

# NUMBERS

IN THE WILDERNESS

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First published in Great Britain in 2017

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-911272-57-1

Designed by Diane Warnes

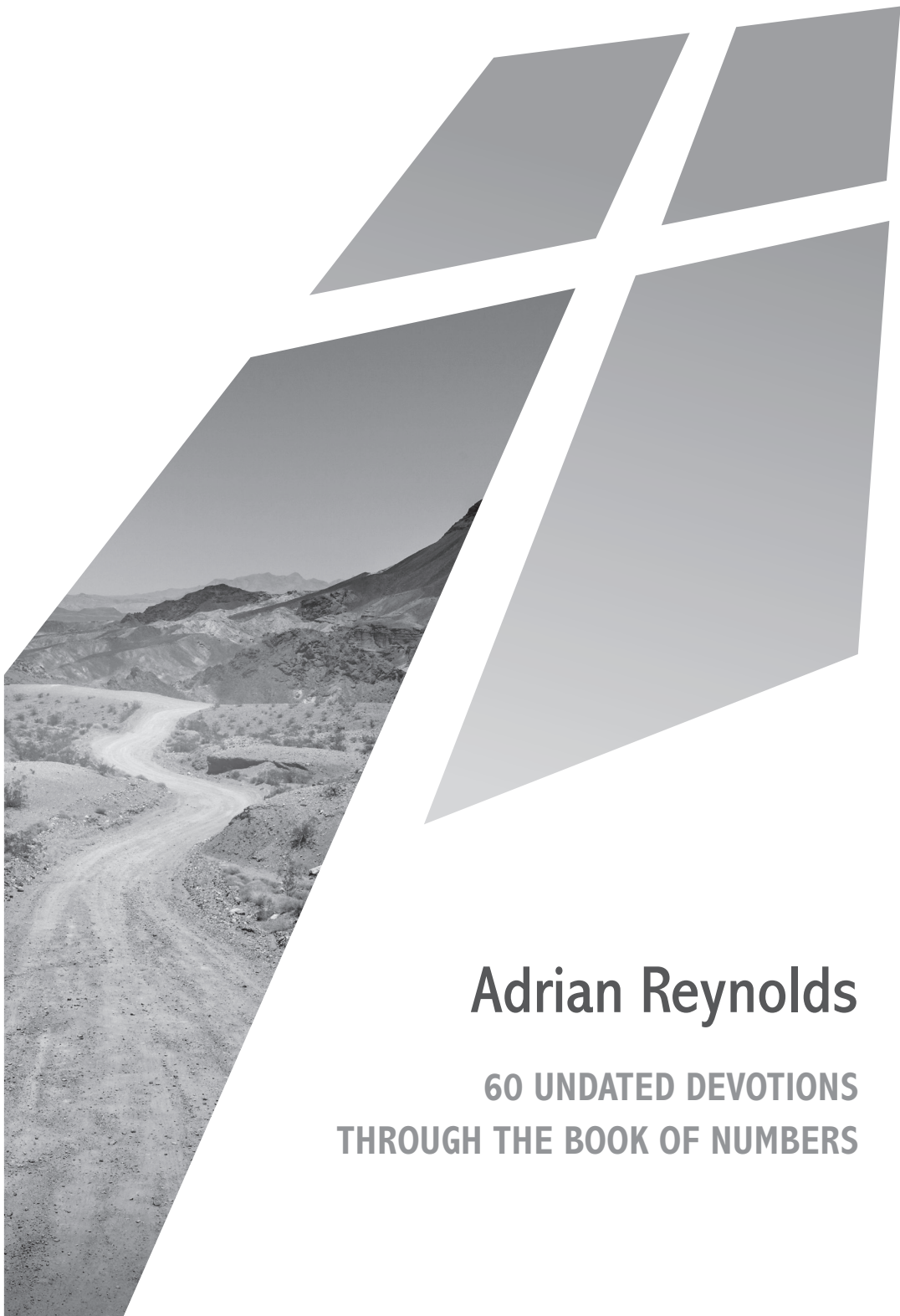
Printed in the UK

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**60 UNDATED DEVOTIONS  
THROUGH THE BOOK OF NUMBERS**



**W**elcome to the book of Numbers. It's given that title because of the two census counts that God commands (1:2 and 26:2). These are two significant moments in this book because they describe two different generations: the first, a rebellious generation that is going to die in the desert; the second, a faithful generation who will ultimately inherit the Promised Land.

However, a Jewish reader would have two other names for this book. One, taken from the very first verse, is 'In the Desert'. It's a great title because it describes geographically where all the action takes place. The people of Israel are leaving Sinai after their great triumph over Egypt. They're on their way to the Promised Land, but they're not there yet. This book of Numbers describes their desert journey.

However, it's much more than a geographic title. It's also a spiritual one, which describes the spiritual state of the wandering Israelites. They've been saved from slavery in Egypt, but they're not quite in the Promised Land yet. There's a spiritual journey ahead as well as a physical one.

Both Paul and the writer to the Hebrews draw lines between this spiritual journey and our own. We have been saved from slavery to sin by our own Passover Lamb, Jesus, who gave himself for our redemption at a

great price. But we are not quite home yet. Though his work is finished and complete, we still need to journey in faith to reach our Promised Land – an eternity with Christ. This, then, is a book for us today!

And the other Jewish title? It's taken from the first few words of verse 1: 'The LORD spoke to Moses'. We're going to discover that their journey is not easy and the people are rebellious. However, God is with them and graciously speaks to them as they progress. They do not travel alone. And neither do we. Christ is with us by his Spirit and the sometimes hard journey we face is possible, because we are never alone and need never fear the final outcome.

## REFLECTION

*Praise God for the salvation we have in Christ Jesus that has secured our future. Thank him that the Spirit of Jesus is with us as we journey to our own Promised Land. Pray that as we travel through our own wilderness, we would learn to rely and depend upon the strength and faithfulness he shows towards us.*

**S**eventy people went down into Egypt (see Ex. 1:5). Look how many come out! The grand total of this first census is included in verse 46: 603,550 fighting men. The count has a ring of truth about it. Notice, for instance, how the numbers vary by tribe. The largest tribe is Judah (74,600). Two of the smallest are (not unexpectedly) the two half tribes of Ephraim (40,500) and Manasseh (32,200).

However, this is more than a mathematical exercise. Note, first of all, the reason for the census. This is not a count of everyone who left Egypt. Nor is it even a count of every *man* who left Egypt. Rather, it is 'all the men in Israel who are twenty years old or more and able to serve in the army' (v. 3).

This is a military exercise. Women, old men and teenagers need not apply! The point is simple – this census is not simply so that Moses will know that the Lord has been keeping the promise to Abraham (see Gen. 15:5). Moses could have seen that with his own eyes. No, this is about preparing Moses, Aaron and Israel for what is ahead. And what is that? Fighting is ahead. A military count is needed because a military campaign is coming.

The Promised Land is graciously given to the Israelites, but they cannot just walk in and plant a flag. They need to faithfully fight for their victories, and this census is a reminder that the conquest will not be a walk in the park.

However, there is one more thing to note. The Levites are not counted in the census (v. 47). They are special, set apart for God himself. We'll hear a bit more about this soon, but the Levites are not to fight because they have a special task – carrying the ark, the tabernacle and all its fixtures and fittings. A battle is ahead, but can only be fought with the presence of God in their midst.

## REFLECTION

*Christians are to 'fight the good fight' (1 Tim. 6:12). Reaching our own Promised Land is not easy, but God in Christ promises to journey with us, giving us the strength and resources we need to be more than victors. Praise him for his help, reflect on the particular battles you face and ask for strength to face today.*