why does the Catholic Church believe things that are contrary to the Bible?" He replied, "Well, we wrote the Bible, and we're still writing it." I used to think he was joking, but now I realize he was serious.



God promises here that **ישראל** will once again be called "children of the living God." And the children of **יהודה** and **ישראל** will go up out of the Land. Although *Ben Yehuda* Street in Jerusalem is named after the man who revived the Hebrew language, is it God's sense of humor, in light of this verse, that a vibrant cultural center in **ישראל** would be named related to this passage?

In [Romans chapters 9-11](#), Paul describes the rejection and subsequent restoration of **ישראל**. Until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this seemed impossible and most thought it must be interpreted allegorically. But since we have seen the prophetic fulfillment of the nation of **ישראל** reborn after nearly 2,000 years of desolation, we can no longer ignore the obvious. It's happening right before our eyes! The people **במדבר** are going up out of the Land and God is keeping His Word. Perhaps the Hebrew Roots movement is part of helping the Church to see that, once again, the people of **ישראל** are "children of the living God." They are the olive tree into which the Church is grafted.

**Restoration Cont.** [Hosea 2-19-23](#) goes on to promise that God will marry **ישראל** and bless the Land. Check out this satellite view of the Land of **ישראל**. If you're familiar with the shape of the modern state, you can see that not just the "fertile crescent," but even stretching down into the Negev desert, in fact following a line from the border with Egypt at Gaza to the city of Eilat on the Red Sea, the Land is noticeably greener. How many plants does it take to change the color in a satellite photo?



Next is a Google map of roughly the same area, with Eilat marked "A." This now-blossoming Land is the same Land about which Mark Twain wrote after a visit in 1867, "..... A desolate country whose soil is rich enough, but is given over wholly to weeds... a silent mournful expanse.... a desolation.... we never saw a human being on the whole route.... hardly a tree or shrub anywhere. Even the olive tree and the cactus, those fast friends of a worthless soil, had almost deserted the country."



No wonder the Church and almost everyone else thought the promises to **ישראל** could no longer be valid. It just didn't seem possible that such a miracle of restoration could happen. Except it is.

In [Leviticus 26.44-46](#), God promises that He will remember His covenant with **ישראל** in the land of their enemies and return them. This promise is connected with God's statutes, judgments, and laws (תורה). The Church tends to think **ישראל** and תורה are history. In fact, both are alive and well.

**A Voice of One Calling במדבר** [John 1](#) says in verse 1, "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Verse 14 tells us who the Word is: **ישוע** the Word became flesh and  $\sigma\kappa\eta\nu\omicron\omega$  *skēnoō* tabernacled among us. As skins cover Moses' Tabernacle, God uses living flesh to cover the Tabernacle of His Son.

Where does **ישוע**  $\sigma\kappa\eta\nu\omicron\omega$  with us? **במדבר**. John the Baptist came as a witness to the Light in [John 1.6-9](#), and he says in [John 1.23](#), "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness..." "In the beginning" reminds us of [Genesis 1.1-3](#). In [verse 2](#), the earth is **תהו** *tohu* formless/empty and **בהו** *bohu* void. Into this wilderness God speaks light.

God creates, sets up His Tabernacle, sends His prophets, sends His Son **ישוע**, the light of men, and sends those He has called, all **במדבר**. Light at creation, light in the pillar of fire, light in our Savior, light where we live, and our job is to be a light.

**Bring the Light** How do we carry this light to others? One way is תורה, which [Proverbs 6.23](#) says is light. Speak according to תורה, or there is no light, [Isaiah 8.20](#).

תורה will proceed from God and his משפט [mishpat](#) judgment will be a light to the people, [Isaiah 51.4](#). God is light, [1 John 1.5-7](#), and we will walk in light if we are faithful and saved. I used to wonder what the lamps were that the five foolish virgins let run out of oil in [Matthew 25.1-13](#). Being raised in the Church, I never considered that the light could be תורה. Now by studying Hebrew Roots, I'm sure תורה is one of the first things the disciples would have pictured in their minds when ישוע told this parable.



תורה is the Written Word, ישוע is the Living Word. Jews have תורה but tend to deny ישוע. Christians have ישוע but tend to deny תורה. To walk out from מדבר and into the Promised Land, we need both.





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|----------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| במדבר                | <i>Bamidbar</i>                       | In the Wilderness                        |
| יהוה                 | <i>YHVH</i>                           | the LORD                                 |
| מ                    | <i>mem</i>                            | from                                     |
| דבר                  | <i>dabar</i>                          | speech/word/speaking/thing               |
| מדבר                 | <i>midbar</i>                         | from the word/wilderness                 |
| ב                    | <i>bet</i>                            | in                                       |
| מדבר                 | <i>bamidbar</i>                       | in the wilderness                        |
| ישראל                | <i>Yisra'el</i>                       | Israel                                   |
| תורה                 | <i>Torah</i>                          | Law/ Instruction                         |
| אהל מועד             | <i>Ohel Moed</i>                      | Tent of Meeting                          |
| ישוע                 | <i>Yeshua</i>                         | Jesus/salvation                          |
| משכן                 | <i>mishkhan</i>                       | Place of Dwelling                        |
| שמר                  | <i>shamar</i>                         | guard                                    |
| כהנים                | <i>kohanim</i>                        | priests                                  |
| יהודה                | <i>Yehuda</i>                         | Judah/praised                            |
| שילה                 | <i>Shiloh</i>                         | Shiloh                                   |
| אישון                | <i>eeshown</i>                        | pupil                                    |
| בני-יהודה ובני-ישראל | <i>beney Yehuda oo-benay Yisra'el</i> | children of Judah and children of Israel |
| σκηνοσ               | <i>skēnoō</i>                         | tabernacle                               |
| תהו                  | <i>tohu</i>                           | formless/empty                           |
| בהו                  | <i>bohu</i>                           | void                                     |
| משפט                 | <i>mishpat</i>                        | judgment                                 |