

Bamidbar	In the Wilderness	The Motley Crew become the Hosts of the L-RD
Torah:	Numbers 1:1-4:20	
Haftarah:	Hosea 1:10-2:20 (2:1-22) (different versification, same content)	
Brit Chadashah:	Romans 9:22-33	

This is the first portion in the book of Numbers and in the first verse we learn that the Children of Israel have spent a year camping around the holy mountain. This was so they could learn to walk according to the laws and statutes of the L-rd and be purged from any residual Egyptian paganism. They staggered towards the mountain as a motley crew of freed slaves and a mixed multitude of Egyptian converts and things did not go well for them when they first arrived. They had a lot of work to do before they were ready to march to Canaan.

Throughout this period, they had manna in the morning, which was sometimes augmented with quail. They had a sheltering cloud during the day and a comforting fire at night. Later, we learn that their feet did not swell and their clothes did not wear out and they were provided with all the water they needed, for them and for their flocks. Their needs were taken care of.

One of the first orders of business in this chapter was to take up a military census to count the number of able-bodied men, who were capable of fighting as they swept into Canaan. There is no more mention of the mixed multitude which came with them out of Egypt and who had become circumcised so that the angel of death would not strike down their first born. Since this effectively converted them into Jews, it is more than likely, that they integrated into one or more of the twelve tribes. This became a custom for converts to Judaism for centuries, they would join the tribe of those who had taken them through the conversion process.

There were twelve specially appointed princes who would supervise the census, but we are not told what kind of tally sheet they used. The fighting men were counted according to tribe, family (clan) and house. And since Israel has always welcomed converts, Israel became a phratry which practiced endogamy and exogamy. A phratry is a group of related people without a common ancestor – Abraham's camp had at least four hundred men who were all circumcised with him and joined the covenant. Endogamy is the custom of marrying among the members of your extended kinship group, while exogamy is the practice of marrying outside your immediate kinship group. We always want to build families inside our faith group.

Strangers were also welcome to dwell among our people and most of the time, they were treated so well, that they joined with us to become full Jews. This has always given us a strong and varied genetic pool and has kept us from becoming inbred.

The counting did not follow a strict birth order for the tribal patriarchs, but this first military census, numbered our warriors at 603,550. We will talk about the Levitical, first born census later. Have you been counted among the faithful warriors of YHVH?

Now, before the camp made its first move, the tribes formed up around the tabernacle under four banners of three tribes each. Facing **east** towards Canaan, was the banner of Judah, with Issachar and Zabulon. **South** of the tabernacle was the banner of Reuben, with Simeon and Gad. **West** of the tabernacle was the banner of Ephraim, with Manasseh and Benjamin. Finally, **north** of the tabernacle was the banner of Dan, with Asher and Naphtali.

They formed the outer circle around the tabernacle and Dan was the only banner bearer who descended from a concubine and not from Leah or Rachel. The inner circle was formed by three levitical clans. Gershon camped **west** of the tabernacle, while Kohath camped **south** of the tabernacle. The clan Merari camped to the **north** of the tabernacle, while the House of Aaron, which was part of the Kohath clan, camped to the **east** of the tabernacle, facing the Promised Land. They were the ones who lead the procession whenever the camp moved.

Next, the first levitical reconciliation census is taken so that the people can pay a fee for the number of their first born that exceeded the number of the Levites. When the Levites took a stand against the golden calf uprising, they replaced the first-born son of each household as priests before G-d. The number of first born had to be counted, then the number of the Levites and payment was made according to how many first born there were, more than the number of Levites. Things had to be kept in balance.

When the number of the Levites was counted, we have a potential textual problem because in the first count of the Levites there are 23,300 and in the next there are only 23,000. What happened to the missing 300? Before we get to that, the number of first-born sons in Israel was listed as 22, 273, or 273 more than the number of Levites. So, the people had to pay five shekels for each extra child, or a sum of 1365 silver shekels. The number of Levites used in the reconciliation was the 22,000 figure, not the 23,300 figure.

Three possible solutions have been offered to account for this apparent discrepancy, but only one of them makes sense. The first is that there was a scribal error where the count of one levitical clan should have read 6,300 and not 6,600. Not a solid solution. Next, some feel that the Bible rounded the number of Levites in the second count, down to 22,000 from 2,300. There is no evidence to support this solution.

The third and most likely solution is that 300 Levites were first born sons themselves and a first born could not be used to redeem another first-born child. Three hundred first born is not a very big number, but at this point, the tribe of Levi was not very large. Their first born already belonged to G-d and could not be used in calculating the number of first born that exceeded their number. The Levitical first born were already included in the 22, 273 first born and they were counted to determine how many needed to be redeemed.

The passage also goes into detail, both about the marching order of the tribes and which parts of the tabernacle each of the levitical clans was to carry. For marching purposes every part of the tabernacle, including the arc, was securely wrapped and carried by respective levitical clans. The heavier portions of the tabernacle were transported in wagons which were later to be donated by twelve princes of the people. The smaller items from the tabernacle were to be carried by the levites on their shoulders. What are you carrying for the L-rd?

The ark was wrapped up three ways. First, it was wrapped in the veil, then enveloped in a water and dust proof tachash or antelope skin. Finally, it was also enveloped in a blue cloth and was boosted onto the shoulders of the sons of Aaron at the head of the people as they moved from one camp to another. They were followed by the banner of Judah, then by the Levitical clans of Gershon and Merari, carrying the larger parts of the tabernacle. Next came the banner of Ruben, followed by the Kohath clan, carrying the smaller items from the tabernacle. Last came the banners of Ephraim and Dan, which served as a rear guard. It must have been a magnificent procession. Both the take down and the set-up of the camp was very well organized and it all revolved around the tabernacle which housed the presence of YHVH. Is your life organized around the presence of YHVH through His word?

Sermon: Messianic Bible Basics: By What Authority?

As I prepared this message, I first scoured the Bible for appropriate passages which deal with obeying governmental authority and which outline the leadership mandate which governments should fulfill. It was not an easy task, since politics is a complicated and often divisive subject. I also did not want to just voice any current approaches to politics and religion. I wanted to establish what the Bible teaches about government, so that I neither became a dupe for current governments who have abused their biblical mandate, nor did I want to adopt a radical voice, calling for the violent overthrow of all governments.

So, let's begin with a series of questions. First, what does the Bible say that our spiritual duty is when it comes to politics and government? Next, when can we resist or rise up and rebel against abusive or corrupt governmental authority? Finally, while our biblical faith would never allow us to support any form of political anarchy, does it require that we passively submit to tyranny and to corrupt and evil government? Buckle up, here we go!

First, we need to realize that before all else, we are citizens of the Heavenly Kingdom and we do not recognize the final or absolute authority of any human government. However, we also acknowledge that the concept of government is essential for any society to function properly. The authority of any government is only derived from its triple mandate which is to protect its citizens, to provide for their needs and to punish lawbreakers and other criminals who want to damage society. It exists for supervision and never for suppression or oppression.

Governmental authority never derives from the whims of any ruler or regime. Neither the concept of the divine right of kings, nor the concept of pure democracy is supported by the teachings of the Scriptures. We all need to be guided by the rule of law, be it divine law outlined in the Scriptures, or natural law, which is a reflection of divine law. Rulers and regimes need to fulfill their threefold mandate and not to consider themselves above the law or as a law unto themselves. They have a limited mandate to govern (rule), not the right to unlimited power. Both Louis LXV and Hitler were wrong. Unlimited power belongs to G-d.

Whenever rulers have claimed divine authority, as if they were somehow partially divine, they have been wrong and were only being guided by the false spirit of antichrist. Also, whenever one nation has claimed the right to rule over other nations, this is also the spirit of antichrist. Yeshua is the only legitimate King of Kings and He alone has the right to rule over the nations.

Sadly, when the European imperialists attacked and nearly annihilated the indigenous populations of the Americas, this horrific genocide was also inspired by the evil spirit of antichrist. When the Europeans went on to conquer and to rule over nearly all the peoples of the globe, this was also a sick manifestation of the spirit of antichrist.

You see, throughout history, all and every empire, however benevolent, has always been motivated and driven by the same spirit of antichrist. Even in our modern age, there are too many antichrists setting up evil governments across our globe. In our modern era, alongside the European colonial empires, the three worst antichrists were Mao, Stalin and Hitler. In history there were others who could compete for the title of the worst antichrist in history before the final antichrist arrives. Evil men like Napoleon and Genghis Khan and various Arab and Muslim (and Christian) conquerors come to mind. The spirit of empire is the spirit of antichrist and never has any divine mandate for conquest and slaughter.

Then why did Paul and Peter instruct us to submit to such an evil regime as the Romans, offering them both honor and the payment of their imposed taxes? This is a tough question, but all and any positions I hold, need to be based on the Scriptures alone and not on the radical ideas of either the political status quo or the revolutionaries who seek to overthrow it.

Our faith needs to support the concept of governmental authority which exists to protect, to provide and to punish, even when our conscience moves us to rise up in revolution. Many students of modern history hold up the American Revolution as an example of the justified overthrow of tyranny. They forget about the Olive Branch Petition to the King of England which was passed by the American Continental Congress in 1775. The revolution only truly started when it was rejected by George III. If it had been accepted, Americans would still be British today. All they really wanted was that British law would be applied in the colonies in the same way it was applied in Britain, which was not an unreasonable request.

When you study the Bible, you discover that the most common form of government discussed is monarchy and before the 1800's most of the globe was ruled by monarchies of every sort. But be careful, because monarchy is not promoted by the Bible as the most effective form of government, just as the most common form. Only two monarchies were set up by divine authority and fell when they did not fulfill their triple mandate – to protect, to provide and to punish. It is the mandate which matters and never any specific regime.

The Bible calls for believers to support governmental authority as a basic principle, no matter what form this governmental authority takes. When any government violates its mandate, it becomes a matter of conscience for believers to discover how they should respond. When any government abuses or exceeds its authority, it has functionally lost its mandate to govern and its days are rightly numbered. Constitutional monarchy has survived in Britain because a series of reforms removed any potential for the monarch to abuse or exceed its mandate to reign, rather than to rule. Monarchs were removed when they violated this principle.

Most governments throughout history have claimed some kind of divine authority, but what they have in fact received, is only a mandate to serve and care for their people and to uphold the rule of law, which may be reformed as needed. However; no reform should ever add to or delete what the Scriptures teach is a government's threefold mandate: to protect the people, to provide for their needs and to punish lawbreakers.

Traditionally, religious authorities have upheld the rule of law and the need of government to be faithful to the mandate. G-d established the mandate for governments to rule by, but His support has always been for the mandate and not for any particular regime. As believers, it is our duty to pray that our governments fulfill their mandate and also uphold the rule of law, either divine or natural. We are never to side with lawbreakers who overthrow the rule of law.

Many modern dictatorships have been hostile to religion, but resistance and rebellion should arise out of personal conviction and not out of religious conviction. Whenever religion and government have been combined, most such governments have wrongly assumed religious authority and religious faith has often suffered both the loss of credibility and of religious freedom. Governments should never use G-d as a weapon to oppress or control their people.

The general mandate for government should be upheld by believers. If our conscience motivates us to resist or overthrow a corrupt or repressive regime, our faith prevents us from wanting to completely overthrow the basic concept of governmental authority as such.

You see, as believers, we have to take a firm stance against any call for anarchy, where the people rule themselves, free from any government of any kind. The basic mandate for government was established by G-d and needs our full support until the government of G-d is established on earth under the rule of our blessed Messiah's eternal kingdom.

Related to this, one of my major objections to the various conspiracy theories which continue to circulate through our modern world is that many are really just calling for anarchy. This is because they claim that all governments are corrupt and ruled by various secret global elites who are somehow in league with the devil. However, the concept and the mandate for government is not demonic. The call for anarchy and no government is demonic.

As believers, we should always support the governmental mandate established by G-d. We should never support the call for all government to be abolished. Wherever possible, we should speak out against all bad and abusive governmental practices AND in some cases, our conscience could require that we join a rebel cause. This would not be because we do not support the concept of government, but may find it necessary to overthrow a particular regime which has violated its mandate to govern. The concept of government is not evil.

In most cases, modern rebellions have not set up better governments than the ones they have overthrown. A few exceptions may be seen in the growing number of democratically elected governments which exist around the globe. To date some 20 monarchies still survive in our world and most of them are constitutional. Good government remains our objective.

Dictatorships are still far too common in our world. We need to pray that good governments which fulfill their mandate to rule, are established across the globe. This is so that we could lead peaceful lives and continue to share our faith with all who will listen. This is our calling until the return of our only true king, the Messiah. No other cause is worthy of our attention.

Related to this, many believers resist the idea of one world government, but that is precisely what will happen, once our blessed Messiah returns to rule over all the nations and generations of mankind. In the interim, should believers support the concept of one world government, or should we resist the globalists who we feel want to violate the national sovereignty of all the world's nations? Is global unity a bad thing to be resisted?

As we consider this, we have to be careful not to insist that all international agencies are somehow the forerunners to the evil global government of the final antichrist. Now, here it comes. The United Nations is a global parliament of the world's nations which is governed by an extensive charter and has no plans or hidden agendas to abolish the sovereignty of all or any of the member nations and set up a single dictatorial global regime. They are not secretly stationing troops across the globe to violate national sovereignty as a first step to the rise of the final antichrist. Imagining evil is not the same thing as fighting against it.

I am not happy with its anti-Israel bent and with the degree it supports abortion and allocates so much of its money to support terrorist groups who pretend to be refugees. But I always want to distinguish between what it stands for in theory and the many correctable short falls it struggles with. Many who criticize the UN have not read its charter and even those who have, believe that it has a secret, hidden agenda which it is really following. They believe anything they want to, with or without valid supporting evidence. They are the ones with an agenda.

It may surprise you to learn there is no biblical evidence to suggest that the world was united into a kind of one world government in the days of Noah. And even the opponents of such a phenomenon as one world government, need to admit that in many ways, we are already a single global economy. We have a global economic interdependence, which is why a virus from China was able to travel the globe so quickly. The sneeze traveled around the world.

The internet connects billions of people and there is virtually no place on earth that is not accessible to our telephones and our skies are full of satellites as more and more technical innovations speed up the pace of change and have turned us into a real extended global village. The idea of a world government over our global village is not the real problem.

It is rather, the various conspiracy theory which call for local and global anarchy that are the real enemy of our faith, not the call for international agencies to make our world a better place. Our current governmental system may not be perfect and I may not be a supporter of our current government at any level, but our first line of defense needs to be to pray for our leaders to fulfill their governmental mandate to rule and then to replace them when they don't do their job. There is no just cause to call for revolution or armed uprisings against our governments, north or south of the border. Armed militias are part of the problem, and are not part of the solution. Our faith supports good government, not armed insurrection.

Too many believers are sliding into paranoid notions that demonize elected governments and claim that they are just a front for secret groups which are working behind the scenes for global domination. Sadly, one of the worst fabricated conspiracies was composed by the Russian Czarist secret police in the 1800's to justify persecuting their Jewish population.

They put together a spurious document called the Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion. It claimed that there was a shadow Jewish world government called the Illuminati who secretly controlled the world economy and all the governments of the world. They were supposedly working to overthrow Christian civilization and set up a world dictatorship under their control.

These false accusations were used by the Nazis to justify their final solution and even many Christians believe that Jews were behind the Second World War to garner sympathy for the foundation of the state of Israel. Some poor souls still falsely believe that Jewish people are really in charge of both the world's economy and world governments and this kind of venomous antisemitism is on the rise on University campuses and among many Arab and Muslim countries. The demonization of Jewish people is really satanic and is being used by the enemy to justify our mistreatment and our persecution based on these false charges.

When they have finished attacking us, they go on to slide into various paranoid notions that also demonize elected governments and claim that they are also merely fronts for any number of secret societies which are also working for global domination.

Their supposed information sources contain many unfounded, wild and false accusations which panic people into considering armed insurrection, both in Canada and in the US. If you do not agree with them, you are being duped, because the sky is really falling and the only safe haven from the coming apocalypse is in the fox's cave. Do you really have any doubt as to his true identity as the prince of lies? As citizens of the government of G-d, we support the concept of good government on earth and we are free to follow the dictates of our conscience as long as it is not a call for global anarchy, which is what our enemy is working towards.