

Message #35**Numbers 33:1-56**

I have read the edited version of the journals of Lewis and Clark more than once. The Lewis and Clark journals log the travels of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark from 1803-1806. The journals begin with them getting supplies and equipment and employing the 40 men who they named the “Corps of Discovery.” They map the trip, describe the flora and animals and travel across the Rocky Mountains. When we lived out in Idaho, I actually went to some of the places where they traveled. I have actually stood on the trail where they headed into the Bitterroot mountains in Idaho. It is a fascinating read. It is fascinating to know that these spots were real history.

What is described in Numbers 33 is not only fascinating history, it is inspired history by God. God wanted a journal log kept of all the places Israel camped and traveled in their 40 year wilderness wandering. He wanted a record of where they had been as He brought the nation to the Promised Land.

As Israel was on the verge of entering the Promised Land, God wanted this nation to remember this history. God works with real people in real time. He keeps a record of every step of His people. Not only was God with His people at these various places, but He kept track of their travels and He provided for them.

We certainly may conclude from this that God knows where we are and He keeps track of our travels and provides for us. We may also conclude, He keeps the record of how often we travel to church. He has the log books.

GOD KEEPS PRECISE RECORDS OF HIS PEOPLE AS THEY TRAVEL THROUGH LIFE AND HIS LEADING, PROVISIONS AND BLESSINGS OCCUR IN REAL PLACES AT REAL TIMES; BUT IF HIS PEOPLE DON'T OBEY HIM THEY EXPERIENCE NEGATIVE THINGS AND HE WILL DELAY HIS FULL BLESSINGS.

According to **verses 1-2**, Moses recorded and documented all of the places where Israel went and camped after coming out of Egypt. So here in the book of Numbers we learn that Moses is the writer. Moses specifically wrote this list himself. So we are reading something far more impressive than the Lewis and Clark journals. This is the only place in Numbers that specifically claims Moses wrote it.

This idea to document and log this came “by the command of the LORD.” So this is an inspired itinerary and documentation that God wanted in His Word and Moses wrote it. This is a very precise travel diary.

In this chapter, by my calculation, there are 41 places specifically named where Israel camped on her way to the Promised Land. It starts in Egypt (**Num. 33:3**) and it ends in the plains of Moab (**33:49**), near Jericho.

The way the chapter breaks down is threefold:

- 1) Egypt to Sinai (**33:5-15**) = 11 campsites
- 2) Sinai to Kadesh (**33:16-36**) = 21 campsites
- 3) Kadesh to plains of Moab (**33:37-49**) = 9 campsites

What we have here is a 40 year travel route that starts with Israel leaving Egypt and ends with them camped just outside the Promised Land. What this data does is show us that God sovereignly directed and took care of His people from beginning to end. He sovereignly directed them and provided for them every step of the way.

Moses picks up the narrative in **verses 3-4** as the children of Israel left Egypt while the Egyptians were burying their firstborn that God had struck down in a plague.

PART #1 – Israel travels from Egypt to Moab. 33:5-49

There are 41 total campsites based on the fact that the word “masa” (journeyed) is used 41 times. So they break camp and move to another campsite some 41 times in the chapter. Most of these places are difficult to precisely pinpoint but on an average, the distance between campsites is about 25-30 miles.

Campsite #1 - They travel from Rameses and camped in Succoth. 33:5 (Ex. 12:37)

They left Rameses as the Egyptians were burying their dead, which the Lord smote in a plague. God had in some respects diverted the attention of the Egyptians who were focused on funerals rather than Israel leaving.

Campsite #2 - They travel from Succoth and camped in Etham. 33:6 (Ex. 13:20)

It is mentioned that here the Lord was guiding them by a pillar of cloud in the day and a pillar of fire by night. It is also mentioned that Etham was located on the “edge of the wilderness.”

Campsite #3 - They travel from Etham and camped at Migdol. 33:7 (Ex. 14:2)

Now to camp near Migdol means they had to backtrack from moving east to the south west. The purpose of God leading Israel here was to trap the Egyptians and lead them across the Promised Land.

Campsite #4 - They traveled through the Red Sea and camped at Marah. 33:8 (Ex. 15:23)

This spot has been identified as being about 25 miles down the eastern coast of the Gulf of Suez. This was a place where Israel rebelled against God and started grumbling about the bitter water (Ex. 15:23-24). This was the place where Moses threw a tree and made the water sweet.

Campsite #5 - They traveled from Marah and camped at Elim. **33:9** (Ex. 15:27)

This is amazing grace. After the nation's grumbling, God led them to great blessings. It was about 22-25 miles between Marah and Elim. God's great blessings may be just a few miles away.

Campsite #6 - They traveled from Elim and camped by the Red Sea. **33:10**

This campsite is not mentioned in Exodus. We know from Exodus 17:1 that they travelled by stages. God was caring for His people and they are camped by the very Sea where He delivered them.

Campsite #7 - They traveled from the Red Sea and camped in the wilderness of Sin. **33:11**

Campsite #8 - They traveled from Sin and camped at Dophkah. **33:12**

This was another place where Israel rebelled against God (Ex. 16:1-2). They did not like the food God provided and grumbled about the lack of food so God supplied food. It is specifically stated here that God wanted His people to know "I hear your grumbings."

Campsite #9 - They traveled from Dophkah and camped at Alush. **33:13**

Campsite #10 - They traveled from Alush and camped at Rephidim. **33:14**

Most believe that Rephidim is located about 30 miles north of the tip of the Sinai Peninsula. Here was another place of rebellion (Ex. 17:1-2). Again they are complaining about the water. God gave them water from a rock that Paul says was Jesus Christ (I Cor. 10:4).

Campsite #11 - They traveled from Rephadim and camped in the wilderness of Sinai. **33:15**
(Ex. 19:1)

This was a place located in front of the mountain where Moses went up and talked with God and God displayed His glory. The first 11 campsites took about a year.

Campsite #12 - They traveled from Sinai and camped at Kibroth-hattaavah. **33:16**

From this point it will take 38-39 years—not due to distance but disobedience. Here is again another spot where Israel rebelled (Num. 11:34). This is the place where God executed some of His people who were greedy in eating quail.

Campsite #13 - They traveled from Kibroth-hattaavah and camped at Hazeroth. **33:17**
(Num. 11:35)

God was still leading His people even though He had to discipline His people.

Campsite #14 - They traveled from Hazeroth and camped at Rithmah. **33:18**

Campsite #15 - They traveled from Rithmah and camped at Rimmon-perez. **33:19**

Campsite #16 - They traveled from Rimmon-perez and camped at Libnah. **33:20**

Campsite #17 - They traveled from Libnah and camped at Rissah. **33:21**

Campsite #18 - They traveled from Rissah and camped at Kehelathah. **33:22**

Campsite #19 - They traveled from Kehelathah and camped at Mount Shepher. **33:23**

Campsite #20 - They traveled from Mount Shepher and camped at Haradah. **33:24**

Campsite #21 - They traveled from Haradah and camped at Makheloth. **33:25**

Campsite #22 - They traveled from Makheloth and camped at Tahath. **33:26**

Campsite #23 - They traveled from Tahath and camped at Terah. **33:27**

Campsite #24 - They traveled from Terah and camped at Mithkah. **33:28**

Campsite #25 - They traveled from Mithkah and camped at Hashmonah. **33:29**

Campsite #26 - They traveled from Hashmonah and camped at Moseroth. **33:30**

Campsite #27 - They traveled from Moseroth and camped at Bene-jaakan. **33:31**

The full name of this place is Beeroth-Bene-jaakan (Deut. 10:6), which is listed as the place near where Aaron died.

Campsite #28 - They traveled from Bene-jaakan and camped at Hor-haggidgad. **33:32**

The noun “Hor” indicates this was a high mountain area.

Campsite #29 - They traveled from Hor-haggidgad and camped at Jotbathah. **33:33**

Jotbath means “a land of rivers or waters.”

Campsite #30 - They traveled from Jotbathah and camped at Abronah. **33:34**

The word “Abronah” is one closely associated with the noun “beach.” So it may be they were camped on a beach.

Campsite #31 - They traveled from Abironah and camped at Ezion-geber. **33:35**

Campsite #32 - They traveled from Ezion-geber and camped in Zin Wilderness (Kadesh). **33:36**

Here again was another place of rebellion (Num. 20:1-3). This was the place where the ten spies turned God's people away from God. The next nine campsites were completely unnecessary.

Campsite #33 - They traveled from Kadesh and camped at Mount Hor. **33:37-40**

Here is the exact place where Aaron died. He died at age 123. He was 83-years-old when he first confronted Pharaoh (Ex. 7:7). He had seen God do much and he traveled far, but as Moses recorded, he did die. Even though he had greatly sinned, God greatly blessed him.

Campsite #34 - They traveled from Mount Hor and camped at Zalmonah. **33:41**

Campsite #35 - They traveled from Zalmonah and camped at Punon. **33:42**

Campsite #36 - They traveled from Punon and camped at Oboth. **33:43**

This was the spot where Israel camped after Moses had made the bronze serpent so those could look at it and be healed of the snakebite (Num. 21:9-10).

Campsite #37 - They traveled from Oboth and camped at Iye-abarim. **33:44**

This was a wilderness location opposite Moab (Num. 21:11)

Campsite #38 - They traveled from Iye-abarim and camped at Dibon-gad. **33:45**

Campsite #39 - They traveled from Dibon-gad and camped at Almon-diblathaim. **33:46**

Campsite #40 - They traveled from Almon-diblathaim and camped in the Abarim mountains.
33:47

Specifically they camped by the city of Dibon.

Campsite #41 - They traveled from the Abarim mountains and camped by the plains of Moab.
33:48-49

Most believe this site is located about 12 miles southeast of Jericho on the east side of the Jordan River, just north of the Dead Sea.

Life goes through different stages at different times. Finally, when we learn the lessons of God, we will experience Promised Land blessings.

PART #2 – Israel is instructed as to how to take possession of the Promised Land. **33:50-56**

This was the goal of this 40 year journey. The goal was to go to the Promised Land and take it. They are specifically given eight instructions:

Instruction #1 - Drive out all inhabitants. **33:52a**

Instruction #2 - Destroy all figured stones. **33:52b**

Instruction #3 - Destroy all molten images. **33:52c**

Instruction #4 - Destroy all high places. **33:52d**

All of the idolatrous places of worship, located in high places, were to be totally and completely destroyed.

Instruction #5 - Take possession of the land. **33:53**

They were to take possession of the land and live in the land.

Instruction #6 - Divide the land by the size of tribal families by lot. **33:54**

Larger tribes need more land and smaller tribes need less land.

Instruction #7 - If you don't drive out inhabitants they will become trouble for you. **33:55**

Instruction #8 - If you don't obey Me, I will do to you what I would have done to them. **33:56**

Here is the answer to why God has not allowed Israel to live and enjoy her land. She will not obey Him. In fact, most of the things in this list of instructions, they did not do.

PARTING THOUGHTS:

1. When God's people don't obey God, they waste their time and life.
2. God's people can have a lot of movement yet make no real progress in their relationship with God.
3. This chapter and these places should cause each of us to examine ourselves and our own travel log with God.
4. Obedience leads to Blessing; Disobedience will cost us Blessings.