

Session 8

Numbers

- **Numbers** derives its title from the **military census** taken in the first sentence of the book, although the book itself chronicles the **desert wanderings** of the Israelites.
- To walk from Mt. Sinai to the Promised Land should have taken days, perhaps weeks, but instead Israel takes **forty years** as punishment for Kadesh (Num 13:32), at which they panicked due to lack of faith in God, and therefore wanted to kill Moses, and then choose another leader to lead them back to slavery in Egypt.
- As we read Numbers, the Israelites do not leave Mt. Sinai until chapter 10, **yet they start rebelling against God in the first verse of chapter 11, complaining about everything, from the food, the water, to Moses' leadership.**
- Numbers chronicles at least nine rebellions against God, giving the impression that the forty years is **one long rebellion.**
- In Numbers 14-24, the second generation, the children of those who escaped slavery in Egypt, grow up in the desert.
- **Balaam** was a false prophet, who derived his powers from the occult, specifically from an unknown demon. Balaam was hired by **Balak**, king of Moab, who feared the Israelites, and therefore wanted to curse them while they were encamped upon the plains of Moab, as they were preparing to enter the Promised Land of Canaan (Num 22:5).
- At first, warned by God, Balaam refused to curse the Israelites, but after repeated pleas from Balak, he agreed to go with Balak's representatives. While on the way, he was stopped by an Angel, invisible to Balaam, but visible to his donkey. When his donkey stopped, refusing to go forward, Balaam struck her with his staff, then "the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey", and Balaam argued with the donkey. When Balaam's eyes were opened to the Angel, the Angel warned him to speak "only the word which I bid you".
- When Balaam finally came to Balak, Balaam, against his will, pronounced blessings rather than curses. **The last of these blessings was a prophecy of the long-distant coming of the Messiah-King (Christ), who would be preceded by a star rising out of Jacob (Star of Bethelhem), and who would dispossess the Edomite ruler (Herod) (Num 24:17-19).**
- Later, Balaam, returning to his evil ways, and in a last-ditch effort to thwart the Israelite advance into the Promised Land, advised the Moabites and the Midianites to use their women to seduce the Israelites into idolatry. **Thus, just outside of the Promised Land, the 2nd generation falls into the very same sin as their parents, as they commit idolatrous worship during an orgy at Peor of the demon/god Baal, which is the Canaanite name for Apis (Num 25). Essentially, Peor was to the 2nd generation what the golden calf was to the 1st generation.**

Deuteronomy

- After the sin at Peor, the covenant with Moses is again remade on the plains of Moab, with many new laws, as God is dealing with the equivalent of a teenage brat, who needs more and more rules.
- The word “**deuteronomy**”, broken down as “deutero” meaning “second” and “nomy” meaning “law”, means “**second law**”, although it technically is the third law, since the original Mosaic covenant had been remade at Mt. Sinai after the golden calf.
- With regard to covenant-making, what happened in Deuteronomy on the plains of Moab, forty years after the Exodus, is very different from what happened at Mt. Sinai, within a year after the Exodus. For example, at Sinai, God appeared to the Israelites in thunder, cloud, and lightning, **but, on the plains of Moab, God does not appear to the Israelites at all, but only speaks privately to Moses, who then delivers a bad-tempered, long-winded, thirty-four chapter sermon.**
- Since Moses had now become Israel’s lawgiver, some of the laws given in Deuteronomy on the plains of Moab condone certain lesser evils, as an accommodation or concession to Israel’s spiritual immaturity. This is why the prophet Ezekiel said, “Moreover, I gave them statutes that were not good, and ordinances by which they could not have life (Ez 20:21-25).” Similarly, the philosopher Aristotle, perhaps with Moses in mind, **described the wise and prudent lawgiver as one who must be willing to tolerate and regulate lesser evils in order to avoid greater evils.**
- Ultimately, Israel needs a *heart transplant*, which the new Israel will receive in the New Covenant by means of the Holy Spirit given in Baptism. This is prophesied by Moses, as he says, “And the Lord your God will *circumcise your heart...so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live (Dt 30:6).*”
- But the Israelites do not think they need new hearts, which is why they do not ask for new hearts, and why they are not granted new hearts. **Thus, convincing the Israelites of their need for new hearts represented the essential purpose behind Deuteronomy.**
- In Deuteronomy, Moses appoints his successor to be Joshua, who will lead Israel into the Promised Land of Canaan. **Thus, Joshua, whose name is the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek name “Jesus” or the Aramaic name “Yeshua”, is a type/foreshadowing of Jesus the Christ (Messiah-King), Who will lead the New Israel the Church into the Promised Land of Heaven.**
- Though Joshua is the secular head of state, he is still subordinated to **Phinehas, who is high priest and spiritual head of Israel.**