

PREACHING THROUGH THE BIBLE: NUMBERS

GOD'S FAITHFUL LOVE

Numbers 6:24-26

I. INTRODUCTION

A. SETTING

1. TIME

- a. Begins—second year after Exodus
 1. Opens with census—1st day, 2nd month, 2nd year after Exodus
 2. 11 months after Moses ascended Mt Sinai (Ex 19)
 3. After Tabernacle set up—1st day, 1st month, 2nd year—Ex 40:17
 4. They had already observed second Passover—Nu 9
 - a. First section (Ch 1-8) recaps things since first Passover
 - b. Then the journey begins in Ch 10—after Passover in Ch 9
- b. Ends—39 years later—poised to enter Promised Land

2. LOCATION

- a. Begins—in Sinai peninsula—wilderness where Tabernacle was erected
- b. Ends—on Plains of Moab—across Jordan from Jericho
- c. Encampment in **22:1**—became base of operations for rest of book

B. CONTENT

1. NAME OF BOOK

- a. Hebrew = *bemidar*—“in the desert”
- b. Greek (Septuagint) = *arithmoi*—“numbers”—for the census

2. MATERIAL

- a. Narrative—of events in Israel's journey through wilderness
- b. Law codes and rules—to prepare for occupying Canaan

3. THEMES

- a. **Preparation**—for entering the Promised Land
- b. Israel's recurrent **rebellion** and **return** to God
- c. **God's expectation**—of holiness and obedience

d. **God's faithfulness**—in keeping His promises

C. OUTLINE

1. ISRAEL ORGANIZED TO ENTER CANAAN— Ch 1 through 10:10

- Census and certain laws
- Guidelines for the Tabernacle
- Second Passover
- God's presence in the cloud
- Silver trumpets—for assembling and movement

2. REJECTION OF THE PROMISED LAND—10:11 through Ch 14

- Leaving Sinai—2nd month, 20th day, 2nd year
- People complain—wanting meat
- Selection of 70 elders to help Moses
- Sending of quail—and plague
- Spying out Canaan—people refuse to enter Canaan
- Discipline by God—this generation will die in the desert
- Defeat of Israel by Amalekites

3. WANDERING OUTSIDE THE PROMISED LAND—Ch 15-21

- Giving of new laws and rules
- Rebellion and destruction of Korah—murmuring—and plague
- More ordinances
- Murmuring about water—and Moses' defiance
- Israel Blocked by Edom
- Deaths of Aaron and Miriam
- Three victories over:
 - Arad—in the Negev
 - Sihon—of the Amorites
 - Og—of Bashan

4. OBSTACLES TO ENTERING CANAAN—Ch 22-25

- Balak—Moabite king tried to stop Israel—by using Balaam
 - Tried to make Balaam prophesy against Israel
 - But God forced Balaam to prophesy good for Israel
- Israel's idolatry and immorality with the Moabites

5. FINAL PREPARATION TO ENTER CANAAN—Ch 26-36

- New census—second generation
- More laws and rules
- Joshua appointed as Moses' successor
- Victory over Midianites
- Reuben, Gad, half-Mannaseh given land in Gilead
- Instructions for apportioning Canaan
 - Including Levitical cities and cities of refuge

II. FOCAL PASSAGE

Nu 6:24-27—*The LORD bless you, and keep you; The LORD make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace. So they shall invoke My name on the sons of Israel, and I then will bless them.*

III. EXPLANATION OF TEXT

A. “THE LORD BLESS YOU, AND KEEP YOU”—v 24

1. THE “LORD” = Jehovah—the I AM

2. “BLESS YOU”

a. Meaning—to show favor toward

b. Historical root concept

- To kneel or break down
- To salute another person—disarming oneself

c. Greek meaning = eulogize—to say a ‘good word’

d. **Examples**

1. **Isaac blessed Jacob** (Gen 27:4,7,10)

2. **Jacob blessed his sons** (Gen 48:9)

e. The Promise to Abraham—Gen 12:2-3

- To bless Abraham—v 2
- To bless those who bless him—v 3

f. In blessing Israel, God made Himself vulnerable

- He ‘stooped’ to show them favor
- He ‘disarmed’ Himself—by attaching His reputation to them

3. “KEEP YOU”

a. Meaning—to guard—protect—preserve

b. Historical root concept—to keep an eye on

- To watch a flock or herd
- To be a watchman of a household

c. **Examples:**

1. God promised **Jacob** that He would **keep** him—Gen 28:15,20

- In Jacob’s dream at Bethel—God’s covenant promise

2. Several **Psalms** refer to God as keeping us

Ps 121:5-6—*Behold, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand.*

B. “THE LORD MAKE HIS FACE SHINE ON YOU, AND BE GRACIOUS TO YOU”—v25

1. “HIS FACE”

a. Meaning—presence of God—His countenance

b. Historical root: *paniym*—becomes Peniel

c. **Examples:**

1. Jacob wrestled with the angel of God—**Ge 32**

- Before meeting Esau
- When he was renamed Israel
- He said “I have seen God face to face”—**Ge 32:30**
- Jacob called the place Peniel

2. God told Moses—no one can see His **face** and live—**Ex 33:20**

2. “SHINE”

a. Meaning—to give light—illumine

b. Greek meaning—epiphany: to shine—to reveal

c. Examples:

1. Moses’ face shone after being with God—Ex 34:29-35

2. **Psalms** ask for this—for salvation—e.g. **Psalm 80**

v3—*O God, restore us and cause your face to shine upon us, and we will be saved.*

v7—*O God of hosts, restore us and cause Your face to shine upon us, and we will be saved.*

v19—*O Lord God of hosts, restore us; cause your face to shine upon us, and we will be saved.*

3. **Psalms**—also ask for illumination—to show the right way

Ps 119:135—*Make Your face shine upon Your servant, and teach me Your statutes*

4. **Psalms** give a parallel blessing to Nu 6—for universal blessing

Ps 67:1-2—*God be gracious to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us—that your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations.*

5. The fiery presence of God

Ex 40:38—cloud by day, fiery pillar by night

Nu 9:15-23—cloud over Tabernacle as guiding presence

3. “GRACIOUS”

a. Meaning—to be gracious to—show compassion—be merciful

b. Examples:

1. Jacob urges Esau to take his gifts—he had plenty

Gen 33:11—*For God had dealt graciously with him*

2. When Moses wanted to see God’s face—God said:

Ex 33:19—*I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.*

C. “THE LORD LIFT UP HIS COUNTENANCE ON YOU AND GIVE YOU PEACE”—v26

1. “LIFT UP HIS COUNTENANCE”

a. Meanings

1. “lift up” = carry/bear—sustain

2. “countenance” = face (same as above—paniyim)

b. Historical roots

1. “to lift up the head” = being merry, cheerful—confident

Example: Ge 4:6-7—God said to Cain—*why is your countenance fallen; if you do well it will be lifted up*

2. God “lifting up His countenance = behold with kindness

c. Interpretation—this is asking God to do two things:

- To look with kindness upon us
- To look with cheerfulness and confidence in us

d. His uplifted face—was His confirmation that they were His people

2. “AND GIVE YOU PEACE”

a. Meanings

1. “give” = lay upon—ordain—transform

➤ Two interpretations

✓ To “load us down with”

✓ To “transform our being”

2. “peace”—shalom = wholeness—safety—contentment

b. Examples of ‘peace’

1. **Gen 15:15**—God promised Abraham—of peace

➤ He would go to his fathers in peace at an old age

2. **Gen 28:21**—Jacob’s promise—to God—at Bethel

➤ If I return in **peace** (safety) to my father’s house

➤ Then the Lord will be my God

D. “AND THEY SHALL INVOKE MY NAME ON THE SONS OF ISRAEL, AND THEN I WILL BLESS THEM”—v 27

1. “And they shall **invoke** My name on the Sons of Israel”

a. “invoke” = “put” or “give” (as in ‘give you peace’ above)

b. Application:

1. Israel becomes identified with the Lord God—as His witness

2. They identify with Him—as His people—in **Ex 19:6**

➤ A kingdom of priests

➤ A holy nation

3. So—everyone looks at Israel and sees the work of the Lord God

2. “And then I will bless them”

a. “bless” = circular return to the beginning of this blessing

b. Application

1. God will bless Israel—as long as it identifies with and obeys Him

2. God fulfills His promise—**Ge 12:2-3**

➤ To bless Abraham—and his descendants

➤ **And** to bless all families of the earth through him/them

3. The blessing of Israel—becomes the blessing of all nations

IV. APPLICATION

1. **BLESS**

- As God blesses us—we must bless others (**Gen 12**—Abram)
- As God ‘stoops’ and ‘disarms’ Himself—we must do so to others

2. **KEEP**—It also means for us

- As God keeps us, we must keep His covenant
- God told Abraham to ‘keep’ his commandments—**Ge 17:9-10**

3. **SHINE**

- Always be aware of God’s presence
- Use His illumination to see and obey His commands—**Ps 119:135**
- Then become the light of the world ourselves—**Mt 6**

4. **LIFT UP COUNTENANCE**

- For God to look with kindness and confidence—we must be obedient
- For God to look with cheer—we must please Him

5. **PEACE**

- Peace is not just an external state of affairs—safety and lack of strife
- It is an internal state of being—wholeness and contentment

VI. EPILOGUE OF GOD’S FAITHFULNESS

A. GOD’ CONSTANT PATIENCE WITH ISRAEL

1. BEFOREHAND—IN THE BOOK OF EXODUS

- The people grumbled
 - At **Marah**—bitter waters—before made sweet—**Ex 15**
 - **Wilderness** of Sin—nothing to eat—before manna—**Ex 16**
 - At **Massah**—for water—before it came from the rock—**Ex 17**
- Their idolatry—at Sinai—the **golden calf**—**Ex 32**

2. IN THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

- The people **grumbled** and **rebelled**
 - **Chapter 11**—people complain—want meat
 - **Chapter 12**—murmuring of Miriam and Aaron
 - **Chapter 14**—people refuse to enter Canaan
 - **Chapter 16**—Korah’s rebellion and subsequent murmuring
 - **Chapter 20**—at Meribah

- People murmur for water
- Moses' disobedience by striking rock

b. Their **idolatry** and **immorality** with the Moabites—**Chapter 25**

B. GOD ALWAYS KEPT HIS COVENANT PROMISE

1. HE ALWAYS FORGAVE THEM—BUT *AFTER* HE DISCIPLINED THEM
2. HE ALWAYS GAVE THEM A SECOND CHANCE
3. HE CONTINUED TO FULFIL HIS PROMISE
 - He *constantly* showed them His favor
 - He *constantly* protected and delivered them
 - He *constantly* acknowledged them as His own
 - He *constantly* gave contentment and safety the world could not give