

## Study Guide for Numbers 31-33

As noted in earlier reading study guides, “Good Bible study involves 3 steps: observation, interpretation and application.” The following study questions are designed to assist you with the first step only: observation. Later in the week, you will get an email with questions to assist you in interpretation and application.

As you work through the following questions, you are encouraged to mark up the text that follows. Good Bible study inevitably involves reading a passage more than once. Marking up the text enables you to build on what you learn with each successive reading.

Be creative when marking key words or phrases (as in #1 and #2 below). Key words or phrases could simply be underlined or double-underlined or circled or boxed with a pen. Or you could be colorful and use highlighters or colored pencils. Symbols above the words work also. Do whatever suits your fancy! The idea is just to make the words stand out so when you read the passage a second time you will notice that particular word again and begin to see its significance within the passage.

Keep in mind that the goal of observation questions or exercises is simply to spend time handling the text. We want to turn it over, view it from every possible angle, hold it at arm’s length, and examine the details, sort of like what a geologist would do upon picking a rock for the first time. The more we handle the text, without specifically trying to decide what it means, the better prepared we will be to interpret it and apply it when the time comes to do that. Observation can seem tedious at first. Sometimes it may even feel like busy work, but rest assured – its rewards are great!!

1. **Read Numbers 31:1-24** and mark in some distinctive way every occurrence of the words “all” and “every.” Mark also any reference to Balaam in the same way that you marked it in Numbers 22-25.

2. **As you read Numbers 31:1-24** again, note exactly what was to be done with the people and plunder of the Midianites. As you come across each of the following words for the first time, write the word in the margin and then note which groups of people or things it was to be applied to. One is done for you.

- killed
- burned
- taken (brought) to Moses, Eleazar and the congregation
- spared
- purified

3. **Read Numbers 31:25-54** and mark each of the following words or phrases in some distinct way

- spoil (or plunder)
- levy (or tribute)
- atonement

4. **Read Numbers 31: 25-54 again** and make a list of all the people or groups of people who were to receive some of the spoil or plunder that was taken from the Midianites. Indicate after each person or group how much of the spoil they were to receive. Don’t forget to account for the spoil mentioned in verses 48 to 54! One group is done for you.

5. In **Numbers 32** we have a long conversation between Moses and the tribes of Gad and Reuben. As you read through this chapter for the first time, mark each of the following in some distinctive way –

- Any reference to the land which the LORD was giving to the sons of Israel
- Any reference to the land which the sons of Gad, Reuben, and Manasseh desired to possess

7. **Read Numbers 32 again** and mark each time the conversation shifts to a different speaker. Try to summarize each paragraph (or speech) in 20 words or less. Use exact words from the text as much as possible. The first paragraph is done for you.

8. **Read Numbers 33** and mark every reference to time --- anything that answers the question, “When did it happen?” or “How long did it go on?” Unlike Numbers 29 there aren’t very many time phrases in this section but the ones that are there are really important. Don’t forget that words like *then*, *when*, and *while* can introduce a time phrase if the phrase that follows tells *when* something happened.

9. **Read Numbers 33 again** and decide where you think the paragraph divisions should fall. Try to summarize each paragraph in 20 words or less.

10. Read the last paragraph of Numbers 33 again (verses 50-56) and note the words “but” and “as.” The word “but” typically signals a contrast (two people or things are presented as being different in some way). The word “as” often signals a comparison (two people or things are presented as similar in some way). For each occurrence of the words “but” or “as” in this passage, try to determine what is being compared or contrasted and how the two things are similar or different. Note your observations in the margin. One is done for you.

## Numbers 31

1 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

2 “Avenge the people of Israel on the Midianites. Afterward you shall be gathered to your people.”

3 So Moses spoke to the people, saying, “Arm men from among you for the war, that they may go against Midian to execute the Lord's vengeance on Midian.

4 You shall send a thousand from each of the tribes of Israel to the war.”

5 So there were provided, out of the thousands of Israel, a thousand from each tribe, twelve thousand armed for war.

6 And Moses sent them to the war, a thousand from each tribe, together with Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, with the vessels of the sanctuary and the trumpets for the alarm in his hand.

7 They warred against Midian, as the Lord commanded Moses, and killed every male.

8 They killed the kings of Midian with the rest of their slain, Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. And they also killed Balaam the son of Beor with the sword.

9 And the people of Israel took captive the women of Midian and their little ones, and they took as plunder all their cattle, their flocks, and all their goods.

10 All their cities in the places where they lived, and all their encampments, they burned with fire,

11 and took all the spoil and all the plunder, both of man and of beast.

12 Then they brought the captives and the plunder and the spoil to Moses, and to Eleazar the priest, and to the congregation of the people of Israel, at the camp on the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho.

13 Moses and Eleazar the priest and all the chiefs of the congregation went to meet them outside the camp.

Killed  
-- every male  
-- the 5 kings  
Of Midian  
-- every woman  
who had  
known man  
by lying with  
him

14 And Moses was angry with the officers of the army, the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds, who had come from service in the war.

15 Moses said to them, "Have you let all the women live?"

16 Behold, these, on Balaam's advice, caused the people of Israel to act treacherously against the Lord in the incident of Peor, and so the plague came among the congregation of the Lord.

17 Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known man by lying with him.

18 But all the young girls who have not known man by lying with him keep alive for yourselves.

19 Encamp outside the camp seven days. Whoever of you has killed any person and whoever has touched any slain, purify yourselves and your captives on the third day and on the seventh day.

20 You shall purify every garment, every article of skin, all work of goats' hair, and every article of wood."

21 Then Eleazar the priest said to the men in the army who had gone to battle: "This is the statute of the law that the Lord has commanded Moses:

22 only the gold, the silver, the bronze, the iron, the tin, and the lead,

23 everything that can stand the fire, you shall pass through the fire, and it shall be clean. Nevertheless, it shall also be purified with the water for impurity. And whatever cannot stand the fire, you shall pass through the water.

24 You must wash your clothes on the seventh day, and you shall be clean. And afterward you may come into the camp."

25 The Lord said to Moses,

26 "Take the count of the plunder that was taken, both of man and of beast, you and Eleazar the priest and the heads of the fathers' houses of the congregation,

27 and divide the plunder into two parts between the warriors who went out to battle and all the congregation.

28 And levy for the Lord a tribute from the men of war who went out to battle, one out of five hundred, of the people and of the oxen and of the donkeys and of the flocks.

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The men of war  
who went out  
to battle  
1/2 minus 1 out  
of 500 for the  
Lord

29 Take it from their half and give it to Eleazar the priest as a contribution to the Lord.

30 And from the people of Israel's half you shall take one drawn out of every fifty, of the people, of the oxen, of the donkeys, and of the flocks, of all the cattle, and give them to the Levites who keep guard over the tabernacle of the Lord.”

31 And Moses and Eleazar the priest did as the Lord commanded Moses.

32 Now the plunder remaining of the spoil that the army took was 675,000 sheep,  
33 72,000 cattle,

34 61,000 donkeys,

35 and 32,000 persons in all, women who had not known man by lying with him.

36 And the half, the portion of those who had gone out in the army, numbered  
337,500 sheep,

37 and the Lord's tribute of sheep was 675.

38 The cattle were 36,000, of which the Lord's tribute was 72.

39 The donkeys were 30,500, of which the Lord's tribute was 61.

40 The persons were 16,000, of which the Lord's tribute was 32 persons.

41 And Moses gave the tribute, which was the contribution for the Lord, to Eleazar the priest, as the Lord commanded Moses.

42 From the people of Israel's half, which Moses separated from that of the men who had served in the army—

43 now the congregation's half was 337,500 sheep,

44 36,000 cattle,

45 and 30,500 donkeys,

46 and 16,000 persons—

47 from the people of Israel's half Moses took one of every 50, both of persons and of beasts, and gave them to the Levites who kept guard over the tabernacle of the Lord, as the Lord commanded Moses.

48 Then the officers who were over the thousands of the army, the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds, came near to Moses

49 and said to Moses, “Your servants have counted the men of war who are under our command, and there is not a man missing from us.

50 And we have brought the Lord's offering, what each man found, articles of gold, armlets and bracelets, signet rings, earrings, and beads, to make atonement for ourselves before the Lord."

51 And Moses and Eleazar the priest received from them the gold, all crafted articles.

52 And all the gold of the contribution that they presented to the Lord, from the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds, was 16,750 shekels.

53 (The men in the army had each taken plunder for himself.)

54 And Moses and Eleazar the priest received the gold from the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, and brought it into the tent of meeting, as a memorial for the people of Israel before the Lord.

### **Numbers 32**

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Gad and Reuben ask for the land of Gilead instead of going across the Jordan because it is suitable for livestock

1 Now the people of Reuben and the people of Gad had a very great number of livestock. And they saw the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead, and behold, the place was a place for livestock.

2 So the people of Gad and the people of Reuben came and said to Moses and to Eleazar the priest and to the chiefs of the congregation,

3 "Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam, Nebo, and Beon,

4 the land that the Lord struck down before the congregation of Israel, is a land for livestock, and your servants have livestock."

5 And they said, "If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to your servants for a possession. Do not take us across the Jordan."

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6 But Moses said to the people of Gad and to the people of Reuben, "Shall your brothers go to the war while you sit here?

7 Why will you discourage the heart of the people of Israel from going over into the land that the Lord has given them?

8 Your fathers did this, when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to see the land.

9 For when they went up to the Valley of Eshcol and saw the land, they discouraged the heart of the people of Israel from going into the land that the Lord had given them.

10 And the Lord's anger was kindled on that day, and he swore, saying,

11 'Surely none of the men who came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, because they have not wholly followed me,

12 none except Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have wholly followed the Lord.'

13 And the Lord's anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation that had done evil in the sight of the Lord was gone.

14 And behold, you have risen in your fathers' place, a brood of sinful men, to increase still more the fierce anger of the Lord against Israel!

15 For if you turn away from following him, he will again abandon them in the wilderness, and you will destroy all this people."

16 Then they came near to him and said, "We will build sheepfolds here for our livestock, and cities for our little ones,

17 but we will take up arms, ready to go before the people of Israel, until we have brought them to their place. And our little ones shall live in the fortified cities because of the inhabitants of the land.

18 We will not return to our homes until each of the people of Israel has gained his inheritance.

19 For we will not inherit with them on the other side of the Jordan and beyond, because our inheritance has come to us on this side of the Jordan to the east."

20 So Moses said to them, "If you will do this, if you will take up arms to go before the Lord for the war,

21 and every armed man of you will pass over the Jordan before the Lord, until he has driven out his enemies from before him

22 and the land is subdued before the Lord; then after that you shall return and be free of obligation to the Lord and to Israel, and this land shall be your possession before the Lord.

23 But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the Lord, and be sure your sin will find you out.

24 Build cities for your little ones and folds for your sheep, and do what you have promised.”

25 And the people of Gad and the people of Reuben said to Moses, “Your servants will do as my lord commands.

26 Our little ones, our wives, our livestock, and all our cattle shall remain there in the cities of Gilead,

27 but your servants will pass over, every man who is armed for war, before the Lord to battle, as my lord orders.”

28 So Moses gave command concerning them to Eleazar the priest and to Joshua the son of Nun and to the heads of the fathers' houses of the tribes of the people of Israel.

29 And Moses said to them, “If the people of Gad and the people of Reuben, every man who is armed to battle before the Lord, will pass with you over the Jordan and the land shall be subdued before you, then you shall give them the land of Gilead for a possession.

30 However, if they will not pass over with you armed, they shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan.”

31 And the people of Gad and the people of Reuben answered, “What the Lord has said to your servants, we will do.

32 We will pass over armed before the Lord into the land of Canaan, and the possession of our inheritance shall remain with us beyond the Jordan.”

33 And Moses gave to them, to the people of Gad and to the people of Reuben and to the half-tribe of Manasseh the son of Joseph, the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites and the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, the land and its cities with their territories, the cities of the land throughout the country.

34 And the people of Gad built Dibon, Ataroth, Aroer,

35 Atroth-shophan, Jazer, Jogbehah,

36 Beth-nimrah and Beth-haran, fortified cities, and folds for sheep.

37 And the people of Reuben built Heshbon, Elealeh, Kiriathaim,

38 Nebo, and Baal-meon (their names were changed), and Sibmah. And they gave other names to the cities that they built.

39 And the sons of Machir the son of Manasseh went to Gilead and captured it, and dispossessed the Amorites who were in it.

40 And Moses gave Gilead to Machir the son of Manasseh, and he settled in it.

41 And Jair the son of Manasseh went and captured their villages, and called them Havvoth-jair.

42 And Nobah went and captured Kenath and its villages, and called it Nobah, after his own name.

### **Numbers 33**

1 These are the stages of the people of Israel, when they went out of the land of Egypt by their companies under the leadership of Moses and Aaron.

2 Moses wrote down their starting places, stage by stage, by command of the Lord, and these are their stages according to their starting places.

3 They set out from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month. On the day after the Passover, the people of Israel went out triumphantly in the sight of all the Egyptians,

4 while the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn, whom the Lord had struck down among them. On their gods also the Lord executed judgments.

5 So the people of Israel set out from Rameses and camped at Succoth.

6 And they set out from Succoth and camped at Etham, which is on the edge of the wilderness.

7 And they set out from Etham and turned back to Pi-hahiroth, which is east of Baal-zephon, and they camped before Migdol.

8 And they set out from before Hahiroth and passed through the midst of the sea into the wilderness, and they went a three days' journey in the wilderness of Etham and camped at Marah.

9 And they set out from Marah and came to Elim; at Elim there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they camped there.

10 And they set out from Elim and camped by the Red Sea.

11 And they set out from the Red Sea and camped in the wilderness of Sin.

12 And they set out from the wilderness of Sin and camped at Dophkah.

13 And they set out from Dophkah and camped at Alush.



14 And they set out from Alush and camped at Rephidim, where there was no water for the people to drink.

15 And they set out from Rephidim and camped in the wilderness of Sinai.

16 And they set out from the wilderness of Sinai and camped at Kibroth-hattaavah.

17 And they set out from Kibroth-hattaavah and camped at Hazeroth.

18 And they set out from Hazeroth and camped at Rithmah.

19 And they set out from Rithmah and camped at Rimmon-perez.

20 And they set out from Rimmon-perez and camped at Libnah.

21 And they set out from Libnah and camped at Rissah.

22 And they set out from Rissah and camped at Kehelathah.

23 And they set out from Kehelathah and camped at Mount Shepher.

24 And they set out from Mount Shepher and camped at Haradah.

25 And they set out from Haradah and camped at Makheloth.

26 And they set out from Makheloth and camped at Tahath.

27 And they set out from Tahath and camped at Terah.

28 And they set out from Terah and camped at Mithkah.

29 And they set out from Mithkah and camped at Hashmonah.

30 And they set out from Hashmonah and camped at Moseroth.

31 And they set out from Moseroth and camped at Bene-jaakan.

32 And they set out from Bene-jaakan and camped at Hor-haggidgad.

33 And they set out from Hor-haggidgad and camped at Jotbathah.

34 And they set out from Jotbathah and camped at Abronah.

35 And they set out from Abronah and camped at Ezion-geber.

36 And they set out from Ezion-geber and camped in the wilderness of Zin (that is, Kadesh).

37 And they set out from Kadesh and camped at Mount Hor, on the edge of the land of Edom.

38 And Aaron the priest went up Mount Hor at the command of the Lord and died there, in the fortieth year after the people of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, on the first day of the fifth month.

39 And Aaron was 123 years old when he died on Mount Hor.

40 And the Canaanite, the king of Arad, who lived in the Negeb in the land of Canaan, heard of the coming of the people of Israel.

41 And they set out from Mount Hor and camped at Zalmonah.

42 And they set out from Zalmonah and camped at Punon.

43 And they set out from Punon and camped at Oboth.

44 And they set out from Oboth and camped at Iye-abarim, in the territory of Moab.

45 And they set out from Iyim and camped at Dibon-gad.

46 And they set out from Dibon-gad and camped at Almon-diblathaim.

47 And they set out from Almon-diblathaim and camped in the mountains of Abarim, before Nebo.

48 And they set out from the mountains of Abarim and camped in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho;

49 they camped by the Jordan from Beth-jeshimoth as far as Abel-shittim in the plains of Moab.

50 And the Lord spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho, saying,

51 "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you pass over the Jordan into the land of Canaan,

52 then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you and destroy all their figured stones and destroy all their metal images and demolish all their high places.

53 And you shall take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given the land to you to possess it.

54 You shall inherit the land by lot according to your clans. To a large tribe you shall give a large inheritance, and to a small tribe you shall give a small inheritance.

Wherever the lot falls for anyone, that shall be his. According to the tribes of your fathers you shall inherit.

55 But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then those of them whom you let remain shall be as barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall trouble you in the land where you dwell.

56 And I will do to you <sup>(as)</sup> I thought to do to them."

Israel / the inhabitants of the Land  
(similar, as far as what God will do to them)