

# THE BOOK OF NUMBERS



**BIBLE STUDY TEXTBOOK SERIES**

---

---

**NUMBERS**

**By**

**Brant Lee Doty**

---

---

**College Press, Joplin Missouri**

**Copyright**  
**College Press**  
**1973**



## PREFACE

None of the sagas of men nor the chronicles of nations can compare with the true story of the people of Israel as recorded in the Word of God. Everything one might seek in such an account is readily found here: all the intrigues of men's schemes, all the sins of men's corruptness, all the glories of men's triumphs, all the sorrows of common life, all the ordeals of suppression and slavery—this and much, much more is faithfully recorded in a compact set of books we call the Holy Bible.

There is one supreme factor present in this Record, however, which no other history can claim. The account is not the product of mere human memory and compilation, nor is it based upon the fantasies and legends of a forgotten past. The very hand of God may be seen on every page, in every line. No one has recorded the manner by which the human authors were utilized in the compilation of the record quite as well as one who had known the experience himself, and Peter describes the process: “. . . men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God,” (II Peter 1:21, NASB).

It is one thing to read history; it is quite another to read history from the viewpoint of the Creator. He has taken great care to preserve His words and His will in Scripture in order that we may find the answers to life's greatest questions: What is man? From whence came man? What is man's purpose on earth? What is man's ultimate destiny? These and many more pertinent questions are fully answered only in the Word of God. We are introduced to the background materials in that portion of The Book known as the Old Testament; we are given the full answer in God's definitive revelation through His Son, Jesus Christ (see Hebrews 1:1-4). With Jesus Christ as the focal point of all history and the climax of all revelation, all which has been written by revelation of God inevitably directs our most careful attention unto the Nazarene. Whether reading in Genesis or Revelation, anyone who studies the Bible is pointed unto Him. Indeed, John named this fact as the primary reason for his writing, (John 20:31).

## PREFACE

In a real sense, then, the same purpose undergirds every book in the Book: that all men may be directed to the Son of God, from Whom they receive life in abundance here and life unending hereafter.

Where does the book of *Numbers* fit into God's majestic scheme? As an indispensable link in the history of those people He had selected as His own—those through which the Son should come. *Numbers* finds Israel encamped at Sinai, having but recently left their enslavement in Egypt, and brings them to the verge of Jordan where, following the death of Moses, they crossed into the Land of Promise. Within the book is a vast stock of treasures, gathered from Historical events and circumstances, from rich symbolisms, from the revelation of divine Law and its enforcement, from an intense study of a people living under stress as well as under promise, from magnificent and detailed prophecies exactly fulfilled. Towering high over all others in the book is God's man, Moses; but we are given beautiful insights into the heroic characters of Joshua and Caleb; we see Miriam and Aaron under the damning power of jealousy; we learn of rebellious priests delivered to death for their effrontery of God, and of the frequent sufferings of a grouching people whose own whinings ban them from Canaan. Collectively, the picture is that of ordinary people under circumstances both ordinary and rare, with their conduct fully open to a complete scrutiny. The wise reader will find in the account quite enough to inspire, inform and admonish him in discovering and following the instructions of God or to suffer the consequences of his wrong choice.

Read the book for exactly what it is: the record of a just and merciful God and His relationship with a people who were so much like ourselves that such an identification is not only possible, it is essential.

Brant Lee Doty

## DEDICATION

*To my dear wife, our five wonderful children,  
and a growing list of offspring, for all of whom I  
have but the warmest affections.*



## NUMBERS

### INTRODUCTION

The book we now call *Numbers* was known from antiquity as *Bemidbar*, "in the wilderness," (from 1:5), by the Hebrews, who also frequently referred to it as the "fourth book of Moses." The early name derives from the locale in which the events unfold, the desert area of Sinai. Alone of the books of the Pentateuch, it has a name currently which is of Latin rather than Greek origin. The Septuagint used the term *Arithmoi*, Tertullian referred to it as *Arithmi*, and Jerome introduced the name with which we are now familiar, *Numerii*, in the Vulgate. This name reflects the two censuses of Israel (Chapters 1-4; 26). Separated as they were by nearly forty years of time, the first census was ordered during the encampment at Sinai; the second briefly preceded Moses' death in the land of Moab.

Being essentially an historic record, *Numbers* bridges that gap between the giving of the Law to Moses and the death of the great prophet. Some time is devoted to the final preparations before leaving Sinai; the closing actions described occurred during the fortieth year following the Exodus. Hence, the total time involved in the book is slightly in excess of thirty-eight years. Specifically, the period of preparation at Sinai was 19 days; traveling from Sinai to Kadesh required 10 days; the wanderings filled somewhat more than 37 years; the final departure from Kadesh to the arrival in northern Moab was a ten-month journey, from which point we are prepared for Moses' farewell messages of Deuteronomy, and the beginning of Joshua's leadership. Throughout, the book interweaves Law and history, showing how the one gives meaningful direction to the other.

Numbers is a necessary and vital link to the developing history of a young nation, as well as the initial record of their life under the theocratic design of God. The *Pulpit Commentary* (*Numbers*, "Introduction," xvi), correctly shows that the book is "so inseparably united to the books which precede it that no scholar would make it the subject of a separate work." In isolation, its value is minimal; without its contributions,

## NUMBERS

Israelite history would suffer a severe void.

### AUTHORSHIP

John Marsh, in his introduction to *Numbers* in *The Interpreter's Bible*, simply says, "Although Numbers is one of the five books of Moses, it cannot be held to have been written by him," (p. 137). Summarized, his arguments are that Moses is always referred to in the third person; that he would not have spoken of himself as the meekest man in all the world (12:3); that 33:2 implies the hand of another writer or of an editor; and that critical or literary analysis discloses the presence of the same sources as are found in the rest of the Pentateuch: J, E, D, P and (possibly) H.

Typical of those who defend the essential Mosaic authorship is Whitelaw, *The Pulpit Commentary*, whose essay on the authenticity and authorship wrestles with some of the obvious difficulties one encounters in treating the chronological, statistical and physical factors. While acknowledging they are sources of some problems, he nevertheless concludes that "if no valid argument can be adduced for impugning the veracity of its contents, the inference is irresistible that it can only have proceeded from the pen of Moses," p. xvi. The conclusion is not merely affirmed; it is the result of reasoned confrontation with the commonly posed objections of Marsh and others.

The conclusion is based upon four converging evidences: 1. Numerous sections of the book must have been from the hand of Moses, or at least from his age, because of (a.) the camping stations (now largely unidentifiable); (b.) the songs in chapter 21 are certainly from the age, if not the actual pen of Moses; (c.) the legislation of chapter 19, plainly intended for people dwelling in camps and tents; (d.) instructions relating to the silver trumpets (10:1-10), and the arrangement of the camps shows a clear relationship to the desert; (e.) the priestly benediction and the military order of march are of "the age and spirit of Moses." 2. The book shows much evidence of having been composed in the desert by an eyewitness and participant in the events recorded. 3. The book shows an intimate and

## INTRODUCTION

accurate familiarity with Egyptian customs and manners. 4. There is testimony from incidental and undersigned items which would point to Mosaic composition. His final words are that the book, "when fairly and dispassionately interrogated, not only does not support the modern hypothesis of its being a late compilation from pre-existing documents . . . but abundantly warrants the still popular belief that, while there is every probability that, like the rest of the Pentateuchal writings, it has been subjected to one or more revisions, and may even have suffered interpolation in unimportant passages . . . yet in the main, and substantially as we still possess it, it proceeded as an original composition from the hand of Moses," (pp. i-xxii).

To these arguments may be added those of William Jones, that "the intermixture in this book of narrative and legislative matter is one of its characteristic features. This feature is exactly one which belongs to the work of a contemporary annalist." He adds, "The various communications purporting to be from God to Moses are so worded and often of such a nature (cf. e. g. xiv. 11-26), that unless we go the length of denying their historical character altogether, we must admit them to have been recorded by the very person who received them," (see *The Preacher's Homiletic Commentary*, pp. 1, 2). The consummate argument follows, then, in the statement that "No other person than Moses has been or can be named with anything like probability, or even plausibility, as the author," (*Ibid*).

## CHRONOLOGY OF THE BOOK

We are given some points of reference by which to establish at least a general chronology of the book of Numbers. All but one of these occur within the second year after the departure from Egypt. Immediately upon the opening of his account, Moses specifies that the divine instructions for taking the census were given on "the first day of the second month in the second year after they came out of the land of Egypt," (1:1). In the same month, two additional events are identified by the calendar; the supplemental passover was observed on the

## NUMBERS

fourteenth day (9:11), and the troupe departed for Canaan (10:11). These occurrences are identified with the month of Zif. Previously, in the same year, in the month Abib, the second Passover had been observed (10:5), and the dedication of the Tabernacle occurred (10:15). These two events, however, are not properly included in the time sequence of Numbers; they are more appropriate to *Exodus* where they had already been noted; their citation here is but a point of reference.

The final time-reference in the book (33:38), sets the date of the death of Aaron: the first day of Ab in the fortieth year. The period of Israel's habitation in the wilderness had been announced in 14:33. It is obvious as the book closes that the exile is terminated, with the tribes prepared to cross the Jordan into the Land of Promise.

Collating all details, then, we arrive at the following analysis: the opening chapters (1:1–10:10), cover a time of one month and twenty days. The second section (10:11–14:45), filled a period of two to four months. The third, (15:1–20:28), fills approximately thirty-eight years; the final, (21:1–36:13), nearly two years. This last period poses some problems in fitting the numerous events into a brief time schedule; but the problems are not insoluble.

There is little doubt that the order of events as they actually occurred and as they are related in Numbers cannot be paralleled at all times. If the problems were unique to this book it might be cause for great concern. Whether we understand the purpose for this disorder or not is not vital to our understanding the author's work. Disparate elements appear with astonishing frequency in the Scriptures—a logical offense to our chronologically oriented minds, but a common practice among ancient writers who, we say, lack "historical objectivity."

In making such a judgment here, we are guilty of an error in reason: we apply a twentieth-century western philosophy of history to a record which is thirty-four hundred years old, and of oriental origin. If our modern sense of orderliness must be satisfied, it is no great difficulty to establish the actual sequence



## INTRODUCTION

of events in Numbers, as well as many other books of the Bible. All we need to know of Israel, from Egypt to Canaan, is to be found in Scripture. If the sequence is not always clear in every detail, it in no way nullifies the impact of the lessons to be learned from this vital link.

### PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

The first and most obvious objective of the book of Numbers is to give an accurate tribe-by-tribe count of those who had left Egypt, and, later, comparative figures as Israel prepared to enter the land of Canaan. The Levites were tallied separately, since they were not involved in military service. In contrast to the great population multiplication which had occurred during their slavery years in Egypt, the Israelites scarcely maintained their total during the hardships of life in the wilderness; their number actually decreased slightly, from 603,550 (1:46) to 601,730 (26:51), of those counted.

When we also consider the calamities visited upon the people by war, rebellion, the poisonous serpents, and the plague, as well as the fact that death visited every member of the nation beyond the age of twenty, with the exceptions of Joshua and Caleb, we are astounded that the numbered reduction was so small.

Numbers is the first record of the life of this new nation under their newly-instituted theocracy. Egypt and its gruelling enslavement is past. Jehovah has consistently and marvelously demonstrated His power to deliver, save, lead and provide for His people. From Sinai forward they will learn directly the rewards of faithful obedience or the hazards and punishments of disobedience; and the lessons will touch every member of their society, including Moses himself. At the introduction of the Law, the Lord had clearly spelled out the certain results of their cooperative lives (Ex. 23:22-33), while the dire consequences of failure are paired with the blessings of faithfulness in the great declamation of Moses in Moab, Deut. 28:1-26. Time and again in our book, both extremes are seen when Israel alternated between these attitudes.

## NUMBERS

Of equal or even greater importance is the fact that Numbers forms an indispensable link in the historical account of a nascent nation. The events between Sinai and preparations for crossing the Jordan would be all but totally unknown without it. As in the other segments of the history, Numbers is without unnecessary detail, presenting essential facts briefly and without undue stress. We cannot but marvel at the succinctness of the account—that the inspired author discriminates consistently between the important and the irrelevant and relates the former with admirably brief accuracy and thoroughness, while avoiding the pitfalls of the latter.

We may fairly say, then, that the controlling purpose of the book is to record, for our profit and example, the succession of historical events showing the certainty of God's promises and threats to His children: His careful instruction and swift, prudent discipline; His daily providential care for their necessities; His jealous concern for their sole affection and undivided worship; His equity of judgment upon all.

There are also to be found certain enlargements upon the Law, as in the assignments to the three priestly families in moving the Tabernacle, or the order of encampment and marching, and miscellaneous provisions for the general welfare. Life in the wilderness could not have been comfortable, under the most ideal circumstances. Living was in tightly knit quarters, on a highly restricted diet, and under a new code of conduct made for hard days. Not all of the people possessed any great portion of the faith and devotion of Moses, and their persistent murmurings reflected their widespread discontent. Constant adjustments and interpretations of the Law were required to maintain the best possible order in their social behavior.

Yet we cannot help making a comparison of these circumstances with those they had left behind. Aside from certain dietary deprivations—the leeks, onions, garlic, melons and fish they had enjoyed formerly (11:5), there were few other features of the previous life they might have missed seriously. Certainly they must have been relieved at the end of

## INTRODUCTION

the conditions of their total enslavement and the consequent freedom now afforded them. Nor would they soon have forgotten the bitterness of their tasks, and the cruelty of their taskmasters, as well as the slaughter of their infant sons. But it is human nature to forget the severity of previous trials when we are relieved of them, and lose their perspective in new problems which may often be of little comparative consequence; so it was with Israel in the desert. Neither can we forget that there were among the Israelites those who composed a "mixed multitude", by which we understand a number of households formed by the intermarriage of Jew with Egyptian, (Ex. 12:38, see Num. 11:4). The NAS surely captures the primary characteristic of such a group in calling it a "rabble". It may well be that these malcontents were the common source of complaints and grumblings; they were almost certainly the instigators of the greedy response to God's provision of the quail (11:32-34); they may well have spearheaded the request earlier for Aaron to make them a god at Sinai while Moses delayed his return (Ex. 32:1ff.), with the consequent orgy and its punishment. Such actions would hardly be surprising, since they were from a background in which polytheistic immorality was not only permitted, it was encouraged.

So Numbers is also God's search for a pure, reliable people. Israel is put through a crucible of testing, and the dross is constantly being skimmed away, leaving what should be a more acceptable residue through whom Jehovah may work His marvelous plan.

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE .....	v
DEDICATION .....	vii
INTRODUCTION .....	1

## NUMBERS

### OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

<b>Part One: The Census, and Final Days at Sinai (1:1–10:10)</b>	
I. INTRODUCTION AND INSTRUCTION (1:1-4) ....	15
A. Setting of the event, v. 1 .....	15
B. General Instructions on the census, vv. 2-4 .....	17
II. THE GENERAL CENSUS (1:5-46) .....	20
A. Tribal heads selected, vv. 5-16 .....	20
B. The counting, tribe by tribe, vv. 17-43 .....	21
C. Total of the martial census, vv. 44-46 .....	26
III. SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS TO THE LEVITES (1:47-54) .....	28
IV. ARRANGEMENTS OF TRIBES FOR CAMPING, MARCHING (2:1-34) .....	31
V. FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS TO THE LEVITES (3:1-51) .....	40
A. The sons of Aaron, vv. 1-4 .....	40
B. The Levites counted and assigned duties, vv. 5-39	42
C. Census of the first born, vv. 40-43 .....	50
D. Levites dedicated in behalf of the first born, vv. 44-51 .....	52

CONTENTS

VI. MARCHING DUTIES ASSIGNED TO THE LEVITE	
FAMILIES (4:1-49) .....	55
A. The Kohathites, vv. 1-20 .....	55
B. The Gershonites, vv. 21-28 .....	61
C. The Merarites, vv. 29-33 .....	63
D. The census of the priestly families, vv. 34-49 .....	64
VII. ASSORTED LAWS (5:1-6:27) .....	67
A. Ejection of the unclean, vv. 1-4 .....	67
B. Restitution and offering for theft, vv. 5-10 .....	69
C. The ordeal of jealousy, vv. 11-31 .....	71
D. Vow of the Nazirite, (6:1-21) .....	77
E. The Aaronic benediction, vv. 22-27 .....	82
VIII. PRINCES' OFFERINGS AT THE DEDICATION	
(7:1-89) .....	85
IX. ASSORTED LAWS AND INSTRUCTIONS	
(8:1-10:10) .....	96
A. On lighting the lamps in the tabernacle, vv. 1-4 ..	96
B. Consecration of the Levites for service, vv. 5-22	99
C. Limits of age and service for Levites, vv. 23-26 ..	103
D. The Second Passover; a supplementary observance	
(9:1-14) .....	105
E. The cloud over the tabernacle, vv. 15-23 .....	109
F. The silver trumpets, (10:1-10) .....	111
Part Two: Sinai to Kadesh-Barnea (10:11-14:45)	
I. FROM SINAI TO HAZEROTH (10:11-12:16) .....	116
A. Departure, and order of march, vv. 11-28 .....	116
B. An invitation to Hobab, vv. 29-32 .....	120
C. The cloud and the ark lead the people, vv. 33-36	121

NUMBERS

D. Complaint and punishment at Taberah, (11:1-3)	123
E. Bitter experience at the 'Graves of Lust', (Kibroth-hattaava) vv. 4-35	125
F. Foolish conduct of Miriam and Aaron, and reso- lution of the problem (12:1-16)	137
<b>II. THE PROMISED LAND REVIEWED AND REJECTED</b> (13:1-4:45)	143
A. Selection of the spies, vv. 1-16	143
B. Their instructions, vv. 17-20	145
C. Survey and report, vv. 21-33	147
D. Complaint and rebellion (14:1-4)	153
E. Moses' plea and great intercessory prayer, vv. 5-19	155
F. General pardon; sentence upon the provokers, vv. 20-38	160
G. Defeats by Amalekites and Kenites, vv. 39-45	166
<b>Part Three: The Years of Wandering (15:1-21:35)</b>	
<b>I. IN PARAN (15:1-19:22)</b>	168
A. Laws of offerings, vv. 1-31	168
B. Stoning of the Sabbath-breaker, vv. 32-36	174
C. Law of the tassels, vv. 37-41	176
D. Revolt and punishment of Korah, Dathan and Abiram (16:1-40)	178
E. The fatal plague, vv. 41-50	190
F. Budding of Aaron's rod (17:1-13)	193
G. Levitical duties and their emoluments (18:1-32)	197
H. Laws of the red heifer and uncleanness (19:1-22)	205

CONTENTS

II. KADESH TO HESHBON (20:1—21:35) .....	212
A. Death of Miriam, v. 1 .....	212
B. Sin of Moses at Meribah, vv. 2-13 .....	214
C. Passage refused through Edom, vv. 14-21 .....	219
D. Death of Aaron, vv. 22-29 .....	221
E. Victory at Hormah (21:1-3) .....	224
F. Incident of the brass serpent, vv. 4-9 .....	226
G. Bypassing Moab, vv. 10-20 .....	231
H. Victory over Sihon and Og, vv. 21-35 .....	236
<b>Part Four: On the Plains of Moab (22:1—36:13)</b>	
I. THE STORY OF BALAAM (22:1—24:25) .....	241
A. Summons of Balak (22:1-6) .....	241
B. God's prohibition, vv. 7-14 .....	244
C. Balaam yields to Balak, vv. 15-41 .....	247
D. The first blessing of Balaam (23:1-12) .....	255
E. Balaam's second blessing, vv. 13-24 .....	258
F. The third blessing, vv. 25-30 .....	262
G. The prophecy of Balaam (24:1-9) .....	263
H. Final blessing, and prophecy, vv. 10-25 .....	267
II. IN MOAB (25:1—27:23) .....	273
A. Grave sins with the Moabites, vv. 1-9 .....	273
B. Commendation of Phinehas, vv. 10-15 .....	278
C. Jehovah denounces the Midianites, vv. 16-18 .....	280
D. The second census (26:1-51) .....	281
E. Instructions for land allotment, vv. 52-56 .....	288
F. Census of the Levites, vv. 57-65 .....	291
G. The plea of Zelophehad's daughters, and God's answer (27:1-11) .....	294

NUMBERS

H. Moses to view the Land of Promise, vv. 12-14 ..	297
I. Joshua appointed to succeed Moses, vv. 15-23 ..	299
III. REVIEW AND ADDITIONS TO THE LAW	
(28:1—30:16) .....	302
A. The daily offerings, vv. 1-8 .....	302
B. Offerings on the Sabbath, vv. 9, 10 .....	305
C. Offerings for the New Moon, vv. 11-15 .....	306
D. Offerings for the Passover and Unleavened Bread, vv. 16-25 .....	308
E. Offerings for the First Fruits, vv. 26-31 .....	310
F. Offerings for the Feast of the Trumpets (29:1-6)	312
G. Offerings for the Day of Atonement, vv. 7-11 ..	313
H. Offerings for the Feast of the Tabernacles, vv. 12-40 .....	314
I. Law on women's vows (30:1-16) .....	319
IV. THE LAST EVENTS IN TRANS-JORDAN	
(31:1—33:42) .....	324
A. Attack upon the Midianites, vv. 1-12 .....	324
B. Instructions for their disposal, vv. 13-20 .....	328
C. Purification of the soldiers and the booty, vv. 21-24 .....	331
D. Division of the booty, vv. 25-54 .....	332
E. Request of Gad and Reuben (32:1-5) .....	337
F. Rebuke by Moses, vv. 6-15 .....	339
G. The tribes' pledge, vv. 16-19 .....	342
H. Land given to Gad, Reuben, and one-half of Manasseh, vv. 20-33 .....	344
I. Cities built or taken in the land, vv. 34-42 .....	346



CONTENTS

V. REVIEW OF THE ROUTE FROM EGYPT TO	
CANAAN (33:1-49) .....	348
A. Egypt to Sinai (33:1-15) .....	348
B. Sinai to Mt. Hor, vv. 16-37 .....	351
C. Mt. Hor to the Jordan, vv. 38-49 .....	353
VI. FINAL INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING THE SETTLE-	
MENT OF CANAAN (33:50-36:13) .....	357
A. On clearing the land (33:50-56) .....	357
B. Borders of Canaan established (34:1-15) .....	360
C. Allotments assigned to tribal leaders, vv. 16-29 .....	364
D. Cities reserved for the Levites (35:1-8) .....	366
E. Regulations regarding the cities of refuge, v. 9-15 .....	369
F. Laws of homicide, vv. 16-34 .....	372
G. The marriage of heiresses (36:1-13) .....	380
ABBREVIATIONS .....	385
GLOSSARY .....	386



# NUMBERS

## Part One: The Census, and Final Days at Sinai (1:1-10:10)

### I. INTRODUCTION AND INSTRUCTIONS (1:1-4)

#### A. SETTING OF THE EVENT v. 1

##### TEXT

Chapter 1:1. And the Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of the congregation, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying,

##### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 1:1. And the Lord told Moses, in the wilderness of Sinai, in the Tent of Meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after Israel had left the land of Egypt,

##### COMMENTARY

With his usual brevity, Moses wastes no words in acquainting us with the background facts of *who*, *when* and *where*, or *how*; the text following will answer *what* and *why*. God Himself is the speaker, and Moses the audience. The message for the moment comes at Sinai, in the Tabernacle, soon after the beginning of the second year after coming from Egypt.

Moses had been and will continue to be dependent upon such direct messages. He will face decisions calling for wisdom far above his own, and he is both unwilling to make such decisions alone, and fully aware of the imminent counsel of God. When the Lord's words come to him, he is responsible for seeing that they are brought to the people and, as far as he is able, that they are carried out. The commission for the mustering of Israel is of divine origin.

The term "wilderness" refers to any area which is uninhabited, and is not necessarily represented by our word "desert". *PHC*, p. 4, suggests that the wilderness would connote

Privation, Peril, and Perplexity; the Tent of Meeting would bring Provision, Protection, and Direction. The area of wandering was barren, pathless and perilous. But Israel had the constant promise of God's leading via the cloud and the pillar. The time spent in these dire circumstances would become a time of stern discipline: adhering to the Law would bring its reward, while hating the commands of God would bring just retribution.

The "wilderness of Sinai" may include a district as large as the entire Sinaitic Peninsula; ordinarily, however, it is limited to the southern portion of the peninsula. It is primarily mountainous, with valleys interlaced at various angles. Extremely dry and barren today, there is much evidence that it was less so in the day of Moses, since the Midianites, Amalekites and others grazed their flocks here. However, there has never been a population of any size, with the exception of the incident we are considering.

The Tabernacle, prescribed and constructed in Exodus 25ff., served as the central point of the nation's worship. Here, too, Moses often received God's instructions for his people. It had been erected on the first day of the first month (Ex. 40:2); hence, its use was yet quite new among the people. They were now just one year and two weeks out of Egypt, and would soon move toward Canaan. Numbers will cover the final nineteen days at Mount Sinai. The major event during this time will be the census.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

1. How does the book of Numbers follow, logically and chronologically, the previous book of history (Exodus)?
2. How much time has elapsed between the two books?
3. How long had the Israelites been at Sinai as the book of Numbers opens?
4. Identify the "Tent of Meeting" of v. 1, and describe it.
5. Explain how Moses was properly permitted to enter and serve in the Tent of Meeting, since only priests qualified for such activities.

6. Locate the Sinaitic Peninsula, the Wilderness of Sinai, the Wilderness of Sin, and Jebel Musa on a map. Find the approximate location of the encampment of the people while they were in the area.
7. Compile a chronological list of events which occurred while Israel tented at Sinai, in order to introduce the events of the book of Numbers.
8. How long did the tribes remain here after the Tent of Meeting was erected?
9. Discuss how life in the wilderness would prepare Israel for life in their new home, Canaan.
10. How had their bondage and slavery in Egypt readied the people for a rugged period of travel, tenting, and rigid diet?

#### B. GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS ON THE CENSUS vv. 2-4

##### TEXT

Chapter 1:2. Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the house of their fathers, with the number of their names, every male by their polls; 3. From twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel: thou and Aaron shall number them by their armies. 4. And with you there shall be a man of every tribe; every one head of the house of his fathers.

##### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 1:2. "Take a head count of all the congregation of the children of Israel by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names; each male, head by head; 3. from twenty years of age and up, whoever is able to go to war in Israel; you and Aaron shall count them according to their armies. 4. Furthermore, there shall be a man of each tribe with you, each one the head of his father's household.

##### COMMENTARY

The purpose for this census is simply stated by the fact that

it is to include all 20-year old males and up, who are able to go to war. Therefore we may accept the term "muster" which is often used to describe the census. In Exodus 14:14 Jehovah had pledged to fight for Israel. The promise was repeated several times, as in Deut. 1:30; 3:22.

Why, then, is an army necessary at all? It is to be clear again and again that the people of God will be asked to assemble an army when under threat or specific martial instructions of God; it is no less clear that victory would come by the varied devices and power of God. Intervening clouds, locked chariot wheels and the release of divinely walled waters in the Red Sea had disposed of the Egyptian army (Ex. 14). The Amalekites were dealt a defeat at Rephidim, but only while Moses' arms were supported and substained by Aaron and Hur. The army engaged the enemy in typical conflict, and God gave the victory (Ex. 17:8-13). We have only to mention Jericho, Aijalon, and Gideon to be reminded of a few of the numerous unusual means God has employed to make his people triumphant.

Each victory is thus seen as a cooperative act: the people, when they obey the detailed words of God, will see their faith justified when God discomfits the enemy. He did not do for them what they were able to accomplish alone, but supplemented their deeds by His own devices. Failure to comply with divine orders, specifically given or logically inferred, brought reverses and retribution, as when Achan's sin prevented the capture of Ai (Joshua 7:1-26), and Saul's non-compliance in eliminating the Amalekites resulted in his losing the throne (I Sam. 15:1-28).

Responsibility for the counting of Israel is primarily given to Moses and Aaron. The work is to be further subdivided into tribal sections, and into families within the tribes. With such an organized scheme the total might be taken in a minimum of time, and without inconvenience.

Exempted from the first counting were all females, as well as all males below the age of twenty, all Levites, and other males who might be maimed, ill, aged or infirm. Only the most

fit were suitable for military service. The nations they must face in the future are formidable, as reported by the spies later (13:28, 29), and there is no place for the man, how willing, who is not physically able to endure the demands of a rigorous military exploit. God has never been pleased with less than our very best for His service. No man could bring Him a crippled or diseased animal in sacrifice; no handicapped Levite could perform priestly services before Him. Even the slightest defect eliminated either: but we should remember that we speak of physical service only. Our worship is quite another matter, for here God looks only at the heart, which is in no way whatever related to or affected by the physical body. David was selected rather than the other, older sons of Jesse not because of age or stature or countenance—factors which men consider important—but because God had looked upon his heart (see I Sam. 16:4-13); into this man God sent forth His Spirit mightily.

Counting the men by families probably indicated that they would also be organized in such units while serving in the army. The natural bond of blood should contribute to the general *esprit de corps*. Each man might well conceive of his service as a protection of his own home and loved ones. Nehemiah utilized such a plan with brilliant effectiveness in leading the Jews to rebuild the city walls of Jerusalem (Neh. 4:13, 14ff.). Like some other people, the Israelites would also attach great importance to their genealogical records, which were carefully memorized and recited commonly by the children and old men alike.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

11. For what special purpose was the number of this congregation to be taken? What other uses might be made of the census?
12. How can the census be called accurate or complete with so many of the people excluded?
13. Can we establish a formula for estimating the total number of the Israelites, since only males are counted, and with the exclusions based upon age and tribe?

14. If God had pledged to fight their battles for the Israelites, why did the instructions state that those to be counted should be "able to go to forth to war"?
15. Suggest some methods by which Moses and Aaron might implement their task of tallying the "head count".
16. Can you think of any reason that the census did not specify an age beyond which the men were not to be counted?

## II. THE GENERAL CENSUS (1:5-46)

### A. TRIBAL HEADS SELECTED vv. 5-16

#### TEXT

Chapter 1:5. And these are the names of the men that shall stand with you: of the tribe of Reuben; Elizur the son of Shedeur. 6. Of Simeon; Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai. 7. Of Judah: Nahshon the son of Amminadab. 8. Of Issachar; Nethaneel the son of Zuar. 9. Of Zebulun; Eliab the son of Helon. 10. Of the children of Joseph: of Ephraim; Elishama the son of Ammihud: of Manasseh; Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur. 11. Of Benjamin; Abidan the son of Gideoni. 12. Of Dan; Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai. 13. Of Asher; Pagiël the son of Ocran. 14. Of Gad; Eliasaph the son of Deuel. 15. Of Naphtali; Ahira the son of Enan. 16. These were the renowned of the congregation, princes of the tribes of their fathers, heads of thousands in Israel.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 1:5. And these are the names of the men who shall stand with you: from the tribe of Reuben, Elizur, son of Shedeur; 6. from Simeon, Shelumiel, son of Zurishaddai; [from here through verse 15, the text differs little enough from the previously-printed *KJV* that such redundancy does not warrant repetition] 16. These were the distinguished men of the assembly, princes of their fathers' tribes, and heads of the thousands of Israel.



## COMMENTARY

Names were always rich and meaningful to the Hebrews. Of the 24 given in this list, exactly half invoke some form of reference to God (El-,el, shad-, shed-). The names often inspired their possessors to expend every effort to be worthy of bearing them. Thus Elizur, or "My God is a rock"; and Shedeur, "The Lord is a light"; Shelumile, "My friend is God";—in each case the bearer was inspired constantly to be and do his very best.

Although the men here listed are but names for us, each man was one of esteem among his people; each was the first-born of his household. One on the list had derived his name from the Egyptian god Ra (Ahira, v. 15); and we might marvel at the small proportion of such an influence after the centuries of enslavement. Only two of the names (Nahshon, an ancestor in the lineage of Jesus Christ, and Amminadab, father of Nahshon) appear again in the Bible; they are named in Ruth 4:20, as well as in Matthew 1:4 and Luke 3:32, 33. These are the men who will be consulted on important decisions to be made in tribal and national affairs. They head the *alaphim*, or large units (sometimes translated 'thousands').

## QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

17. Of how much influence is a man's name upon his character and conduct? Can you cite any examples from Scripture?
18. Why would any of the Israelites have been given Egyptian names? Is this a really significant matter?
19. Review the several names of the tribal princes, noting the variety of meanings. (See Glossary.)
20. Note the relationship of Nahshon and Amminadab to David, in the lineage of the Messiah.
21. How many responsibilities did the tribal princes have, in addition to their help with the census?

## B. THE COUNTING, TRIBE BY TRIBE vv. 17-43

## TEXT

Chapter 1:17. And Moses and Aaron took these men which

are expressed by their names: 18. And they assembled all the congregation together on the first day of the second month, and they declared their pedigrees after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, by their polls. 19. As the Lord commanded Moses, so he numbered them in the wilderness of Sinai. 20. And the children of Reuben, Israel's eldest son, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, by their polls, every male from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 21. Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Reuben were forty and six thousand and five hundred.

22. Of the children of Simeon, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, those that were numbered of them, according to the number of their polls, every male from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 23. Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Simeon, were fifty and nine thousand and three hundred.

24. Of the children of Gad, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 25. Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Gad, were forty and five thousand six hundred and fifty.

26. Of the children of Judah, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 27. Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Judah, were threescore and fourteen thousand and six hundred.

28. Of the children of Issachar, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 29. Those that were

numbered of them, even of the tribe of Issachar, were fifty and four thousand and four hundred.

30. Of the children of Zebulun, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 31. Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Zebulun, were fifty and seven thousand and four hundred.

32. Of the children of Joseph, namely, of the children of Ephraim, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 33. Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Ephraim, were forty thousand and five hundred.

34. Of the children of Manasseh, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 35. Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Manasseh, were thirty and two thousand and two hundred.

36. Of the children of Benjamin, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 37. Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Benjamin, were thirty and five thousand and four hundred.

38. Of the children of Dan, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 39. Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Dan, were threescore and two thousand and seven hundred.

40. Of the children of Asher, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 41. Those that were

numbered of them, even of the tribe of Asher, were forty and one thousand and five hundred.

42. Of the children of Naphtali, throughout their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 43. Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Naphtali, were fifty and three thousand and four hundred.

### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 1:17. And Moses and Aaron took these men who have been named. 18. They gathered the entire congregation of people in one place, on the first day of the second month. Then they registered themselves by families, by their fathers' houses, from twenty years of age and over, head by head, 19. As the Lord had commanded Moses. So they were counted in the wilderness of Sinai:

20. The children of Reuben, firstborn son of Israel, their generations, according to their families by their fathers' houses, by the number of names, head by head, every male twenty years old and over, all who were able to go to war— 21. the total for the tribe of Reuben was 46,500. [Again, the formula for the text may be applied, tribe by tribe, through v. 43, refer to the *KJV* already given.]

### COMMENTARY

Apparently the census is completed in one day, which would require fine preparation in advance. We had been given an approximation of the figure in Exodus 12:37, and an exact number in Exodus 38:26. However, the figures might have been supplied by Moses after the date of reference, in a later composition of the book; or, the first and earlier reference may have been a well-calculated estimate. We are not to suppose that the named princes made their counts alone; this would have been an impossible chore. The totals no doubt resulted when the numbers of individual families were simply added together and combined at graduating levels within the tribes, until a final

sum might be reckoned as the composite of all smaller sub-groups.

The impressive totals listed for each tribe, as well as that for the nation as a whole, have been subjected to harsh critical comments. Butzer, *IB*, simply affirms that "No fertile land, let alone a desert, could have provided sufficient nourishment for such a mobile population, nor indeed could it have journeyed as ch. 33 relates . . . . The artificiality of the numbers here is evidenced by the fact that half the tribes are below, and half above, the fifty-thousand mark." His conclusion had been previously stated: "The result is quite unhistorical." (pp. 145, 146).

In response, we must notice that the text nowhere affirms that the people lived upon the products of the land through which they moved, and in which they were to live for forty years. Apparently he is unwilling to allow the record to speak for itself: that God miraculously provided a great quantity of manna and meat as necessary to the host. Discount this provision, and his argument becomes plausible; but so it is with every critical argument calling God's powers into question. It seems reasonable to conclude that the Israelites did not live on manna alone; doubtless they ate of their sizeable herds and flocks, and gained some sustenance, however limited, from the land.

With reference to the thought that the numbers divide equally above and below the fifty-thousand mark, we may ask why the arbitrary figure is chosen at all. It has absolutely no significance in itself, and sounds more like the contrived argument of one who has already made up his mind than that of one who is attempting objectivity.

Gray had posed the problem of sustenance in the desert (*ICC*, p. 12), based upon a quotation from Robinson that "a body of two millions of men could not subsist there a week without drawing their supplies of water, as well as of provisions, from a great distance." To Robinson's words Gray adds, "By a miracle, no doubt, this multitude might have been sustained;

but it ought to be observed that the miracles actually *recorded* are not on an adequate scale . . . . (to care for such needs),” (*Ibid*). The presumptions of such a conclusion are clear: that we are told of every occasion which God provided essential food and water for the people; that we are aware of every source of water then available; and that their actual requirements are now to be compared to the contemporary extravagances with which we are familiar. We are speaking of a slave people who are quite accustomed to subsisting on a bare minimum of necessities. They are now relatively inactive, further reducing the necessary input of food and water.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

22. Why is the tribe of Joseph divided into two: Manasseh and Ephraim?
23. Find a reasonable formula for computing an estimate of the total population of Israel, based upon the known factors here.
24. Arrange the tribes in order of their numerical count, from the largest to the least. Can you establish any relationship between this head count and the area or location each tribe was given in the Promised Land in Joshua 13-19?
25. What value is there in repeating the exact formula for each tribe in the census?
26. Suggest some plans Moses, Aaron and the tribal heads might have used to organize the people for the census.

### C. TOTAL OF THE MARTIAL CENSUS vv. 44-46

#### TEXT

Chapter 1:44. These are those that were numbered, which Moses and Aaron numbered, and the princes of Israel, being twelve men: each one was for the house of his fathers. 45. So were all those that were numbered, of the children of Israel, by the house of their fathers, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war in Israel; 46. Even all they

that were numbered were six hundred and three thousand and five hundred and fifty.

### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 1:44. These are the ones who were counted, whom Moses and Aaron numbered with the assistance of the leaders of Israel, twelve men, each representing his father's house. 45. So the entire number of the children of Israel, according to their father's houses, from twenty years of age and up, every able man who could go forth to war in Israel, 46. the total number was 603,550.

### COMMENTARY

When Gray (*ICC*, p. 13) dismisses the census total as unrealistic he cites the number of firstborn at 22,273 (3:43). From this he concludes that the total firstborn, male and female, would be double this figure, or 44,546; the total number of Israelites he then places between 2,000,000 and 2,500,000, and concludes that the average family must have had 50 children! Again, his preconceived conclusion (that the figures are unreliable) has blinded his reason to some important facts: we have no idea whatever how many firstborn males there might have been who were unfit for war; his words make no provision for the Levites, separately counted; and, as Keil proposes, the number may represent only those firstborn sons who were born after the exodus. Michaelis has proposed that the practice of polygamy was widespread among the Israelites, and only the firstborn of the fathers were counted. Baumgarten suggests that all firstborn male children under six years of age were counted, whereas those above that age were not, since they had already been redeemed by partaking of the passover in Egypt. Kurtz mentions other relevant factors: the remarkable fruitfulness of the Hebrew mothers; the exclusion of firstborn sons of the mother who were not also the firstborn of the father; and, like Michaelis, the possibility of polygamy among the Hebrews. Any and each of these may help explain an otherwise difficult question. (See *PC* xi, xii.)

Three important facts might be pointed out regarding this army: it was made up of Israelites only, and included none of the "mixed multitude" who would offer severe problems later; it was made up of the able-bodied only; and, all able-bodied men were included. There is much to be learned from each of them.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

27. Compute the increase of the Israelites, tribe by tribe, since their ancestors first went to Egypt (See Gen. 46:5-27).
28. Why would this census not include any of the "mixed multitude" among the children of Israel?
29. How could such a multitude find sustenance in a wilderness?
30. Why would the Lord not want the Levites to be included in the army?

### III. SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS TO THE LEVITES (1:47-54)

#### TEXT

Chapter 1:47. But the Levites after the tribe of their fathers were not numbered among them. 48. For the Lord had spoken unto moyses, saying, 49. Only thou shalt not number the tribe of Levi, neither take the sum of them among the children of Israel: 50. But thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of testimony, and over all the vessels thereof, and over all things that belong to it: they shall bear the tabernacle, and all the vessels thereof; and they shall minister unto it, and shall encamp round about the tabernacle. 51. And when the tabernacle setteth forward, the Levites shall take it down; and when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death. 52. And the children of Isreal shall pitch their tents, every man by his own camp, and every man by his own standard, throughout their hosts. 53. But the Levites shall pitch round about the tabernacle of testimony, that there be no wrath upon the congregation of the children of Israel: and the Levites shall keep the charge of



the tabernacle of testimony, 54. And the children of Israel did according to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so did they.

### PARAPHRASE

47. However, the Levites were not numbered among them after the tribes of their fathers, 48. for the Lord had spoken to Moses, saying, 49. "Only the tribe of Levi is not to be counted; you shall not take their census among the children of Israel. 50. But you shall appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the testimony, and over all its furniture and over all things which belong to it. They shall carry the tabernacle and all its furniture, and they shall take care of it; they shall also camp around the tabernacle. 51. Therefore, when the tabernacle is to move forward, the Levites shall take it down; and when the Tabernacle camps, the Levites shall erect it. But the common man who approaches too near will be put to death. 52. And the children of Israel shall camp, each man in his own camp, and each by his own standard, throughout their groups. 53. But the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the testimony, so that there may be no wrath upon the congregation of the children of Israel. In this way the Levites shall keep charge of the tabernacle of the testimony."

54. And the children of Israel did so; according to everything the Lord had commanded Moses, that is what they did.

### COMMENTARY

The specialized work of the Levites required specific instructions, which begin here, and are dispersed throughout the book. They are to camp beside the Tabernacle, serve in it, dismantle, move, and erect it, and guard it against intrusion by any unauthorized individuals. First among their concerns, however, were the spiritual requirements of the tribes. The Levites were servants in behalf of the people and Jehovah; they were to be zealous in His behalf. Such a zeal they had shown when Moses' wrath was stirred up against the makers of the golden calf at Sinai: the Levites had slain the worshipers of the calf, and their appointment may have stemmed in part from this

deed (Ex. 32:26-29).

Care should be exercised to distinguish between the Levites and the priests, who were descendants of Aaron and his sons. Any priest was necessarily a Levite; but by no means were all Levites priests. The difference helps us remember the distinction between the tribe and the family. To further remember the distinctions, we should note that the priests were consecrated (Ex. 29:1-37); the Levites were purified (8:5-22). The Levites were considered a gift unto Aaron and his sons (3:5-13; 8:19; 18:1-7). Only the priests had the privilege of ministering at the altar and entering into the holy place, or the most holy place (Ex. 28:1; 29:9; Num. 3:10, 38; 4:15ff; 18:1-7; 25:10-13). Aaron had been chosen for his position by the sign of the budding almond rod (Num. 17:1-11). Korah, of the family of Kohath, accentuated the distinction between the priest and the Levite when, rebelling against Aaron, he was quickly subdued and punished (Num. 16).

The organization prescribed for each tribe's location while encamped is to be given in chapter 2. Reasons for such a plan are logical: it makes for orderliness in camping, and for ease of marching: it preserved their tribal identity, while retaining their place in the unity of the people as a whole; it facilitated the matter of keeping genealogical details in mind.

Tribal standards, which will be discussed later, doubtless aided the multitude in locating their relative positions quickly and inerrantly. Erected high on poles, they might be seen at some distance. When the positions of encampment were given to the tribes, they formed a tight square about the Tent; the Levites were within this square as if to symbolize their central duties. There was a further practical consideration—such a position gave the Levites immediate access to their stations of labor. Also, this tightly knit method of surrounding the Tabernacle would make it all but impossible for a stranger to approach the sacred area accidentally. There was every precaution to preserve the sanctity of this symbol of divine presence.

#### ARRANGEMENTS OF TRIBES FOR CAMPING, MARCHING 2:1-34

Failure to follow the exactly detailed instructions in setting up camp would bring about the wrath of God, as would deviations in serving the Tabernacle. It was a grave matter to adhere to the clear, often rigid assignments of God. On this occasion, the nation responded exactly as God had commanded.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

31. Were the Levites always numbered separately from the other tribes? Explain and justify your answer.
32. How does the camping assignment of the Levites harmonize with the assignments given all others?
33. Describe the duties of the Levites.
34. How are the priests distinguished from the Levites? What did they have in common?
35. Who were the "strangers" to be kept from the Tabernacle?
36. What purposes did the tribal standards serve?
37. Why would the entire congregation of Israel be punished if the Levites failed to camp near the Tabernacle?
38. Is there a reason that no other tribes might assist in erecting, transporting or taking down the Tent of Meeting?
39. Why should death come upon any "stranger" who drew near the Tent?

#### IV. ARRANGEMENTS OF TRIBES FOR CAMPING, MARCHING (2:1-34)

#### TEXT

Chapter 2:1. And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, 2. Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by his own standard, with the ensign of their father's house: far off about the tabernacle of the congregation shall they pitch. 3. And on the east side toward the rising of the sun shall they of the standard of Judah pitch throughout their armies: and Nahshon the son of Amminadab shall be captain of the children

of Judah. 4. And his host, and those that were numbered of them were threescore and fourteen thousand and six hundred. 5. And those that do pitch next unto him shall be the tribe of Issachar: and Nethaneël the son of Zuar shall be captain of the children of Issachar. 6. And his host, and those that were numbered thereof, were fifty and four thousand and four hundred. 7. Then the tribe of Zebulun: and Eliab the son of Helon shall be captain of the children of Zebulun. 8. And his host, and those that were numbered thereof, were fifty and seven thousand and four hundred. 9. All that were numbered in the camp of Judah were a hundred thousand and four score thousand and six thousand and four hundred, throughout their armies: these shall first set forth.

10. On the south side shall be the standard of the camp of Reuben according to their armies: and the captain of the children of Reuben shall be Elizur the son of Shedeur. 11. And his host, and those that were numbered thereof, were forty and six thousand and five hundred. 12. And those which pitch by him shall be the tribe of Simeon: and the captain of the children of Simeon shall be Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai. 13. And his host, and those that were numbered of them, were fifty and nine thousand and three hundred. 14. Then the tribe of Gad: and the captain of the sons of Gad shall be Eliasaph the son of Reuel. 15. And his host, and those that were numbered of them, were forty and five thousand and six hundred and fifty. 16. And that were numbered in the camp of Reuben were a hundred thousand and fifty and one thousand and four hundred and fifty, throughout their armies: and they shall set forth in the second rank.

17. Then the tabernacle of the congregation shall set forward with the camp of the Levites in the midst of the camp: as they encamp, so shall they set forward, every man in his place by their standards.

18. On the west side shall be the standard of the camp of Ephraim according to their armies: and the captain of the sons of Ephraim shall be Elishama the son of Ammihud. 19. And his host, and those that were numbered of them, were forty

thousand and five hundred. 20. And by him shall be the tribe of Manasseh: and the captain of the children of Manasseh shall be Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur. 21. And his host, and those that were numbered of them, were thirty and two thousand and two hundred. 22. Then the tribe of Benjamin: and the captain of the sons of Benjamin shall be Abidan the son of Gideoni. 23. And his host, and those that were numbered of them, were thirty and five thousand and four hundred. 24. All that were numbered of the camp of Ephraim were a hundred thousand and eight thousand and a hundred, throughout their armies: and they shall go forward in the third rank.

25. The standard of the camp of Dan shall be on the north side by their armies: and the captain of the children of Dan shall be Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai. 26. And his host, and those that were numbered of them, were threescore and two thousand and seven hundred. 27. And those that encamp by him shall be the tribe of Asher: and the captain of the children of Asher shall be Pagiel the son of Ocran. 28. And his host; and those that were numbered of them, were forty and one thousand and five hundred.

29. Then the tribe of Naphtali: and the captain of the children of Naphtali shall be Ahira the son of Enan. 30. And his host, and those that were numbered of them, were Ahira the son of Enan. 30. And his host, and those that were numbered of them, were fifty and three thousand and four hundred. 31. All they that were numbered in the camp of Dan were a hundred thousand and fifty and seven thousand and six hundred: they shall go hindmost with their standards.

32. These are those which were numbered of the children of Israel by the house of their fathers: all those that were numbered of the camps throughout their hosts were six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty. But the Levites were not numbered among the children of Israel: as the Lord commanded Moses. 34. And the children of Israel did according to all that the Lord commanded Moses: so they pitched by their standards, and so they set forward, every

one after their families, according to the house of their fathers.

### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 2:1. The Lord said unto Moses and Aaron, 2. "The people of Israel shall encamp each by his own standard, with the banners of their fathers' houses; they shall encamp facing the Tent of Meeting on all sides. 3. Those who shall encamp on the east side toward the sunrise shall be under the standard of the camp of Judah by their armies, with Nahshon, son of Amminadab, captain of the army of the children of Judah. 4. And his host, and those who were numbered, were 74,600. 5. Those who encamp beside him shall be the tribe of Issachar, whose leader shall be Nethanel the son of Zuar of the tribe of Issachar; 6. his host is numbered at 54,400. 7. Next is the tribe of Zebulun, whose leader shall be Eliab, the son of Helon, of the tribe of Zebulun; 8. his host is numbered at 57,400. 9. The total number of the camp of Judah, by their armies, is 186,400. They shall lead out on the march.

10. On the south side shall be the standard of the camp of Reuben by their armies, whose leader shall be Elizur, the son of Shedeur, of the tribe of Reuben; 11. his host is numbered at 46,500. 12. And those who are to camp next to him shall be the tribe of Simeon, with Shelumiel, the son of Zurishaddai, leader of the people of Simeon; 13. his host as numbered is 59,300. 14. Then Gad's tribe, with Eliasaph, the son of Reuel, the leader of the tribe of Gad; 15. his host as numbered was 45,650. 16. The entire number of the camp of Reuben by their armies is 151,450. They shall move out second.

17. "Then the Tent of Meeting shall move out, with the camp of the Levites in the midst of the camps; just as they encamp, so shall they move out, each in place, standard by standard.

18. "On the west side shall be the standard of the camp of Ephraim by their armies, with Elishama, the son of Ammihud, the leader of the tribe of Ephraim; 19. his host as numbered was 32,200. 20. And next to him shall be the tribe of Manasseh, with Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur, leader of the people of

#### ARRANGEMENTS OF TRIBES FOR CAMPING, MARCHING 2:1-34

Manasseh; 21. his host as numbered was 32,200. 22. Then the tribe of Benjamin, with Abidan, the son of Gideon, leader of the tribe of Benjamin; 23. his host as numbered was 35,400. 24. The entire number of the camp of Ephraim by their armies is 108,100. They shall move out third on the march.

25. "On the north side shall be the standard of the camp of Dan by their armies, with Ahiezer, the son of Ammishaddai, leader of the tribe of Dan: 26. his host as numbered was 62,700. 27. And those who are to camp next to him shall be the tribe of Asher, with Pagiel, the son of Ochran, leader of the tribe of Asher; 28. his host as numbered was 41,500.

29. Then the tribe of Naphtali, with Ahira, the son of Enan, leader of the tribe of Naphtali; 30. his host as numbered was 53,400. 31. All those who were numbered in the camp of Dan were 157,600. They shall go forth last with their standards."

32. These are the children of Israel as they were numbered by their fathers' houses; all who were numbered in their armies were 603,550. 33. But the Levites were not counted among the people of Israel, just as the Lord had commanded Moses. 34. So the people of Israel did everything according to what the Lord had commanded Moses. In this manner they camped by their standards, and in this manner they set forth, every one with his family, according to his father's house.

#### COMMENTARY

Since the Tent of Meeting represented the literal presence of Jehovah, it was only appropriate that the Tent should be situated in the very center of the camp of Israel. All tribes were virtually equidistant from this Tent, lying roughly along the sides of a large rectangle.

With three tribes designated to each point of the compass about the Tent, and with the priestly families and the other Levites established in the inner camping area, directly before the door of the Tent, the place of greatest importance was toward the east, or sunrise. The sons of Aaron held this favored spot among the Levites, while Judah was awarded the choice

spot among the secular tribes—the area central toward the rising sun.

We know the symbols of some, but not all, of the tribes. The best known of all must be Judah's lion. The symbol was both historic and prophetic, pointing to the Lion of the tribe of Judah, Jesus Christ (Rev. 5:5). Jacob had spoken of Judah as a "lion's whelp", one to whom his brothers' children would bow, one who would conquer his enemies, and one from whom the scepter would not depart 'until Shiloh come', (Gen. 49: 8-10). History will show the validity of the statements. Rabbinical literature consistently affirms the symbol of Judah to be a young lion. The same sources, primarily Aben Ezra, assign to Reuben the sign of a man, to Ephraim that of an ox (see Deut. 33:17), and an eagle to Dan; on the other hand, the Targum of Palestine, while concurring in the case of Judah, makes the stag a sign of Reuben, assigns a young man to Ephraim, and a basilisk serpent to Dan. In his blessings to his sons, Jacob had identified several of them with various figurative expressions. Besides that given of Judah, he had spoken of Reuben as boiling water (49:3); of Issachar as a strong donkey (49:14); of Dan as a horned snake (49:17); of Naphtali as a freed doe (49:21); of Joseph as a fruitful bough (49:22); and of Benjamin as a ravaging wolf (49:27). No symbolic terms are given for Simeon, Levi, Zebulun, Gad or Asher. Since the list is incomplete, we may not infer that these omitted tribes had no symbols, nor that the symbols they used in the wilderness coincided with Jacob's identifications among those which are known, with the exceptions of Judah and, perhaps, Dan.

We do not know in what precise form these symbols were made, although it is believed the standard (*degel*) was a kind of banner or flag, perhaps of great size, such as might be carried in advance of a large troop under martial conditions. The ensigns (>othoth), it is suggested, were smaller pennants which might be carried at the front before tribal subdivisions. Each tribe had its standard; each family its ensign. In no way did Israel consider the making of the flags a violation of the Commandment prohibiting images or likenesses of any created thing (Ex.



ARRANGEMENTS OF TRIBES FOR CAMPING, MARCHING 2:1-34

20:4). After all, they were erected by the very commission of the Lord; and, more important, in no way were they to be mistaken for religious objects and worshiped. Their erection simply served as a means of identifying the location of the tribes and families while encamped and on the move, and would allow quick regrouping should any lose its place. During the prolonged marches and many settlements, an unorganized or illogical arrangement could have caused numerous unnecessary problems.

The matter of Israel's multiplication between the time of entering and leaving Egypt has been much discussed. Genesis 46:27 gives a total of seventy souls who came to Egypt, including the family of Joseph, which was already there. The census here taken gives the number of male Israelites of age twenty and over at 603,550. To this must be added the number of Levites, or 22,000 (3:39), more than one month old. Tribe by tribe, the increase is given as follows:

Tribe	Number at Coming to Egypt	Census in Numbers 2,3
Reuben	7	46,500
Simeon	7	59,300
* Levi	4	*22,000
Judah	7	74,600
Issachar	5	54,400
Zebulun	4	57,400
Gad	8	45,650
Asher	9	41,500
Joseph	o 3	
Ephraim		40,500
Manasseh		32,200
Benjamin	11	35,400
Dan	2	62,700
Naphtali	<u>5</u>	<u>53,400</u>
	o 72	* 603,550

\* The Levites, and their totals, are not included in the final figure.

°The total of 72 includes Ephraim and Manasseh, who would not have been reckoned among those who came into Egypt; they were born there.

Judah, along with Issachar and Zebulun, received the front position in the camp, that is, the eastward side, and their combined army of 186,400 men was appointed to lead the entire group as they marched. Those who camped on the south under the banner of Reuben, with Gad and Simeon, marched next. They totalled 151,450 men. At this point as the armies moved forward, the Tabernacle and the Levites moved into the center position. Symbolically, then, whether Israel might be in camp or on the march, the sacred Presence was in their midst.

Following next, under the banner of Ephraim, also came Manasseh and Benjamin. Their number totalled 108,100 men of war. Bringing up the rear was the tribe under Gad's standard, together with Asher and Naphtali, with 157,600 soldiers. The total picture would be impressive indeed.

The Palestinian Talmud says that the encampment of the Israelites covered an area of approximately twelve square miles. Later historians have estimated, however, that it was more probably three to three and one-half square miles, basing their figures upon relative sizes and spaces occupied by the Roman armies in camp. Whatever the true area might have been, there was a clear need for careful planning, tight discipline and constant cooperation among the people. We are not told what provisions are made for the animals; it would seem fit to assume they were pastured about the perimeter of the camp, and driven at the end of the marching band. Further, in many areas where the camps must have been erected, it would be very difficult to find even three square miles of level land in one spot, complicating the camping problems. This would have been true throughout their travels until they reached the plateaus of Moab. Doubtless adjustments were made, with the camp much elongated to fit the narrow accommodations of the tight valleys through which they traversed. We must not forget that these were slave people, and the tight quarters and handicaps of the wilderness should have been accepted as a part of the price of

their freedom. What has been described is the ideal arrangement; how often they were able to conform precisely to the instructions, we may only speculate upon. As set forth, the plan of organization for the camp of Israel has become symbolic of the great city of Zion as portrayed by Ezekiel (48:20), and in Revelation 21:16. Binnie, in his homily based upon the passage, points out the resemblances between the camp of Israel and the church of Christ as he notes 1. that the church is an army; it is 2. an army on the march; that is 3. an army moving under a banner; that 4. God keeps a perfect roll of His men by name; and that 5. the army has the Lord for its ever-present Leader.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

40. Suggest some complications which might arise if the tribes of Israel had simply camped and marched at random.
41. Draw a diagram showing the places of the camps of each tribe as they related to the Tent of Meeting.
42. What reasons may be given for placing the sons of Aaron and the families of the Levites immediately about the Tent of Meeting?
43. Group the placement of the tribes according to their maternal origin (see Gen. 35:23-26).
44. Why was the tribe of Judah chosen to lead the marching order of the people? Is there something prophetic in this arrangement?
45. Why are the Levites and the Tent of Meeting placed in the center of the camp? Why do they march in the midst of the tribes?
46. What arrangements might have been made to provide for the herds and flocks both while camping and marching?
47. Discuss the symbolism attached to the centrality of the Tent of Meeting; of the design of the encampment.
48. Identify the tribes whose symbols we know, or for which

there is traditional evidence. What is unusual about the symbol for Judah's group?

49. List the totals of the tribes, tribe by tribe; then give the number of the Levites counted. Now show what the sum of the congregation was when the Levites are not counted, and what it was with them included.
50. What are the probable differences between the 'standards' and the 'banners'? What were their separate purposes?
51. Arrange the tribes in their marching order.

## V. FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS TO THE LEVITES

(3:1-51)

### A. THE SONS OF AARON vv. 1-4

#### TEXT

Chapter 3:1. These also are the generations of Aaron and Moses, in the day that the Lord spake with Moses in mount Sinai. 2. And these are the names of the sons of Aaron: Nadab the firstborn, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. 3. These are the names of the sons of Aaron, the priests which were anointed, whom he consecrated to minister in the priest's office. And Nadab and Abihu died before the Lord, when they offered strange fire before the Lord, in the wilderness of Sinai, and they had no children: and Eleazar and Ithamar ministered in the priest's office in the sight of Aaron their father.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 3:1. These are also the descendants of Aaron and Moses from the time that the Lord spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai. 2. The names of the sons of Aaron were Nadab, his first son, and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar; 3. these are the names of the sons of Aaron, the ones who were anointed as priests, whom he consecrated to serve in the office of priest. 4. Nadab and Abihu lied in the presence of the Lord when they offered unholy fire unto Him in the wilderness of Sinai. They had no children. Then Eleazar and Ithamar served as priests during the

lifetime of Aaron their father.

### COMMENTARY

From this time forward, we may think of Ephraim and Manasseh as replacing Joseph and Levi among the twelve tribes of Israel. Levi is set apart unto a special task among his people; he will be dispersed among the tribes when they establish themselves in the Promised Land (35:1-8). All of Joseph's descendants, of course, are through the two sons.

We may compare this section with Ex. 6:23 and Lev. 10:1, 2. In this manner the priesthood is introduced. However, although Moses is mentioned along with Aaron his brother, Moses' descendants appear in I Chron. 23:14 as Levites. With the deaths of Nadab and Abihu, who were childless, the entire descent of the priests is now traced to Eleazar and Ithamar. Aaron's sons were set apart to be custodians of the sanctuary; this was the Lord's chosen alternative, with the other possibility that of taking the firstborn of all tribes.

The word 'consecrate' is, in the original, a term meaning 'to fill the hand'. The possible significance is that of occupying all of one's industry in behalf of that to which he has been set apart. The priests were not to dilute their service to God in any manner whatever.

Had there been children to Nadab and Abihu, they need not necessarily have shared the consequences of offering the "strange fire before the Lord" unless they had actually participated in the wrongdoing. The consistent biblical truth makes the father responsible for his own sins, and the son free of parental iniquity (see Ezekiel 18:19, 20); the reverse is also true, as parents are not liable for the sins of knowledgeable children. But the crime of the two priests had been mortal. In the historical account (Lev. 10:1, 2), we are given no more indication of the sin itself, whether they had violated the ritual, or substituted for the incense, or offered in an irreverent attitude, or offended in some other way. The hand of God struck with such suddenness and such finality that none could fail to realize the gravity of their crime. Like the imposition of

death upon Ananias and Sapphira in the early church (Acts 5), this incident would serve a stern warning upon all who stood in a like holy place before God.

Aaron may be mentioned before Moses in the passage for various reasons. He was, first of all, older. This might be reason enough, expecting that the order is usually reversed. The more probable reason now is that since we are being directed to the development of the priesthood, and since the priestly families will be descendants of Aaron only, his name is given the priority.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

52. Why is Aaron named before Moses in this passage?
53. How far can we trace the descendants of Moses?
54. Relate what happened to Nadab and Abihu.
55. Comment upon the special meaning of "consecrated" in v. 3.
56. What is meant by the "strange fire" offered by Nadab and Abihu, and why was their offense so grave?

### B. THE LEVITES COUNTED AND ASSIGNED DUTIES

vv. 5-39

#### TEXT

Chapter 3:5. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 6. Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him. 7. And they shall keep his charge, and the charge of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of the congregation, to do the service of the tabernacle. 8. And they shall keep all the instruments of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the charge of the children of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle. 9. And thou shalt give the Levites unto Aaron and to his sons: they are wholly given unto him out of the children of Israel. 10. And thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest's office: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death. 11. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 12. And I,

behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn that openeth the matrix among the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be mine; 13. Because all the firstborn are mine; for on the day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto me all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast: mine shall they be: I am the Lord.

14. And the Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, saying, 15. Number the children of Levi after the house of their fathers, by their families: every male from a month old and upward shalt thou number them. 16. And Moses numbered them according to the word of the Lord, as he was commanded. 17. And these were the sons of Levi by their names; Gershon, and Kohath, and Merari. 18. And these are the names of the sons of Gershon by their families; Libni and Shimei. 19. And the sons of Kohath by their families; Amram, and Izehar, Hebron, and Uzziel. 20. And the sons of Merari by their families; Mahli, and Mushi. These are the families of the Levites according to the house of their fathers.

21. Of Gershon was the family of the Libnites, and the family of the Shimites: these are the families of the Gershonites. 22. Those that were numbered of them, according to the number of all the males, from a month old and upward, even those that were numbered of them were seven thousand and five hundred. 23. The families of the Gershonites shall pitch behind the tabernacle westward. 24. And the chief of the house of the father of the Gershonites shall be Eliasaph the son of Lael. 25. And the charge of the sons of Gershon in the tabernacle of the congregation shall be the tabernacle, and the tent, the covering thereof, and the hanging for the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, 26. And the hangings of the court, and the curtain for the door of the court, which is by the tabernacle, and by the altar round about, and the cords of it for all the service thereof.

27. And of Kohath was the family of the Amramites, and the family of the Izeharites, and the family of the Hebronites, and the family of the Uzzielites: these are the families of the

Kohathites. 28. In the number of all the males, from a month old and upward, were eight thousand and six hundred, keeping the charge of the sanctuary. 29. The families of the sons of Kohath shall pitch on the side of the tabernacle southward. 30. And the chief of the house of the father of the families of the Kohathites shall be Elizaphan the son Uzziel. 31. And their charge shall be the ark, and the table, and the candlestick, and the altars, and the vessels of the sanctuary wherewith they minister, and the hanging, and all the service thereof. 32. And Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest shall be chief over the chief of the Levites, and have the oversight of them that keep the charge of the sanctuary.

33. Of Merari was the family of the Mahlites, and the family of the Mushites: these are the families of Merari. 34. And those that were numbered of them, according to the number of all the males, from a month old and upward, were six thousand and two hundred. 35. And the chief of the house of the father of the families of Merari was Zuriel the son of Abihail: these shall pitch on the side of the tabernacle northward. 36. And under the custody and charge of the sons of Merari shall be the boards of the tabernacle, and the bars thereof, and the pillars thereof, and the sockets thereof, and all the vessels thereof, and all that serveth thereto, 37. And the pillars of the court round about, and their sockets, and their pins, and their cords.

38. But those that encamp before the tabernacle toward the east, even before the tabernacle of the congregation eastward, shall be Moses, and Aaron and his sons, keeping the charge of the sanctuary for the charge of the children of Israel; and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death. 39. All that were numbered of the Levites, which Moses and Aaron numbered at the commandment of the Lord, throughout their families, all the males from a month old and upward, were twenty and two thousand.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 3:5. And the Lord said to Moses, 6. "Bring the tribe of Levi near, presenting them before Aaron the priest, that



they may serve him. 7. They shall perform duties for him, and for the entire congregation before the Tent of Meeting, serving at the Tabernacle. 8. They shall have custody of all the furnishings of the Tent of Meeting, and perform duties for the children of Israel, serving at the Tabernacle. 9. And you shall give the Levites unto Aaron and his sons: they are all given to him from among the children of Israel. 10. And you shall appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall maintain themselves in the priest's office: but any stranger who comes near is to be put to death."

11. And the Lord said to Moses, 12. "Behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of each firstborn son which opens the womb among the children of Israel. Therefore, the Levites are all mine, 13. because all of the firstborn are mine. On the day that I slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I consecrated unto Myself all of Israel's firstborn, of both man and beast. They are mine. I am the Lord."

14. And the Lord said to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, 15. "Count the sons of Levi according to their fathers' families: every male one month old or more is to be counted." 16. And Moses counted them according to the word of the Lord, as he was commanded. 17. And these are the names of the sons of Levi: 18. Gershon, Kohath and Merari. And these are the names of the sons of Gershon according to their families: 19. Libni and Shimei. And the sons of Kohath by families: Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel. 20. And the sons of Merari by families: Mahli and Mushi. These are the families of the Levites according to their fathers' families.

21. Of Gershon was the family of the Libnites and the family of the Shimites: these are the families of the Gershonites. 22. Those who were counted of them, according to the number of all the males one month old and up, even all of those counted were seven thousand five hundred. 23. The families of the Gershonites are to pitch their tents behind the Tabernacle to the west. 24. And Eliasaph, son of Lael, is to be head of the fathers of the Gershonites; 25. And the duty of the sons of Gershon in the Tent of Meeting is to be the Tabernacle,

the Tent, its covering, the curtain for the door of the Tent of Meeting, 26. the drapes of the court, the curtain for the door of the court surrounding the Tent, and the altar, and its cords; and all the service relating to these things.

27. The family of the Amramites were of Kohath, as well as the family of the Izharites, the family of the Hebronites, and the family of the Uzzielites: these are the families of the Kohathites. 28. Counting all the males from a month of age and older, there were eight thousand six hundred who handled the duties of the Sanctuary. 29. The families of Kohath's sons were to pitch their tents on the south side of the tabernacle. 30. Elizaphan, the son of Uzziel, was the head of the house of the fathers of the families of the Kohathites. 31. And their duty was the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, the vessels of the sanctuary with which the priests minister, and the curtain, and all the service relating to these things. 32. Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, was to be chief over the leaders of the Levites, having supervision of those who were in charge of the sanctuary.

33. The family of the Mahlites and the family of the Mushites were of Merari: these are the families of Merari. 34. Their number counting all the males from a month of age and older was six thousand two hundred. 35. Zuriel, the son of Abihail, was the head of the fathers' house of the families of Merari; they were to pitch their tents on the north side of the Tabernacle. 36. And the duty of the sons of Merari was to care for the boards of the Tabernacle, the braces, the posts, the bases, and their accessories, with all the service relating to them, besides the posts of the surrounding court, with all their bases, pegs and cords.

38. Moses and Aaron, with their sons, were to pitch their tents in front of the Tent of Meeting on the east side; they were given charge of all the sanctuary services required for the people of Israel. Anyone else who approached was to be put to death. 39. The total number of the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron counted by the Lord's commandment, including their families, all the males one month of age and older, was twenty

two thousand.

### COMMENTARY

The Levites are placed at the disposal and service of the priests, under the direct supervision of Aaron. Serving the Lord in His tabernacle would require an infinite number of carefully specified acts of service, involving numerous items of all sizes and types. In order that these all might be ready for use, even at a moment's notice, the Levites are charged with their supervision. This will be true while the tribes are in the wilderness, and when they have established themselves in Canaan. Without the intelligent and dedicated work of these men, the labors of the priests would have been utterly impossible.

Moses describes the Levites as the *nethunims* (the 'totally given ones'), v. 9. It is an emphatic term, specifying that their service is without limitation. They are gifts of God to the priests, and they are engaged in an honorable work. The term is to be distinguished from the similar *nethinim* ('slaves'), non-Israelite servants who are given the grosser tasks at and about the tabernacle (see Joshua 9:27). These latter men were placed at the disposal of the Levites, completing the complement of service personnel.

When v. 10 pronounces the death sentence for any stranger who approaches the Tent of Meeting, we must understand the special meaning of the term in its context. Ordinarily, a "stranger" would be an alien, a non-Israelite. But the word is broader in this usage, including anyone who is not authorized to serve the Lord as a priest; hence, even the Levites themselves would be considered strangers if they presumed to act beyond their specially designated responsibilities; and the death sentence served to punctuate the limitation upon them.

For reasons of His own, God adopted the Levites rather than all of the firstborn, appointing them unto their place of honor among the tribes. The slaughter of the firstborn of the Egyptians stands as a memorial unto the particular honor shown Israel's firstborn; and the Levites become essentially typical of this preservation. In a secondary appointment, all future

firstborn must be sanctified—firstborn sons were dedicated to the Lord at the sanctuary; firstborn animals must have been sacrificed to Him. Now, with the particular adoption of the Levites, both the Levites and their cattle are to stand in the stead of their brothers, and the firstborn sons of Israel are released (see v. 40, sqq.). The service became more orderly, concentrated in the hands of a single tribe, which should devote its entire and undivided interest to their vocation. It is commonly supposed that the tribe of Levi was chosen for this work because of their zeal in ending the worship of the golden calf. It is also proposed that the choice came because the tribe was considerably smaller than any of the others. We can only advise caution in making either suggestion a dogmatic statement, since Scripture does not inform us of any of God's reasons. The choice may have been purely arbitrary.

The rules for mustering the Levites differ greatly from those governing other tribes: all males one month of age and older are counted. It is approximate, since at this age (one month) the firstborn were to be given up or redeemed (cf. vv. 40, 43 and 18:16). From birth, the Levites would have a single fact firmly instilled in their hearts, that they were possessed by the Lord Himself, consecrated to His service. Theirs was a lifetime with a constant commitment.

First counted were the Gershonites, who number 7,500. They are assigned the camping post to the west of the Tent, under Eliasaph, son of Lael. For their special responsibility, they are assigned the care of the tapestry of the dwelling, or inner covering, Ex. 26:1ff.; of the Tent, or the goats' hair covering, Ex. 26:7ff; the Tent's covering of rams' skins dyed red, and the covering of the dolphin skin over it, Ex. 26:14. They were further charged to care for the curtain at the door, Ex. 26:36, as well as the hangings for the court and the curtain for the door of the court, Ex. 27:9-16. With these, they also had custody of the cords, or tent ropes, which were secured to the pins to support the tent materials (see Ex. 35:18, 39:40). Finally, they had the responsibility for the utensils or instruments of service. Ex. 27:19. Care of these items included

especially the duty of assembling or disassembling them when the people encamped or moved, as well as daily custody while the Tabernacle remained in use.

Next, the Kohathites, numbering 8,600, received their duties. Under their hands were the ark of the covenant, the table of showbread, the seven-branched lampstand, both altars (incense and sacrifice), and the articles of service for all of these items. Additionally, they were to care for the veil between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. All of the articles of furniture had to be wrapped with care when being transported (4:5ff.). In camp, the Kohathites were situated south of the Tent. Chief of the four families of the Kohathites was Elizaphan, son of Uzziel; but the chief of all the Levites was also a Kohathite: Eleazar, son of Aaron.

The third family counted were the Merarites, numbering 6,200, and placed north of the Tent. Zuriel was prince of the group, who had the work of the framework of the Tent: its boards, bars, pillars and sockets. They also handled the comparable units for the framework surrounding the court. While this assignment might seem somewhat less impressive than those given the other families, such would not be the case; there simply was nothing assigned which was unimportant. All of the jobs were interdependent, and the Tabernacle could not be moved or used unless the cooperation of each family was assured. Nothing is insignificant if God has asked it!

In the favored eastern position, in front of the door to the court, was the camping area of the priests—Moses, Aaron, and Aaron's sons. Not only is this a place of honor, it is also the position of greatest convenience for the priests' responsibilities of service, and it places them where they may intercept any "stranger" who might, for any reason, approach unto the forbidden area.

There is a discrepancy in the totals from the census. Verse 39 gives the number an even 22,000, whereas verses 40-51 show 22,300. The mistake is of long standing, and appears to have been a scribal error in transmission. Other attempts to explain the difference seem much too speculative.

## QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

57. Distinguish between the terms "priest" and "Levite" Show their differing functions.
58. Why should the priests need so many to assist them?
59. Draw up a list of the "instruments of the Tabernacle," (v. 8), and tell how they were used.
60. Define the term "stranger" in v. 10. Why should there be such a severe penalty for approaching unto the Tabernacle unlawfully?
61. In what respect would setting aside the Levites recall Israel's release from Egypt?
62. Why are the firstborn animals recognized, along with the firstborn sons of Israel?
63. Among the other tribes, the census began with 20-year olds. However, the Levites were counted from the age of one month. Why the difference?
64. Draw a design of the placement of the families of the sons of Levi around Tabernacle.
65. Beside the names of the families of the Levitical families, list their assignments in assembling and disassembling the Tabernacle.
66. What special honor was given to Aaron's son Eleazar?
67. Name the articles for which the Merarites were responsible, and tell what each of the items was used for.
68. For what items were the Kohathites responsible, and how were they used in the Tabernacle?
69. What were the responsibilities of the Kohathites? How were these things prepared for travel?
70. What special advantages were there in having Moses and Aaron and his sons camp at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting?

## C. CENSUS OF THE FIRST BORN vv. 40-43

## TEXT

Chapter 3:40. And the Lord said unto Moses, Number all the firstborn of the males of the children of Israel from a month old and upward, and take the number of their names. 41. And thou shalt take the Levites for me (I am the Lord) instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel; and the cattle of the Levites instead of all the firstlings among the cattle of the children of Israel. 42. And Moses numbered, as the Lord commanded him, all the firstborn among the children of Israel. 43. And all the firstborn males by the number of names, from a month old and upward, of those that were numbered of them, were twenty and two thousand two hundred and threescore and thirteen.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 3:40. Then the Lord said to Moses, "Count all the firstborn males of the children of Israel from one month old and up, and list their names. 41. And you shall take the Levites for me (I am the Lord), rather than all the firstborn among the children of Israel; and the cattle of the Levites rather than all the firstborn among the cattle of the children of Israel." 42. So Moses counted all the firstborn among the children of Israel, as the Lord commanded him; and the total of all the firstborn males named, from one month old and up, came to 22,273.

## COMMENTARY

The number of the firstborn, 22,273, can hardly be a complete figure for all of the tribes of Israel. If there were an equal number of firstborn females, the total of about 45,000 would mean that the average family would have had about 50 children or more, if the total population exceeded two million. Various suggestions have been made. It has been proposed that only the firstborn males who were not heads of their own families were included—those too young to have their own firstborn. Again, there is the thought that in many instances the firstborn might have died, and hence is not tallied. Even if these

factors be granted, the number would have not been reduced as much as the figures demand. Perhaps an answer is that only those firstborn sons were counted whose births had transpired after the departure from Egypt. But this theory would require a very unusually high birth rate for the period. A final suggestion is that the sanctification of the firstborn, being designed to strike a blow at the practice of the sacrifice of the pagan infants to the worship of Moloch, would hence have included only the very young firstborn among Israel.

But all of these are speculative, and none is without its difficulties. Whatever the actual reason for there being such a small number, we are not told: the most likely explanation may be that of *PC*, (pp. 19, 20), that the tally included only the firstborn sons in Israel who were not themselves heads of houses. The conclusion is reached by drawing a parallel between this counting and the deaths of the Egyptian firstborn at the Passover, at which time each household lost only its eldest son; but the father, although a firstborn, was not touched. "These," it is stated, "were the destroyed in Egypt—these the redeemed in Israel."

The number of firstborn of the tribes, 22,273, was exchanged for the 22,000 Levites; and the cattle of the Levites were consecrated in the place of all the firstborn cattle of Israel. The exchange was not one-for-one, but approximate.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

71. What explanations are suggested for the small number of firstborn among the tribes of Israel? Can you find the difficulty in these suggestions?
72. Compare the number of firstborn in the nation with the census of the Levites.
73. In what sense are the Levites and their cattle to be taken in place of the firstborn of Israel and of the cattle?



D. LEVITES DEDICATED IN BEHALF  
OF THE FIRSTBORN vv. 44-51

TEXT

Chapter 3:44. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 45. Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of their cattle; and the Levites shall be mine: I am the Lord. 46. And for those that are to be redeemed of the two hundred and three-score and thirteen of the firstborn of the children of Israel, which are more than the Levites; 47. Thou shalt even take five shekels apiece by the poll, after the shekel of the sanctuary shalt thou take them: (the shekel is twenty gerahs:) 48. And thou shalt give the money, wherewith the odd number of them is to be redeemed, unto Aaron and to his sons. 49. And Moses took the redemption money of them that were over and above them that were redeemed by the Levites: 50. Of the firstborn of the children of Israel took he the money; a thousand three hundred and threescore and five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary: 51. And Moses gave the money of them that were redeemed unto Aaron and to his sons, according to the word of the Lord, as the Lord commanded Moses.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 3:44. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 45. "Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites rather than their cattle. The Levites shall be mine: I am the Lord. 46. And for those who are to be ransomed of the 273 of the firstborn of the children of Israel, who are in excess of the Levites, 47. you shall take five shekels for each man, that is, the shekel of the sanctuary (or, twenty gerahs),\* 48. and you shall give the money, which is the ransom of the excess, to Aaron and his sons. 49. And Moses took the ransom money from those of the excess beyond those ransomed by the Levites; 50. he took the money, as of the shekel of the sanctuary, totalling 1,365, from

\*In our terms, approximately 6.8 pounds, avoirdupois.

the sons of Israel. 51. Then Moses gave the ransom money to Aaron and his sons, as the Lord had commanded Moses.

### COMMENTARY

Verses 44 and 45 repeat earlier instructions for the purpose of emphasis and clarity. The Lord underscores the purpose for adopting the Levites; He also adds necessary instructions with reference to the number of firstborn among the tribes which exceeds that of the Levites—273. They were to be redeemed on the basis of the established price for redemption of the firstborn among the people (see 18:16).

The shekel of the sanctuary had been established in Exodus 30:13; see also Lev. 27:6. "Shekel" means "weight", and demonstrates the ancient practice of establishing the value of an item by equating it with a measured weight of gold, silver, or even bronze or iron; The shekel weighed about four-tenths of an ounce. It required 1365 shekels to redeem the excess of the firstborn (273) over the number of the Levites. The sum was given to Aaron in lieu of the firstborn. From the beginning it was ordained that those who served their brothers in the capacity of priests and Levites should derive their livelihood from those whom they served. The principle would be extended into the New Covenant of the Gospel by the apostle Paul in declaring that the Lord has "ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel," (I Cor. 9:14). Denied the opportunity of ordinary livelihood by labor, those whose occupation involves total service to God in behalf of their fellow men may rightly ask their provision by those whom they serve.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

74. What is suggested when the Lord said, "The Levites shall be mine"?
75. Establish the value of the ransom price of the firstborn if it was paid in gold, and if it was paid in silver, according to the current values of these metals.
76. The provisions given in this section are only for a single

time and a single circumstance. What regulations were given for consecration of the firstborn of the people and animals later?

77. Who paid the ransom money to the priests?

## VI. MARCHING DUTIES ASSIGNED TO THE LEVITE FAMILIES (4:1-49)

### A. THE KOHATHITES vv. 1-20

#### TEXT

Chapter 4:1. And the Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron, saying, 2. Take the sum of the sons of Levi, after their families, by the house of their fathers, 3. From thirty years old and upward even until fifty years old, all that enter into the host, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation. 4. This shall be the service of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation, about the most holy things.

5. And when the camp setteth forward, Aaron shall come, and his sons, and they shall take down the covering veil, and cover the ark of testimony with it: 6. And shall put thereon the covering of badgers' skins, and shall spread over it a cloth wholly of blue, and shall put in the staves thereof. 7. And upon the table of showbread they shall spread a cloth of blue, and put thereon the dishes, and the spoons, and the bowls, and covers to cover withal: and the continual bread shall be thereon: 8. And they shall spread upon them a cloth of scarlet, and cover the same with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put in the staves thereof. 9. And they shall take a cloth of blue, and cover the candlestick of the light, and his lamps, and his tongs, and his snuffdishes, and all the oil vessels thereof, wherewith they minister unto it: 10. And they shall put it and all the vessels thereof within a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put it upon a bar. 11. And upon the golden altar they shall spread a cloth of blue, and cover it with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put to the staves thereof: 12. And they shall take all the instruments of ministry, wherewith they minister in the

sanctuary, and put them in a cloth of blue, and cover them with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put them on a bar. 13. And they shall take away the ashes from the altar, and spread a purple cloth thereon: 14. And they shall put upon it all the vessels thereof, wherewith they minister about it, even the censers, the fleshhooks, and the shovels, and the basins, all the vessels of the altar; and they shall spread upon it a covering of badgers' skins, and put to the staves of it. 15. And when Aaron and his sons have made an end of covering the sanctuary, and all the vessels of the sanctuary, as the camp is to set forward; after that, the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it: but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. These things are the burden of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation.

16. And to the office of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest pertaineth the oil for the light, and the sweet incense, and the daily meat offering, and the anointing oil, and the oversight of all the tabernacle, and of all that thereon is, in the sanctuary, and in the vessels thereof.

17. And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, saying, 18. Cut ye not off the tribe of the families of the Kohathites from among the Levites: 19. But thus do unto them, that they may live, and not die, when they approach unto the most holy things: Aaron and his sons shall go in, and appoint them every one to his service and to his burden: 20. But they shall not go in to see when the holy things are covered, lest they die.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 4:1. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2. "Count the descendants of Kohath from among the sons of Levi, by their families, by their fathers' houses, 3. from thirty years of age, all who enter into the service to do the duties of the Tent of Meeting. 4. This shall be the service of the descendants of Kohath in the Tent of Meeting among the holy things:

5. When the camp moves out, Aaron and his sons shall enter

in and take down the veil of the screen, and cover the ark of the covenant with it; 6. and they shall lay a covering of goatskin on it, and shall spread a cloth of pure blue over it, and insert its poles. 7. "And they shall spread a cloth of blue over the table of showbread, and put on it the dishes, the spoons, the bowls and the jars for pouring; and the continual bread shall be upon it. 8. And they shall spread over them a cloth of scarlet, and cover the same with a covering of goatskin, and insert its poles. 9. Then they shall take a cloth of blue, and cover the lampstand of light, along with its lamps, its snuffers and its pans, and all its oil vessels used in serving it: 10. and they shall put it and all its vessels inside a cover of goatskin, and they shall put it upon the carrying staves. 11. And they shall spread a blue cloth over the golden altar and cover it with a covering of goatskin, and insert its poles. 12. And they shall take all the utensils of service, with which they serve in the sanctuary, and put them in a blue cloth, and cover them with a covering of dolphin skin, and put them on the carrying staves. 13. Then they shall remove the ashes from the altar and spread a purple cloth upon it. 14. They also shall put on it all the vessels by which they serve, the pans, the forks, the shovels and the basins, all the vessels of the altar; and they shall spread upon it a covering of goatskin, and insert the poles. 15. And when Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all of the vessels of the sanctuary, as the camp is to move out, after that the sons of Kohath shall come to carry it; but they must not touch any holy things, lest they should die. These things are the burden of the sons of Kohath in the Tent of Meeting. And the duty of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, is the oil of the light, the sweet incense, the daily meal offering, the anointing oil—the responsibility for all the Tabernacle and everything in it, along with the sanctuary and its vessels."

17. Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 18. "Do not cut off the tribe of the families of the Kohathites from among the Levites, 19. but do this to them that they may live and not die when they come unto the most holy things: Aaron and his sons shall enter, and designate each man to his duty and

his burden; 20. but they must not enter in to see when the holy things are covered lest they die.

### COMMENTARY

To the Kohathites was given the most responsible chores. The family included Moses, Aaron and his sons; that is, the priests. Their service is said to have begun at age 30 here (v. 3), whereas 8:24 gives the age as 25, the LXX adopts the lower age in this verse. It has been suggested that the age might have been first established at the earlier figure, then lowered, as more men were to be served, due to the population growth.

The Kohathites have been referred to as the *militia sacra*, or sacred army. A military term is used to describe their "service", (v. 3). Their obligations are as clear and regimented as those of an army; and their commitments are total, demanding unquestioning allegiance to their Commander. To them is assigned the most holy things in the Tabernacle: the ark of the covenant, the table of showbread, the lampstand (candlestick), the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offerings, as well as all the articles pertaining to them.

When the call came for the Israelites to move, the priests first carefully followed a set procedure. Aaron and his sons took down the curtain between the holy place and the holy of holies, using it to wrap up the ark of the covenant (vv. 5, 6); and they covered the entire bundle with skins variously identified as those of the badger or sea-cow. The Hebrew word *tachash* is currently translated "goatskins" in the RSV. It is a very probable correction, since the quantity of badgerskins required for the coverings would have been excessive. Furthermore, the availability of either the badgers or the sea-cows in sufficient quantity is subject to reasonable question. Finally, staves were inserted into the rings of the ark, and it was ready for carrying.

Preparations for the other items was somewhat less complicated. The table of showbread was wrapped inside a blue cloth (vv. 7, 8), and on this were placed all the dishes, spoons, bowls, pitchers, and the bread itself. Great care must be taken

in the process to see that none of these things were touched directly, under pain of death (v. 15), even while wrapping them with the cloths of covering. The lampstand was wrapped with blue cloth, together with its small pots, its snuffers, trays, and oil vessels. Again, it was carried by means of a pole inserted through the covering, vv. 9, 10.

Similarly, the altar of incense should be wrapped, with its many utensils, and carried upon poles. The cloth encompassing the golden altar was blue, v. 11

The large altar of sacrifice, or burnt-offering, was wrapped in purple, after its ashes had been carefully removed, v. 13, along with the numerous items required for its use—firepans, forks, shovels, basins, and miscellaneous articles. The removal of the ashes was not done to clean the altar: it was hollow, with a filling of earth or stones. Rather, the ashes were most carefully tended as living embers. The sacred fire was never permitted to go out.

There is a surprising omission here, the great laver. Both the Septuagint and the Samaritan text add, after v. 14, "And they shall take a purple cloth, and cover the laver and its foot, and they shall put it into a hyacinthine cover of skin, and put it on bars." Although this is a spurious interpolation, it is certain that the Kohathites were required to carry the laver. The suggestion in *PC* (p. 25) is unsatisfactory—that the laver was "not regarded as of equal sanctity with the rest" will not suffice to explain the omission; there simply is no satisfactory explanation.

Upon completion of the wrapping of all articles, the Kohathites came to carry them. It is evident from the order in which the account is related that the Kohathites and their burdens marched at the forefront of the nation when on the move.

Special tribute, along with special duty, fell upon Eleazar. His responsibility included oversight of the oil for the lampstand, incense for the golden altar, the continual meal-offering, the anointing oil, and the vessels for their care. He further directed the entire process of gathering and preparing the

Tabernacle and all the sacred objects for transportation. We may infer that the Kohathites worked directly under his supervision. The Kohathites are recognized to be especially significant among the tribes. Lest they be guilty of any degree of negligence or carelessness which others might prevent, Moses and Aaron are strictly admonished to supervise their duties most carefully. Should they fail, they are to be held accountable directly to God. Any carelessness or irreverence in the conduct of the priests' functions would induce similar attitudes and serious mistakes among the Levites; death then must be the inevitable consequence. Every phase of the service of Jehovah is of gravest importance, and God's instructions are to be carried out to the letter.

The final note of caution (v. 20) summarizes all that has been said. Wrapping the furnishings is the task of the priests; the Kohathites must be cautious not even so much as to look upon the vessels for an instant, under pain of death.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

78. How do you reconcile the differences given for the time of the priestly service, as stated in Num. 4:3 and 8:24?
79. In what sense might the Kohathites be called the "militia sacra"?
80. Give in full detail the step-by-step measure which must be followed when the Tabernacle and its various articles were to be moved.
81. Why is it more likely that "goatskins" is the proper word in this passage, rather than "porpoises" or "sea-cows"?
82. Why should there be such a severe penalty for the unauthorized sight of the various items of furniture before they are completely wrapped?
83. Why was it unnecessary to clean ashes from the altar of sacrifice?
84. What possible explanations are offered for the omission of the laver from the list of the Tabernacle's furniture?
85. Why was Eleazar given special responsibility over the



process of packing and moving all the articles of the Tabernacle?

86. In what manner might clumsiness, carelessness or indifference in performing their duties as priests affect the general attitude of the Levites? of the people as a whole?

#### B. THE GERSHONITES vv. 21-28

##### TEXT

Chapter 4:21. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 22. Take also the sum of the sons of Gershon, throughout the houses of their fathers, by their families; 23. From thirty years old and upward until fifty years old shalt thou number them; all that enter in to perform the service, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation. 24. This is the service of the families of the Gershonites, to serve, and for burdens: 25. And they shall bear the curtains of the tabernacle, and the tabernacle of the congregation, his covering, and the covering of the badgers' skins that is above upon it, and the hanging for the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 26. And the hangings of the court, and the hanging for the door of the gate of the court, which is by the tabernacle and by the altar round about, and their cords, and all the instruments of their service, and all that is made for them; so shall they serve. 27. At the appointment of Aaron and his sons shall be all the service of the sons of the Gershonites, in all their burdens, and in all their service: and ye shall appoint unto them in charge all their burdens. 28. This is the service of the families of the sons of Gershon in the tabernacle of the congregation: and their charge shall be under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.

##### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 4:21. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 22. "Count the sons of Gershon also, by their fathers' houses, by their families, 23. from thirty years old and up to fifty years old you shall count them: all who enter to perform the service, to

do the work in the Tent of Meeting. 24. This is the service of the families of the Gershonites, in both serving and carrying: 25. they shall carry the curtains of the Tabernacle and the Tent of Meeting, its covering, and the covering of the goatskin on top of it, and the screen for the door of the Tent of Meeting, and the curtain for the court, 26. and the screen for the door of the gate of the court surrounding the Tabernacle and the altar, and their cords and all the equipment for their service, and everything that is made for them; in this manner they shall serve. 27. All the service of the sons of the Gershonites, in all their duties and all their work, shall be done by the order of Aaron and his sons: you shall appoint all their duty to those in charge. 28. This is the service of the families of the sons of the Gershonites in the Tent of Meeting; and their duties shall be under the hand of Ithamar, the son of Aaron the priest.

#### COMMENTARY

Much less complex than the work of the Kohathites were the duties of the second family, the Gershonites. They are tallied for service on the same basis as are the others; from ages thirty to fifty. On the march, they are responsible for the many curtains of the Tabernacle, the Tent itself, and the many coverings they required; they carry also all the screen which filled the door at the eastern Door of the Tent, as well as the bulky hangings which surrounded the outer court and the screen which closed the only opening by which access might be gained into the court. With these, they carried the cords which were used specifically for the erection and solidity of the Tabernacle. In order that there might be no misunderstanding whatever, they are instructed in detail by Aaron and his sons.

Ithamar, who had had a primary assignment during the construction of the Tabernacle (Ex. 38:21), now is placed in oversight of both the Gershonites and the Merarites, although he himself is a Kohathite. We are informed in 7:7, 8 that wagons were assigned for transporting the articles.

## QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

87. Compare this passage with Ex. 27, and see more clearly the duty of the Gershonites.
88. Why did they not carry the "veil"?
89. Distinguish between the cords carried by the Gershonites and those for which the Merarites were responsible.

## C. THE MERARITES vv. 29-33

## TEXT

Chapter 4:29. As for the sons of Merari, thou shalt number them after their families, by the house of their fathers; 30. From thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old shalt thou number them, every one that entereth into the service, to do the work of the tabernacle of the congregation. 31. And this is the charge of their burden, according to all their service in the tabernacle of the congregation; the boards of the tabernacle, and the bars thereof, and sockets thereof, 32. And the pillars of the court round about, and their sockets, and their pins, and their cords, with all their instruments, and with all their service: and by name ye shall reckon the instruments of the charge of their burden. 33. This is the service of the families of the sons of Merari, according to all their service, in the tabernacle of the congregation, under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 4:29. "Regarding the sons of Merari, you shall count them by their families, by their fathers' houses; you shall count them from thirty years of age and up to fifty: everyone who enters the service, to do the duties of the Tent of Meeting. 31. And this is the responsibility for their loads, for all their duties in the Tent of Meeting: the boards of the Tabernacle and its bars, its pillars and its sockets, 32. as well as the pillars of the surrounding court, their sockets, pegs and cords, with all their utensils, and all their service; and you shall assign to each man by name the articles he is to carry. 33. This is the service of the

families of the sons of Merari, according to their duties, in the Tent of Meeting, under the supervision of Ithamar, the son of Aaron the priest."

### COMMENTARY

Unto the Merarites fell the heaviest of all the burdens of transport. It was a fitting assignment, since the tribe had a larger number of men in the 30-50 age bracket than did the Gershonites or the Kohathites—51% of their total count.

<u>Tribe</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Age 30-50</u>	<u>% of Tribe</u>
Kohath	8600	2750	32
Gershon	7500	2630	35
Merari	<u>6200</u>	<u>3200</u>	<u>51</u>
	22,300	8560	38

The Merarites were the nation's carpenters, and, under Ithamar's direction, they are to care for the structural framework of the Tent and the court. As with the Gershonites, the Merarites were provided with wagons to handle their burdens, (7:8).

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

- Review the instructions for making the boards of the Tabernacle and the court (Ex. 26:15-25); it will help you appreciate the extent of the Merarites' duties in moving to compute the running feet of lumber required!
- Study Ex. 27:19, with the ten preceding verses, to understand how the many pegs, cords and other accessories were used in the Tabernacle.

### D. THE CENSUS OF THE PRIESTLY FAMILIES vv. 34-49

#### TEXT

Chapter 4:34. And Moses and Aaron and the chief of the congregation numbered the sons of the Kohathites after their families, and after the house of their fathers, 35. From thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old, every one that entereth into the service, for the work in the tabernacle of the

congregation: 36. And those that were numbered of them by their families were two thousand seven hundred and fifty. 37. These were they that were numbered of the families of the Kohathites, all that might do service in the tabernacle of the congregation, which Moses and Aaron did number according to the commandment of the Lord by the hand of Moses. 38. And those that were numbered of the sons of Gershon, throughout their families, and by the house of their fathers, 30. From thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old, every one that entereth into the service, for the work in the tabernacle of the congregation, 40. even those that were numbered of them, throughout their families, by the house of their fathers, were two thousand and six hundred and thirty. 41. These are they that were numbered of the families of the sons of Gershon, of all that might do service in the tabernacle of the congregation, whom Moses and Aaron did number according to the commandment of the Lord.

42. And those that were numbered of the families of the sons of Merari, throughout their families, by the house of their fathers, 43. From thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old, every one that entereth into the service, for the work in the tabernacle of the congregation, 44. Even those that were numbered of them after their families, were three thousand and two hundred. 45. These be those that were numbered of the families of the sons of Merari, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the word of the Lord by the hand of Moses. 46. All those that were numbered of the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron and the chief of Israel numbered, after their families, and after the house of their fathers, 47. From thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old, every one that came to do the service of the ministry, and the service of the burden in the tabernacle of the congregation, 48. Even those that were numbered of them, were eight thousand and five hundred and fourscore. 49. According to the commandment of the Lord they were numbered by the hand of Moses, every one according to his service, and according to his burden: thus were they numbered of him, as the Lord commanded Moses.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 4:34. And Moses and Aaron and the princes of the congregation counted the sons of the Kohathites by their families and by their fathers' houses, 35. from thirty years of age up to fifty, everyone who entered the service for work in the Tent of Meeting. 36. And those who were counted of them by their families were 2,750. 37. These were the men counted from the Kohathite families, all who were serving in the Tent of Meeting, whom Moses and Aaron counted according to the commandment of the Lord by the hand of Moses. 38. And those who were counted of the sons of Gershon, by their families, and by the house of their fathers, from thirty years of age and up to fifty, everyone who enters into the service for work in the Tent of Meeting. 40. And those who were counted by them, by families, by their fathers' houses, were 2,630. 41. These are the men counted of the families of the sons of Gershon, of all who might do service in the Tent of Meeting, whom Moses and Aaron counted according to the commandment of the Lord.

42. And those who were counted of the families of the sons of Merari, by their families, by their fathers' houses, from thirty years old up to fifty, everyone who enters into the service, for work in the Tent of Meeting, even those who were counted of them by their families, were 3,200. 45. These are the men counted of the families of the sons of Merari, whom Moses and Aaron counted, according to the word of the Lord, by the hand of Moses. 46. All of the men counted of the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron and the princes of Israel counted, by their families and by their fathers' houses, from thirty years of age and up to fifty, everyone who came to do the work of serving and the work of carrying in the Tent of Meeting—48. those who were counted of them were 8,500. 49. They were counted by the hand of Moses according to the commandment of the Lord, everyone according to his service, and according to his burden; thus they were counted, as the Lord commanded Moses.

## COMMENTARY

*PC* proposes that the numbering in this census is rounded out by tens rather than to show each individual. Further, it is said, the task of carrying all the items of the Tabernacle as listed would not have required such a large number of people; hence, the duties were also assigned by units of ten. It is also suggested that something has disturbed the relative numbers between the Merarites and the other families, with such an abnormally high percentage of those counted being between thirty and fifty years of age. In the ordinary situation, we might expect the age bracket to account for about one-fourth of the total population; the Merarites double this figure. We are given no explanation of the fact. The same source advances the possible thoughts that an abnormally high number of children of this tribe might have been slaughtered as infants in Egypt, or that they may suddenly have reduced the number of marriages. We can only speculate on the actual solution.

## QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

92. Is the suggestion that the census here is computed by tens out of harmony with the totals from the other tribes?
93. What advantage would there be to tallying in this fashion?
94. What explanations might be offered for the unusually high percentage of Merarites between the ages of thirty and fifty?

## VII. ASSORTED LAWS (5:1-6:27)

## A. EJECTION OF THE UNCLEAN vv. 1-4

## TEXT

Chapter 5:1. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 2. Command the children of Israel, that they put out of the camp every leper, and every one that hath an issue, and whosoever is defiled by the dead; 3. Both male and female shall ye put out, without the camp shall ye put them: that they defile not their

camps, in the midst whereof I dwell. 4. And the children of Israel did so, and put them out without the camp: as the Lord spake unto Moses, so did the children of Israel.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 5:1. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2. "Command the children of Israel that they put out of the camp everyone with leprosy, and everyone having a discharge, and anyone who is unclean because of a dead person. 3. You shall put out both male and female; you shall send them outside the camp so that they will not defile their camps, among which I dwell." 4. And the children of Israel did so, and put them outside of the camp; as the Lord spoke to Moses, so did the children of Israel.

#### COMMENTARY

Full details for detecting the initial symptoms of leprosy for isolating him for three successive weeks before being consigned to perpetual separation or restoration to society, and for his ultimate return in the event of its cure are given in Lev. 13 and 14. The leper's expulsion from camp was immediate; his life must be spent where contact with others, even in the most casual manner, would be virtually impossible. Neither the Israelites nor any other ancient people have the vaguest concept of the manner in which the disease was spread. But the wisdom of such isolation would never be questioned today. The God whose hand was leading Israel long anticipated the discoveries of medical science in prescribing this treatment.

Other issues, discussed in Lev. 15, are cause of defilement as long as they obtain. They might spring from a wide variety of problems, and the victim remained separate from the nation until the matter was overcome. The term "issue" would refer to any unnatural oozing of blood, pus, or any similar liquid from the flesh, other than as the natural consequence of an injury. We are told that, until the time of Maimonides at least, a common custom in the East required the women's isolation during menstrual periods, (*ICC*, p. 40).



Defilement also occurred as a consequence of contact with a corpse, (Lev. 11:24, 21:1). The former reference applies when the corpse is that of an unclean animal; the second exempts from the law of uncleanness one who has come in contact with the body of his near of kin. These laws of exclusion from the camp were put immediately into force, and obtained when the people occupied Canaan, as prescribed in Lev. 13:45, 46.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

95. Explain the reasons for such harsh treatment of lepers as this commandment requires.
96. Review the laws relative to the period of isolation of one who is suspected of having leprosy. What provisions were made for his reinstatement into society if the problem disappeared?
97. What various kinds of bodily issues rendered a man or a woman unclean?
98. Why should an individual be considered unclean for having touched the corpse of an unclean animal?
99. This is one of the all-too-few instances in which the Israelites are said to have complied fully and immediately with the commandment of the Lord. What other such instances can you find during the period of wandering?

### B. RESTITUTION AND OFFERING FOR THEFT vv. 5-10

#### TEXT

Chapter 5:5. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 6. Speak unto the children of Israel, When a man or woman shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against the Lord, and that person be guilty; 7. Then they shall confess their sin which they have done: and he shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof, and add unto it the fifth part thereof, and give it unto him against whom he hath trespassed. 8. But if the man have no kinsman to recompense the trespass unto, let the trespass be recompensed unto the Lord, even to the priest; beside the ram of the atonement, whereby an

atonement shall be made for him. 9. And every offering of all the holy things of the children of Israel, which they bring unto the priest, shall be his. 10. And every man's hallowed things shall be his: whatsoever any man giveth the priest, it shall be his.

### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 5:5. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 6. "Speak to the children of Israel, 'When a man or a woman commits any sin that men commit, sinning against the Lord, and that person is guilty, 7. then he shall confess the sins which he has committed, and make restitution in full for the trespass, and shall add one-fifth to it, and give it to him who has been wronged. 8. But if the man has no kinsman to whom restitution may be made for the trespass, let the restitution which is made to the Lord be the priest's, besides the ram of atonement, by which atonement is made for him. 9. And every offering of all the holy things of the children of Israel, which they bring to the priest, shall be his. 10. And every man's holy things shall be his: whatever any man gives to the priest, it shall be his.' "

### COMMENTARY

The law here supplements that of Lev. 6:1-7 telling the proper procedure to follow in the event of the death of the original owner, who has left no kinsmen who might receive repayment. By no means is he exempted from restitution, since his offense is primarily against God. As David was later to say so well, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned," Ps. 51:4. Whether discovered or not, whether restitution in full is made to the wronged person in the event of robbery or any other crime, the essential thought is that all sin is first of all an assault upon the laws and will of God. *PC*, p. 36, cites the "general principle that the priest was the visible representative of the invisible majesty", hence, the offender's recompense is given him. The offering, in this instance, is a ram, given as a heave offering (Ex. 29:28). Such offerings were not burned upon the altar, but were "presented", after which they became the

property of the Lord, and were passed to the priests.

Three steps are involved, then, in the process of righting a wrong: the guilty must acknowledge his sin, he must make full restitution, and, by some process, there must be an atonement. Under the Law, the atonement involved his heave offering; under the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God effects our pardon.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

100. What was a thief required to do if he was caught with stolen goods, and the victim was still alive? (See Lev. 6:1-7).
101. How is it justifiable for the priest to receive the ram brought him as an offering for any sin?
102. Explain how all sins are essentially against God.
103. What three steps have always been required by God in order that any man's sins may be forgiven?
104. What great difference is there between the method of atonement in the Old Covenant, and in the New?
105. Discuss whether or not you think stealing and similar crimes might be discouraged today if our laws required that thieves repay what was stolen with a substantial increase, as the Law required.

### C. THE ORDEAL OF JEALOUSY vv. 11-31

#### TEXT

Chapter 5:11. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 12. Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, If any man's wife go aside, and commit a trespass against him, 13. And a man lie with her carnally, and it be hid from the eyes of her husband, and be kept close, and she is defiled, and there be no witness against her, neither she be taken with the manner; 14. And the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be defiled; or if the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be not defiled:

15. Then shall the man bring his wife unto the priest, and he shall bring her offering for her, the tenth part of an ephah of barley meal; he shall pour no oil upon it, nor put frankincense thereon; for it is an offering of jealousy, an offering of memorial, bringing iniquity to remembrance. 16. And the priest shall bring her near, and set her before the Lord: 17. And the priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel; and of the dust that is in the floor of the tabernacle the priest shall take, and put it into the water: 18. And the priest shall set the woman before the Lord, and uncover the woman's head, and put the offering of memorial in her hands, which is the jealousy offering: and the priest shall have in his hand the bitter water that causeth the curse: 19. And the priest shall charge her by an oath, and say unto the woman, If no man have lain with thee, and if thou hast not gone aside to uncleanness with another instead of thy husband, be thou free from this bitter water that causeth the curse: 20. But if thou hast gone aside to another instead of thy husband, and if thou be defiled, and some man have lain with thee besides thine husband: 21. Then the priest shall charge the woman with an oath of cursing, and the priest shall say unto the woman, The Lord make thee a curse and an oath among thy people, when the Lord doth make thy thigh to rot, and thy belly to swell; 22. And this water that causeth the curse shall go into thy bowels, to make thy belly to swell, and thy thigh to rot. And the woman shall say, Amen, amen. 23. And the priest shall write these curses in a book, and he shall blot them out with the bitter water: 24. And he shall cause the woman to drink the bitter water that causeth the curse; and the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her, and become bitter. 25. Then the priest shall take the jealousy offering out of the woman's hand, and shall wave the offering before the Lord, and offer it upon the altar: 26. And the priest shall take a handful of the offering, even the memorial thereof, and burn it upon the altar, and afterward shall cause the woman to drink the water. 27. And when he hath made her to drink the water, then it shall come to pass, that if she be defiled, and have done trespass against her husband, that the water that causeth the

curse shall enter into her, and become bitter, and her belly shall swell, and her thigh shall rot: and the woman shall be a curse among her people. 28. And if the woman be not defiled, but be clean; then she shall be free, and shall conceive seed. 29. This is the law of jealousies, when a wife goeth aside to another instead of her husband, and is defiled; 30. Or when the spirit of jealousy cometh upon him, and he be jealous over his wife, and shall set the woman before the Lord, and the priest shall execute upon her all this law. 31. Then shall the man be guiltless from iniquity, and this woman shall bear her iniquity.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 5:11. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 12. "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, 'If any man's wife go aside, and commit a sin against him, and a man have intercourse with her, and it is hidden from the eyes of her husband, and she is undetected, she is defiled, although there is no witness against her and she has not been taken in the act, 14. if a spirit of jealousy come upon him and he be jealous of his wife when she is defiled; or if a spirit of jealousy come upon him and he be jealous of his wife when she is not defiled, 15. then shall the man bring his wife to the priest, and he shall bring an offering for her, one-tenth of an ephah of barley meal; he shall pour no oil upon it, nor put frankincense on it, for it is an offering of jealousy, an offering of memorial, bringing iniquity to remembrance. 16. Then the priest shall bring her near and have her stand before the Lord; 17. and the priest shall take holy water in a clay pot, and he shall take of the dust which is on the floor of the tabernacle, and shall put it in the water. 18. The priest shall then have the woman stand before the Lord, and loosen the hair of her head, and put the memorial offering in her hands—that is, the grain offering of jealousy; and the priest shall have in his hand the water of bitterness which causes a curse. 19. And the priest shall have her take an oath, saying unto the woman, "If no man has lain with you and if you have not gone aside to uncleanness with someone other than your husband, be immune to this bitter water which causes the curse;

20. however, if you have gone aside to someone other than your husband, and if you are defiled and some man other than your husband has lain with you," 21. Then the priest shall charge the woman with an oath of the curse, and shall say to the woman, "The Lord make you a curse and an oath among your people when He causes your thigh to waste away and your abdomen to swell; 22. and this water which causes the curse shall enter your bowels and make your abdomen to swell and your thigh to waste away." And the woman shall say, "Let it be so; let it be so." 23. "Then the priest shall write these curses on a scroll and wash them off with the bitter water; 24. and he shall make the woman drink the bitter water which causes the curse, so that the water which causes the curse shall enter into her and become bitter. 25. Then the priest shall take the meal offering of jealousy from the woman's hand, and wave the offering before the Lord and offer it upon the altar; 26. and a priest shall take a handful of the offering, of the memorial portion, and burn it on the altar, and later shall cause the woman to drink the water. 27. And when he has caused her to drink the water, it shall happen that if she is defiled, and has sinned against her husband, the water which causes a curse shall enter into her and become bitter, and her abdomen will swell and her thigh will waste away and she will become a curse among her people. 28. But if the woman is not defiled, and is clean, then she shall be free and conceive children. 29. This is the Law of Jealousies: when a wife goes aside to someone other than her husband, and is defiled; 30. or when the spirit of jealousy comes over him and he becomes jealous of his wife, he shall bring the woman before the Lord and the priest shall apply all this law unto her. 31. The man shall be without guilt of sin, but his wife shall bear her guilt."

### COMMENTARY

Among all the sins which men commit, few or none are viewed with such loathing as that of adultery. Its consequences may spread in an ever-widening sphere, beginning with the offender and the offended, and including the immediate family,

the close and more remote circle of friends, neighbors, and an almost infinite combination of possibilities of social, business, religious and community factors. No other single wrong is so disruptive of the basic unit of God's ordained social structure, the home.

Even when there is reasonable ground for suspicion of marital infidelity, the consequences may be profound. The case is well presented in *KD*, pp. 29, 30: "As any suspicion cherished by a man against his wife, that she either is or has been guilty of adultery, whether well-founded or not, is sufficient to shake the marriage connection to its very roots, and to undermine, along with marriage, the foundation of the civil commonwealth, it was of the greatest importance to guard against this moral evil, which was so utterly irreconcilable with the holiness of the people of God, by appointing a process in harmony with the spirit of the theocratical law, and adapted to bring to light the guilt or innocence of any wife who had fallen into such suspicion, and at the same time to warn fickle wives against unfaithfulness."

The ordeal prescribed in this section was to be undergone where adultery was suspected, but could not be proved, for lack of witnesses. The penalty for demonstrable adultery was set (Lev. 20:10). It is in no way directly related to this test. The wife is to come with her husband, bringing an offering of barley meal to the priest. She is then to be brought before the Lord as she subscribes to an oath, setting forth the conditions that if she is innocent no harm will come of the test; but if there is guilt upon her soul, she will suffer the extraordinary consequences of having her body swell and her thigh "fall away". Josephus has suggested this is a form of dropsy. Michaelis proposes it to be dropsy of the ovary, in which a huge tumor may form in place of the ovarium, and swell to almost unbelievable size, causing dreadful emaciation. *KD* notes that "The punishment was to answer exactly to the crime, and to fall upon those bodily organs which had been the instruments of the woman's sin, viz. the organs of child-bearing.

No little symbolistic value has been found in the ingredients

of the test. *KD* has the holy water representing the righteousness and justice of God; the dust, taken from the sanctuary floor, signifies the curse of sin since dust was to be eaten by the serpent (Gen. 3:14); the earthen vessel is used rather than one of copper because it is virtually worthless; loosening the woman's hair suggests the loss of "the proper ornament of female morality and conjugal fidelity"; she stands with the offering in her own hands, as a symbol of her conduct before God, while the priests, holding the trial water, represents God and divine judgment, pp. 31, 32. Such hypothetical speculation is interesting and, to some degree logical; but the Bible makes no such associations.

After the charges against the woman had been inscribed on a roll, the writing itself was washed off into the bitter water, to become the water of trial. Much is made of this in *ICC* and *PC*, since antecedents and similarities may be found in numerous ancient, pagan societies, and contemporarily in parts of Africa among semi-barbarous people. Indeed, among some Mohammedans, those who are ill swallow portions of the Koran in hopes of a cure. *PC* cites an incident in the middle ages when Archbishop Edmund Rich, later canonized, washed a crucifix in water, drank it, and cited the thought, "Ye shall drink from the wells of salvation," p. 33. If one reckons without the power of a personal, righteous God, there is no difference between the superstitious practices of the pagan and the obedient response of believers in such a God. The Hebrews did not question either the method or the divine power behind the method of enforcing this test. In her response, "Amen, amen," the wife placed herself under the strictures of the test. If guilty, she awaited a horrible consequence; if innocent, a welcome acquittal, and the ability to produce children, v. 28.

The concluding verses, 29-31, free the husband of any guilt in subjecting his wife to the law's ordeal. It is generally believed that the consequences of the ordeal, if negative, would be apparent within a brief time. Josephus makes it a maximum of ten months. If, in the meanwhile, she should bear a son, the fact is considered an exoneration. *PC* says it is unlikely the ordeal



was ever actually used, since no guilty woman would dare subject herself to such a dreadful challenge, unless she had no fears of the actions of God. The same source asserts, with the Talmud as its authority, that the use of the law of jealousy ended forty years before the destruction of Jerusalem, p. 41.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

106. Compare the process of this testing by the Law of Jealousy with the law covering demonstrable adultery.
107. The test of infidelity here has been called "almost inhuman" by today's standards. Discuss the point, showing problems which arise in a marriage afflicted by jealousy.
108. List the possible symbolisms in the steps followed in the test.
109. Could there be any danger in the wife's undergoing her ordeal if she is innocent of any wrongdoing?
110. The test of jealousy has been compared to numerous paganistic rituals. What essential differences do you find between the two?
111. What was the composition of "holy water", and for what various purposes, other than this test, was it used?  
Show the role of God throughout such a testing period.

### D. THE VOW OF THE NAZIRITE 6:1-21

#### TEXT

Chapter 6:1. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 2. Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto the Lord; 3. He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried. 4. All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled, in the which he

separateth himself unto the Lord, he shall be holy, and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow. 6. All the days that he separateth himself unto the Lord he shall come at no dead body. 7. He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother, or for his sister, when they die: because the consecration of his God is upon his head. 8. All the days of his separation he is holy unto the Lord. 9. And if any man die very suddenly by him, and he hath defiled the head of his consecration; then he shall shave his head in the day of his cleansing, on the seventh day shall he shave it. 10. And on the eighth day he shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons, to the priest, to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: 11. And the priest shall offer for a burnt offering, and make an atonement for him, for that he sinned by the dead, and shall hallow his head that same day. 12. And he shall consecrate unto the Lord the days of his separation, and shall bring a lamb of the first year for a trespass offering: but the days that were before shall be lost, because his separation was defiled.

13. And this is the law of the Nazarite: when the days of his separation are fulfilled, he shall be brought unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: 14. And he shall offer his offering unto the Lord, one he lamb of the first year without blemish for a burnt offering, and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish for a sin offering, and one ram without blemish for peace offerings, 15. And a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, and wafers of unleavened bread anointed with oil, and their meat offering, and their drink offerings. 16. And the priest shall bring them before the Lord, and shall offer his sin offering, and his burnt offering: 17. And he shall offer the ram for a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the Lord, with the basket of unleavened bread: the priest shall offer also his meat offering, and his drink offering. 18. And the Nazarite shall shave the head of his separation at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall take the hair of the head of his separation, and put it in the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offerings. 19. And the priest shall take the sodden shoulder of the ram, and one unleavened cake out of the

basket, and one unleavened wafer, and shall put them upon the hands of the Nazarite, after the hair of his separation is shaven: 20. And the priest shall wave them for a wave offering before the Lord: this is holy for the priest, with the wave breast and heave shoulder: and after that the Nazarite may drink wine. 21. This is the law of the Nazarite who hath vowed, and of his offering unto the Lord for his separation, besides that that his hand shall get: according to the vow which he vowed, so he must do after the law of his separation.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 6:1. Again the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2. "Speak to the children of Israel and tell them, 'When either a man or a woman takes the special vow of a Nazirite to separate himself to the Lord, 3. he shall abstain from wine and strong drink, and shall drink neither fermented wine, nor other fermented drink, nor any liquid from grapes, nor eat fresh or dried grapes. 4. All the days of his abstinence he shall eat nothing which comes from the grape vine, from the seeds to the skin. 5. All the days of his vow of separation no razor shall touch his head. Until the days are completed during which he separates himself to the Lord, he shall be holy unto the Lord; and he shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow long. 6. All the days of his separation unto the Lord he shall not approach a dead person. 7. He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother or for his sister when they die, because the sign of God is upon his head. All the days of his separation he is holy unto the Lord. 9. "And if any man dies very suddenly near him, and his head of consecration has been defiled, then he shall shave his head on the day he becomes clean, that is, on the seventh day. 10. Then on the eighth day he shall bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons to the priest at the door of the Tent of Meeting. 11. The priest shall offer one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering and make atonement for him, because he was defiled by the dead; and he shall consecrate his head on that same day, 12. and dedicate to the Lord the days of his abstinence, and

bring a year-old male lamb for a guilt offering: and the previous days shall be void because his separation was defiled.

13. Now this is the law of the Nazirite when the days of his separation are completed: he shall be brought to the Tent of Meeting, 14. and he shall offer his offering to the Lord, one year-old male lamb without blemish for a sin offering, and one year-old ewe lamb without blemish for a sin offering, and one ram without blemish for a peace offering, 15. and a basket of unleavened bread, loaves of fine flour mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil, along with their grain offering and their drink offerings. 16. Then the priest shall present them unto the Lord, and shall offer with his sin offering and his burnt offering. 17. He shall offer the ram as a sacrifice of peace offering to the Lord, with the basket of unleavened bread; the priest shall also offer his meal offering and his drink offering. 18. Then the Nazirite shall shave his head of separation at the door of the Tent of Meeting and take the hair of his head of separation and put it in the fire beneath the sacrifice of peace offerings. 19. And the priest shall take the boiled ram's shoulder and one unleavened loaf from the basket, and one unleavened wafer, and put them upon the hands of the Nazirite after his hair of separation is shaved. 20. Then the priest shall wave them for a wave offering before the Lord. This is holy for the priest, together with the waved breast and the lifted shoulder; and after that the Nazirite may drink wine. 21. This is the law of the Nazirite who has vowed, and of his separation offering unto the Lord, in addition to whatever else he can afford; according to the vow he has taken, so he must do according to the law of his separation.' "

### COMMENTARY

The name here has been misspelled consistently by those who have made a false association between a Nazirite and a Nazarene. Aside from the similarity in spelling, confusion is impossible. A Nazarene was simply one from Nazareth, a city unknown during the Old Testament period. The term 'Nazirite' is derived from the Hebrew root *nazir*, whose basis meaning

indicates 'separation', which is significant to the vow. The name of the city of Nazareth was derived from *netser*, meaning a "shoot" or "sprout".

The Nazirite pledged himself to one of two kinds of vows, either temporary or lifelong. Three individuals in the Bible are known to have been lifelong Nazirites: Samuel, Samson and John the Baptist. Although women were privileged to subscribe to the vow, we have no record of any who so pledged themselves, on either condition.

When one became a Nazirite, it was for the purpose of separation unto a special service for Jehovah. The vow lasted until the special task was accomplished. Such vows of separation are not found in Israel's history alone, although there are distinguishing marks in the system: (1) neither wine, nor grapes, nor any portion of the products of the vine were to be consumed; (2) the hair was never to be cut nor trimmed at all; and, (3) the subject should never come into contact with a dead body, even of the near of kin. When the angel of the Lord listed the details of the vow to which Samson should be pledged, a fourth element was included: he should eat no unclean thing (Judges 13:7). Since this final provision was a law unto Israel, its inclusion should have been unnecessary; however, the state of affairs at the time may have dictated that the term be included. Both Samuel and Samson were given to be Nazirites before their birth, and it is inferred from Luke 1:15 that the same is true of John. *PBD* affirms that many, but perhaps not all, of the Qumran community at the time of John were Nazirites, p. 575. Acts 21:23ff. makes reference to Paul's support of the four men who were Nazirites, and some have believed the apostle himself subscribed in Acts 18:18. But the evidence is inconclusive. We do know that Herod Agrippa supported a number of Nazirites, according to Josephus, and that numerous Jews took the vow as a protest against Antiochus Epiphanes in the time of the Maccabees. Among the bitter denunciations of Amos is a strong condemnation of those who gave wine to the Nazirites, thus inducing them to break their vows. In the passage, (Amos 2:11, 12), the Nazirites apparently

are considered, along with the prophets, to be spiritual leaders of the people.

Upon completion of the term of his pledge, the Nazirite was released to ordinary life according to the schedule announced in vv. 13-20. The climax came when the hair of his head was shaved and burned. Thus the Nazirite acknowledged that he had been able to keep his vow by virtue of the strength God had given him. The "sodden shoulder" was the ram's left; the right already belonged to the priest. (Lev. 7:32). Since the offerer shared in this offering, the peace offering, it was appropriate that he should take the choice portion not assigned to the priest for the sacrificial meal for himself and his family as all celebrated the conclusion of the vow. Wine was allowed for the occasion (v. 20).

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

113. Distinguish between the Nazarene and the Nazirite, both as to meaning and derivation.
114. At what age might one take the vow of the Nazirite?
115. What is the purpose of this vow?
116. Give the restrictions placed upon the Nazirite, and tell why each one was prescribed.
117. What relationship might there be between the length of the Nazirite's hair and the validity of his vow?
118. Which of the Bible characters are known to have been Nazirites? What proof have we in each case?
119. How long did the Nazirite vow last?
120. Describe the ritual through which a Nazirite devotee must go in the event of his defilement.
121. List the steps associated with the completion of the vow of the Nazirite. What is the special symbolism of the shaving of the head? of the unleavened bread?
122. How was the termination of the vow celebrated? by whom?

## E. THE AARONIC BENEDICTION vv. 22-27

## TEXT

Chapter 6:22. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 23. Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, 24. The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: 25. The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: 26. the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. 27. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 6:22. And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 23. "Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, 'In this way you shall bless the children of Israel, saying to them, 24. "The Lord bless you, and keep you; 25. The Lord make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you: 26. The Lord lift up His countenance unto you, And give you peace." 27. They shall put my name on the children of Israel; and I will bless them.'"

## COMMENTARY

Although Aaron and his sons had been established now as high priest and family, God delivers a special formula of blessing to Moses, and, through him, the people. The method underscored once more the esteem in which Moses is held. According to the Mishnah, this blessing was given daily in Jerusalem at the temple, and the proper name for Jehovah was used rather than the altered form, "Adonai," which suggests the solemnity of its pronouncement. The same source reports use of the blessing in the synagogues, but with the substitute name. Aaron was appointed to bless the people (Deut. 21:5, cf. I Chron. 23:13), and Lev. 9:22 gives an example of this action. In this sequence of thoughts we readily see the divine name being committed exclusively to the high priestly line.

The structure of the benediction is elementary, consisting of three sections, each of which begins with "The Lord," followed

by two parts. Each of the two parts is directed to the hearer. It might be analyzed as follows:

The Lord	bless thee,	and keep thee:
The Lord	make his face shine upon thee	and be gracious unto thee:
The Lord	lift up his countenance upon thee	and give thee peace.

Analysis by ICC yields a fruitful harvest of thought. "The Lord bless thee" is tied to the promises of Deut. 28:2-14—that plenteous harvests and success in all undertakings. "And guard thee" gives the reverse of this wish—that God should guard against such things as drought and hostile invasions. The shining face of the Lord is related to many references, such as Ps. 31:17; Dan. 9:17; Ps. 80:4, 8, 20, and many others. The significance is that of inward pleasure or, when turned upon another, a favorable disposition. It suggests also, as in Ex. 34:29ff., the radiant glory of the divine presence. God's graciousness hardly needs comment. It is obvious in all ages through His supreme mercy and providence. That God should "lift up his countenance" suggests favorable regard, just as hiding the face would indicate imminent trouble for His creatures. God's smile shines as the sun upon those who love Him. The peace, *shalom*, which only God can bestow, is much more than a negative circumstance—the absence of war, or disruptive circumstance—it is the stability, calmness and utter tranquility captured in beautiful thought by Isaiah (26:3): "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee." With this thought, the benediction is most appropriately closed.

The "name" which was to be put upon the people has now been irrecoverably lost by those into whose custody it was most carefully entrusted. For fear of profaning the original form of the name of Jehovah, its use was gradually abandoned and ultimately forfeited entirely. The various names we use today are either speculation and guesswork, or substitutes. In its original form, the name pointed to the timeless and eternal nature of God—without beginning and without end; existing at all times and at any time, before time was ordained for man, and after time shall end. In His eternal Person is grounded any



and every blessing man may seek.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

123. Why was this benediction, to be used by Aaron and his descendants, first delivered through Moses?
124. Arrange the benediction into its poetic components, showing the finely balanced thoughts.
125. What special kinds of blessings are suggested here?
126. How had God promised to "guard" or "keep" Israel?
127. What is the significance of the phrases "make His face shine upon you" and "lift up His countenance unto you"?
128. Cite some examples of the appearance of God's radiance to men in both the Old and the New Testaments. What was the common reaction? Is the expression here any different, and if so, in what way?
129. What paradox do you find in God's promise of "peace" unto the Israelites as you think of their later history?
130. Why are we unable to say exactly what the original form of God's name might have been? How was it lost, and by whom?

## VIII. PRINCES' OFFERINGS AT THE DEDICATION

(7:1-89)

### TEXT

Chapter 7:1. And it came to pass on the day that Moses had fully set up the tabernacle, and had anointed it, and sanctified it, and all the instruments thereof, both the altar and all the vessels thereof, and had anointed them, and sanctified them: 2. that the princes of Israel, heads of the house of their fathers, who were the princes of the tribes, and were over them that were numbered, offered: 3. And they brought their offering before the Lord, six covered wagons, and twelve oxen; a wagon for two of the princes, and for each one an ox: and they brought them before the tabernacle. 4. And the Lord spake

unto Moses, saying, 5. Take it of them, that they may be to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; and thou shalt give them unto the Levites, to every man according to his service. 6. And Moses took the wagons and the oxen, and gave them unto the Levites. 7. Two wagons and four oxen he gave unto the sons of Gershon, according to their service: 8. And four wagons and eight oxen he gave unto the sons of Merari, according unto their service, under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest. 9. But unto the sons of Kohath he gave none: because the service of the sanctuary belonging unto them was that they should bear upon their shoulders.

10. And the princes offered for dedicating of the altar in the day that it was anointed, even the princes offered their offering before the altar. 11. And the Lord said unto Moses, They shall offer their offering, each prince on his day, for the dedicating of the altar.

12. And he that offered his offering the first day was Nahshon the son of Amminadab, of the tribe of Judah: 13. And his offering was one silver charger, the weight whereof was a hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary; both of them were full of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering: 14. One spoon of ten shekels of gold, full of incense: 15. One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering: 16. One kid of the goats for a sin offering: 17. And for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five lambs of the first year: this was the offering of Nahshon the son of Amminadab.

18. On the second day Nethaneel the son of Zuar, prince of Issachar, did offer: 19. He offered for his offering one silver charger, the weight whereof was a hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering: 20. One spoon of gold of ten shekels, full of incense: 21. One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering: 22. One kid of the goats for a sin

offering: 23. And for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five lambs of the first year: this was the offering of Nethaneel the son of Zuar.

24. On the third day Eliab the son of Helon, prince of the children of Zebulun, did offer: 25. His offering was one silver charger, the weight whereof was a hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil, for a meat offering: 26. One golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense: 27. One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering: 28. One kid of the goats for a sin offering: 29. And for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five lambs of the first year: this was the offering of Eliab the son of Helon.

30. On the fourth day Elizur the son of Shedeur, prince of the children of Reuben, did offer: 31. His offering was one silver charger of the weight of a hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering: 32. One golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense: 33. One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering: 34. One kid of the goats for a sin offering: 35. And for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five lambs of the first year: this was the offering of Elizur the son of Shedeur.

36. On the fifth day Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai, prince of the children of Simeon, did offer: 37. His offering was one silver charger, the weight whereof was a hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering: 38. One golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense: 39. One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering: 40. One kid of the goats for a sin offering: 41. And for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five lambs of the first year: this was the offering of Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai.

42. On the sixth day Eliasaph the son of Deuel, prince of the children of Gad, offered: 43. His offering was one silver charger of the weight of a hundred and thirty shekels, a silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering: 44. One golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense: 45. One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering: 46. One kid of the goats for a sin offering: 47. And for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five lambs of the first year: this was the offering of Eliasaph the son of Deuel.

48. On the seventh day Elishama the son of Ammihud, prince of the children of Ephraim, offered: 49. His offering was one silver charger, the weight whereof was a hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering: 50. One golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense: 51. One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering: 52. One kid of the goats for a sin offering: 53. And for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five lambs of the first year: this was the offering of Elishama the son of Ammihud.

54. On the eighth day offered Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur, prince of the children of Manasseh: 55. His offering was one silver charger of the weight of a hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering: 56. One golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense: 57. One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering: 58. One kid of the goats for a sin offering: 59. And for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five lambs of the first year: this was the offering of Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur.

60. On the ninth day Abidan the son of Gideoni, prince of the children of Benjamin, offered: 61. His offering was one silver charger, the weight whereof was a hundred and thirty

shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering: 62. One golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense: 63. One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering: 64. One kid of the goats for a sin offering: 65. And for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five lambs of the first year: this was the offering of Abidan the son of Gideoni.

66. One the tenth day Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai, prince of the children of Dan, offered: 67. His offering was one silver charger, the weight whereof was a hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering: 68. One golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense: 69. One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering: 70. One kid of the goats for a sin offering: 71; And for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five lambs of the first year: this was the offering of Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai.

72. On the eleventh day Pagiel the son of Ocran, prince of the children of Asher, offered: 73. His offering was one silver charger, the weight whereof was a hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering; 74. One golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense: 75. One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering: 76. One kid of the goats for a sin offering: 77. And for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five lambs of the first year: this was the offering of Pagiel the son of Ocran.

78. On the twelfth day Ahira the son of Enan, prince of the children of Naphtali, offered: 79. His offering was one silver charger, the weight whereof was a hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary; both of them full of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat offering: 80. One golden spoon of ten shekels, full of

incense: 81. One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a burnt offering: 82. One kid of the goats for a sin offering: 83. And for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five lambs of the first year: this was the offering of Ahira the son of Enan.

84. This was the dedication of the altar, in the day when it was anointed, by the princes of Israel: twelve chargers of silver, twelve silver bowls, twelve spoons of gold: 85. Each charger of silver weighing a hundred and thirty shekels, each bowl seventy: all the silver vessels weighed two thousand and four hundred shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary: 86. The golden spoons were twelve, full of incense, weighing ten shekels apiece, after the shekel of the sanctuary; all the gold of the spoons was a hundred and twenty shekels. 87. All the oxen for the burnt offering were twelve bullocks, the rams twelve, the lambs of the first year twelve, with their meat offering: and the kids of the goats for sin offering twelve. 88. And all the oxen for the sacrifice of the peace offerings were twenty and four bullocks, the rams sixty, the he goats sixty, the lambs of the first year sixty. This was the dedication of the altar, after that it was anointed. 89. And when Moses was gone into the tabernacle of the congregation to speak with him, then he heard the voice of one speaking unto him from off the mercy seat that was upon the ark of testimony, from between the two cherubim: and he spake unto him.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 7:1. Now it happened on the day that Moses had finished erecting the tabernacle, and had anointed and sanctified it with all its furnishings, both the altar and its utensils, and had anointed and sanctified them, 12. that the princes of Israel, heads of their fathers' households, who were princes of the tribes and were over those who were counted, offered. 3. They brought their offerings unto the Lord: six covered carts and twelve oxen, a cart for every two princes, and an ox for each one; and they brought them before the tabernacle. 4. And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 5. "Accept

the offering from them, that they may be used in serving the Tent of Meeting; and you shall give them to the Levites, to each man according to his service." 6. And Moses took the carts and the oxen, and gave them to the Levites. 7. He gave two carts and four oxen to the sons of Gershon, according to their service; 8. and he gave four carts and eight oxen to the sons of Merari, according to their service under the supervision of Ithamar, the son of Aaron the priest. 9. But he gave none to the sons of Kohath because the service of the sanctuary was theirs: they bore it upon their shoulders.

10. And the princes offered the dedication offering for the altar on the day it was anointed, and the princes offered their offering before the altar. 11. And the Lord said to Moses, "They shall offer their offering, each prince, on his day, for the dedication of the altar."

12. The one who brought his offering on the first day was Nahshon, the son of Amminadab, of the tribe of Judah; 13. his offering was one silver dish, weighing one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary; both of them were filled with fine flour mixed with oil for a meal offering; 14. one spoon weighing ten gold shekels, full of incense; 15. one young bullock, one ram, one year-old lamb, for a burnt offering; 16. one male goat for a sin offering; 17. and for a peace offering sacrifice, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, five year-old lambs: this was the offering of Nahshon, the son of Amminadab.

18. On the second day Nethanel, the son of Zuar, prince of Issachar, offered. [From this point forward, through the eighty-third verse of chapter seven, the account of the offerings of the twelve princes proceeds from man to man virtually verbatim, differing only as the names themselves change, and briefly in the introductory formula of v. 19, as noted in the comments. We are not reproducing the text excepting only those verses which show the order of the princes' offerings.] 24. On the third day Eliab, the son of Helon, prince of the sons of Zebulun, offered . . . .

30. On the fourth day Elizur, the son of Shedeur, prince of the sons of Reuben, offered . . . .

36. On the fifth day Shelumiel, the son of Zurishaddai, prince of the sons of Simeon, offered . . . .

42. On the sixth day Eliasaph, the son of Deuel, prince of the sons of Gad, offered . . . .

48. On the seventh day, Elishama, the son of Ammihud, prince of the sons of Manasseh, offered . . . .

54. On the eighth day Gamaliel, the son of Pedahzur, prince of the sons of Manasseh, offered . . . .

60. On the ninth day Abidan, the son of Gideon, prince of the sons of Benjamin, offered . . . .

66. On the tenth day Ahiezer, the son of Ammishaddai, prince of the sons of Dan, offered . . . .

72. On the eleventh day, Pagiel, the son of Ocran, prince of the sons of Asher, offered . . . .

78. On the twelfth day Ahira, the son of Enan, prince of the sons of Naphtali, offered . . . .

84. This was the dedication of the altar, on the day it was anointed, by the princes of Israel: twelve silver dishes, 85. twelve silver bowls, twelve golden spoons; each silver dish weighed one hundred and thirty shekels, each bowl seventy: altogether the silver vessels weighed two thousand four hundred shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary. The gold of all the spoons was one hundred and twenty shekels. 87. Altogether there were twelve oxen, bullocks, for the burnt offerings, and twelve rams, twelve year-old lambs with their meal offering, and twelve male goats for a sin offering. 88. The total number of oxen for the sacrifice of peace offerings was 24 bulls; of the rams, 60; of the male goats, 60; of the year-old lambs, 60. This was the dedication of the altar, after it was anointed. 89. Now when Moses had gone into the Tent of Meeting to speak with Him, he heard the Voice speaking to him from the covering that was on the ark of testimony, from between the two cherubim: and it spoke to him.



## COMMENTARY

Although this portion might seem needlessly redundant to the contemporary reader, what with the detailed repetition of the twelve identical offerings of the princes of the twelve tribes, it would not have been considered so by Moses, nor by the people. The great point being established is that, regardless of the size of the tribe, the status of the prince, the wealth held personally or by his tribe, or any other factor, all were to bring precisely the same elements—nothing more, and nothing less. Before God, all were equal.

When all things were ready, it was appropriate that the initial offerings be made by the leaders of the people themselves. So, following the consecration of the Tabernacle, the initiatory rites of the priests, and the census, at which time the princes were selected, a twelve-day period was set aside for the sacrificial gifts to be presented formally. The phrase "on the day" has troubled some. If it be taken literally, this would be the first day of the first month of the second year (see Ex. 40:17); but the account makes it clear that the census had been finished and duties assigned to the Levitical families. Further, the same phrase occurs in v. 10, at which time, if taken literally, all princes would have made their offerings on the same day. Therefore it is wise to understand the phrase as meaning "at the time"; it is so translated in Gen. 2:4.

When the chosen leaders are called "princes", we must understand the term in its use. Alternate translations would allow "elders" or "leaders", which are better understood today. The men clearly were those of eminence who stood as representatives of their entire tribes. The Septuagint uses *episkopes*, "overseers", suggesting a similarity to the leadership ordained for the New Testament church.

Using the six wagons provided, the offerings were brought to the east side of the Tabernacle—its only entrance. *PC*, after discussing the type of vehicle others have suggested for this duty, concludes that, after the nature of the terrain and the small number of oxen assigned to each, the "wagons" may have

had no wheels, but were carried by one ox at the front with another at the rear, with the load on a bed supported by shafts between the animals, (p. 58).

Two wagons and four oxen are assigned the Gershonites for transporting their burdens when the Tabernacle was moved; four wagons and eight oxen are assigned to the Merarites for a similar purpose, while none are given the Kohathites: they must bear their burdens on their shoulders. The purpose is well summarized in *IB*: "More than ever in this mechanical age we need to realize that there are some things which call for personal handling, and with the utmost care," (p. 175). This suggests both a greater honor and a weightier responsibility to Kohath. *PC* adds that Uzzah's death is an instance of the disregard of such a rule (cf. II Sam. 6:3, 7 and I Chron. 15:13), p. 58.

With v. 10 begins the dedication of the altar in a second sense, since it had previously been consecrated by the sacred oil and stipulated sacrifices (Lev. 8:10, 15). Now it is being designated for use of the people through their legates, the princes. The twelve identical gifts are brought to the place of offering, although the actual sacrifices are made over a period of twelve days, as the Lord instructed (v. 11). The order in which they present their gifts coincides with the order of march established when the census was taken (1:5-15). Sheer weight of numbers of the sacrificial animals would make it impossible to accept, as *ICC* proposes (p. 76) that all the presentations were made on the same day. *KD* shows, that there was not room in the court of the Tabernacle for the 252 bulls, rams and sheep to have been "received, slaughtered, and prepared for sacrificing all at once, or on the same day; and it would have been also impossible to burn 36 whole animals (oxen, rams, and sheep), and the fat portions of 216 animals upon the altar," (p. 44).

The gifts are first detailed as each individual brought them; then a summary follows. Each prince brought one silver "charger", or dish, of 130 sacred shekels each—the equivalent of about 4½ pounds avoirdupois. He also gave a silver basin, used

for pouring, 70 shekels. This was filled with "fine flour mingled with oil", perhaps serving not only as a meal offering and receptacle for the princes, but being designated to similar uses in the future. The "spoon", perhaps a small cup with a handle, and made of gold, weighed about four ounces, but would have been most valuable; it was filled with the prescribed incense.

Next are named the animals given for sacrificing: one young bull, one ram and one lamb—all representing the animals given for a burnt offering, (Lev. 1:2). The single goat, or "shaggy one", was a sin offering. It was followed by a peace offering of two oxen, five rams, five he goats and five yearling lambs. Thus the three kinds of offerings expressed dedication, expiation and fellowship with God.

One slight, insignificant variation may be seen as the offering of Nethaneel is described. V. 19 says, "He offered for his offering," whereas in all other instances the princes' actions are described, "And his offering was" (cf. vv. 13, 25, etc.).

When the summary is given in vv. 84-86, the totals are most impressive: the twelve silver dishes together with the silver basins, came to 2400 shekels; the golden spoon-cups weighed 120 shekels. However, they were quite conservative when compared with the extravagance of the offerings when Solomon's temple was dedicated (cf. I Kings 8:63).

The final verse, 89, is not an isolated, disjointed afterthought, as suggested in *IB* p. 180. Moses goes into the Tent of Meeting as was his custom, and is engaged in conversation with the Lord. It seems quite natural to suppose that the message at this time related to the actions just ended: the Lord expressed His approval of the manner in which the princes had fully complied with His instructions, and their offerings were acceptable.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

131. Why does Moses repeat in such detail every offering of each of the princes?

132. Were the princes' offerings for themselves only, or were they acting in behalf of their tribes and families?
133. Why is it unlikely that all of the offerings occurred on a single day? If the offerings were spread over twelve days, how can we understand the meaning of "on the day", which suggests that the offerings occurred within a one-day period?
134. Discuss the significance of the term "prince" as it is used in reference to the leaders of the twelve tribes.
135. Why were no wagons provided for the Kohathites to carry their assigned burdens of the Tabernacle? Why should the Gershonites need only half as many wagons as did the Merarites?
136. Compute the value of the gifts of silver and gold which each prince brought as his offering. Add this for the combined total.
137. What special attitudes and purposes were expressed through the three kinds of offerings?
138. In what sense does the final verse (v. 89) fit the previous thrust of chapter seven?
139. Compare the offerings of the twelve princes with those of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple. Why is the latter so much greater than the former?
140. Suggest some valuable lessons Christians may appropriate from this chapter.
141. How is it that Moses, who was not designated a high priest, could enter the Tent of Meeting to converse with the Lord?

## IX. ASSORTED LAWS AND INSTRUCTIONS (8:1-10:10)

### A. ON LIGHTING THE LAMPS IN THE TABERNACLE

vv. 1-4

#### TEXT

Chapter 8:1-4. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 2.

Speak unto Aaron, and say unto him, When thou lightest the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light over against the candlestick. 3. And Aaron did so; he lighted the lamps thereof over against the candlestick, as the Lord commanded Moses. 4. And this work of the candlestick was of beaten gold; unto the shaft thereof, unto the flowers thereof, was beaten work: according unto the pattern which the Lord had showed Moses, so he made the candlestick.

### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 8:1-4. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2. "Speak to Aaron and say to him, 'When you serve the lamps, the seven lamps will give light in front of the lampstands.'" 3. And Aaron did so: he served its lamps at the front of the lampstand as the Lord had commanded Moses. 4. Now this was the workmanship of the lampstand: it was of hammered gold; from its base to its flowers it was hammered work. So he made the lampstand according to the pattern which the Lord had shown Moses.

### COMMENTARY

The term "candlestick", found throughout the *KJV* and some others, is very misleading. As is commonly known, the sole provision for light in the tabernacle was an ornately carved lampstand with seven small bowls, in which olive oil was burned. It would be a necessity for the priests, since little or no natural light would ever be available for the performance of their duties.

The instructions to Aaron, also, are misleading in the older translations. He was told not to "light" the lamps, but to "attend them" or to set them up. The duty no doubt was refilling them with the oil, and lighting them as required. They would illuminate the table of showbread, opposite on the north side of the tabernacle, and the altar of incense, standing in front of the veil which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. The light thus tended and provided by Aaron make the ministrations of the priests possible, since their service was

entirely with the other two articles of furniture, and they had no duties which required them to use the lampstand itself.

Josephus (*Antiquities* III. 6, 7) says the seven lamps represented the sun, moon and planets, and were a constant symbol of God's creative power, and His work in creating light. Christian scholars have found the lamps symbolic of the Word of God, as in Psalm 119:114, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, And a light unto my path," (cf also Prov. 6:23).

Little needs to be said about the lampstand itself. Of a single lump of solid gold, it was hammered into a base, shaft, and seven cups, each cup resting upon a separate branch. Three of these extended to the left and three to the right, with a single stem in the center. Its stand and its branches were ornately decorated with almond designs, branches and flowers and blossoms, (see Ex. 25:31-36). It was a magnificent piece, the work of Bezaleel and Oholiab, who had been specially endowed by the Spirit of God for the performance of their work, (Ex. 31:1ff.). Here, as in numerous other instances, God emphatically instructs them to work precisely according to the pattern He had entrusted to Moses.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

142. What light was available in the Holy Place, other than that provided by the lampstand?
143. Describe the lampstand fully. Who had made it, and how did they gain their skill?
144. What was burned in the lampstand? What articles of the priests' service required this illumination?
145. At what times was Aaron to attend unto the lamp?
146. Why was God so insistent that this, and the other articles in the Tabernacle, should be made exactly as He commanded? Run the references on this point, and count the number of times God so directed Moses. Is there a lesson we can learn as Christians from the point?

B. CONSECRATION OF THE LEVITES FOR SERVICE

vv. 5-22

TEXT

Chapter 8:5. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 6. Take the Levites from among the children of Israel, and cleanse them. 7. And thus shalt thou do unto them, to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purifying upon them, and let them shave all their flesh, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean. 8. Then let them take a young bullock with his meat offering, even fine flour mingled with oil, and another young bullock shalt thou take for a sin offering. 9. And thou shalt bring the Levites before the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt gather the whole assembly of the children of Israel together. 10. And thou shalt bring the Levites before the Lord: and the children of Israel shall put their hands upon the Levites: 11. And Aaron shall offer the Levites before the Lord for an offering of the children of Israel, that they may execute the service of the Lord. 12. And the Levites shall lay their hands upon the heads of the bullocks: and thou shalt offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, unto the Lord, to make an atonement for the Levites. 13. And thou shalt set the Levites before Aaron, and before his sons, and offer them for an offering unto the Lord. 14. Thus shalt thou separate the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be mine. 15. And after that shall the Levites go in to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt cleanse them, and offer them for an offering. 16. For they are wholly given unto me from among the children of Israel; instead of such as open every womb, even instead of the firstborn of all the children of Israel, have I taken them unto me. 17. For all the firstborn of the children of Israel are mine, both man and beast: on the day that I smote every firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for myself. 18. And I have taken the Levites for all the firstborn of the children of Israel. 19. And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the service of the

children of Israel in the tabernacle of the congregation, and to make an atonement for the children of Israel: that there be no plague among the children of Israel, when the children of Israel come nigh unto the sanctuary. 20. And Moses, and Aaron, and all the congregation of the children of Israel, did to the Levites according unto all that the Lord commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so did the children of Israel unto them. 21. And the Levites were purified, and they washed their clothes; and Aaron offered them as an offering before the Lord; and Aaron made an atonement for them to cleanse them. 22. And after that went the Levites in to do their service in the tabernacle of the congregation before Aaron, and before his sons: as the Lord had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so did they unto them.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 8:5. Again the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, 6. "Take the Levites from among the sons of Israel, and purify them: sprinkle cleansing water upon them, and let them shave their whole bodies, and wash their clothes, thus making themselves clean. 8. Then let them take a young bull with its meal offering, fine flour mixed with oil, and a second bull you shall take for a sin offering. 9. And you shall bring the Levites before the Tent of Meeting. You shall also gather the whole congregation of the children of Israel together, 10. bring the Levites before the Lord; and the children of Israel shall lay their hands on the Levites. 11. Then Aaron shall offer the Levites before the Lord as an offering from the children of Israel, in order that they may perform the service of the Lord. 12. And the Levites shall lay their hands upon the heads of the bulls. Then offer one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering to the Lord to make atonement for the Levites. 13. Then you shall have the Levites stand before Aaron and his sons in order to present them as a wave offering to the Lord. 14. "In this manner you shall set the Levites apart from among the children of Israel, and the Levites shall be mine. 15. After that the Levites may enter into the Tent of Meeting to serve; but



you shall cleanse them and present them as a wave offering, 16. since they are entirely given to me from among the children of Israel. I have taken them unto myself in the place of every first child of the womb, the firstborn of all the children of Israel. 17. Every firstborn of the children of Israel is mine among the men and the animals; on the day that I brought death upon all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I set them apart unto myself. 18. But I have taken the Levites rather than each of the firstborn among the children of Israel. And I have given the Levites as dedicated ones to Aaron and his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the service of the children of Israel at the Tent of Meeting, and to make atonement in behalf of the children of Israel, and there may not be a plague among the children of Israel from their approaching the sanctuary." 20. Thus did Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel to the Levites: according to everything the Lord had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, the children of Israel did to them. 21. The Levites, also, purified themselves from sin and washed their clothes; then Aaron presented them as a wave offering before the Lord. 22. After that the Levites entered to do their service in the Tent of Meeting before Aaron and his sons; exactly as the Lord had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, they did to them.

#### COMMENTARY

Chapter three has already told us of the selection of the Levites for special service in the sanctuary (v. 5ff). But before they were to begin the performance of their duties, they must be fully set apart from the people of Israel in special rites of consecration. Our passage parallels the instructions of Leviticus 8. ICC cites Kuenen, "Nu. viii. 5-22 . . . is an insipid repetition and exaggeration of the account of the separation of the Levites . . . . If the author of these last-named chapters had supposed that the Levites, before entering on their duties, had to be purified, and presented to Yahwe . . . he would not have passed it over in silence . . . ." He concludes by saying the passage is a pericope added by some later writer.

On the other hand it is a bit surprising to discover *IB* defending the doubled passage by the suggestion of two results: the exaltation of the priesthood over the Levites (the Levites are simply cleansed; the priests are sanctified); and the notable differentiation between the Levites and the ordinary Israelites.

The Midrash, commenting upon the question, says that when Aaron saw the dedication offerings of the princes, he was much disappointed that neither he nor his tribe was represented. Therefore, God told him, "By your life! Your part is greater than theirs, since you kindle and prepare the lamps," *RCP*, p. 131. The process by which the Levites were cleansed was elementary: they were sprinkled with the water of purification, after which all hair was shaved from the body. We should notice what they were *not* to do: undergo a ceremonial washing, dress in the priestly robes, undergo the oil anointment, nor be sprinkled with the blood of sacrifices. *PC* assumes that the purpose for all these rituals was to assure personal cleanliness. Two bullocks were brought before the Lord; their uses are shown in v. 12: one is a sin offering; the other a burnt offering. These offerings were to be made after all the Israelites assembled and laid their hands upon the Levites, designating the fact that they represented the entire nation in their services. Aaron himself made the pronouncement of their consecration. The Levites must always consider themselves both the property and the servants of the Lord, standing in the stead of all the firstborn sons among the other tribes. Such a provision was a significant advance beyond the pagan practice of sacrificing the firstborn son, as unto Molech, a practice of which Jehovah could not conceivably approve, He much preferred, as it were, living sacrifices.

When God pledged that the nation would be spared the visitation of plagues as long as they were, through the Levites, faithful in their religious service, it was a landmark declaration. We can only understand this to mean that God allows such plagues to visit those who are logically expected to serve Him, but do not. History amply attests to the validity of this conclusion.

The conclusion of the verses merely demonstrates that the divine commission was carried out exactly as ordered.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

147. What purposes are achieved in repeating in this chapter a service which has previously been described?
148. Which of the ordinary portions of the ritual of cleansing are omitted upon this occasion? Why?
149. For what purposes were the two bullocks used?
150. What did it signify when all the people placed their hands upon the heads of the Levites? Does this lessen the duties of the people?
151. Why did God not command the literal sacrifice of Israel's firstborn?
152. Are we to consider that plagues and other catastrophes are always the result of widespread sinful conduct?
153. In what sense have the Levites been given to Aaron and his sons (v. 18)?
154. Discuss the importance of doing exactly what the Lord asks, as is recorded in verses 20, 22.

### C. LIMITS OF AGE AND SERVICE FOR THE LEVITES vv. 23-26

#### TEXT

Chapter 8:23. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 24. This is it that belongeth unto the Levites: from twenty and five years old and upward they shall go in and wait upon the service of the tabernacle of the congregation: 25. And from the age of fifty years they shall cease waiting upon the service thereof, and shall serve no more: 26. But shall minister with their brethren in the tabernacle of the congregation, to keep the charge, and shall do no service. Thus shalt thou do unto the Levites touching their charge.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 8:23. Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 24. "This is the regulation of the Levites: from twenty-five years of age and up they shall go in to do service in the work of the Tent of Meeting. 25. But at the age of fifty they shall retire from service in the work, and not work any more. 26. However, they may help their brothers in the Tent of Meeting, to keep an obligation; but they shall not do any work themselves. You shall use this regulation upon the Levites in their commission."

## COMMENTARY

In 4:3-49, the ages for service among the Levites is given at thirty to fifty: but a careful reading will show the logical difference between the two prescriptions. In the earlier passage, the assignment is for the transportation of the tabernacle and its trappings; in the passage before us, the Levites are to render all the services necessary to its use. Such duties would include the tasks of cleaning, preparing the wood and water for sacrifices, slaughter of the animals, and dismantling or assembling the entire sanctuary. As *KD* well points out, "The transport of the tabernacle required the strength of a full-grown man, and therefore the more advanced age of thirty years; whereas the duties connected with the tabernacle when standing were a lighter description, and could easily be performed from the twenty-fifth year," p. 49.

When David established the tabernacle permanently on Mount Zion, he utilized the services of Levites as young as twenty (I Chron. 23:24, 25), saying specifically that this put an end to the transportation of the dwelling and its furnishings. It is most likely that such younger workers would have served only in a kind of apprenticeship, however.

Upon reaching the age of fifty, service was no longer compulsory among the Levites. They might, nevertheless, offer their assistance, and they were held in high honor among their younger counterparts.

## QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

155. Is there a contradiction between the regulations here, calling for the service of the Levites between ages 25-50 and that of Num. 4:3-49, in which the ages are set at 30-50? Explain and defend your answer.
156. What logical division of the work of the Levites might depend upon their ages?
157. How was David justified in using Levites as young as age 20 in service of the tabernacle?
158. What special activities might have been performed by Levites who had reached the retirement age?

## D. THE SECOND PASSOVER:

## A SUPPLEMENTARY OBSERVANCE (9:1-14)

## TEXT

Chapter 9:1. And the Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying, 2. Let the children of Israel also keep the passover at his appointed season. 3. In the fourteenth day of this month, at even, ye shall keep it in his appointed season: according to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof, shall ye keep it. 4. And Moses spake unto the children of Israel, that they should keep the passover. 5. And they kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month at even in the wilderness of Sinai: according to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so did the children of Israel.

6. And there were certain men, who were defiled by the dead body of a man, that they could not keep the passover on that day: and they came before Moses and before Aaron on that day. 7. And those men said unto him, We are defiled by the dead body of a man: wherefore are we kept back, that we may not offer an offering of the Lord in his appointed season among the children of Israel? 8. And Moses said unto them, Stand still, and I will hear what the Lord will command concerning you.

9. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 10. Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be in a journey afar off, yet he shall keep the passover unto the Lord. 11. The fourteenth day of the second month at even they shall keep it, and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. 12. They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it: according to all the ordinances of the passover they shall keep it. 13. But the man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbeareth to keep the passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people: because he brought not the offering of the Lord in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin. 14. And if a stranger shall sojourn among you, and will keep the passover unto the Lord; according to the ordinance of the passover, and according to the manner thereof, so shall he do: ye shall have one ordinance, both for the stranger, and for him that was born in the land.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 9:1. Thus spoke the Lord to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying, 2. "Now let the children of Israel observe the Passover at its established time. 3. At twilight of the fourteenth day of the month, you shall observe it at its established time, according to all its regulations, and all its laws." 4. And Moses told the children of Israel to observe the Passover in this manner. 5. The people observed the Passover in the first month, on the fourteenth day, at twilight, in the wilderness of Sinai; just as the Lord had commanded, the children of Israel did.

6. But some men who were unclean from a dead person could not observe the Passover on that day. They came before Moses and Aaron that day, and said to him, 7. "Although we are unclean because of a dead person, why are we prevented from giving the offering of the Lord at its scheduled time along with the children of Israel?" 8. Moses said to them, "Stand here, and I will hear what the Lord commands you."

9. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 10. "Say to the children of Israel, 'If any of you become unclean from a dead person, or is traveling far away, he may, nevertheless, keep the Passover unto the Lord. 11. In the second month, on the fourteenth day at twilight, he shall keep it; he shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. 12. He shall not leave any of it until morning, nor break a single one of its bones; they shall observe it according to all the law of the Passover. 13. But the man who is clean, and is not away from home, yet fails to observe the Passover, he shall be excommunicated from his people, since he did not give the Lord's offering at its set time. He shall bear his sin. 14. And if a foreigner sojourns with you and would keep the Passover of the Lord according to the law of the Passover and according to its regulation, he may do so; you shall have one law, for both the stranger and the native of the land!"

#### COMMENTARY

The second passover of Israel, observed at Sinai, celebrated the completion of a full year's reprieve from Egypt. It is placed out of the proper chronological order in the text, having actually preceded the census and most of the other events of the book. The people may have doubted whether or not they were to keep the feast while in the wilderness; but the Lord resolves the question by commanding the feast at the same time of year as its institution. The itemized provisions are not repeated; it is unnecessary, since they would be remembered easily. The single detail which would not have matched the original circumstances was the command to smear the blood of the lamb upon the lintel: the tents of the wanderers would have nothing precisely comparable. We are not given an answer to this matter in the text. In later years, after Israel had been established in the Promised Land, the lamb's blood was sprinkled upon the altar (II Chron. 30:16).

The Passover is to be kept, literally, "between the two evenings," a phrase which later was understood to refer to the time between three and five o'clock in the afternoon.

Leviticus 7:21 declared a man unclean for having touched the corpse of a man or a beast. Should he disregard his uncleanness and participate in a sacrifice, he was to be cut off from among his people. The two unnamed men, temporarily unclean, earnestly desire to participate in the meaningful feast, but with equally strong feelings, they do not want to do so at the risk of excommunication. As was his custom, Moses did not presume to settle the question. Upon consulting God, he was informed they might keep their tryst with the Lord exactly one month later. The same exception was to be allowed for one whose travels kept him from the company of his people when the feast day came. The same regulations applied to the later observation as to the first.

A new note is sounded when God warns against deliberately absenting oneself from the feast for no valid reason—such a one is to be disfellowshipped, a penalty as significant as the death sentence in a society as tightly knit as that of Israel's.

The final words do not require that a sojourner participate in the feast; they simply allow such participation. If the alien chooses to become involved, he is under the same regulations as the Israelites. The feast was prescribed in exact details none of which might be altered.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

159. Upon what grounds might the Israelites have believed they were not to observe the Passover regularly until they occupied the Promised Land?
160. Which of the original provisions for the feast could they not have observed in the wilderness?
161. Explain what is meant by the phrase "at even".
162. Why would the Israelite take care not to participate in any sacrifice while he was ceremonially unclean?
163. Could not Moses have given a judgment on the matter of allowing the two men to observe the Passover—must he have taken the question to the Lord?



164. Why should God allow a postponement of the feast at all?
165. Explain the significance of the penalty levied against anyone who deliberately absented himself from the Passover without a proper reason.
166. Why should any stranger or sojourner be permitted to join in the Passover? What conditions were laid upon him if he chose to do so?

## E. THE CLOUD OVER THE TABERNACLE vv. 15-23

## TEXT

Chapter 9:15. And on the day that the tabernacle was reared up the cloud covered the tabernacle, namely, the tent of the testimony; and at even there was upon the tabernacle as it were the appearance of fire, until the morning. 16. So it was alway: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night. 17. And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed: and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents. 18. At the commandment of the Lord the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the Lord they pitched: as long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle they rested in their tents. 19. And when the cloud tarried long upon the tabernacle many days, then the children of Israel kept the charge of the Lord, and journeyed not. 20. And so it was, when the cloud was a few days upon the tabernacle; according to the commandment of the Lord they abode in their tents, and according to the commandment of the Lord they journeyed. 21. And so it was, when the cloud abode from even unto the morning, and that the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed: whether it was by day or by night that the cloud was taken up, they journeyed. 22. Or whether it were two days or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not: but when it was taken up, they journeyed. 23. At the commandment of the Lord they rested in the tents, and at the commandment of the Lord they journeyed: they kept the charge of the Lord, at the commandment of the Lord by the hand of Moses.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 9:15. On the day that the Tabernacle was set up, the cloud covered it, the Tent of Testimony. In the evening it had the appearance of fire above the Tabernacle until morning. 16. It was this way from then on: the cloud covered the Tent during the day, and an appearance of fire during the night. 17. Whenever the cloud was lifted from above the Tent, the children of Israel would then set forth; and at whatever place the cloud stopped, the children of Israel would camp. 18. At the word of the Lord the children of Israel would set forth, and at the word of the Lord they would camp; while the cloud remained over the Tabernacle, they stayed in camp. 19. And when the cloud remained over the Tabernacle several days, the children of Israel kept the commandment of the Lord and did not travel. 20. Sometimes the cloud stayed a few days over the Tabernacle. Then they stayed encamped, according to the commandment of the Lord; or, according to the commandment of the Lord, they journeyed. 21. Sometimes the cloud remained from evening until morning; and when the cloud was taken up in the morning, they traveled. Whether the cloud was taken up by day or by night, they traveled. 22. or, if it were two days, or a month or a year that the cloud remained over the Tabernacle, abiding over it, the children of Israel stayed in camp and did not travel; but when it was lifted up, they traveled. 23. At the commandment of the Lord they stayed in camp, and at the commandment of the Lord they journeyed; they kept the commandment of the Lord, when He commanded them through Moses.

## COMMENTARY

The presence of the Lord at the Tabernacle was a continual matter, from the moment of its erection. We are taken back to the point of the completion of the Tent to establish the fact. Far from needless redundancy, the Divine Presence is stated here just prior to the account of leaving its original site. Wherever Israel was to go, they were assured of two fundamental facts: God was with them at all times, and He led them

in every step of their travels. In a real sense, then, there was no time when Israel was aimlessly wandering about. They were informed by the movement or the halting of the cloud and fire, when to move, when and where to stop moving, and how long to remain in each encampment.

There was one appearance of the overwhelming glory of God within the Tabernacle—the Shekinah—which came upon the tent at its initial construction and was so great as to delay Moses' own entry within (see Ex. 40:34, 35). But the cloud specified in our text is not precisely the same. While both are of God's glory and presence, the first such phenomenon was temporary; the second was continual.

We are not told how long the Israelites camped at their various stations excepting on a few occasions; we do not know where they spent as much as one year after leaving Sinai. But the question is academic. Moses' point is simple: the length of the rest is not the important factor, it is the ever-present God who leads them who is being cited.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

167. What were the two primary functions of the cloud and the pillar of fire?
168. Is it proper to say that the Israelites "wandered" during the time they spent in the wilderness before they came to the Land of Promise?
169. What reasons can you give for a very brief period of encampment; or for a very long one?

#### F. THE SILVER TRUMPETS (10:1-10)

##### TEXT

Chapter 10:1. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 2. Make these two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps. 3. And when they shall blow with them, all the assembly shall assemble

themselves to thee at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 4. And if they blow but with one trumpet, then the princes, which are heads of the thousands of Israel, shall gather themselves unto thee. 5. When ye blow an alarm, then the camps that lie on the east parts shall go forward. 6. When ye blow an alarm the second time, then the camps that lie on the south side shall take their journey: they shall blow an alarm for their journeys. 7. But when the congregation is to be gathered together, ye shall blow, but ye shall not sound an alarm. 8. And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow with the trumpets; and they shall be to you for an ordinance for ever throughout your generations. 9. And if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies. 10. Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the Lord your God.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 10:1. And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, 2. "Make two trumpets of silver; of one beaten piece each, you shall make them. You shall use them to call the congregation, and for the traveling of the camps. 3. And when they blow them, all the congregation shall gather themselves to you at the door of the Tent of Meeting. 4. If they blow only one trumpet, then the princes, heads of the thousands of Israel, shall gather themselves to you. 5. When you blow an alarm, the camps that lie on the east side shall go forward. 6. When you blow the second alarm, the camps that lie on the south side shall go forward: they shall blow an alarm for their travels. 7. But when the congregation is to be assembled, you shall blow, but you shall not sound an alarm. 8. And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow the trumpets; and they shall be a law for you forever throughout your generations. 9. And if you go to war in your

land against an oppressor enemy, you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets; and you shall be remembered before the Lord God, and you shall be saved from your enemies. 10. Also, in the day of your gladness and in your feast days, and in the beginnings of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of the peace offerings, so that they may be a memorial to you before your God: I am the Lord your God.

### COMMENTARY

The trumpet named here, the *chatsotserah*, was almost certainly a long slender tube of silver with a widened mouth. Two other trumpets were known, the *cheren* and the *shopbar*, both curved after the general shape of the ram's horn; often they were actually the ram's horn itself. Two of the trumpets are prescribed, doubtless giving distinctive sounds in order that even a single blast might be recognized at once.

Since the signal for Israel to move from one place to another was the removal of the cloud and pillar, trumpets might seem unnecessary. The purpose of the instruments was not simply to signal movement, but to give an orderly method for the tribes to follow as they disbanded their sites. They further served to call the entire assembly together for any special occasions, for announcements, or for hearing the Lord's instructions in a given situation: unique signals were also established for summoning the princes of the tribes to receive their personal advice from Moses and Aaron.

When the signal of the trumpets designated a forward march, the first sound called the tribes from the east of the Tabernacle: Judah, Issachar and Zebulun. The sound was a long, unbroken note, distinguished from short, sharp tones as in v. 7. The second signal called Reuben, Simeon and Gad from the south. For some unknown reason, the order in which the western and northern tribes is not given; the LXX assigns the west to the third signal, and the northern three to the final blast.

Since the trumpets were to be used only for religious purposes, they were to be kept as sacred utensils; their use was restricted to the sons of Aaron. When they were sounded under the circumstances of war, it was to summon the soldiers—such would have been impossible in Canaan with the tribes widely scattered, and only two trumpets—it was to pronounce to Israel that they were dependent upon Jehovah in battle, cf. 31:6 and II Chron. 13:12, 14. When they were sounded to call the congregation of Israel into holy assembly, it was in conjunction with the designated feasts, at the start of each month, and at appropriate times during the offerings of those days. Later sacred history records that the trumpets were also blown on some very auspicious occasions: when the ark of the covenant was removed from the tent of Obed-edom unto the tent prepared for it by David (I Chron. 15:24ff.); it was sounded when Solomon's temple was dedicated (II Chron. 5:12—Solomon had here increased the number to 120 trumpets and 120 priests); when the foundation of the second temple was laid (Ezra 3:10); at the consecration of the walls of Jerusalem (Neh. 12:35, 41); as well as other occasions of the festivals 29:27).

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

170. Describe the kind of horn used for setting Israel forth on their journeying, and compare it to the other types of trumpets we know about from that time.
171. For what reasons were the trumpets assigned to the sons of Aaron?
172. Why were only two trumpets designated for the use to which these are ascribed?
173. Differentiate between the type of sound made for marching orders and the sound which called the princes of the congregation together.
174. How did the sounding of the trumpets contribute to the orderly process of marching?

175. For what regular, ordinary purposes were the trumpets blown?
176. What was the primary reason for blowing the trumpets at the time of war?
177. What corollary promise did the Lord make unto Israel if they would faithfully remember to sound the trumpets before confronting their enemies in battle?
178. List the occasions upon which the trumpets were used in later history, beyond those originally prescribed.
179. What alteration did Solomon make in the number of trumpets and trumpeters when the temple was consecrated?

## Part Two: Sinai to Kadesh-Barnea (10:11–14:45)

### I. FROM SINAI TO HAZEROTH (10:11–12:16)

#### A. DEPARTURE, AND ORDER OF MARCH, vv. 11-28

##### TEXT

Chapter 10:11. And it came to pass on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was taken up from off the tabernacle of the testimony. 12. And the children of Israel took their journeys out of the wilderness of Sinai; and the cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran. 13. And they first took their journey according to the commandment of the Lord by the hand of Moses.

14. In the first place went the standard of the camp of the children of Judah according to their armies: and over his host was Nahshon the son of Amminadab. 15. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Issachar was Nathaneel the son of Zuar. 16. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Zebulun was Eliab the son of Helon. 17. And the tabernacle was taken down; and the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari set forward, bearing the tabernacle.

18. And the standard of the camp of Reuben set forward according to their armies: and over his host was Elizur the son of Shedeur. 19. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Simeon was Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai. 20. And over the host of tribe of the children of Gad was Eliasaph the son of Deuel. 21. And the Kohathites set forward, bearing the sanctuary: and the other did set up the tabernacle against they came.

22. And the standard of the camp of the children of Ephraim set forward according to their armies: and over his host was Elishama the son of Ammihud. 23. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Manasseh was Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur. 24. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Benjamin was Abidan the son of Gideoni.

25. And the standard of the camp of the children of Dan set forward, which was the rearward of all the camps throughout



their hosts: and over his host was Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai. 26. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Asher was Pagiel the son of Ocran. 27. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Naphtali was Ahira the son of Enan. 28. Thus were the journeyings of the children of Israel according to their armies, when they set forward.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 10:11. And it happened on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was lifted from the Tabernacle of the Testimony. 12. Then the children of Israel began their journeys from the wilderness of Sinai; and the cloud stayed in the wilderness of Paran. 13. And they first began their travel according to the commandment of the Lord by the hand of Moses. 14. In the front went the standard of the camp of Judah, according to their armies; and leading his host was Nahshon, the son of Amminadab. 15. And over the host of the tribe of Issachar was Nethanel, the son of Zuar. 16. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Zebulun was Eliav, the son of Helon. 17. And the Tabernacle was taken down; and the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari went forward, carrying the Tabernacle.

18. And the standard of the camp of Reuben went forward according to their armies: and over his host was Elizur, the son of Shedeur. 19. And over the host of the tribe of Simeon was Shelumiel, the son of Zurishaddai. 20. And over the host of the tribe of the children Gad was Eliasaph, the son of Deuel. 21. And the Kohathites went forward, carrying the sanctuary: and the others set up the Tabernacle before their arrival.

22. And the standard of the camp of the children of Ephraim went forward according to their armies: and over his host was Elishama, the son of Ammihad. 23. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Manasseh was Gamaliel, the son of Pedahzur. 24. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Benjamin was Abidan, the son of Gideoni.

25. And the standard of the camp of the children of Dan

went forward, which was the rear side of all the camps throughout their hosts: and over his host was Ahiezer, the son of Ammishaddai. 26. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Asher was Pagiel, the son of Okhran. 27. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Naphtali was Ahira, the son of Enan. 28. These were the travels of the children of Israel according to their armies; then they went forward.

### COMMENTARY

Israel had arrived at Mt. Sinai in the third month after their departure from Egypt (Ex. 19:1). Now, on the twentieth day of the second month in the second year, they are summoned for their first march after receiving the Law. It will be the beginning of a long and arduous trip—much longer and more difficult than even the most gloomy pessimist among them might have guessed. Little do they know that only two of their number above the age of twenty years will ultimately walk across the Jordan River into the Land of Promise; indeed, they know nothing of the circumstances which will make it necessary to take the round-about route from the east rather than the nearer, logical approach from the south. It will be their own stubbornness and lack of faith which will make the difference, and this will cost them dearly: more than thirty-eight years must be spent going from place to place in a barren, waste area before they are finally led of God through Moab.

The land in which most of the intervening time will be spent, called Paran, and, in its northern section, the Negev, is a large desert plateau. It is bounded on the east by the slash of Arabah (that portion of a 3000 mile long geological fault which has resulted in, among other things, the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea). On the southwest, the border is the desert of Shur, the generally acknowledged border between Egypt and Philistia. To the north, the barrenness slowly melds into the more hospitable hills of the Amorites, which formed the southern border of Canaan. The Arabs have called the general region *et Tib*, the wandering-place of the children of Israel. Its sandy soil extends approximately 150 miles from north to south, and

virtually the same from east to west. Divided nearly exactly in half by the Wady el Arish, the district is lower in the western half than in the eastern, which rises to lofty mountain heights broken up by many small wadies and large tableland areas. It is hostile country, and far from an ideal place for normal life; this, it would seem, should have made the Israelites even more eager to move quickly into the Land of Promise. That they did not is a reflection upon their unstable faith, and their rejection of the favorable report of the two faithful spies, Joshua and Caleb.

As the cloud was removed from the Tabernacle and the trumpet sounded, the tribe of Judah led the way from Sinai, moving in an almost due north path toward Kadesh-barnea, after a brief northeasterly trek to Hazeroth. There is a slight alteration in the original plan of marching: the Levites, instead of traveling all together, are divided to place the Gershonites and the Merarites after Judah and before Reuben. This allows them, ahead of the Kohathites to erect the Tent of Meeting in advance of its furnishings. It is unnecessary to list the order in which the rest of the tribes follow, other than to demonstrate that they did so in accordance with the divine orders. We may conclude that this experience in such marching became the set pattern for later occasions.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

180. How long had the Israelites actually been living at Mt. Sinai?
181. How long would it be before the Land of Promise was actually theirs at the crossing of the Jordan?
182. Describe the chief characteristics of the territory through which the tribes were to march, and in which they would live for the next several years.
183. What signalled the fact that the tribes were to pack up their belongings and move?
184. Why is the original order of march slightly altered now?
185. For what reason are we taken through the entire order of the first nine tribes' departure, without completing the list with the final three tribes?

## B. AN INVITATION TO HOBAB vv. 29-32

## TEXT

Chapter 10:29. And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel. 30. And he said unto him, I will not go; but I will depart to mine own land, and to my kindred. 31. And he said, Leave us not, I pray thee; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes. 32. And it shall be, that what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 10:29. And Moses said to Hobab, the son of Reuel, the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, "We are traveling to the place the Lord spoke about. I will give it to you; come with us, and we will do you good, for the Lord has spoken good things concerning Israel." 30. And he said to him, "I will not go; instead, I will return to my own land and to my relatives." 31. And Moses said, "I pray you, do not leave us since you know we are to camp in the wilderness, and you may be more helpful to us than eyes. 32. And it shall be if you go with us that whatever good the Lord shall do to us, we will do the same to you."

## COMMENTARY

Hobab is the son of Raguel (another spelling of *Reuel*, based upon the *LXX*: he is also known as Jethro, Ex. 2:18), and hence Moses' brother-in-law. He is invited to accompany the Israelites for two very good reasons, either of which alone would seem sufficient: first, by joining himself to Israel he and his family may share in the rich blessings anticipated by the nation; and, having lived all his life in this area and others similar, Hobab could be invaluable both as a guide and an

instructor in adjustments to living in the desert. This is the gist of v. 31. The initial refusal of Hobab was not accepted by Moses, who repeated the invitation in greater detail.

It is generally assumed that Hobab did join with the Israelites, since it is more probable that a negative answer would have been recorded than an affirmative one, which seems properly inferred from the abrupt ending. Nevertheless, we do not find Hobab's name, nor that of his family and descendants, among the later lists of the children of Israel. He is said to dwell among the children of Judah in Judges 1:16. Since Judah led the march, it is logical that Hobab would have become fixed among this tribe, even if he were not actually made a part of the tribe itself.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

186. Look up the background of the Midianites: the type of life they lived, the areas in which they traveled, and their chief occupation. How would they be especially fitted to aid the Israelites in adjusting to life in Paran?
187. Why did Hobab refuse Moses' invitation the first time it was extended to him?
188. What do we know of Hobab's descendants in later history? Why did they settle where they did?

#### C. THE CLOUD AND THE ARK LEAD THE PEOPLE

vv. 33-36

#### TEXT

Chapter 10:33. And they departed from the mount of the Lord three days' journey: and the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days' journey, to search out a resting place for them. 34. And the cloud of the Lord was upon them by day, when they went out of the camp. 35. And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee. 36. And when it rested, he said, Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 10:33. And they went a three-days' journey from the mount of the Lord; and the ark of the covenant went ahead of them during the three days' journey to find a resting place for them. 34. And the cloud of the Lord was over them by day when they left the camp. 35. And it happened that when the ark went forth that Moses said, "Rise up, O Lord, and let your enemies be scattered; and let those who hate you flee before you." 36. And when it rested he said, "Return, Lord, to the ten thousand thousands of Israel."

## COMMENTARY

From this time onward, the nation will be led by the very Presence, symbolized by the cloud and the pillar which attended and preceded the ark of the covenant. This one great difference would be reassuring at all times. Their first leg of the journey occupies three days, suggesting two nights without establishing a camp. They were traversing difficult, sandy terrain. *PC* claims that "a modern army, unencumbered with non-combatants, does not make more than ten miles a day over difficult country, nor can cattle be driven faster than that," p. 98. From Mt. Sinai to the first known station, Hazeroth, is a distance of nearly twice that traveled in the first three days.

With the ark of the covenant moving before them, the Israelites set out. The usual place for the cloud was above the ark while it was within the Tabernacle. It is not certain whether the cloud encompassed the ark as it was being transported, but this seems unlikely, since the vision of the carrier Kohathites would have been obscured. The full description of the appearance of the cloud implies that it stretched backward above the entire company of the people, and far enough ahead to guide the journey of those carrying the ark.

The sixty-eighth Psalm is considered to be an enlargement of Moses' prayer as the ark moves forward (*PC*, p. 99). The initial verse, "Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him," is certainly similar

enough to suggest Moses' words as the basis upon which David composed the song. The words apparently were spoken whenever the ark was moved; this custom may have continued until the ark found its resting place within the Temple.

A counterpart may be seen when the ark rested: Moses invokes the Lord's return to the myriads of Israel after He has scattered their enemies and caused them to flee from His presence. The contrast between the power of God in destroying Israel's enemies and in protecting Israel is beautifully developed in the whole of Psalm 68 (q. v.). Both prayers of Moses, given in the briefest of forms, are rich and significant.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

189. In what respect was the marching order now changed as Israel left Mt. Sinai? Why?
190. Describe the land into which the Israelites were entering.
191. About how far might such a company expect to move daily?
192. Show how the cloud might have been established to conform to the description given in the text.

### D. COMPLAINT AND PUNISHMENT AT TABERAH (11:1-3)

#### TEXT

Chapter 11:1. And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord: and the Lord heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the Lord burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp. 2. And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the Lord, the fire was quenched, 3. And he called the name of the place Taberah: because the fire of the Lord burnt among them.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 11:1. Now the people complained and it displeased the Lord: He heard it and His anger was kindled; and the fire of

the Lord burned among them, and consumed those who were in the outer sections of the camp. 2. Then the people cried out to Moses; and Moses prayed to the Lord, and the fire was quenched. 3. And he called the place Taberah because the fire of the Lord burned among them.

### COMMENTARY

Several factors combine to produce the probable causes of the complaints during Israel's first march from Sinai. *PC* mentions fatigue and anxiety in the march; the year of comparative idleness; the frightful nature of the country into which they were coming; the unknown terrors of the way before them (p. 102). To face such trials, it would be necessary for them to trust implicitly in the God who had promised to lead them and care for their needs. Having but recently been slaves, it is conceivable that the people found such a trust very difficult, despite the signs already given them that God made no foolish, unwarranted pledges.

Even so, the complaints are unjustified. Their needs had always been supplied, often in dramatic and convincing form. The people are, after all, but little more than a year removed from the confounding of Pharaoh's army at the crossing of the Red Sea; they are but a few months removed from the disastrous defection at Sinai when the calf of gold had been erected. From these and other incidents, they might be expected to have found that reliance upon the Lord was a confidence well placed. We are given no precise grounds for their murmuring on this occasion; perhaps no single incident was the precipitator. The dissatisfaction seems to have been general in nature, and significant enough to bring the Lord's intervention dramatically into play.

The fire, whatever its exact nature and however it was brought unto the people, was limited to the outer portion of tents, probably consuming the tents and their occupants. The Targum of Palestine assigns the fire to the tribe of Dan, where a graven image had been concealed; the tradition is remote and



unsupported, and may actually be an anticipation of the defection of Dan reported in Judges 18.

*IB* states, without evidence, that the place called Taberah was established before the Israelites came upon the grounds; that the story told here is but a familiar legend from the Near East which has been adapted and entered into the text to demonstrate Yaweh's guidance to the spot, p. 193. The assertion is totally unsupported excepting by the wishful thinking of the commentator.

Whether the incident occurred before, during or after the three days' march has been much discussed. Since the tribes were encamped, it seems unlikely they were marching and merely settled down for the night. The site of Taberah, then, would either be near Sinai or, as *PC* suggests may be an earlier name for Kibroth-Hattaavah, p. 103. The exact spot cannot be identified today.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

193. Compare those grounds the Israelites might have used as the basis of their complaints with those factors which should have prevented such complaining.
194. Where did the fire visit? What tradition has grown up about it?
195. What can we say about the nature of this fire?
196. How was the fire ended?
197. What does "Taberah" mean?
198. What can be said about the location of this place?

#### E. BITTER EXPERIENCE AT THE "GRAVES OF LUST" (KIBROTH-HATTA AVAH), vv. 4-35

##### TEXT

Chapter 11:4. And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? 5. We remember the

fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic; 6. But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, besides this manna, before our eyes. 7. And the manna was as coriander seed, and the color thereof as the color of bdellium. 8. And the people went about, and gathered it, and ground it in pans, and made cakes of it: and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil. 9. And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it.

10. Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent: and the anger of the Lord was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased. 11. And Moses said unto the Lord, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favor in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? 12. Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers? 13. Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat. 14. I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. 15. And if thou deal thus with them, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favor in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness.

16. And the Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee. 17. And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone. 18. And say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against to-morrow, and ye shall eat flesh: for ye have wept in the ears of the Lord, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? for it was well with us in Egypt: therefore the Lord will give you flesh, and ye shall eat. 19. Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten

days, nor twenty days; 20. But even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the Lord which is among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt? 21. And Moses said, The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. 22. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them? 23. And the Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord's hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not.

24. And Moses went out, and told the people the words of the Lord, and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle. 25. And the Lord came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease. 26. But there remained two of the men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the spirit rested upon them; and they were of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle: and they prophesied in the camp. 27. And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp. 28. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them. 29. And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them. 30. And Moses gat him into the camp, he and the elders of Israel.

31. And there went forth a wind from the Lord, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, as it were a day's journey on this side, and as it were a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits high upon the face of the earth. 32. And the people stood up all that day, and all that night, and all the next day,

and they gathered the quails: he that gathered least gathered ten homers: and they spread them all abroad for themselves round about the camp. 33. And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague. 34. And he called the name of that place Kibroth-hattaavah: because they buried the people that lusted. 35. And the people journeyed from Kibroth-hattaavah unto Hazeroth; and abode at Hazeroth.

### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 11:4. And the mixed multitude among them lusted greatly. And the children of Israel also wept again, saying, "Who will give us meat to eat? 5. We remember the fish which we ate in Egypt for nothing; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic; 6. but now our soul is withered away: there is nothing at all excepting this manna for us to see." 7. And the manna was like coriander seed, and its color was like the color of bdellium. 8. The people went about and gathered it, and ground it in mills or boiled it in a pot and made cakes of it: and its taste was like that of a cake baked with oil. 9. When the dew fell upon the camp during the night, the manna fell with it.

10. And Moses heard the entire families of the people weeping, each man in the door of his tent: and the anger of the Lord burned greatly, and Moses was displeased. 11. And Moses said to the Lord, "Why have you afflicted your servant? and why have I not found favor in your sight, that you lay the burden of all these people upon me? 12. Have I not conceived all these people? have I not begotten them, that you should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom as a nursing father carries the sucking child, to the land you have pledged unto their fathers?' 13. From what source should I have meat to give to all these people? because they weep to me, saying, 'Give us meat for us to eat.' 14. I am not able to bear all these people alone; it is too heavy for me. 15. And if you deal this way with us, kill me, I pray, here and now if I have found favor in your sight. Do not

let me see my own misery."

16. Then the Lord said unto Moses, "Gather to me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be elders of the people and officers over them, and bring them to the Tent of Meeting, and let them stand there with you. 17. I will come down and talk with you there: and I will take of the Spirit which is upon you, and I will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you so that you shall not bear it all alone. 18. "And say to the people, 'Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat'; for you have wept in the ears of the Lord, saying, 'Who will give us meat to eat? For it was well with us in Egypt.'" Therefore the Lord will give you meat and you shall eat. 19. You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, 20. but an entire month, until it comes out your nostrils, and is loathsome to you; because you have despised the Lord who is among you, and have wept before him, saying, "Why did we leave Egypt?"'" 21. And Moses said, "The people, among whom I am, are 600,000 foot soldiers; yet you have said, 'I will give you meat to let them eat for an entire month.' 22. Shall flocks and herds be killed for them, to satisfy them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to satisfy them?" 23. And the Lord said to Moses, "Is the Lord's hand too short? You shall see now whether my word will come to pass to you or not."

24. So Moses went out and told the people the words of the Lord, and gathered seventy men of the elders of the people, and stationed them around the Tent. 25. Then the Lord came down in a cloud, and spoke to him, and took of the Spirit who was upon him, and gave it to the seventy elders; and it happened that when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied; but they did not do it again. 26. But two men had remained in camp. The name of one was Eldad, and the name of the second, Medad: and the Spirit rested upon them—they were among those who had been registered, but had not gone out to the Tent—and they prophesied in the camp. So a young man ran and told Moses, and said, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in

the camp." 28. Then Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of Moses from his youth, answered and said, "Moses my lord, restrain them." 29. But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!" 30. Then Moses retired into the camp, he and the elders of Israel.

31. Now a wind went forth from the Lord and brought quail from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, about a day's journey on this side, and about a day's journey on the other side, all around the camp, and about three feet deep on the surface of the ground. 32. And the people stood up all that day, and all that night, and all the next day, and gathered the quail: he who gathered least gathered ten homers. And they spread them out for themselves all around the camp. 33. And while the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the anger of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord struck the people with a grave plague. 34. Therefore he called the name of that place Qivroth-hatta'wah (Graves of Lust), because there they buried the people who lusted. From Qivroth-hatta'wah they traveled to Hatseroth, and they stayed at Hatseroth.

#### COMMENTARY

The term "mixed multitude" is generally understood to mean those riff-raffs who had attached themselves to Israel when leaving Egypt. Some have thought them to be renegade Israelites; others believe they were combination marriages of Israelites and Egyptians. They are mentioned twice elsewhere—as a group in Ex. 12:38, and in an individual instance in Lev. 24:10; both times the occasions are altogether unfavorable. How many of them there were is an unsettled question, but any appreciable number could cause a deterioration of morale quickly. Their wish here is for some of the rich, strongly flavored foods they had enjoyed in Egypt. The wish is shared by Israel, which also "wept again." The "flesh" for which they cry is a general term for all meat. The animals which Israel brought forth with them during the exodus

would hardly have kept their tables supplied with meat, and no real help might have been gained from the locale. Wild animals are sparse enough to be rare.

However unusual it might seem to our tastes that the complaint was for such items as leeks, onions and garlic, we must remember that all of these were delicacies to the Egyptians, as well as other residents of the Middle East. We should not assume, as v. 5 suggests, that the Israelites were given their food for nothing, literally, for as *RCP* shows, the Egyptians were unwilling even to give them the straw necessary for bricks, p. 134. The same source further affirms that the people were murmuring on a trumped-up pretext, since the text would later say that the "Children of Reuben had much cattle," (32:1). Their statement that their souls had withered away may have been correct (v. 6); but they were entirely incorrect in attributing the fact to the matter of their food. The obvious fact is that they had lost their faith in a providential God—assuming that this rabble had had some faith in Him earlier.

The description of manna given in verses 7-9 is only a brief summary of that in Ex. 16:14-30. In the fuller passage, we learn of the versatility of manna: it was capable of being baked or boiled, suggesting a food like our potato whose use is limited only to the genius of the cook herself. Evidently God provided the manna with a careful balance of nutrients to safeguard the health of the people who would eat little else for forty years.

Is the factor of food the only cause for the unhappiness among the Israelites? It is not likely, and the Talmud suggests that the root cause was actually the firm line Jehovah had taken against the marriage of near of kin to one another. Their protests annoy both the Lord and Moses. The former is displeased because of the ingratitude and ungoverned passions of His people; Moses is disturbed because of the consequences of their complaints. They have placed an unbearable burden upon him. His situation is similar to that described in Ex. 18, when Jethro suggested a relief from the intensity of judging all

difficulties through the appointment of judges for lesser problems. Moses is entirely correct when he says, "I am not able to bear all these people alone"; and God did not intend for it to be his sole responsibility.

The dialogue of 10-20 is one of several intimate glimpses we have of the relationship Moses enjoyed with Jehovah. The conversation is much too frank and realistic to have been imagined. We gain a very human picture of Moses, lending strong credence to the genuineness of the text. We are also shown once more the intensity with which this great man identifies himself with his people; even when they are under strong threat. If they are to perish, he will go with them.

In giving of His Spirit to the seventy elders of the people, nothing of the Divine Presence in Moses was diminished, (v. 17). The Holy Spirit may indwell every living person alive at any given time to the full capacity of each. Such is certainly a part of our concept of the omnipresence of God. The seventy will be specially heightened in their powers of weighing right and wrong in settling disputes; they will thus shoulder a portion of the load which has, to this point been Moses' exclusively.

It is fascinating to realize now that God insisted upon having all the people prepare themselves for His revelation by undergoing the process of sanctification; and the purpose of this revelation is to demonstrate His righteous wrath. Severe punishment will follow. Their false words, that all had been well in Egypt, are typical of a spirit of ungratefulness, and show what short memories they had. The arduous burdens of servitude are forgotten, and the few occasional pleasures such as the foods, have been remembered disproportionately. We can only think of them as rather typical—too very much like ourselves.

For many of the murmurers, the food they are about to eat will constitute their last meal. God promises meat in such abundance that they shall eat for an entire month, adding the graphic picture that the food will come out of their nostrils and be loathsome to them. The points to be established are clear:



the people must be sternly rebuked for their complaints and ingratitude; they must be brought to see the mighty power of God again as He provides such a vast quantity of food for them, demonstrating that His hand is by no means shortened; they must come to trust Him to provide their every need, but not to cater to their trivial whims and wants; they must be brought to realize that their present state is infinitely better than their former, and the promised covenant land will shortly be available to them, unless their faith falters. The real key to the Lord's words is the statement that they "have despised the Lord," (v. 20). In this state, we should not be surprised at any actions or any foolish words. The emerging pattern is clear: their love has cooled, they take up unfounded complaints, and the next step would be rebellion.

We can hardly blame Moses for wondering where the Lord will find an adequate quantity of meat for the soldiers, not to mention their families and all the Israelites. He had been frustrated before, as Israel stood at the beach of the Red Sea, having not the least idea of God's plan to divide the waters. He had been uncertain as the Israelites murmured for water. How can he conceivably anticipate the actions of God, when the promise is made to feed the people for an entire month on meat which is not their own? His suggestion that the answer may come from fish out of the sea is typical of his confusion. They are a great distance from any sizeable body of water—at least 20 miles from the Gulf of Aqaba—and whether or not any quantity of fish might be available from this source is highly doubtful. God's rebuke once more is spoken with the typical intimacy between Himself and Moses. Even the great leader needed prodding occasionally, which brings us to see that he was, after all, only a man, however noble. The figure of God's shortened hand suggests His inability to accomplish His purposes. Isaiah used the figure with the same meaning (1:2; 59:1). It is both simple and expressive, occurring here rhetorically. The answer Moses must give is a resounding "No".

The Lord's descent into the Tabernacle is indicated by the cloud once more, and this time under abnormal circumstances.

The seventy specially appointed elders are at hand as the Spirit of the Lord is shared. The scene is allegorized by *RCP*: "What was Moses like at that moment? He was like a light placed in a candlestick from which everyone kindles additional lights, and yet the illumination of the original light is by no means diminished," (p. 136). Their prophesying is limited to this day alone; but it served to demonstrate to the people that God had in fact set them apart unto a holy work. It was a faith-building demonstration.

We cannot know why Eldad and Medad did not join with the others at the Tabernacle. They were, nevertheless, equally endowed with the Spirit and empowered to prophesy. No doubt their reason for abstention was acceptable to the Lord. We cannot fault them, nor can we criticize the young man who reported their works. He might have thought their actions were deliberate disobedience which he was obligated to report. Even Joshua considers their actions in error, and asks for their correction and restraint. He is mildly rebuked by Moses, who sees the deeper issue: God has evidently approved their conduct, since they have shared in the gift of His Spirit. If God approves of their situation, they should be encouraged rather than condemned. It is more to be desired that all of the people might share in this *charisma*. With this preliminary sign, God has prepared the way for the great miracle which is to follow.

A specially prepared wind from the Lord, said to have come from the south and east (Ps. 78:26) rained quail upon the camp in vast quantities. Great migrations of quail have been seen in this area, flying from Africa to Europe in the spring. Using the great wind, He sent the quail off their normal course and directly to the camp. There they were literally said to have been "thrown down" among the Israelites to the depth of about three feet, where they were gathered in vast quantities by the people. It is difficult to say exactly how large these quantities were, since the homer was a variable measure. The size of the homer is often given as ten ephahs, or about two bushels. Whatever the precise amount might have been, it was quite sufficient to show that this was no normal phenomenon. God

was keeping His word literally that there would be enough to suffice for one month. All this would both "shame their unbelief" and "punish their greediness," (*KD*, p. 73). No doubt the quail would have been widely spread over the earth to dry, since their consumption would require many days.

The account now takes an unexpected turn. *PC* proposes to explain the visitation of divine wrath, attributing it to the greediness of the people in gathering such great measures of the quail in anticipation of later feasts, while postponing their enjoyment of the divinely given food, p. 112. It may rather be that, despite this great manifestation of God's providence, the hearts of the murmurers were unmoved, ungrateful and still disrespectful toward the Lord. Their motive is indicated by the name attached to the place: "Graves of greediness"; a greedy spirit cannot allow for gratitude. The location of the spot is not known, nor do we know how long the camp remained. It is certain they were not now permitted to eat of the meat for the thirty days; the patience of the Lord had been exhausted.

Hazereth, to which Israel is now led, has been identified with a fountain named Ain el Hadhera; but the identification is based solely upon similarity of the words. Like most of the other desert stations, it would be more remarkable if they could be identified than if they could not, since they represent only temporary campsites.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

199. Discuss the "mixed multitude" among the Israelites—who they were, why they were a source of difficulty, and the purported reasons for their complaints.
200. Why were the murmurings of these people of such concern to the Lord?
201. Why did the Israelites not supplement the manna with meat gained from hunting?
202. In what ways were these complainers misrepresenting their situation in Egypt? Show how their position was typical of human nature.

203. Suggest some of the ways in which manna might have been prepared.
204. What was the possible underlying cause for all the unhappiness of the crowd?
205. How is Moses' situation here similar to his previous experience in judging the people?
206. Analyze the warmly human characteristics of Moses as they emerge in his dialogue with the Lord (vv. 10-20).
207. Why did Moses continually identify himself with his people, rather than recognize the foolishness of their complaining natures?
208. For what immediate purposes did the Lord grant His Spirit to the seventy elders? Why did they prophesy? Why did this special gift not continue?
209. What purposes would be served if the Lord provided enough meat for all the children of Israel to eat for one month?
210. Why did Moses not simply accept the fact that God would be able to accomplish this feat?
211. Explain the phrase, "Is the Lord's hand waxed short?"
212. Were there legitimate reasons that Eldad and Medad did not go with the other elders to the Tent of Meetings? How can you justify their absence?
213. How could such a vast quantity of quail be at precisely this place at the exact time the Lord had foretold their coming?
214. Why is the action of the wind important in this event?
215. How long did the Israelites spend in gathering the birds? In what quantities were they taken?
216. God had said the people would eat of the meat for one month; what actually happened, and why?
217. Why is it difficult to identify many of the stations at which the Israelites camped in the wilderness?

F. FOOLISH CONDUCT OF MIRIAM AND AARON  
AND RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM (12:1-16)

## TEXT

Chapter 12:1. And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. 2. And they said, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the Lord heard it. 3. (Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.) 4. And the Lord spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come ye out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out. 5. And the Lord came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth. 6. And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. 7. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. 8. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? 9. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them; and he departed. 10. And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous. 11. And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my Lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned. 12. Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother's womb. 13. And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee.

14. And the Lord said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again. 15. And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days: and the people journeyed not till Miriam was

brought out again. 16. And afterward the people removed from Hazeroth, and pitched in the wilderness of Paran.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 12:1. Then Miriam and Aaron criticized Moses because of the Ethiopian woman he had married (for he had married an Ethiopian woman). 2. And they said, "Has the Lord indeed spoken only with Moses? Has he not spoken with us as well?" And the Lord heard it. 3. Now the man Moses was very humble, more so than all the men upon the face of the earth. 4. And the Lord spoke suddenly to Moses, and to Aaron and to Miriam, "You three come out to the Tent of Meeting!" And the three came out. 5. Then the Lord came down in a pillar of cloud, in the door of the Tent, and He called Aaron and Miriam. When they came out, He said, "Now hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known to him in a vision, and speak to him in a dream. But not so with my servant Moses: 7. he is the reliable one in all my household. 8. I speak with him mouth to mouth, openly, and not in veiled messages; and he sees the very likeness of the Lord. Why, then, were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" 9. So the anger of the Lord burned against them, and He left. 10. Now the cloud was removed from the Tent, and lo, Miriam was snow white, stricken with leprosy. Aaron looked at Miriam, and behold, she was diseased. 11. And Aaron said to Moses, "Oh, my Lord, I beg you, do not lay this sin upon us; we have behaved foolishly: we have sinned. 12. Do not let her become as a dead person whose flesh is half consumed when he emerges from his mother's womb!" 13. And Moses pleaded with the Lord, saying, "Heal her now, O God, I pray you." 14. But the Lord said to Moses, "If her father had only spit on her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? Let her be shut out of the camp seven days; after that she may be received back again. 15. And Miriam was excluded from the camp for seven days, and the people did not travel until Miriam was returned to them. 16. Afterward the people left Hazeroth, and camped in the wilderness of Paran.

## COMMENTARY

Life is plagued by many types of problems. We now face one of the more common and troublesome: Miriam turns upon her brother in a vicious, verbal assault with two thrusts. She is critical of his wife, and she is envious of his special and unique relationship with God. *PC* gives five reasons for laying the sin specifically at Miriam's feet: she is named first in the account; the verb is in the feminine, and properly says, "she spoke out against"; the attack is "a peculiarly feminine one"; she alone was punished; and, Aaron never led out in anything. The third and fifth arguments seem very thin and inconclusive; it is the fourth which would especially establish her great guilt. No penalty of any kind visits Aaron.

Commentators are much divided over the identification of Moses' wife in the passage. Some contend that the reference could not conceivably be to Zipporah, who was a Midianite, not a Cushite or Ethiopian. They suggest, therefore, that Zipporah was dead and Moses had but recently remarried. The argument is altogether from silence, unless one reads such an inference into this passage. Others suggest Moses had taken a second wife, a most improbable proposal, and one the Lord certainly could not have approved without comment of any kind anywhere in the record. Yet others believe Moses' wife's beauty is being compared to that of a Cushite woman's. This is the position of *RCP*, which uses a process of numerology to establish the claim. The word for "Cushite" has a numerical value of 736, the same numerical value as *yefat mareb* ("a woman of beautiful appearance"). Numerologists may give some credence to such speculation, but they must stand alone.

As for the criticisms themselves, they were of a most unkind sort. The criticism of Moses for having married a woman other than an Israelite should have come from the Lord, not Miriam, if there were grounds for any criticism. It is generally assumed that Miriam's motivation was jealousy, which may well be correct. With all the other burdens Moses was carrying, the last thing he needed was for members of his own family to turn

upon him with such a vindictive spirit. After all, Miriam herself had been distinguished above all the other women when she was made a prophetess—the only one of whom we have record among the people; and Aaron was established as the high priest, than which there was no higher office of permanent nature among the Israelites. Only pride and envy could account for the manner in which the two unite in their criticisms. God had, after all, also spoken through them as well as through Moses, as they confess, v. 2.

The next verse, (v. 3), has bothered countless commentators, as in *IB*: “This verse gave much difficulty to those who were concerned to assert the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. The point is, simply, that Moses would not have written so of his own meekness; this would be the most certain indication that he lacked humility.” But such a position ignores other possibilities. If God deemed it appropriate that the account should make such a note at this point, where it surely fits, and instructed Moses to state the fact, in no sense could we understand this to have been a boastful assertion of the great man. It has been asserted that the verse was added to the original, and was not the work of Moses himself. We cannot deny the possibility; and, in fact, the *KJV* puts the verse in parentheses as an apparent indication of this. Whatever the actual explanation, one fact is supremely clear, and that is the truth of the statement itself. Moving from year to year and incident to incident throughout the life of Moses, we cannot but marvel at the unbounded humility of so significant a man. This would make the onslaught against him even more difficult to bear, and virtually impossible for the man himself to counter successfully.

God’s manner of calling specially to the three is unusual and unexpected. It is thought that the call came simultaneously, and to them at their individual residences. They meet at the Tent, and from that point Aaron and Miriam are separated from Moses.

The divine message is prefaced by a well-understood fact:



when God spoke to the ordinary prophet, He used the technique of dreams or visions. Neither of these methods should be limited to day-time occurrences, however, since nocturnal revelations are a distinct rarity in the Scriptures. They were, nevertheless, less distinctive than the method God used in speaking to Moses: "mouth to mouth." The thought is identical to that of Ex. 33:11, "face to face." Messages to others came darkly, as in riddles or mysterious utterances. To Moses, He spoke clearly, unambiguously.

Even Moses did not look directly upon the face of God. He beheld His "similitude", or the "aftereffects", as in Ex. 33:22, 23. After having lived forty days in intimacy with God, some of the glory of God Himself was infused upon Moses' own face, and the Israelites could not look upon him until he was veiled (Ex. 34:29-35). This transmitted glory must yet have been grossly less than that of God Himself. Aaron and Miriam ought to have been totally ashamed of having expressed themselves derogatorily.

When the cloud of the Divine Presence was lifted, Aaron noticed the leprous condition of Miriam. It is an indication that she had led the verbal assault upon Moses. The fact that her skin was white would indicate she had been visited by a milder form of leprosy. Even so, leprosy in any form is to be greatly dreaded, and this would be sufficient to cut her off from her people for life, or for the duration of the plague itself. Aaron is quick to confess his part, and their mutual guilt; he pleads for pardon of their rash foolishness, and for Miriam's healing. They are compelled to seek the mediation of the very one they have offended!

Moses' intercessory prayer is but partially recorded, only the most briefly relevant summary being contained in the text: but it is all we need. The Lord's answer impresses all of them both with His mercy and His justice. In His mercy, the leprosy is removed. In His justice, it is necessary for Miriam to endure one week of the circumstances of a leper. She would never forget this. It was a sure way of seeing that she remembered the

humiliation brought upon herself by haughtiness. Seven days outside the camp and in the company with others whose bodies were ravaged by such a dreadful disease would be quite long enough for her to learn this lesson. This was the same period of time required of any disrespectful one whose father was required to rebuke her publicly, see Deut. 25:9.

During Miriam's isolation, the people did not move. *RCP* understands this delay to have been a demonstration of God's reward for the time she had spent watching Moses when he was placed in the river (Ex. 2:4). The incident reminds us that she was, after all, only human, and that when she and Aaron were confronted forcefully with their sins, they were brought to repentance and a form of restitution before they could be reinstated in God's good graces.

Leaving Hazeroth, they come into the region of Kadesh, in the desert of Paran. It is on the southernmost border of the land of Canaan. They reached the spot just one and one-half years after leaving Egypt, and might as easily as not have crossed immediately into the Promised Land. The fact that they did not is a reflection upon their small faith.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

218. Why is it usually assumed that Miriam was the ring-leader in complaining about Moses' wife?
219. Is there a contradiction in the accounts which identify the wife of Moses as an Egyptian (our present passage), a Midianite (Ex. 2:21), and a Cushite (*RSV*)?
220. What were Miriam and Aaron attempting to accomplish or to prove by their words?
221. If Moses was truly meek, as v. 3 affirms, how could he possibly have written this of himself?
222. How might Moses himself have successfully answered his sister and brother?
223. Compare and contrast the manner in which God spoke with Moses with the more ordinary methods of communicating with the prophets.

224. Review the provisions which applied to an individual who was thought to have leprosy, and show how it was appropriate that Aaron should have made the discovery.
225. Why does Aaron ask Moses to intercede for himself and for Miriam, rather than directing his own prayer to the Lord.
226. Might a lesser man than Moses have refused this request?
227. For what probable reasons did God insist that Miriam's leprosy should remain upon her for a week?
228. What is the significance of the Lord's words about the time of isolation if one were spit upon by his father?
229. How important was the factor of repentance in God's dealings with the offenders?

## II. THE PROMISED LAND REVIEWED AND REJECTED (13:1-14:45)

### A. SELECTION OF THE SPIES, vv. 1-16

#### TEXT

Chapter 13:1. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 2. Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them. 3. And Moses by the commandment of the Lord sent them from the wilderness of Paran: all those men were heads of the children of Israel. 4. And these were their names: Of the tribe of Reuben, Shammua the son of Zaccur. 5. Of the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat the son of Hori. 6. Of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh. 7. Of the tribe of Issachar, Igal the son of Joseph. 8. Of the tribe of Ephraim, Oshea the son of Nun. 9. Of the tribe of Benjamin, Palti the son of Raphu. 10. Of the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel the son of Sodi. 11. Of the tribe of Joseph, namely, of the tribe of Manasseh, Gaddi the son of Susi. 12. Of the tribe of Dan, Ammiel the son of Gemalli. 13. Of the tribe of Asher, Sethur the son of Michael. 14. Of the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi the son of Vophsi. 15. Of the tribe of Gad, Geuel the son

of Machi. 16. These are the names of the men which Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Oshea the son of Nun, Jehoshua.

### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 13:1. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2. "Send out men, that they may spy out the land of Canaan, which I give to the children of Israel: from each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, each one a ruler among them." 3. So Moses sent them from the wilderness of Paran by the commandment of the Lord, all those men who were heads of the children of Israel. 4. And these were their names; from the tribe of Reuben, Shammua son of Zaccur; 5. from the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat son of Hori; 6. from the tribe of Judah, Caleb son of Jephunneh; 7. from the tribe of Issachar, Igal son of Joseph; 8. from the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea son of Nun; 9. from the tribe of Benjamin, Palti son of Rafu; 10. from the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel son of Sodi; 11. from the tribe of Joseph, from the tribe of Manasseh, Gaddi son of Susi; 12. from the tribe of Dan, Ammiel son of Gemalli; 13. from the tribe of Asher, Sethur son of Michael; 14. from the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi son of Vophsi; 15. from the tribe of Gad, Geuel son of Machi. 16. These are the names of the men Moses sent to spy out the land; and Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun, Joshua.

### COMMENTARY

When the second account of this mission is told by Moses (Deut. 1:20-25), it is the people themselves who are made to suggest the mission of the spies. The original idea may well have come from them; it is clear, on the other hand, that Moses would have carried the plan to the Lord before acting upon it. With divine approval, the spies are appointed to their work.

The men who are chosen are prominent men, but they were not the tribal princes. The journey they are about to undertake would require both youthfulness and vigor; the princes may have been a poor selection for these reasons.

Only two names in the list are noteworthy: Joshua (here called Oshea), and Caleb. The change in Joshua's name is slight, but the change in meaning is significant: from "Salvation" to "Jehovah is salvation." Since it is a change appointed by Moses, we should not find it strange that he has used the name already several times. Such apparent anachronisms trouble the negative critic much more than they would have bothered Moses, as author of the events. It would be quite natural for him to use the name he himself had bestowed upon his successor, even in alluding to that time before the actual change was made.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

230. Explain the variation between the two accounts of the sending of the spies in the accounts given in Numbers and Deuteronomy.
231. Why were none of the men sent chosen from the previously chosen tribal princes?
232. No spy is sent for the tribe of Levi. Can you think of a good reason for this omission?
233. If the change in Joshua's name was not made until Israel came to Kadesh-Barnea, how can we explain its use in the earlier records?
234. What is the significance of the change in names?

### B. THEIR INSTRUCTIONS vv. 17-20

#### TEXT

Chapter 13:17. And Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said unto them, Get you up this way southward, and go up into the mountain: 18. And see the land, what it is; and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many; 19. And what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad; and what cities they be that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strongholds. 20. And what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein, or not. And be ye of good courage, and bring of the

fruit of the land. Now the time was the time of the first ripe grapes.

### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 13:17. As Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, he said unto them, "Go up this way by the South; then go up into the high land. 18. Look over the country as it is, and the people who dwell in it, whether they are strong or weak, few or many. 19. And examine the land in which they dwell, whether in tents or in fortified cities; 20. and learn how the land is, whether it is fertile or poor, whether there are trees there or not. Be courageous and bring back some of the fruit of the land." Now it was the time of the first ripe grapes.

### COMMENTARY

The spies did not leave Kadesh to travel in a southerly direction, although the King James and other translations seem to say this. More accurately, the text sends them into the Negev, which is the southern portion of the land later to be given Judah. The territory is poor and barren. By contrast the remainder of Canaan would seem ideal for occupation. The Negev, excepting in the few areas where springs water narrow rivulets and fields, is virtually uninhabitable. Beyond the Negev, traveling northward, the spies would come into the southern hill country, the hills of Judea, which are suitable for both cultivation and grazing. This hill country extends from the Negev to the northernmost parts of Canaan, and continues far beyond as the Lebanon Mountains. It is the very backbone of the country.

Not only are the men to examine the land itself; they are instructed to appraise the residents. Are they strong or weak? Have they fortified cities? Is the land settled heavily or sparsely? Do the people appear to be timid or bold? Do they till the land well? Is the soil productive? Is it well provided with useful trees? All these and many more important observations might be made without any overt actions, in a walk-through

kind of trip. Grapes first ripen in Palestine in late July or early August; they are usually harvested a month later.

## QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

235. Look up a reliable article on the Negev. Learn about the terrain, when and by whom it has been inhabited, and how it figured in later Israelite history.
236. What major types of information were the spies to seek? Which of the items are most important, among those things they are to observe?
237. Why did the Israelites not simply march into the land, trusting in the Lord to deliver it into their hands?
238. Besides the first ripened grapes, what other fruits might the spies have expected to find at this season?

## C. SURVEY AND REPORT vv. 21-33

## TEXT

Chapter 13:21. So they went up, and searched the land from the wilderness of Zin unto Rehob, as men come to Hamath. 22. And they ascended by the south, and came unto Hebron; where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the children of Anak, were. (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) 23. And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates, and of the figs. 24. The place was called the brook Eshcol, because of the cluster of grapes which the children of Israel cut down from thence. 25. And they returned from searching of the land after forty days.

26. And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. 27. And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. 28. Nevertheless the

people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. 29. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan. 30. And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it. 31. But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. 32. And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof: and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. 33. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 13:21. So they went up and spied out the land from the wilderness of Zin to Rehob, on the way to Hamath. 22. After they went up into the South, they came to Hebron where Ahiman, Sheshai and Talmai, children of Anak, were. (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) 23. They came to the Wadi of Eshcol, and there they cut down a branch with a single cluster of grapes, which they carried on a pole between two men; and they brought back pomegranates and figs. 24. That place was called the Wadi of Eschol because of the cluster of grapes which the children of Israel cut down there. 25. After forty days of searching the land they returned. 26. and came to Moses and Aaron and all the assembly of the children of Israel in the wilderness of Paran at Kadesh; and they brought word back to them and to all the assembly, and showed them the fruit of the land. 27. And they spoke to him, and said, "We entered the land to which you sent us, and indeed it flows with milk and honey; and this is its fruit. 28. However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are



very large and fortified. 29. Moreover, we saw the children of Anak there. Amalek lives in the land of the Negev, and the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites live in the hill country. The Canaanites live by the sea and in the valley of the Jordan." 30. Then Caleb stilled the people in front of Moses and said, "Let us go up immediately and take possession of it, for we are quite able to overcome it." 31. But the men who went up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we." 32. So they spread a bad report of the land they had spied out to the children of Israel, saying, "The land through which we went, to spy it out, is a land which eats up its inhabitants; and all the people we saw in it were men of great height." 33. We also saw the Nephilim there (the sons of Anak were among the Nephilim); and we seemed like grasshoppers in our own sight, just as we were in their sight."

#### COMMENTARY

Zin is the name given the northern portion of the larger desert, Paran. Crossing the Wady Murreh, which divides the sparsely settled wilderness of the South from the higher hill country later given as the southern part of the territory of Judea, the ten spies traversed the length of Canaan. Their northernmost penetration took them beyond Dan (earlier, Laish), to a well-travelled trade route which led to Hamath. This route passed near Beth-rehob, not far from Laish. In early days the city was of great importance under Syrian rule; it is in the territory of Naphtali when the land is divided among the tribes of Israel.

Having summarized the journey of the spies, Moses now reviews their actions in some expanded details. The first important city they encountered was Hebron, nearly twenty miles south of Jerusalem. Remembered for being Abraham's residence and burial place, Hebron was now held by three clans descended from Anak. These Anakim were of gigantic stature, thought to have been exterminated later by Israel excepting for some who found refuge among the Philistines. At this point Moses interjects a note of information which would have been

very meaningful to him. It is the kind of point we can scarcely imagine anyone else's having inserted—one which nobody would have invented, and one which receives its value from the very casual nature in which it is used: the note that Hebron was founded seven years earlier than Zoan (Tanis) in Egypt. Such incidental references give a ring of authenticity to the account, being completely appropriate to the writer, and irrelevant to those who might have written under other circumstances.

We have no reason whatever to draw any historical relationship between Zoan and Hebron. However, if Zoan was built or enlarged into the pharaoh's residence at the time of the exodus, Moses could well have been personally involved in the affairs of state. The association is purely chronological, which is Moses' point.

The second specific area mentioned is properly "the valley of Eshcol"; here an oversize bunch of grapes, carried on a pole between two of the men, becomes tangible evidence that the land is productive. Indeed, the finest grapes in all Canaan are said to come from north of Hebron on the way to Jerusalem. Here are also found pomegranates, figs and various other fruits. The size of the single bunch of grapes would be such that it would require a second man to carry it, not because of the total weight, but in order to avoid crushing them. Bunches weighing up to twelve pounds have been found in the valley of Eshcol (see *KD*, p. 90). No doubt those brought back to the camp of Israel were picked immediately before the spies' return.

The second factor which would figure prominently in the spies' report involved the inhabitants. We are not given a complete resumé of all the tribes inhabiting Canaan, but we are immediately introduced to those who lived in the vicinity of Hebron, as well as general references to the Amalekites, Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites and Canaanites. Three of the progeny of Anak are named: Ahiman, Sheshai and Talmai. The Anakim, along with the Emim and the Rephaim were notable for their great size, and perhaps for their longevity as well. Their origin is obscure. Fifty years later they would be driven from the city by

Caleb (Joshua 15:14). The Amalekites lived in an area generally including a portion of the northern Negev, and a portion of the area later assigned to Simeon and southern Judah. They were descendants of Esau who lived as nomads, constantly causing difficulty to their neighbors. Saul would later be ordered to exterminate them, I Sam. 15:1-3. The Hittites, a non-Semitic people, had come into the land about a half-century earlier. It is generally suggested that they had come from Cappadocia. Until the early twentieth century, critics of the Scriptures considered them fictitious. They were not mentioned in any extra-biblical writings which had been discovered until that time. But the extensive work of Hugo Winckler at Khattusa (Boghaz-koy) in present-day Turkey in 1906-07 amplified earlier discoveries at Carchemish, and removed any lingering doubts about the Hittites. We now know they were people of a well advanced culture who lived in various portions of Canaan, particularly the south.

The Jebusites were descended from Canaan (see Genesis 10) and are best known in the area of Jerusalem. The Amorites, also descended from Canaan, are thought to have held a rather large kingdom including much of Mesopotamia and Syria, with a capital at Haran before migrating to Canaan. In this latter location, they took land from the Moabites, and usually were found east of the Jordan. The term 'Canaanites' has two uses in the Old Testament. In its broader sense, it includes any of the pagan tribes who lived within the bounds of the Promised Land. More specifically, as used here, it refers to a single tribe living in the coastal plains and the valleys of the land; such is also to be inferred from the meaning of their name: "the lowlanders".

We must admire the integrity and faith of Caleb. He and Joshua had seen exactly what the remaining ten spies had observed, both the good and the formidable, of the land. But his confidence in the guidance of the Lord is unquestioning as he simply says, "Let us go up at once, and occupy it; for we are well able to overcome it." It is noted later (14:6) that Joshua urged the same action. Had their enthusiastic advice been followed, the history of the nation would have been changed,

and they would have been spared the extreme difficulties of wandering for approximately 38½ years in the wilderness before ultimately crossing the Jordan into the Land of Promise.

We should not be unduly surprised that the multitude listened to the counsel of the ten rather than the words of the two. It is always a simpler matter to be negative than positive; to rationalize into disobedience rather than to obey an apparently difficult command. The ten spies, and the people as well, are awed by the stature of the people who make the Israelites look like "grasshoppers"; Joshua and Caleb remember that God has promised this land unto His people, and that He has promised to drive out the inhabitants, if they will but trust Him. Their faith seems too visionary for the cowardly listeners.

Many explanations have been proposed for the statement that "the land eats up its inhabitants." It cannot mean death came upon the people from starvation or similar natural causes—the fruits brought back would not give any credibility to such a thought. Even more nauseating is the suggestion that cannibalism was being practiced. One of the most interesting and logical suggestions comes from *RCP*: the people everywhere were "burying their dead . . .", an action of God to "keep the people busy in their mourning so that they would not notice the spies," (p. 142).

The final argument proposed to the people is that "all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature." We must view this as unmitigated hyperbole, a further impassioned appeal to discourage the masses from listening to Caleb. It is successful.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

239. Consult a reliable map, and estimate the distance the spies may have travelled in their journey through Canaan. For what things would they especially look?
240. Establish the probable locations of Rehob and Hamath. Why were they important at that time?
241. Why is Hebron mentioned, rather than Jerusalem, as the key city in the South?

242. What can you say of the "children of Anak"?
243. What association is there between Hebron and Zoan? Why are we given information about the date of founding for the cities? How important is this incidental point in establishing Mosaic authorship of the event and book?
244. What is a Wadi? What does "Eshcol" mean?
245. How would the Israelites be impressed by the fruits brought back from the land before them?
246. Explain the idiom used to describe the land: "it flows with milk and honey."
247. Name the different tribes which are reported as inhabitants in the land. Tell where each lived, and whatever we know about the origin of each.
248. In what two senses is the name "Canaanites" used? How is it probably to be understood here?
249. Upon what items do all of the twelve spies agree, and where do they disagree?
250. Explain why these men could come to such widely different reactions to the people and the land they had just visited.
251. What most important factor had the ten spies overlooked in their negative recommendation?
252. How has the phrase "A land that devours its inhabitants" been understood?
253. Why do the ten spies emphasize the negative factors in their report? How could they justify their gross exaggeration?
254. Who were the Nephilim of whom the spies speak?

#### D. COMPLAINT AND REBELLION (14:1-4)

##### TEXT

Chapter 14:1. And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. 2. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron:

and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! 3. And wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt? 4. And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return to Egypt.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 14:1. Then all the assembly lifted up their voice and cried; and the people wept that night. 2. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron; and the whole assembly said to them, "Would that we had died in this wilderness! 3. And why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword so that our wives and children should be victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?" 4. And they said to one another, "Let us select a chief and return to Egypt."

#### COMMENTARY

What should have been a day of rejoicing in anticipation of a great victory through the power of the Lord has been turned into a period of weeping and complaints. Instructions to the people, so confidently expressed by Caleb, are overruled by the discouraging words of the fearful ten, and the spirits of the people are completely extinguished. Now that they are a year and one-half removed from Egypt, the slavery from which they have been delivered does not seem so oppressive. Step by step throughout the interval, the masses have echoed the same tedious refrain: "We never should have left Egypt!"

Moses and Aaron are the immediate targets for criticism. Nothing they might say would be of any weight to them in the present circumstances. Their argument continues, and lays an even greater blame upon the Lord. He has led them here, and certainly must be blamed because they cannot simply march into the new land unopposed. The people have come to expect everything of Him, and nothing of themselves. Murmurings

similar to their protests have been heard before; this is the first time it is actually suggested that another leader be chosen, one who will lead them back to the land of their bondage. We might speculate that, had they actually followed this course, their voices would have risen even more strongly against the renewal of slavery before the first day's servitude had ended.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

255. How do you account for the fact that the words of the ten spies had a much greater effect upon the Israelites than the words of the two?
256. Why should the Israelites have forgotten the fact that they were slaves in Egypt, while they refused to march into the land before them as a free people?
257. Do you think the Israelites would have found true happiness if they had actually returned to Egypt? Defend your answer.

### E. MOSES' PLEA AND GREAT INTERCESSORY PRAYER

vv. 5-19

#### TEXT

Chapter 14:5. Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel.

6. And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes: 7. And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. 8. If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. 9. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us; their defense is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not. 10. But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel.

11. And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have showed among them? 12. I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.

13. And Moses said unto the Lord, Then the Egyptians shall hear it, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;) 14. And they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou Lord art among this people, that thou Lord art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by daytime in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night.

15. Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, 16. Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness. 17. And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, 18. The Lord is long-suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. 19. Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 14:5. Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before the entire assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel.

6. And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunnah, of those who spied out the land, tore their clothes: 7. and they spoke to all the assembly of the children of Israel, saying, "The land through which we passed to spy it out is an exceptionally good land. 8. If the Lord is pleased with us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us: a land which flows



with milk and honey. 9. Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land, for they shall be our prey: their defense is removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them." 10. But all the assembly suggested stoning them with stones. Then the glory of the Lord appeared in the Tent of Meeting before all the children of Israel.

11. And the Lord said to Moses, "How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be before they believe me, in spite of all the miracles I have performed among them? 12. I will strike them with a pestilence and disinherit them, and make of you a greater and stronger nation than they."

13. But Moses said to the Lord, "Then Egypt will hear of it, since by your power you brought up this people from among them, 14. and they will tell it to the residents of this land. They have heard that you, Lord, are among this people; that you, Lord, are seen face to face, and that your cloud stands over them, and that you go before them by day in a pillar of cloud and by night in a pillar of fire.

15. Now, if you do kill all this people as one man, the nations which have heard of your fame will say, 16. 'Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land He pledged to them, therefore he has slaughtered them in the wilderness.' 17. But now, I pray, let the power of my Lord be great, just as you have spoken, saying, 18. 'The Lord is slow to anger, great in love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but He will by no means clear the guilty, bringing the iniquity of the fathers upon their children to the third and fourth generations.' 19. Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people, according to the vastness of your love, even as you have forgiven them from Egypt until now."

#### COMMENTARY

It is sometimes assumed that the congregation desired to stone only Joshua and Caleb ( *RCP* ); however, the manner in which the Lord responded may indicate that the reaction was against all four. Divine glory flashed forth from the Tabernacle

to halt the actions of the crowd, and refocused their attention upon their rightful position. No doubt the manifestation was both visible and awesome, since drastic measures would have been required to prevent mob actions against the potential victims.

The two faithful spies make one final effort to influence the people. But they cannot do more than specify the conditions upon which the Lord will fulfill the promise of the land: they must be worthy of the delight of the Lord, and cease rebelling against Him. Neither must they any longer fear the pagan inhabitants any longer. The choice is placed squarely upon the rebels. They may march victoriously into Canaan, led by God's powerful hand; or, they may resume their grumbling and anarchy. They choose the latter course.

Unreasoning mobs are seldom stilled by cool heads and calm pleas. Stoning was not only a most horrible means of death, it was a disgraceful punishment reserved for the most grave circumstances. That such a thing was suggested for God's men reveals the hostility and irrationality of the mob.

God's glory, manifested under so many different conditions during all dispensations, has never failed to strike the viewers with awe. These same insurrectionists had viewed His glory at Sinai (Ex. 24:16-17), when He confirmed His covenant with them. That had been a time for rejoicing; this was a time for fear.

For the second time, God proposes to destroy an ungrateful, rebellious troupe and make of Moses a greater people than they. *PC* offers the suggestion that God was not actually serious about eliminating Israel—He was putting Moses to the test of unselfishness, loyalty and courage with respect to his people, fully expecting Moses to refuse the offer. From another vantage point, *RCP* reminds the reader that, even had the Lord put all the rebels down, leaving only Moses, the promise to the patriarchs would not have been broken since Moses was a descendant of the patriarchs. An oversimplified response is simply to point out that *every* Israelite was a

descendant of the patriarchs.

Although verses 13 and 14 are corrupt in the original, their meaning is simple: the Egyptians, from whom Israel has been delivered, would delight in pointing out to the inhabitants of Canaan that the God who had presumably led Israel across the Red Sea and to the edge of Canaan, was now suddenly impotent and could not finish His proposed work. The response the Egyptians might logically expect would be a united attack against the former slaves, resulting in their utter defeat. Then, Moses reasons, the name of the Lord would be subjected to derision and contempt. Any tragedy coming upon them, especially the pestilence such as God threatened, would be further confirming evidence to the pagan mind. The logic of Moses rests upon human principles, failing to recognize that God's actions are not measured by men's reasoning; if, in His judgment the actions of Israel warrant death, the reaction of others is irrelevant.

The second basis of Moses' appeal has much more to commend it as he appeals to God's forgiveness and mercy. Justice may well require the death sentence, but God is free always to temper justice with mercy as it may accomplish His purposes. Before He can extend mercy, however, He must effect pardon; and they have sinned grossly. Thus two supreme divine prerogatives are involved: the power to forgive and the ability to temper justice with mercy.

Moses' intercession is a sublime prayer. It is totally unselfish, since Moses might have been briefly tempted to accept the place of progenitor of a new and faithful people. It is solicitous of the name and reputation of God, which Moses would like preserved without even undeserved tarnish. It appeals to the highest attributes of God, prerogatives He alone may possess, in the resolution of this dilemma. If it is not eloquent in its original form, it is a splendid presentation of the thought that the wicked, much more than the righteous, must depend upon the pardoning mercy of the Lord.

## QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

258. What is the significance of the actions of Moses and Aaron as they fell upon their faces before the people? Are the actions of Joshua and Caleb for the same reasons?
259. What reason might the two faithful spies have for thinking the people might listen to them now, when their earlier words had drawn an unfavorable response?
260. Under what conditions would the "Lord delight in us"? What consequences would follow?
261. Explain the thought, "the people are bread for us" in v. 9.
262. Upon what legal basis could the Israelites have appealed for stoning their antagonists?
263. What is the implied reaction of the people when the glory of the Lord appeared from the Tent of Meeting?
264. Discuss the various motives attributed to God when He proposed the destruction of the rebels in Israel.
265. List the points presented in Moses' petition to the Lord. Discuss the relative weight of each.
266. Why should there be any need for the Egyptians to tell the people of Canaan of the impotence of God, if Israel were not brought into the land?
267. What fate would be demanded of the Israelites if God acted upon sheer justice alone? What point or points would be demonstrated if He were to accede to the petition of Moses?

F. GENERAL PARDON;  
SENTENCE UPON THE PROVOKERS, vv. 20-38

TEXT

Chapter 14:20. And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word: 21. But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. 22. Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these

ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; 23. Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it; 24. But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land where-into he went; and his seed shall possess it. 25. (Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwelt in the valley.) Tomorrow turn you, and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea.

26. And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, 27. How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. 28. Say unto me, As truly as I live, saith the Lord, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you; 29. Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness, and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, 30. Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. 31. But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. 32. But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness. 33. And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness. 34. After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise. 35. I the Lord have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die. 36. And the men which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the land, 37. Even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the Lord. 38. But Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of the men that went to search the land, lived still.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 14:20. And the Lord said, "I have pardoned them according to your word; 21. but certainly, as I live, and as all the earth is filled with the glory of the Lord, 22. all those men who have seen my glory and my miracles which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have tested me now these ten times, and have not heeded my voice, 23. certainly they shall not see the land I pledged to their fathers, nor shall any of those who provoked me see it. 24. But my servant Caleb, because he had a different attitude and followed me completely, I will bring into the land into which he went; and his descendants shall possess it. 25. Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites lived in the valleys. Turn tomorrow and set out into the wilderness by way of the Red Sea."

26. And the Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron, saying, 27. "How long shall I put up with this evil congregation who murmur against me? I have heard the complaints of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. 28. Say to them, 'As I live,' says the Lord, 'just as you have spoken in my ears, so will I do to you: 29. your corpses shall fall in this wilderness, according to the total number, from twenty years of age and older, who have complained against me. You shall certainly not come into the land, in which I swore I would bring you to live, excepting Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua, the son of Nun. 31. However, your children, whom you said would become prey, these I shall bring in, and they shall know the land you have rejected. 32. But as for you, your corpses shall fall in this wilderness. 33. And your children shall be shepherds in this wilderness forty years, and suffer because of your unfaithfulness, until your corpses are consumed in the wilderness. 34. According to the number of days in which you spied out the land, that is, forty days, for every day you shall bear your sins one year: namely, forty years; and you shall know my displeasure.' 35. I have spoken, I the Lord; surely I will do it to all this wicked generation which have gathered together against me. In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there shall they die." 36. As for the men Moses sent to spy

out the land, those who returned and caused all the congregation to complain against him by giving a bad report concerning the land, 37. those men who brought a bad report of the land died by a plague before the Lord. 38. But Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, among the men who went to spy out the land, lived.

### COMMENTARY

Whatever the intercessory prayer of Moses might have lacked in eloquence was more than supplied by his sincerity and selflessness. God immediately responds, adopting the course of the petitioner. So the course of an entire nation is determined by the "fervent, effectual prayer of the righteous" man, (James 5:16).

We do not have a record of ten instances when the nation of Israel tested God's patience; nor is it necessary to produce such a list. The language of God simply expresses the thought that their provocations have reached the ultimate. The same technique is used again and again in Amos (1:3; 1:6, et passim), when the end of God's patience comes after three, and then four, transgressions.

God's sentence comes upon the people in two pronouncements: those men directly responsible for misdirecting Israel are to be struck down by the plague; and the people, who have been gullible, will not be permitted to enter the Promised Land at all. The punishments fit the crimes. Those who have attained the age of twenty are presumed to be responsible for their decisions. They have chosen to believe ten men rather than the Lord and His two faithful spies; hence, they are consigned to wandering about in the wilderness for the remainder of their lives. The ten unfaithful spies are especially culpable, since it is their word which has incited the disobedience. If they are allowed to remain alive and influential among the people, there is no way of guessing what seeds of discord and disruption they might have sown. Knowing their hearts, and that they will contribute nothing constructive to the morale of their audience, God deems them worthy of death. They are struck dead on the

spot. The term "plague" is general rather than specific, making it a matter of speculation as to exactly how the Lord imposed His penalty upon them.

Sharply contrasting with the sentence of God upon the unfaithful spies and the doubting people, the commendation of the Lord with respect to Caleb particularly, and to Joshua as well, is refreshing. They alone, of all the Israelites above the age of twenty, would be permitted to enter and possess their portions in Canaan. It is safe to assume, at this point, that Moses and Aaron would have been included with the two faithful men. Moses may have omitted himself and his brother at this point when he wrote the record years later, and both of them had also been excluded from the Promised Land.

An ironic note is inserted into the pronouncement of God when He informs the murmuring people that their children, for whom they have expressed special concern about marching directly into the Promised Land, are to be spared through the wilderness ordeal. They, not their fearful parents, will know the full promise of life in a free land of their own. We must conclude that the expressed fears were only alibis; the people were afraid on their own account, not because of their children. Their carcasses, rotting in the desert, would provide stark evidence of this fact.

The words to the children, and their time in the wilderness, are properly, "Your children shall pasture in the wilderness forty years," suggesting something quite different from aimless wandering, which is the common thought from earlier translations. The area of this pasturing was irregularly used for the same purposes by the Amalekites, the Midianites, and a few other nomadic tribes. At its best, however, the land is bleak and unsuited to permanent residence. It is hot, arid, mountainous, and inhospitable. For forty years the children of the rebels would endure its privations because of the sins of their fathers. "Whoredoms", as used in this context, unquestionably refers to the idolatrous acts of the Jews, as in Ex. 34:16. Blame for these iniquitous deeds rests squarely upon the souls of the defectors: but the consequences of their idolatry come upon the children



as well. Obvious spiritual overtones are to be found in these facts.

Little wonder that the people wept when Moses informed them of the decision of the Lord! They could find neither consolation nor hope in it. Before them lay a difficult life, and death would come upon them all without their having realized the one really wonderful promise which would have made all their trials bearable. Again, the punishment well fits the crime. At this point, Moses inserts the editorial comment which confirms the Lord's prophecies: death came upon these apostates in such a manner as to make it clear that they did not die natural deaths, and all within the time foretold.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

268. The Lord pronounced two judgments and punishments upon various portions of the Israelites because of their faithlessness. What were these two pronouncements, and whom did each affect?
269. Name the previous occasions on which the murmuring people tested God's patience.
270. Why did God set the period of wilderness wandering at forty years?
271. Of the total number of people in the tribes of Israel, how many adults eventually entered into the Promised Land?
272. What alibi did the people give for not moving immediately into the Promised Land? How did God turn this very argument against them?
273. How is the word "whoredoms" used with reference to the conduct of the people?
274. Why did Moses not include himself and Aaron among those whom God promised entrance into the Promised Land?

## G. DEFEATS BY AMALEKITES AND KENITES vv. 39-45

## TEXT

Chapter 14:39. And Moses told these sayings unto all the children of Israel: and the people mourned greatly.

40. And they rose up early in the morning, and gat them up into the top of the mountain, saying, Lo, we be here, and will go up unto the place which the Lord hath promised: for we have sinned. 41. And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the Lord? but it shall not prosper. 42. Go not up, for the Lord is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies. 43. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are before you, and ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from the Lord, therefore the Lord will not be with you. 44. But they presumed to go up unto the hilltop: nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and Moses, departed not out of the camp. 45. Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, even unto Hormah.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 14:39. And Moses told these words to all the children of Israel; and the people grieved very much. 40. And they rose up early in the morning and went to the top of the mountain, saying, "Here we are. We have sinned; nevertheless, we will go up to the place which the Lord has promised." 41. And Moses said, "Then why are you transgressing the word of the Lord, when it will not succeed? 42. Do not go up, lest you be struck down before your enemies, for the Lord is not among you. 43. The Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and you will fall by the sword because you have turned away from the Lord. Therefore the Lord will not be with you." 44. But they presumed to go up to the hill top, although neither the ark of the covenant nor Moses left the camp. 45. Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in that mountainous region came down and attacked them, and utterly drove them away as far as Hormah.

## COMMENTARY

When the verdict of the Lord is brought unto the people, their response is typically human. Having been told they cannot enter the Land before them, that is exactly what they now say they want to do! But it is much too late. God's patience has been tried beyond reason, and they must face the consequences of their rebellions. Even their belated expression, "We have sinned," is of no avail.

Ironically, the course now announced by the people, which would have been exactly what God wanted them to do shortly earlier, is now strongly forbidden; what would have been faithful obedience is now another instance of disbelieving rebellion. Moses stands before them to point out the radically changed circumstances, and the certain consequences of their new resolution: God is not with them, and they will be badly beaten by their enemies. When Israel moves to battle, it is without Moses or the ark of the covenant: and, we may be certain, neither Caleb nor Joshua was among them.

Complete defeat was the inevitable consequence. The Amalekites and the Canaanites descended upon them from the hills, and routed them to Hormah, and unidentified city of the region.

## QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

275. How is it that when the Israelites now want to enter the Land of Promise, they are forbidden?
276. When would it have been more appropriate for the people to confess that they had sinned?
277. Would the presence of Moses, or of the ark of the covenant, have assured victory for Israel at this time?
278. The Amalekites are regularly assigned to live in and around the territory of Kadesh-Barnea; the Canaanites are not. Consult a good Bible dictionary or atlas, and determine the areas of their inhabitation.

## Part Three: The Years of Wandering (15:1–21:35)

### I. IN PARAN (15:1–19:22)

#### A. LAWS OF OFFERINGS vv. 1-31

##### TEXT

Chapter 15:1. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 2. Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land of your habitations, which I give unto you, 3. And will make an offering by fire unto the Lord, a burnt offering, or a sacrifice in performing a vow, or in a freewill offering, or in your solemn feasts, to make a sweet savor to the Lord, of the herd, or of the flock: 4. Then shall he that offereth his offering unto the Lord bring a meat offering of a tenth deal of flour, mingled with the fourth part of a hin of oil. 5. And the fourth part of a hin of wine for a drink offering shalt thou prepare with the burnt offering or sacrifice, for one lamb. 6. Or for a ram, thou shalt prepare for a meat offering two tenth deals of flour, mingled with the third part of a hin of oil. 7. And for a drink offering thou shalt offer the third part of a hin of wine, for a sweet savor unto the Lord. 8. And when thou preparest a bullock for a burnt offering, or for a sacrifice in performing a vow, or peace offerings unto the Lord; 9. Then shall he bring with a bullock a meat offering of three tenth deals of flour, mingled with half a hin of oil. 10. And thou shalt bring for a drink offering half a hin of wine, for an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord. 11. Thus shall it be done for one bullock, or for one ram, or for a lamb, or a kid. 12. According to the number that ye shall prepare, so shall ye do to every one according to their number. 13. All that are born of the country shall do these things after this manner, in offering an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord. 14. And if a stranger sojourn with you, or whatsoever be among you in your generations, and will offer an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord; as ye do, so shall he do. 15. One ordinance shall be both for you of the congregation, and also

for the stranger that sojourneth with you, an ordinance for ever in your generations: as ye are, so shall the stranger be before the Lord. 16. One law and one manner shall be for you, and for the stranger that sojourneth with you.

17. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 18. Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land whither I bring you, 19. Then it shall be, that, when ye eat of the bread of the land, ye shall offer up a heave offering unto the Lord. 20. Ye shall offer up a cake of the first of your dough for a heave offering: as ye do the heave offering of the threshingfloor, so shall ye heave it. 21. Of the first of your dough ye shall give unto the Lord a heave offering in your generations.

22. And if ye have erred, and not observed all these commandments, which the Lord hath spoken unto Moses, 23. Even all that the Lord hath commanded you by the hand of Moses, from the day that the Lord commanded Moses, and henceforward among your generations; 24. Then it shall be, if aught be committed by ignorance without the knowledge of the congregation, that all the congregation shall offer one young bullock for a burnt offering, for a sweet savor unto the Lord, with his meat offering, and his drink offering, according to the manner, and one kid of the goats for a sin offering. 25. And the priest shall make an atonement for all the congregation of the children of Israel, and it shall be forgiven them; for it is ignorance: and they shall bring their offering, a sacrifice made by fire unto the Lord, and their sin offering before the Lord, for their ignorance: 26. And it shall be forgiven all the congregation of the children of Israel, and the stranger that sojourneth among them; seeing all the people were in ignorance.

27. And if any soul sin through ignorance, then he shall bring a she goat of the first year for a sin offering. 28. And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly, when he sinneth by ignorance before the Lord, to make an atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him. 29. Ye shall have one law for him that sinneth through ignorance, both

for him that is born among the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them.

30. But the soul that doeth aught presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. 31. Because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him.

### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 15:1. And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2. "Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, 'When you come to the land of your dwellings, which I give to you, 3. make an offering of fire to the Lord, a burnt offering or a sacrifice to fulfill a special vow, or as a freewill offering, or in your solemn feasts to make a sweet aroma to the Lord, from the herd or the flock; 4. then he who presents his offering to the Lord shall bring a meal offering of one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of oil. 5. You shall prepare wine for the drink offering: one-fourth of a hin, with the burnt offering or sacrifice for each lamb. 6. Or for a ram, you shall prepare as a meal offering two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with one-third of a hin of oil. 7. And for a drink offering you shall give one-third of a hin of wine as a sweet aroma to the Lord. 8. And when you prepare a bull for a burnt offering or a sacrifice, to fulfill a special vow, or as a peace offering to the Lord, 9. then he shall bring with the bull a meal offering of three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with one-half a hin of oil. 10. And you shall bring for a drink offering one-half hin of wine for an offering by fire, of a sweet aroma to the Lord.' 11. "Thus it shall be done for a bull, for a ram, for a lamb, or for a goat. 12. According to the number you shall prepare, so you shall do for everyone according to their number. 13. All who are born in this country shall do these things in the same manner in presenting an offering by fire, of a sweet aroma to the Lord. 14. And if an alien sojourns with you, or anyone who is among you throughout your generations, and

if he wishes to present an offering by fire, of a sweet aroma to the Lord, he shall do as you do. 15. There shall be just one regulation for you of the congregation, as well as for the alien sojourning with you, a regulation forever throughout your generations: as you are, so shall the alien be before the Lord. 16. One law and one code shall apply both to you and to the alien who sojourns with you."

17. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 18. "Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, 'When you come into the land into which I bring you, 19. it shall be that when you eat of the bread of the land you shall offer up a gift to the Lord. 20. You shall offer a cake from the first of your dough as a gift; just as you offer the gift of your threshing floor, in the same manner you shall set it apart. 21. You shall give an offering to the Lord from the first of your dough throughout your generations.

22. "If you have erred and have not kept all these commandments which the Lord spoke to Moses, 23. everything the Lord has commanded you through Moses, from the day the Lord gave commandment and onward throughout your generations; 24. then if it is done unintentionally or without the knowledge of the congregation, all of the congregation shall offer one young bull for a burnt offering, for a sweet aroma to the Lord, along with its meal offering and its drink offering according to the regulation; and one young goat shall be given as a sin offering. 25. Then the priest shall make atonement for all the congregation of the children of Israel, and they shall be forgiven; since it was unintentional, and they have brought their offering, a sacrifice brought by fire to the Lord, and their sin offering made before the Lord, for their ignorance. 26. And it shall be forgiven unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and the alien sojourning among them, since all the people were in ignorance.

27. Also, if one person sins through ignorance, he shall bring a year-old female goat for a sin offering. 28. And the priest shall make atonement for the person who sins in ignorance when he sins unintentionally before the Lord, to make atonement for

him: it shall be forgiven him. 29. "You shall have just one law for him who sins ignorantly, whether he is born among the children of Israel or the alien who sojourns among them.

30. But the person who acts defiantly, whether he is native born or an alien, dishonors the Lord: that person shall be excommunicated from among his people. 31. Because he has despised the word of the Lord and has broken His commandment, that person shall be entirely cut off; and his guilt shall be upon himself.

### COMMENTARY

At this point comes a most abrupt break in the account of Israel's history. For thirty-seven years, with the exception of a single item, in chapter 16, no actions of the people are recorded. It is as if the time spent in the wilderness should be forgotten. True, the places of their encampments are given (33:19-30); but even these are all but unidentifiable. We must not assume that God abandoned the people. They were certainly provided their daily manna, and, just as certainly, it would have been necessary that He furnish copious supplies of water for the people and their animals. In addition, the fire and the cloud went before them (see Ex. 40:34-37), so that the 'wandering' was not aimless and undirected; the Lord led them from place to place as it was appropriate. In analyzing the general circumstance, *KD* suggests the silence of the account is to be attributed to the fact that "the fighting men of Israel had fallen under the judgment of Jehovah, and the sacred history, therefore, was no longer concerned with them; whilst the youth, in whom the life and hope of Israel were preserved, had as yet no history at all," (p. 100).

Anticipating the time when the young generation should arrive in the Promised Land, the Lord reveals certain provisions which complete previous laws. When *KD* proposes that the reason for this revelation is to revive the hopes of the oncoming generation and direct their minds toward the Land, the reasoning seems too thin. It is hard to see how such a minor factor could serve as such a buoy for forty years. Perhaps a



better reason is that of *PC*: "it is evident that the primary object of their promulgation was simply to supply certain defects and omissions in the Levitical legislation," (p. 181).

The laws pertain to certain meal offerings, which are to be added to other sacrifices. The first of these relates all burnt offerings and all offerings which were killed to meat and drink offerings. A fixed amount of meal, oil and wine should be presented with each animal. The quantity differed according to the kind of animal being sacrificed. The occasion of the offering had no effect upon this law—it did not matter whether the animal was being given during the observation of a feast, or in confirmation of a vow, or as a free will offering.

The second law, vv. 17-21, establishes a procedure for offering the "first-fruits"—coarsely ground meal was to be made into a "cake", which, in turn, was lifted up or "heaved" unto the Lord in token of gratitude and blessing. It then became food for the priests.

A final enlargement, 22-31, relates to offerings occasioned by sins of omission. Considering the broad expanses of the terms of the Law, and countless points upon which questions of personal interpretation might arise in carrying out the Law, it is not at all surprising that provision is made for those who, in ignorance or oversight, err. This law had no relationship whatever to deliberate or willful sins, such as blasphemy or rebellion against the Lord. In each of the three provisions, the same details are to apply to both stranger and native-born (see verses 16, 26 and 30).

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

279. What purposes would be served in giving the Israelites instructions for sacrificial procedures they would not use until they occupied their new land?
280. Is it logical for Moses to change the account so abruptly at this point in his history of the people? Enlarge upon your answer.

281. The period in Israel's history between Kadesh-Barnea and the end of their days in the desert have commonly been called the "Wilderness Wanderings." How is this both accurate and inaccurate?
282. Why are the special provisions given in this section to be applicable to both native Israelites and strangers alike?
283. Under what circumstances should an Israelite make an offering for unknown sins?

## B. STONING OF THE SABBATH-BREAKER vv. 32-36

### TEXT

Chapter 15:32. And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day. 33. And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. 34. And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. 35. And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. 36. And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the Lord commanded Moses.

### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 15:32. Now while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the sabbath day. 33. And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation. 34. And they held him in custody, since it had not been told what should be done to him. 35. And the Lord said to Moses, "The man shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp." 36. And all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him to death with stones just as the Lord had commanded Moses.

## COMMENTARY

Following immediately upon the law distinguishing between unwitting and deliberate sins, the brief account of the Sabbath-breaker may well be introduced as an exemplum, as well as a concrete reference for future cases in which labor on the Sabbath might require judgment. The man appears to be acting presumptuously rather than in ignorance of the law. Much of the discussion upon the incident, especially that of liberal scholarship, purports to find a basic contradiction between the statement here that "it was not declared what should be done to him," (v. 34), and the clear teaching of Ex. 31:14ff. and 35:2—that Sabbath-breaking is a capital offense—overlooks a basic point. Labor on the Sabbath clearly is such an offense; but, is gathering sticks considered labor, or is it an excusable necessity under the circumstances? God's answer is quick and decisive: the man had broken the law, and must suffer the consequences previously prescribed. He is stoned by the congregation to his death.

The incident offends certain modern minds which find the death penalty horrendous under any or all circumstances. They are especially disturbed that death should come upon an individual for such an apparently trivial reason. Where such an attitude can be found, it is evidence of a more deeply seated reaction against the sovereign right of God to prescribe laws and govern human conduct by standards which do not rest upon human reasoning. Much more than our present age, the Israelites were taught from infancy to recognize the holiness of the Lord. Since His laws were nothing less than the extension of His will and His person into the ideal human society, they were always justifiable, always above question. Such conclusions were inevitable and essential in a truly theocratic system.

Stoning "without the camp" preserved the undefiled nature of the camp. In no manner were the people to be held accountable for the presumptuous man's sins; they were to be totally dissociated from both the living violator and the dead victim of the law of God.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

- 284. Upon what grounds can we justify the death sentence for this apparently trivial offense?
- 285. What point of the Law needed clarification before the man's fate could be decided?
- 286. Why should the congregation participate in execution of the sentence?
- 287. What important fact is impressed upon us regarding the Sabbath in the incident?

C. LAW OF THE TASSELS vv. 37-41

TEXT

Chapter 15:37. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 38. Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments, throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue; 39. And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring: 40. That ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God. 41. I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the Lord your God.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 15:37. And the Lord spoke to Moses saying, 38. "Speak to the children of Israel and tell them that they shall make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and they shall put on the tassel of each corner a blue cord. 39. And it shall be a tassel for you to see and remember all the commandments of the Lord, to do them. Do not seek after your own heart or your own eyes, after which you wander, 40. in order that you may remember to do all my commandments, and be holy to your God. 41. I am the Lord

your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am the Lord your God."

### COMMENTARY

*Tzitzit*, the Hebrew term used in v. 38, probably means "tassels". Ezekiel used the word (8:3) where its apparent meaning is "lock of hair." They were placed at the corners of the garments, attached by a blue cord. Two purposes have been ascribed to the tassels: they are to remind the people of their living relationship to the Lord and His Laws; and, they serve as a readily recognizable means of identification for His people. Wherever they went, and among whatsoever people they might mingle, they were uniquely marked unless, in repudiation of this commandment, they should be ashamed or unwilling to comply with God's requirement.

Historically, the Israelites complied with the commandment by wearing the *tallith*, a special garment worn by all males beyond the age of thirteen. It was a long, narrow cloth with a tassel at each corner and a hole in the center. The head was passed through the hole, and the cloth fell to the chest and the mid-back. Among the many other aberrations and showy practices of the Pharisees, making these tassels extremely large was a practice which Jesus condemned (Matt. 23:5). Their actions had become exhibitions of pride—far from the purpose for which the Lord had prescribed the tassels in the first place. Numerology has figured in the rabbinical attitude toward the *tzitzit*, whose gematria is six hundred. Adding eight threads and five knots (arbitrarily assigned as components of the garment), one arrives at the total of 613, the total number of commandments accepted as obligatory upon the Jews. Of further interest is the fact that the blue dye used for the tassels was derived from the blood of the *hilazon*, a shellfish, and was very expensive. It was later determined, perhaps because of the prohibitive cost, that the knotted cord might be white.

Non-Jewish scholars have usually cited the psychological importance of the *tzitzit* as constant reminders of the individual's relationship to God. Following "their own heart

and their own eyes" would mean spiritual defection according to their personal whims rather than the righteous laws God had delivered to them. Such a defection is termed "a whoring" here in *KJ*—a strong, symbolical term frequently applied to such conduct in both testaments.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

288. Describe the *tzitzit*, its appearance and function.
289. What use, and what abuse, was made of the tassels?
290. Discuss the numerological significance attached to the tassels.
291. For what reason were the Israelites later permitted to make the tassels white rather than blue?
292. Do you find any memorials or instructions in the New Testament which resemble the one given here?

#### D. REVOLT AND PUNISHMENT OF KORAH, DATHAN AND ABIRAM (16:1-40)

##### TEXT

Chapter 16:1. Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men: 2. And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown; 3. And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord? 4. And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face; 5. And he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even to-morrow the Lord will show who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him: even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him. 6. This do: Take you censers, Korah, and all his company; 7. And put fire therein, and put incense in them before the

Lord tomorrow: and it shall be that the man whom the Lord doth choose, he shall be holy: ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi. 8. And Moses said unto Korah, Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi: 9. Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? 10. And he hath brought thee near to him, and all the brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and seek ye the priesthood also? 11. For which cause both thou and all thy company are gathered together against the Lord: and what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him?

12. And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab; which said, We will not come up: 13. Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us? 14. Moreover, thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards: wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? we will not come up. 15. And Moses was very wroth, and said unto the Lord, Respect not thou their offering: I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them. 16. And Moses said unto Korah, Be thou and all thy company before the Lord, thou, and they, and Aaron, to-morrow: 17. And take every man his censer, and put incense in them, and bring ye before the Lord every man his censer, two hundred and fifty censers; thou also, and Aaron, each of you his censer. 18. And they took every man his censer, and put fire in them, and laid incense thereon, and stood in the door of the tabernacle of the congregation with Moses and Aaron. 19. And Korah gathered all the congregation against them unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the congregation. 20. And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, 21. Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment. 22. And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt

thou be wroth with all the congregation?

23. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 24. Speak unto the congregation, saying, Get you up from about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. 25. And Moses rose up and went unto Dathan and Abiram; and the elders of Israel followed him. 26. And he spake unto the congregation, saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins. 27. So they gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side: and Dethan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children. 28. And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind. 29. If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the Lord hath not sent me. 30. But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord.

31. And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: 32. And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. 33. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation. 34. And all Israel that were around about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also. 35. And there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense.

36. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 37. Speak unto Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, that he take up the censers out of the burning, and scatter thou the fire yonder; for they are hallowed. 38. The censers of these sinners against their own souls, let them make them broad plates for a covering of the altar: for they offered them before the Lord, therefore they are



hallowed: and they shall be a sign unto the children of Israel. 39. And Eleazar the priest took the brazen censers, wherewith they that were burnt had offered; and they were made broad plates for a covering of the altar: 40. To be a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger, which is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before the Lord; that he be not as Korah, and as his company: as the Lord said to him by the hand of Moses.

### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 16:1. Now Korah, son of Izhar, son of Kohath, son of Levi, along with Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and On, son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, gathered men 2. and rose up against Moses, together with certain of the children of Israel—two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, regularly chosen by the assembly, men of renown. 3. And they gathered themselves together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, “You assume too much, since all the congregation are holy, each one of them, and the Lord is in their midst. Why, then, do you exalt yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?” 4. When Moses heard this, he fell on his face 5. and spoke to Korah and all his company, saying, “Tomorrow morning the Lord will show who is His, and who is holy, and will cause him to draw near Him; even the one whom He will choose. He will bring near to Himself. 6. Do this: Take censers, both Korah and all his company. 7. Put fire in the censers and put incense in them in the presence of the Lord tomorrow. The man whom the Lord chooses, he shall be holy. You assume too much, you sons of Levi!” 8. Then Moses said to Korah, “I ask you to listen, sons of Levi. 9. Is it too little for you that the God of Israel has set you apart from the congregation of Israel to bring you near to Himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister to them? 10. He has also brought you near Him, and all your brothers, sons of Levi, with you? 11. Do you also seek the priesthood? For this reason you and all your company who are brought together are against the Lord. And who is Aaron, that you

complain against him?

12. Then Moses issued a summons to Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab; 13. but they said, "We will not come. Is it not enough that you have brought us up from a land flowing with milk and honey to kill us in the wilderness? and now you also make yourself a prince over us? 14. Furthermore, you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor have you given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards. Would you gouge out the eyes of these men? We will not come up!" 15. Then Moses was very angry and he said to the Lord, "Do not regard their offering. I have not taken a single donkey from them, nor have I hurt any of them." 16. And Moses said to Korah, "Be present before the Lord with all your company tomorrow: you, they, and Aaron. 17. Let every man take his censer and put incense in it, and present his censer unto the Lord—two hundred and fifty censers. You and Aaron, each shall bring his censer. 18. So each man took his censer, putting fire in it, and laid incense on it, and stood in the door of the Tent of Meeting with Moses and Aaron. 19. And Korah gathered all the congregation before them at the door of the Tent of Meeting; and the glory of the Lord appeared to the entire congregation. 20. Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron saying, 21. "Separate yourselves from among this congregation so I may consume them immediately." 22. But they fell on their faces and said, "O God, God of the spirit of all flesh, if one man sins, will you be angry with the entire congregation?"

23. Then the Lord said to Moses, "Speak to the congregation, saying, 24. 'Get away from the area around the homes of Korah, Dathan and Abiram' " 25. And Moses arose and went to Dathan and Abiram, with the elders of Israel following him. 26. And he said to the congregation, "I pray you, get away from the tents of these corrupt men, touching nothing of theirs, lest you be consumed among all their sins." 27. So they left the homes of Korah, Dathan and Abiram on all sides; and Dathan and Abiram came out and stood in the door of their tents, as did their wives, their sons, and their little children. 28. And Moses said, "By this you shall know that the

Lord has sent me to do all these works; I have not done them of my own volition. 29. If these men die a death common to all men, or if that which comes upon them also comes upon all men, then the Lord has not sent me. 30. However, if the Lord creates something quite new, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up with everything related to them and they enter alive into the Grave, then you shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord."

31. As he finished speaking these words, it happened that the ground split open beneath them. 32. The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, their homes, and all the men associated with Korah, together with all their possessions. 33. They, and all their belongings descended alive into the Grave, and the earth closed upon them; and they perished from among the congregation. 34. And all the Israelites surrounding them fled at their shout, for they said, "The earth must not swallow us also!" 35. And a fire came from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering incense.

\*36. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 37. "Tell Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, that he should take up the censers from the fire and scatter the burning coals around; the censers have become holy. 38. As for the censers of these men who sinned at the cost of their very lives, let them be made into beaten plates for a covering for the altar, since they presented them before the Lord, and they have become holy. 39. They shall be a sign unto the children of Israel." So Eleazar the priest took the brass censers which had been offered by the men who were burned; and they beat them into a covering for the altar, 40. to be a reminder to the children of Israel so that no one who is not a priest, who is not a descendant of Aaron, may come near to burn incense before the Lord, lest he become like Korah and his company, as the Lord told Eleazar through Moses.

#### COMMENTARY

This section has been subjected to severe attack by the

\*Some versions divide the chapter at this point.

critics' knives. The usual contention is that we have here not one rebellion, but two; and that they are interwoven records of the revolt of Dathan and Abiram against Moses' civil authority, while the revolt of Korah and his company is directed against the religious authority of the great man of God. The first account is presumed to be that of JE; the second, by P. Admittedly, there are some problems with the early portion of the text, but in no logical manner do these problems give substance to the critical view. Besides the contention that we have two, rather than one incident, critics have pointed to the fact that the verb "took" (v. 1) has no object. Finally, there is a change of number in the verbs from verse 1 to the following verses— from the singular to the plural.

Each of the charges can be answered without straining the intent or the integrity of the text. Regarding the change of number, we may assume that Moses himself began the account by calling attention to Korah, the instigator of all of the difficulty, as he gathered the other leading participants about him and influenced them to join in the protest against Moses. From that point, we are dealing not with one individual, but with a group; hence, the entire group receive the author's attention.

Nobody knows certainly what is the intended object of the verb "took", although the *KJ* supplies "men", a very logical choice under the circumstances; the Jerusalem Targum suggests "counsel", which would also fit the situation; *RCP*, more original but less probable, supplies "himself". With Dathan and Abiram having been mentioned within the same verse, and anticipating the association all would have in the revolt, the conjecture that Korah "took men" for the purpose of organizing the resistance would seem most probable; and it would reinforce the argument regarding the change of number previously discussed.

The suggestion that we are dealing with two interwoven records, not a single incident, is purely a subjective judgment. *IB* demonstrates well a very obviously anachronistic prejudice in

commenting that the mistake of all the revolutionaries was not that of insurrection, disrespect for authority, or attempted usurpation of rights not properly theirs; it was, instead, a mistake of bad timing. In the commentator's words, "In what then did the crime of Korah and his associates consist? Was it not that they failed to see that their timing was wrong?" (p. 222). The conclusion is based upon the premise that the contemporary reader should "glory in their two main contentions, viz., ecclesiastical and political democracy as over against autocracy", (*Ibid*). It is hard to imagine a more unwarranted and myopic argument. The author has ignored the facts that Moses served in his place, not by demagoguery or without divine sanction, but as the very personally appointed legate of God Himself. It is historical folly to suggest that a democratic government among either the priests or the people of Israel would have been a more equitable form of rule than that which had been ordained by the Law: a theocracy, with political leadership placed squarely in Moses' hands, and religious leadership assigned to the Levitical priesthood, with Moses and Aaron standing in primary positions. It must not be forgotten that these positions, while most honorable and prestigious, also were positions of almost incalculable responsibility. Rebels like Korah and his crew have, more often than not, sought honor and prestige rather than equity and responsibility. From the manner in which the revolt began, but more particularly from the manner in which God dealt with it, we may confidently affirm that the critics stand upon thin ice.

The most interesting treatment of Korah's mutiny undoubtedly is that of Rabbi Tanhumah in the Midrash. He points out that Reuben camped on the south side of the Tent, which put Korah and the other rebels in near proximity to each other. And why did Korah rebel? Because of jealousy toward Elizaphan, son of Uzziel, who was appointed prince of the Kohathites (at Moses' hand, but at God's instruction), whereas Korah, son of Izhar and in seniority next to Amram, should have received the honor, in his own opinion. Tanhumah relates a test question devised by Korah and his company, by which he

proposed to humiliate and expose Moses as unfit to lead the people: standing before Moses, Korah asked, "Does a garment made entirely of blue wool still require the *tzitzit* with its single blue thread, or is such a garment exempt?" When Moses replied that the *tzitzit* must still be fastened to the garment, the scoffers retorted, "Is it possible that a garment of a different color is legally covered by a single thread of blue, while this robe made wholly of blue should not be exempt?" (*RCP*, pp. 148, 149).

While such a story may lack historical validity, it would blend well with the true meaning of "rose up *before* Moses", v. 2; in harmony with v. 3, we may understand that the rebels "rose up *against* Moses," plotting their insurrection, but not necessarily standing directly before his face at the outset of their plot.

At the actual confrontation (v. 3ff.), their words accuse Moses of assuming too much authority, elevating himself above all the people without authorization. Their weak premise is that all of the people, not Moses alone, had the abiding presence of the Lord in their midst; hence, the proposal is that all the people should be a holy people—perhaps even an entire nation of priests. Such a proposal ignores, according to *KD*, both the "transition of the universal priesthood into the special mediatorial office and priesthood of Moses and Aaron," and overlooks "the fact that God Himself had chosen Moses and Aaron, and appointed them as mediators between Himself and the congregation, to educate the sinful nation into a holy nation . . . the rebels, on the contrary, thought that they were holy already," (pp. 106, 107).

For the fourth time, a serious incident has disrupted the smooth progress of history among the Israelites. They had worshipped the golden calf, murmured bitterly against Moses and the Lord, and followed the bad advice of the ten faithless spies. Each time Moses had interceded in their behalf; each time God had been merciful. But the potential of this rebellion seems to be the worst of all. Moses "fell upon his face" once more,

doubtless experiencing a combination of frustration, bitter disappointment, and grief. Only the Lord can fully and properly handle the problem and, while prostrate, Moses seeks the course of Divine counsel. When he rises, it is with God's own prescription for action: the rebels are to bring their censers into His own Presence on the following day, and He would make his verdict clear to the entire camp. Of course, only the Levites following Korah would be involved in the test at this point. Theirs is a higher station than that of the Reubenites; theirs is, therefore, a weightier responsibility. The Reubenites will be dealt with differently but appropriately. Moses pinpoints the sin of Korah and his troupe in v. 7 when he turns their own argument upon them: "Ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi!" They have been presumptuous to the extreme, standing in criticism of a system designed by God, but making Moses the butt of their snide remarks.

The entire structure of the priestly system is placed in its proper perspective in vv. 9-11. Every Levite holds a place of special honor and service of ministry; now these malcontents seek to break out of their prescribed assignment, considering it beneath their dignity or their ability. Typically human, they complain about not holding the highest stations while ignoring the singular place of honorable service to which they have been set aside.

Moses next turned his attention to Dathan and Abiram, whose precise role in the conflict is not clear. They were not of the two hundred and fifty previously referred to, but they are called to the same scene of impending trial. They refuse emphatically. They propose four basic criticisms against Moses: 1. he has brought them from a land of plenty; 2. he will cause their death in the desert; 3. he has made himself a prince over the people; and, 4. he has failed to bring them to the land promised them when they left Egypt. The charges have no substance whatever. They have forgotten that they were slaves without privilege, and under heavy oppression, regardless of any other circumstances. Again, although death has indeed been promised to all those adults now in the camp before they

emerge from their time in the wilderness, it is a death they have brought upon themselves because of their hardness of heart and refusal to follow God's will in entering into Canaan. This argument is directly related to the last point, since their failure to enter the Promised Land is coupled with their own obstinacy, and the resultant promise of death. The charge that Moses had made himself a prince over the people is patently untrue. The accusers had forgotten, or did not know, that, although Moses chose to repudiate his place among the royal family in Egypt in order to identify himself with his own people (Ex. 2:11-15; cf. Heb. 11:24-27), God had selected him to return from Midian as the leader of his people from the land of bondage over Moses' sincere efforts to refuse the place of leadership (see Ex. 3:7-4:17). These circumstances made the unkind criticisms even more difficult for Moses to bear. His angered response (v. 15) is not only understandable, it is wholly justified. His counsel to the Lord, that He should not recognize their offering, hardly seems necessary, although it is a natural statement, as is his defense of personal integrity.

To Korah, Moses repeats God's instructions, (vv. 16, 17). The next day arrives, and Korah appears as directed, with his companions, while the congregation draws near to watch the proceedings. When God warns Moses and Aaron to draw apart from the throng to avoid being caught in their destruction, they immediately react against the thought that punishment might visit upon the entire audience—how shall they all be held responsible for the deeds of a few? Their intercession is based upon the knowledge that God is aware of the innermost thoughts of all men, and He will not cause the innocent to suffer here with the offenders; He will punish with discrimination. To this end, Moses and Aaron are told to leave the dwelling of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.

Moses makes one last effort to dissuade the revolutionaries from their course. He came before Dathan and Abiram to request an end to their rebellion, but his efforts are without success. Consequently the people are told to separate themselves from the spot and to touch nothing whatever among



their belonging, for all are to be destroyed. This leaves the rebels and their families in virtual isolation, whereupon Moses sets forth the terms of the divine ordeal: if the men die an ordinary death, then he is not God's ordained spokesman. If, however, the earth splits and they are taken into the crevice, the people must recognize them for what they are: rebels against the Lord. He had scarcely finished his charge when the earth opened up and they were destroyed. The sight was made more horrendous by the accompanying screams of the victims, a flame which no doubt flashed forth from the sanctuary like lightning, and the disappearance of people, houses and possessions. Fear struck the hearts of the congregation and they fled to escape a similar fate. At the same instant, the two hundred fifty Levites and, no doubt, Korah himself were overcome by a fatal fire emanating from the Tabernacle. It was a most convincing demonstration of righteous judgment, and a clear exoneration of Moses and Aaron.

The closing verses of this section (vv. 36-40), establish the sacredness of the vessels used by the lately deceased. They are not to be discarded or used profanely. Rather, they are to be made into brass covers for the altar of incense. As such, they would be continuing reminders of the fate which surely awaits any who would be so foolish as to repeat the irreverent errors of Korah. The incident is closed. Moses and Aaron have been vindicated, and the justice of God has again been demonstrated most convincingly.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

293. Review the distinction between priests and Levites, and relate this to Korah, Dathan and Abiram.
294. Upon what grounds do critics attempt to show that chapter 16 is actually a composite of two separate incidents? Look through the chapter carefully, separating the proposed incidents. What happens to the text's logic, order and credibility?
295. List the actual problems encountered in the account.

- How is each of them interpreted by the critical schools?  
How can the problems be explained without doing violence to belief in the Mosiac authorship of the chapter?
296. What is essentially wrong in suggesting that the error of the revolutionaries was simply a matter of bad timing?
  297. Pinpoint the primary point of guilt in Korah's criticism and ambition.
  298. Relate the test Korah is said to have proposed to Moses, in an attempt to trap him.
  299. Explain why Moses would continue to intercede before the Lord in behalf of a rebellious people time after time.
  300. Why should the verdict of God be pronounced separately and differently upon the Levites and the Reubenites?
  301. What four basic criticisms do Dathan and Abiram level at Moses? Answer each of them.
  302. Why was it necessary for God to call the congregation apart from Korah—would He have destroyed them along with the rebels?
  303. Others, besides Moses, have predicted the manner of God's destruction upon false prophets or revolutionaries. Find as many examples as you can, such as Micaiah (I Kings 22:24-28).
  304. What would be considered an "ordinary death", as Moses speaks to the rebels?
  305. Describe the circumstances under which God effected the punishment of the rebels.
  306. What emotion came upon the congregation as they witnessed this scene?
  307. Why were the censers not destroyed? To what use were they finally put?

## E. THE FATAL PLAGUE vv. 41-50

## TEXT

Chapter 16:41. But on the morrow all the congregation of

the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord. 42. And it came to pass, when the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation; and, behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared. 43. And Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of the congregation.

44. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 45. Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment. And they fell upon their faces.

46. And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the Lord; the plague is begun. 47. And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people. 48. And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed. 49. Now they that died in the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred, besides them that died about the matter of Korah. 50. And Aaron returned unto Moses unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the plague was stayed.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 16:41. But on the next day all the congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, saying, "You have killed the people of the Lord." 42. And it happened when the congregation had gathered against Moses and Aaron that they looked toward the Tent of Meeting, and behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared. 43. Then Moses and Aaron came before the Tent of Meeting.

44. And the Lord said to Moses, "Get away from this congregation so that I may consume them immediately." 45. And they all fell on their faces. And Moses said to Aaron, "Take

a censer and put fire from the altar in it, and put incense on it, and take it quickly to the congregation to make atonement for them;

46. for wrath has gone out from the Lord, and the plague has begun.” 47. And Aaron took the censer as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and behold, the plague had begun among the people. Therefore, he put incense on the censer, and made atonement for the people. 48. And he stood between the dead and the living so that the plague was stopped. 49. Now all those who had died in the plague were 14,700, besides those who died in the incident of Korah. 50. Then Aaron returned to Moses, to the door of the Tent of Meeting, since the plague had been ended.

#### COMMENTARY

While the incident given in closing chapter sixteen may almost seem to be an epilogue to the account of Korah and the rebels, it is only partly so. The multitude had had no part in the rebellion, and should have been convinced by the dramatic visit of divine justice that Moses' conduct was altogether acceptable to the Lord, and that the destruction was nothing less than deserved. Had the matter been left here, the story would have had a different end. But, with the unpredictability of human nature, the crowd now proved to be most fickle as they hurled bitter charges against Moses and Aaron, accusing them of having “killed the people of the Lord”! Such a judgment cannot be justified, under any circumstances. True, the lives of a number of people have been taken, but they have suffered a self-imposed condemnation; and the people themselves were spared only because Moses and Aaron had interposed for them, eliciting God's instructions that they all should withdraw from the proximity of the destruction (v. 26). Since the 250 men had been very important men in the community, their loss would be a serious blow. But it should not have obscured the issues themselves, which the people have now forgotten.

While the protest is being lodged with Moses and Aaron, God again takes decisive action, appearing in a covering cloud at

the tabernacle. From this covering, His words issue a call for the two faithful men to separate themselves again from the murmurers. Quickly, Aaron is dispatched to offer incense in behalf of the offenders, to prevent their death. And what is the plague which has already begun to ravage the camp? Our information is inadequate, but it seems to have been a direct visit of death upon them. In a very brief time, 14,700 had been victims. That there were not many more is directly due to the quick actions of Aaron at the instruction of Moses. For so fierce a visitation to have ended so suddenly would leave no doubt whatever but that God heard the intercession of His servants once again; the surviving people owed their very lives once more to the men of whom they had been most severely critical.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

308. By what sort of logic could the congregation hold Moses and Aaron responsible for the death sentence executed upon the rebels?
309. Why would the loss of these 250 men be a special blow against the life of the community?
310. The Law prescribed no such service as Aaron's special incense offering, made on this occasion. Why should it have been effectual?
311. What do we know about the kind of plague which visited the people?
312. Explain the scripture saying that Aaron "stood between the dead and the living" in giving his offering.

#### F. BUDDING OF AARON'S ROD (17:1-13)

##### TEXT

Chapter 17:1. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 2. Speak unto the children of Israel, and take of every one of them a rod according to the house of their fathers, of all their princes according to the house of their fathers, twelve rods: write thou every man's name upon his rod. 3. And thou shalt write Aaron's name upon the rod of Levi: for one rod shall be for the head of

the house of their fathers. 4. And thou shalt lay them up in the tabernacle of the congregation before the testimony, where I will meet you. 5. And it shall come to pass, that the man's rod, whom I shall choose, shall blossom: and I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel, whereby they murmur against you.

6. And Moses spake unto the children of Israel, and every one of their princes gave him a rod apiece, for each prince one, according to their father's houses, even twelve rods; and the rod of Aaron was among their rods. 7. And Moses laid up the rods before the Lord in the tabernacle of witness, 8. And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds. 9. And Moses brought out all the rods from before the Lord unto all the children of Israel: and they looked, and took every man his rod.

10. And the Lord said unto Moses, Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels; and thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from me, that they die not. 11. And Moses did so; as the Lord commanded him, so did he. 12. And the children of Israel spake unto Moses saying, Behold, we die; we perish; we all perish. 13. Whosoever cometh anywhere near unto the tabernacle of the Lord shall die; shall we be consumed with dying?

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 17:1. Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2. "Speak to the children of Israel, and take from each one of them a rod, one for each father's family, of all their princes according to the father's family: twelve rods in all. Write every man's name on his rod, 3. and write Aaron's name upon the rod of Levi, for one rod shall represent each of the fathers' families. 4. And you shall lay them up in the Tent of Meeting in front of the Testimony, where I will meet with you. 5. And it will happen that the man whose rod I shall choose shall blossom. In this way I will put an end to the grumbings against Me—the

grumbings of the children of Israel who complain against you.”

6. So Moses spoke to the children of Israel, and each of the princes gave him a rod, one for each prince, according to their fathers' families: twelve rods, among which was the rod of Aaron. 7. So Moses put the rods before the Lord in the Tent of the Testimony. 8. And it happened on the next day that Moses went into the Tent of the Testimony; and lo, the rod of Aaron, representing the house of Levi, had sprouted and brought forth buds and bloomed, and had produced ripe almonds. 9. Moses then brought out all the rods from before the Lord to all the children of Israel; and they looked, and each man took his rod.

10. But the Lord said to Moses, “Put Aaron's rod back before the Testimony, to be kept as a sign against the rebels so that you may put an end to their complaining against Me, in order that they may not die.” 11. And Moses did it; just as the Lord commanded him, he did it. 12. And the children of Israel spoke to Moses, saying, “Look we are dying! We perish! We are all dying! 13. Everyone who comes near, everyone who even approaches the Tabernacle of the Lord dies! Shall we all perish?”

#### COMMENTARY

Of this account, *IB* says, “The story of Aaron's rod presents a miracle which the modern mind finds difficult to accept as a literal historical fact,” (p. 227). The revealing comment is hardly surprising from such a source; we might expect it to have been made of virtually any miracle in Scripture, since all revolve about the intervention of God in normal life, and they vary only in time, dimension and circumstances. But to the man who is convinced of God's supreme power, and of His concern with the affairs of men, the miracle is more than credible, it is virtually mandatory at this point in time. When the seeds of rebellion have been sown widely among Israel, and the full crop has led to the deaths of nearly 15,000 people; when God's appointed leaders have been subjected to crude, cruel and totally unjustified criticism, nothing could be more appropriate than for God to demonstrate convincingly that He is still in

power upon His throne, and that His selection of Moses and Aaron is now more fully justified than ever before.

True, it is unusual that a branch, broken from its source, should live, let alone bring forth buds, blossoms and fruit overnight. But who would have been convinced by a sign requiring natural processes to produce the same effects in four months? The God of nature, Whose Son eliminated the time and process required to turn water into wine naturally, chose a like technique to gainsay the scoffers of Israel and reaffirm the station of Aaron, further setting him apart to the highest permanent office among the people: High Priest.

It is probable that the twelve rods presented before the Lord were not sticks randomly chosen to fulfill a specific commandment of the Lord, but that they had served each individual man as a useful staff in daily life; and that each might have been identifiable to its owner even without inscribing his name upon it. The identification would demonstrate beyond dispute, however, ownership of the rod chosen of the Lord; and none could question it. Hebrews 9:4 lists the rod, along with the tablets of the Law and a pot of manna, as an item kept within the Ark of the Covenant—continuing as a reminder of the divine appointment of the High Priest. And, just as the rod, separated from the tree, could have produced nothing at all except by divine power, so the priesthood itself, if severed from God, would be sterile.

The rod is preserved as a sign against rebellion, and God remarked that thus He had literally “buried” their murmurings (v. 10). When the people witnessed the sign of the fruitful rod, they were struck with terror, perhaps realizing the gravity of their complaints more fully than ever before. They feared another fatal judgment upon their number at the moment, or at intervals in the future when they approached the Tabernacle, and their cries, “We are dying!” are expressed in what are known as “percepts of certainty”, indicating the inevitable. But they have only seen God’s warning, not His execution, in the sign: and they have no reason to fear unless they should repeat the dastardly conduct of the recent past.



QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

313. Name ten miracles, besides the one in Numbers 17, in which the power of God neutralizes, reverses, or accelerates some natural power.
314. Why would it be important that the twelve rods were placed in the Tabernacle during the time of the test?
315. Why was this test important, and why was it appropriate to the circumstances?
316. What was the probable service of the rods before they were brought for this test?
317. What was the ultimate destination of Aaron's rod?
318. Explain the reaction of the people to the sight of Aaron's rod.
319. Under what circumstances should they have been afraid?

G. LEVITICAL DUTIES AND THEIR EMOLUMENTS  
(18:1-32)

TEXT

Chapter 18:1. And the Lord said unto Aaron, Thou and thy sons and thy father's house with thee shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary: and thou and thy sons with thee shall bear the iniquity of your priesthood. 2. And thy brethren also of the tribe of Levi, the tribe of thy father, bring thou with thee, that they may be joined unto thee, and minister unto thee: but thou and thy sons with thee shall minister before the tabernacle of witness. 3. And they shall keep thy charge, and the charge of all the tabernacle: only they shall not come nigh the vessels of the sanctuary and the altar, that neither they, nor ye also, die. 4. And they shall be joined unto thee, and keep the charge of the tabernacle of the congregation, for all the service of the tabernacle; and a stranger shall not come nigh unto you. 5. And ye shall keep the charge of the sanctuary, and the charge of the altar; that there be no wrath any more upon the children of Israel. 6. And I, behold, I have taken your brethren the Levites from among the children of Israel: to you they are given as a

gift for the Lord, to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. 7. Therefore thou and thy sons with thee shall keep your priest's office for every thing of the altar, and within the veil; and ye shall serve: I have given your priest's office unto you as a service of gift: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.

8. And the Lord spake unto Aaron, Behold, I also have given thee the charge of mine heave offerings of all the hallowed things of the children of Israel; unto thee have I given them by reason of the anointing, and to thy sons, by an ordinance for ever. 9. This shall be thine of the most holy things, reserved from the fire: every oblation of theirs, every meat offering of theirs, and every sin offering of theirs, which they shall render unto me, shall be most holy for thee and for thy sons. 10. In the most holy place shalt thou eat it; every male shall eat it: it shall be holy unto thee. 11. And this is thine; the heave offering of their gift, with all the wave offerings of the children of Israel: I have given them unto thee, and to thy sons and to thy daughters with thee, by a statute for ever: every one that is clean in thy house shall eat of it. 12. All the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine, and of the wheat, the firstfruits of them which they shall offer unto the Lord, them have I given thee. 13. And whatsoever is first ripe in the land, which they shall bring unto the Lord, shall be thine; every one that is clean in thine house shall eat of it. 14. Everything devoted in Israel shall be thine. 15. Everything that openeth the matrix in all flesh, which they bring unto the Lord, whether it be of men or beasts, shall be thine: nevertheless the firstborn of man shalt thou surely redeem, and the firstling of unclean beasts shalt thou redeem. 16. And those that are to be redeemed from a month old thou shalt redeem, according to thine estimation, for the money of five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs. 17. But the firstling of a cow, or the firstling of a sheep, or the firstling of a goat, thou shalt not redeem; they are holy: thou shalt sprinkle their blood upon the altar, and shalt burn their fat for an offering made by fire, for a sweet savor unto the Lord. 18. And the flesh of them shall be thine, as

the wave breast and as the right shoulder are thine. 19. All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer unto the Lord, have I given thee, and thy sons and thy daughters with thee, by a statute for ever: it is a covenant of salt for ever before the Lord unto thee and to thy seed with thee.

20. And the Lord spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel. 21. And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. 22. Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin, and die. 23. But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they shall bear their iniquity: it shall be a statue for ever throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance. 24. But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as a heave offering unto the Lord, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.

25. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 26. Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up a heave offering of it for the Lord, even a tenth part of the tithe. 27. And this your heave offering shall be reckoned unto you, as though it were the corn of the threshingfloor, and as the fulness of the winepress. 28. Thus ye also shall offer a heave offering unto the Lord of all your tithes, which ye receive of the children of Israel; and ye shall give thereof of the Lord's heave offering to Aaron the priest. 29. Out of all your gifts ye shall offer every heave offering of the Lord, of all the best thereof, even the hallowed part thereof out of it. 30. Therefore thou shalt say unto them, When ye have heaved the best thereof from it, then it shall be counted unto the Levites as the increase of the threshingfloor,

and as the increase of the winepress. 31. And ye shall eat it in every place, ye and your households; for it is your reward for your service in the tabernacle of the congregation. 32. And ye shall bear no sin by reason of it, when ye have heaved from it the best of it: neither shall ye pollute the holy things of the children of Israel, lest ye die.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 18:1. And the Lord said unto Aaron, "You and your sons, as well as your father's family with you, shall bear the guilt of the sanctuary; and you and your sons with you shall bear the guilt of your priesthood. 2. But bring with you also your brothers, the tribe of Levi, the tribe of your father; in order that they may be joined with you to serve you, while you and your sons with you are before the Tent of the Testimony. 3. And they shall attend to your duty, and to the duty of all the Tent; but they shall not come near the vessels of the sanctuary and the altar, lest they, or you, should die. 4. And they shall be joined with you and attend to the duties of the Tent of Meeting, for all the service of the Tent; but no foreigner may come near you. 5. And you shall keep the duty of the sanctuary, and the duty of the altar so that there may be no more wrath upon the children of Israel. 6. And behold, I have taken your brothers from the Levites, from among the children of Israel. They are given to you as a gift for the Lord, to do the duty of the Tent of Meeting. 7. Therefore you and your sons with you shall keep your priesthood for everything related to the altar, and inside the veil; and you shall do the service. I have given your priesthood to you as a service of gift; but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death."

8. And the Lord said to Aaron, "Behold, I have also given you charge of my heave offerings of all the sacred things of the children of Israel; I have given them to you as a share, and they are unto your sons as a perpetual portion. 9. This is to be yours of the most holy gifts, reserved from the fire: each offering of theirs, each meal offering of theirs, and each sin offering of theirs, and every guilt offering of theirs which they shall render

unto me shall be most holy for you and your sons. 10. In the most holy place you shall eat it; every male shall eat it. It shall be holy to you. 11. And this also is yours: the heave offering of their gift, even all the wave offerings of the children of Israel: I have given them to you and to your sons and daughters with you by law forever: every one in your house who is clean shall eat of it. 12. All of the best of the oil, and all of the best of the wine, and of the wheat, of the first of them offered to the Lord: these have I given you. 13. The first ripe fruit of everything in the land, which they are to bring to the Lord: these shall be yours. Everyone in your house who is clean shall eat of it. 14. Every devoted thing in Israel shall be yours. 15. Everything coming forth first from the womb of all flesh, which they bring to the Lord, whether of men or of animals, shall be yours. However, the firstborn of man you shall surely redeem, and the firstborn of unclean animals you shall redeem. 16. And those which are to be redeemed are to be redeemed from one month old by your ordinary counting for five shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs. 17. But the firstborn of an ox, or the firstborn of a sheep, or the firstborn of a goat you are not to redeem: they are holy. You shall sprinkle their blood upon the altar, and burn their fat for an offering of fire, as a sweet aroma to the Lord. 18. And their flesh shall be yours, just as the breast of the wave offering and the right thigh. 19. All the heave offerings of holy gifts, which the children of Israel offer to the Lord, I have given to you and your sons and your daughters with you forever by law. It is a covenant of salt forever before the Lord to you and to your children with you."

20. The Lord said to Aaron, "You shall have no inheritance in their land, nor shall you own any portion among them: I am your portion and your inheritance among the children of Israel. 21. "And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tithe in Israel for an inheritance for the service they perform, even the service of the Tent of Meeting. 22. Neither must the children of Israel come near the Tent of Meeting from now on lest they bear sin and die. 23. Only the Levites shall do the

service of the Tent of Meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity. It shall be an everlasting regulation throughout your generations that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance. 24. But I have given the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as a gift to the Lord, to the Levites as an inheritance. Therefore, I have said to them, 'Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.' "

25. Then the Lord said to Moses, 26. "Furthermore, you shall speak to the Levites and tell them, 'When you take the tithes which I have given you from the children of Israel as an inheritance, you shall offer from it a gift for the Lord, a tithe of the tithe. 27. And your offering shall be reckoned to you as though it were grain from the threshing floor, or as the completeness of the winepress.' 28. In this way you also shall present an offering to the Lord from your tithes, which you receive from the children of Israel; and from it you shall give the Lord's offering to Aaron the priest. 29. From all that is given you, you shall lay aside all that is due as a gift to the Lord, from everything the very best, even the sacred portion of it. 30. Therefore you shall say to them, 'When you have laid aside the best of it, it shall be counted to the Levites as the increase of the threshing floor and of the winepress. 31. And you may eat it anywhere, you and your households, since it is your reward for your service in the Tent of Meeting. 32. And you shall bear no sin because of it when you have offered the best from it; nor shall you pollute the holy things of the children of Israel, lest you die.' "

### COMMENTARY

The duties of the priests and the duties of the Levites are now put in clear relationship to each other. The priests attend unto all affairs of the sanctuary and of the altar of sacrifice. The Levites supply what assistance may be required, but they are under severe warning not to come directly into contact with the vessels or the altar, under threat of death (v. 3). To Aaron and the Kohathites comes the weighty assignment of fulfilling the detailed requirements of the expiation of all types of sins in the

various sacrifices and offerings. The inherited office would remain as long as the very covenant itself, making it unnecessary for the members of any other tribe to endanger his life by approaching the sanctuary. The "stranger" of v. 4 would not only include anyone of foreign birth, but also any proselyte or other Israelite not of the tribe of Levi; it is a prohibition to be universally applied, exempting only the authorized priests and Levites. Compliance would prevent such calamities as that of Korah's.

Two gifts are mentioned in verses 6, 7: the Levites are given as servants to the Levites; the priestly office is given unto the descendants of Aaron. The two gifts combine to render effectual service for an entire nation. The services are not to be considered a burden, a problem, or as the mere accident of inheritance, but a sacred privilege.

Various sacrifices, when completed, became, in part or in whole, food for the male members of the priestly family. The general regulation is set forth in v. 8, which is followed by specific details regarding the individual processes. All of the remaining portion of meat offerings, sin offerings and guilt offerings may be eaten, but only "in the most holy place," a term almost certainly used of the court of the tabernacle in this context. In addition, all wave offerings, all offerings of the first fruits, everything dedicated to the Lord, and all the firstborn, or their substitutes, came to the priests in lieu of an inheritance of land to the tribe of Levi. The priest's family might partake with him of the wave offering. The total agreement is termed "a covenant of salt," or a binding, inviolable agreement. This idiomatic expression was derived from an ancient custom of sealing a bond by sharing the same food; the parties involved would, from that time forward say, "There is salt between us," and they were bound to mutual respect and defense, even to death.

Both the priests and the Levites were entirely supported by the revenue from their service of the Tabernacle. Besides the food they received from allotted portions of the sacrifices, they were assigned the tithes from the people. These were exacted

upon all produce from the fields, as well as the increase of the flocks and herds. Carefully observing all the instructions which God had given them in the process of implementing the total sacrificial system, the priests and Levites obviated the necessity of the people's personal participation. This was for their own protection, since they would have been dealing with holy things, and an abuse or a careless act could well have been fatal. In this sense, the Levites bore the iniquity of the people.

When the Promised Land was later divided among the tribes, no proportionate land grant was given the Levites. Instead, 48 cities with their suburbs were designated as Levitical cities (see chapter 35). Six of these served as cities of refuge; all of them were distributed among the tribal lands, and with each went a two-thousand cubit suburban area surrounding the city proper. Here the Levites might cultivate the land or graze their herds, but by no means could they all live on such a small allotment; the tithes and sacrificial concessions would be essential to their very existence. Paul uses this principle to point out the appropriateness of having those who proclaim the gospel live by the revenue gained through its proclamation. The picture, in both instances, is not that of a staid, complacent professional; the man is first and always a servant of God and a servant of men, whose recompense is totally unwarranted unless he is a faithful servant in both relationships.

The effective program of God with reference to the people's giving depended upon their faithful stewardship, especially in tithing their increase. Mal. 3:8-10 makes it clear that this was not always done. Consequently, the Levites were sometimes deprived, and even poor. Even so, whatever their situation might be the Levites were required to tithe their incomes through heave offerings. And these, like the offerings of the people, were not to be the left-overs, but the very best of all they received, v. 32. In so doing, they recognized that everything they were given had come from the Lord. They could do nothing less, conscientiously, than this.



QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

320. What clear line of demarkation does God draw between the duties of the priests and the duties of the Levites?
321. Propose some reasons which would explain why God would commit such duties through inheritance rather than by any other method.
322. How is the term 'stranger' to be understood here? Why is this an unusual use of the word?
323. Which of the offerings of Israel became the priests' food? Why should they be eaten only "in the most holy place"?
324. Explain the term, "a covenant of salt".
325. What would be the most grave danger if someone other than a priest or a Levite were to perform the functions of the sacrifice?
326. Why were the descendants of Levi given no land inheritance in the Promised Land? What were they given instead?
327. What precedent is set for the Christian system in the paying of tithes to support the priesthood?
328. Show what improper attitudes might be adopted by the servants of God, and how they might endanger both them and the people.
329. For what reasons would God require the Levites themselves the tithe?

H. LAWS OF THE RED HEIFER AND UNCLEANNESS  
(19:1-22)

TEXT

Chapter 19:1. And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, 2. This is the ordinance of the law which the Lord hath commanded, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke. 3. And ye shall give her unto Eleazar the priest, that he may bring her forth

without the camp, and one shall slay her before his face: 4. And Eleazar the priest shall take of her blood with his finger, and sprinkle of her blood directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times. 5. And one shall burn the heifer in his sight; her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn: 6. And the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer. 7. Then the priest shall wash his clothes, and he shall bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp, and the priest shall be unclean until the even. 8. And he that burneth her shall wash his clothes in water, and bathe his flesh in water, and shall be unclean until the even. 9. And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up without the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin. 10. And he that gathereth the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even: and it shall be unto the children of Israel, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among them, for a statute for ever.

11. He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days. 12. He shall purify himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean: but if he purify not himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean. 13. Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is yet upon him. 14. This is the law, when a man dieth in a tent: all that come into the tent, and all that is in the tent, shall be unclean seven days. 15. And every open vessel, which hath no covering bound upon it, is unclean. 16. And whosoever toucheth one that is slain with a sword in the open fields, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days. 17. And for an unclean person they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a

vessel: 18. And a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave: 19. And the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day: and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at even. 20. But the man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation, because he hath defiled the sanctuary of the Lord: the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him; he is unclean. 21. And it shall be a perpetual statute unto them, that he that sprinkleth the water of separation shall wash his clothes; and he that toucheth the water of separation shall be unclean until even. 22. And whatsoever the unclean person toucheth shall be unclean; and the soul that toucheth it shall be unclean until even.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 19:1. Then the Lord said unto Moses, and Aaron, 2. "This is the regulation of the Law which the Lord has commanded, saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel that they bring you an unblemished red heifer, without defect, on which no yoke has ever been put; 3. and you shall give her to Eleazar the priest, in order that he may bring her outside the camp. And she shall be slaughtered in his presence. 4. Then Eleazar the priest shall take some of her blood upon his finger and sprinkle of her blood toward the front of the Tent of Meeting seven times. 5. After this, the heifer shall be burned in his sight: her skin, her flesh, her blood, with her refuse shall she be burned. 6. And the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet material and throw it into the midst of the burning heifer. 7. Then the priest shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, after which he shall come into the camp; and he shall be unclean until the evening. 8. The one who burns the heifer shall wash his clothes in water, and bathe his body in water, and shall be unclean until the evening. 9. And a man who is clean shall

collect the ashes of the heifer and put them outside the camp in a clean place; they shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for the water of purification offering. 10. And the one who gathers the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the evening. And this shall be a law forever to the children of Israel, as well as to the foreigner who sojourns among them.

11. " 'Anyone who touches the corpse of any man shall be unclean for seven days. 12. If he purifies himself with it on the third day and on the seventh day, he shall be clean; but if he does not purify himself on the third day and on the seventh day, he shall not be clean. 13. Whoever touches a dead body of any man who has died but does not cleanse himself defiles the tabernacle of the Lord; and that person shall be cut off from Israel. Since the water of sprinkling was not thrown upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness still is upon him. 14. " "This is the Law: when a man dies in a tent, all who come into the tent, and every one who is in the tent shall be unclean for seven days. 15. And every open vessel which has no lid fastened upon it is unclean. 16. Any one who touches one who is killed with a sword in the open field, or a corpse, or a man's bone, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days. 17. For the unclean persons they shall take some ashes of the burnt offering and running water shall be added in a container; 18. then a clean person shall take hyssop, dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, upon all the vessels, upon the people who were there, and upon that one who touched a bone, or one killed, or a corpse, or a grave; 19. and the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day and on the seventh day; in this manner on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and he shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water, and he shall be clean at evening. 20. " "But the man who shall be unclean and shall not purify himself, that person shall be cut off from among the congregation because he has defiled the sanctuary of the Lord, since he has not had the water of sprinkling thrown upon him; he is unclean. 21. And it shall be a perpetual regulation for them that he who sprinkles the water of sprinkling shall wash his clothes; and he

who touches the water of sprinkling shall be unclean until evening; and anything the unclean person touches shall be unclean; and the person who touches it shall be unclean until evening.' ”

### COMMENTARY

Attitudes toward death have been many and varied in all ages, and they have run the gamut of human emotions. Perhaps the predominant attitude has been a combination of fear and frustration. Along with the varying sentiments held toward death itself are the attitudes toward the dead. From the most ancient days have come the beliefs that the living would be contaminated by contact with any corpse. Nobody knows where the belief arose, since it is, with notable exceptions, found in various records throughout the world.

If the living man was looked upon as the creation of God in whom lived His very breath, the corpse quickly suggested the departure of this breath, or spirit. It was nothing but the clay from which man had been originally made (see Gen. 1:27, 28; 2:7; 3:19). God had not yet revealed the marvelous full promises of eternal life in heaven; these remained for full disclosure through His Son and the Spirit-inspired writers of the New Testament. But death was formidable, and Sheol, the abode of the dead, mysterious. The fact of death was viewed as the result of man's sin since the time of Adam (Gen. 2:17). When a man died, he was a symbol of sin, and his body a source of defilement to the living.

Carefully detailed instructions now are given by the Lord to provide for the purification of one who had come into contact with a dead body. Of the sacrifice of the red heifer, *PC* comments, "This offering was obviously intended, apart from its symbolic significance, to be studiously simple and cheap. In contradiction to the many and costly and ever-repeated sacrifices of the Sinaitic legislation, this was a single individual, a female, and of the most ordinary colour of cattle, and a young heifer is of less value than any other beast of its kind," p. 240.

The stipulations are clear the red heifer must be unblemished, and one which had never been used for work under the yoke. Delivered to Eleazar, son of Aaron, the heifer then was killed outside the encampment. A small sample of her blood—such as would adhere to the priest's finger—was then brought toward the front of the Tent of Meeting to be sprinkled there seven times, after which the animal was burned up in its entirety. Wood from the cedar, along with hyssop and scarlet were thrown into the fire. Both the priest and the one presiding over the burning of the heifer bathed themselves and their clothing, remaining unclean until the evening. During this time, one who was clean took the heifer's ashes and preserved them for the purifying water. This liquid was used to remove uncleanness from death, as well as to cleanse a leprous man or house (see Lev. 14:4f., 49-52).

Uncleanness from coming in contact with a dead body lasted for seven days. During this time the unclean person was required to offer himself on the third and seventh days for cleansing with the purification water. Failure to comply with this regulation would result in his being cut off from his people. Such a one became as much as dead, even to his immediate family, and forfeited all of the rights and privileges extended to the chosen people. The threat is great enough to impress all with the severity of the offense.

Beyond actually coming into contact with a corpse, the Israelite might be rendered unclean by entering the place of habitation in which death had occurred, or by touching any uncovered vessel within the dwelling. His uncleanness was of the same days' duration, and required the same manner of expurgation. Outside the dwelling, contamination might result from touching the corpse of one killed out of doors by the sword, or touching any remains of the corpse, or even the grave in which such a body had been placed.

The mode of purification remained the same in all above instances. Verse 17 specifies the use of "living" water—water from a flowing source, such as a river—as the basic ingredient.

The water was to be administered by means of a twig of hyssop, at the hands of one who was clean. The water was administered to the contaminated man, the dwelling which had been made unclean, and all furnishings on the two days specified. Two facts emphasize the importance of the entire provision: it is termed "a perpetual statute", a phrase reserved for matters of the most solemn importance; and, the penalty is repeated for the sake of underscoring the significance. Of the circumstance and the remedy, *PC* says, "But the whole design of this ordinance, down to its minutest detail, was to stamp upon physical death a far-reaching power of defiling and separating from God, which extended even to the very means Divinely appointed as a remedy," (p. 242).

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

330. Where and when did the belief arise that the living would be contaminated by contact with the dead?
331. Show how the attitude and instructions here, as well as the Biblical teachings regarding man, make this account stand in contrast with pagan superstitions.
332. What reasons have been suggested for the selection of a red heifer in this offering?
333. For what special purposes was the purifying water to be used in conjunction with death and the dead?
334. Explain what it would mean to an Israelite to be "cut off from among his people."
335. How might an individual become contaminated without actually coming into contact with a dead body?
336. What is "hyssop" and how was it to be used in the purification ceremony?
337. Can you see in this law some suggestion of an explanation for the conduct of the priest and the Levite in the story of the Good Samaritan, (Luke 10:30-32)?
338. What lesson was being impressed upon the people's minds through the law of purification from uncleanness by the dead?

## II. KADESH TO HESHBON (20:1-21:35)

## A. DEATH OF MIRIAM v. 1

## TEXT

Chapter 20:1. Then came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin in the first month: and the people abode in Kadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 20:1. Then the children of Israel, the entire congregation, came into the wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed at Kadesh; and Miriam died there and was buried there.

## COMMENTARY

Now the period of wandering has ended. Presumably, all those who had lived under the sentence of death outside of the Promised Land are either dead or will die within this, the fortieth year since leaving Egypt. Moses stresses the fact that it is the entire congregation which assembles at Kadesh. They may have touched in at this spot many times during the years of wandering, but now they are brought together for a clear purpose: the time has arrived to begin the last phase of their journey and to enter Canaan. Their last great decision had been reached here—that they would not follow Joshua and Caleb in claiming the Promised Land immediately after the spies had returned from their mission. A totally different attitude now seems to pervade the crowd with reference to coming into their assigned inheritance. But is far more than a simple brief trip due north, as geography would indicate. They face a long journey, through hostile country; they will be ungrateful, just as their fathers had been, for God's provisions; they will murmur when they are in trouble or in short supply of food or water; they will be brought into conflict with many armies among the countries they visit; they will yield to strong temptations in immorality and suffer the bitter consequences. Yet there is a great



difference: at least a vast majority will rise to the occasion and their influence will dominate the nation. They will recognize the leading hand of the Lord and follow more willingly. They will be granted victory on the battlefield and physical necessities in the camp. It is a major turning point in their tempestuous history.

The very first incident related upon their return to Kadesh is the brief, almost casual, note of the death of Miriam. If this seems curt or indifferent, let the following facts be noted: Miriam had been far from exemplary on occasion; in the entire Bible, the deaths of very few women are noted at all; when the death of anyone is mentioned, it is ordinarily little more than a simple statement of the fact; her death appears to have been from natural causes, since there is no reason to associate the fact with any misconduct, past or present; the thrust of the account demands that we move forward, and undue or excessive details now would interrupt the flow of Moses' account; and, finally, neither of her brothers was ultimately to enter Canaan, and all were excluded by their various offenses. Aaron would expire in the fifth month of the same year, while Moses' death occurred almost at the close of the year. *RCP* adds that while Moses and Aaron died "by the mouth of God," the phrase is not used here (p. 155).

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

339. Identify the Wilderness of Zin, establishing its borders on all sides. Distinguish this wilderness from the Wilderness of Sin.
340. Can you give any reasonable explanation of the fact that so little is said of the wandering period?
341. Why did the Israelites not simply march north from Kadesh into the Promised Land?
342. Mention of Miriam's death seems almost casual. Why is it given so little attention? Discuss your answer.
343. What evidence is there that we have now entered the fortieth year since the Exodus?
344. Compute Miriam's age at the time of her death.

## B. SIN OF MOSES AT MERIBAH vv. 2-13

## TEXT

Chapter 20:2. And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. 3. And the people chode with Moses and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord! 4. And why have ye brought up the congregation of the Lord into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there? 5. And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? it is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink. 6. And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto them.

7. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 8. Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink. 9. And Moses took the rod from before the Lord, as he commanded him. 10. And Moses took Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? 11. And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also.

12. And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them. 13. This is the water of Meribah; because the children of Israel strove with the Lord, and he was sanctified in them.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 20:2. Now there was no water for the congregation;

and they came together against Moses and against Aaron. 3. And the people argued with Moses, saying, "We wish we had died when our brethren died before the Lord! 4. Why have you brought the congregation up into this wilderness? So that we and our cattle should die here? 5. It is no place for seed, or for figs, or for vines, or for pomegranates; and there is no water to drink." 6. Then Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the congregation to the door of the Tent of Meeting, and they fell upon their faces;

7. and the glory of the Lord appeared to them, and the Lord spoke to Moses saying, 8. "Take the rod and gather the congregation together, you and Aaron your brother, and speak to the rock in front of their eyes; and it shall give forth water. You will bring forth water for them from the rock; in this manner you will give the congregation and their animals a drink." 9. So Moses took the rod from the presence of the Lord as he commanded him. 10. Then Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together in front of the rock and said unto them, "Listen now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water from this rock for you?" 11. And Moses lifted up his hand, and with the rod he struck the rock twice: and water came forth abundantly so that the congregation and their animals drank.

12. And the Lord said unto Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe in me, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." 13. These are the waters of Meribah, where the children of Israel contended with the Lord, and he was sanctified by them.

#### COMMENTARY

Kadesh has not been identified with certainty, and it is thought to designate either a large district of desert land in the wilderness of Zin, or a smaller area about a large natural spring. Nothing was said of a shortage of water when the Israelites first camped here. The present cause may have derived from the season or from an unusually dry period. In saying there was "no

water", Moses may have intended only that whatever supply they had was inadequate to serve the needs of so large a multitude. Since water is essential both to the people and their large herds and flocks, a great quantity would be required regularly. When their requirements are not met, they revert to the manners of their fathers, assembling to protest against Moses and Aaron, (Ex. 17).

Whether the older Israelites had died en masse toward the end of the wandering period or their deaths were spread throughout that time, the surviving ones expressed their preference to join the dead rather than endure the discomforts of being waterless. Certainly the situation would be far from comfortable; but a review of the history of the nation would show that God had never abandoned them in any time of need. This is a time for faithtesting, and they are unprepared. Their charge that they have been brought into an "evil place," (v. 4), reflects only their momentary circumstance. They had not, for the most part, seen any of the bondage in Egypt; and on the other hand, their lives had been spent in the time of wandering. Hardships could not have been new and strange to them.

The evaluation of Kadesh is correct: it is not a place for an agricultural people, and it is far from ideal for their animals. While the Israelites are not at this time agricultural, they, like the Egyptians, may have come to depend largely upon the produce of the land—a fact of which their fathers had loudly complained, (Num. 11:5), when they grew tired of the manna.

Moses and Aaron react properly at first, going before the Lord on their faces to determine His will and His course of action. Without Him they are powerless and at the mercy of the people. But they stand ready to do whatever may be required of them. Their wait was not long when the glory of Jehovah came unto them, and His words have a familiar ring. They are to take the rod (almost certainly that which had been used as a sign before Pharaoh, and at the parting of the waters of the Red Sea), approach "the rock" (otherwise unidentified, but surely a prominent landmark at the camp site), and produce the water so desperately needed.

Initially it appears that Moses will do exactly as the Lord has asked. He gathers the assembly and, after rebuking them by labelling them rebels, addresses himself to the problem. And what was his sin? Some have pointed to the fact that Moses used the plural "we" in reference to the miracle soon to be performed, thus seeming to equate his part in the miracle with the Lord's; or, to say the least, sharing somewhat in it. Others point to the fact that Moses struck the rock twice, whether motivated by anger, righteousness, or impatience; still others remind us that he was told only to speak to the rock, and should not have touched it at all. Any one of these might have been enough, but if we allow Scripture to interpret Scripture, God Himself refers to Moses' failure to glorify His name (v. 12), thus singling out the greatest offense.

We should not be surprised that water gushed forth from the rock in spite of Moses' error. God did not intend that the people should suffer, and He sent an abundant supply to care for them and their beasts. His rebuke is properly spoken to Moses and Aaron, and doubtless His verdict was given in private, for their ears alone: they would not be privileged to lead their people in the final triumphant step into the Promised Land. It was a most bitter sentence, but it underscores the grievous nature of the offense. A special weight of responsibility rests upon the shoulders of those entrusted with places of authority and leadership (cf. James 3:1). Since their actions influence many others directly, they must be most careful at all times. The error of Moses was public. Had God ignored it, or had Moses gone unpunished, the people could rightly accuse Him of biased treatment. This God is incapable of doing. His judgments are impersonal, altogether fair and constant.

The name "Meribah" is used of this place, as it had been used in the early days of Israel's exodus (see Ex. 17:7). The similarity between the two locations rests upon their need for water, their bitter complaints, and satisfaction through divine assistance. Otherwise, the narratives are most dissimilar, and cannot be confused. Even in these unusual circumstances, God was "sanctified in them", that is, as PC says, "He revealed there

his holiness and power, and put to silence their evil murmurings against Him. He was sanctified in them all the more abundantly because Moses and Aaron failed to sanctify him in the eyes of the people; but what they failed to do he brought to pass without their agency," (p. 254).

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

345. Since the Israelites must have continually relied upon God's providence in the past for the great quantity of water they needed, why should they suddenly show this strong doubt?
346. Why should the people blame Moses and Aaron for their problem?
347. What type of country surrounds Kadesh?
348. Do you believe God deliberately delayed bringing water to the Israelites? If so, for what purposes?
349. How could the people understand this area to be an "evil place"?
350. Compare the list of the foods they now miss with those given when the nation had first removed from Egypt. Explain the differences.
351. Some have suggested that Moses used Aaron's budded rod in the incident here. Why is this unlikely?
352. What explanations have been given for Moses' sin at "the rock"? Which do you accept, and why?
353. Explain why God sent water forth from the rock in spite of this fact.
354. Does it seem fair to you that Moses should be prohibited from leading the people into the Promised Land on the basis of this single act of error? Defend your answer.
355. What similarities can you find between the two incidents involving "Meribah"?
356. What do you learn of God's justice from the incident?

## C. PASSAGE REFUSED THROUGH EDOM vv. 14-21

## TEXT

Chapter 20:14. And Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the king of Edom, Thus saith thy brother Israel, Thou knowest all the travail that hath befallen us: 15. How our fathers went down into Egypt, and we have dwelt in Egypt a long time; and the Egyptians vexed us, and our fathers: 16. And when we cried unto the Lord, he heard our voice, and sent an angel, and hath brought us forth out of Egypt: and, behold, we are in Kadesh, a city in the uttermost of thy border. 17. Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country: we will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells: we will go by the king's high way, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders. 18. And Edom said unto him, Thou shalt not pass by me, lest I come out against thee with the sword. 19. And the children of Israel said unto him, We will go by the high way: and if I and my cattle drink of thy water, then I will pay for it: I will only, without doing any thing else, go through on my feet. 20. And he said, Thou shalt not go through. And Edom came out against him with much people, and with a strong hand. 21. Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border: wherefore Israel turned away from him.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 20:14. Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom, "Thus says your brother Israel, 'You know all the difficulty which has come upon us: 15. how our fathers went down into Egypt, and we lived in Egypt a long time. Egypt treated us badly, as well as our fathers. 16. When we cried to the Lord, He heard our voice, sent an angel, and brought us out of Egypt; and, lo, we are in Kadesh, a city on the edge of your territory. 17. Let us pass through your country, I pray you. We will not pass through the fields nor through the vineyards, nor will we drink of the water of your wells. We will go by the King's Highway; we will not turn to the

right or to the left until we have passed through your country.' ” 18. But Edom replied to him, “You shall not pass through me lest I come out with the sword against you.” 19. And the children of Israel said to him, “We will go by the highway. And if I or my cattle drink any of your water, I will pay for it. I will do no damage; just let me pass through on foot only.” 20. But he said, “You shall not pass through.” And Edom came out against him with many people and a strong force. 21. In this way Edom refused to allow Israel passage through his border; so Israel turned him away.

### COMMENTARY

When the Israelites refused to enter the land of Canaan the first time they came to the region of Kadesh, they were turned away from Kadesh by the warring Amalekites and Canaanites (14:45). This may be the reason they now choose not to enter Canaan from the south—the direct route—choosing instead the long march around the south of the Dead Sea and an approach from east of the Jordan. Because Moses does not consult the Lord in the decision, it is safe to assume that he had already been informed that the march would follow such a route.

Even without the detour required around the borders of Edom, going from Kadesh to Jericho via the southern route involved prolonging the trip extensively, through much more formidable territory. But it was a wiser choice than a confrontation with their previous enemies. Such a route required the permission of the king of Edom, through whose territory the large troupe must pass. The Edomites knew of the general circumstances (v. 14), since news of their origin and travels must certainly have spread throughout all adjacent lands. When Moses recites the history briefly, it is a polite prelude to a fair proposal. He asks permission for his people to pass through Edom without imposing hardship of any kind upon the residents. The population of Edom was never large, and the country had little tillable land. The Israelites might have consumed their resources in a relatively short time. Reassurance that the people would take nothing from field, vineyard, or



even the wells should have allayed any fears. It was a strong promise, and perhaps the Edomite king thought enforcement of the pledge, however sincerely given, was impossible.

Not wishing to incur the wrath of the king, nor to engage his forces in battle, Moses is compelled to agree to a detour. Even the pledge to stay on the trade route, and to reimburse the Edomites for any items consumed, even for any water, is fruitless. The adamant stand of the king might well account in part for later feelings of antipathy between the two peoples. The march turns again, and an additional 200 miles is imposed upon them.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

357. What reasons possibly explain why the Israelites did not move directly north from Kadesh into the land of Canaan?
358. Consult a good map, and estimate the additional distance the tribes were required to travel when they were refused permission to pass through Edom.
359. How might the Edomites have heard the story of the history of Israel's servitude and delivery from Egypt?
360. Why was the proposed trip through Edom a potentially disastrous event for the Edomites? What safeguards did Moses offer?
361. Of what was the king of Edom actually afraid?
362. Trace the genealogical lines of the Israelites and the Edomites to find their relationship.

### D. DEATH OF AARON vv. 22-29

#### TEXT

Chapter 20:22. And the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, journeyed from Kadesh, and came unto mount Hor. 23. And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, 24. Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land

which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah. 25. Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up unto mount Hor: 26. And strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son: and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, and shall die there. 27. And Moses did as the Lord commanded: and they went up into mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation. 28. And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there in the top of the mount: and Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount. 29. And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel.

### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 20:22. And they traveled from Kadesh, and the children of Israel, the entire congregation, came to Mount Hor. 23. And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron at Mount Hor, near the border of the land of Edom, 24. "Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: he shall not enter into the land I have given the children of Israel, because you rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah. 25. Take Aaron and Eleazar his son and bring them up to Mount Hor. 26. Strip Aaron of his garments, and put them on Eleazar his son: and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, and he shall die there." 27. And Moses did as the Lord commanded; and they went up to Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation. 28. And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there on the top of the mountain. And Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain. 29. And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, all the children of Israel mourned for thirty days.

### COMMENTARY

About one day's journey northeast of Kadesh is a tall, easily recognizable peak often thought to be this Mount Hor. Positive identification has not been made, although Jebel Harun is near

Petra, well inside the borders of Edom, The essential portion of the country lies north of this point, and it is through this area the Israelites were not permitted to march. Here God chooses to call Aaron to the peak of the "mountain on top of a mountain," to be the scene of his death. The second of the famous children of Amram and Jochebed is soon to die in the fortieth year of the wandering.

The death of Aaron, like that of Moses, comes before the Israelites enter the land of Promise; and it is for the same reason: the disobedience at Meribah. They have shared the crime, and they share the punishment. Although the death of Moses is delayed, it still deprived him of what must have been the strongest yearning of his life—entrance into the new Land. Aaron's life was plagued by some rather glaring sins, such as the construction of the golden calf (Ex. 32:1ff.); his self-exaltation and sedition against Moses, along with Miriam's harsh criticisms (12:1-11); and this last, the presumptuous wrong at Meribah. Any of these might have excluded him from Canaan, but God quite apparently considers the final offense to be the worst.

God gave special instructions to be carried out in conjunction with Aaron's death and his successor. The death would come on top of Hor, and the priestly robes, stripped from his body, should be placed upon Eleazar his third son, as God's next man chosen for the office of the high priest. The first sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, were victims of their own disobedience, and died in offering strange fire before the Lord (Lev. 10:1-2). Besides Eleazar, there was a younger son, Ithamar. Together they had served with Aaron after the death of their brothers (3:4); but only one could occupy the high priesthood, and Eleazar is chosen.

Among all the beautiful Hebrew expressions, none is more expressive than the phrase, given at death, "he was gathered unto his people." Far more than merely euphemistic, the thought had been used of the patriarchs (Gen. 25:8, 17; 35:29; 49:33, and elsewhere), and suggests a continuity of fellowship beyond the grave, and more than an elementary concept of the pleasantness of reunion with those we have known and loved in

this life. It is one of the clearest assertions of this doctrine in the Old Testament.

God's instructions were carefully followed. With the people watching, the two men carry out their roles.

Mourning was always a symbolic rite among the Hebrews, and might last for an extended period of time—not usually less than a week if the deceased were of any prominence. The entire nation mourned for Aaron for thirty days, indicating that he was a man of no little respect.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

363. Identify Mount Hor. Distinguish this from the other mountain of the same name.
364. Why was Aaron not permitted to enter the land of Canaan?
365. Which of his sins was responsible for this exclusion? Why?
366. Why was Aaron's firstborn son not selected to succeed his father to the high priesthood?
367. Detail the instructions God gave to be carried out at the death of Aaron.
368. Show the symbolism and the deeper meanings of the term, to be "gathered unto one's people".
369. How long had the Israelites mourned for these people: Jacob? Joseph? Miriam? Aaron?
370. What actions were involved in this mourning?

### E. VICTORY AT HORMAH 21:1-3

#### TEXT

Chapter 21:1. And when king Arad the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south, heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies; then he fought against Israel, and took some of them prisoners. 2. And Israel vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities. 3. And the Lord hearkened to the

voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities: and he called the name of the place Hormah.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 21:1. When the Canaanite, the king of Arad, who dwelt in the Negev, heard that Israel came by the way of Atharim, he fought against Israel and took some of them prisoners. 2. And Israel made a vow to the Lord and said, "If you will indeed deliver these people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities." 3. And the Lord listened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities; and he called the name of the place Hormah.

#### COMMENTARY

The Israelites had come approximately sixty miles from the region of the Canaanites since leaving Kadesh. The raid of Arad's king was quite apparently caused by false information, since Israel had headed away from this area. Perhaps they thought this was a guise, and that Israel would return to attack them. The term translated "by the way of the spies" is probably incorrect. Most of the more recent translations use the term "Atharim", which must be a local place name. The Canaanites held the territory of what would later be the southern portion of the land of Judah, to the wilderness of Zin. The Israelites had passed through this section en route to Mount Hor. The offensive action of the Canaanites is aimed at taking the lead away from the Israelites by beating them to the attack. Their adventure is at least temporarily successful when they gain prisoners from their foray.

The vow of the Israelites is simple. If Jehovah will grant them victory, they will pronounce a kind of anathema upon the cities of the Canaanites. It was a means of designating them for total destruction, with no booty to be divided among the conquerors. The purpose, as *PC* affirms, would be to remove them "from the sphere of private hatred, revenge, and cupidity,

and place (them) upon a higher level" (p. 270). The pledge is passed to the location, "Hormah", or, the "place of the ban." It is not altogether clear whether the term was intended for a single location, or for all the Canaanite cities in the general area of the attack. Carrying out the pledge necessarily must be deferred, since the Israelites have not intended to enter Canaan from the south. Fulfillment of the vow is mentioned in Joshua 12:14, although nothing unusual is said to have occurred at the time.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

371. Why should the Canaanites go so far from their territory to attack Israel, when the Israelites were not immediately threatening them?
372. What territory is included in 'Arad'?
373. Give the terms of Israel's vow unto the Lord.
374. Give the meaning of 'Hormah', and tell why it fits the occasion.
375. In what way was the promise to destroy Arad any different from the instructions of God regarding other pagan cities?
376. When was the destruction of Hormah carried out?

### F. INCIDENT OF THE BRASS SERPENT vv. 4-9

#### TEXT

Chapter 21:4. And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. 5. And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loathed this light bread. 6. And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people. and much people of Israel died.

7. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have

sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. 8. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. 9. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole; and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 21:4. From Mount Hor they traveled by the way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the heart of the people was very much disturbed because of the route. 5. And 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 bread, nor is there any water; and we detest this miserable bread." 6. Then the Lord sent poisonous serpents among the people; and they bit the people, and many of the people of Israel died.

7. And 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 the serpents away from us." And Moses prayed for the people. 8. Then the Lord said unto Moses, "Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live." 9. So Moses made a brass serpent and put it upon a pole. And it happened that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he looked at the brass serpent, he lived.

### COMMENTARY

The journey of the Israelites now takes them through the long, narrow geological fault, known as the Arabah, which extends through the entire Jordan valley, and for a total of approximately 3,000 miles. Its northern extremity reaches north of Syria; its southern terminus is found deep within the African continent. Of variable width and depth, it includes the

country of Edom. However, the western portion of the valley was all but desolate and uninhabited, and it is through this side the Israelites march. Their course will take them all the way to the northeastern tip of the Red Sea, which is the Gulf of Aqabah at this point. It is rugged country all the way.

The trials of travel, as well as the great length added to their trip because of the stubbornness of the Edomites, doubtless incites this latest complaint of the people, and they take up the common refrain so often sung in the past: how much they had rather give up the present circumstance to return to their former state in Egypt. Their special criticism is turned upon the manna and a lack of water. Nowhere is it suggested that the people were actually without at least their barest necessities. The manna fell daily, and water had always been provided as needed.

Of the sending of the serpents, the Midrash has said, quoting the supposed words of the Lord: "Let the serpent, who was punished for speaking slander (Genesis 3), come and exact punishment from those who speak slander. Let the serpent, to whom all foods taste alike, come and exact punishment from these ungrateful people for whom one food (manna) could have a variety of tastes," *RCP*, p. 161.

*PC* enters an unusual thought in reference to the serpents' identity, claiming that, rather than being poisonous vipers, the term "burning" or "fiery" refers to an unusual coloration—a brilliant and metallic lustre. The modifying word *saraph* seems to indicate such brilliance in two other uses (Ezekiel 1:7 and Isaiah 6:2); but, in reference to the serpents, such a position seems illogical. The snake bites cause death among the Israelites, and the bronze image is erected to prevent such death, which would hardly be sensible if the bite were harmless. When *PC* points out that certain "very deadly snakes in Australia . . . are known as "copper snakes", the point is irrelevant, since they are on the wrong continent. No such serpents have been positively identified in the Arabah.

With the camp in an uproar at this latest turn of events, the



people once more turn to Moses; but this time it is in air of desperation and concern. They confess, "We have sinned," and identify their sin as critical talk about the Lord. They ask for Moses' direct intercession in their behalf. It is the first time they have asked for such a favor; on all other occasions of Moses' intervention, it was his own unsolicited action. Their hope is clear; that the serpents may be removed.

It is doubtful that either Moses or the people quite expected the answer which the Lord gave. They would have been shocked at the erection of the image of a serpent for two reasons: God Himself had instructed them to make no graven image of any creature in the Decalogue; and, there would seem to be no connection whatever between a brass image and the relief they sought. Clearly, however, the remedy God suggests is a test, however elementary, of their faith. He who had prohibited image-making for the sake of idolatrous practices has ordered this action for quite another purpose, to show His great power even over the simple creatures of the dust. An unusual kind of faith would be required of the people of Israel if they were to be healed. They must look upon the bronze standard in the center of the camp. The command cannot be rationalized. It is purely a test of obedient faith, such as is common in the Word of God. Man responds to a command of God, not because he understands fully the relationship between carrying out the command and receiving the pardoning favor of God, but because he believes God means exactly what He says; He will punish the disobedient and show His favor unto the obedient. To look upon the serpent is enough. Anyone believing this will be cured of the poisonous bite.

How could anyone of that day, Moses included, have known the glorious symbolism which our Lord would make of this circumstance? Although an application of the lifted serpent in the wilderness to the redeeming cross of Calvary would hardly have occurred to the Christian without Jesus' own words (John 3:14), His application is clear. Those whose shallow faith would not permit so much as a glimpse at the lifted serpent would suffer the consequences of their doubts, whereas those who

believed Moses' instructions and, in faith were to look at the standard erected by God's words would be cured. It is the exact relationship of Jesus Christ to the world. There is no salvation to that one who will not turn to the Son of God in obedient faith to seek His cleansing power. So the most detested of all creatures became a sign of the innocent Lamb of God, despised of the world, but offering Himself in behalf even of those who hated Him.

Later history shows that this brazen serpent had been kept by the people, and became an object of worship. In Hezekiah's day the practice of offering incense before the standard was ended when the good king ordered it to be broken in pieces (II Kings 18:4). Typically, the people had turned a glorious historical symbol into an object of disgraceful paganistic practice.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

377. Describe the Arabah.
378. List the factors which contributed to the complaints of the people.
379. Why would such complaints be unjustified?
380. What is the meaning of the term "fiery serpents"?
381. Discuss the possibility that Moses was referring to a specially colored snake, rather than to a venomous type.
382. If Moses is referring to the color of the serpents, explain how the people died from their bite.
383. What was the primary motive of the people in appealing to Moses to intercede for them unto the Lord?
384. What is unusual about the fact of having a serpent serve as a means of saving the people from death?
385. What relationship is there between looking at a snake's image and being cured of a poisonous bite?
386. Show how Jesus used the figure of the brazen serpent in His teaching.
387. What was the ultimate end of the brazen serpent?

## G. BYPASSING MOAB vv. 10-20

## TEXT

Chapter 21:10. And the children of Israel set forward, and pitched in Oboth. 11. And they journeyed from Oboth, and pitched at Ije-abarim, in the wilderness which is before Moab, toward the sunrising. 12. And from thence they removed, and pitched in the valley of Zared. 13. From thence they removed, and pitched on the other side of Arnon, which is in the wilderness that cometh out of the coasts of the Amorites: for Arnon is the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites. 14. Wherefore it is said in the book of the wars of the Lord, What he did in the Red sea, and in the brooks of Arnon, 15. And at the stream of the brooks that goeth down to the dwelling of Ar, and lieth upon the border of Moab. 16. And from thence they went to Beer: that is the well whereof the Lord spake unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water.

17. Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it: 18. The princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it, by the direction of the lawgiver, with their staves. And from the wilderness they went to Mattanah: 19. And from Mattanah to Nahaliel: and from Nahaliel to Bamoth: 20. And from Bamoth in the valley, that is in the country of Moab, to the top of Pisgah, which looketh toward Jeshimon.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 21:10. And the children of Israel moved forward and camped in Oboth. 11. And they moved forward from Oboth, and camped at Iyeabarim, in the wilderness which is opposite Moab, toward the sunrise. 12. From that place they left and camped in the wady of Zered. 13. From that place they left and camped on the other side of the Arnon, which is in the wilderness extending from the boundary of the Amorites; for the Arnon is the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites. 14. Therefore it is said in the book of the wars of the Lord,

Waheb in Suphah,  
 And the wadies of the Arnon,  
 15. And the slope of the valleys  
 Which extends to the dwelling of Ar,  
 And lies at the boundary of Moab.

16. And from there they continued to Beer: that is the well of which the Lord spoke to Moses, "Gather the people together and I will give them water.

17. Then Israel sang this song,  
 Spring up, O well; sing to it:  
 18. The well which the princes dug,  
 Which the nobles excavated,  
 With the scepter and with their staves.

And from the wilderness they went to Mattanah, 19. and from Mattanah to Nahaliel, and from Nahaliel to Bamoth, 20. and from Bamoth to the valley which is in the country of Moab, to the top of Pisgah, which overlooks the desert.

#### COMMENTARY

Two stations, later mentioned (33:41-43), are omitted at this point; but there is no significance to the omission other than to make the account somewhat more brief. The stations, Zalmonah and Phunon, are not identified, and nothing of consequence occurred at either place. Oboth itself has not been located positively, although it is tentatively set by George Adam Smith on a high plateau in eastern Edom. By the time this point had been reached, Israel had completed its long, and to them unnecessary, journey around the circumference of Edom. Israel had been severely warned not to make war upon the descendants of Esau (Deut. 2:4-6), and to repay them for any provisions procured from the residents of the land. Traveling on the eastern edge of Edom was much less difficult than the former marches had been, since the mountains are almost a continuous plateau. The Edomites, by now convinced that the Israelites have no military intentions, are content to let the huge parade go by unharmed. Ije-abarim, like Oboth, has not been

certainly identified. It means, literally, "the ruins on the other side," (of the Jordan, that is). In 33:44, Ije-abarim is located on the border of Moab. Since the march took the tribes well to the east, it is likely that this encampment was near the edge of the Arabian Desert. Later the general name "Abarim" was applied to the region east of the Jordan, comparable to the area designated as "Perea" in the New Testament (such usage is to be found in Jeremiah 22:20). At the time of Moses, the name applied to the range of mountains opposite Jericho.

The so-called "valley of Zered" is commonly thought to be mistakenly used here for the Wady Kerek, which would have been crossed earlier. The next camp, established on the other side of the Arnon, must have been well to the east since the valley of the Arnon is very precipitous as the river approaches the Dead Sea, at which point it would have been impassable to the company of Israel. The Arnon itself usually formed the border between Moab and the land of the Amorites; although it was not always so, this must have been the case at the time of Moses. In the context, the phrase "on the other side of the Arnon" seems to indicate the south side of the river in the land of Moab. From such a site it would be logical to establish the point from which the territory of the Amorites could be entered. An embassy was sent to Sihon from the spot.

Concerning the fragmentary song and historical extract introduced at this point, nothing more is known. The book, *Book of the Wars of Jehovah*, has not been found. Apparently it was composed by anonymous national poets who commemorated various incidents and victories mentioned by Moses. *PC* asserts that such a poem demonstrates the genuineness of the fragment, as well as the original, since such a fragmentary, isolated and archaic bit obviates forgery (see p. 280). In its original form, the book may have been a compilation of odes celebrating the glorious acts of the Lord. The portion in v. 14 has neither subject nor verb, indicating its familiarity at the time it was incorporated into the text.

The positive, victorious tone of the poem leaves no doubt about the great hand of God in the affairs of His chosen people.

It anticipates the victory over Sihon, and signals the fact that the people will no longer need to depend upon some miraculous act to provide their water: they have but to dig wells. One cannot miss the marvelous contrast in attitude, shifting from very recent bitter complaint to joyous, triumphant praise. Beer Elim, mentioned in Isaiah 15:8, seems to be the spot of the encampment when the great victory song was composed and sung. It is located in the extreme northeastern sector of Moab, at the edge of the desert. The next move, to Mattanah, brings them into a less barren area. Nahaliel, "the brook of God," may designate a small tributary of the Arnon, on the route Israel followed north from that river. Bamoth, "heights", seems to indicate a site where Baal was worshiped; the full name, in this case, would be Bamoth-Baal, as in 22:41 and Joshua 13:7. The name, then, might have designated its mountainous elevation; or it could be understood to a "high place" which served as a central point for Baalism.

The text presents a problem here in the original: "And from Bamoth . . . the valley which in the field . . . Moab . . . the top . . . Pisgah." *PC* suggests a full reading: "And from the heights to the valley that is in the field of Moab, viz., the top of Pisgah," (p. 281). The field would appear to be an area north of the Arnon which is barren plateau. However, since Bamoth is a common name found elsewhere in Moab, as well as in areas where Baalism was strong, the identification is uncertain.

Passing then through the valley, which is unnamed but probably was little less than a glen rather than a wady, the troupe came to "the top of Pisgah." Pisgah is applied to a series of peaks along the plateau of northwestern Moab, overlooking the Dead Sea, and offering a commanding view of the land of Canaan. The same term also apparently includes the single peak of Mt. Nebo, and the two peaks have often been considered identical. It is said to overlook the Jeshimon, or "valley". The Jeshimon is usually associated with the area where David took refuge from Saul, the eastern section of the hills of Judea. Here it is applied to the area opposite, just east of the Dead Sea. Since the word is often used as a common noun as well as a

proper noun, there is no real confusion of terms. The people's camp will be established here until after the eastern lands have fallen to God's people, and they prepare to cross Jordan after the death of Moses.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

388. What reasons can you give that so many of the places mentioned here, and in similar passages regarding the travels of the Israelites, are difficult or impossible to identify today?
389. Examine a topographical map of the region of Edom and its environs. Why would it have been more simpler to cross the northern portion of the Arabah? Why would the Edomites not be afraid to have the Israelites cross the southern point of the country? For what reasons would the Israelites travel along the extreme eastern edge of Edom as they headed north?
390. Show how the term "Abarim" is commonly used.
391. Why is the reference to crossing the Zered probably a mistaken notation?
392. For what primary reasons would the Israelites avoid crossing the Arnon in the vicinity of the Red Sea?
393. What do you know of the *Book of the Wars of Jehovah*? When and by whom was it probably written? What is its essential purpose? How does its piecemeal nature indicate its authenticity?
394. What great change in life style is indicated in the portion of the poem recorded?
395. Explain the problem in the original text at v. 20. What is the probable meaning?
396. Explain the confusion regarding the name "Pisgah".
397. What region is usually designated by the "Jeshimon"? What more is meant here?
398. How long did the Israelites maintain their encampment here?

## H. VICTORY OVER SIHON AND OG vv. 21-35

## TEXT

Chapter 21:21. And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon king of the Amorites, saying, 22. Let me pass through thy land: we will not turn into the fields, or into the vineyards; we will not drink of the waters of the well: but we will go along by the king's high way, until we be past thy borders. 23. And Sihon would not suffer Israel to pass through his border: but Sihon gathered all his people together, and went out against Israel into the wilderness: and he came to Jahaz, and fought against Israel. 24. And Israel smote him with the edge of the sword, and possessed his land from Arnon to Jabbok, even unto the children of Ammon: for the border of the children of Ammon was strong. 25. And Israel took all these cities; and Israel dwelt in all the cities of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab, and taken all his land out of his hand, even unto Arnon. 27. Wherefore they that speak in proverbs say, Come into Heshbon, let the city of Sihon be built and prepared: 28. For there is a fire gone out of Heshbon, a flame from the city of Sihon: it hath consumed Ar of Moab, and the lords of the high places of Arnon. 29. Woe to thee, Moab! thou art undone, O people of Chemosh: he hath given his sons that escaped, and his daughters, into captivity unto Sihon king of the Amorites. 30. We have shot at them; Heshbon is perished even unto Dibon, and we have laid them waste even unto Nophah, which reacheth unto Medeba.

31. Thus Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites. 32. And Moses sent to spy out Jaazer, and they took the villages thereof, and drove out the Amorites that were there.

33. And they turned and went up by the way of Bashan: and Og the king of Bashan went out against them, he, and all his people, to the battle at Edrei. 34. And the Lord said unto Moses, Fear him not: for I have delivered him into thy hand, and all his people, and his land; and thou shalt do to him as thou didst unto Sihon king of the Amorites, which dwelt at Heshbon. 35. So they smote him, and his sons, and all his



people, until there was none left alive; and they possessed his land.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 21:21. And Israel sent messengers to Sihon, King of the Amorites, saying, 22. "Let me pass through your land; we will not turn aside into the fields or into the vineyards; we will not drink of the waters of the well; we will go along by the King's Highway, until we have passed your borders." 23. But Sihon would not permit Israel to pass through his territory. He gathered all his men together and went out against Israel in the wilderness, and he came to Jahaz and fought against Israel. 24. And Israel slew him with the edge of the sword and took possession of his land from Arnon to Jabbok, as far as the children of Ammon: for the border of the children of Ammon was strong. 25. And Israel took all these cities, and Israel settled in all the cities of the Amorites, in Heshbon and in all its villages. 26. Now Heshbon was the city of Sihon the king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab and had taken all his land out of his hand, as far as the Arnon. 27. Therefore those who speak in similes say,

"Come to Heshbon; let it be built;  
Let the city of Sihon be established.

28. "For a fire went out of Heshbon,  
A flame from the city of Sihon:  
It consumed Ar of Moab,  
And the lords of the high places of Arnon.

29. "Woe unto you, Moab!  
You are undone, O people of Chemosh!  
He made his sons fugitives,  
And his daughters captives  
To Sihon, king of the Amorites.

30. "So their posterity vanished from Heshbon,  
As far as Dibon, and we laid waste  
Until the fire spread to Medeba."

31. In this manner Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites.

32. And Moses sent to spy out Jazer; and they took its villages and drove out the Amorites who were there.

33. Then they turned and went by the way of Bashan. And Og, the king of Bashan, went out against them, he and all his people, to the battle at Edrei. 34. And the Lord said to Moses, "Do not be afraid of him; I have delivered him into your hand, and all his people, and his land. You shall do to him as you did to Sihon, king of the Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon." 35. So they slew him, his sons, and all his people until there was not a single survivor; and they took possession of his land.

#### COMMENTARY

Having passed through the territory controlled by the Edomites and the Moabites, the people of Israel now turn their attention to the next northern neighbors, the Amorites. Unlike the other two nations, the Amorites were not Hebrews, but Canaanites (see Gen. 10:16). The same request made before to Edom and Moab, is addressed to Sihon, and with the same results. It is rejected. To emphasize his refusal, Sihon organized his people into an army and attacked Israel. The encounter occurred at Jahaz, a site as yet unidentified, but probably was found well to the east of Israel's camp.

With the conquest of Sihon, the Israelites gained control over a large land, reaching northward to the Jabbok. This river is found about twenty-five miles north of the Dead Sea, and forty-five miles north of the Arnon. North of the Jabbok lived the Ammonites; they may well have prevented the expansion of the Amorites' territory. The primary city of the Amorites, Heshbon, had been the capital since Sihon had earlier defeated Moab. It is located about midway between the Arnon and the Jabbok, and eighteen miles east of point where the Jordan flows into the Dead Sea. The immediate area is a plateau of about 3000 feet elevation. Heshbon and her "daughters", the small surrounding villages, are listed in Josh. 13:17.

Victory at Heshbon gave rise to the quoted proverbs. These would have been sung by their composers, who may have been

professional balladeers. With a succession of favorable events to celebrate, their works are joyous to the Israelites and taunting to their enemies.

The first portion is sometimes thought to have been a work of satirical nature, composed by an Israelite who now challenges the Amorites to recapture their recently-lost capital of Heshbon as they had previously taken it from Moab. The second portion, v. 29, attacks the worshipers of Chemosh, who was Moab's chief god. Certain coins found at Areopolis show Chemosh a god of war armed and flanked by fiery torches. Singing of his defeat in this manner comprised an especially ironic thought. Not only was Chemosh a war god, his direct worship involved human sacrifice via the flame. In the song, Chemosh is powerless to resist Sihon who, in turn, has been soundly defeated by Israel. The third section of the poem details the consequences of Sihon's defeat. The text is obscure in the *KJV*; the *RSV* seems justified in following the *LXX*. Heshbon has been utterly destroyed, together with some of the chief cities nearby, Dibon and Medeba.

Jazer was taken next, along with its surrounding villages, which ended the resistance of the Amorites. All of the residents of the city were expelled, and it became an important city in the land of Gad under Joab.

The land of Bashan, lying well to the north of Jazer, is a broad, fertile territory lying to the east of the Sea of Galilee, and extending from Mt. Hermon to a point south and east of the Yarmuk. Edrei, the capital, lay in this corner of the land. The people were Amorites (see Josh. 2:10), but had a separate existence from those governed by Sihon. They lived in heavily fortified cities which had been considered invincible by direct assault. Apparently Og's forces left the capital for some reason and were beaten in the field. Perhaps, as *PC* offers, they were victims of their own overconfidence. Speaking as He often did, God told Moses "I have delivered him into thy hand . . . ;" He speaks of the *fait accompli* before the battle is engaged. Israel will take army, people and land, and they shall know the same end as did Sihon. And so it happened.

## QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

399. Trace the origin of the Amorites.
400. Why should Sihon, ruler of a rather small nation, attack such a large group as the Israelites?
401. Describe the country in which the Amorites lived.
402. Show the irony in the first simile-ballad, as it relates to the Amorites, and to Moab.
403. How does the second ballad reflect upon the god Chemosh?
404. What was the ultimate fate of Jazer?
405. Show what territory was included in the land of Bashan at this time.
406. What possible explanation might there be for Og's abandoning his fortified cities in order to attack Israel in the field?

Part Four: On The Plains of Moab (22:1—36:13)

I. THE STORY OF BALAAM (22:1-24:25)

A. SUMMONS OF BALAK (22:1-6)

TEXT

Chapter 22:1. And the children of Israel set forward, and pitched in the plains of Moab on this side Jordan by Jericho.

2. And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. 3. And Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they were many: and Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel. 4. And Moab said unto the elders of Midian. Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time. 5. He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam the son of Beor to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me: 6. Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land; for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou curest is cursed.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 22:1. Then the people of Israel set out, and they camped in the plains of Moab on the far side of the Jordan by Jericho.

2. And Balak, the son of Zippor, saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. 3. And Moab was very frightened by the people, because they were numerous; and Moab was overcome by fear because of the children of Israel. 4. And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, "This horde will now lick up everything around us, just as the ox licks up the grass of the field." Balak, the son of Zippor was king of Moab at that time. 5. So he sent messengers to Balaam, son of Beor, at Pethor, which is near the

River in the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, "Behold, there is a people come out of Egypt; they cover the face of the earth, and they are camping opposite me. 6. "Come now and curse this people for me, for they are too strong for me. Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them from the land; for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed."

### COMMENTARY

When the Israelites bypassed Moab on their journey toward Canaan, it must have relieved the Moabites greatly. Now, after they have delivered stunning defeats to the Amorites of Sihon and Og, and have taken residence in the near vicinity of Moab, fear enters the heart of Balak the king. Gilead and Bashan have fallen, and Moab would be a logical next step. Since the Israelites are a threat to more than the Moabites alone, and since they are so numerous, Balak appeals to Midian for help. More closely related to the Israelites than were the Moabites or the Ammonites, the Midianites lived to the east of Moab. They derived their livelihood from their herds and from the caravan trade, (Gen. 36:35), and were nomadic in life style. Although the threat to Moab was more immediate than that to Midian, it was real enough to give substance to Balak's appeal.

When the account introduces Balaam into the history of Israel, we are brought face to face with one of the most mysterious and intriguing people in all the Word of God. A native of Pethor, on the bank of the Euphrates in Mesopotamia, he was quite evidently a widely known soothsayer whose counsel was sought now by Balak. He appears suddenly upon the scene in the history of Israel, playing a role of no little importance. Like Melchisedec and Cyrus, he is one of a select few whom God chose from outside the Israelite nation for His good purposes. Everything we know of him is developed in this one circumstance, and in the later notice of his death (31:8, 16). His fame was evidently widespread, since his coming to Moab involved a trip of well over four hundred miles, if Pethor is properly identified as Pitru, near Carchemish.

Opinions regarding Balaam have generally divided into two camps. Some have considered him a wizard and false prophet, an idolator who was compelled to bless Israel against his personal will. Others have thought him a genuine prophet whose downfall was occasioned by greed and ambition. As a matter of fact, there may be some truth in both positions since he seems to undergo a shift of character as the account unfolds. His name suggests that he belonged to a family in which the magical arts was inherited; hence, he is properly thought of as a wizard. Furthermore, he is never spoken of by the common term for a prophet (*nabhi*). The term used for him in Joshua 13:22 is translated properly as "soothsayer", a term never used of a prophet of God. On the other hand, Balaam has a specific knowledge of Jehovah, and his words, at least at the outset, are exactly what Jehovah called upon him to speak. In the presence of Balak and his messengers, he would call upon the Name (22:8ff.). At some earlier time at least, he had used auguries in his work, (24:1), but when he speaks for Jehovah, these means are unnecessary. It is in his favor that he rejected the request of Balak consistently to condemn Israel; but his downfall came when he betrayed his own conscience. The consistent answer to the full character of this enigmatic man remains in large part a matter of conjecture.

Although it had been forty years since Israel departed from Egypt, Balak quite properly looks upon them as much more than a disorganized, nomadic people. He may remember the accounts of their miraculous delivery from the oppressing nation, as well as the record of divine provision of their needs in a bitter territory; more recently, the ease with which they have won victories over the northern neighbors has caused Balak to show due concern. Even though they had circumvented his land, they are now a greater threat, having cut off Moab from any assistance from the North: and Midian, to whom he makes his request, is a small, almost insignificant people. The king seems backed into a corner. His move to call Balaam is an act of desperation.

What people had Balaam cursed, and which had he blessed?

We have no way of answering. Had he, indeed, by some prior power granted of the Lord been called upon to act in His behalf toward another nation? We can only guess. It may be that Balak is indulging in flattery as he expresses his confidence in Balaam, or that he relies upon his own superstitious nature by trusting in one who has come from a family noted for their auguries. Whatever the actual situation may be, the messengers are charged to bring him back with them to curse Israel.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

407. If the Israelites had intended to attack Moab, why had they not done so before they marched around the land?
408. Upon what basis does Balak appeal to Midian for help against the Israelites?
409. How were the Midianites related to the Israelites, if at all? the Moabites?
410. Using a good Bible encyclopedia or other sources, tell of the many possible methods Balaam might have used in his conjuring.
411. How might Balaam have known anything about Jehovah?
412. What later facts are known about Balaam?
413. Why should Balak have sent so far away for a soothsayer?
414. How did he know of Balaam?
415. Discuss fully the varying opinions of Bible scholars about Balaam.
416. Why are the Israelites now a much greater threat than when they marched around Moab?

#### B. GOD'S PROHIBITION vv. 7-14

##### TEXT

Chapter 22:7. And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand; and they came unto Balaam, and spake unto him the words of Balak. 8. And he said unto them, Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the Lord shall speak unto me: and



the princes of Moab abode with Balaam. 9. And God came unto Balaam, and said, What men are these with thee? 10. And Balaam said unto God, Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, hath sent unto me, saying, 11. Behold, there is a people come out of Egypt, which covereth the face of the earth: come now, curse me them; peradventure I shall be able to overcome them, and drive them out. 12. And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed. 13. And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said unto the princes of Balak, Get you into your land: for the Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you. 14. And the princes of Moab rose up, and they went unto Balak, and said, Balaam refuseth to come with us.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 22:7. And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian left with the fees of their divining in their hand; and they came to Balaam and gave him Balak's words. 8. And he said unto them, "Spend the night here, and I will bring back word to you according to the Lord's message to me"; and the princes of Moab lodged with Balaam. 9. And God came to Balaam and said "Who are these men with you?" 10. And Balaam said to God, "Balak, the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent unto me, saying, 11. 'Behold, a people has come from Egypt, and it covers the face of the earth. Come now and curse them for me; perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them out.' " 12. And God said unto Balaam, "You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed." 13. So Balaam rose up in the morning and said to the princes of Balak, "Go to your own land; the Lord has refused to let me go with you." 14. So the princes of Moab rose and went to Balak and said, "Balaam refuses to come with us."

## COMMENTARY

Balaam's rejection of the messengers of Balak has been variously interpreted. *IB* jumps quickly to his defense, calling him " . . . a man of the deepest integrity . . . wholly committed

to be the mouthpiece of God," (p. 250). *KD*, on the other hand, properly shows that had Balaam been a true prophet he "would at once have sent the messengers away and refused their request, as he must then have known that God would not curse His chosen people," (p. 166). *RCP* suggests cryptically that "The Holy Spirit rested on Balaam only at night. So too with all other prophets of Gentile nations," (p. 164). The word of the Lord did, in fact, come to Balaam during the night.

Whatever the "rewards of divination" may have been, certain facts are obvious: Balak no doubt was willing to pay a high price for the soothsayer's services; here is one of the distinguishing factors between the prophet of God and false prophets—such rewards were almost without exception refused by God's men, and the few exceptions allowed him only an insignificant amount which was not to be thought of as payment for services, but a provision for the livelihood of the prophet (see II Sam. 4:10; I Sam. 9:8; I Kings 14:3; II Kings 8:8ff.); charging fees for their services was a practice strictly forbidden to the prophesying priests and prophets (see Micah 3:5, 11; Amos 7:12-15; Ezek. 13:19); Balaam doubtless would have kept the offered reward unless he was instructed by the Lord not to do so.

God did not need to ask Balaam the identity of his visitors for His own sake. The probable reason for this question is to call Balaam's attention to the type of men and their proposal, both of which he is entertaining. Their request is in direct contrast with what he knows to be the will of God; it should have been unnecessary for him to await further word. That he has delayed his answer is evidence that the temptation was strong.

The response of Balaam leaves us to infer that he hopes now to influence God and perhaps even to change His course of action. He is open about his answer to the degree that he does not misrepresent the essential facts of the situation. He certainly could not have fooled the Lord about this.

God replies in simple, unequivocal terms: His people are not

to be cursed, and Balaam must dispatch his guests without concession of any kind. It is done, and they return to Balak empty handed.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

417. Show what motives Balaam might have had in dismissing the men sent by Balak.
418. Under what conditions might a prophet of God accept any payment when he rendered a service in God's name? When could he not?
419. Why did God ask Balaam about the messengers and their mission?
420. What had been indicated by Balaam's asking the men to remain overnight?
421. On what basis might Balaam have hoped that God would allow him to go to Balak?

#### C. BALAAM YIELDS TO BALAK vv. 15-41

##### TEXT

Chapter 22:15. And Balak sent yet again princes, more, and more honorable than they. 16. And they came to Balaam, and said to him, Thus saith Balak the son of Zippor, let no thing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me: 17. For I will promote thee unto very great honor, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people. 18. And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more. 19. Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the Lord will say unto me more. 20. And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do. 21. And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab.

22. And God's anger was kindled because he went: and the

angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him, Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him. 23. And the ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field: and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way. 24. But the angel of the Lord stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side, 25. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall: and he smote her again. 26. And the angel of the Lord went further, and stood in a narrow place, where was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. 27. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff. 28. And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times? 29. And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me; I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now I would kill thee. 30. And the ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay. 31. Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in his way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face. 32. And the angel of the Lord said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? Behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me: 33. And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive. 34. And Balaam said unto the angel of the Lord, I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it displeases thee, I will get the princes of Balak.

36. And when Balak heard that Balaam was come, he went out to meet him unto a city of Moab, which is in the border of Arnon, which is in the utmost coast. 37. And Balak said unto Balaam, Did I not earnestly send unto thee to call thee?

wherefore camest thou not unto me? am I not able indeed to promote thee to honor? 38. And Balaam said unto Balak, Lo, I am come unto thee: have I now any power at all to say any thing? the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak. 39. And Balaam went with Balak, and they came unto Kirjath-huzoth. 40. And Balak offered oxen and sheep, and sent to Balaam, and to the princes that were with him. 41. And it came to pass on the morrow, that Balak took Balaam, and brought him up into the high places of Baal, that thence he might see the utmost part of the people.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 22:15. Once more Balak sent princes, more and more honorable than they. 16. And they came to Balaam and said to him, "Thus says Balak, the son of Zippor: 'Let nothing prevent you from coming to me: 17. for I will promote you to a very high position, and I will do whatever you say to me; come and curse this people for me, I beg you.' " 18. But Balaam answered and said to the servants of Balak, "Even if Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do more or less. 19. Please, now, stay here tonight also so that I may know what more the Lord will say to me." 20. And God came to Balaam at night and said unto him, "If the men come to call you, rise up, go with them. But say only what I tell you; that is what you are to do." 21. So Balaam rose up in the morning and saddled his donkey and went with the princes of Moab.

22. But God's anger burned because he went; and the angel of the Lord stood in the way as his adversary. Now Balaam was riding on the donkey, and his two servants were with him. 23. And the donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in the path, with his sword drawn in his hand; and the donkey turned aside out of the road, and went into the field. And Balaam struck the donkey, to turn her back to the road. 24. Then the angel of the Lord stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on each side. 25. And when the donkey saw the the angel of the Lord, she pushed against the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot

against the wall; so he struck her again. 26. Then the angel of the Lord went on ahead and stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn either to the right or to the left. 27. When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she lay down under Balaam. And Balaam's anger burned, and he struck the donkey with a rod. 28. Then the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you that you have struck me these three times?" 29. And Balaam said, "Because you mocked me, I wish I had a sword in my hand? then I would kill you." 33. And the donkey replied to Balaam. "Am I not your donkey, upon which you have ridden all your life until today? Have I ever been disposed to do this way to you?" And he said, "No." 31. Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the path, with drawn sword in hand; and he bowed his head, and fell on his face. 32. And the angel of the Lord said unto him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to confront you because your actions are against me; 33. and the donkey saw me, and turned aside before me these three times. If she had not turned aside from me, I would surely have killed you now and let her live." 34. Then Balaam said unto the angel of the Lord, "I have sinned, because I did not know you stood in the path against me; therefore, if it displeases you now, I will go back again." 35. And the angel of the Lord said, to Balaam, "Go with the men; but you shall only speak the words which I speak unto you." So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.

36. Now when Balak heard that Balaam had come, he went out to meet him at the city of Moab, on the boundary of Arnon, at the farthest border. 37. And Balak said unto Balaam, "Did I not send and call for you? Why did you not come to me? Am I unable to honor you?" 38. Balaam said to Balak, "Lo, I have come to you! Do I have any power to speak to you at all? The message God puts in my mouth is what I must speak." 39. Then Balaam went with Balak, and they came to Kiriath-huzzoth. 40. And Balak sacrificed oxen and sheep and sent to Balaam and the princes who were with him. 41. And on the

next day Balak took Balaam and brought him up to Bamoth-baal; and from that point he could see the greatest number of the people.

### COMMENTARY

We may assume that Balak, unwilling to believe that Balaam would refuse his request entirely, has supposed the refusal is based upon his not offering a sufficient reward. He therefore sends a second set of messengers, of a higher station than the first, with a virtual "blank check" offer to do whatever Balaam may ask if he will curse Israel. To Balak, it is simply the second stage in the common Oriental process of haggling for a price. The use of flattery is as much a part of this process as is the increase of the price; and his using the "more honorable" princes is to the same purpose. To what honor could Balak have promoted Balaam? The offer is not specific, but it might have been the customary "unto one-half of my kingdom" such monarchs were wont to offer; or he might have had in mind a special place of well-paid service in the practice of his auguries. In any event, the request has not changed: he wants the Israelites cursed.

The reply of Balaam seems convincing enough. He will abide by the instructions of God, regardless of the offer. If his words were sincerely spoken, it is exceedingly difficult to understand the incidents which follow. His later actions are better understood if we adopt the analysis of *KD*: "His thirst for honour and wealth was not so overcome by the revelations of the true God, that he could bring himself to give up his soothsaying, and serve the living God with an undivided heart. Thus it came to pass, that through the appeal addressed to him by Balak, he was brought into a situation in which, although he did not venture to attempt anything in opposition to the will of Jehovah, his heart was never thoroughly changed; so that, whilst he refused the honours and rewards that were promised by Balak, and pronounced blessings upon Israel in the strength of the Spirit of God that came upon him, he was overcome immediately afterwards by the might of the sin of his own

unbroken heart, fell back into the old heathen spirit, and advised the Midianities to entice the Israelites to join in the licentious worship of Baal Peor (chapt. xxxi. 16),” pp. 162, 163.

For the second time, Balaam extends the hospitality of his home to the king’s legates. But what more could he expect God to say which had not already been said? Must God repeat His instructions again and again to confirm the details? Unless Balaam had been susceptible to coveting the reward, on the remote hope that God had changed His will, he would have needed no further word whatever. But on matters of this kind, it is totally inconceivable that God should have changed the message in any details whatever. To insure that His will is known to Balaam, He appears during the night. The instructions, while superficially different in allowing Balaam to go with the king’s messengers, yet retains the firm instructions that the seer is to speak nothing more nor less than he is told by Jehovah—hardly what the man had wanted.

It is inferred (*RCP* p. 167), that there is great significance in the fact that Balaam saddled his animal himself: he arose in great haste, eager to set forth on the journey, and still hoping for some consideration which would favor his own will. *PC* hypothesizes that Balaam was permitted to go with the men in order that he might eventually be punished for his covetousness and his longing to disobey God, (p. 292).

God’s use of the ass in the manner which follows should not surprise us unduly, however unnatural it might seem at first glance, we must confess its effectiveness. If the event is unique, this fact alone in no way mitigates against the account itself. The angel, invisible to Balaam, is observed by the ass. The seer’s eyes had been momentarily rendered incapable of seeing God’s messenger (see v. 31). Something of Balaam’s haste in the trip is indicated by his anger in beating the animal (v. 23). He would brook no delay; but the Lord had other plans. The impatience of Balaam is indicated again when he attempts to ride through the blocked path, much against the wish of the ass, whose



reaction results in crushing the foot of Balaam against the vineyard wall beside the road. In a final move to resist the angel, the ass balks, falling to the road. It is the final indignity, and God speaks through the mouth of the steed; Balaam engages it in conversation. This is not as strange as it might seem at first thought, since Balaam, as a prophet, had heard God speak in various means in the past; he may have used such a method himself, by some sort of trickery, to impress his clientele; and, being bitterly angry at the moment, he might have responded without any deep thought whatever to the astonishing circumstances (see *PC*, p. 293).

The appearance of the angel of God is made possible at this time when the eyes of Balaam are opened. Balaam does not need to ask his identity or, in fact, his mission. He has come, not to rebuke the seer for his cruelty to a dumb animal, but to chastise him for his perversity. Balaam is by no means flattered to learn that the ass has been more responsive to the manifestation of God's influence than has he. Now he learns that God is not displeased that he should go with the men of Balak. His intentions and his hope for evil gain are at the seat of his problem. Ideally, his conscience should have been awakened by the episode. Perhaps he struggled within himself whether or not to continue his trip; or, he may have so hoped to profit from his visit to Balak that his reaction was but momentary. With the stern warning of the angel that he is to speak nothing excepting what he is told, he is sent on his way.

When Balaam arrived in Moab, Balak might logically assume that he had come for one reason—to do as he was bidden. Balak hurried to meet his distinguished guest as soon as he reached the northern border at the River Arnon. He issued a mild rebuke that Balaam had not come at the first summons, but was pleased that he had come at all. Immediately Balaam repeated what he had been told to say: he would say nothing except the words God put in his mouth. Then together they proceeded to Kirjath-huzoth, where the king had large herds of animals slaughtered as a sacrifice in honor of Balaam and the honorable men, in anticipation of a favorable verdict from the seer. The

following day he was brought to look out upon all the people he had been asked to curse.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

422. Can you give any reason that Balak had not sent his most important princes to ask for Balaam's service the first time he made the contact?
423. Why might he expect Balaam to change his mind upon the second contact?
424. How does Balak's offer this time differ from the first?
425. The answer Balaam gives seems quite convincing. Compare it with his words to the first messengers.
426. Was it wrong for Balaam to extend an over-night invitation to the princes? why or why not?
427. Has God changed his mind about the message He will have delivered to Balak?
428. God appeared to Balaam during the night, and instructed him to return to Moab with his guests. Later He sent His angel to intervene on the trip. How can you reconcile these facts?
429. Why did Balaam not see the angel which appeared in the road.
430. How does the man show his impatience to resume his journey?
431. Explain how the ass was able to talk, and what was the gist of what it said?
432. Of what actions was Balaam guilty in bringing the Lord to confront him?
433. Balak's actions prove he was eager to meet Balaam and hear his prophecies. What did he do?
434. How resolute was the seer in claiming that he could speak nothing excepting what God revealed to him? Give proof.
435. Suggest the primary reason Balak might have wanted Balaam to see the multitude of the people in Moab.

## D. THE FIRST BLESSING OF BALAAM (23:1-12)

## TEXT

Chapter 23:1. And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven oxen and seven rams. 2. And Balak did as Balaam had spoken; and Balak and Balaam offered on every altar a bullock and a ram. 3. And Balaam said unto Balak, Stand by thy burnt offering, and I will go: peradventure the Lord will come to meet me; and whatsoever he showeth me I will tell thee. And he went to a high place. 4. And God met Balaam: and he said unto him, I have prepared seven altars, and I have offered upon every altar a bullock and a ram. 5. And the Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, Return unto Balak, and thus thou shalt speak. 6. And he returned unto him, and, lo, he stood by his burnt sacrifice, he, and all the princes of Moab. 7. And he took up his parable, and said, Balak the king of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the Mountains of the east, saying, Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel. 8. How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied? 9. For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. 10. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his! 11. And Balak said unto Balaam, What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed them altogether. 12. And he answered and said, Must I not take heed to speak that which the Lord hath put in my mouth? 13. And Balak said unto him, Come, I pray thee, with me unto another place, from whence thou mayest see them: thou shalt see but the utmost part of them, and shalt not see them all: curse me them from thence.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 23:1. And Balaam said to Balak, "Build seven altars for me here, and supply me with seven bulls and seven rams." 2.

And Balak did as Balaam asked; and Balak and Balaam sacrificed upon each altar one bullock and one ram. 3. And Balaam said to Balak, "Stand beside your burnt offering, and I will go. Perhaps the Lord will come to meet me; and whatever he shows me, I will tell you." And he went to a steep place. 4. And God met Balaam. And Balaam said to him, "I have prepared the seven altars, and I have offered upon each altar a bull and a ram." 5. And the Lord put a message in Balaam's mouth and said, "Return to Balak, and this is what you shall speak." 6. And He returned to him, and behold, he stood by his burnt offering, he and all the princes of Moab. 7. And he began his message, and said, "Balak has brought me from Aram: the king of Moab from the eastern mountains. Come, curse Jacob for me, and come, denounce Israel. 8. How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? or how shall I defy whom the Lord has not defied? 9. For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him; lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. 10. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my end be like his!" 11. And Balak said unto Balaam, "What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies, and behold, you have done nothing but bless them." 12. And he answered, "Must I not be careful to speak what the Lord has put in my mouth?"

#### COMMENTARY

The first action of Balaam now is to order the construction of seven altars, upon each of which a bullock and a ram is sacrificed. Numerologists would have the number of great significance, based upon an ancient and almost universal belief to this effect. Among the Hebrews, it typified the seven days of creation, and was applied to those matters which pleased God. Such may have been the thought as Balaam specified the circumstances under which he would deliver his message. Since he has given the orders, it seems correct to assume that the sacrifices were given in the name of Jehovah. Balak made certain that the precise instructions were carried out: indeed,

he, not Balaam, seems to have presided at the sacrifices since the subject of the verb "offered" seems originally to have been singular, and Balak requests the king to stand beside the offering while he consults the Lord for His words.

Just what did Balaam now expect the Lord to tell him? Is there any reasonable ground upon which he might hope the situation will turn to his own advantage? We can hardly imagine what rationalizations he might have permitted in his mind; but he pledges to relate only what the Lord tells him. Is he playing both ends against the middle, ready now to convey God's message with an eye to some future moment when he will disregard the message if Balak makes it really worth while and the reward is sufficiently large? It would be an interesting ploy. The "high place" is literally a "bald height". Pagan prophets were wont to choose such sites among the barren mountain peaks, where they followed their auguries.

Immediately God informed Balaam of the words to be given Balak. They have not changed. When he spoke to the king, Balaam at first reviewed the situation, beginning with the request made of his services. He had been asked to curse Jacob (the Israelites), a request God disallowed altogether. These people had been especially blessed, and Balak had asked the impossible. When Balaam returned, he delivered the prophecies exactly as he received them. His words were a glowing tribute to the people the Lord loved and chose as His own; they could neither be cursed nor defied; they were unique among all the nations; they were special recipients of God's blessings and favor; they had become a vast multitude under His care; and, the prophet himself hoped for a fate as great as theirs.

Upon hearing these words, Balak is distraught. They are far from his expectations, and quite a bitter disappointment. He protests vigorously, blaming Balaam, who reaffirms that he can do nothing other than what God has ordered him to do. Acting upon the concept that the gods had limited and prescribed areas of jurisdiction and power, Balak requests that the same ritual be performed at another place—in a more favored spot, where all the Israelites are not visible.

## QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

436. Explain the reason for erecting and sacrificing upon seven altars.
437. Why should Balak, rather than Balaam, have presided at the rituals of the sacrifices themselves?
438. How might Balaam have expected to turn the persistent words of the Lord to his own advantage?
439. Research references to the "high places" of pagan worship. Learn where they were located, and what elements of "worship" were involved.
440. Analyze God's words to Balaam, showing the elements of his personal history, those of the request of Balak, the message Balaam was to deliver, and the divine promises to Israel.
441. What advantage did Balak seek in ordering Balaam to another place, and why did he expect anything to be different in the second location?

## E. BALAAM'S SECOND BLESSING vv. 13-24

## TEXT

Chapter 23:13. And Balak said unto him, Come, I pray thee, with me to another place, from whence thou mayest see them, and shalt not see them all: and curse me them from thence.

14. And he brought him into the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars, and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar. 15. And he said unto Balak, Stand here by thy burnt offering, while I meet the Lord yonder. 16. And the Lord met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, Go again unto Balak, and say thus. 17. And when he came to him, behold, he stood by his burnt offering, and the princes of Moab with him. And Balak said unto him, What hath the Lord spoken? 18. And he took up his parable, and said, Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor: 19. God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he

should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? 20. Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it. 21. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. 22. God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of a unicorn. 23. Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought! 24. Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey and drink the blood of the slain.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 23:13. And Balak said to him, "Come, please, to another place, from which you may see them. You shall see only the nearest of them, not all of them: then curse them for me there."

14. And he took him to the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and build seven altars, and offered a bull and a ram on each altar. 15. And he said unto Balak, "Stand here beside your burnt offering, while I meet the Lord yonder." 16. And the Lord met Balaam and put a message in his mouth, and said, "Return to Balak, and speak to him so." 17. And he came to him, and behold, he was standing beside his burnt offering, along with the princes of Moab. And Balak said to him, "What has the Lord said?" 18. And Balam began his speech, and said, "Rise up, Balak, and hear; listen to me, you son of Zippor: 19. God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should repent. Has he spoken, and will he not perform it? or has he foretold, and will he not make it good? 20. Behold, I received a command to bless: he has blessed, and I cannot reverse it. 21. He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, nor has he seen perverseness in Israel. The Lord their God is with them, and the trumpeting of a king is in their midst. 22. God is bringing out of Egypt; he has, as it were, the strength of a wild

ox. 23. Surely there is no enchantment in Jacob, nor any divination in Israel: in due time it shall be said of Jacob and Israel, What has God wrought! 24. Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he has eaten of the prey, and drunk the blood of the slain."

### COMMENTARY

The field of Zophim ("the watchers"), to which Balaam is now brought, permits a broad view of the surrounding country side, including the camp of the Israelites. The peak of Pisgah, from which Moses will later be allowed to inspect the Promised Land, rises sharply above the surrounding terrain. The exact meaning of the two phrases which refer to the sight before Balaam is not clear. The first seems to suggest that he is able to see the entire company, while the second says he sees only a portion of the camp. A reconciliation of the thoughts is probably found in the possibility that, while the outermost reaches of the camp of Israel are visible from the spot from which Balaam looks, some areas are not within sight, being obscured by projections of the mountain at a lower level, or by intervening peaks.

For the second time seven altars are erected and seven sacrifices offered. Just as had done the first time, Balaam leaves Balak beside the spot as he consults the Lord about the message for Balak. When the answer comes, it is by far the most complete and definitive of which we have record. There would be no way for Balaam to misconstrue God's words without deliberately lying. When Balaam returns to Balak, he quickly responds to the king's inquiry by taking up his "parable", or "oracle".

The premise upon which Balaam bases all he is now to tell Balak is the unchanging nature of God and the immutability of His will. He is no mere man, whose whimsies and fickle desires result in inconstant conduct. His decrees are unalterable, and they are to be executed precisely as they are given. Any terms



used to express such attributes are anthropomorphic, but the impact is only strengthened by use of this figure. The second oracle goes beyond the first in that it is more than a refusal to curse Israel; it is a strong declaration of blessing upon the nation.

Eight emphatic points are established in the poem: 1) God's blessing is irreversibly upon Israel; 2) the nation is found less iniquitous than others (certainly not perfect, and not without sin among the individual citizens, but relative to other nations, the people are not without virtue); 3) God is with them as their King, which is an occasion for their shouting; 4) the hand of God has already brought about some wonderful works, such as their delivery from slavery in Egypt, with a strength like that of the wild ox (the term "unicorn" is an unfortunate and inaccurate translation from the Septuagint here—the animal intended resembles a large bison); 5) no manner or number of auguries, enchantments, or other divination can prevail against the chosen people of God; 6) future generations will marvel at all the great and glorious things He has accomplished through His people; 7) the people will be much feared, as a hunting lion; and, 8) they will not stop their exploits until their enemies are fully subjugated. Balak could find nothing hopeful in this!

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

442. Using a good Bible gazette, review the area of Mt. Pisgah. Where might the Israelites have been encamped?
443. Why did Balak and Balaam go through the time-consuming process of building seven more altars and offering fourteen more animals?
444. Upon what firm basis are all of Balaam's words premised?
445. How is the figure of anthropomorphism used in the passage?
446. List the eight points emphasized in the message Balaam delivered.
447. Explain the appearance of the word "unicorn" in the text. What is actually intended?

448. What portions of the prophecy referred to the past, and what to the future of Israel?

#### F. THE THIRD BLESSING vv. 25-30

##### TEXT

Chapter 23:25. And Balak said unto Balaam, Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all. 26. But Balaam answered and said unto Balak, Told not I thee, saying, All that the Lord speaketh, that I must do?

And Balak said unto Balaam, Come, I pray thee, I will bring thee unto another place; peradventure it will please God that thou mayest curse me them from thence. 28. And Balak brought Balaam unto the top of Peor, that looketh toward Jeshimon. 29. And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven bullocks and seven rams. 30. And Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered a bullock and a ram on every altar.

##### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 23:25. And Balak said to Balaam, "Neither curse them nor bless them at all!" 26. But Balaam replied, "Did I not tell you, 'All that the Lord says, I must do?'"

27. And Balak said to Balaam, "Come now; I will take you to another place. Perhaps it will please God for you to curse them for me there. 28. So Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, which overlooks the desert." 29. And Balaam said to Balak, "Build seven altars here for me, and provide me with seven bulls and seven rams." 30. And Balak did as Balaam had asked, and offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

##### COMMENTARY

Substantially, Balak's first reaction to the previous words of Balaam are, "If you can't say something bad about these people, don't say anything at all!" He has had no grounds for reassurance from anything yet spoken, and we can only be amazed that he should want to try again to gain a favorable

word from Balaam unless he had some reason to believe that the prophet was still susceptible to bribery, or that yet another change of location would bring a change of message. If this is true, Balaam may have given some slight hint, ever so subtle or even subconscious, which Balak detected.

Although the exact peak indicated here cannot be positively identified, it is in the Abarim range, which includes Pisgah. Nearby was the village of Beth-Peor, in which vicinity Moses would later be buried (Deut. 34:6). The area was across the Jordan from Jericho. From the site Balaam could see the entire camp of Israel spread out before him (24:2). Jeshimon, "the waste", is primarily the plains area at the east and northeast section of the Dead Sea—a barren, rarely-inhabited region which extended to the southern end of the Jordan valley.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

439. How could Balak possibly hope now that Balaam would say anything different from what he had prophesied previously?
440. Do you believe Balaam was sincere and honest when he said he could not say anything other than what God revealed for him? Defend your answer.
441. Locate and describe the place to which Balaam was led for the third round of sacrifices and prophecies.
442. Identify "Jeshimon", and describe the terrain.

#### G. THE PROPHECY OF BALAAM (24:1-9)

##### TEXT

Chapter 24:1. And when Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments, but he set his face toward the wilderness. 2. And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes; and the Spirit of God came upon him. 3. And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: 4. He

hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open: 5. How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! 6. As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lignaloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters. 7. He shall pour the water out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. 8. God brought him forth out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of a unicorn: he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows. 9. He couched, he lay down as a lion, and as a great lion: who shall stir him up? Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 24:1. And when Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he did not go to seek omens, as he had at other times, but he looked intently toward the wilderness. 2. And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel camping tribe by tribe. And the Spirit of God came upon him, 3. and he took up his speech and said, "The oracle of Balaam the son of Peor, the oracle of the man whose eye is opened, 4. the oracle of him who hears the words of God, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down, but having his eyes opened; 5. How fair are your tents, O Jacob, and your Tabernacles, O Israel! 6. Like valleys that stretch afar, like gardens beside a river, like aloes which the Lord has planted, like cedar trees beside the waters. 7. He shall pour the water out of his buckets, moistening his seed abundantly; and his kings shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. 8. God brought him out of Egypt: he has, as it were, the strength of a wild ox. He shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones in pieces, and shall pierce them through with his arrows. 9. He rested, he lay down like a lion, and like a lioness; who will rouse him up? Blessed be he who blesses you, and cursed be he who curses you."

## COMMENTARY

Now persuaded fully that God will not cure Israel, Balaam conducts himself differently. In the previous sacrifices he had resorted to auguries, which would have been omens or signs observed in the world of nature and interpreted for the situation at hand. The custom was soundly denounced to Israel (Lev. 19:26; Deut. 18:10), but was a very common practice among the heathen. As he looks out upon the spreading camp of God's people, he can no longer feign any type of cooperation with Balak, and is well prepared for the revelation which God's Spirit will bring him.

The message of God is specified as Balaam's "parable", or "utterance". While the term alone does not exclusively specify a message of divine origin, the circumstances would establish this fact. In stating that his eyes are now open, he speaks of one of the major manners by which God's communications were delivered—a heightened vision. He would be permitted to see what was hidden from normal human eyes, and for the purpose of relaying God's will to Balak. The message of God directly followed.

Essentially, the communication reinforced the previous prophecy. Once more Balaam pronounced a totally favorable word about Israel. The tents of Jacob would be like widespreading valleys, resembling riverside gardens of exotic trees. The aloe, for example, which grew no nearer than the Far East, would have been known only through importation of its rare fragrance; the cedars, on the other hand, were indigenous to northern Palestine and Lebanon, and were extensively used in building and decorative work. The two trees are mentioned together not because they are of a common source, but because they are symbolic of living and valuable blessings.

Together with the beautiful trees comes the figure of an abundance of water, carried to the irrigation field in buckets via long poles, or to the household for daily use. The thought suggests an abundance of this lifegiving element to a people who would deeply appreciate the fact, having for so long been

transients in a barren, near-waterless land.

Like the names "Pharoah" and "Abimelech", "Agag" is not the name of a single individual, but the title applied to the kings of the Amalekites. The present prophecy was uttered in an area where these kings would have been well known. But the king of Israel would attain a stature high above that of Agag—a thought usually understood to refer to more than any one Israelite king, and conceivably a prophecy of the Messiah. At the peak of the Kingdom of Israel, all of the land promised to Abraham—the territory lying between the Arabian Desert and the Mediterranean, and stretching from the Wilderness of Paran to the great bend of the Euphrates north of Syria—a total of about 60,000 square miles—was under the dominion of David and Solomon. Neither Agag nor Balak nor any of the other kings encountered by the followers of Moses ever attained to such a kingdom. And all possible comparisons fade into insignificance when the passage is viewed symbolically with its Messianic import. The exaltation of His kingdom was twofold: it brought man into a saved relationship with God, and elevated him into an eternal state of bliss. Nothing remotely comparable could be found in any earthly kingdom of any age; hence, the words spoken through Balaam stand without possible contradiction.

The words continued, expressing divine leadership and delivery from Egypt, followed by a constant strengthening and continuing victories to His favored people. Enemies were, by inference, weaker, since Israel's strength is compared to that of the wild ox; they were to be devoured as by a conquering lion. The broken bones and arrow-piercing wounds suggest total mastery and defeat of the national enemies. Following his victories, the lion lies complacent at his lair, unafraid of any about him. None dare antagonize him, since his power is unmatched and fearsome. The very choice blessings of God must come upon all who show this nation favor, but divine vengeance falls upon any who subject it to oppression and shame. All this constitutes a remarkable oracle. Its message must be heeded, or the consequences are formidable.

## QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

443. What is different about Balaam's conduct as he approaches this third prophecy?
444. How is it possible that the Spirit of God could come upon a man who was not of the people of Israel?
445. Explain the term "parable" or "oracle" as used of Balaam's message.
446. Show the points on which the prophecies of Balaam were fulfilled literally in later years.
447. Why is the kingdom in Israel's future compared to that of Agag's?
448. Discuss the two aspects of the prophesied kingdom.
449. Show the validity of comparing this kingdom to a hunting, relaxing lion.

## H. FINAL BLESSING, AND PROPHECY vv. 10-25

## TEXT

Chapter 24:10. And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together: and Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times. 11. Therefore now flee thou to thy place: I thought to promote thee unto great honor; but, lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honor. 12. And Balaam said unto Balak, Spake I not also to thy messengers which thou sentest unto me, saying, 13. If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do either good or bad of mine own mind; but what the Lord saith, that will I speak? 14. And now, I go unto my people: come therefore, and I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days.

15. And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: 16. He hath said, which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the Most High, which saw the vision of the

Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open: 17. I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh; there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. 18. And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly. 19. Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city.

20. And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable, and said, Amalek was the first of the nations; but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever. 21. And he looked on the Kenites, and took up his parable, and said, Strong is thy dwelling place, and thou puttest thy nest in a rock. 22. Nevertheless the Kenite shall be wasted, until Asshur shall carry thee away captive. 23. And he took up his parable, and said, Alas, who shall live when God doeth this! 24. And ships shall come from the coast of Chittim, and shall afflict Asshur, and shall afflict Eber, and he also shall perish for ever. 25. And Balaam rose up, and went and returned to his place: and Balak also went his way.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 24:10. And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he struck his hands together. And Balak said to Balaam, "I called you to curse my enemies, and behold, you have blessed them fully these three times. 11. Therefore, flee to your place; I said, 'I will certainly honor you, but the Lord has held you back from honor.' " 12. And Balaam said to Balak, "Did I not speak to your messengers, whom you sent to me, 13. 'If Balak should give me his house full of silver and gold, I would not be able to go beyond the word of the Lord, to do either good or bad by my own will; what the Lord speaks, that will I speak?' 14. And now, behold, I am going to my people. Come, I will advise you what this people will do to your people in the latter days."

15. And he began his speech, saying, "The oracle of Balaam the son of Peor, the oracle of the man whose eye is opened. 16.



the oracle of him who hears the word of God, and knows the wisdom of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down, and having his eyes uncovered. 17. I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come forth out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the corners of Moab, and break down the children of Sheth. 18. And Edom shall be dispossessed, Seir also, his enemies, shall be captured; and Israel shall act bravely. 19. Out of Jacob shall come a ruler, and he shall destroy him that remains in the city." 20. And when he looked upon Amalek, he continued his message, "Amalek was the first of the nations, but in the end he shall come to destruction." 21. And he looked at the Kenites and continued his speech, "Your dwelling place is strong, and your nest is set in a rock; 22. nevertheless, the Kenite shall be wasted. Where shall Asshur carry you away?" 23. And he continued his message, saying, "Alas, who shall live when God does this? 24. But ships shall come from Chittim, and shall afflict Asshur and Eber, and he also shall come to destruction." 25. Then Balaam arose and went back to his place; and Balak also went his way.

#### COMMENTARY

Infuriated, Balak now claps his hands together as a token of his rage (see Job 27:23), an action which might also express horror or contempt (see Lam. 2:15). Once more his attempt to gain a favorable prophecy from Balaam has brought forth exactly the opposite: the anticipated cursing has issued forth as a blessing upon the sojourners visible before them in the valley of the Abarim. Perhaps in desperation the king now blames Jehovah for preventing Balaam's elevation. Strong irony marks the statement, and it is not wasted on the prophet. But what honor could the king offer comparable to the good will of the One in whom he spoke?

It was necessary for Balaam to refer again to his original preface: he could speak nothing excepting those matters God told him to say. For whatever motives he may have acted previously, Balaam had at least been consistent in affirming the

point. A fact which Balak could not have recognized at the time is that Balaam's refusal to pronounce a malediction upon Israel was a great favor to the king. Had he done so, the circumstances would not have changed, but Balak, believing Balaam's curse to be effective, would have plunged into a most foolish confrontation with God's people. However unfavorable the prophet's words were at the moment, they were exactly what the king needed to hear, and God's will was strongly pronounced in Moab.

Now Balaam speaks most forcefully by the Spirit of the Lord. He launches into a magnificent unconditional prophecy which looks well into the future and establishes Israel's unquestioned superiority over the familiar nations of the day. The entire text of this prophecy is futuristic, exalting God's people and foretelling the downfall of their enemies. It is an altogether glorious word—for Israel: and, it is as accurate as it is glorious. As a preface to the actual message, he relates the manner in which the revelation has come: his "eye is opened"; also, he hears the words of God . . . sees the vision of the Almighty . . .," and has "his eyes uncovered." All these expressions suggest modes with which the Bible student is familiar. The process of divine inspiration heightens the vision of the prophet to enable him to see what the ordinary senses cannot detect, and his ears are attuned to a wave-length denied ordinary hearing. By no means could Balaam have guessed at the facts he spoke: they are far too complex, and extend well into the distant future. God used him as the vehicle through whom His design would be traced in the unfolding future.

Signifying that the message in bulk is to be understood as futuristic is the repeated thought that the events are seen, "but not now," and beheld, "but not nigh." Two symbols are used to express the kingdom of which Balaam speaks: the star and the scepter. The star signified more than royalty alone in later Hebrew thought: it came to have a Messianic connotation, and fits beautifully with the sign given the Eastern magi at Christ's birth (Matt. 2:2-10). The scepter is an even more obvious symbol. In the oracle it is assigned to Israel, thus forecasting a

kingdom which would not exist for approximately four hundred years.

The first named victim of the coming star and scepter is Moab, also called the "children of Sheth." Moab is to be caught in an assault from both sides, or "corners." The thought may mean the land is to be struck at both temples of the head, like a man suffering a fatal wound. It is a blow from which there can be no recovery. In the parallel thought, the "children of Sheth" may mean the "children of pride," an identification not unfamiliar in reference to Moab (see Isaiah 16:6).

The second sentence is pronounced against Edom, symbolized by Seir, a name referring both to the country itself and to the extensive mountain plateau forming the eastern side of the central valley of the land. The Edomites will be dispossessed. Although God ordered Israel to take no action against Edom when they were denied passage through the land (20:21), and to leave them alone in their territory (Deut. 2:4, 5), the future would see this relationship bitterly strained. Ultimately, David would take the land (II Sam. 8:14), but the conquest was only temporary. Trouble flared between the nations on numerous occasions until at last, about 129 B. C., the Edomites were decisively defeated by John Hyrcanus. They were compelled to undergo circumcision, were brought into league with the Judeans, and, by a series of political intrigues ruled the land through the Herodian family. At this apparent zenith in their history, the Edomites, now known as the Idumeans, drop completely from the pages of the record at the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. As a companion to Moses' words, we must consider the prophecy of Isaiah (34:5, 6 and 63:1)—Edom was the only neighboring nation to whom God promised no mercy whatsoever.

The second section of the prophecy is related to the Amalekites. When Amalek is called "the first of the nations," the thought certainly cannot refer to political stature, since the Amalekites never were a prominent people. The commonly proposed theory that Amalek is "first" because the tribe moved

against the Israelites shortly after they left Egypt (Ex. 17:8, ff.), cannot be acceptable; it is a strained thought. Much more satisfactory is the hypothesis that the Amalikites were extremely boastful, and that this reputation was a Bedouin trait (see *PC* p. 317). Of Amalek, the testimony is damning. He will perish forever. Made successively subservient by Saul and David, they were finally exterminated in the day of Hezekiah (see I Chron. 4:43).

The third people who receive attention in Balaam's prophecy, the Kenites, another of the tribes inhabiting the land of Canaan from the time of Abraham (Gen. 15:19). They originally held a portion of the Negeb, although some of their number settled far to the north (see Judges 4:17; 5:24). They are not to be confused with the descendants of Hobab, who were friendly to Israel. These people, of the lineage of Cain, were connected with the Amalekites; and, we may infer their hostility toward Israel. Their fate is dire: they will be deported to Assyria. Taken from their apparently inaccessible "nest in a rock", they will be destroyed.

In a final summation Balaam strongly affirms the prevailing will of God on earth over the strongest nations, even such rampaging people as the Assyrians. They, like the smaller nations whose fates have already been foretold, must fall to the ships from Chittim, or Cyprus, which seems only to be an intermediate port on the route of the conquerors, not their origin. It is hypothesized that the prophecy refers to the conquest of Persia by Alexander the Great, in which case Asshur becomes a symbol of that conquered people.

Eber, also subjected to affliction in the prophecy, cannot refer to the Hebrews, as the *LXX* has suggested. Almost certainly *IB* is correct in the position that the word itself, which means "the region beyond", is another symbolic reference to the country beyond the Euphrates. It may then be a redundant reference to Assyria, which seems unlikely because of the manner in which two names are coordinated; or, it may be used of another country in a similar location, such as Babylon.

Having said this, Balaam then quickly states that the conquering nation will itself come to destruction, perishing forever. It is the closing note in the oracle. As he finished, Balaam left the scene of his utterance, as did Balak.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

450. What was the visible symbol of Balak's anger against Balaam, and what other sentiments might it have expressed?
451. Show the final tactic used by Balak as he attempts to influence the prophecy.
452. In what sense was Balaam doing a favor to the king when he refused to curse Israel?
453. Since Balak is only concerned about his own circumstances and his own day, why would these numerous futuristic prophecies interest him?
454. Describe the methods named by Balaam to explain by what contacts God made His revelations to the prophet.
455. Why would it have been impossible for Balaam to have guessed at the facts contained in his prophecies?
456. Identify the two symbols of Balaam by which he refers to the coming Messianic kingdom.
457. Name the countries and people included in Balaam's words and relate what is said of each of them. What historical details are available to us to confirm the words of these prophecies.
458. What primary lessons should Balak have learned from all of these messages? Did he take advantage of these insights?

## II. IN MOAB (25:1-27:23)

### A. GRAVE SINS WITH THE MOABITES (25:1-9)

#### TEXT

Chapter 25:1. And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people

began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. 2. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. 3. And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. 4. And the Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the Lord against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel. 5. And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal-peor.

6. And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 7. And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand; 8. And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel. 9. And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 25:1. While Israel lived in Shittim, the people began to commit harlotry with the daughters of Moab. 2. They called the people to sacrifice to their gods, and the people ate, and bowed down unto their gods. 3. In this way Israel yoked himself to Baal of Peor. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. 4. And the Lord said to Moses, "Take all the chiefs of the people, and hang them in the sun before the Lord, in order that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned from Israel." 5. And Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Each one of you is to kill his men who have yoked themselves to Baal-Peor."

6. And behold, one of the people of Israel came and brought a Midianite woman to his family, in the very sight of Moses and of the whole congregation of the people of Israel, who were weeping in front of the door of the Tent of Meeting. 7. And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the

priest, saw this, he arose and left the congregation, and took a spear in his hand. 8. and went after the man of Israel, into the chamber, and pierced both of them, the man of Israel and the woman, through her belly. And the plague was stopped from the children of Israel. 9. But those who had died from the plague numbered twenty-four thousand.

### COMMENTARY

The harsh life Israel has led for nearly forty years is now drawing to its close. They are stationed in the final encampment before launching on the last leg of their long trip—into the Promised Land itself. This camp is at Shittim (“the acacia trees”), which lies directly opposite Jericho, approximately equidistant on the east side of the river. Throughout their time in the wilderness, God had proved His faithfulness in every respect. We would expect the people to be living in a thrilling anticipation of the new life before them. The incidents related in the opening verses of chapter 25 must have occurred as the people relaxed their guard prior to their push. Living near the Moabites, they observe the immoral religious rituals of these people at first hand, and yield to the seductions of the Moabite women. They join in the sacrificial festival of Baal-peor, who is believed to be the same as Chemosh, the Moabites’ national god. Along with the lustful conduct, gluttony was practiced by the defectors, who have been living on manna for forty years.

God’s anger rose high over the conduct of His people. Their complaints, criticisms, faithlessness and gross misconduct lead us to marvel at His patience. A time must certainly come, however, when divine mercy is inappropriate. The Lord summoned Moses and instructed him to kill the guilty sinners, especially their chiefs, who should have led the resistance to such a misadventure rather than becoming a part of it. The penalty was severe in proportion to the seriousness of their dereliction of duty. Divine justice has always held a special responsibility for those in special positions, and to impress the people with the gravity of the situation, the bodies of the chiefs are impaled in the open camp after having been first put to

death. The properly appointed leaders of the people, their judges, are then commanded to put to death every man who had defected to the worship of Baal-peor.

At this point the account takes a turn which has been variously understood. Some (as *IB* and *ICC*) believe the incidents of verses 1-5 and 6-9 are totally unrelated and incomplete, as the products of various writers which have been illogically combined. *IB* says the accounts are "from JE and P respectively, . . . the first, featuring Moabite women, lacks an ending; the second, introducing Midianite women, has no beginning," (p. 263). The judgment is unfair and inaccurate. Both stories are complete in themselves. The first ends quite appropriately with the sentence pronounced upon the adulterous miscreants. It is by no means a strain upon the text to have introduced at this point the appearance of yet another influence—that of the Midianite woman—contributing to the evidence of deteriorating and blatant immorality among the Israelites. Even at the moment, the camp is under the pall of the sentence of the judges, and an aggressive Simeonite named Zimri introduces the daughter of a Midianite chief into the very central presence of Moses and the congregation, obviously for immoral purposes. The effrontery is revolting to good taste and common decency, but seems to be typical of the attitude of the camp's more gross people.

By contrast with the licentious members of the nation, many Israelites are participating in a period of mourning because of the provocation against the Lord. The plague, which soon would claim 24,000 lives (v. 9), visited those insensitive and disobedient ones who had flaunted the laws of God. The sin of Zimri is no more grave than those of the other Israelites—it is, however, more blatant and defiant and depicts a highly degenerative spiritual attitude. The quick action of Phinehas in slaying Zimri without waiting for a called assembly to stone the man is clearly defensible. The account makes it logical to infer that the sinning couple were slain in the very act of adultery, within the tent of their deed. Obviously the attitude of Zimri was known to the people generally, and word had been carried



to the young priest; his response was essential to the best welfare of the entire camp. The punishment enacted upon the two, as well as the fulfillment of the instructions previously given to the chiefs, stayed the plague after it had exacted a bitter toll. Rabbinical tradition must be the source of Paul's statement (I Cor. 10:8) that the deaths occurred on one day, since this book and no other in the Old Testament states the fact; and the Apostle also gives a figure of 23,000 which, according to the same rabbinical source, is the number of those who were victims of the plague itself, whereas the additional 1,000 were hanged (see *KD*, p. 206).

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

459. Where is Shittim?
460. Using a reliable Bible dictionary or reference book, read up on the ritualistic orgies which accompanied the worship of Baal-peor. Show how the Israelites who participated in such practices were in violation of various units of the Ten Commandments.
461. Did the first overture in the incidents of this portion of Scripture originate with the Israelite men or with the Moabite women? Can you give any reason for your answer?
462. What part did gluttony play in the series of events?
463. Why was the punishment of the sinning people left in the hands of the chiefs?
464. For what purpose were their bodies put on public display?
465. How are the two incidents in this section substantially related? Why do some commentators attempt to separate them? Do you consider them complete units or only fragments? Why?
466. Since the Moabites are the neighboring people at this time, how does a Midianite woman become involved?
467. What factors make the sin of Zimri especially obnoxious?

468. Why were the people weeping at the time?  
 469. Can you justify the quick and decisive actions of Phinehas?  
 470. What relationship is there between the actions of Phinehas and the arrested plague?  
 471. How can the figure given in verse 9 be reconciled to the Apostle Paul's words in I Cor. 10:8?

## B. COMMENDATION OF PHINEHAS vv. 10-15

### TEXT

Chapter 25:10. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 11. Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy. 12. Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace: 13. And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel. 14. Now the name of the Israelite that was slain, even that was slain with the Midianitish woman, was Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of a chief house among the Simeonites. 15. And the name of the Midianitish woman that was slain was Cozbi, the daughter of Zur; he was head over a people, and of a chief house in Midian.

### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 25:10. Then the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, 11. "Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, has turned back my anger from the people of Israel in that he was zealous for my sake, so that I have not consumed the children of Israel in my jealousy. 12. Therefore say, 'Behold, I give to him my promise of peace: 13. and it shall be to him, and to his descendants after him, the promise of a perpetual priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the people of Israel.' " 14. Now the name of the man of Israel who was killed with the Midianite woman was Zimri, the son of

Salu, a prince of a father's house among the Simeonites. 15. And the name of the Midianite woman who was killed was Cozbi, the daughter of Zur, who was the head of the people of a father's house in Midian.

### COMMENTARY

Whatever the present-day reaction of self-appointed critics may be to the immediate and decisive actions of Phinehas, the Scriptures leave no doubt about the mind of God in the affair. His full endorsement and reassuring words of commendation mean far more than the piddling comments of those who would set their own criteria for Divine conduct. He not only approves of Phinehas' deed; He uses it as the basis for asserting the selection of the Aaronic lineage for the high priesthood through the grandson of the initial high priest. His zeal was spontaneous, and in rigid defense of the order God wished among His people. The Lord credits him with having turned away His wrath from the people—no small accomplishment.

The pledge made to Phinehas established an eternal priesthood for himself and his descendants irrevocably. The lineage remained in this position until the time of the Herodians, with the brief exception of a temporary interruption during the days of Eli (see I Sam. 1-3; 14:3).

Both Zimri and Cozbi were individuals of prominent families and high stations in life. They may have felt, therefore, that they were above condemnation or criticism. This fact would have made many of the people reluctant to report their odious conduct, for fear of reprisal from the other members of the families. When such an attitude permeates those of noble position, and their conduct is either tolerated or unrebuked, we may well expect such results as are found in this incident. But God is no respecter of persons, and it was unthinkable that He should let the guilty pair escape unpunished. The arm of His vindication reached out through Phinehas.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

472. How does God's evaluation of the act of Phinehas differ

from that of the self-appointed critics’?

473. How could the act of a single man turn away the wrath of God from an entire nation?
474. Explain the use of the word “jealousy” in reference to the attitude of God toward Israel (see also Ex. 20:5).
475. Precisely what did God promise to Phinehas in recognition of his act?
476. How long did this promise actually last?
477. Does God expect more of those who hold important stations in life than from the common people? Defend your answer.

### C. JEHOVAH DENOUNCES THE MIDIANITES vv. 16-18

#### TEXT

Chapter 25:16. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 17. Vex the Midianites, and smite them: 18. For they vex with their wives, wherewith they have beguiled you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of a prince of Midian, their sister, which was slain in the day of the plague for Peor’s sake.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 25:16. And the Lord said unto Moses, 17. “Vex the Midianites and strike them. 18. They have harassed you with their wives, with which they have enticed you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of the prince of Midian and their sister, who was slain on the day of the plague because of Peor.”

#### COMMENTARY

Quite properly, *PC* reminds the reader that, while the account of defection begins with the Moabites, it concludes with the Midianites because the sin of the women of the latter nation were studied and deliberate. The women of Moab, on the other hand, were but indulging in their personal passions. It is

further suggested that the Moabites were not acting upon advice of Balaam, as were the Midianites, in a "plot to entangle the Israelites in heathen rites and heathen sins which would alienate them from the favour of God," (p. 344).

The text quite certainly suggests that the Midianite women had acted deliberately and craftily. Later Scripture (31:16) names this motive and incriminates Balaam. When God instructs Moses to "Vex" the Midianites, the command is made very emphatic by repetition. The account will proceed quickly to the military census, taken as an initial step in preparation for moving against the Midianites in battle (see 31:5). It is a logical inference that the actions of Zimri and Cozbi were not isolated, but may have been common among the Israelites as they were lured by the women of Midian. We see the culmination, then, of the invidious plot of these enemies of God's people.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

478. Explain why God sentences Midian to a sad end, but says nothing comparable to Moab.
479. How severe is the punishment expressed for Midian? How is the severity emphasized?
480. Explain what part Balaam played in the actions of the Midianite women.
481. What immediate steps are taken to prepare for the actions of vengeance against the Midianites?

#### D. THE SECOND CENSUS (26:1-51)

##### TEXT

Chapter 26:1. And it came to pass after the plague, that the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, saying, 2. Take the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, from twenty years old and upward, throughout their fathers' house, all that are able to go to war in Israel. 3. And Moses and Eleazar the priest spake with them in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho, saying, 4. Take the sum of the people, from twenty years old and upward; as the

Lord commanded Moses and the children of Israel, which went forth out of the land of Egypt.

5. Reuben, the eldest son of Israel; the children of Reuben; Hanoch, of whom cometh the family of the Hanochites: of Pallu, the family of the Palluites: 6. Of Hezron, the family of the Hezronites: of Carmi, the family of the Carmites. 7. These are the families of the Reubenites: and they that were numbered of them were forty and three thousand and seven hundred and thirty. 8. And the sons of Pallu; Eliab. 9. And the sons of Eliab; Nemuel, and Dathan, and Abiram. This is that Dathan and Abiram, which were famous in the congregation, who strove against Moses and against Aaron in the company of Korah, when they strove against the Lord: 10. And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up together with Korah, when that company died, what time the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men: and they became a sign. 11. Notwithstanding the children of Korah died not.

12. The sons of Simeon after their families: of Nemuel, the family of the Nemuelites: of Jamin, the family of the Jaminites: of Jachin, the family of the Jachinites: 13. Of Zerah, the family of the Zarhites: of Shaul, the family of the Shaulites. 14. These are the families of the Simeonites, twenty and two thousand and two hundred.

15. The children of Gad after their families: of Zephon, the family of the Zephonites: of Haggi, the family of the Haggites: of Shuni, the family of the Shunites: 16. Of Ozni, the family of the Oznites: of Eri, the family of the Erites: 17. Of Arod, the family of the Arodites: of Areli, the family of the Arelites. 18. These are the families of the children of Gad according to those that were numbered of them, forty thousand and five hundred.

19. The sons of Judah were Er and Onan: and Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan. 20. And the sons of Judah after their families were; of Shelah, the family of the Shelanites: of Pharez, the family of the Pharzites: of Zerah, the family of the Zarhites. 21. And the sons of Pharez were: of Hezron, the family of the Hezronites: of Hamul, the family of the

Hamulites. 22. These are the families of Judah according to those that were numbered of them, threescore and sixteen thousand and five hundred.

23. Of the sons of Issachar after their families: of Tola, the family of the Tolaites: of Pua, the family of the Punites: 24. Of Jashub, the family of the Jashubites: of Shimron, the family of the Shimronites. 25. These are the families of Issachar according to those that were numbered of them, threescore and four thousand and three hundred.

26. Of the sons of Zebulun after their families: of Sered, the family of the Sardites: of Elon, the family of the Elonites: of Jahleel, the family of the Jahleelites. 27. These are the families of the Zebulunites according to those that were numbered of them, threescore thousand and five hundred.

28. The sons of Joseph after their families were Manasseh and Ephraim. 29. Of the sons of Manasseh: of Machir, the family of the Machirites: and Machir begat Gilead: of Gilead come the family of the Gileadites. 30. These are the sons of Gilead: of Jeezer, the family of the Jeezerites: of Helek, the family of the Helekites: 31. And of Asriel, the family of the Asrielites: and of Shechem, the family of the Shechemites: 32. And of Shemida, the family of the Shemidaites: and of Hopher, the family of the Hopherites.

33. And Zelophehad the son of Hopher had no sons, but daughters: and the names of the daughters of Zelophehad were Mahlah, and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. 34. These are the families of Manasseh, and those that were numbered of them, fifty and two thousand seven hundred.

35. These are the sons of Ephraim after their families: of Shuthelah, the family of the Shuthalhites: of Becher, the family of the Bachrites: of Tahan, the family of the Tahanites. 36. And these are the sons of Shuthelah: of Eran, the family of the Eranites. 37. These are the families of the sons of Ephraim according to those that were numbered of them, thirty and two thousand and five hundred. These are the sons of Joseph after their families.

38. The sons of Benjamin after their families: of Bela, the family of the Belaites: of Ashbel, the family of the Ashbelites: of Ahiram, the family of the Ahiramites: 39. Of Shupham, the family of the Shuphamites: of Hupham, the family of the Huphamites. 40. And the sons of Bela were Ard and Naaman: of Ard, the family of the Ardites: and of Naaman, the family of the Naamites. 41. These are the sons of Benjamin after their families: and they that were numbered of them were forty and five thousand and six hundred.

42. These are the sons of Dan after their families: of Shuham, the family of the Shuhamites. These are the families of Dan after their families. 43. All the families of the Shuhamites, according to those that were numbered of them, were threescore and four thousand and four hundred.

44. Of the children of Asher after their families: of Jimna, the family of the Jimnites: of Jesui, the family of the Jesuites: of Beriah, the family of the Berites. 45. Of the sons of Beriah: of Heber, the family of the Heberites: of Malchiel, the family of the Malchielites. 46. And the name of the daughter of Asher was Sarah. 47. These are the families of the sons of Asher according to those that were numbered of them; who were fifty and three thousand and four hundred.

48. Of the sons of Naphtali after their families: of Jahzeel, the family of the Jahzeelites: of Guni, the family of the Gunites: 49. Of Jezer, the family of the Jezerites: of Shillem, the family of the Shillemites. 50. These are the families of Naphtali according to their families: and they that were numbered of them were forty and five thousand and four hundred. 51. These were the numbered of the children of Israel, six hundred thousand and a thousand seven hundred and thirty.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 26:1. Then it happened after the plague that the Lord spoke to Moses and to Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saying, 2. "Count all the assembly of the children of Israel, from twenty years old and up, according to their fathers'



houses, all who are able to go to war in Israel." 3. So Moses and Eleazar the priest spoke with them in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho, saying, 4. "Count the people from twenty years old and up, just as the Lord has commanded Moses." Now the sons of Israel who had come forth from the land of Egypt were:

5. Reuben, the oldest son of Israel; the children of Reuben: Hanokh, the family of the Hamochites; of Pallu, the family of the Palluites; 6. of Hezron, the family of the Hezronites; of Carmi, the family of the Carmites. 7. These are the families of the Reubenites, and those who were counted of them were 43,730. 8. And the sons of Pallu: Eliab. 9. And the sons of Eliab: Nemuel and Dathan and Abiram. This is the Dathan and Abiram who were called by the congregation, who contended against Moses and Aaron in the company of Korah, when they contended against the Lord. 10. And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up along with Korah when that company died; and at that time the fire devoured 250 men; and they became a symbol. 11. But the sons of Korah did not die.

12. The sons of Simeon, according to their families: of Nemuel, the family of the Nemuelites; of Jamin, the family of the Jaminites; of Jachin, the family of the Jachinites; 13. of Zerah, the family of the Zerahites; of Shaul, the family of the Shaulites. 14. These are the families of the Simeonites, 22,200.

15. The sons of Gad according to their families: of Zephon, the family of the Zephonites; of Haggi, the family of the Haggites; of Shuni, the family of Shunites; 16. of Ozni, the family of the Oznites; of Eri, the family of the Erites; 17. of Arod, the family of the Arodites; of Areli, the family of the Arelites. 18. These are the families of the sons of Gad according to those who were counted of them, 40,500.

19. The sons of Judah were Er and Onan; but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan. 20. And the sons of Judah according to their families were: of Shelah, the family of Shelanites; of Perez, the family of the Perezites; of Zerah, the family of the Zerahites. 21. And the sons of Perez were: of Hezron, the

family of the Hezronites; of Hamul, the family of the Hamulites. 22. These are the families of Judah according to those who were counted of them, 76,500.

23. The sons of Issachar according to their families: of Tola, the family of the Talaites; of Puvah, the family of the Punites; 24. of Jashub, the family of the Jashubites; of Shimron, the family of the Shimronites. 25. These are the families of Issachar according to those who were counted of them, 64,300.

26. The sons of Zebulun according to their families: of Sered, the family of the Seredites; of Elon, the family of the Elonites; of Jahleel, the family of the Jahleelites. 27. These are the families of the Zebulunites according to those who were counted of them, 60,500.

28. The sons of Joseph according to their families: Manasseh and Ephraim. 29. The sons of Manasseh: of Machir, the family of the Machirites; and Machir became the father of Gilead; of Gilead, the family of the Gileadites. 30. These are the sons of Gilead: of Iezer, the family of the Iezerites: of Helek, the family of the Helekites; 31. and of Asriel, the family of the Asrielites; and of Shechem, the family of the Shechemites; 32. and of Shemida, the family of the Shemidaites; and of Hephher, the family of the Hephherites.

33. Now Zelophehad the son of Hephher had no sons, but only daughters; and the names of the daughters of Zelophehad were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah. 34. These are the families of Manasseh; and those who were counted of them were 52,700.

35. These are the sons of Ephraim according to their families: of Shuthelah, the family of the Shuthelaites; of Becher, the family of the Becherites; of Tahan, the family of the Tahanites. 36. And these are the sons of Shuthelah: of Eran, the family of the Eranites. 37. These are the families of the sons of Ephraim according to those who were counted of them, 32,500. These are the sons of Joseph according to their families.

38. The sons of Benjamin according to their families: of Bela, the family of the Belaites; of Ashbel, the family of the

Ashbelites; of Ahiram, the family of the Ahiramites; 39. of Shephupham, the family of the Shuphamites; of Hupham, the family of the Huphamites. 40. And the sons of Bela were Ard and Naaman: of Ard, the family of the Ardites; of Naaman, the family of the Naamites. 41. These are the sons of Benjamin according to their families; and those who were counted of them were 45,600.

42. These are the sons of Dan according to their families: of Shuham, the family of the Shuhamites. These are the families of Dan according to their families. 43. All the families of the Shuhamites, according to those who were counted of them, were 64,400.

44. The sons of Asher according to their families: of Imnah, the family of the Imnites: of Ishvi, the family of the Ishvites; of Beriah, the family of the Berites. 45. Of the sons of Beriah: of Heber, the family of the Heberites; of Malchiel, the family of the Malchielites. 46. And the name of the daughter of Asher was Serah. 47. These are the families of the sons of Asher according to those who were counted of them 53,400.

48. The sons of Naphtali according to their families: of Jahzeel, the family of the Jahzeelites; of Guni, the family of the Gunites; 49. of Jezer, the family of the Jezerites; of Shillem, the family of the Shillemites. 50. These are the families of Naphtali according to their families; and those who were counted of them were 45,400. 51. These are those who were counted of the sons of Israel, 601,730.

#### COMMENTARY

The census taken just before Israel made final preparations to enter into Canaan served two purposes: they were mustered for battle against the Midianites, and they are counted in preparation for the proper division of tribal inheritances in the new land. Only 12,000 men were actually involved in the battle with Midian (31:5); the entire nation was involved in the land division.

As might be expected, some of the tribes suffered decreases

during the arduous travels in the wilderness, whereas others increased. The seven which increased were Judah (up by 1,900); Issachar (9,900); Zebulun (e, 100); Joseph's sons (total increase of 2,500, although Ephraim had lost 8,000); Benjamin (10,200); Dan (700); and Asher (11,900). The five suffering losses were Gad (down by 6,150); Ephraim (as mentioned, 8,000); Naphtali, (8,000); Simeon (a phenomenal drop of 37,100); and, Reuben, (2,770). The grand total of 601,730 counted represents a slight loss of 1,820—a remarkable fact in considering that all of those over twenty years of age at the time of the exodus are now dead, and that they had endured such a rigorous life in the rugged terrain through which they had come. It is evident that the hand of God had led and blessed them in a marvelous way.

The original manner of counting, including the same formula used in the first census, is preserved. The order is alike excepting for the reversal of positions between Ephraim and Manasseh. Since Aaron is now dead, his son Eleazar works together with Moses in this endeavor.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

482. Where was the final census of Israel taken?
483. For what two purposes did the Lord order the census?
484. Compile parallel lists of the first and second countings of the people of Israel, showing the gain or loss of each tribe.
485. Outline the standard formula used to report the count for all the tribes and families.

#### E. INSTRUCTIONS FOR LAND ALLOTMENT vv. 52-56

##### TEXT

Chapter 26:52. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 53. Unto these the land shall be divided for an inheritance according to the number of names. 54. To many thou shalt give the more inheritance, and to few thou shalt give the less

inheritance: to every one shall his inheritance be given according to those that were numbered of him. 55. Notwithstanding the land shall be divided by lot: according to the names of the tribes of their fathers they shall inherit. 56. According to the lot shall the possession thereof be divided between many and few.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 26:52. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Among these the land shall be divided for an inheritance according to the census of names. 54. To the larger number you shall give the larger inheritance; to the smaller number you shall give the smaller inheritance; each shall have his inheritance according to those who were counted of him. 55. But the land shall be divided by lot. They shall receive their inheritance according to the names of the tribes of their fathers. 56. According to their selection by lot, their inheritance shall be divided between the larger and the smaller.

#### COMMENTARY

Two factors figure in the division of the land to the tribes: the size of each tribe is to be considered; the actual area specified for each will be established by casting lots. *IC* summarily pronounces the principles "clear but contradictory"; *ICC* reports "the meaning is not quite clear . . . . how these two in themselves irreconcilable principles are both to be respected in the division is not said"; *PC* reports the second order (division by lot) "can only be reconciled with the preceding order by assuming that the lot was to determine the situation of the territory, the actual boundaries being left to the discretion of the rulers." Only *KD*, of the sources cited, makes a genuine attempt to reconcile the methods: "In vv. 53, 54, the command is given to distribute the land as an inheritance among the twelve tribes ('unto these'), according to the number of the names (chap. i. 2-18), i. e., of the persons counted by name in each of their families. To a numerous tribe they were to make the inheritance great; to the littleness, i. e., to the tribes and

families that contained only a few persons, they were to make it small . . . In vv. 55, 56, it is still further commanded that the distribution should take place by lot . . . . The meaning of these words can only be, that every tribe was to receive a province of its own for an inheritance, which should be called by its name for ever. The other regulation in v. 56, '*according to the measure of the lot shall its inheritance* (the inheritance of every tribe) *be divided between the numerous and the small* (tribe),' is no doubt to be understood as signifying, that in the division of the tribe territories, according to the comparative sizes of the different tribes, they were to adhere to that portion of land which fell to every tribe in the casting of the lots. The magnitude and limits of the possessions of the different tribes could not be determined by the lot according to the magnitude of the tribes themselves: all that could possibly be determined was the situation to be occupied by the tribe . . . . The lot was to determine the portion of every tribe, not merely to prevent all occasion for dissatisfaction and complaining, but in order that every tribe might receive with gratitude the possession that fell to its lot as the inheritance assigned it by God, the result of the lot being regarded by almost all nations as determined by God Himself (cf. Prov. xvi. 33, xviii, 18)," (pp. 210, 211).

Because the precise boundaries used in the actual division of the tribal inheritances cannot be established, we can make but a general observation: the inheritances did not follow a rigid formula by which the most populous tribes received the greatest areas from largest to smallest; however, there is a general relationship between the two factors. Manasseh and Ephraim together, as sons of Joseph, constituted by far the largest descendants of any single son of Jacob, and received easily the greatest area of land. Judah, next largest tribe, received the second largest portion. This is an especially significant fact because of the prominent role Judah was destined to play in the unfolding history of God's people. The land itself was well situated and productive. Excepting for the Jeshimon, it was totally habitable. It was an ideal portion within which the longest-faithful portion of the people could live to greatest

advantage for the longest period of time. Such a fact cannot be overlooked when one considers the guiding hand of God in the lot distribution. The exact extent of other territories pales into unimportance, then, after this established fact: and further inquiry about the significance of the size of any particular portion is almost without meaning. Perhaps the most important point of all is that God guided the distribution of all the portions so that every tribe had as much as it needed, and more than it ever used to fullest advantage either materially or spiritually.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

486. Look up data on the various methods used to determine decisions by means of casting lots.
487. Why would it be important for the land to be divided in relationship to the sizes of the various tribes?
488. Reconcile the two methods given in this portion of Scripture: how could they both be used in the land distribution?
489. To what extent did the actual land distribution relate to the size of the individual tribes?
490. What important facts emerge when we look at the ultimate results of the land allotment?

#### F. CENSUS OF THE LEVITES vv. 57-65

##### TEXT

Chapter 26:57. And these are they that were numbered of the Levites after their families: of Gershon, the family of the Gershonites: of Kohath, the family of the Kohathites: of Merari, the family of the Merarites. 58. These are the families of the Levites: the family of the Libnites, the family of the Hebronites, the family of the Mahlites, the family of the Mushites, the family of the Korathites. And Kohath begat Amram. 59. And the name of Amram's wife was Jochebed, the daughter of Levi, whom her mother bare to Levi in Egypt: and she bare unto Amram, Aaron and Moses, and Miriam their

sister. 60. And unto Aaron was born Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. 61. And Nadab and Abihu died, when they offered strange fire before the Lord. 62. And those that were numbered of them were twenty and three thousand, all males from a month old and upward: for they were not numbered among the children of Israel, because there was no inheritance given them among the children of Israel.

63. These are they that were numbered by Moses and Eleazar the priest, who numbered the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho. 64. But among these there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron the priest numbered, when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai. 65. For the Lord had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness. And there was not left a man of them, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 26: 57. And these are those who were numbered of the Levites according to their families: of Gershon, the family of the Gershonites; of Kohath, the family of the Kohathites; of Merari, the family of the Merarites. 58. These are the families of Levi: the family of the Libnites, the family of the Hebronites, the family of the Mahlites, the family of the Mushites, the family of the Korahites. And Kohath became the father of Amram. 59. And the name of Amram's wife was Jochebed, the daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt; and she bore to Amram: Aaron, and Moses, and their sister, Miriam. 60. And to Aaron were born Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. 61. But Nadab and Abihu died when they offered strange fire before the Lord. 62. And those who were counted of them were 23,000 every male from one month of age and up, for they were not counted among the sons of Israel, since no inheritance was given them among the sons of Israel.

63. These are those who were counted by Moses and Eleazar the priest, who counted the sons of Israel in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho. 64. But among those there was not a



man of those who were counted by Moses and Aaron the priest who counted the sons of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai, 65. for the Lord had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness. And not a man was left of them, excepting Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun.

### COMMENTARY

We have here an incomplete listing of the Levitical families. The purpose of the abbreviated passage seems to be concentrated on establishing the descent of Moses, Aaron and Miriam rather than all the families of Gershon, Kohath and Merari. The counting was complete, of course, when originally done, and shows that the Levites had increased by one thousand. Once more, their numbering began with sons at one month of age.

No general land allotment was awarded later to the Levites. Instead, they received forty-eight cities distributed throughout the land (see 35:1-8 and Joshua 21), in order that they might serve all of the people.

The genealogical chart here is much abbreviated, since Jochebed could not have been the daughter of Levi himself. The word "daughter" is properly understood to mean she was a direct female descendant; the number of generations intervening would be irrelevant. Jochebed here becomes one of a select few women who figure prominently in any Biblical genealogy. No doubt the most prominent names to be found in such lists would be those of Rahab and Ruth, listed in Matthew's chart of Jesus Christ's ancestors (1:5). Matthew also gives Tamar, who bore Phares and Zara to Judah (1:3); he alludes to "her that had been the wife of Urias" (Bathsheba, 1:6) as well. But the appearance of any feminine name in genealogical listings among the Jews was rare enough to be notable, and places Jochebed in perspective as the great woman she must have been.

Our attention is called appropriately to the fact that among all those counted in the second census, "there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron the priest numbered," with the exception of Caleb and Joshua, since all those above twenty

years of age at the time of the first census were now dead, (cf. 14:23, 28-30).

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

491. Are there good reasons for omitting many names of the sons of Levi and their descendants?
492. What difference was there in the total number of Levites since the first census?
493. Why is it impossible that Jochebed might have been the daughter of Levi?
494. How are we to understand the use of the word "daughter" here?
495. Why are there so few names of women given in the genealogical lists of the Israelites? Find as many examples as you can.
496. How many Israelites were counted in the second census who had been tallied in the first? Who were they?

### G. THE PLEA OF ZELOPHEHAD'S DAUGHTERS, AND GOD'S ANSWER (27:1-11)

#### TEXT

Chapter 27:1. Then came the daughters of Zelophehad, the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph: and these are the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Tirzah. 2. And they stood before Moses, and before Eleazar the priest, and before the princes and all the congregation, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying, 3. Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not in the company of them that gathered themselves together against the Lord in the company of Korah; but died in his own sin, and had no sons. 4. Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family, because he hath no son? Give unto us therefore a possession among the brethren of our father. 5. And Moses brought their cause before the Lord.

6. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 7. The daughters of Zelophehad speak right: thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father's brethren; and thou shalt cause the inheritance of their father to pass unto them. 8. And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a man die, and have no son, then ye shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his daughter. 9. And if he have no daughter, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his brethren. 10. And if he have no brethren, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his father's brethren. 11. And if his father have no brethren, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his kinsman that is next to him of his family, and he shall possess it: and it shall be unto the children of Israel a statute of judgment, as the Lord commanded Moses.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 27:1. Then came the daughters of Zelophehad, the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph; and these are the names of the daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah. 2. And they stood before Moses and Eleazar the priest, and before the leaders and all the assembly, at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting, saying, 3. "Our father died in the wilderness, although he was not in the company of those who gathered themselves together against the Lord in the company of Korah; but he died in his own sin, and had no sons. 4. Why should the name of our father be lost to his family because he had no son? Give us a possession among the brothers of our father. 5. And Moses brought their case before the Lord.

6. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 7. "The daughters of Zelophehad speak properly. You shall surely give them a possession as an inheritance among the brothers of their father, and you shall transfer their father's inheritance to them. 8. "Also, you shall speak to the children of Israel and say, 'If a man dies having no son, then you shall transfer his inheritance to his daughter. 9. 'And if he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers. 10. "And if he has no

brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his father's brothers. 11. 'And if his father has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his nearest relative in his own family, and he shall possess it; and it shall be a law of judgment to the children of Israel, just as the Lord commanded Moses.' "

### COMMENTARY

A very real problem presents itself in the situation before us. Zelophehad died without male issue, which would have ended the chain of inheritance to his family. What should be done? Ought the situation end here, and the land be divided otherwise among near relatives? Was there some method by which the family name and inheritance could be preserved? Only God could give an adequate answer, so He is consulted via Moses. The five daughters of Zelophehad petition to have the land given them rather than have it lost to the family, and God honors their request.

In other nations in the ancient world, women seldom had any rights of inheritance: but it would not be so among God's people, if there were no male heir. Presumably, the women married and, upon so doing, they lost their original family identity; their children inherited from the father's household. But in this instance, with no brothers to preserve their father's name and estate, the daughters accept both the inheritance and the responsibilities which accompany the inheritance; clearly, the first-born son of the oldest will establish the primary line of lineage. The law would secure the ancient principle: land is not to be permanently given up by that family to which it has been allocated.

Would the decision have been different if Zelophehad had been involved in the extraordinary sins and rebellious conduct for which severe punishment had been meted out? We have only inferences to draw from silence, but the fact is that there is no record of an inheritance which was ever denied to the child of a rebellious father on this basis alone. God's judgment upon the offending Israelites had already been pronounced and exacted: they would die outside of the Promised Land. The situation and

decision anticipate the immediate future, when Israel will actually occupy the land toward which they have been led.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

497. Why should there have been any question whether or not Zelophehad's daughters might inherit their father's land?
498. Is it important that Zelophehad had not been among those who had rebelled against the Lord?
499. Show what the consequences would have been if the inheritance had not been passed through the daughters.
500. In what manner was Zelophehad's name to have been preserved?
501. Why is it relevant to settle this question even before the Israelites had entered into the land of Canaan?
502. Can you think of any nation or circumstances where the details of inheritance resemble those given in God's instructions to Moses?

## H. MOSES TO VIEW THE LAND OF PROMISE vv. 12-14

### TEXT

Chapter 27:12. The Lord said to Moses, Get thee up into this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel. 13. And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered. 14. For ye rebelled against my commandment in the desert of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify me at the water before their eyes: that is the water of Meribah in Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.

### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 27:12. Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go up to this mountain Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel. 13. And when you have seen it, you shall also be gathered unto your people, as Aaron your brother was; 14. for you rebelled against my commandment in the desert of Zin,

in the strife of the assembly, to sanctify me at the water before their eyes: that is, the waters of Meribah in Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin."

### COMMENTARY

The Abarim, "those on the other side," are mountains east of the Jordan near the northern tip of the Dead Sea. Moses was led here for the purpose of examining the land into which the people, but not he, would enter. The peak from which Moses looked is referred to as Pisgah or Nebo (21:20, and Deut. 34:1ff.). From any of several such peaks in the area—and the exact identification of the individual peak is impossible—a commanding view may be had of the Jordan valley to the north, of the depression and environment of the Dead Sea to the south, and across the Jordan into the Judean hills.

Because of his part in the sin at Kadesh (here called a rebellion), Moses will not be permitted to cross the Jordan. He had been previously informed of this judgment (20:12); it is here reaffirmed. God's authority and integrity must stand, therefore the punishment could not have been rescinded. Whereas we might wish some concession to have been made to Moses because of his greatness, or his usually adamant resistance to evil and to the enemies of God, or his splendid and heart-warming intercessory prayers for the people, the view is quite different from God's perspective: as leader of the people he had a primary obligation to adhere rigidly to the divine instructions under all circumstances, and punishment must be sure, fair and consistent upon the occasion of his disobedience. God could do nothing other than that which He did and be fair.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

503. Identify "Abarim." Why was this an ideal point from which Moses could view the Promised Land?
504. In what sense could Moses' actions at Meribah be called a rebellion?
505. Explain why God did not revoke the punishment He had previously announced for Moses.

506. Is it fair that a special weight should be attached to the sin of Moses?

I. JOSHUA APPOINTED TO SUCCEED MOSES vv. 15-23

TEXT

Chapter 27:15. And Moses spoke unto the Lord, saying, Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, 17. Which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in: that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd.

18. And the Lord said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; 19. And set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. 20. And thou shalt put some of thine honor upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. 21. And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the Lord: at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation. 22. And Moses did as the Lord commanded him: and he took Joshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation: 23. And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 27:15. Then Moses spoke to the Lord, saying, 16. "May the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, 17. who may go out before them and who may come in before them, and who may lead them out, and who may bring them in; in this way the congregation of the Lord will not be as sheep which have no shepherd."

18. So the Lord said to Moses, "Take Joshua, the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand upon him;

19. and have him stand before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and charge him in their sight. 20. And you shall invest him with some of your authority, so that all the congregation of Israel may be obedient unto him. 21. Furthermore, he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall seek counsel for him according to the judgment of Urim before the Lord. Upon his word they shall go out, and upon his word they shall come in, both he and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation." 22. And Moses did as the Lord commanded him. He took Joshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the assembly. 23. Then he placed his hands upon him and gave him the charge, as the Lord commanded through Moses.

#### COMMENTARY

In what we must consider a typical action, Moses shows more concern for the children of Israel than for his own welfare. He knows that his time on earth is very limited, and that he cannot lead his people across the Jordan. He knows also that they must not be left without competent leadership; so, without so much as a word to gainsay the verdict of God, he makes the simple request that a man be appointed by God as his successor. This is no small request. Moses has established such an imposing image of capable leadership that any man must suffer by comparison. It is also in Moses' favor that he does not ask for the privilege of naming this man, or that he does not claim the position for his descendants by right of birth alone. God only can capably fill the position, and Moses will not interfere; it is a lesson God had to teach Samuel by direct revelation (see I Sam. 16:6ff.). The next leader of Israel must handle the rigorous demands of daily business; he must be a military man to lead in driving out the Canaanites; he must be a man of great spiritual depth and intensity to stabilize a fickle people; he must be a patient man to endure their gainsaying and criticism; he must be a respectable man whose word they can believe and follow; he must be a man of moral integrity to set a proper example and to administer justice to those whose lives



would seriously defy the righteous standards of God; he must be a meek man whose head will not be turned by the honor given him in his position; he must be courageous to resist the taunts and opposition of the enemy, as well as the indifference and grumbling of his own people. In short, he must be a man very much like Moses himself. Moses certainly would not have said it, but the circumstances and the facts require it.

God does not hesitate in rendering His decision: the man is Joshua. The son of Nun was a man filled with God's own Spirit (v. 18), who had proved himself again and again under a variety of extreme circumstances. The choice is logical, and fully justified by history. Caleb, who might also have been considered for the position, is much less well known to us through the pages of Scripture, which may indicate lesser ability in some area, or lesser strength of character. But the choice cannot be criticized.

The laying on of hands in Scripture indicates the transfer of power inherent in an office being assumed. For his special work, Joshua will need a special dispensation of God's grace. While Moses could not and did not transfer all of his traits or powers to Joshua, he is to command the respect and obedience of the people as Moses had. The ceremony doubtless was done publicly to let everyone know of the transfer.

An essential difference between Moses and Joshua emerges when Joshua is told to stand before Eleazar in order to seek counsel in his work. Moses was of the priestly line himself, and stood above all priests, not excluding Aaron himself. Joshua's leadership is civil and military, and he is under the religious heads of the nation just as any other individual was. Joshua was not a lawgiver: he was under the Law and its primary executives, the priests.

In serious national matters Eleazar himself was obligated to approach the Lord in behalf of Joshua via the Urim. While there is much we do not know of the Urim and the companion Thummim, they were uniquely worn and used by the high priest to determine the counsel of Jehovah for His people in

matters of grave nature. These “lights and perfections” were stones of various kinds, set in the breastplate when the high priest entered into the divine Presence for the specific purpose of gaining God’s decision when it was required, (see Ex. 28:30; Lev. 8:8).

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

507. Show how Moses’ conduct at this time reflects his great stature of spirit.
508. Why should the place of leadership of the people not be left to ancestral descent? to the choice of the people? to Moses himself?
509. List the singular qualifications which Joshua possessed for the office to which God chose him.
510. What special duties would fall to Moses’ successor? With what we have already learned of Joshua, which of these duties seem appropriate to him?
511. What significance is attached to the “laying on of hands” here?
512. Why was this done publicly?
513. Is there significance in asking Joshua to come before Eleazar? Explain your answer.
514. Explain the Urim and Thummim. How do they relate to Joshua?

### III. REVIEW AND ADDITIONS TO THE LAW

(28:1—30:16)

#### A. THE DAILY OFFERINGS vv. 1-8

##### TEXT

Chapter 28:1. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 2. Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, My offering, and my bread for my sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savor unto me, shall ye observe to offer unto me in their due season. 3. And thou shalt say unto them, This is the

offering made by fire which ye shall offer unto the Lord; two lambs of the first year without spot day by day, for a continual burnt offering. 4. The one lamb shalt thou offer in the morning, and the other lamb shalt thou offer at even; 5. And a tenth part of an ephah of flour for a meat offering, mingled with the fourth part of a hin of beaten oil. 6. It is a continual burnt offering, which was ordained in mount Sinai for a sweet savor, a sacrifice made by fire unto the Lord. 7. And the drink offering thereof shall be the fourth part of hin for the one lamb: in the holy place shalt thou cause the strong wine to be poured unto the Lord for a drink offering. 8. And the other lamb shalt thou offer at even: as the meat offering of the morning, and as the drink offering thereof, thou shalt offer it, a sacrifice made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 28:1. Then the Lord spoke to Moses saying, 2. "Command the children of Israel and say to them, 'You shall be careful to present my offering, the provision of my sacrifices made with fire as a sweet aroma to me, when it is the proper time.' 3. And you shall say to them, 'This is the fire offering which you shall offer to the Lord: two lambs, yearlings without defect, day by day as a continual burnt offering. 4. You shall offer the one lamb in the morning and the other lamb at evening; 5. also, a tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a grain offering, mixed with one-fourth of a hin of beaten oil. 6. It is a continual burnt offering which was ordained at Mount Sinai as a sweet aroma, a sacrifice made by fire to the Lord.' And its drink offering shall be one-fourth of a hin for each lamb; in the holy place you shall pour out the strong drink to the Lord for a drink offering. 8. You shall offer the other lamb at evening: just as the meal offering of the morning, and as its drink offering, you shall offer it, a sacrifice by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord.' "

#### COMMENTARY

In summarizing the purpose of the two chapters next before

us, *KD* suggests: “When Israel was prepared for the conquest of the promised land by the fresh numbering and mustering of its men, and by the appointment of Joshua as commander, its relation to the Lord was regulated by a law which determined the sacrifices through which it was to maintain its fellowship with its God from day to day and serve Him as His people,” (p. 216). The offerings and sacrifices detailed were periodical and public, beginning appropriately with the daily morning and evening burnt offerings which had been instituted at Sinai when the altar was dedicated. Other sacrifices follow in logical order: the Sabbath offerings, the New Moon offerings, offerings for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for the Feast of Weeks, for the Feast of Trumpets, for the Day of Atonement and for the Feast of the Tabernacles.

The importance of these offerings is seen in their significance. The daily burnt-offering is designed to sanctify the life, both body and soul and spirit, to God Himself. The sacrifices on the feast days were to reinforce this sanctification. The sacrifices of the daily ritual were doubled on the Sabbath; on the other feast days it was increased by a burnt offering of oxen, rams, and yearling lambs, always preceded by a sin offering. Both the Sabbath and the feast days were thus elevated high above ordinary days.

When *KJ* translates *Shecar* as “strong wine,” it is exceptional. The usual meaning exempts wine and includes other intoxicants (see Lev. 10:9). But the matter is by no means certain, since the Targums give its meaning as “old wine” since the drink offering in every other instance listed was to be of wine. *PC* proposes that the difficulty of obtaining wine in the wilderness might well account for this exceptional provision, so that any fermented drink might be used in the daily ritual. All sources agree that the provision was temporary only, and that nothing but wine was used after the settlement in Canaan.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

515. What primary purpose was served by all of the sacrifices and offerings of the Israelites?

516. Show the significance of each separate type of offering.  
 517. How and why were the daily offerings different from those of special days?  
 518. Discuss the use of "strong wine" in the drink offering.

## B. OFFERINGS ON THE SABBATH vv. 9, 10

### TEXT

Chapter 28:9. And on the sabbath day the two lambs of the first year without spot, and two tenth deals of flour for a meat offering, mingled with oil, and the drink offering thereof: 10. This is the burnt offering of every sabbath, beside the continual burnt offering, and his drink offering.

### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 28:9. "On the Sabbath day two lambs, yearlings without defects, and two-tenths of a measure of flour for a meal offering, mixed with oil, and its drink offering. 10. This is the burnt offering of every Sabbath, in addition to the continual burnt offering and its drink offering."

### COMMENTARY

On the sabbath, provisions for the offerings were doubled. The inference of the instructions in verses 9 and 10 is that the two lambs offered are in addition to the daily quota, and that they would follow the daily offering. The order appears here for the first time. The literal meaning of the instructions in verse 10 is, "the sabbath burnt offering for its sabbath." The importance of the seventh day was underscored.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

519. Why should the offerings given on the Sabbath be different in any way from those of the daily offerings?  
 520. Compute the total number of lambs which would be offered during one year, combining the daily and Sabbath offerings.

## C. OFFERINGS FOR THE NEW MOON vv. 11-15

## TEXT

Chapter 28:11. And in the beginnings of your months ye shall offer a burnt offering unto the Lord; two young bullocks, and one ram, seven lambs of the first year without spot; 12. And three tenth deals of flour for a meat offering, mingled with oil, for one bullock; and two tenth deals of flour for a meat offering, mingled with oil, for one ram; 13. And a several tenth deal of flour mingled with oil for a meat offering unto one lamb; for a burnt offering of a sweet savor, a sacrifice made by fire unto the Lord. 14. And their drink offerings shall be half a hin of wine unto a bullock, and the third part of a hin unto a ram, and a fourth part of a hin unto a lamb: this is the burnt offering of every month throughout the months of the year. 15. And one kid of the goats for a sin offering unto the Lord shall be offered, beside the continual burnt offering, and his drink offering.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 28:11. "At the beginning of each of your months you shall offer a burnt offering to the Lord: two young bulls, one ram, seven yearling lambs without defect, 12. and three-tenths of a measure of flour as a meal offering, mixed with oil, for one bull; and two tenths of a measure of flour as a meal offering mixed with oil, for one ram: 13. and one-tenth of a measure of flour, mixed with oil, as a meal offering for every lamb, as a burnt offering of a sweet aroma, an offering by fire to the Lord. 14. And their drink offerings shall be one-half hin of wine for a bull, and one-third of a hin for a ram, and one-fourth hin for a lamb: this is the burnt offering of each month throughout the months of the year. 15. Also one male goat for a sin offering to the Lord; it shall be offered besides the continual burnt offering and its drink offering."

## COMMENTARY

The new moon inaugurated each month, and the event was

celebrated by another special offering. Rather than the lambs alone, which had been specified for the previous offerings, on this occasion the animals were bulls and rams, in addition to seven supplementary lambs. Then was added a shaggy goat, as at Lev. 4:23, although in fact the goat may have been first in the sequence of the offering (see Ex. 29:10-14). As instituted, the new moon was not a feast day; however, practices associated with such days began to attach to the new moon: it was a time used for presenting yearly thank-offerings (I Sam. 20:6, 29); common trading was stopped (Amos 8:5); the people came to the prophets for teaching (II Kings 4:23); and, the prophets themselves speak of the time as festive (Isaiah 1:13; Hosea 2:13; Ezekiel 46:1).

The true purpose of the day was to bring in remembrance before God those sins committed during the month for which pardon had not been received, and to renew their life-covenant with the Lord through the burnt offering. Blowing the silver trumpets proclaimed the congregation of the people (see 10:10) to bring the prayers of the people unto the Lord through the sacrifices, and to invoke His merciful pardon and a renewal of His grace. Thus the people were regularly and often reminded that their very lives were spared by such grace, and that to take such kindness for granted would be a mark of impiety and ingratitude.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

521. Examine the Hebrew calendar in a good Bible dictionary and see how the months and the new moons coincided.
522. Compute the number of animals which would be used in the monthly sacrifices over a period of one year, using twelve months as a basis.
523. What practices became attached to the offerings of the new moon? Were they commanded?
524. Exactly what was the Lord proposing to accomplish through the establishment of the monthly offerings?

D. OFFERINGS FOR THE PASSOVER  
AND UNLEAVENED BREAD vv. 16-25

TEXT

Chapter 28:16. And in the fourteenth day of the first month is the passover of the Lord. 17. And in the fifteenth day of this month is the feast: seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten. 18. In the first day shall be a holy convocation; ye shall do no manner of servile work therein: 19. But ye shall offer a sacrifice made by fire for a burnt offering unto the Lord; two young bullocks, and one ram, and seven lambs of the first year: they shall be unto you without blemish. 20. And their meat offering shall be of flour mingled with oil: three tenth deals shall ye offer for a bullock, and two tenth deals for a ram; 21. A several tenth deal shalt thou offer for every lamb, throughout the seven lambs: 22. And one goat for a sin offering, to make an atonement for you. 23. Ye shall offer these beside the burnt offering in the morning, which is for a continual burnt offering. 24. After this manner ye shall offer daily, throughout the seven days, the meat of the sacrifice made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord: it shall be offered beside the continual burnt offering, and his drink offering. 25. And on the seventh day ye shall have a holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 28:16. "And on the fourteenth day of the first month is the Passover of the Lord. 17. And on the fifteenth day of this month is the feast: unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days. 18. There shall be a holy convocation on the first day; you shall do no hard work on it. 19. And you shall offer a sacrifice by fire for a burnt offering to the Lord: two young bulls, and one ram, and seven lambs one year old, having no defects. 20. And their meal offering shall be of flour mixed with oil: three tenths of a measure for a bull, and two-tenths of a measure for a ram; 21. one-tenth of a measure you shall offer for a lamb, for each of the seven lambs; 22. and one goat for a sin offering, to make an atonement for you. 23. You shall offer



these in addition to the burnt offering in the morning, which is for a continual burnt offering. 24. And this is the procedure for the daily offering throughout the seven days, the provision of the sacrifice by fire, of a sweet aroma to the Lord: it shall be offered with its drink offering, in addition to the continual offering. 25. And on the seventh day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no hard work."

### COMMENTARY

The Feast of the Passover was the first of the three great annual feasts in Israel, commemorating that great occasion when the Lord visited death upon the oppressing Egyptians' homes while sparing Israel's firstborn (see Ex. 11:1-12:14). Historically, it was by far the most significant feast in the calendar, bringing back rich memories to those who had participated, and recalling a sacred past to those who had not. The people needed no other evidence of God's favor, although there were many such incidents; but the circumstances of Jehovah's visit upon a slave people in bringing them triumphantly out of a land of slavery and oppression called the attention of the world to their high estate. This general had caused terror in the heart of Balak, and he prefaced his plea to Balaam by alluding to Israel's recent escape, (Num. 22:11), and the full account was still being cited when the Israelites approached Jericho forty years later when Rahab referred to the hand of God in the nation's destiny, (Joshua 2:9). So, two weeks after each year began, the memorable event was celebrated. In the proper sense, the observance was not a feast, but the conclusion of a fast, ending in the holy evening meal.

Continuing directly from the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread obtained for seven days. Because the Israelites left Egypt in haste, it was not sensible to wait for a leavening agent to produce the favored light bread; consequently, all leavening was removed from the house. For the following seven days, Israel continued to eat unleavened bread, since there would have been no time to "set" the bread while on the move from Egypt.

The sacrifices for the seven days of this feast were the same as those for each new moon, from the 15th until the 21st days of Abib. There was no special sacrifice on the Passover itself.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

525. Name the three great feasts which the Israelites observed annually.
526. Give the essential meaning of the "passover".
527. Why should the Passover hold such fascinating significance for Israel?
528. What relationship was there between the historical Passover and the use of unleavened bread?
529. Why did the Israelites use unleavened bread while eating the Passover lamb?
530. Give the significance of the seven-day period for the feast of Unleavened Bread.

### E. OFFERINGS FOR THE FIRST FRUITS vv. 26-31

#### TEXT

Chapter 28:26. Also in the day of the firstfruits, when ye bring a new meat offering unto the Lord, after your weeks be out, ye shall have a holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work: 27. But ye shall offer the burnt offering for a sweet savor unto the Lord; two young bullocks, one ram, seven lambs of the first year; 28. And their meat offering of flour mingled with oil, three tenth deals unto one bullock, two tenth deals unto one ram, 29. A several tenth deal unto one lamb, throughout the seven lambs; 30. And one kid of the goats, to make an atonement for you. 31. Ye shall offer them beside the continual burnt offering, and his meat offering, (they shall be unto you without blemish,) and their drink offerings.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 28:26. "Also on the day of the firstfruits, when you bring a new meal offering to the Lord, during your feast of

weeks, you shall have a holy convocation: you shall do no hard work. 27. And you shall offer the burnt offering for a sweet aroma to the Lord: two young bulls, one ram, seven yearling lambs; 28. and their meal offering of flour mixed with oil, three-tenths of a measure for one bull, two-tenths of a measure for one ram, 29. one-tenth of a measure for one lamb, for each of the seven lambs; 30. and one male goat, to make an atonement for you. 31. You shall offer them in addition to the continual burnt offering and its grain offering, and you shall present them with their drink offerings; they shall be without defect."

### COMMENTARY

The feast described in this section is variously called the Feast of Weeks, the Harvest Feast, the Feast of the First Fruits, and, later, Pentecost. The same offerings were designated as for the previous two feasts. Two special provisions are stipulated: there is to be a congregation, or holy convocation of the people; and, the people are to avoid hard work.

The date of the feast was seven weeks after the Passover, on the fiftieth day. From this fact was derived the last name, Pentecost. In the growing season, this placed the Feast at the time of the wheat harvest. The people were asked to express their gratitude to God in a freewill offering at the time, as they began to harvest their grain (Deut. 16:10); the offering was to reflect the blessings they had first received from God, with each individual male appearing before the Lord with such a gift as he was able (Deut. 16:17).

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

531. By what other names is the Feast of Weeks known?
532. Explain how each of the different names for this feast has its own significance.
533. At what time of year was the Feast of Weeks to be observed?
534. What product was being harvested at this time?

535. What determined the value or amount of the freewill offering given at the feast?

F. OFFERINGS FOR THE FEAST OF THE TRUMPETS  
(29:1-6)

TEXT

Chapter 29:1. And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, ye shall have a holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work: it is a day of blowing the trumpets unto you. 2. And ye shall offer a burnt offering for a sweet savor unto the Lord; one young bullock, one ram, and seven lambs of the first year without blemish: 3. and their meat offering shall be of flour mingled with oil, three tenth deals for a bullock, and two tenth deals for a lamb, 4. And one tenth deal for one lamb, throughout the seven lambs: 5. And one kid of the goats for a sin offering, to make an atonement for you: 6. Beside the burnt offering of the month, and his meat offering, and the daily burnt offering, and his meat offering, and their drink offerings, according unto their manner, for a sweet savor, a sacrifice made by fire unto the Lord.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 29:1. "In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no hard work: it is a day to you for blowing the horn. 2. And you shall offer a burnt offering for a sweet aroma to the Lord: one young bull, one ram, and seven yearling lambs without defect. 3. And their meal offering shall be of flour mixed with oil, three-tenths of a measure for a bull, and two-tenths of a measure for a ram, and one-tenth of a measure for one lamb, 4. and one-tenth of a measure for each lamb through the seven lambs: 5. one male goat for a sin offering, to make atonement for you. 6. besides the burnt offering of the month and its grain offering, and the daily burnt offering, and its grain offering, and their drink offerings, according to their provisions, for a sweet aroma, a sacrifice made with fire to the Lord."

## COMMENTARY

The Israelites used two calendars to govern the year. The religious year began with the month Abib, and was the month in which the Passover and the Feast of the Unleavened Bread occurred. The civil year began in the seventh month of the seventh year, the month of Tishri, and included the Feast of the Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of the Tabernacles. The Feast of the Trumpets announced the beginning of the civil year, and received its name from the traditional practice of sounding the Shopharim, or rams' horns, which were blown on numerous occasions. The horns themselves were used in commemoration of the delivery of Isaac on Mt. Moriah when the ram was offered in his stead (Gen. 22:13).

## QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

536. Explain the chronological relationship of the two calendars of the Israelite people.
537. What feasts occurred in the first month of the civil year?
538. Which feasts occurred in the first month of the religious year?
539. Identify the "shopharim", and tell for what they were used.
540. Of what were the "shopharim" symbolic?

## G. OFFERINGS FOR THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

vv. 7-11

## TEXT

Chapter 29:7. And ye shall have on the tenth day of this seventh month a holy convocation; and ye shall afflict your souls: ye shall not do any work therein: 8. But ye shall offer a burnt offering unto the Lord for a sweet savor; one young bullock, one ram, and seven lambs of the first year; they shall be unto you without blemish. 9. And their meat offering shall be of flour mingled with oil, three tenth deals to a bullock, and

two tenth deals to one ram, 10. A several tenth deal for one lamb, throughout the seven lambs: 11. One kid of the goats for a sin offering; beside the sin offering of atonement, and the continual burnt offering, and the meat offering of it, and their drink offerings.

### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 29:7. "And on the tenth day of this seventh month you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall humble yourselves: you shall do no work. 8. And you shall offer a burnt offering to the Lord for a sweet aroma: one young bull, one ram, and seven yearling lambs, without defect: 9. And their grain offering, flour mixed with oil, three-tenths of a measure for the bull, two-tenths for the one ram, 10. one-tenth of a measure each for the seven lambs; 11. one male goat for a sin offering, in addition to the sin offering of atonement, and the continual burnt offering, and its grain offering, and their drink offerings.

### COMMENTARY

Special offerings were required on the Day of Atonement, as specified in Lev. 16:2-28. Additionally, the offering duplicated that of the first day of the month, and the people were required to fast and abstain from work, as on the sabbath day.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

541. Read up on the Day of Atonement, and list the events which were unique to this feast.
542. How did the nation learn on this day whether their offerings, and the intercession of the High Priest, were accepted by the Lord?

### H. OFFERINGS FOR THE FEAST OF THE TABERNACLES vv. 12-40

#### TEXT

Chapter 29:12. And on the fifteenth day of the seventh

month ye shall have a holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work, and ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord seven days: 13. And ye shall offer a burnt offering, a sacrifice made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord; thirteen young bullocks, two rams, and fourteen lambs of the first year; they shall be without blemish: 14. And their meat offering shall be of flour mingled with oil, three tenth deals unto every bullock of the thirteen bullocks, two tenth deals to each ram of the two rams. 15. And a several tenth deal to each lamb of the fourteen lambs: 16. And one kid of the goats for a sin offering; beside the continual burnt offering, his meat offering, and his drink offering.

17. And on the second day ye shall offer twelve young bullocks, two rams, fourteen lambs of the first year without spot: 18. And their meat offering and their drink offerings for the bullocks, for the rams, and for the lambs, shall be according to their number, after the manner: 19. And one kid of the goats for a sin offering; beside the continual burnt offering, and the meat offering thereof, and their drink offering.

20. And on the third day eleven bullocks, two rams, fourteen lambs of the first year without blemish: 21. And their meat offering and their drink offerings for the bullocks, for the rams, and for the lambs, shall be according to their number, after the manner: 22. And one goat for a sin offering; beside the continual burnt offering, and his meat offering, and his drink offering.

23. And on the fourth day ten bullocks, two rams, and fourteen lambs of the first year without blemish: 24. Their meat offering and their drink offerings for the bullocks, for the rams, and for the lambs, shall be according to their number, after the manner: 25. And one kid of the goats for a sin offering; beside the continual burnt offering, his meat offering, and his drink offering.

26. And on the fifth day nine bullocks, two rams, and fourteen lambs of the first year without spot: 27. And their meat offering and their drink offerings for the bullocks, for the rams, and for the lambs, shall be according to their number,

after the manner: 28. And one goat for a sin offering; beside the continual burnt offering, and his meat offering, and his drink offering.

29. And on the sixth day eight bullocks, two rams, and fourteen lambs of the first year without blemish: 30. And their meat offering and their drink offerings for the bullocks, for the rams, and for the lambs, shall be according to their number, after the manner: 31. And one goat for a sin offering; beside the continual burnt offering, his meat offering, and his drink offering.

32. And on the seventh day seven bullocks, two rams, and fourteen lambs of the first year without blemish: 33. And their meat offering and their drink offerings for the bullocks, for the rams, and for the lambs, shall be according to their number, after the manner: 34. And one goat for a sin offering; beside the continual burnt offering, his meat offering, and his drink offering.

35. On the eighth day ye shall have a solemn assembly: ye shall do no servile work therein: 36. But ye shall offer a burnt offering, a sacrifice made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord: one bullock, one ram, seven lambs of the first year without blemish: 37. Their meat offering and their drink offerings for the bullock, for the ram, and for the lambs, shall be according to their number, after the manner: 38. And one goat for a sin offering; beside the continual burnt offering, and his meat offering, and his drink offering. 39. These things ye shall do unto the Lord in your set feasts, beside your vows, and your freewill offerings, for your burnt offerings, and for your meat offerings, and for your drink offerings, and for your peace offerings. 40. And Moses told the children of Israel according to all that the Lord commanded Moses.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 29:12. "And on the fifteenth day of the seventh month you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no hard work, and you shall keep a feast unto the Lord for seven days:



13. you shall offer a burnt offering, a sacrifice with fire, of a sweet aroma to the Lord: thirteen young bulls, two rams, and fourteen yearling lambs without defect. 14. And their grain offering shall be of flour mixed with oil, three-tenths of a measure for each bull of the thirteen bulls; two-tenths of a measure for each ram of the two rams, 15. and one-tenth of a measure for each lamb of the fourteen lambs, 16. and one male goat for a sin offering; in addition to the continual burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offering.

17. "Then on the second day: twelve bulls, two rams, fourteen yearling lambs without defect; 18. and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams and for the lambs, by their number according to the ordinance; 19. and one male goat for a sin offering, besides the continual burnt offering and its grain offering, and their drink offering.

20. "And on the third day: eleven bulls, two rams, fourteen yearling lambs without defect; 21. and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, their number according to the ordinance; 22. and one male goat for a sin offering, besides the continual burnt offering and its grain offering and its drink offering.

23. "And on the fourth day: ten bulls, two rams, fourteen yearling lambs without defect: 24. their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams and for the lambs, by their number according to the ordinance; 25. and one male goat for a sin offering, besides the continual burnt offering, its grain offering and its drink offering.

26. "Then on the fifth day: nine bulls, two rams, fourteen yearling lambs without defect; 27. and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, and for the rams and for the lambs, by their number according to the ordinance: 28. and one male goat for a sin offering, besides the continual burnt offering and its grain offering and its drink offering.

29. "And on the sixth day: eight bulls, two rams, fourteen yearling lambs without defect: 30. and their grain offering and their drink offering for the bulls, for the rams, and for the

lambs, according to their number by the ordinance; 31. and one male goat for a sin offering, besides the continual burnt offering, its grain offering and its drink offerings.

32. "And on the seventh day: seven bulls, two rams, fourteen yearling lambs without defect; 33. and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams and for the lambs, according to their number by the ordinance: 34. and one male goat for a sin offering, besides the continual burnt offering, its grain offering and its drink offering.

35. "On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no hard work. 36. But you shall present a burnt offering, an offering by fire, as a sweet aroma to the Lord: one bull, one ram, seven yearling lambs without defect; 37. their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bull, for the ram and for the lambs, according to their number by the ordinance; 38. and one male goat for a sin offering, besides the continual burnt offering and its grain offering and its drink offering. 39. "You shall present these to the Lord at your appointed times, besides your vows, and your freewill offerings, for your burnt offerings, and for your grain offerings and for your drink offerings and for your peace offerings. 40. And Moses told the children of Israel according to everything the Lord had commanded Moses.

### COMMENTARY

The unusual Feast of the Tabernacles began at sunset on the fourteenth of Tishri, and required the later Israelites to commemorate the period in the wilderness by forsaking their homes to live in temporary booths. The offerings began with thirteen bulls on the first day of the feast, and the number decreased by one daily. *PC* attributes to this fact a significance of diminishing joy in the feast into ordinary joys of daily life. In total, during the entire feast five times as many bulls and twice as many rams and lambs were offered as in the spring festival. On the eighth day the sacrifice reverted to the number offered on the first and tenth days of the month. The feast ended at sunset of this day.

Coming as it did at the end of the harvest of fall fruits, the festival was to reflect the happiness gained through divine blessings in the increase of the fields.

Altogether, the sacrifices commanded at these feasts totalled 1071 lambs, 113 Bulls, 37 rams, 30 goats, 112-bushels of flour, about 370 gallons of oil, and about 340 gallons of wine. Besides these, any individuals or families could offer spontaneous or votive offerings unto the Lord.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

543. How was the Feast of the Tabernacles celebrated, and what did it commemorate?
544. What reason is suggested for the diminishing number of bulls sacrificed on consecutive days?
545. Give the total number of various animals, and the quantities of other commodities offered during the special feasts of the Jews.
546. Were their offerings limited to this number?

### I. LAW ON WOMEN'S VOWS (30:1-16)

#### TEXT

Chapter 30:1. And Moses spake unto the heads of the tribes concerning the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the Lord hath commanded. 2. If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth. 3. If a woman also vow a vow unto the Lord, and bind herself by a bond, being in her father's house in her youth; 4. And her father hear her vow, and her bond wherewith she hath bound her soul, and her father shall hold his peace at her; then all her vows shall stand, and every bond wherewith she hath bound her soul shall stand. 5. But if her father disallow her in the day that he heareth, not any of her vows, or of her bonds wherewith she hath bound her soul, she shall stand; and the Lord shall forgive her, because her father disallowed her. 6. And if she had at all a husband, when she vowed, or uttered aught

out of her lips, wherewith she bound her soul; 7. And her husband heard it, and held his peace at her in the day that he heard it; then her vows shall stand, and her bonds wherewith she bound her soul shall stand. 8. But if her husband disallowed her on the day that he heard it, then he shall make her vow which she vowed, and that which she uttered with her lips, wherewith she bound her soul, of none effect; and the Lord shall forgive her. 9. But every vow of a widow, and of her that is divorced, wherewith they have bound their souls, shall stand against her. 10. And if she vowed in her husband's house, or bound her soul by a bond with an oath; 11. And her husband heard it, and held his peace at her, and disallowed her not: then all her vows shall stand, and every bond wherewith she bound her soul shall stand. 12. But if her husband hath utterly made them void on the day he heard them; then whatsoever proceeded out of her lips concerning her vows, or concerning the bond of her soul, shall not stand: her husband hath made them void; and the Lord shall forgive her. 13. Every vow, and every binding oath to afflict her soul, her husband may establish it, or her husband may make it void. 14. But if her husband altogether hold his peace at her from day to day; then he establisheth all her vows, or all her bonds, which are upon her; he confirmeth them, because he held his peace at her in the day that he heard them. 15. But if he shall any ways make them void after that he hath heard them; then he shall bear her iniquity. 16. These are the statutes, which the Lord commanded Moses, between a man and his wife, between the father and his daughter, being yet in her youth in her father's house.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 30:1. Then moſes ſpoke to the heads of the tribes of the ſons of Iſrael, ſaying, "This is the word which the Lord has commanded: 2. If a man makes a vow to the Lord, or takes an oath, binding his ſoul with an obligation, he ſhall not break his word; he ſhall act according to everything that proceeds from his mouth. 3. If a woman alſo makes a vow to the Lord, and binds herſelf by a promiſe while ſhe is young in her father's

house, 4. and if her father hears her vow and the pledge by which she has bound herself, and her father says nothing to her, then all her vows shall stand, and every obligation by which she has obligated herself shall stand: 5. But if her father should dissuade her on the day he hears her vow, none of her vows nor her obligations to which she has pledged herself shall stand, and the Lord will forgive her because her father has not allowed her to make the vows. 6. "However, if she should marry while under her vows, or if she has spoken impetuously, and so bound herself, 7. and if her husband hears of it but says nothing to her on the day he hears it, then her vows are binding, and the obligations to which she has bound herself shall stand. 8. But if on the day her husband hears of it he forbids her, then he shall nullify the vow she is under and the impetuous words of her lips, by which she has bound herself; and the Lord will forgive her. 9. "But the vow of a widow, or of a divorcee—everything by which she has bound herself—shall stand against her. 10. However, if she vowed in her husband's house, or bound herself by a bond with an oath, 11. and her husband heard it and did not speak out or annulled her vow, then all her vows shall stand, and every obligation which she bound upon herself shall stand, 12. But if her husband annulled them on the day he heard them, then anything which has proceeded from her lips concerning her vows or concerning an obligation upon herself shall not stand: her husband has annulled them, and the Lord will forgive her. 13. "Every vow and every binding oath which would humble her, her husband may confirm, or her husband may annul. 14. But if her husband indeed does not say anything from day to day, then he confirms all her vows or all her obligations, because he has held his peace on the day he heard them: 15. but if he annuls them after he has heard them, then he shall bear her guilt." 16. These are the laws which the Lord commanded Moses between a man and his wife, between a father and his daughter while she is still young in her father's house.

## COMMENTARY

In summary, the laws in verses 1-16 treat with vows made by women—the only portion in Scripture which does so exclusively—under varying circumstances of life. As with any man, the widowed or divorced woman is unconditionally bound by any vow her heart leads her to make (v. 10). If she is unmarried, and lives in her father's house, her vow is subject to his approval, (v. 4-6). The concurrence of her husband is required of any married woman (vv. 7-9, 11-15).

Two types of vows are treated, the *nedher* and the *issar*. The latter is a vow of abstinence (v. 13); the former is a generic term covering a wide spectrum of vows. The *nedher* ordinarily pledges something given to God; the *issar* is typified by the Nazirite vow and its specific terms of abstinence. Men were bound unconditionally by any vow openly expressed, even as intentions. The seriousness of giving voice to a promise could not be overestimated. On the other hand, should an unmarried young lady or a wife so express herself, the consent or approval of the father or husband involved was necessary before her pledge became binding. If he refused, the words were invalid. The young lady in this instance is assumed to be without personal property and dependent upon her father, although the law does not say precisely this.

The regulation applying to the married woman bound the betrothed lady as well, since there was virtually no difference in the legal status of the two under Jewish law. Both she and all that she had belonged to the husband, and he had full rights to allow or disallow any vow she might wish to make. Should she make a vow before her betrothal which her father had not disallowed, her betrothed husband still had the power to renounce her vow rather than suffer any loss through the pledge.

In the instance of divorced or widowed women, any vow had full force, since no man was involved. No explanatory or qualifying terms are mentioned because there were none: and the point is not discussed at all.

The final situation involved the vow of a woman whose husband, upon learning of the vow, permits it to obtain, even if by his silence. Should he later change his mind, the guilt and punishment which should come upon her, if the vow is broken, become his instead. Under this circumstance, he was required to offer a sin-offering or accept the punishment for the sin (see Lev. 5:4, ff., and Lev. 5:1). As given, all the provisions are simple and unambiguous.

We should notice that nothing whatever is said about the vows' contents themselves. A vow was not to be broken if it were foolish, or impractical, or even wrong; it simply was not to be made in the first place if such an eventuality were possible. The point at issue was elementary: nobody was to take a promise lightly, nor was any man to give his word to any solemn pledge without carefully considering the consequences as far as they could be foreseen. *PC* lists these conditions which any proper vow should meet: it "must not contradict any commandment of God, nor infringe any right of other men. It must lie within the proper province of a man's own free will; it must concern such things as he can really control. This was what gave the vow its virtue and significance," (p. 396). The same source, when considering the essential evil of a broken vow, concludes properly that truth must exist for the sake of truth alone. It is sacred in God's eyes. The evil, the author concludes, "has been in forcing the oath on all men irrespective of their disposition. No forced oath will make the liar really truthful; and no forced oath can make the truthful man anything more than truthful. Administering oaths to a man of veracity is like holding a candle to make the sun shine. As has been truly said, the compelled oath makes the ignorant and superstitious to think that there are two kinds of truth, and that it is harmless to say, free from an oath, what it would be very wicked to say under it," (p. 396).

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

547. Distinguish between the terms *nedber* and *issar*, showing what is or is not included in each.

548. What differences does the Scripture make between the circumstances under which a man or a woman might make binding vows.
549. Give the circumstances under which a woman's vow was not binding.
550. How does the law of vows relate to a betrothed woman?
551. At what time might it be assumed that an unmarried woman might make a vow without the consent of her father?
552. When was a married woman's vow valid, even if her husband did not speak his word of approval?
553. What two kinds of women might make binding vows without consulting any men?
554. Discuss fully the principle which underlies the law of vows. How does it establish a firm foundation for truth?
555. What four conditions should every vow meet to be proper?
556. What would cause a forced vow to lose its validity?
557. Discuss why it would be superfluous to ask an honest man to take a vow.

#### IV. THE LAST EVENTS IN TRANS-JORDAN (31:1—33:42)

##### A. ATTACK UPON THE MIDIANITES vv. 1-12

###### TEXT

Chapter 31:1. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 2. Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites: afterward shalt thou be gathered unto thy people. 3. And Moses spake unto the people, saying, Arm some of yourselves unto the war, and let them go against the Midianites, and avenge the Lord of Midian. 4. Of every tribe a thousand, throughout all the tribes of Israel, shall ye send to the war. 5. So there were delivered out of the thousands of Israel, a thousand of every tribe, twelve thousand



armed for war. 6. And Moses sent them to the war, a thousand of every tribe, them and Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war, with the holy instruments, and the trumpets to blow in his hand. 7. And they warred against the Midianites, as the Lord commanded Moses: and they slew all the males. 8. And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain: namely, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian: Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword. 9. And the children of Israel took all the women of Midian captives, and their little ones, and took the spoil of all their cattle, and all their flocks, and all their goods. 10. And they burnt all their cities wherein they dwelt, and all their goodly castles, with fire. 11. And they took all the spoil, and all the prey, both of men and of beasts. 12. And they brought the captives, and the prey, and the spoil, unto Moses and Eleazar the priest, and unto the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the camp at the plains of Moab, which are by Jordan near Jericho.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 31:1. Then the Lord spoke to Moses saying, "Execute the full vengeance of the Children of Israel upon the Midianites; afterward, you shall be gathered unto your people." 3. And Moses spoke unto the people, saying, "Arm men from among you for the conflict, and let them go forth against Midian and avenge the Lord on Midian. 4. You shall send to the war one thousand men from each tribe, throughout all the tribes of Israel." 5. So twelve thousand armed men were brought out of the thousands of Israel, a thousand from each tribe, for the battle. 6. And Moses sent them to the battle, a thousand from each tribe, they and Phinehas, son of Eleazar the priest, to the battle, with the holy instruments and the trumpets and his hand to blow. 7. And they fought against Midian as the Lord had commanded Moses: and they killed all the males. 8. And they killed the kings of Midian, besides the others who were slain: Evi and Rekem and Zur and Hur and Reba, the five kings of Midian; they also killed Balaam, the son of Peor, with

the sword. 9. And the children of Israel took all the women of Midian captive, along with their little ones; and all their cattle and all their flocks and all their goods. 10. Then they burned all the cities where they lived, as well as their camps, with fire. 11. And they took all the loot, and all the prey, both of man and beast. 12. And they brought the captives and the prey and the loot to Moses and Eleazar the priest and to the congregation of the children of Israel, to the camp at the plains of Moab, which are by the Jordan opposite Jericho.

### COMMENTARY

God had earlier commanded the attack upon the Midianites (25:17), citing their prostitution of Israel at Peor (25:18). We have no way of determining exactly how long this interval had been, but in the meanwhile the census had been taken to establish the basis for Israel's army. When the attack was finally made, it seems to have been quite unexpected, and the victory was total. One thousand men from each of the tribes constituted the attacking army, and they were accompanied by Phinehas, the son of the high priest, who took with him certain "holy instruments", whose identity is not known, along with the trumpets.

In the battle, all males—apparently the adults—were killed, along with the five "kings" or chiefs of Midian. Along with these five prominent men is mentioned the fact that Balaam, son of Beor, was a victim of the same attack. It would seem that Balaam had remained in the area, had attached himself unto the Midianites, and counseled the Midianites to tempt Israel into idolatry (v. 16). His death may have been the result of judicial execution rather than from the battle itself (see *PC* p. 400).

Following the overwhelming victory comes the matter of dividing the spoils of conquest. The women are taken prisoners, along with all children. The "cattle", here meaning beasts of burden, and their domesticated flocks are confiscated, along with all of their goods. The cities were burned next. Since the Midianites were a nomadic people, it is very possible that these cities had originally belonged either to the Moabites or the

Amorites, and that they had been captured by Sihon. The *KJ* word "castle" is not justified in the text; the term means simply "camps". The booty now was brought before Moses and Eleazar, as well as the congregation, in their camp in Moab for disposition. Since the battle had been ordered by the Lord, the warriors were not to look upon the occasion as one of personal exploitation of the victims. God Himself must guide this next important step.

Why was the annihilation of so great a number of the Midianites ordered? Not because they were the only idolatrous people with whom Israel came into contact; nor were the Israelites to become international moral policemen to enforce Divine laws of conduct. The reason, simply put, is that Midian "had made an unprovoked, crafty, and successful attack upon God's people, and had brought thousands of them to a shameful death. The motive which prompted the attack upon them was not horror of their sins, nor fear of their contamination, but vengeance; Midian was smitten avowedly 'to avenge the children of Israel' (v. 2) who had fallen through Baal-Peor, and at the same time 'to avenge the Lord' (v. 3), who had been obliged to slay his own people," (*PC*, p. 403.) A final word is appropriate. We would be logically in error to apply twentieth-century, or even Christian, moral standards to the actions commanded at Moses' time. The treatment of the Midianite women and children was, by the standards of his day, most merciful, and is a step toward that ethic God would have all men reach through His Son—to stir a national conscience against atrocities and, ultimately and ideally, to eliminate war altogether. If men fail to reach this goal, it is due not to a failure in God's plan or a lowering of His goals, but to the continuing rebellious and inhumane attitudes and acts of His rebellious creature.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

558. What was the basic reason for God's ordering the attack upon the Midianites?
559. Why had He not done similarly to the Moabites or the Amorites?

560. Who accompanied the army, and with what implements?  
 561. Tell who was killed in the ensuing battle.  
 562. Who were spared initially?  
 563. Why had the cities probably not been built originally by the Midianites?  
 564. Discuss the ethical question of the annihilation of the Midianites. Why is it a fallacy to apply contemporary standards of the actions here?

## B. INSTRUCTIONS FOR THEIR DISPOSAL vv. 13-20

### TEXT

Chapter 31:13. And Moses and Eleazar the priest, and all the princes of the congregation, went forth to meet them without the camp. 14. And Moses was wroth with the officers of the host, with the captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, which came from the battle. 15. And Moses said unto them, Have ye saved all the women alive? 16. Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the Counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord. 17. Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him. 18. But all the women children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves. 19. And do ye abide without the camp seven days: whosoever hath killed any person, and whosoever hath touched any slain, purify both yourselves and your captives on the third day, and on the seventh day. 20. And purify all your raiment, and all that is made of skins, and all work of goats' hair, and all things made of wood.

### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 31:13. And Moses and Eleazar the priest, and all the princes of the congregation went out to meet them outside the camp. 14. And Moses was angry with the officers of the army, the captains of thousands and the captains of hundreds,

who had come from the battle. 15. And Moses said to them, "Have you spared all the women alive? 16. "Behold, these caused the childrn of Israel to revolt against the Lord through the counsel of Balaam, in the matter of Peor; and there was a plague of the Lord among the congregation. 17. "Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known a man by lying with him. 18. "But all the girls who have not lain with a man you are to keep alive unto yourselves. 19. "Stay outside of the camp seven days, anyone who has killed another person, and anyone who has touched a corpse; purify both yourselves and your captives on the third day, and on the seventh day. 20. "And you shall purify every garment and every item of leather and all work of goats' hair, and all things made of wood."

#### COMMENTARY

The anger of Moses, Eleazar and other leaders of the people is not difficult to understand. When they learned that the very most involved members of the Midianite tribe who had earlier corrupted Israel had been spared, their reaction was spontaneously to disapprove. These were the very women who induced the people of God to sin flagrantly, both in committing whoredom and in subscribing to orgaistic religious rituals before the pagan gods. To spare them would be an affront to the very God who had ordered the extermination of the offending tribe. Moses' decision is immediate, and his orders are to the point. He first rebukes those who were responsible for the situation, then he gives the reason for his displeasure. Then they are told what they must do: kill every male child and every woman who has had intercourse with a man. Only virgins, of whatever age, are to be spared. The male children are to be exterminated in order to bring Midian to extinction. The women who have had sexual experience are to be killed to prevent further seduction of the Israelites; and, as we may now conclude from present knowledge of the ravages of sexually-oriented diseases, to prevent a further infestation of God's people in a manner all too familiar from the past.

Why, then, were the virgins spared? Unlike many of their contemporary nations, the Hebrews were not slave traders. They were permitted servants, with numerous laws in the Mosaic code to govern the practice. But in this instance it seems correct to assume that many of the Midianites married into the nation of Israel, since any children born to such a union would have been considered Israelites; and they are not yet living under the circumstances which would have prohibited the marriages. Nevertheless, both soldiers and captives were required to remain outside the camp for one week. During the time, they are to follow exactly the strictures of 19:11ff., in order that they might be ceremonially clean when they reentered the camp. Even their clothing and anything made of skin, goats' hair or wool, must likewise be made clean. The directions specify that only those who have actually killed another, or have touched a corpse, are involved. Even the captives themselves are to undergo the ritual cleansing before they may be admitted into the assembly of Israel.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

565. Give the causes for the anger of Moses and Eleazar when Israel's warriors returned from their battle with the Midianites.
566. Relate Moses' instructions as to how the captives were to be treated. What was to happen to the different kinds of prisoners?
567. Why was it reasonable to spare only the virgins among the Midianites?
568. What eventually became of those Midianite women?
569. For what reason and for what length of time were some of the soldiers not permitted to return to camp?
570. Compare the treatment given these captives by Israel with that normally given to prisoners of war in other contemporary societies.
571. Suggest any reasons you can for requiring the Israelites to purify even the garments and other such items before bringing them into camp.

C. PURIFICATION OF THE SOLDIERS  
AND THE BOOTY vv. 21-24

TEXT

Chapter 31:21. And Eleazar the priest said unto the men of war which went to the battle, This is the ordinance of the law which the Lord commanded Moses; 22. Only the gold, and the silver, the brass, the iron, the tin, and the lead, 23. Everything that may abide the fire, ye shall make it go through the fire, and it shall be clean: nevertheless it shall be purified with the water of separation: and all that abideth not the fire ye shall make go through the water. 24. And ye shall wash your clothes on the seventh day, and ye shall be clean, and afterward ye shall come into the camp.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 31:21. Then Eleazar the priest said to the warriors who had gone to the battle, "This is the statute of the Law which the Lord commanded Moses: 22. only the gold and silver, the bronze, the iron, the tin and the lead, 23. everything which can stand the fire, you shall pass through the fire, and it shall be clean. But whatever does not pass through the fire you shall pass through the water. 24. "And you shall wash your clothes on the seventh day and be clean; afterwards you may enter the camp."

COMMENTARY

In recognizing that "this is the earliest instance of the high priest declaring to the people what the law of God as delivered to Moses was, and then applying and enlarging that law to meet the present circumstances," (*PC*, p. 400), we should also recognize the circumstances under which such a declaration was made. As the account moves inexorably toward the time of the death of Moses, more responsibility has already been shared with Joshua, and it is only reasonable that such a sharing should occur in another area in which Moses has carried a singular responsibility—a responsibility which will be an inherent part of

the duties of the succeeding high priests. This fact alone is hardly sufficient to prove that the passage is a later interpolation.

All those metals which can be purified by fire are to undergo this method of treatment; materials which would not survive this process are to be washed thoroughly with water. The metals named here: gold, silver, bronze, tin, iron and lead were well known to ancient people; all of them were refined, and all could be purified by the fires; so it was ordered. The process of washing would have included all skins, clothing, and woven fabrics of any kind. Even aside from the fact that the order is given for ceremonial purposes, no better precautionary measures could have been taken to insure curtailment of any transmissible diseases. In a day when men did not know anything of this fact, and of the part which either clothing or materials of any other kind could play in spreading unwanted germs and infestations, it was a part of God's divine protection of His people to order such a cleansing. Their own clothing must be washed on the final day of the quarantine, as the final act of compliance; following this, life might be resumed in its normal course.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

572. Why were the metal items and all other articles of booty to be subjected to the ritual of cleansing?
573. Explain the part of Eleazar in presenting the instructions to Israel.
574. Why did Moses himself not deliver the instructions?
575. Find other instances where the Israelites were required to make similar compliances with God's orders.

#### D. DIVISION OF THE BOOTY vv. 25-54

##### TEXT

Chapter 31:25. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 26. Take the sum of the prey that was taken, both of man and of beast, thou, and Eleazar the priest, and the chief fathers of the



congregation: 27. And divide the prey into two parts; between them that took the war upon them, who went out to battle, and between all the congregation. 28. And levy a tribute unto the Lord of the men of war which went out to battle: one soul of five hundred, both of the persons, and of the beeves, and of the asses, and of the sheep: 29. Take it of their half, and give it unto Eleazar the priest, for a heave offering of the Lord. 30. And of the children of Israel's half, thou shalt take one portion of fifty, of the persons, of the beeves, of the asses, and of the flocks, of all manner of beasts, and given them unto the Levites, which keep the charge of the tabernacle of the Lord. 31. And Moses and Eleazar the priest did as the Lord commanded Moses. 32. And the booty, being the rest of the prey which the men of war had caught, was six hundred thousand and seventy thousand and five thousand sheep, 33. And threescore and twelve thousand beeves, 34. And threescore and one thousand asses, 35. And thirty and two thousand persons in all, of women that had not known man by lying with him. 36. And the half, which was the portion of them that went out to war, was in number three hundred thousand and seven and thirty thousand and five hundred sheep: 37. And the Lord's tribute of the sheep was six hundred and threescore and fifteen. 38. And the beeves were thirty and six thousand; of which the Lord's tribute was threescore and twelve. 39. And the asses were thirty thousand and five hundred; of which the Lord's tribute was threescore and one. 40. And the persons were sixteen thousand; of which the Lord's tribute was thirty and two persons. 41. And Moses gave the tribute, which was the Lord's heave offering, unto Eleazar the priest, as the Lord commanded Moses. 42. And of the children of Israel's half, which Moses divided from the men that warred, 43. (now the half that pertained unto the congregation was three thousand and thirty thousand and seven thousand and five hundred sheep, 44. And thirty and six thousand beeves, 45. And thirty thousand asses and five hundred, 46. And sixteen thousand persons,) 47. Even of the children of Israel's half, Moses took one portion of fifty, both of men and of beast, and gave them unto the Levites, which

kept the charge of the tabernacle of the Lord: as the Lord commanded Moses.

48. And the officers which were over thousands of the host, the captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds, came near unto Moses: 49. And they said unto Moses, Thy servants have taken the sum of the men of war which are under our charge, and there lacketh not one man of us. 50. We have therefore brought an oblation for the Lord, what every man hath gotten, of jewels of gold, chains, and bracelets, rings, earrings, and tablets, to make an atonement for our souls before the Lord. 51. And Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold of them, even all wrought jewels. 52. And all the gold of the offering that they offered up to the Lord, of the captains of thousands, and of the captains of hundreds, was sixteen thousand seven hundred and fifty shekels. 53. (For the men of war had taken spoil, every man for himself.) 54. And Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold of the captains of thousands and of hundreds, and brought it into the tabernacle of the congregation, for a memorial for the children of Israel before the Lord.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 31:25. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "You and Eleazar the priest, and the heads of the fathers' households of the congregation shall take a count of the loot which was taken, of both man and animal; 27. and divide the loot between the warriors who went out into battle and all the congregation. 28. "And you shall levy a tax for the Lord from the warriors who went out to battle, one in five hundred of the people and of the cattle, and of the donkeys and of the sheep; 29. take it from their half and give it to Eleazar the priest, as an offering to the Lord. 30. "And from the half belonging to the children of Israel you shall take one of each fifty of the people, of the cattle, of the donkeys and of the sheep, from all the animals, and give them to the Levites who keep charge of the Tabernacle of the Lord." 31. So Moses and Eleazar the priest did as the Lord commanded Moses. 32. And the booty which

remained from the loot which the warriors had taken was 675,000 sheep, 33. and 72,000 cattle, 34. and 61,000 donkeys; 35. and of people, of the women who had not lain with a man, the total number of women was 32,000. 36. And the half which was the allotment of those who went to war was the following: the number of sheep was 337,500, 37. and the Lord's tax of the sheep was 675, 38. and the number of cattle was 36,000, from which the Lord's tax was 72. 39. And there were 30,500 donkeys, from which the Lord's tax was 61. 40. And there were 16,000 people, from whom the Lord's levy was 32 people. 41. And Moses gave the tax which was the Lord's offering to Eleazar the priest, as the Lord had commanded Moses. 42. And from the half belonging to the children of Israel, which Moses received from the men who had gone to war 43. (now the congregation's half was 337,500 sheep, 44. and 36,000 cattle, 45. and 30,500 donkeys; 46. and there were 16,000 people), 47. and from the half belonging to the children of Israel, Moses took one chosen from every fifty, of both man and animals, and gave them to the Levites who kept charge of the Tabernacle of the Lord, just as the Lord had commanded Moses.

48. Then the officers who were over the thousands of the army, the captains of thousands and the captains of hundreds, came to Moses. 49. And they said to Moses, "Your servants have taken a census of the warriors who are under our command, and not one man is missing. 50. "So we have brought as an offering to the Lord what each man found, items of gold, jewels of gold, chains, and bracelets, rings, earrings, and belts, to make atonement for our souls before the Lord." 51. Then Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold from them, all kinds of wrought jewelry. 52. And all the gold of the offering which they offered up to the Lord from the captains of the hundreds was 16,750 shekels. 53. (Now the warriors had taken loot, every man for himself.) 54. Now Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold from the captains of thousands and of hundreds, and brought it to the Tent of Meeting as a memorial for the children of Israel before the Lord.

## COMMENTARY

Everything taken in war against the Midianites was first divided into two equal portions. These were shared alike by those who had gone to battle and those who had not. David would later base his distribution of loot from war upon this principle (see I Sam. 30:24ff.): it is implicit in Joshua's words to the people when the two and one-half tribes settled east of the Jordan (Josh. 22:8).

When the equal division was completed, the booty was assessed for a tribute unto the Lord. One-fifth of one percent of that which was designated for the warriors was to be given Eleazar for a heave offering unto the Lord. The same portion was taken from those given the congregation, and these portions were taken for the Levites. Although the total portions taken were identical, the proportions differed greatly: .2% of the soldiers' booty, but 2% of the booty of the people. This would recognize the active service of the warriors. If the number of animals taken seems large, let the later reference of Judges 6:3-5 be considered, where the Midianites' herds and flocks are compared to grasshoppers in multitude, and their camels are said to have been "without number."

The soldiers were obviously pleased with their rewards (v. 49); and an even more intriguing item is the note that not one man was missing from their ranks. This latter fact has been attributed to the protection of God, to the lack of resistance from the Midianites, and to the full obedience and sound faith of the participants. The passage does not assign a cause.

A number of items of jewelry appear in the detailing of the booty. We should not wonder that a nomadic people possessed such items, since this was a custom of antiquity among the Bedouins, whose jewelry represented the total of their wealth, apart from their flocks. The Israelites themselves had produced a sufficient quantity to more than provide for the necessities of construction of the Tabernacle. All of the gold so taken was given to the Lord, and was doubtless used to support the tabernacle services.

## QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

576. Compare the amount of booty allocated to the soldiers with that shared by the people.
577. On what basis were the soldiers allowed the greater shares?
578. What explanations have been offered for the fact that not one of the Israelite soldiers was lost in this battle? Defend the one you accept.
579. Is it reasonable to believe that a nomadic people could have as much gold as Israel took from the Midianites? Explain your answer.

## E. REQUEST OF GAD AND REUBEN (32:1-5)

## TEXT

Chapter 32:1. Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of cattle: and when they saw the land of Jazer, and the land of Gilead, that, behold, the place was a place for cattle. 2. The children of Gad and the children of Reuben came and spake unto Moses, and to Eleazar the priest, and unto the princes of the congregation, saying, 3. Ataroth, and Dibon, and Jazer, and Nimrah, and Heshbon, and Elealeh, and Shebam, and Nebo, and Beon, 4. Even the country which the Lord smote before the congregation of Israel, is a land for cattle, and thy servants have cattle: 5. Wherefore, said they, if we have found grace in thy sight, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 32:1. Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had an exceedingly large number of livestock. So when they saw the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead, that it was a suitable place for livestock, 2. the children of Gad and the children of Reuben came and spoke to Moses and to Eleazar the priest, and to the leaders of the congregation, saying, 3. Ataroth, Dobon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam,

Nebo and Beon, 4. the land which the Lord conquered before the congregation of Israel, is a land for livestock; and your servants have livestock. 5. And they said, "If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to your servants for a possession; do not take us across the Jordan."

### COMMENTARY

We may infer that the herds of Gad and Reuben had, by some means, grown more rapidly than had those of the other tribes, and their request must be based upon this situation. The land of Jazer, or Jaazer, is situated just east of the Jordan in the vicinity of Heshbon. Gilead is the common name for the greater portion of the territory beyond the Jordan, sometimes even including the land of Bashan which is east of the Sea of Galilee. In its most restrictive sense the term Gilead refers to the area from the northern tip of the Dead Sea to the Yarmuk River and the Sea of Galilee. The area is mountainous, but there are also occasional plateaus and plains, with large areas offering pasture land and tillable fields. It must certainly have looked most desirable to these shepherding people, after considering the relatively barren land through which they had come.

The nine settlements mentioned in v. 3 are all in the southern section of the eastern land; they were later divided with four going to Gad and five to Reuben. It is possible that the flocks and herds of the entire nation were grazing well within the area the cities described. At this time the tribes had not received their allocations. When Gad and Reuben asked for portions on the east of Jordan, the request would seem out of order. Whether they coveted the finest pasture land, or wanted to escape having to assist in driving the pagan tribes out of the land across the Jordan, or whether they had some other motive altogether is not told; Moses understood their reason to be the second of these. History would later show their choice, if not their faith, to have been faulty.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

580. What reasons could the two tribes have had for wanting

to settle east of the Jordan?

581. Give the areas specified, and describe them, as Gad and Reuben made their requests.
582. Follow the decay and downfall of the eastern tribes in later time, especially after the division of the Kingdom of Israel. Can this be traced in any way to their choice of territory?

#### F. REBUKE BY MOSES vv. 6-15

##### TEXT

Chapter 32:6. And Moses said unto the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben, Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here? 7. And wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the Lord hath given them? 8. Thus did your fathers, when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to see the land. 9. For when they went up into the valley of Eshcol, and saw the land, they discouraged the heart of the children of Israel, that they should not go into the land which the Lord had given them. 10. And the Lord's anger was kindled the same time, and he sware, saying, 11. Surely none of the men that came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob; because they have not wholly followed me: 12. Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite, and Joshua the son of Nun; for they have wholly followed the Lord. 13. And the Lord's anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation, that had done evil in the sight of the Lord, was consumed. 14. And behold, ye are risen up in your fathers' stead, an increase of sinful men, to augment yet the fierce anger of the Lord toward Israel. 15. For if ye turn away from after him, he will yet again leave them in the wilderness; and ye shall destroy all this people.

##### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 32:6. But Moses said to the sons of Gad and the

sons of Reuben, "Shall your brothers go to war while you yourselves sit here? 7. And why do you now discourage the children of Israel from crossing into the land which the Lord has given them? 8. This is what your fathers did when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to see the land. 9. For when they went up to the wady of Eshcol and saw the land, they discouraged the children of Israel so that they did not go into the land which the Lord had given them. 10. So the Lord's anger burned in that day, and He swore, saying, 11. 'Indeed, none of the men who came up from Egypt, twenty years old and up, shall see the land which I pledged to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob because they have not fully followed me. 12. excepting Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have fully followed the Lord.' 13. So the Lord's anger burned against Israel, and he made them wander forty years in the wilderness, until the entire generation of those who had sinned in the sight of the Lord were destroyed. 14. And behold, you are risen up in your fathers' place, a brood of sinful men, to add still more to the fierce anger of the Lord toward Israel. 15. For if you turn away from following Him, He will once more abandon them in the wilderness; and you will destroy all these people."

#### COMMENTARY

The anxieties and fears shown by Moses are readily understandable. Above all other things, he most wanted to prevent another fiasco like that at Kadesh-Barnea. There the disobedient people incurred the righteous wrath of God, and their stubbornness had cost the lives of virtually the entire group, besides the forty years of time lost in the wilderness. The suggestion from Gad and Reuben at this juncture conceivably could produce a rift among God's people again, and who could predict the possible consequences? Moses' conclusion that the two tribes hoped to avoid having to participate in the military campaign in the west is logical. He further concluded that such action would disturb the essential unity of the tribes. Almost exactly the same charge would later be leveled against the two



tribes by Deborah (Judges 5:16, 17), and with sound reason. For one-sixth of the group to stand back now and disengage themselves arbitrarily from Israel's advance into the Promised Land would have dulled the glory of the moment of triumph to say the least; at most, it could have served as a disquieting and discouraging element of such magnitude as to cause the remainder of the people to refuse to advance any farther. Thus the situation of Kadesh-Barnea could easily have been repeated.

Are the words of Moses unnecessarily harsh? His response to the circumstantial request is immediate; he has not asked for an explanation: and he does not consult the Lord first before voicing his own objections: this hardly seemed necessary. But he was not omniscient, and regardless of the manner in which the issue came to its settlement, his forthright zeal to protect God's people had been evidenced. Moses was not being stubborn or inconsiderate or illogical; he was taking a positive stand for right as he understood it. That he later qualified his stand is irrelevant, excepting to show the great stature of the man who, when all the facts are introduced into the picture, was willing to modify his position when he was satisfied that the principle for which he contended would not fall. Beyond doubt those who made the suggestion among the two tribes were young men whose minds had little or no recollection of the analogous circumstance to which Moses compared this one. He speaks from wisdom and experience. Nothing in the incident can be understood as a reflection upon his integrity, his character, or his intelligence. He simply does not want disastrous history to repeat itself if he can prevent it.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

583. What did Moses fear as possible results if Gad and Reuben were permitted to settle east of the Jordan?
584. What possible motives might they have had?
585. To what historical situation and incident did he compare the choice before them?
586. Defend the propriety of Moses' words.

587. What is there in the incident which makes you think more highly of Moses?
588. What later historical events seem to suggest that Moses' fears were not entirely ungrounded?

## G. THE TRIBES' PLEDGE vv. 16-19

## TEXT

Chapter 32:16. And they came near unto him, and said, We will build sheepfolds here for our cattle, and cities for our little ones: 17. But we ourselves will go ready armed before the children of Israel, until we have brought them unto their place: and our little ones shall dwell in the fenced cities, because of the inhabitants of the land. 18. We will not return unto our houses, until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance: 19. For we will not inherit with them on yonder side Jordan, or forward; because our inheritance is fallen to us on this side Jordan eastward.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 32:16. Then they came near him and said, "We will build sheepfolds here for our livestock, and cities for our little ones, 17. but we ourselves will go armed and ready before the children of Israel until we have brought them unto their place, while our little ones live in the fortified cities because of the inhabitants of the land. 18. We will not return to our houses until the each of the Children of Israel had taken his inheritance. 19. For we will not inherit with them on the other side of the Jordan and beyond, because our inheritance has fallen to us on this side of the Jordan toward the east."

## COMMENTARY

The answer given Moses by Gad and Reuben made it apparent that their intentions in settling east of the Jordan are not those he had feared. They were more than willing to assist their brothers to whatever degree it was necessary in clearing out the western lands; they desired only to be allowed this

productive portion for themselves, and that they first be allowed to make shelters for their animals and "cities", or camps, for their families. These camps would have been fortified villages in which the women, children and the aged could enjoy a degree of protection.

To make their willingness completely clear, the two tribes offer not only to go with the other ten, but to arm themselves and precede the others until the conquest is complete. Only then will they return to their homes and families. We encounter some difficulty in understanding just what the two spokesmen meant in affirming "our inheritance is fallen to us on this side of Jordan eastward," v. 19. The allotment has not yet been made, (see 33:16ff.), and we have been given no decree from any source that any of the tribes would be permitted to settle here. The statement is best understood to designate the tribal preference, rather than an official allocation, as if to say, "With your permission and the Lord's, we should like this area to be considered our allotment." Apparently none of the other tribes had any objections, to say nothing of any resentment, of the plan and request, which must have been an important factor in resolving the question.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

589. Show how the Gadites and Reubenites demonstrated their desire to maintain their strong ties with the other tribes.
590. What conditions did they lay down as preliminary to moving forward to clear out the land?
591. Looking ahead, how long was it to be before these men would return to their families, and who gave them permission to do so?
592. Explain how the territory they sought could be called their "inheritance".

H. LAND GIVEN TO GAD, REUBEN, AND  
ONE-HALF OF MANASSEH vv. 20-33

## TEXT

Chapter 32:20. And Moses said unto them, If ye will do this thing, if ye will go armed before the Lord to war, 21. And will go all of you armed over Jordan before the Lord, until he hath driven out his enemies from before him, 22. And the land be subdued before the Lord: then afterward ye shall return, and be guiltless before the Lord, and before Israel; and this land shall be your possession before the Lord. 23. But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out. 24. Build you cities for your little ones, and folds for your sheep; and do that which hath proceeded out of your mouth. 25. And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben spake unto Moses, saying, Thy servants will do as my lord commandeth. 26. Our little ones, our wives, our flocks, and all our cattle, shall be there in the cities of Gilead: 27. But thy servants will pass over, every man armed for war, before the Lord to battle, as my lord saith. 28. So concerning them Moses commanded Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the chief fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel. 29. And Moses said unto them, If the children of Gad and the children of Reuben will pass with you over Jordan, every man armed to battle, before the Lord, and the land shall be subdued before you; then ye shall give them the land of Gilead for a possession: 30. But if they will not pass over with you armed, they shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan. 31. And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben answered, saying, As the Lord hath said unto thy servants, so will we do. 32. We will pass over armed before the Lord into the land of Canaan, that the possession of our inheritance on this side Jordan may be ours. 33. And Moses gave unto them, even to the children of Gad, and to the children of Reuben, and unto half the tribe of Manasseh the son of Joseph, the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites, and the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, the land, with the cities thereof in the coasts, even the cities of the country round about.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 32:20. So Moses said to them, "If you will do this, if you will go armed before the Lord 21. and all of your armed men cross over the Jordan before the Lord until he has driven his enemies out from before him, 22. then later you shall return and be guiltless before the Lord, and before Israel; and this land shall be your possession before the Lord. 23. But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the Lord, and be sure your sin will find you out. 24. Build cities for yourselves, and for your little ones, and folds for your sheep; then do what you have promised." 25. And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben said to Moses, "Your servants will do just as my lord commands. 26. Our little ones, our wives, our flocks and all our cattle shall be there in the cities of Gilead; 27. but your servants will pass over, every man armed for war, before the Lord to battle, just as my lord says."

28. So Moses gave command concerning them to Eleazar the priest, and to Joshua the son of Nun, and to the heads of the fathers' households of the tribes of the children of Israel. 29. And Moses said unto them, "If the children of Gad and the children of Reuben will pass with you across the Jordan, each man armed for battle, before the Lord, and the land shall be overcome before you, then you shall give them the land of Gilead for a possession; 30. but if they will not cross over with you armed, they shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan. 31. And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben answered, saying, "As the Lord has said unto your servants, that is just what we will do. 32. We will pass over armed before the Lord into the land of Canaan, in order that the possession of our inheritance may be ours on this side of the Jordan. 33. And Moses gave to them, to the sons of Gad and to the sons of Reuben and to one-half of the tribe of Manasseh the son of Joseph, the kingdom of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and the kingdom of Og, king of Bashan, the land with its cities and their environs, the cities in the surrounding country.

## COMMENTARY

The offer of service is quite acceptable to Moses. If the

tribes will keep their word to go "before the Lord" and fight until the land of Canaan is cleared, they may have their request, and their inheritance east of Jordan will be granted. Should they renege in any manner, however, and fail to do exactly as they have promised, their sins would be brought graphically to their attention, and they shall regret their folly. If a pledge made by an individual Israelite was considered inviolate, we may well attach supreme importance to such a promise made by this large segment of the nation. Failure under these circumstances could bring disaster upon the total nation.

We are told now (v. 33) of the inheritance of the one-half tribe of Manasseh, without having been told of the division of the tribe; they were not named at all in the negotiations. Whether there had been division within the tribe; whether Gad and Reuben were more prominent as spokesmen in the discussions; or, whether it was advisable to split the number because this tribe had multiplied so rapidly, we are not told. The answer may well be found later (vv. 39-42).

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

593. Suggest what punishment the Lord might have brought upon the men of Gad, Reuben, and Manasseh if they failed to honor their pledge.
594. Why does the half-tribe of Manasseh now join with the others in the pledge?
595. What reasons may be given for the division of Manasseh's tribe?

### I. CITIES BUILT OR TAKEN IN THE LAND

vv. 34-42

#### TEXT

Chapter 32:34. And the children of Gad built Dibon, and Ataroth, and Aroer, 35. And Atroth, Shopan, and Jaazer, and Jogbehah, 36. And Beth-nimrah, and Beth-haran, fenced cities; and folds for sheep. 37. And the children of Reuben built

Hesbon, and Elealeh, and Kirjathaim, 38. And Nebo, and Baal-meon, (their names being changed,) and Shibmah: and gave other names unto the cities which they builded. 39. And the children of Machir the son of Manasseh went to Gilead, and took it, and dispossessed the Amorite which was in it. 40. And Moses gave Gilead unto Machir the son of Manasseh; and he dwelt therein. 41. And Jair the son of Manasseh went and took the small towns thereof, and called them Havorth-jair. 42. And Nobah went and took Kenath, and the villages thereof, and called it Nobah, after his own name.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 32:34. And the children of Gad built Dibon and Ataroth and Aroer, and Atroth-shophan and Jazer and Jogbehah, 36. and Beth-nimrah and Beth-haran as fortified cities, and sheepfolds for sheep. 37. And the children of Reuben built Heshbon and Elealeh and Kiriathaim, 38. and Nebo and Baal-meon (their names were changed) and Sibmah, and they gave other names to the cities they built. 39. And the sons of Machir, the son of Manasseh, went to Gilead and took it, and dispossessed the Amorites who were there in it. 40. So Moses gave Gilead to Machir, the son of Manasseh, and he lived in it. 41. And Jair, the son of Manasseh, went in and took their villages, and called them Havvoth-jair. 42. And Nobah went in and took Kenath and its villages, and called it Nobah, after his own name.

#### COMMENTARY

The text must not be made to mean that the named cities were first constructed by the Israelites; rather, they were rebuilt or restored, in order to provide the necessary security for the families who would remain there. All of the cities are located between the Arnon and the Jabbok rivers. The general territory was very unstable in later days, with much of the area fluctuating between the Gadites, Reubenites, Ammonites, and Moabites. The boundaries are often very difficult to ascertain.

The incident related in verse 39 is followed by Manasseh's

settlement of Gilead. The descendants of Machir, son of Manasseh, were especially prominent in taking this territory, and apparently this was the reason Moses awarded them the land. "Gilead" here is used to apply to the land north of the Yarmuk—the area more often known as Bashan—indicating a broad use of the term.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

596. In what sense are the Israelites said to have built the cities in Gilead?
597. Using a good Bible encyclopedia, determine the widest and most narrow sense in which "Gilead" is used.
598. How does this passage of the text help show the probable reason for awarding of a portion of the eastern territory to half of the tribe of Manasseh?

## V. REVIEW OF THE ROUTE FROM EGYPT TO CANAAN (33:1-49)

### A. EGYPT TO SINAI (33:1-15)

#### TEXT

Chapter 33:1. These are the journeys of the children of Israel, which went forth out of the land of Egypt with their armies under the hand of Moses and Aaron. 2. And Moses wrote their going out according to their journeys by the commandment of the Lord: and these are their journeys according to their goings out. 3. And they departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the morrow after the passover the children went out with a high hand in the sight of all the Egyptains. 4. For the Egyptians buried all their first born, which the Lord had smitten among them: upon their gods also the Lord executed judgments. 5. And the children of Israel removed from Rameses, and pitched in Succoth. 6. And they departed from Succoth, and pitched in Etham, which is in the edge of the wilderness. 7. And they removed from Etham, and turned again unto Pi-hahiroth, which is before Baal-zephon:



and they pitched before Migdol. 8. And they departed from before Pi-Hahiroth, and passed through the midst of the sea into the wilderness, and sent three days' journey in the wilderness of Etham, and pitched in Marah. 9. And they removed from Marah, and came unto Elim: and in Elim were twelve fountains of water, and threescore and ten palm trees; and they pitched there. 10. And they removed from Elim, and encamped by the Red sea. 11. And they removed from the Red sea, and encamped in the wilderness of Sin. 12. And they took their journey out of the wilderness of Sin, and encamped in Dophkah. 13. And they departed from Dophkah, and encamped in Alush. 14. And they removed from Alush, and encamped at Rephidim, where was no water for the people to drink. 15. And they departed from Rephidim, and pitched in the wilderness of Sinai.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 33:1. These are the journeys of the children of Israel, who went out of the land of Egypt, with their armies, under the hand of Moses and Aaron. 2. And Moses wrote their starting places according to their journeys by the command of the Lord, and these are their journeys according to their starting places. 3. And they left Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the next day after the passover the children of Israel started out boldly in the sight of all the Egyptians, 4. while the Egyptians were burying all their first-born whom the Lord had struck down among them; and God executed judgment upon their gods as well. 5. And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses, and camped in Succoth. 6. And they journeyed from Succoth, and camped in Etham, which is at the edge of the wilderness. 7. And they journeyed from Etham, and turned back to Pi-hahiroth, which faces Baal-zephon and they camped before Migdol. 8. And they journeyed from before Pi-hahiroth and passed through the midst of the sea into the wilderness; and they went three days' journey into the wilderness of Etham, and camped at Marah. 9. And they journeyed from Marah and came to Elim; and in Elim

there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees; and they camped there. 10. And they journeyed from Elim and camped by the Sea of Reeds. 11. And they journeyed from the Sea of Reeds and camped in the wilderness of Sin. 12. And they journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, and camped at Dophkah. 13. And they journeyed from Dophkah and camped at Alush. 14. And they journeyed from Alush and camped at Rephidim, where there was no water for the people to drink. 15. And they journeyed from Rephidim and camped in the wilderness of Sinai.

### COMMENTARY

At the word of the Lord, Moses set down the progressive list of "journeys", actually, stations, at which the Israelites encamped from the time of leaving Egypt until they reached Canaan. Forty-one names appear in the list, if we include the final mention of Moab. Eleven names appear en route to Sinai, twenty-one on the way to Kadesh, and the final eight on the way to Moab. Many of the places are, understandably, unidentifiable. There can be no way of placing them, since they were never permanent settlements. Many familiar names appear on the list, such as Succoth, the wilderness of Sin and of Sinai, Ezion-geber, Kadesh, Mt. Hor, and the locations in Moab. Many others are totally strange; making it impossible to trace the journey with more than spotty accuracy.

Two dates are mentioned in the process of this listing: Israel left Egypt on the fifteenth day of the first month; the death of Aaron is noted on the first day, fifth month, in the fortieth year after the exodus. To what purpose is this detailing? The primary lesson gained certainly is in the demonstration of the leading hand of God in the entire period. Most of the details used to embellish the listed "stations" are to be found in the introductory portion, i. e., verses 3-8. As was so often done by the Old Testament chroniclers and prophets, the people are reminded of the significance of their history, especially the devastating death of the Egyptian first-born. Of special interest is the fact that the account calls our attention to the burial of

the Egyptian dead. Funerary rites were especially important in Egypt, and the concentration of these people upon the rites afforded Israel an excellent period during which to move away on their journey. We are also reminded that the mighty works of the Lord were performed as judgment upon the gods of Egypt. The contrasting picture is obvious: the gods of Egypt had been directly assaulted in the plagues, and their powers to protect the people were bluntly refuted when the firstborn were slain. Israel would point to this fact repeatedly in the future.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

599. Why is it impossible to identify many of the "journeys" listed in this chapter?
600. What does the term mean here?
601. How does this section demonstrate the continuing leading hand of God?
602. How did the Egyptian custom of taking care to bury their dead work in favor of the Israelites?
603. Consult a good Bible encyclopedia, and learn how the plagues God sent upon Egypt were direct blows against that nation's gods.
604. What conclusions would we have expected the Egyptians to reach concerning their gods at the death of their firstborn?

### B. SINAI TO MT. HOR vv. 16-37

#### TEXT

Chapter 33:16. And they removed from the desert of Sinai, and pitched at Kibroth-hattaavah; 17. And they departed from Kibroth-hattaavah, and encamped at Hazeroth. 18. And they departed from Hazeroth, and pitched in Rithmah. 19. And they departed from Rithmah, and pitched at Rimmon-parez. 20. And they departed from Rimmon-parez, and pitched in Libnah. 21. And they removed from Libnah, and pitched at Rissah. 22. And they journeyed from Rissah, and pitched in Kehelathah. 23.

And they went from Kehelathah, and pitched in mount Shapher. 24. And they removed from mount Shapher, and encamped in Haradah. 25. And they removed from Haradah, and pitched in Makheloth. 26. And they removed from Makheloth, and encamped at Tahath. 27. and departed from Tahath and pitched at Tarah. 28. And they removed from Tarah, and pitched in Mithcah. 29. And they went from Mithcah, and pitched in Hashmonah. 30. And they departed from Hashmonah, and encamped at Moseroth. 31. And they departed from Moseroth and pitched in Bene-jaakan. 32. And they removed from Bene-jaakan, and encamped at Hor-hagidgad. 33. And they went from Hor-hagidgad, and pitched in Jotbathah. 34. And they removed from Jotbathah, and encamped at Ebronah. 35. And they departed from Ebronah, and encamped at Ezion-gaber. 36. And they removed from Ezion-gaber, and pitched in the wilderness of Zin, which is Kadesh. 37. And they removed from Kadesh, and pitched in mount Hor, in the edge of the land of Edom.

#### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 33:16. And they journeyed from the wilderness of Sinai and camped at Kibroth-hattaavah. 17. And they journeyed from Kibroth-hattaavah, and camped at Hazeroth. 18. And they journeyed from Hazeroth and camped at Rithmah. 19. And they journeyed from Rithmah and camped at Rimmon-perez. 19. And they journeyed from Rimmon-perez and camped at Libnah. 21. And they journeyed from Libnah and camped at Rissah. 22. And they journeyed from Rissah and camped at Kehelathah. 23. And they journeyed from Kehelathah and camped at Mount Shepher. 24. And they journeyed from Mount Shepher and camped at Haradah. 25. And they journeyed from Haradah and camped at Makheloth. 26. And they journeyed from Makheloth and camped at Tahath. 27. And they journeyed from Tahath and camped at Terah. 28. And they journeyed from Terah and camped at Mithkah. 29. And they journeyed from Mithkah and camped at Hashmonah. 30. And they journeyed from Hashmonah and camped at

Moseroth. 31. And they journeyed from Moseroth and camped at Bene-jaakan. 32. And they journeyed from Bene-jaakan and camped at Hor-haggidgad. 33. And they journeyed from Hor-haggidgad and camped at Jotbathah. 34. And they journeyed from Jotbathah and camped at Abronah. 35. And they journeyed from Abronah and camped at Ezion-geber. 36. And they journeyed from Ezion-geber and camped in the wilderness of Zin, that is, Kadesh. 37. And they journeyed from Kadesh and camped at Mount Hor, at the edge of the land of Edom.

### COMMENTARY

Of all the place-names in this section, thirteen are not given anywhere else in the Old Testament. It is impossible to say whether or not Gray is correct in assigning these places to the total area wandering, as well as that between Sinai and Kadesh (see p. 296, *IB*). In this event, there would have been no attempt to mention the places chronologically, but simply as a composite list from the final two portions of the total journey from Egypt to Canaan. The list is, indeed, longer than necessary for the brief trip from Sinai to Kadesh; and the list covering the final 38½ years is proportionately much too small. Either Moses has listed every point at which the people encamped during the second leg, but has scantily summarized the third; or the stops in the one period were very brief, while in the other they were prolonged.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

605. Why are so many of the places mentioned here not to be found anywhere else in the Old Testament?
606. What alternative is there to accepting Moses' arrangement of the place names in chronological order? What evidences would seem to indicate this arrangement by geography rather than chronology?

### C. MT. HOR TO THE JORDAN vv. 38-49

#### TEXT

Chapter 33:38. And Aaron the priest went up into mount

Hor at the commandment of the Lord, and died there, in the fortieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the first day of the fifth month. 39. And Aaron was a hundred and twenty and three years old when he died in mount Hor. 40. And king Arad the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south in the land of Canaan, heard of the coming of the children of Israel. 41. And they departed from mount Hor, and pitched in Zalmonah, 42. And they departed from Zalmonah, and pitched in Punon. 43. And they departed from Punon, and pitched in Oboth. 44. And they departed from Oboth, and pitched in Ije-abarim, in the border of Moab. 45. And they departed from Iim, and pitched in Dibon-gad. 46. And they removed from Dibon-gad, and encamped in Almon-diblathaim. 47. And they removed from Almon-diblathaim, and pitched in the mountains of Abarim, before Nebo. 48. And they departed from the mountains of Abarim, and pitched in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho. 49. And they pitched by Jordan, from Beth-jesimoth even unto Abel-shittim in the plains of Moab.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 33:38. Then Aaron the priest went up to Mount Hor upon the command of the Lord, and died there, in the fortieth year after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, on the first day of the fifth month. 39. Now Aaron was one hundred twenty-three years of age when he died on Mount Hor. 40. And the Canaanite king of Arad, who lived in the Negev in the land of Canaan, learned of the coming of the children of Israel. 41. Then they journeyed from Mount Hor and camped at Zalmonah. 42. And they journeyed from Zalmonah and camped at Punon. 43. And they journeyed from Punon and camped at Oboth. 44. And they journeyed from Oboth and camped at Iyeabarim, near the border of Moab. 45. And they journeyed from Iyim and camped at Dibon-gad. 46. And they journeyed from Dibon-gad and camped at Almon-diblathaim. 47. And they journeyed from Almon-diblathaim and camped in the mountains of Abarim, before

Nebo. 48. And they journeyed from the mountains of Abarim and camped in the plains of Moab near the Jordan, opposite Jericho. 49. And they camped by the Jordan, from Beth-jeshimoth as far as Abel-shittim in the plains of Moab.

### COMMENTARY

The death of Aaron was a notable event in the history of Israel. Although he had not always been just what God wanted him to be, as when he participated in the affair of the golden calf (Ex. 32) and joined Miriam in seditious talk against Moses, we should see the man in his proper perspective, not remembering these incidents only, but knowing him as the spokesman for Moses before Pharaoh; as the conscientious high priest who faithfully performed his duties before a murmuring, complaining people; as the brother and intimate companion of Moses who must often have served as counselor, confidante and commiserator with the great man of God in whose shadow Aaron was required to live.

Since Aaron's death occurred "in the fortieth year," it is clear that God intended for the entire time taken up by the travels, from Egypt to Canaan, to be included in the forty years specified as punishment for the rebellion at Kadesh. In actual time, one and one-half years had been taken in the period from the exodus to Kadesh, and additional time was required to march around Edom, through Moab into the Abarim, and to overcome the eastern tribes of Gilead. Three years older than Moses, he had been 83 years of age when he stood before Pharaoh (Ex. 7:7).

Arad the Canaanite is mentioned here because he had previously opposed Israel, at their coming to the southern edge of Canaan (21:1-3), imposing a defeat upon them and taking a number of captives. He made no move against Israel in this situation, however. The people left the area soon, and all conflict was avoided.

From the scene of Aaron's death, the Israelites began their march around Edom, since the latter people had refused passage

through their land (20:14-21), coming to Zalmonah at the southeastern extremity of Edom. They then worked their way in a generally northward direction to the eastern side of Moab, removing later to the area of the Abarim and the northern plains of Moab at Abel-shittim. From this point they took their time to cross the Jordan. There can be no doubt that the Israelites made camp at many unnamed locations—camping perhaps for a few days or for extended periods of time. To reconstruct their travels completely and accurately, even if all the unnamed stations were also supplied, would be impossible. We have quite enough information, however, to show us that God's words to the people were accurately fulfilled.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

607. Evaluate the life of Aaron as a man, as a spokesman for Moses, as a priest, and as a leader of the people, showing his strengths and weaknesses.
608. Cite a half-dozen instances in which Aaron had stood firm for the cause and the word of the Lord.
609. Why does the Bible tell us of the wrongdoings of Aaron?
610. What do we conclude from the fact that Aaron died "in the fortieth year"? Reconstruct a chronology of the period from Egypt to Abel-shittim, showing how the forty years are accounted for in the divisions of the trip.
611. Consult a reliable map of the area of the wandering, and trace the travels of Israel in regard to the known places where they encamped.
612. Is it possible that we are not given the names of every location where the Israelites stopped during their journeys?
613. If there are omissions in this list, how much would we be helped if the list were complete?



VI. FINAL INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING  
THE SETTLEMENT OF CANAAN (33:50-36:13)

## A. ON CLEARING THE LAND (33:50-56)

## TEXT

Chapter 33:50. And the Lord spake unto Moses in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho, saying, 51. Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye are passed over Jordan into the land of Canaan; 52. Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places: 53. And ye shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land, and dwell therein: for I have given you the land to possess it. 54. And ye shall divide the land by lot for an inheritance among your families; and to the more ye shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer ye shall give the less inheritance: every man's inheritance shall be in the place where his lot falleth: according to the tribes of your fathers ye shall inherit. 55. But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell. 56. Moreover it shall come to pass, that I shall do unto you, as I thought to do unto them.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 33:50. Then the Lord spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab near the Jordan opposite Jericho, saying, 51. "Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, When you cross over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, 52. then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their carved stones, and destroy all their molten images, and devastate all their high places. 53. You shall take possession of the land and live in it, for I have given the land unto you to possess it. 54. And you shall inherit the land by lot according to your families; to the larger you shall give the greater inheritance; and to the smaller you shall give the smaller

inheritance. Wherever the lot falls to anyone, it shall be his. You shall inherit according to the families of your fathers. 55. But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall come about that those whom you allow to remain will become as thorns in your eyes and as pins in your sides, and they shall trouble you in the land in which you live. 56. And it shall happen that as I plan to do to them, I shall do to you.

### COMMENTARY

Here quite briefly, but in details which are certainly adequate, the children of Israel are told precisely what to do when they enter into the land of Canaan: first, they are to drive out all the inhabitants; second, every evidence of their pagan worship, idols, symbols, stones, and sites of desecration, are to be totally destroyed; third, they are to possess and settle in the entire land outlined unto them; and, finally, they are to determine by lot the area to which each tribe is to be assigned, with the division generally awarding larger territories to larger tribes, and smaller territories to smaller tribes. As a corollary, God informs His people of the dire consequences of anything less than total obedience: any of the residents who are left in the land will become a source of irritation and spiritual disruption; and, the Lord will bring upon Israel the same fate as should have come upon the Canaanites.

Two matters are established in God's proclamation that the people of Canaan are to be driven from the land in order that Israel might occupy it. God is at the same time pronouncing judgment upon a polytheistic, decadent and immoral people; and, He is making provision to establish a nation whose laws and conduct He may approve. All of this is an essential link in the chain of promise-fulfillment made to Abraham, Issac and Jacob, and his words to Moses are tantamount to saying, "This is your land, just as I have promised. It shall be the land of your people as long as they are worthy of it. But should they become like the other nations, in idolatry and in conduct, they shall forfeit any claims whatsoever, and shall suffer the same end as

those who held it before their coming.”

Itemized as those factors which are especially offensive to the Lord are the “pictures”, or, more accurately, their carved stone images; the “molten images”, or images which have been cast or engraved of metal; and the “high places” or sites upon which idolatrous rites occurred, often in elevated areas. They were all to be totally demolished. No vestige of these offensive elements were to be left, lest they pollute the thoughts and corrupt the practices of Israel. It would be impossible to misunderstand the meaning of these instructions. They would either be fully carried out, or the very pledge of long standing with the patriarchs was no longer valid. Holding the land was directly associated with religious purity—a factor which should never be forgotten. Failure to apprehend this principle will result in a failure to understand the dozens of associated prophecies which God would later speak through His appointed messengers. It is unfortunate that many otherwise devout and learned students of the Word of God have not given this premise to all their exegesis of the prophetic treatment of Israel, both past, present and future.

Only the unbeliever or the self-appointed expert can question the right of the Creator to declare a portion of His creation for the use of those whom He has chosen. Israel will become stewards of Canaan simply because the previous occupants were poor landlords, worshiping the created rather than the Creator. While Israel retains a faithful stewardship, the land will belong to successive generations.

As in 26:53-56, division of the land by lot is commanded now, along with the provision that the sizes of the tribes are to be factors in allocation of the portions. We may well remember that the size of the allotment alone in some instances is an indecisive factor. Although the territory given Simeon was great, much of it was wasteland (the Negev area); and although the portion awarded Dan by lot was relatively small, it was a most productive and desirable location for shepherding or agriculture. It is not possible, however, to establish a rigid formula relating these factors unexceptionally to the division of

the land.

During his final address to the nation, Joshua alluded to the curse God promised upon Israel if she were disobedient to his laws and plans (Josh.23:13), and the figure is implicit in Judges 2:3, although it is not completely expressed. Little imagination is required to feel the impact of the thought, since anyone who has had sharp grit in an eye, or a thorn in his flesh can appreciate its meaning; and the experiences are virtually universal. Just so, God's blessings become curses to an ungrateful and disobedient people regardless of time or place.

### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

614. Outline the commandments and conditions laid out by the Lord to Israel regarding their duties in occupying the land of Canaan.
615. How can we justify God's command to exterminate or drive out the people who were already living in the land?
616. What specific items were to be demolished, and why?
617. By what basic principle would their happiness or punishment in the land be determined?
618. Show how God was honoring His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob at this time.
619. Can we reconcile the two instructions about dividing the land by lot and awarding the larger portions to the larger tribes?
620. What other considerations come to mind when we attempt this reconciliation?
621. Under what later circumstances were the figures of punishment against Israel used?

### B. BORDERS OF CANAAN ESTABLISHED (34:1-15)

#### TEXT

Chapter 34:1. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 2. Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land of Canaan: (this is the land that shall fall

unto you for an inheritance, even the land of Canaan with the coasts thereof:) 3. Then your south quarter shall be from the wilderness of Zin along by the coast of Edom, and your south border shall be the outmost coast of the salt sea eastward: 4. And your border shall turn from the south to the ascent of Akrabbim, and pass on to Zin: and the going forth thereof shall be from the south to Kadesh-barnea, and shall go on to Hazar-addar, and pass on to Azmon: 5. And the border shall fetch a compass from Azmon unto the river of Egypt, and the goings out of it shall be at the sea. 6. And as for the western border, ye shall have even the great sea for a border: this shall be your west border. 7. And this shall be your north border: from the great sea ye shall point out for you mount Hor: 8. From mount Hor ye shall point out your border unto the entrance of Hamath; and the goings forth of the border shall be to Zedad:

9. And the border shall go on to Ziphron, and the goings out of it shall be at Hazar-enan: this shall be your north border. 10. And ye shall point out your east border from Hazar-enan to Shepham: 11. And the coast shall go down from Shapham to Riblah, on the east side of Ain; and the border shall descend, and shall reach unto the side of the sea of Chinnereth eastward: 12. And the border shall go down to Jordan, and the goings out of it shall be at the salt sea: this shall be your land with the coasts thereof round about. 13. And Moses commanded the children of Israel, saying, This is the land which ye shall inherit by lot, which the Lord commanded to give unto the nine tribes, and to the half tribe: 14. For the tribe of the children of Reuben according to the house of their fathers, and the tribe of the children of Gad according to the house of their fathers, have received their inheritance; and half of the tribe of Manasseh have received their inheritance: 15. The two tribes and the half tribe have received their inheritance on this side Jordan near Jericho eastward, toward the sunrising.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 34:1. Then the Lord spoke to Moses saying, 2.

“Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, ‘When you enter the land of Canaan, this is the land which shall fall to you as an inheritance: the land of Canaan and its borders. 3. The southern section shall be from the wilderness of Zin alongside the border of Edom, and your south border shall be from the tip of the Dead Sea eastward. 4. There your border shall turn from the south to the slopes of Akrabbim and continue to Zin; its limits shall be from the south to Kadesh-barnea, and shall reach Hazaraddar, and continue on to Azmon. 5. And the border shall turn from Azmon to the wady of Egypt, and its boundary shall be at the Sea. 6. As for the western border, you shall have the Great Sea as its border: this shall be your west border. 7. And this shall be your north border: you shall draw the boundary line from the Great Sea to Mount Hor: 8. from Mount Hor you shall mark out your border to the entrance of Hamath, and the limit of the border shall be at Zedad.

9. Then the border shall proceed to Ziphron, and its limit shall be at Hazer-enan. This shall be your north border. 10. “For your eastern border, you shall also draw a line from Hazer-enan to Shepham, 11. and the border shall go down from Shepham to Riblah on the east side of Ain; and the border shall go down and reach the eastward projection of the Sea of Chinnereth. 12. And the border shall go down to the Jordan, and its limit shall be at the Salt Sea: this shall be your land with its surrounding borders.’ ” 13. So Moses commanded the children of Israel, saying, “This is the land which you shall inherit by lot, which the Lord commanded to give to the nine and one-half tribes; 14. for the tribe of the children of Reuben, according to the house of their fathers, and the tribe of Gad, according to the house of their fathers, have received their inheritance; and the half-tribe of Manasseh have received their inheritance. 15. The two and one-half tribes have received their inheritance on this side of the Jordan, east of Jericho, toward the sunrise.

#### COMMENTARY

Since two and one-half tribes have already received their

inheritances east of the Jordan, they are not involved in the description of the borders of Canaan. This term is properly applied only to that land west of the Jordan. The remaining nine and one-half tribes are to be bounded within the area set forth in the description before us.

The southern boundary was established from the southern tip of the Dead Sea in a southwesterly direction to Kadesh, generally following the western border of Edom. From Kadesh, it turned northwest at nearly a right angle toward the "river of Egypt," the Wady el-Arish, which was to be commonly cited as a boundary between Egypt and Canaan later (see II Chron. 7:8; Isaiah 27:12). The line met the Mediterranean coast at a point almost directly west of the spot from which it left the Dead Sea.

On the west, the Israelites were to view the Great Sea, or the Mediterranean, as their boundary. The Hebrew word for "west" (*yam*) is the same as that for "sea", and this secondary use is no doubt traceable to the identity of the two in bounding Canaan. Strangely, the Israelites never held the coastal plains along the Mediterranean. The southern portion, the Philistine Plain, was held by the Philistines; the central plains area, the Plain of Sharon, was in the hands of the Canaanites; the northern portion, the Phoenician Plain, was never taken from those people. Even at the peak of the Kingdom during the reigns of David and Solomon, the coastal territories were not fully occupied by Israel. Nevertheless both the word and the concept were perpetuated, even in the language of the people.

Along the northern border, we are not told from what point the line was to leave the Sea. The Mount Hor here mentioned is not to be confused with the peak of the same name where Aaron died, since the two are not less than 120 miles apart. Since the location of each is subject to question, however, an exact figure cannot be given. The one in 33:7 must have been in Lebanon, and it was probably recognizable from the Sea at the point of the border's origin. The "entrance of Hammath" cannot be precisely located today. Perhaps it is that point at which the Orontes River leaves its upper valley, in the Lebanon

mountains, and enters the plains in the vicinity of Hamath. If this is true, the northern boundary of the land was far beyond the ordinary holdings, lying more than one hundred miles north and east of the Sea of Galilee. Identification of the other points mentioned is at best tenuous, with the "fountain of the court", or Hazar-enan offering the most likely identifiable spot as the area of Banias where the source of the Jordan rises.

On the east, the boundary is vague from Hazar-enan to the sea of Chinnereth (Galilee). Those points mentioned, Shepham, and Riblah are unknown. Ain may be the traditional place at which the various sources of the Jordan converge, south of Mount Hermon. The Jordan itself is then named as the final unit of the boundary, along with the Salt Sea.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

622. Why are the boundaries not given for the two and one-half tribes which settled east of the Jordan?
623. Make a list of the points given in the itemized boundaries which can be identified today.
624. Why are so many of the points unidentifiable?
625. Why did the Israelites never occupy the coastal plains along the Great Sea?
626. Draw a map of the land included in these boundaries, showing the locations of the known places named, and, where possible, the suggested locations of those places not positively identifiable today.

#### C. ALLOTMENTS ASSIGNED TO TRIBAL LEADERS

vv. 16-29

#### TEXT

Chapter 34:16. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 17. These are the names of the men which shall divide the land unto you: Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun. 18. And ye shall take one prince of every tribe, to divide the land by inheritance. 19. And the names of the men are these: of the



tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh. 20. And of the tribe of the children of Simeon, Shemuel the son of Ammihud. 21. Of the tribe of Benjamin, Elidad the son of Chislon. 22. And the prince of the tribe of the children of Dan, Bukki the son of Jogli. 23. The prince of the children of Joseph, for the tribe of the children of Manasseh, Hanniel the son of Ephod. 24. And the prince of the tribe of the children of Ephraim, Kemuel the son of Shiphtan. 25. And the princes of the tribe of the children of Zebulun, Elizaphan the son of Parnach. 26. And the prince of the tribe of the children of Issachar, Paltiel the son of Azzan. 27. And the prince of the tribe of the children of Asher, Ahihud the son of Shelomi. 28. And the prince of the tribe of the children of Naphtali, Pedahel the son of Ammihud. 29. These are they whom the Lord commanded to divide the inheritance unto the children of Israel in the land of Canaan.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 34:16. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 17. These are the names of the men who shall assign the land to you by lot as an inheritance: Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun. 18. And you shall take one leader from each tribe to assign the land for inheritance. 19. And these are the names of the men: of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh. 20. And from the tribe of the children of Simeon, Samuel the son of Ammihud. 21. From the tribe of Benjamin, Elidad the son of Chislon. 22. And from the tribe of the children of Dan a leader, Bukki the son of Jogli. 23. From the children of Joseph: of the tribe of the children of Manasseh a leader, Hanniel the son of Ephod. 24. And from the tribe of the children of Ephraim a leader, Kemuel the son of Shiphtan. 25. And from the tribe of the children of Zebulun a leader, Elizaphan the son of Parnach. 26. And from the tribe of the children of Issachar a leader, Paltiel the son of Azzan. 27. And from the tribe of the children of Asher a leader, Ahihud the son of Shelomi. 28. And from the tribe of the children of Naphtali a leader, Pedahel the son of Ammihud. 29. These are the ones whom the Lord commanded to assign the inheritance to the children of Israel in the land of Canaan.

## COMMENTARY

Overseeing the process of casting lots for the inheritances are the two men most responsible for the two essential of primary responsibility among the people—religious and civil. Whereas we have been accustomed to hearing of Aaron and Moses in these capacities, the mantles have fallen upon their successors, Eleazar and Joshua. To assist them, one man of significance is to be chosen from each of the tribes sharing in the lot. Precise borders may have been left as negotiable points among these men, who must have been men of greatest integrity and trustworthiness. They are named in the order in which their lots progress from south to north generally in the new land. Of these men we know nothing more.

## QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

627. Why are Eleazar and Joshua chosen to guide the distribution of the land by lot?
628. What characteristics would you expect to have found in the men selected to represent each tribe in this process?

## D. CITIES RESERVED FOR THE LEVITES (35:1-8)

## TEXT

Chapter 35:1. And the Lord spake unto Moses in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho, saying, 2. Command the children of Israel, that they give unto the Levites, of the inheritance of their possession, cities to dwell in; and ye shall give also unto the Levites suburbs for the cities round about them. 3. And the cities shall they have to dwell in; and the suburbs of them shall be for their cattle, and for their goods, and for all their beasts. 4. And the suburbs of the cities, which ye shall give unto the Levites, shall reach from the wall of the city and outward a thousand cubits round about. 5. And ye shall measure from without the city on the east side, two thousand cubits, and on the south side two thousand cubits, and on the west side two thousand cubits, and on the north side two thousand cubits; and the city shall be in the midst: this

shall be to them the suburbs of the cities. 6. And among the cities which ye shall give unto the Levites there shall be six cities for refuge, which ye shall appoint for the manslayer, that he may flee thither: and to them ye shall add forty and two cities. 7. So all the cities which ye shall give to the Levites shall be forty and eight cities: them shall ye give with their suburbs. 8. And the cities which ye shall give shall be of the possession of the children of Israel: from them that have few ye shall give few: every one shall give of his cities unto the Levites according to his inheritance which he inheriteth.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 35:1. And the Lord spake to Moses in the plains of Moab near the Jordan opposite Jericho, saying, 2. "Command that the children of Israel give to the Levites, from the inheritance of their possession, cities in which to dwell; and you shall also give the Levites open ground around the cities. 3. And the cities shall be theirs to live in; and the open ground shall be for their livestock, and for their herds and all their animals. 4. And the open ground of the cities which you shall give to the Levites shall extend outward from the city wall one thousand cubits all around. 5. You shall also measure from outside the city on the east two thousand cubits, and on the south side two thousand cubits, and on the west two thousand cubits, and on the north two thousand cubits, with the city in the center: this shall be the open ground of the cities. 6. And the cities you shall give the Levites shall be six cities of refuge, which you shall give for the man-killer to flee unto; in addition to them, you shall give forty-two other cities. 7. All the cities which you shall give to the Levites shall be forty-eight cities, along with their open ground. 8. Regarding the cities which you shall give from the possessions of the children of Israel, you shall take more from the larger, and less from the smaller; but each one shall give some of his cities to the Levites in proportion to his inheritance which he inherits.

## COMMENTARY

No single land inheritance was awarded to the Levites, in

the fashion of the areas allocated to the other tribes. Instead, forty-eight cities together with their stipulated "suburbs" were to be designated Levitical cities. This does not mean that only Levites occupied the cities, but that they were to hold as many residences within the towns as necessary; and their pasturage requirements were to be met through use of the land immediately surrounding the city walls. The arrangement accomplishes several good ends. The Levites are removed from total dependence upon the tithes the offerings of the people; in the event of the failure of the other tribes to fulfill their lawful obligations unto the priests, the priests will not be without any sources of livelihood, since they will be able to maintain their own herds and flocks. The plan disperses the priests among the people, where they will be convenient and available for their services to the congregation. They are not to be an isolated, detached and uninvolved group; they will be able to participate in the day-by-day events of their communities, and become one with those they serve. They will have regular duties themselves to perform in caring for their animals—a responsibility not without its practical values.

The "suburbs" awarded the Levites were open grounds for tilling and for pasturing their animals. The measure of the first one thousand cubits (about 1500 feet), may be set up for cultivation and the second thousand cubits for grazing the animals. This is certainly the most simple method of explaining the manner in which the suburbs were established. *KD*, however, accepts the proposal by Michaelis that the city is to be viewed as a square with pasturage stretching one thousand cubits outward in every direction, so that the length of the extreme border of the environs would be two thousand cubits longer than the dimension of its parallel side. The total area in this latter arrangement would have been considerably smaller; but we cannot be certain which method was actually used.

Six of the Levitical cities were to be appointed as cities of refuge, to which any manslayer should flee until proper disposition might be made of his homicide. The general regulations governing the flight of the manslayer, his confine-

ment to the city of refuge until his trial, and the course to be followed in the event of his being found innocent or guilty are now to be given, enlarging upon the previous suggestion found in Exodus 21:13ff. With the matter of judgment of the manslayer in the hands of the congregation, (v. 24), any of the cities of Israel might have been selected theoretically; but it is especially appropriate that the cities should be those in which there was a concentration of Levites. Such a fact should augur well toward a careful administration of justice under the Law.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

629. How many cities were awarded the Levites?
630. How were these cities distributed among the tribes?
631. Who lived in the cities?
632. Describe the manner in which the extent of the "suburbs" may have been laid out.
633. To what uses did the Levites put the "suburbs"?
634. List the advantages of distributing the Levites in this manner.
635. What was the purpose of the "cities of refuge"?
636. Into whose hands was the judgment of the manslayer delivered?
637. What favorable results might we have expected from having the Levites living in the cities of refuge?

#### E. REGULATIONS REGARDING THE CITIES OF REFUGE vv. 9-15

##### TEXT

Chapter 35:9. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 10. Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come over Jordan into the land of Canaan; 11. Then ye shall appoint you cities to be cities of refuge for you; that the slayer may flee thither, which killeth any person at unawares. 12. And they shall be unto you cities for refuge from the avenger; that the manslayer die not, until he stand before the congregation in

judgment. 13. And of these cities which ye shall give, six cities shall ye have for refuge. 14. Ye shall give three cities on this side Jordan, and three cities shall ye give in the land of Canaan, which shall be cities of refuge. 15. These six cities shall be a refuge, both for the children of Israel, and for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them: that every one that killeth any person unawares may flee thither.

### PARAPHRASE

Chapter 35:9. And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, 10. "Speak unto the children of Israel and tell them, 'When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, 11. you shall select for yourselves cities to be your cities of refuge, in order that the man-killer who has killed any person unintentionally may flee unto them.' 12. And the cities shall be as a refuge unto you from the avenger, so that the man-killer may not die until he appears before the congregation in judgment. 13. And the cities which you are to give shall be your six cities of refuge. 14. You shall give three cities across the Jordan and three cities in the land of Canaan: they are to be cities of refuge. 15. These six cities shall be for refuge for the children of Israel, and for the alien and for the traveler among them, so that anyone who kills a person unintentionally may flee unto them."

### COMMENTARY

The first thing to be noticed in the appointment of the six cities of refuge is that they were not intended to protect that individual who had committed deliberate, willful murder. Only where some reasonable doubt existed in reference to the circumstances might that man expect to be permitted sanctuary; otherwise, the sentence of the law was clear and emphatic: he must be stoned to death.

The perspective of the account is clearly that of Israel's being yet on the east side of the Jordan: the cities were not even to be selected until they lived in Canaan. At that time, three cities on each side of the river should be appointed. In the event of any homicide in which the killer believed himself not

to have been guilty of murder, he was obliged to scurry rapidly to the nearest city of refuge. Hence, the location of the six cities was to be a matter of careful concern. As the manslayer fled to the sanctuary, the "avenger of blood", or the male next of kin to the deceased was obliged to make pursuit and, if he overtook the manslayer, he might put him to death without guilt of blood upon his hands.

The import of this law has been much discussed. The emerging value of the law is its emphasis upon the value of human life—even a careless act which results in the death of another is no light matter, and preventable homicide imposes a punishment upon that one who is careless, negligent or unconcerned about another human being. The law was to be enforced not upon the Israelites only, but upon any strangers, and even sojourners in their land. By this method all people who came within the scope of the law's force came under the instruction of those who saw its value and the rationale for the law itself. The basic concept was a gigantic stride forward from any law to be found in pagan contemporary society. The inherent value of each individual's life, and the awesome nature of divine justice are well established.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

638. What were the cities of refuge specifically *not* designed to do?
639. Why should any distinction be made among the manners by which homicide was committed?
640. Describe the conduct expected of the manslayer and of the avenger of blood?
641. Who was the avenger of blood?
642. Why would the avenger of blood be permitted to slay the manslayer outside the city of refuge, or before he reached the city?
643. Show what primary principles were established by this law.

644. For what reasons were strangers and sojourners included under the law?
645. How does this law compare with attitudes and laws of other countries relative to treatment of killers?

## F. LAWS OF HOMICIDE vv. 16-34

## TEXT

Chapter 35:16. And if he smite him with an instrument of iron, so that he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. 17. And if he smite him with throwing a stone, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. 18. Or if he smite him with a hand weapon of wood, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. 19. The revenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer: when he meeteth him, he shall slay him. 20. But if he thrust him of hatred, or hurl at him by laying of wait, then he die; 21. Or in enmity smite him with his hand, that he die: he that smote him shall surely be put to death; for he is a murderer: the revenger of blood shall slay the murderer, when he meeteth him. 22. But if he thrust him suddenly without enmity, or have cast upon him any thing without laying of wait, 23. Or with any stone, wherewith a man may die, seeing him not, and cast it upon him, that he die, and was not his enemy, neither sought his harm: 24. Then the congregation shall judge between the slayer and the revenger of blood according to these judgments: 25. And the congregation shall deliver the slayer out of the hand of the revenger of blood, and the congregation shall restore him to the city of his refuge, whither he was fled: and he shall abide in it unto the death of the high priest, which was anointed with the holy oil. 26. But if the slayer shall at any time come without the border of the city of his refuge, whither he was fled; 27. And the revenger of blood find him without the borders of the city of his refuge, and the revenger of blood kill the slayer; he shall not be guilty of blood: 28. Because he should have remained in the city of his refuge until the death of the high



priest: but after the death of the high priest the slayer shall return into the land of his possession. 29. So these things shall be for a statute of judgment unto you throughout your generations in all your dwellings. 30. Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die. 31. Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall surely be put to death. 32. And ye shall take no satisfaction for him that is fled to the city of his refuge, that he should come again to dwell in the land, until the death of the priest. 33. So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it. 34. Defile not therefore the land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I dwell: for I the Lord dwell among the children of Israel.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 35:16. But if he struck him down with an iron instrument, so that he died, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. 17. And if he struck him down with a stone in his hand, so that he might have died, and if he did die, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. 18. Or if he struck him down with a wooden instrument in his hand, so that he might have died, and he did die, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. 19. The avenger of blood himself shall put the murderer to death; he shall be put to death when he meets him. 20. Or if he shoved him in hatred, or threw something at him from ambush so that he died, 21. or if in he struck him down with his hand maliciously so that he died, the one who struck him down shall surely be put to death: he is a murderer; the blood avenger shall put the murderer to death when he meets him. 22. But if he shoved him suddenly and without malice, or threw something at him, not being in ambush, 23. or hit him with a stone object capable of killing him, but without seeing him, and was not hostile toward him, and had not sought to harm him, 24. then

the congregation shall judge between the killer and the blood avenger according to these regulations. 25. And the congregation shall deliver the man-killer from the hand of the avenger of blood, and the congregation shall restore him to the city of refuge to which he had fled; and he shall live in it until the death of the high priest who was anointed with the holy oil. 26. But if the man-killer goes at any time outside the border of the city of his refuge to which he has fled; 27. and if the avenger of blood finds him outside the border of the city of his refuge, the blood avenger may kill the man-killer and not be guilty of his blood: 28. because he should have remained inside his city of refuge until the death of the high priest. However, after the death of the high priest the man-killer shall return to the land of his possession. 29. So these things shall be for a regulatory law to you throughout your generations in all your dwellings. 30. If anyone kills another person, the murderer shall be put to death on the testimony of witnesses; but the testimony of one witness alone shall not cause him to be put to death. 31. Furthermore, you shall take no ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death; he shall surely be put to death. 32. And you shall not take a ransom for one who has fled to his city of refuge to permit him to return to live in his land before the death of the high priest. 33. In this way you shall not pollute the land where you are: for blood pollutes the land, and no land can be cleansed of the blood which has been shed upon it excepting by the blood of the one who shed it. 34. And you shall not defile the land which you shall inhabit, in which I dwell: for I am the Lord, dwelling among the Children of Israel.

#### COMMENTARY

As in other areas of the Law, the provisions defining murder and distinguishing it from accidental homicide; the different tests for determining guilt and innocence; the various punishments determined by the seriousness of the offense—all of these are vast improvements over any other ancient statutes. In essence, there are three differences, as shown in ICC; (1) the Law “insists that life is to be forfeited only in case of wilful

murder," in contrast to primitive measures which did not make such a distinction; (2) the Law "tacitly insists that the life of the actual murderer only can become forfeit"; in primitive cultures the family often might be compelled to share the punishment of the offense of one of its members; and, (3) the Law "forbids the acceptance of a money equivalent for a forfeited life," (p. 471). Additionally, clear points are set forth upon which to form a fair judgment in reference to guilt because of motive. The motivation, if any, behind any homicide was subjected to three areas of inquiry: first, the weapon itself: was it lethal in nature, or not? Implements of iron, large stones, or weapons of wood which were large enough to administer a death blow must first be established as the cause of death, if murder were suspected. Then, had there been enmity between the two? Witnesses would be adduced to confirm or deny this possibility. Feelings strong enough to lead to deliberate murder would be difficult to conceal. Those knowing of such feelings would become prime sources of testimony if murder were suspected. The third factor adduced would be the circumstances of the death: had the murderer plotted the assault? "Laying in wait" need not necessarily mean an ambush, but rather seeking an opportune time or place for the foul deed. Thrusting in hatred suggests an explosion of temper, but it is to be inferred that the circumstances are more than a mere accident; in such a circumstance, the judgment was in the hands of the congregation. Motive, weapon, and occasion, then, were the prime factors to be reviewed in any charge of murder.

The duty of the "revenger of blood" was clear: to pursue the manslayer and, if he be overtaken before reaching a city of refuge, to slay him; no guilt of blood would then be upon his hands. Additionally, he was to make certain that the slayer did not leave the city of refuge at all before he had been pronounced guilty or innocent of murder. Obviously, if he were guilty of murder, the punishment was stoning to death by the congregation. If he were innocent of murder, he was yet required to remain in the city of refuge until the death of the current high priest. To go outside the city was to invite death at

the hands of the "revenger of blood". Even under circumstances of accidental homicide, the guilty man, and the entire nation, were to learn that taking a life was no trivial matter. Courtesy, caution, and preventive measure may be learned from the law: man should do all he possibly can to avoid placing himself in a situation where, even by the remotest accident, he might endanger the life of another.

Because a great responsibility lay with the "congregation", we should recognize the concept behind the word. Ordinarily, *eydab* signified the entire nation assembled together. We cannot believe the trial of a murderer would have been the occasion for such an assembly, especially after they were scattered about in the new land; and the law is tailored to that situation. The force of the word may suggest that any individual of the congregation, or of the assembled ones who answered the call to assemble, might bear testimony if he had reason to do so, or that any one might participate in the decision, once having heard the testimony of all witnesses. If the accused were found innocent, he was provided safe escort back to the city of refuge from the scene of the trial. If he were guilty, all participated in his execution by stoning.

That the manslayer was forced to dwell in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest presents some interesting points. Several restrictions automatically accompany such a sentence. The man, and his family as well, would be required to uproot themselves from their previous residence and live within the city. The man himself dare not go outside the walls. Perhaps a radical change in his life style might be necessary, since he would not possibly be able to pursue either an agricultural or shepherding career within the walls of the city. Unless other members of his family visited him, he would be unable to see father, mother, brothers or sisters until the time of his release. Yet, he had escaped the sentence of death, and the inconveniences of his new life were much to be preferred over the sentence of death. The reason for specifying that the innocent manslayer was to be set free when the high priest died is not given. The proper understanding may be that presented in *PC*:

"The stress . . . which is laid upon the fact of his (the high priest's) decease, cf. v. 28, and the solemn notice of his having been anointed with the holy oil, seem to point unmistakably to something in his official and consecrated character which made it right that the rigour of the law should die with him. What the Jubile was to the debtor who had lost his property, that the death of the high priest was to the homicide who had lost his liberty," (p. 448).

A most significant factor in the general set of laws regarding manslaughter is the stipulation that more than one witness must be heard in testimony against the killer. It is a most reasonable safeguard, requiring none of our defense. If one were a witness of the assault and another of evidence of enmity, the testimonies might condemn the manslayer by their harmony; but no man could be condemned on the word of one other person alone.

The next provisions are equally grave and reasonable. The murderer could offer nothing whatever in place of his life if he were convicted of his crime. Having disregarded the sanctity and the right of another man to his life, the killer could not offer anything other than his own. No amount of money, no servile pledge, no measure of repentance—none were acceptable. The principle had held since the day of Noah: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man," (Gen. 9:6).

Again impressing upon the people the gravity of taking another's life even by accident is the legal provision that the manslayer found innocent of murder may not purchase his freedom by any means. Only the death of the high priest is effectual in procuring his release from the city or refuge. An act with a most serious consequence could only be seen in its true perspective if the consequences were inviolate.

One of the continuing marks of human decadence, especially in the abuse of positions of power, is the callous attitude of indifference to shedding the blood of the innocent. To anyone with a memory of the meaning of Buchenvald, Auschwitz,

Dachau, or other symbols of Hitler's blood-purge of the Jews in the time of World War II; or to those familiar with the political purges in Communist Russia or Red China, it is hardly necessary to point out the fact that men have furthered their own political or social philosophies by wholesale murder of the innocent within their lands. Surely the technique was not invented in our twentieth century, but, to our shame, our generation certainly has not eliminated the atrocious practice. The shedding of innocent blood, whether in individual or mass quantities, is a polluting, profaning crime for which an entire people may be defiled. In a most climactic way, the Lord implores Israel not to pollute their land because He Himself wants to live there! The serious child of God knows that the Divine Presence is more than a wish, more than a myth—it is a glorious fact.

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

646. In what three areas can you note a significant difference between the laws of homicide among the Israelites as compared with those laws from other cultures?
647. Why is it necessary to establish motivation behind any charge of murder?
648. Show the importance of the size and substance of the weapon in such a charge.
649. How do the circumstances under which a homicide occurs help to determine whether or not it might be murder?
650. To what facts might witnesses be brought to testify?
651. Exactly what does "laying in wait" mean?
652. Who was the "revenger of blood", and what was his primary obligation?
653. What was the action of the avenger of blood if the manslayer were found guilty of murder by the congregation?
654. What were his duties if the manslayer were found innocent of murder?

655. Define the obligations of the congregation in the accusation and prosecution, as well as execution of a murderer.
656. Discuss some of the lessons the Israelites, as well as other people who might become familiar with their laws, should have learned from these regulations regarding homicide.
657. What is the usual meaning of "congregation" as it is used of the Israelites?
658. How can it be demonstrated that these homicidal laws were designed for implementation after Israel settled in Canaan?
659. How long was the manslayer required to remain in the city of refuge if he were found innocent of murder?
660. What was accomplished by requiring the innocent man to remain away from his home for this period of time?
661. Suggest some of the inconveniences he and his family might have to undergo.
662. What significance do you find in the death of the high priest as it related to the manslayer?
663. Why should the witness of one man alone not be sufficient to establish the guilt of a man accused of murder?
664. To what various facts might the witnesses bear record?
665. What significance to you attach to the fact that the manslayer was unable to purchase his exemption from residence in the city of refuge by recompense of any kind?
666. What lesson attaches to the firm requirement that the murderer could not escape by any method from the sentence of death for his crime?
667. Does this provision contribute in any way to the concept of the intrinsic value of human life?
668. For how long had the principle of "life-for-life" been

- known among men? What were the circumstances of its beginning?
669. Have we a real basis for revoking this law of God?
670. What does history show has happened when human life was held in low esteem?
671. Why are the innocent most likely to suffer under these circumstances?
672. Cite historical instances of the debauches of political and social theorists whose power enabled them to enforce their discriminatory philosophies. Cite both contemporary and ancient examples.
673. For what supreme reason did God ask Israel to refrain from polluting her land?
674. Might He express the same thought today?

#### G. THE MARRIAGE OF HEIRESSES (36:1-13)

##### TEXT

Chapter 36:1. And the chief fathers of the families of the children of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of the sons of Joseph, came near, and spake before Moses, and before the princes, the chief fathers of the children of Israel: 2. And they said, The Lord commanded my lord to give the land for an inheritance by lot to the children of Israel: and my lord was commanded by the Lord to give the inheritance of Zelophehad our brother unto his daughters. 3. And if they be married to any of the sons of the other tribes of the children of Israel, then shall their inheritance be taken from the inheritance of our fathers, and shall be put to the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they are received: so shall it be taken from the lot of our inheritance. 4. And when the jubilee of the children of Israel shall be, then shall their inheritance be put unto the inheritance of the tribes whereunto they are received: so shall their inheritance be taken away from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers. 5. And Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of the



Lord, saying, The tribe of the sons of Joseph hath said well. 6. This is the thing which the Lord doth command concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, Let them marry to whom they think best; only to the family of the tribe of their father shall they marry. 7. So shall not the inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe: for every one of the children of Israel shall keep himself to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers. 8. And every daughter, that possesseth an inheritance in any tribe of the children of Israel, shall be wife unto one of the family of the tribe of her father, that the children of Israel may enjoy every man the inheritance of his fathers. 9. Neither shall the inheritance remove from one tribe to another tribe; but every one of the tribes of the children of Israel shall keep himself to his own inheritance. 10. Even as the Lord commanded Moses, so did the daughters of Zelphehad: 11. For Mahlah, Tirzah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, were married unto their father's brothers' sons: 12. And they were married into the families of the sons of Manasseh the son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained in the tribe of the family of their father. 13. These are the commandments and the judgments, which the Lord commanded, by the hand of Moses, unto the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho.

## PARAPHRASE

Chapter 36:1. And the heads of the fathers' households of the family of the children of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of the children of Joseph, approached unto Moses and the leaders, the heads of the fathers' households of the children of Israel, 2. and said, "The Lord commanded my lord to give the land by lot as an inheritance, and my lord was commanded by the Lord to give the inheritance of Zelophehad our brother to his daughters. 3. But if they marry any of the sons of other tribes of the children of Israel, their inheritance shall be taken from the inheritance of our fathers and will be added to the inheritance of the tribe to which they then belong; in this way it shall be withdrawn from

the lot of the inheritance. 4. And when the jubilee of the children of Israel comes, then their inheritance will be added to the inheritance of the tribe to which they then belong; in this way their inheritance shall be withdrawn from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers." 5. So Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of the Lord, saying, "The tribe of the children of Joseph has spoken correctly. 6. This is what the Lord commanded regarding the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, 'Let them marry whomever they choose; only let them marry within the family of the tribe of their father.' 7. Thus no inheritance of the children of Israel shall be transferred from tribe to tribe; the children of Israel shall individually hold to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers. 8. And every daughter who comes into the possession of an inheritance of any of the tribes of the children of Israel shall become the wife of one of the families of the tribe of her father, so that the children of Israel may each maintain his own inheritance." 10. So the daughters of Zelophehad did just as the Lord had commanded Moses: 11. Mahlah, Tirzah, and Hoglah, and Milcah and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, married their uncles' sons. 12. They married into the families of the children of Manasseh the son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained with the tribe of the family of their father. 13. These are the commandments and the laws which the Lord commanded unto the children of Israel through the hand of Moses in the plain of Moab by the Jordan opposite Jericho.

#### COMMENTARY

In the previously introduced question about the laws of inheritance as they applied to the daughters of a man without sons, the legislation was aimed at preserving land holdings within the family and the tribe of the father. One circumstance had not been considered at that time: supposing the marriage of an inheriting daughter to a man of another tribe; did the land she had received from her father go with her as a possession of the tribe of her husband? The consequences of such a possibility are endless and, theoretically, very confusing. The

matter of the Jubilee year is introduced since in that year all land was re-settled and all titles cleared for permanent ownership. Titles not challenged were considered settled; and the claims of the children of a legitimate heiress could not be called into question. Hence, parcels of land might readily and in some quantity escape the family and tribe for which they were intended, despite the obvious fact that an essential principle of ownership was being violated.

In answer to the problem, the simple answer is announced: the women who inherited land were forbidden to marry outside their tribes. The instance before us would mean that Zelophehad's daughters must marry men of Manasseh. Any further complications were avoided when they actually married "their father's brothers' sons," (v. 11). The complications of marriage outside the family would be similar to those of marriage outside the tribe; hence, the solution of Zelophehad's daughters was an ideal one.

A single brief sentence summarizes much of the content and intent of *Numbers*: to present the commandments and judgments given by the Lord through Moses to Israel during their last days in Moab opposite Jericho. The many interesting and informative facts of history contained in the book are of secondary importance when compared with the words spoken of God for the common welfare. On the same principle, the details of history reflect the degree to which men have followed or disregarded such words; and the men are themselves justified or condemned upon the basis. Knowing now the general regulations which are intended to govern their lives in the land which God has prepared for them, the Israelites are but briefly removed from that day when they will cross the Jordan and inhabit the land of "milk and honey".

#### QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

675. Review the situation with Zelophehad's daughters, and the verdict rendered at that time.

676. What complications would arise if any of the daughters were to marry outside the tribe of Manasseh?
677. How does the entire situation relate to the year of Jubilee?
678. What simple regulation was pronounced for the problem?
679. Why was it important that the marriages be consummated within family groups?
680. What advantage was there in settling such issues as this before the land of Canaan was actually taken?

ABBREVIATIONS FOR REFERENCES USED  
IN THE TEXT

<u>Book</u>	<u>Abbreviation</u>
<i>American Standard Version</i>	AS
<i>The Interpreter's Bible</i>	IB
<i>The International Critical Commentary</i>	ICC
<i>Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament</i>	ILOT
<i>Keil &amp; Delitzsch, Commentaries on the Old Testament</i>	KD
<i>King James Version</i>	KJV
<i>New American Standard Bible</i>	NASB
<i>Zondervan's Pictorial Bible Dictionary</i>	PBD
<i>The Preacher's Homiletic Commentary</i>	PHC
<i>The Pulpit Commentary</i>	PC
<i>Rashi Commentaries on the Pentateuch</i>	RCP

## GLOSSARY to the Book of NUMBERS

- Aaron**—"luminous" (?). First son of Amram and Jochebed, brother of Moses and Miriam. Selected by God to be spokesman for Moses, Aaron worked closely with his brother throughout the time of the exodus and subsequent history. He was made the first high priest by the Lord, although his character was weak and he fell into the sin of jealousy toward his brother. Death came to him at age 123 years on the top of Mt. Hor, at which time his robes were stripped from him and put upon his son and successor, Eleazar. The people mourned for him for thirty days.
- Abarim**—"a region on the other side". Site of one of the final encampments of the Israelites east of the Jordan. From one of the peaks of the mountains in this area, the Israelites viewed the Promised Land, as did Moses.
- Abel-shittim**—"meadow of the acacia trees." A plain in the land of Moab. Here the Israelites spent their last few days before crossing into Canaan.
- Abidan**—"father is judge." A prince selected from the tribe of Benjamin as their representative at the census in the wilderness. He also offered a sacrifice as one of the leaders of Israel when the tabernacle was dedicated.
- Abihail**—"father is strength." The head of the house of Merari; father of Zuriel.
- Abihu**—"the father is he." The second son of Aaron who, with his father, brother, and seventy elders, ascended Sinai part-way with Moses. Later killed along with his brother Nadab when they offered strange fire to Jehovah.
- Abiram**—"father of exaltation." One of the conspirators against Moses, along with Dathan and Korah, his brothers. He was struck dead by the Lord, who opened the earth to swallow them.
- Agag**—"violent, war-like," (?). A royal title given to the Amalekite princes. Its use is similar to that of 'Pharaoh' or 'Caesar', in that it is applied to the current ruler at the time of writing.

GLOSSARY

**Ahiezer**—"helping brother," (?). Head of the tribe of Dan in the wilderness.

**Ahihud**—"brother of Majesty." Head of the tribe of Asher who assisted Moses in the division of the land of Canaan.

**Ahiman**—"my brother is a gift." One of the three giant sons of Anak whom the Israelite spies saw at Mount Hermon.

**Ahiram**—"exalted brother." A son of Benjamin. Not listed in Genesis, he is the third of five sons in Numbers.(26:38, 39).

**Ain**—"fountain." A spring, or flowing water, located west of Riblah on the eastern border of the Promised Land. Perhaps to be identified with the source of the Orontes river.

**Akrabbim**—"scorpions, or curves." The "ascent of the scorpions," a pass rising between the southwestern corner of the Dead Sea and the Wilderness of Zin; the boundary between Judah and Edom.

**Almon-diblathaim**—"Almon of the two cakes of figs." One of the final camps of Israel—the eighth after Ezion-geber—situated between Dibon-gad and the mountains of Abarim.

**Alush**—"wild place, or lion's lair," (?). One of the campsites of Israel between Dophkah and Rephidim.

**Amalekites**—"laborious, war-like" (?). Descendants of Esau, the Amalekites were nomadic marauders living principally in the Negeb. They, together with the Canaanites, defeated Israel at Hormah.

**Ammiel**—"God is my kinsman." Son of Gemalli, and Dan's spy among those sent into Canaan by Moses.

**Ammihud**—"my kinsman is glorious." 1. An Ephraimite and father of Elishama. 2. A Simeonite and father of Shemuel. 3. A Naphtalite whose son, Pedahel, assisted in dividing the Promised Land.

**Amminadab**—"my kinsman is generous." 1. Aaron's father-in-law; a Levite. 2. A prince of Judah.

## NUMBERS

**Ammishaddai**—"my kinsman is the Almighty." A Danite, whose son was captain of the tribe of Dan.

**Ammonites**—"son of my relative." Descendants of Ben-Ammi, the son of Lot by his second daughter. Related to the Moabites, with whom they often joined against a common foe.

**Amorites**—"highlanders". Descendants of Canaan, these people, under king Sihon, took a large area from Moab and held it during the time of the Israelites' wanderings.

**Amram**—"exalted people." A Levite and father of Moses, Aaron and Miriam.

**Anak**—"long necked; giant." Descended from Arba, and the father of the Anakim. Three of their chiefs occupied Hebron at the time of the spies' visit.

**Ar**—"city". A city or district in Moab; at one time the capital. Located on the Arnon River.

**Arad**—"wild ass; fugitive" (?). A city in the Negeb, about seventeen miles south of Hebron.

**Ard**—"descender, or ruler." Son of Bela, descendant of Benjamin.

**Areli**—"valiant". A son of Gad and founder of the Arelites.

**Arnon**—"roaring stream." River rising in Arabia which flows into the Dead Sea through a high gorge from the east. During the time of the wilderness wandering, it formed the boundary between the Moabites and the Amorites.

**Arod**—"descendant". A son of Gad and head of the Arodites during Moses' day. (26:17).

**Aroer**—"poor, naked, helpless." 1. A town on a branch of the brook Jabbok, captured from Sihon. 2. A town on the north bank of the Arnon, held by the Reubenites.

**Ashbel**—"man of Baal." Second son of Benjamin, and father of the Ashbelites.

**Asher**—"happy". The second son of Zilpah, by Jacob; and the tribe descended from him.



## GLOSSARY

- Asriel**—"God binds together." Son of Gilead, and grandson of Manasseh.
- Asshur**—"level plain." Apparently Assyria in Balaam's prophecy. Asshur was a descendant of Ham, and builder of Nineveh. (24:22, 24).
- Ataroth**—"crowns". A city fortified by Gad, although in the original territory of Manasseh. (32:35).
- Atroth-shophan**—"crowns of nakedness". Either the full name of the city Atroth, or, if the names are intended to be separate in 32:35, it is the listing of separate cities taken by Gad.
- Azmon**—"strong". A city on the southern border of Judah. (34:4, 5).
- Azzan**—"strong". The father of Paltiel, prince of the tribe of Issachar. (34:26).
- Baal-Meon**—"Baal of Meon". An old city near the border of Moab, assigned to Reuben. (32:38). (Also called Beon in 32:3).
- Baal-peor**—"Baal of Peor". A Moabite god, probably Chemosh, worshipped on the top of Mount Peor. It was this god which the Israelites were enticed to worship by the Moabite women in Numbers 25:1-9.
- Baal-Zephon**—"lord of the north". An encampment of the Israelites before crossing the Red Sea. (33:7). Exact location is unknown.
- Balaam**—"devouring", or "devourer". Son of Peor, and a prophet used, when willing, to declare the counsel of Jehovah to Balak, king of Moab. Ultimately he yielded to selfish ambition, attempting both to speak for the Lord and to please Balak with his words. Although he uttered one of the great prophecies of the Messiah as the Star of Jacob and the scepter of Israel smiting her enemies, including Moab, he remained affiliated with the Moabites and eventually died in battle against Israel.

NUMBERS

- Balak**—"devastator". King of Moab who hired Balaam to curse the Israelites. When Balaam's words were anything but reassuring, the Israelites were brought to cohabit with the Moabite women in lustful idolatry. Consequently, a great judgment came upon the people of God.
- Bamoth-Baal**—"the high places of Baal". A place north of the Arnon River to which Balak took Balaam. Later a part of Reuben's territory. (21:19; 22:41).
- Bashan**—"smooth, fertile land". A plateau area east of the Sea of Galilee, north of Gilead, and extending to Mount Hermon, extremely fertile and rich. It was taken by the Israelites before crossing the Jordan, and was assigned to the half-tribe of Manasseh. (21:33-35).
- Bashan Havoth Jair**—"encampments of Jair in Bashan". Several unwallied towns, perhaps as many as 60, taken by Jair of the tribe of Manasseh. (32:41).
- Becher**—"first born", or "young camel". Son of Benjamin whose descendants are not registered among the families of Israel, perhaps because they were too few to form a tribe. (26:38).
- Beer**—"a well". One of the encampments of the Israelites in the wilderness. (21:16).
- Bela**—"destruction". Oldest son of Benjamin, and head of the Belaites. (26:38).
- Bene Jaakan**—"sons of intelligence". An encampment of Israel in the wilderness, shortly before Aaron's death. (33:31, 32).
- Benjamin**—"son of my right hand". Youngest son of Jacob; one of the tribes of Israel, immediately north of Judea.
- Beon**—"lord of On", or "house of On". Also: Baal-Meon. A town built by Reuben. (32:3).
- Beor**—"shepherd". The father of Balaam. (22:5, *et passim*).
- Beriah**—"gift" (?), "unfortunate" (?). A son of Asher and father of the Beriites. (26:44).

## GLOSSARY

- Beth-Haran**—"house of the high place". A fortified city built by Gad in Gilead. (32:36).
- Beth Jeshimoth**—"house of desolations". A city of Moab near the place where the Jordan enters the Dead Sea. (33:49).
- Beth Nimrah**—"house of the leopard". A fenced city in Gad. (32:3, 36).
- Bukki**—"mouth of Jah". A prince of Dan who helped divide the land under Joshua. (34:22).
- Caleb**—"dog", "impetuous". Son of Jephunneh of the tribe of Judah, appointed as one of the twelve spies sent into Canaan; and, with Joshua, one of the two who urged immediate occupation of the Promised Land. For his faithfulness, he was permitted to enter into Canaan, and received Hebron, with its surrounding hills.
- Canaan**—"low," "flat". Early name of Palestine, the land taken by the Israelites. The name is derived from the son of Ham and grandson of Noah who settled here.
- Canaanites**—"lowlanders". Generally, any of the pagan inhabitants in Palestine prior to, and together with the tribes of Israel. Specifically, the Tribe of the Canaanites occupied the Jordan Valley, portions of the valley of Jezreel and of the plain of Sharon.
- Carmi**—"fruitful". One of the sons of Reuben, and father of the Carmites. (26:6).
- Chemosh**—"fire", "hearth". The primary god of Moab. (21:29).
- Chinnereth**—"harp", "circuit". Early name for the Sea of Galilee. (34:11).
- Chislon**—"strong". Father of Elidad, Benjamite prince who assisted in division of the land of Promise. (34:21).
- Chittim**—"terrible", "giants". Descendants of Javan; this name was given to the Island of Cyprus and the islands and coasts of the Mediterranean. (24:24).

## NUMBERS

- Cozbi**—"deceitful". A Midianite woman through whom the fiery plague came upon Israel in the wilderness. She was killed by Aaron's grandson, Phinehas. (25:16-18).
- Dan**—"judge". Fifth son of Jacob, and one of the twelve tribes. One of the largest of the tribes, (62,700), they were assigned rear guard duty during the Exodus.
- Dathan**—"fountain". Great-grandson of Reuben, he and his brothers, Abiram and Korah, led a rebellion against Moses, and both they and their families were swallowed up by the earth. (16:2-15; 16:31-35).
- Deuel**—"God knows". Father of Eliasaph, one of the princes, of the tribe of Gad.
- Dibon**—meaning unknown. Station of one of the encampments of Israel; in the high plain of Moab east of the Dead Sea. At first held by Sihon of the Amorites, it was taken by Israel, and became a city of Gad.
- Dophkah**—"cattle driving" (?). Encampment of the Israelites between the Red Sea and Sinai. (33:12).
- Eber**—"a shoot". Perhaps a patronymic designation of the descendants of Eber; or, perhaps referring to those "beyond the river".
- Ebronah**—"beach", "bank", "coast". Encampment of Israel just before arrival at Ezion-geber on the Gulf of Akaba. (33:34).
- Edom**—"red". Also called Seir, this territory consisted of a 100-mile long valley directly south of the Dead Sea reaching to the Gulf of Akaba. The king of this land refused permission to Israel to pass through his territory, necessitating a much longer march toward Canaan. (20:14-21).
- Edrei**—"strong". An important city of Og, king of Bashan, taken by the Israelites. The city and the territory came to the half-tribe of Manasseh. (21:33).

## GLOSSARY

**Egypt**—form and meaning uncertain. Land settled by the second son of Ham, who gave his name to the country. Here the Israelites were enslaved for 400 years; from this land they were led of God to Sinai, thence to the Land of Promise ultimately. From the land, the Israelites brought elements of a polytheistic religion, soon seen in the erection of the golden calf at Sinai. The Hebrews both hated and respected this land. They often formed unprofitable alliances with the Egyptians; they often feared the military prowess of this people. At the same time, they could not forget that Egypt had provided their forefathers with food when they otherwise might have succumbed to the severe famine in the time of Joseph. The Israelites remembered with favor the delicacies they had enjoyed in Egypt (see 11:5, 6); but they would be chronically infected with religious adulteries from the same source.

**Egypt, River of**—the wadi of Mitsrayim. Probably the Wady el-Arish, which formed the border between Canaan and Egypt; certainly not the Nile. It was the southern boundary of Judah. (34:5).

**Eldad**—"God has loved". This man, along with Medad, remained in the camp when Moses and 70 elders were summoned to the Tabernacle to receive the gift of prophecy; they received the gift at their tents, and prophesied there. Despite Joshua's objection, Moses commended the two. (11:24-29).

**Elealeh**—"God ascends". A town associated with Heshbon. Located approximately one mile north of this city, it belonged to Reuben after the military exploits of Israel east of the Jordan. (32:3, 37).

**Eleazar**—"God has helped". Third son of Aaron, he was designated chief priest and was given several special tasks before the Lord, (3:32; 19:3, 4; 16:36-39). At Aaron's death, he was appointed chief priest, and he assisted in taking the second census, as well as in dividing the booty from conquest of the Midianites. He also assigned the 2½

## NUMBERS

tribes to the land east of the Jordan and helped Joshua divide the Promised Land among the tribes.(34:17).

**Elim**—"terebinths". Second place of encampment after crossing the Red Sea. A fine oasis with a dozen springs and 70 palm trees was found here. (33:9, 10).

**Elishama**—"God has heard". Grandfather of Joshua; prince of Ephraim when the wilderness wanderings began. (1:10, 2:18, *et passim*).

**Elizaphan**—"God has concealed". Son of Uzziel, chief among the Kohathites when the census was taken. (3:30).

**Elizur**—"God is a rock". Son of Shedeur and prince of Reuben who helped in the census. (1:5, *et passim*).

**Elon**—"oak, strong". Second of Zebulun's three sons. (26:26).

**Enan**—"fountain". Father of Ahira, of Naphtali, who aided in the census at Sinai. (1:15; *et passim*).

**Ephod**—"oracular". The father of Hanniel, prince of Manasseh. (34:23).

**Ephraim**—"double fruit". The younger of Joseph's two sons. He received the right hand of Jacob in blessing, despite Joseph's protest. The Ephraimites marched and camped on the west side of the Tabernacle in the wilderness. Joshua was of this tribe. (2:18-24; 13:8).

**Er**—"watchful". First son of Judah by Shua, the Canaanite. Named in the genealogy of Judah.(26:19).

**Eran**—"watcher". Ephraim's grandson, by Shuthelah. (26:36).

**Eri**—"my watcher". Fifth son of Gad, and father of the Erites. (26:16).

**Eshcol**—"cluster". Valley near Hebron from which the Israelite spies brought back a large cluster of grapes. (13:23, 24).

**Etham**—meaning unknown. A wilderness area through which Israel wandered after leaving Succoth; perhaps on both sides of the north end of the Dead Sea. (33:6-8, see Ex. 13:20).

## GLOSSARY

- Ethiopia**—meaning unknown. Land from which Moses' wife had come (12:1, 2); named for Cush, son of Ham.
- Evi**—"desire". One of the five kings of Midian slain in battle against Israel on the plains of Moab. (31:8).
- Ezion-geber**—"backbone of a mighty one". City on the Gulf of Akaba, near Elath. Israel stopped here last on the way to Kadesh. (33:35, 36).
- Gad**—"fortune". Seventh son of Jacob. The tribe of the Gadites shrank more than 5,000 between the two censuses. They chose to occupy land east of the Jordan, and were granted the central portion, between Reuben to the south and the half-tribe of Manasseh to the north.
- Gaddi**—"belonging to fortune". Chosen from the tribe of Manasseh as one of the twelve spies. (13:11).
- Gaddiel**—"Gad brings a fortune". Representative from Zebulun as one of the twelve spies. (13:10).
- Gamaliel**—"reward of God". Chief of the tribe of Manasseh who helped Moses in the census. (1:10, *et passim*).
- Gemalli**—"camel owner", or "rider". Father of Ammiel, ruler of the tribe of Dan; one of twelve spies sent into Canaan. (13:12).
- Gershon**—"a stranger in that place". First son of Levi. During the wanderings, the family were assigned to care for the Tent itself. (3:17, 18, 21, 23-25, *et passim*).
- Geuel**—"God of salvation". A prince of Gad, also sent out with the twelve spies to Canaan. (13:15).
- Gideoni**—"one who cuts down". Prince of Benjamin who assisted in the census at Sinai. (7:60).
- Gilead**—"strong, rocky". Region in the Trans-Jordan country from about the southern tip of the Sea of Galilee to the northern end of the Dead Sea. At that time, it was very fertile, and much to be desired. Most of the area was claimed by Gad; the southern portion formed part of Reuben's claim. (32:1).

## NUMBERS

- Guni**—"protected". A family of the tribe of Naphtali. (26:48).
- Haggi**—"festive". Son of Gad, and ancestor of the Haggites. (26:15).
- Hamath**—"fortification". City in upper Syria, on the Orontes river. Specified as the northern limit of Israel. (34:8).
- Hamul**—"pity". Grandson of Judah, and son of Perez. (26:21).
- Hanniel**—"God is gracious". Son of Ephod, prince of Manasseh, appointed to aid in dividing the land. (34:23).
- Hanoch**—"dedicated". First son of Reuben; head of the Hanochites. (26:5).
- Haradah**—"terror". An encampment of Israel in the wilderness after leaving Mount Shepher. Location is unknown. (33:24).
- Hashmonah**—"fruitfulness". Camping station in the wilderness; location unknown. (33:29, 30).
- Havoth-jair**—"villages of Jair". A group of villages taken by Jair, son of Manasseh. The term signifies a village of tents. (32:41).
- Hazar-addar**—"house of honor". Site on the southern border of Judah, west of Kadesh-barnea. (34:4).
- Hazar-enan**—"court of the fountains". Spot where the northern and eastern boundaries of the Promised Land intersect, approximately 60 miles east by northeast of Damascus. (34:9, 10).
- HazerOTH**—"courts, or villages". One of the stations on the journey from Mt. Sinai—approximately lying 45 miles distant from the peak. The people remained here for some time recuperating from the plague at Kibroth-hattaavah; here Miriam and Aaron rebelled against Moses. (11:35; 12).
- Hebron**—"league, confederacy". One of the world's most ancient cities, Hebron lies about 20 miles south and somewhat west of Jerusalem, at an altitude of nearly 3000 feet. The spies brought a huge cluster of grapes from the valley of Eshcol, near this city. (13:22-24).



## GLOSSARY

- Helek**—meaning uncertain. Second son of Gilead, of the tribe of Manasseh, and head of a family. (26:30).
- Helon**—“valorous”. A leading man of the tribe of Zebulun at the census. (1:9).
- Hepher**—“pit, well”. The father of Zelophehad, whose daughters sought a ruling on the inheritance and their tribal properties; of the tribe of Manasseh. (26:32; 27:1-8, 36:1-9).
- Heshbon**—“reckoning”. Capital of the territory of the Amorites; taken by Israel (21:21-31), and held as part of Reuben’s land.
- Hezron**—“blooming”. (a) Son of Reuben, and father of the Hezronites. (26:6). (b) Descendant of Judah, through Perez. (26:21).
- Hittites**—“people of Heth”. Descendants of Ham, through Canaan and Heth. Listed along with the Jebusites, and Amorites as mountain-dwellers in the south of the land of Canaan, they were a powerful but peaceable people whose very existence was in dispute among Bible critics until archeological discoveries in 1871 fully substantiated the record of Scripture. (13:29).
- Hobab**—“beloved”. Brother of Zipporah, and hence a brother-in-law to Moses. Moses urged him to guide the people through the wilderness. At first declining, Hobab later agreed. (10:29).
- Hoglah**—“magpie”. One of the five daughters of Zelophehad, involved in the problem of familial inheritance of land. (26:33; 27:1-11; 36:1-12).
- Hor**—“mountain”. (a) Mountain where Aaron died, and from which the Israelites marched south toward the Red Sea (20:22-29; 31:4; 33:37-41). (b) Unidentified peak named as a landmark in the border of northern Israel, between the Mediterranean and the entrance of Hamath (34:7, 8).

NUMBERS

- Hor-hagidgad**—"hollow, or cavern of Gilgad". One of the camps of Israel in the wilderness. (33:32, 33).
- Hori**—"cave-dweller". Father of Shaphat, one of the spies. Of the tribe of Simeon. (13:5).
- Hormah**—"A devoted place". Scene of defeat of the rebellious Israelites, administered by the Amelkites. Situated midway between Gaza and Beer-sheba. (14:45; 21:1-3).
- Hoshea**—"salvation". Early name of Joshua; changed my Moses. (13:8, 16).
- Hupham**—Son of Benjamin and father of the Huphamites. (26:39).
- Hur**—"whiteness". One of five Midianite kings killed in battle against Israel at the time of Balaam's death.(31:1-8).
- Hushim**—Sons of Dan, called Shuham in 26:42.
- Igal**—"God redeems". One of the twelve spies sent into Canaan. (13:7).
- Ije-abarim**—"ruins of Abarim". An unidentified station of the Israelites in the vicinity of Moab. (33:44).
- Imnah**—"right hand, or good fortune". Head of a family of Asher. (26:44).
- Israel**—"prince of God". In Numbers, the name generally refers to the nation descended from Jacob—the twelve tribes under Moses. (1:2, 3, 45, 54; 10:12; 13:21; 14:2, *et passim*).
- Issachar**—One of the tribes of Israel. Between the first and second censuses, the tribe increased by nearly 10,000 warriors. (1:28, 29, cf. 26:25).
- Ithamar**—Youngest of Aaron's four sons. He was treasurer of the tabernacle offerings and superintendent of the Gershonites and Merarites. (4:28, 33).
- Izhar**—"the shining one". Son of Kohath. (3:19).
- Jaakan**—A camp during the wanderings (33:31, 32). The site of Aaron's burial (Deut. 10:6, 7).

## GLOSSARY

- Jaazer, Jazer**—"helpful". Fertile land taken from the Amorites under Moses. (21:32; 32:1-5).
- Jabbok**—"flowing". The largest river flowing into the Jordan from the east. It formed the border between the kingdoms of Sihon and Og, about midway between the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee. (21:21-25).
- Jabesh-Gilead**—"dry". Most important city in the area of the Gileadites; given to the half tribe of Manasseh. (32:33).
- Jachin**—"he will set up". Fourth son of Simeon and founder of the Jachanites.(26:12).
- Jahaz**—Stronghold north of the Arnon river, conquered by Israel, and given as a portion of the inheritance of Reuben. (21:21-25).
- Jahleel**—Son of Zebulun, and father of the Jahleel clan.(26:26).
- Jahzeel**—"God divides, or apportions". Son of Naphtali; descendants are named in 26:48.
- Jair**—"he enlightens". A leading warrior in the conquest of Gilead, Jair was the son of Manasseh. (32:40, 41).
- Jamin**—"right hand". A son of Simeon; later a tribe. (26:12).
- Jashub**—"he returns". A son and later a tribe descended from Issachar. (26:24).
- Jazer**—meaning unknown. Prominent city in Gilead, built by the Gadites. (21:31, 32).
- Jebusites**—meaning unknown. Of doubtful origin, the Jebusites occupied the area in and around Jerusalem. A mountain tribe, they seem also to have been small in number. (13:29).
- Jeezer**—meaning unknown. Head of a family of the tribe of Manasseh. (26:30).
- Jehoshua**—"the Lord is deliverance". Usual Hebrew form of "Joshua". (13:16).
- Jemuel**—meaning unknown. Son of Simeon, called "Nemuel" in 26:12.

NUMBERS

- Jephunnah**—"it will be prepared". The father of Caleb, of the tribe of Judah. (13:6).
- Jeshimon**—"waste, desert". Barren land or desert in the southeastern portion of Judah, between Hebron and the Dead Sea. (21:20; 23:28).
- Jesui**—"the Lord is satisfied". Otherwise, Ishvi. Son of Asher, and head of a tribe. (26:44).
- Jezer**—"form, purpose". Son of Naphtali and head of a tribe. (26:49).
- Jimna**—"good fortune". Son of Asher (26:44).
- Jochebed**—"Jehovah is glory". Mother of Moses, Aaron and Miriam, and sister of Kohath. (26:59).
- Jogbehah**—"lofty". City in Gilead given to Gad. (32:35).
- Jogli**—"led into exile". Father of Bukki, a chief among the Danites. (34:22).
- Jordan**—"flowing downward". The great river of Palestine, flowing from the environs of Mount Hermon in Syria to its ultimate receptacle, the Dead Sea. Crossing this river would symbolize Israel's entrance into the Promised Land. (13:29, *et passim*).
- Joseph**—"he will add". Eleventh, and favored son of Jacob; his name was not given to one of the twelve tribes, but the inheritance was passed through two of his sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. (1:10, *et passim*).
- Joshua**—"Jehovah is deliverer". Son of Nun, and the man selected to succeed Moses as leader of the Israelites. (11:28, *et passim*).
- Jotbathah**—meaning unknown. An unidentified camp of the Israelites in the desert. (33:33, 34).
- Judah**—"praise". The fourth son of Jacob by Leah. The tribe was given a favored area in the Promised Land. (1:7 *et passim*).

GLOSSARY

- Kadesh, Kadesh-Barnea**—"holy". A region immediately south of the Promised Land in which Israel remained as the twelve spies were sent into that Land. The death of Miriam was the first of several incidents here (20:1; 13:26; 20:14; *et passim*).
- Khelathah**—"gathering, assembly". Unidentified camp of Israel during their wanderings. (33:22, 23).
- Kemuel**—"God's mount". A prince of the tribe of Ephraim, consulted in the division of Canaan. (34:24).
- Kenath**—"possession". An Amorite city conquered by Nobah, along with surrounding villages of the area. (32:42).
- Kenezite**—"belonging to the side or flank". A tribe which descended from Esau, but who may have become quickly absorbed into the tribe of Judah. Caleb was of the Kenezites, through Jephunneh. (32:12).
- Kenite**—"smith". A nomadic tribe among the tribes of Canaan; perhaps dispersed among the Amalekites. (24:21, 22).
- Kibroth-hattaavah**—"graves of lust". Camp of Israel one day after leaving Sinai. Here the people lusted for flesh, and a great quantity of quails came upon them. This was followed by a plague and widespread death. (11:34; 33:16).
- Kirjathaim**—"two cities". A city in the hills of Moab, formerly held by Sihon and given to Reuben. (32:37).
- Kohath**—"assembly". The second son of Levi, and ancestor of Moses and Aaron. One of the three divisions of the Levites, they were given special duties over the ark, the table, the candlestick and the vessels of the sanctuary, along with the screen and the service. (3:17ff, *et passim*).
- Korah**—"baldness". Along with Dathan and Abiram, Korah rebelled against the authority of Moses in the wilderness. Along with them and all their families, he was swallowed up by the earth in punishment. (16:11-32; 26:9; 27:3).
- Lael**—"belonging to God". A Levite of the family of Gershon. (3:24).

## NUMBERS

- Levi**—"joined unto". Third son of Leah and Jacob, from whom the priestly tribe descended, and whose name they bore. (1:49 *et passim*).
- Libnah**—"whiteness, transparent". The fifth camp of Israel after leaving Sinai. (33:20, 21).
- Libni**—"white, distinguished". Son of Gershon, and head of the Libnites. (3:18, 21; 26:58).
- Machi**—meaning uncertain. One of the twelve spies; of the tribe of Gad. (13:15).
- Machir**—"salesman". Son of Manasseh to whom Moses pledged the territory of Gilead. (26:29; 32:39, 40).
- Mahli**—"sickness or weakness". Son of Merari of the Levites. (3:20).
- Makheloth**—"assemblies". Camp of the Israelites of uncertain location. (33:25, 26).
- Malchiel**—"God is king". Son of Beriah and grandson of Asher. (26:45).
- Manasseh**—"causing to forget". Tribe descended from the first son of Joseph. They were given a share of the land east of the Jordan. (27:1).
- Marah**—"bitter". The first camp of Israel after crossing the Red Sea; Moses healed the brackish waters of the area. (33:8ff).
- Mattanah**—"gift". An unidentified station of the Israelites in the wilderness. (21:18ff).
- Medad**—"affectionate". An elder who remained in the camp apart from the other elders, but upon whom, along with Eldad, the spirit of prophecy fell. (11:26,27).
- Medeba**—"gently flowing waters". A city conquered by the Israelites at the same time they took Heshbon and Dibon. (21:30).
- Merari**—"bitter". The third son of Levi. This family of priests cared for the curtains, covers, hangings and other similar items of the tabernacle. (3:17, 20, 25, 26, 33, 36, 37, *et passim*).

## GLOSSARY

- Meribah**—"strife, contention". Site of the rock where Moses brought forth water presumptuously. Located in Rephidim near Kadesh-Barnea. (20:13, 24; 27:14).
- Michael**—"who is like God?" Father of Sethur, who was sent as Asher's representative among the spies. (13:13).
- Midian**—"contention". Land east of Edom whose people were at first friendly toward the Israelites in the desert, but who later were numbered with the Moabites in warfare. (22:4, *et passim*).
- Milcah**—"counsel". One of the daughters of Zelophehad. (26:33; 27:1; 36:11).
- Miriam**—"fat, thick". Sister of Moses and Aaron. She opposed Moses at Hazeroth, was smitten with leprosy, and was cured upon Aaron's intercession. She died and was buried at Kadesh. (12:1-5; 10-15; 20:1).
- Mithcah**—"sweetness". One of the wilderness camps of Israel. (33:28ff.)
- Moab**—"water of a father". Land east of the Dead Sea and north of Edom through which the Israelites passed. Worshipers of Chemosh and the Baalim, the inhabitants lured Israel into grave sin, resulting in a war in which Moab was defeated. (21:11, *et passim*).
- Moseroth**—"bonds". Camp of the Israelites in the desert; it was here that Aaron died and was buried. (33:30, 31).
- Moses**—"drawn out". The great leader and prophet of Israel. This book chronicles many of the most important events in the life of Moses: he is directed to take the census of his people (1:2ff); he encounters the murmuring of his brother and sister, Aaron and Miriam about his Ethiopian wife, with the consequent punishment to Miriam (12:1-15); the twelve spies are sent into Canaan, but the children of Israel refuse to march forward into the land (13:1-14:9); Moses utters one of his great intercessory prayers (14:13-19); Korah,

## NUMBERS

Dathan, and Abiram lead a rebellion of the people, and suffer the consequences (16:1-35); acting rashly, Moses strikes the rock at Meribah, and is told that his disobedience will prevent his entering into Canaan (20:2-13); Miriam dies (20:1), as does Aaron (20:24-29); Israel defeats Sihon and Og in great battles (ch. 21); the people sin flagrantly with Baal-Peor (ch. 25); the second census (26:1-63); Joshua is appointed to succeed Moses (27:18-23); the Midianites are slaughtered (ch. 31); Reuben, Gad, and one-half of Manasseh are conditionally allowed to settle east of the Jordan (ch. 32); all the journeys of the people are listed (ch. 33); the borders of Canaan are established (34:1-12); the Levitical cities are set forth as cities of refuge (ch. 35). Throughout all the forty years of this period of Moses' life, he is the unquestioned leader of Israel. Rebellions from within his own family, as well as among the priests, are quickly and effectively put down. The Lord speaks to him directly and frequently, as evidenced by the repeated phrase, "The Lord spake unto Moses," (1:1; 2:1; 3:1, *et passim*).

Perhaps the climax of all this book is reached, however, with Moses' rash action at Meribah. At one and the same time it demonstrates the humanness of this giant of a man, and the indiscriminating character of the judgment of our great God.

**Mushi**—perhaps "withdrawn". One of the sons of Merari. (3:20).

**Naaman**—"pleasantness". A son of Bela, grandson of Benjamin. (26:38, 40).

**Nadab**—"noble". Aaron's firstborn son (3:2). Suffered the death penalty, along with his brother Abihu, for offering 'strange fire'—an unauthorized sacrifice—before the Lord. (26:61).

**Nahaliel**—"torrent valley of God". One of the camps of Israel between the Arnon and Jericho; probably a tributary of the Arnon. (21:19).



## GLOSSARY

- Nahshon**—"oracle". Of the tribe of Judah, Nahshon was a brother-in-law of Aaron, and an ancestor of David. (1:7).
- Naphtali**—"mighty wrestlings". The tribe descended from Jacob's fifth son. They numbered 53,400 in the first census; but they had decreased to 45,400 at the time of the second (1:43, 2:30; 26:48ff). They encamped on the north side of the tabernacle under the standard of Dan, together with Asher (2:25ff). When on the march, Naphtali brought up the rear (2:31).
- Nebo**—"height". One of several cities assigned to Reuben, along with Heshbon and Elealeh (32:3).
- Nebo**—"height". High mountain in Moab near the northeastern tip of the Dead Sea, from which Moses viewed the Promised Land, and later, died (33:47).
- Nemuel**—"God is spreading". 1. Brother of Dathan and Abiram, and of the tribe of Reuben (26:9). 2. Son of Simeon (26:12).
- Nethanael**—"God has given". One of the princes of the tribe of Issachar (1:8; 2:5; 7:18, 23; 10:15).
- Noah**—"movement". One of the daughters of Zelophehad (26:33; 27:1; 36:11).
- Nobah**—"prominent". 1. A Manassite who conquered Kenath, an Amorite city in the Transjordan (32:42). 2. Name given to Kenath after it was conquered by Nobah of Manasseh (31:20).
- Nophah**—"height". City in the kingdom of Sihon, near Medeba (21:30).
- Nun**—"fish". Father of Joshua (11:28, *et passim*).
- Oboth**—"waterbags". The third wilderness encampment of Israel after leaving Mt. Hor; near the border of Moab (21:11; 33:43, 44).
- Ocran**—"trouble". Father of Pagiel, prince of the tribe of Asher (1:13; 2:27, *et passim*).

## NUMBERS

- Og**—"long-necked, or giant". The king of Bashan, which boasted 60 cities. Conquered by Moses and the army of Israel after the defeat of Sihon and the Amorites. The battle was fought at Edrei. (21:33).
- Onan**—"vigorous". Son of Judah by Tamar; mentioned only in the genealogy of Numbers 26 (v. 19).
- Oshea**—"God saves". Another form of 'Joshua'—his original name was Hoshea (13:8, 16).
- Ozni**—"the Lord hears". One of the sons of Gad (26:16).
- Pagiel**—"God meets". A prince of the tribe of Asher; son of Ocran. He led the tribe during their journeying with Israel. (1:13; 2:27; 7:72; 10:26; 14, 22, 25).
- Pallu**—"distinguished". Son of Reuben; perhaps to be identified with Peleth of 16:1. (See also 26:5, 8).
- Palti**—"the Lord delivers". From the tribe of Benjamin, the spy sent to search out the land of Canaan by Moses. (13:9).
- Paltiel**—"God's deliverance". A prince of Issachar. (34:26).
- Paran**—"full of caverns". A wilderness area southwest of the Dead Sea, consisting of a high limestone plateau. Much of the wandering of Israel during the forty years occurred in this area, which stretches broadly between Mt. Sinai and Canaan. (10:12; 13:21, *et passim*).
- Parnach**—"gifted". The father of Elizaphan, prince of Zebulun. (34:25).
- Pedahel**—"whom God redeems". A prince of Naphtali who aided in apportioning the land of Canaan. (34:17, 28).
- Pedahzur**—"the rock delivers". Father of Gamaliel and head of the tribe of Manasseh when the exodus began. (1:10; 2:20, *et passim*).
- Peleth**—"swiftness". The father of On, and one of those who rebelled against Moses and Aaron. (16:1).

## GLOSSARY

- Peor**—"opening". 1. A high mountain in the land of Moab, to which Balaam was sent by Balak in order to curse Israel; located about seven miles from Heshbon (23:28). 2. The name of Moab's god whose worship required gross immorality; participation in this exercise brought a grave plague upon the Israelites. (25:1-18).
- Pethor**—"extension". Home of Balaam, on the Euphrates river. (22:5).
- Pharez**—"breaking forth". Same as Perez; the older son of Judah by Tamar, and ancestor of the Pharzites. (26:20, 21).
- Phinehas**—"oracle". Grandson of Aaron and son of Eleazar, he led the attack against Zimri, who had brought evil into the camp through a Midianite woman: both were killed, ending the licentiousness at Shittim (25:6-18). He went against the Midianites (31:6), and was promised that his descendants would hold a place of service among the priests. (25:11-13).
- Pi-hahiroth**—"the place of the meadows" (?). An unidentified place on the Israelites' journey toward the Red Sea. Probably about ten miles from the site of modern Suez, along the old shore line of the Sea.
- Pisgah**—"the peak". Another name for Nebo. From this peak, whose name always bears the article in Hebrew, Moses viewed the Promised Land; here he died.
- Pua**—"utterance". The second son of Issachar, and father of the Punites, who were counted in the census by Moses and Eleazar.
- Punon**—"ore-pit". Second camp of the Israelites after leaving Mount Hor; east of Edom, between Selah and Zoar.
- Raguel**—"Jah is a friend". Another form of Reuel, Moses' father-in-law; also called Jethro. (10:29).
- Rameses**—"son of the sun". City of Egypt, of uncertain location; built by Hebrew labor (Ex. 1:11). Named as one of the cities from which the Israelites fled Egypt. (33:3, 5).

## NUMBERS

**Raphu**—"feared", or, "one healed". Father of Palti, who was selected as a spy from the tribe of Benjamin. (13:9).

**Reba**—"sprout", or "one-fourth". One of five chieftains of the Midianites slain in battle with the Israelites under Moses. (31:8).

**Red Sea**—"sea of rushes or seaweeds", or, simply *yam* "the sea". An arm of the Indian Ocean extending approximately 1,350 miles in a northwesterly direction, separating the continents of Africa and Asia. At its widest, it is 250 miles across; near its northern extremity the Sea is divided into the Sea of Aqaba, which lied almost due north-south beneath the Dead Sea and the Land of Edom; and the Gulf of Suez, which separates the peninsula of Sinai from Egypt. Strangely, not one river empties into its waters, which are derived from the Indian Ocean. In the northern portion of the Gulf of Suez, lush bulrushes have grown. The term 'red' is of uncertain origin with reference to the Sea. Some have speculated the term to have originated because of the presence of red coral, or of zoophytes in the waters; others associate the color with mountains on the western coast.

**Rehob**—"broad". The term may be applied to a road or a plain; it was the northernmost penetration of the Promised Land by the twelve spies (13:21).

**Rekem**—"friendship". One of the five kings or chieftains of Moab killed in battle with the Israelites under Moses (31:8).

**Rephidim**—"rests". A station where the Israelites encountered and defeated Amalek; here they anticipated finding water, but the streams were dry. God miraculously supplied the element, as Moses struck a rock as instructed by the Lord. The location is near Horeb, in a fertile valley.

**Reuben**—"behold, a son". The first son of Jacob, and father of the Reubenites. 46,500 men were counted in the first census; they had decreased to 43,730 men of war at the second counting. The Reubenites requested, and received

## GLOSSARY

permission to stake their claim to land east of the Jordan, and were granted the southernmost portion, which lay east of the northern half of the Dead Sea, above the Arnon River.

**Riblah**—"bare place". Site mentioned in 34:11 as located on the eastern boundary of Israel. Such a location is not known; there are variants which would allow this as a reference to Harbel, in the vicinity of Mt. Hermon.

**Rimmon-parez**—"twin pomegranates" (?). A camp of Israel in the wilderness; unidentified; fourth stop after leaving Sinai. (33:19).

**Rissah**—"dew". The sixth camp of Israel after leaving Sinai. (33:21, 22).

**Rithmah**—"broom". The third Israelite camp after leaving Sinai; may be the same as Kadesh. (13:26).

**Salu**—"miserable, unfortunate". A prince and head of a house of the tribe of Simeon; father of Zimri, slain by Phinehas and the Midianite woman he had brought into the camp. (25:14).

**Sarah**—"princess". Daughter of Asher. (26:46).

**Seir**—"rough, wooded". Mountain, and also a hilly region south of the Dead Sea in Edom. (24:18).

**Sered**—"escape". The first son of Zebulun. (26:26).

**Sethur**—"hidden". Son of Michael, of the tribe of Asher; chosen as the spy from that tribe. (13:13).

**Shammua**—"famous". Son of Zacchur, of the tribe of Reuben; chosen as their spy. (13:4).

**Shaphat**—"judge". Son of Hori, of the tribe of Simeon; chosen as that tribe's spy. (13:5).

**Shapher**—"fair". A mountain near one of the camping sites of Israel. (33:23).

**Shaul**—"asked". A son of Simeon, sometimes also referred to as

NUMBERS

- “the son of a Canaanitish woman.” (26:13).
- Shebam**—“balsam”. Once a Moabite city, later taken by the Reubenites. Near the capital city of Heshbon. (32:3).
- Shechem**—“shoulder”. Son of Gilead, son of Manasseh; ancestor of the Shechemites. (26:31).
- Shedeur**—“day-break”. Father of Elizur, chief of the tribe of Reuben. (1:5; 2:10; 7:30).
- Shelah**—“peace”. Ancestor of the Shelanites (26:20), of the tribe of Judah by Shua the Canaanite’s daughter.
- Shelomi**—“Jah is peace”. The father of Ahihud, a chieftain of the Asherites, who was appointed to help divide the land of Canaan. (34:27).
- Shelumiel**—“God is peace”. Son of Zurishaddai, of the tribe of Simeon; appointed to help Moses in the census. (1:6ff).
- Shemida**—“fame of knowing”. A son of Gilead, of the tribe of Manasseh. (26:32).
- Shemuel**—“name of God”. A chieftain of the Simeonites, appointed to help divide the land of Canaan. (34:20).
- Shephan**—“fruitful”. Named as a point on the eastern boundary of Israel; perhaps a city in the hill country. (34:10).
- Sheshai**—“free, noble”. One of the sons of Anak—a clan living in Hebron at the time Israel came into the land. (13:22).
- Sheth**—“appointed”. An unidentified tribe, probably Moabites, named in the parable of Balaam. (24:17).
- Shibmah**—“balsam”. A Moabite city taken by the Reubenites, near Kirjathaim. (32:38).
- Shillem**—“recompense”. Fourth son of Naphtali, and ancestor of the Shillemites. (26:49).
- Shimei**—“fame”. A son of Gershon, son of Levi. (3:18).
- Shimron**—“watch”. The fourth son of Issachar, and ancestor of the Shimronites. (26:24).
- Shiphtan**—“judge”. Father of Kemuel, a prince of the Ephraimites appointed to divide the land of Canaan. (34:24).

## GLOSSARY

- Shittim**—"the acacias". The final camping place of Israel before crossing the Jordan. Here the people fell to the evil counsel of Balaam, committing great sins with the Moabites, and incurred divine wrath and retribution. (25:1ff).
- Shophan**—"nakedness". Or, Atroth-Shophan. A city in the territory of Gad. (32:35).
- Shuham**—"pit". Son of Dan, and ancestor of the Shuhamites. (26:42ff).
- Shupham**—"serpent". Gentilic form of a name given one of the families of Benjamin, whose original form is not known. (26:39).
- Shuni**—"fortunate". The third son of Gad. (26:15).
- Shuthelah**—"setting of Telah". A son of Ephraim. (26:35, 36).
- Sihon**—"bold". A king of the Amorites against whom Israel fought successfully. King of Heshbon, his defeat was essential to the advance and occupation of the Israelites east of the Jordan. (21:21, *et passim*).
- Simeon**—"hearing". Second son of Jacob by Leah; his descendants numbered 59,000 in the census. (1:6, *et passim*).
- Sin**—"loamy, clay". Desert area between Elim and Sinai, east of the Gulf of Suez. (33:11, 12).
- Sinai**—"pointed, or peaked". Both a desert and a mountain, the south-central portion of the peninsula between the Gulf of Suez and the Gulf of Aqaba. The same area is also often called 'Horeb', without any apparent distinction between the terms. Three peaks rise in parallel pillars from the valley to the north; the central one has been called *Jebel Musa* ('the mountain of Moses'), and is traditionally that one the great prophet ascended to receive the tablets of the Law. (1:1, *et passim*).
- Sodi**—"Jah decides". A Zebulonite, father of Gaddiel, who was one of the twelve spies sent into Canaan. (13:10).

## NUMBERS

- Succoth**—"booths". The first camp of the Israelites after leaving Rameses. (33:5, 6).
- Susi**—"horsemen". Father of Gaddi, and one of the spies who was sent into Canaan; of the tribe of Manasseh. (13:11).
- Taberah**—"burning". An unidentified camping place of the Israelites, three days' journey north of Sinai, where the people murmured and were punished, (11:3).
- Tahan**—"graciousness". A son of Ephraim. (26:35).
- Tahath**—"below, humility". One of the stations of the Israelites in the wilderness, (33:26, 27).
- Talmai**—"spirited". One of the sons of Anak in Hebron, (13:22).
- Tarah**—"turning". A station of the Israelites after leaving Sinai, (33:27, 28).
- Tirzah**—"delight". Zelophehad's youngest daughter. (26:33ff).
- Tola**—"worm; crimson". One of the sons of Issachar. (26:23).
- Uzziel**—"God is my strength". One of the descendants of Levi through Kohath (3:19, 27, 30).
- Vophsi**—"rich". Father of Nahbi, spy from the tribe of Naphtali, (13:14).
- Zacchur**—"ventriloquist". (?). One of the spies sent into the land of Canaan; he was a Reubenite, and the father of Shammuah, (13:4).
- Zalmonah**—"gloomy". The third station of the Israelites from Ezion-geber; near the southern area of the Salt Sea. (33:41, 42).
- Zared**—"willow bush". A valley and brook forming the boundary between Moab and Edom at the southeastern tip of the Salt Sea, (21:12).
- Zebulun**—"dwelling". The tenth son of Jacob, and Leah's sixth. He moved with Judah when marching, and was first in the marching order (1:9, *et passim*).
- Zedad**—"sloping place". A place in northern Canaan, named as a



## GLOSSARY

- point of identification for the border, near Hamath. (34:8).
- Zelophehad**—meaning unknown. Grandson of Gilead, and son of Manasseh. He died without sons, and his land was allocated to his daughters. (26:33ff).
- Zephon**—“dark” (?). A son of Gad. (26:15).
- Zerah**—“sprout”. Younger of the twin sons of Judah and Tamar; ancestor of the Zerahites. (26:20).
- Zimri**—“celebrated”, or “wild sheep”. A prince of the Simeonites who was killed, along with the Midianite woman, Cozbi, by Phinehas, son of Aaron. (25:14).
- Zin**—“low land”. A wilderness identified with the wilderness of Kadesh; the two names appear to be interchangeable. The spies were sent northward from this area, which is south of Judah, and southwest of the Salt Sea, (13:21, *et passim*).
- Ziphron**—“beautiful top”. A place in northern Palestine. (34:9).
- Zippor**—“sparrow, bird”. The father of Balak, Moabite king, who procured Balaam to curse Israel. (22:2ff).
- Zoan**—“Imigration”. Capital of Egypt, located on the eastern side of the Nile delta. The only certainly fixed site in Egypt which is positively identified with the Israelites in that country. (13:22).
- Zophim**—“field of watchers”. A spot on top of Mt. Pisgah to which Balak brought Balaam. (23:14).
- Zuar**—“little one”. Father of Nethanel, who was the head of the tribe of Issachar. (1:8, *et passim*).
- Zur**—“rock”. A chief among the Midianites, and father of the woman slain with Zimri. (25:14; 31:8).
- Zuriel**—“my God is a rock”. Son of Abihail, a Merarite, and the head of the families of Merari. (3:35).
- Zurishaddai**—“my rock is the Almighty”. The father of Shelumiel, head of the tribe of Simeon. (1:6, *et passim*).

