

Psalms Book 4: Numbers

When we consider why we should worship God according to the Psalms, one of the greatest reasons comes from book 4, which pertains to the book of numbers.

The book of Numbers pertains to the Israelites time in the wilderness, and how God provided for them despite their failures.

The Wilderness

The Wilderness is a crucial concept in your walk with God. For the Israelites, it was the time period between when God delivered them from Egypt and when they arrived in the promised land.

For you as a modern day believer, it is the time period between when God delivered you from your burden of sin by the blood of Jesus, and when you will enter into the promised land, the kingdom of heaven.

The Wilderness we speak of can be characterized by:

- A time of trials and tests, meant to teach us to trust and rely on God
- A time of vulnerability to Satan and spiritual attacks
- A time of discipline and sanctification
- A time of great faith, wonder, and worship

Psalm 103:1–2 (NKJV)

“Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits.”

The Psalms of book four recount The Israelites time in the wilderness, their many failures, and God’s faithful provision of all their needs despite their unfaithfulness.

These Psalms call us to worship God for what may be the simplest and most obvious reason of all:

He takes care of you.

How God Provided in the Wilderness

Exodus 16- Manna from Heaven

² Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. ³ And the children of Israel said to them, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather ^[a] a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not. ⁵ And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily."

- Manna- means "what is this?" or "what".
- Comes with instructions for the people to learn to trust God- take only what you need for the day, except the day before sabbath
- The Manna would go bad if any was left over, except on the sabbath

Notice this pattern- every time the Israelites are afraid or hungry they revert back to Egypt. They have an idealized memory of what Egypt was like, because it's what they knew and where they were comfortable, even though they were slaves.

How often do you run back to Egypt because you don't think God is going to take care of you?

Numbers 11 – Complaining About Manna / Quail Judgment

⁴ Now the mixed multitude who were among them ^[c] yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: "Who will give us meat to eat? ⁵ We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; ⁶ but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!"

"Intense craving" (v.11:4)

fell a lusting" KJV or "yielded to intense craving" NKJV

- **(hit'avu ta'avah)** — this is a wordplay. It literally means "they craved a craving" or "lusted a lust." This **intensifies** the desire—it wasn't normal hunger. It implies **an uncontrollable, fleshly, selfish yearning**.

- The craving wasn't merely for meat. It was a **rejection of God's provision** and a desire to go back to the perceived pleasures of Egypt

The craving was rooted in discontent, not hunger. They had manna—daily provision straight from God. But they **loathed it** (v. 6), revealing a spiritual rot: **“God is not enough for us.”**

¹⁹ You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, ²⁰ but for a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you, because you have despised the Lord who is among you, and have wept before Him, saying, “Why did we ever come up out of Egypt?”

Numbers 20 – Water from the Rock

² Now there was no water for the congregation; so they gathered together against Moses and Aaron. ³ And the people contended with Moses and spoke, saying: “If only we had died when our brethren died before the Lord! ⁴ Why have you brought up the assembly of the Lord into this wilderness, that we and our animals should die here? ⁵ And why have you made us come up out of Egypt, to bring us to this evil place? It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates; nor is there any water to drink.” ⁶ So Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and they ^[a] fell on their faces. And the glory of the Lord appeared to them.

⁷ Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ⁸ “Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals.” ⁹ So Moses took the rod from before the Lord as He commanded him.

¹⁰ And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, “Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?” ¹¹ Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank.

¹² Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.”

¹³ This was the water of ^[b] Meribah, because the children of Israel contended with the Lord, and He was hallowed among them.

- Meribah- contending or striving with God
- This is the second time The Israelites arrive at this “Rock” (not the same location, but the same spiritually). The first time, Moses is told to strike the Rock. This time he is told to speak with it, but strikes it anyway.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians that the Rock is a picture of Christ, and the water is the Living Water that Christ offers that we all drink from when we put our faith in him and receive eternal life.

⁴and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.

Striking the Rock the first time was meant to symbolize the sacrifice of Christ for our salvation. Moses was supposed to speak to the rock the second time, as a symbol that after Christ dies on the cross, Living Water is received through prayer and communion with Him.

But Moses instead strikes the rock again, painting a picture of how we crucify Christ again when we fail to trust him.

Hebrews 6:6

since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.

- Despite all this, water still flows from the Rock, symbolizing that God still provides for us even in our unbelief.

Numbers 21:4–9 – The Bronze Serpent

⁴Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very ^[b]discouraged on the way. ⁵And the people spoke against God and against Moses: “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul ^[c]loathes this worthless bread.” ⁶So the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died.

⁷Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord that He take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people.

⁸Then the Lord said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.” ⁹So Moses made a bronze serpent,

and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

- 2 Kings 18:4, the bronze serpent would ironically later be used as a symbol of idolatry until king Hezekiah destroys it. *"He broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan (mere piece of bronze)."*
- The children of Israel would later be guilty of worshipping the created thing rather than the creator, failing to recognize what the bronze serpent was a symbol of.

John 3:14-16

¹⁴And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in Him should ^[c]not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Jesus explicitly connects the bronze serpent to:

- The manner he would die- raised up on a cross
- The manner in which we are saved- looking unto Jesus

Even the serpent itself is pointing us to Jesus: the serpent was the image of the curse of sin, and then became the image lifted up for salvation.

Romans 8:3

³For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,

2 Corinthians 5:21

"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

God has provided; Manna in the Old Testament, Jesus in the New Testament

- When they were hungry he sent manna
- When they complained some more he sent quail
- When they were thirsty he sent water from a rock
- When they complained against him and were punished for their sin, he raised up the serpent in the wilderness.

And in the same way he raised up Christ for all who would believe. So we worship God because he has taken care of us.

How do the Psalms in this section reflect these stories and God's provision? And how do they point us to Christ?

Psalms of Book 4: God's Provision, Endless Mercy, Fulfillment in Christ

Psalm 91- Jesus in the Wilderness for Us

*He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High
Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*

*² I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress;
My God, in Him I will trust."*

- Recognizes God's provision and protection, finding his safety in Him

*Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge,
Even the Most High, your dwelling place,*

¹⁰ No evil shall befall you,

Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling;

¹¹ For He shall give His angels charge over you,

To keep you in all your ways.

¹² In their hands they shall bear you up,

Lest you dash your foot against a stone.

- Satan quotes this verse when tempting Jesus, but omits the phrase "to keep you in all your ways".
- He tries to use the Psalm to hold God to a promise that God didn't make. The phrase "keep you in all your ways" distinguishes the Psalm as a psalm about God's provision for the faithful

Understand the connection: in numbers, God provided daily bread in the wilderness. The psalmist in psalm 91 recognizes God as his refuge, fortress, and ultimate provider, and tells you the listener that if you put your faith in him he will protect you and provide for you, but it's for a purpose, "to keep you in all your ways", in other words to keep you in obedience and trust.

Satan ironically uses this passage about trusting God to test God. But Jesus refuses, and trusts in God, fulfilling one of the most important aspects of who He is: the one who was tested and tempted in every way that we are, yet without sin.

Psalm 100- The Shepherd and His Sheep

Make a joyful shout to the Lord, ^[a]all you lands!

²Serve the Lord with gladness;

Come before His presence with singing.

³Know that the Lord, He is God;

It is He who has made us, and ^[b]not we ourselves;

We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

- John 10:11- *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.”*

⁴Enter into His gates with thanksgiving,

And into His courts with praise.

Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.

⁵For the Lord is good;

His mercy is everlasting,

And His truth endures to all generations.

Psalm 103- Christ’s Endless Mercy

Bless the Lord, O my soul;

And all that is within me, bless His holy name!

²Bless the Lord, O my soul,

And forget not all His benefits:

³Who forgives all your iniquities,

Who heals all your diseases,

⁴Who redeems your life from destruction,

Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,

⁵Who satisfies your mouth with good things,

So that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.

⁶The Lord executes righteousness

And justice for all who are oppressed.

⁷He made known His ways to Moses,

His acts to the children of Israel.

*⁸ The Lord is merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.*

*⁹ He will not always strive with us,
Nor will He keep His anger forever.*

*¹⁰ He has not dealt with us according to our sins,
Nor punished us according to our iniquities.*

*¹¹ For as the heavens are high above the earth,
So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;*

*¹² As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.*

- Hebrew for “East” and “West”, place the sun rises and place the sun sets
- North and South eventually meet, but you can never go so far east that you find yourself going west. God has removed our sins and unfathomable distance from us.

*¹³ As a father pities his children,
So the Lord pities those who fear Him.*

*¹⁴ For He ^[a] knows our frame;
He remembers that we are dust.*

*¹⁵ As for man, his days are like grass;
As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.*

*¹⁶ For the wind passes over it, and it is ^[b] gone,
And its place remembers it no more.*

*¹⁷ But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting
On those who fear Him,*

And His righteousness to children’s children,

*¹⁸ To such as keep His covenant,
And to those who remember His commandments to do them.*

*¹⁹ The Lord has established His throne in heaven,
And His kingdom rules over all.*

*²⁰ Bless the Lord, you His angels,
Who excel in strength, who do His word,
Heeding the voice of His word.*

*²¹ Bless the Lord, all you His hosts,
You ^[c] ministers of His, who do His pleasure.*

*²² Bless the Lord, all His works,
In all places of His dominion.*

Bless the Lord, O my soul!

Takeaways: Why should we praise God?

He provides for our daily needs

Psalm 90:14

“Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days!”

Psalm 104:27–28

“These all wait for You, that You may give them their food in due season. What You give them they gather in; You open Your hand, they are filled with good.”

Psalm 105:40–41

“The people asked, and He brought quail, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven. He opened the rock, and water gushed out; it ran in the dry places like a river.”

Even in the barren wilderness, where no crops grow and no wells flow, God provided **mana, quail, and water**—just enough for each day. In the same way, He supplies us with what we truly need, often in quiet, faithful ways we overlook. Daily provision is not just physical; it’s emotional, spiritual, and sustaining grace. We worship because we are **never forsaken** in our daily dependence.

He made a way through the wilderness

Psalm 91:15

“He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him.”

Psalm 95:7–8

“For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you will hear His voice: Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion...”

Psalm 106:9

“He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it dried up; so He led them through the depths, as through the wilderness.”

The wilderness was never the destination—it was the **refining path** to the promise. God didn’t abandon Israel in the wild places; He **guided them, delivered them**, and even **dwelt among them**. The same is true for us. Jesus, the greater Moses, leads us through spiritual deserts with **compassion and direction**. We praise God because we’re never lost when we follow His voice.

His mercy is unending

Psalm 103:8–10

“The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins...”

Psalm 103:17

“But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him...”

Psalm 106:44–45

“Nevertheless He regarded their affliction, when He heard their cry; and for their sake He remembered His covenant, and relented according to the multitude of His mercies.”

If God’s mercy had a limit, Israel’s story would’ve ended in the wilderness—but it didn’t. Over and over, they rebelled, and over and over, **God forgave, restored, and remembered His covenant**. His mercy isn’t a one-time event; it’s a character trait—**everlasting, patient, and personal**. We praise God because He doesn’t treat us as our sins deserve—He treats us as children.

Conclusion

Not enough is said about the endless mercy of God.

The psalmist declares,

“The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy... As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:8, 12).

How can we truly comprehend that? We can measure the distance from earth to the moon, or from one ocean to another, but “east from west” is immeasurable—it never meets. That is how far God has carried our sins away. If we could fully grasp this mercy, we would live in unending praise, like a condemned prisoner who has heard the gavel drop, only to find the Judge Himself stepping forward to take the punishment instead. Every breath from that moment on would be a thank-you note to God. But since His mercy is greater than anything we can imagine, our praise must also rise beyond what we think is “enough.”