

NUMBERS

Kissimmee church of Christ

Monday Night Bible Study

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Numbers Introduction

The major theme of the book of Numbers is the journey of the people of Israel from a lack of faith in God and in their leaders, including rebellion against them, through the consequences of punishment and suffering, leading to acceptance of their destiny as God's people and preparation for a new life. The first ten chapters represent the ideal structure of the encampment, the tabernacle, and the march. The next chapters show how the realities of life intrudes upon this ideal scene.

In Numbers the history of Israel during the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness from Egypt to Canaan is described. It is a sad history of continual failure. The long period of 40 years was the punishment of God for the disobedience of His people and it was not according to His counsel.

The wandering in the wilderness is depicted in the New Testament as to take warning from for the Christians ([1 Cor 10:1-22](#); Hebrews 3; Hebrews 4). The wilderness is a picture of earthly circumstances wherein faith is tested.

Very little is mentioned about the nearly 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. In chapter 10:11 the camp sets forward for the first time on the twentieth day of the second month in the second year of the exodus out of Egypt. In chapter 20:1 we read already of the fortieth year (compare Aaron's death in chap. 20:28 with 33:38).

The Levites and their service play an important role in this book. This ought to show us that the Christian also is responsible to reveal the testimony of Christ, his Lord, in the world.

After receiving the law at mount Sinai the people went through a census which was repeated after the wandering in the wilderness (chaps 1 and 26). In chapters 1 to 10 instructions on the service and consecration of the Levites and the Nazarite precede the description of the journeying of the camps. After a short time the people reach the boundaries of the south of Canaan and there the twelve spies are sent forth. But ten of the spies have so little faith that they discourage the people and make them rebellious. God answers by punishing them: The people have to wander another 38 years in the wilderness until all (except for Joshua and Caleb) who have come out of Egypt have died (chaps 13 to 14).

Some have marveled that so little record of those thirty-eight intervening years is given, but there is actually no mystery about this. In the long bitter years after Israel rebelled and were condemned to wait upon the arrival of another generation who would more nearly obey the Lord, what they did during that period of living out of their sentence had little importance. All of the incidents recorded in Numbers were not oriented to the project of telling what that generation did, but to the provision of

examples from their sins and mistakes that would have value for Christians in ages to come, as cited in the N.T.

Now these things happened unto them by way of example, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come. - [1 Cor 10:11](#)

Then follow the rising up of Korah (chaps 16 and 17), the failure of Moses and Aaron (ch. 20) and renewed murmuring of the people and the plague of fiery serpents, where Moses had to erect the serpent of brass in chapter 21. The Lord Jesus mentions the serpent as a symbol of His death on the cross ([John 3:14-15](#)). Then Israel comes into contact with the enemy. First they meet Balaam, who according to the will of the Moabites ought to condemn Israel but then has to bless it instead (chapters 22-25). After that various people in the land of eastern Jordan were conquered until at the end of Numbers Israel finally arrives at the boundary river Jordan.

The book of Numbers finds its parallels in the New Testament in the Epistles to the Corinthians which describe the order and the conduct of the assembly of God.

(Coffman)

Overview of Contents

I. Numbers 1-9; Numbers 10:1-10 : The camp of the people of Israel at Sinai

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III. Numbers 21-32 : The Sojourning on River Jordan

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Chapter 33	Israel's Route of Wandering
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Chapter 35	Cities of the Levites and Cities of Refuge
Chapter 36	Daughters of Zelophehad and Law of Succession for Women

NUMBERS 1

[1](#) Now the Lord spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying: [2](#) "Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel, by their families, by their fathers' houses, according to the number of names, every male individually, [3](#) from twenty years old and above--all who are able to go to war in Israel. You and Aaron shall number them by their armies. [4](#) And with you there shall be a man from every tribe, each one the head of his father's house. [5](#) "These are the names of the men who shall stand with you... (Note: verse 5 to 15 list the men from each tribe)

[16](#) These were chosen from the congregation, leaders of their fathers' tribes, heads of the divisions in Israel.

- A. As the tabernacle was erected upon the first day of the first month, in the second year after their coming out of Egypt, [Ex 40:17](#); and this muster of the people was made on the first day of the second month, in the same year; it is evident that the transactions related in the preceding book must all have taken place in the space of *one month*, and during the time the Israelites were encamped at Mount Sinai, before they had begun their Journey to the promised land. (Clarke)
- B. In this census no women were reckoned, nor children, nor strangers, nor the Levites, nor old men, which, collectively, must have formed an immense multitude; the Levites alone amounted to 22,300. True-born Israelites only are reckoned; such as were able to carry arms, and were expert for war. (Clarke)
- C. Possible reason for the census
 - a. That they might see he had not forgotten his promise to Abraham, but was multiplying his posterity.
 - b. That they might observe due order in their march toward the promised land.
 - c. That the tribes and families might be properly distinguished; that all litigations concerning property, inheritance, might, in all future times, be prevented.
 - d. That the promise concerning the Messiah might be known to have its due accomplishment, when in the fullness of time God should send him from the seed of Abraham through the house of David. And,
 - e. That they might know their strength for war for although they should ever consider God as their protector and defence, yet it was necessary that they should be assured of their own fitness, naturally speaking, to cope with any ordinary enemy, or to surmount any common difficulties. (Clarke)
- D. A census ("sum") was commanded, to be based not upon any fresh registration of individuals, but upon that which had accompanied the previous collection of the offerings. Compare [Exo 30:11](#), etc.; [Exo 38:25-28](#). The offerings had been probably tendered by the people in groups, and if certificates of registration were furnished to such groups, the new census might be easily carried out by means of these documents, and got through [Num 1:18](#) in a single day. (Barnes)

[17](#) Then Moses and Aaron took these men who had been mentioned by name, [18](#) and they assembled all the congregation together on the first day of the second month; and they recited their ancestry by families, by their fathers' houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, each one individually. [19](#) As the Lord commanded Moses, so he numbered them in the Wilderness of Sinai. [20](#) Now the children of Reuben, Israel's oldest son, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, every male individually, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war: [21](#) those who were numbered of the tribe of Reuben were forty-six thousand five hundred.

- A. Note the verbatim repetition of these words from Num 1:20 to Num 1:43
- B. Much has been said about the extensive repetition that confronts us in these chapters, but, as Gordon accurately noted, "The repetition of lengthy passages without modification is characteristic of Near Eastern Literature in general." It is also characteristic of the Bible. (Coffman)
- C. Another census of Israel was taken after about forty years (Numbers 26); and this is a convenient place to present the information gathered from that numbering along with this: (Coffman)

Tribe	1 st Census	2 nd Census
Reuben	46,500	43,730
Simeon	59,300	22,200
Gad	45,650	40,500
Judah	74,600	76,500
Issachar	54,400	64,300
Zebulun	57,400	60,500
Ephraim	40,500	32,500
Manasseh	32,200	52,700
Benjamin	35,400	45,600
Dan	62,700	64,400
Asher	41,500	53,400
Naphtali	53,400	45,400
Total:	603,550	601,730

[44](#) These are the ones who were numbered, whom Moses and Aaron numbered, with the leaders of Israel, twelve men, each one representing his father's house. [45](#) So all who were numbered of the children of Israel, by their fathers' houses, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war in Israel-- [46](#) all who were numbered were six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty. [47](#) But the Levites were not numbered among them by their fathers' tribe; [48](#) for the Lord had spoken to Moses, saying: [49](#) "Only the tribe of Levi you shall not number, nor take a census of them among the children of Israel;

- A. It is of interest also that the tribe of Levi was not numbered among those prepared to go to war, their task being solely related to the priesthood and the tabernacle. Their numbers are also given in the first census here as 22,270, and in the second census as 23,000. It should also be noted that these figures take no account of any units less than fifty. (Coffman)
- E. When a census of the tribe of Levi takes place. [Num 3:15](#); [Num 26:62](#), "all" the males are counted from a month old and upward, and not, as in the other tribes, those only who were of age for service in the field. (Barnes)

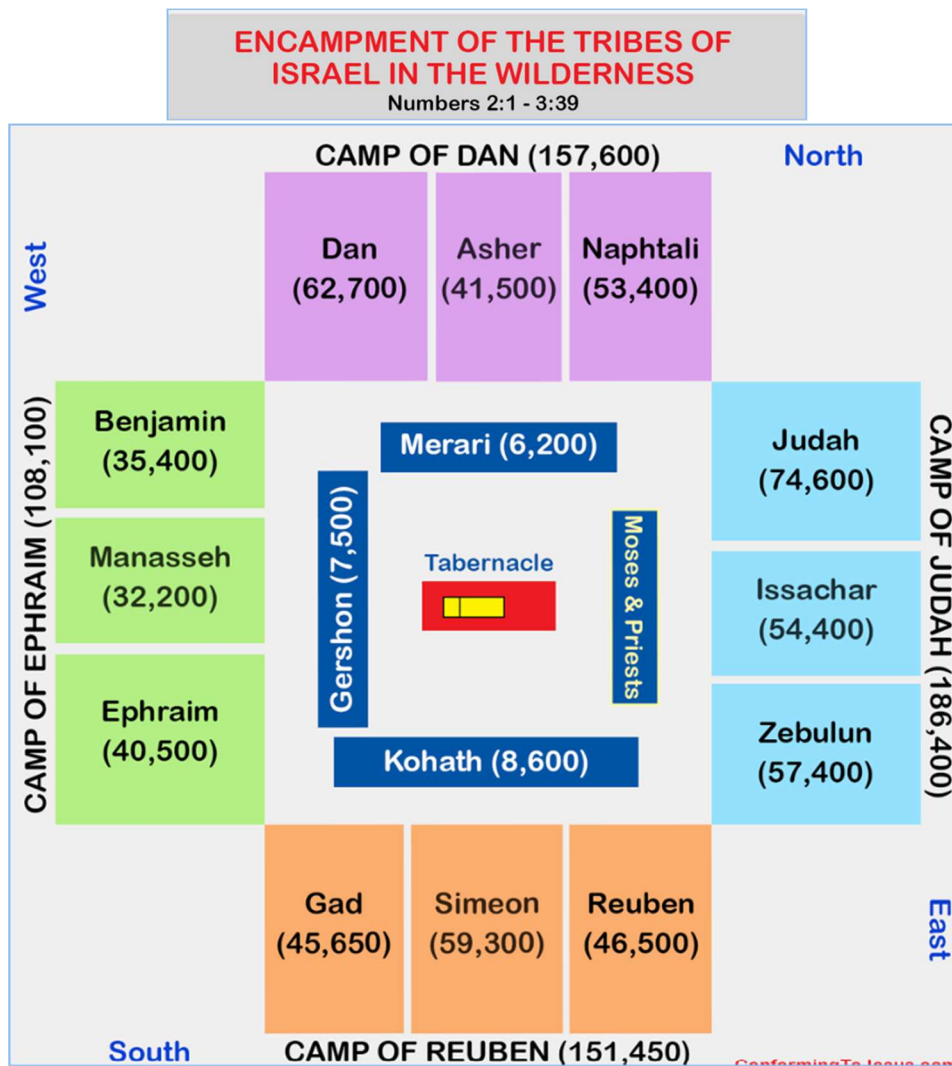
[50](#) but you shall appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the Testimony, over all its furnishings, and over all things that belong to it; they shall carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings; they shall attend to it and camp around the tabernacle. [51](#) And when the tabernacle is to go forward, the Levites shall take it down; and when the tabernacle is to be set up, the Levites shall set it up. The outsider who comes near shall be put to death. [52](#) The children of Israel shall pitch their tents, everyone by his own camp, everyone by his own standard, according to their armies; [53](#) but the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the Testimony, that there may be no wrath on the congregation of the children of Israel; and the Levites shall keep charge of the tabernacle of the Testimony." [54](#) Thus the children of Israel did; according to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so they did

- A. Jewish tradition says the "four standards" under which Israel encamped in the wilderness, to the east, Judah, to the north, Dan, to the west, Ephraim, to the south, Reuben, were respectively a lion, an eagle, an ox, and a man, while in the midst was the tabernacle containing the Shekinah symbol of the Divine Presence.

NUMBERS 2

1 And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying:

2 "Everyone of the children of Israel shall camp by his own standard, beside the emblems of his father's house; they shall camp some distance from the tabernacle of meeting.



The Position of the Tribes

The twelve tribes, in groups of three, were divinely situated at a certain distance around the tabernacle. Four of the tribes, Judah, Reuben, Ephraim and Dan were recognized as tribal leaders. Each had its own standard or banner identifying it as a tribal head while the other tribes had ensigns, a lesser type of banner.

- A. According to Jewish expositors, "The standard of Judah was a lion ([Rev 5:5](#)), that of Reuben was a man, that of Ephraim was an ox ([Deu 33:17](#)), and that of Dan an eagle." As Whitelaw said, "If we could be sure of this, we would have the origins of the 'living creatures' in Ezekiel ([Eze 1:26](#); 10:1) and in Revelation ([Rev 4:4-16](#)). However, the traditions of the Jews are too fluctuating to carry any weight. (Coffman)

Note: From Num 2:3 to 2:31 is explained how the tribes are laid out around the tabernacle.

[32](#) These are the ones who were numbered of the children of Israel by their fathers' houses. All who were numbered according to their armies of the forces were six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty. [33](#) But the Levites were not numbered among the children of Israel, just as the Lord commanded Moses. [34](#) Thus the children of Israel did according to all that the Lord commanded Moses; so they camped by their standards and so they broke camp, each one by his family, according to their fathers' houses.

A. Even in the order of marching the centrality of the tabernacle was maintained.

The strongest forces were placed in the vanguard where Judah and his hosts led the way and in the rearguard where Dan and his divisions were placed last in the line of march ([Num 2:31](#)). "From the position of [Num 2:17](#), it is to be understood that the first two 'standards' are to precede the tent of meeting and the last two to follow it."

B. Another interesting observation with reference to this deployment was seen by Wade in certain discriminations made with reference to which of the wives of Jacob was the maternal ancestor: "Those deployed on the east were the children of Leah; those on the south were from Leah and Zilpah (Leah's maid); on the west were the descendants of Rachel, and those under Dan on the north were children of either Bilhah (Rachel's maid) or of Zilpah (Leah's maid)" Oddly enough, this corresponds roughly to the deployment of his sons upon the occasion when Jacob went forth to meet Esau. (Coffman)

Gen 33:1-2 1 Now Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and there, Esau was coming, and with him were four hundred men. So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two maidservants. 2 And he put the maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children behind, and Rachel and Joseph last.

Gen 35:23 the sons of Leah were Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, and Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun; 24 the sons of Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin; 25 the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant, were Dan and Naphtali; 26 and the sons of Zilpah, Leah's maidservant, were Gad and Asher. These were the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Padan Aram.

ISA 11:10 "And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, ISA 11:12 He will set up a banner for the nations, And will assemble the outcasts of Israel, And gather together the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth.

NUMBERS 3

The Sons of Aaron

[1](#) Now these are the records of Aaron and Moses when the Lord spoke with Moses on 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 anointed priests, whom he consecrated to minister as priests. [4](#) Nadab and Abihu had died before the Lord when they offered profane fire before the Lord in the Wilderness of Sinai; and they had no children. So Eleazar and Ithamar ministered as priests in the presence of Aaron their father.

- A. In the opening verse of this chapter, which relates to the designation of the priesthood, Moses is named, for once, after his brother. According to the genealogy of [Exo 6:1-30](#), Aaron was the elder (The Expositor's Bible Commentary)
- B. Moses passes by his own family, or immediate descendants; he gave no rank or privilege to them during his life, and left nothing to them at his death. They became incorporated with the Levites, from or amongst whom they are never distinguished. (Clarke)
- C. The statement, "These are the names of the sons of Aaron" occurs twice, first in the naming of the sons, and then in the characterization of the sons as priests, in order to show that even after their appointment to the priesthood, the sons of Aaron did not receive new names but were still considered the same human beings as before....Certainly the conceit of the Medieval Church in giving new names to their Cardinals and Popes upon their elevation to certain offices is not at all justified by anything in the Holy Scriptures. (Coffman)
- D. Nadab and Abihu died — See [Lev 10:1-5](#).

The Levites Serve in the Tabernacle

[5](#) And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: [6](#) "Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him. [7](#) And they shall attend to his needs and the needs of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of meeting, to do the work of the tabernacle. [8](#) Also they shall attend to all the furnishings of the tabernacle of meeting, and to the needs of the children of Israel, to do the work of the tabernacle. [9](#) And you shall give the Levites to Aaron and his sons; they are given entirely to him from among the children of Israel. [10](#) So you shall appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall attend to their priesthood; but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death."

- A. This paragraph reveals the divine appointment of the tribe of Levi, not as priests, but as a special class of workers who would be employed continually in the service of the tabernacle, under the oversight and supervision of the High Priest.

It is not true that they were thus constituted a tribe of slaves. Theirs was an honored and privileged position in which they were perpetually exempt from military service and were supported entirely and particularly for this service.

(Coffman)

B. The Levites were to perform the most common and laborious offices. It was their business to take down, put up, and carry the tabernacle and its utensils; for it was the object of their peculiar care. In a word, they were the servants of the priests.

(Clarke)

C. It was the business of the priests to offer the different sacrifices to God; to consecrate the shew-bread, pour out the libations, burn the incense, sprinkle the blood of the victims, and bless the people. In a word, they were the servants of God alone. (Clarke)

[11](#) Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: [12](#) "Now behold, I Myself have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of every firstborn who opens the womb among the children of Israel. Therefore the Levites shall be Mine, [13](#) because all the firstborn are Mine. On the day that I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to Myself all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast. They shall be Mine: I am the Lord."

A. The important question of just why God selected the Levites for this assignment is easily answered. Whitelaw has the best analysis of it:

"The most obvious reason why Levi was selected is that he was by far the smallest in numbers of the twelve tribes, being less than half the size of the next smallest. Also, he almost balanced the number of the firstborn. Furthermore, a larger tribe could not have been spared, and would not have been needed to supply the number required ... Another reason may appear in the prophecy of [Gen 49:7](#). Both Levi and Simeon were doomed never to raise their heads as a united and powerful tribe in Israel." (Coffman)

Census of the Levites Commanded

[14](#) Then the Lord spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, saying: [15](#) "Number the children of Levi by their fathers' houses, by their families; you shall number every male from a month old and above." [16](#) So Moses numbered them according to the word of the Lord, as he was commanded.

[17](#) These were the sons of Levi by their names: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

Note: The duties of the sons of Levi will be discussed in Numbers 4 and are removed here

[21](#) From Gershon came the family of the Libnites and the family of the Shimites; these were the families of the Gershonites.

[22](#) Those who were numbered, according to the number of all the males from a month old and above--of those who were numbered there were seven thousand five hundred.

[23](#) The families of the Gershonites were to camp behind the tabernacle westward.

- A. A marked difference in the method of numbering occurs here in that all males above the age of one month were included, whereas in the case of the military registration, only those above twenty years old were counted. Based upon this, Jewish tradition held that, "A child must live a month before being considered fully viable. Neither funeral nor mourning practices are observed if a child has not reached that age, and the child is considered as if stillborn." (Coffman)

[27](#) From Kohath came the family of the Amramites, the family of the Izharites, the family of the Hebronites, and the family of the Uzzielites; these were the families of the Kohathites. [28](#) According to the number of all the males, from a month old and above, there were eight thousand six hundred keeping charge of the sanctuary. [29](#) The families of the children of Kohath were to camp on the south side of the tabernacle.

[32](#) And Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest was to be chief over the leaders of the Levites, with oversight of those who kept charge of the sanctuary.

- A. In virtue, as it should seem, of the descent of Moses and Aaron from Kohath, the Kohathites had the most honourable portion of the service of the Tabernacle assigned to them; and hence, as the priests belonged to the Amramites, one of the four families of the Kohathites, Eleazar, the eldest surviving son of Aaron, was chosen to have the oversight over the whole body of the Levites. (Elliott)

[33](#) From Merari came the family of the Mahlites and the family of the Mushites; these were the families of Merari. [34](#) And those who were numbered, according to the number of all the males from a month old and above, were six thousand two hundred.

[35](#) The leader of the fathers' house of the families of Merari was Zuriel the son of Abihail. These were to camp on the north side of the tabernacle.

[38](#) Moreover those who were to camp before the tabernacle on the east, before the tabernacle of meeting, were Moses, Aaron, and his sons, keeping charge of the sanctuary, to meet the needs of the children of Israel; but the outsider who came near was to be put to death. [39](#) All who were numbered of the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron numbered at the commandment of the Lord, by their families, all the males from a month old and above, were twenty-two thousand.

- A. Although Moses was given a place of honor alongside Aaron at the entrance to the tabernacle, Moses' sons were not included, having no part whatever of the priesthood. (Coffman)

- B. The totals of the enrollees of these divisions are 7,500 for Gershon, 8,600 for Kohath, and 6,200 for Merari, yielding a grand total of 22,300, precipitating the "tremendous problem" posed by the flat 22,000 given for this total in [Num3:39](#)! Apparently, some of the commentators never heard of "round numbers."
- C. The "explanations" usually focus on the fact that the Hebrew word for "6" as given in the enumeration for Kohath might actually have been "3," due to the close similarities in the Hebrew designations for those numbers. The Jews used letters to signify numbers. The numeral six was represented by [~sh-sh], and the numeral three was represented by [~sh-l-sh]; and some scribe might easily have overlooked the [~l] (Coffman)

Levites Dedicated Instead of the Firstborn

[40](#) Then the Lord said to Moses: "Number all the firstborn males of the **children of Israel** from a month old and above, and take the number of their names. [41](#) And you shall take the Levites for Me--I am the Lord--instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the livestock of the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the livestock of the children of Israel." [42](#) So Moses numbered all the firstborn among the children of Israel, as the Lord commanded him. [43](#) And all the firstborn males, according to the number of names from a month old and above, of those who were numbered of them, were twenty-two thousand two hundred and seventy-three.

- A. Only those Israelites born AFTER the exodus were covered by this law of the dedication of the first-born, and this figure of 22,273 represents the first-born who were born AFTER the exodus. As Keil expressed it: "Of course, the reference was only to the first-born of men and cattle that came into the world from that time forward (the time of the announcement of the law regarding the first-born), and not to those whom God had already sanctified to Himself by sparing the Israelites and their cattle (the night of the 10th plague). (Coffman)

[44](#) Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: [45](#) "Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the livestock of the Levites instead of their livestock. The Levites shall be Mine: I am the Lord. [46](#) And for the redemption of the two hundred and seventy-three of the firstborn of the children of Israel, who are more than the number of the Levites, [47](#) you shall take five shekels for each one individually; you shall take them in the currency of the shekel of the sanctuary, the shekel of twenty gerahs. [48](#) And you shall give the money, with which the excess number of them is redeemed, to Aaron and his sons." [49](#) So Moses took the redemption money from those who were over and above those who were redeemed by the Levites.

[50](#) From the firstborn of the children of **Israel** he took the money, one thousand three hundred and sixty-five shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary. [51](#) And Moses

gave their redemption money to Aaron and his sons, according to the word of the Lord, as the Lord commanded Moses.

- A. Firstborn of the children of Israel 22,273 (V46) Numbered of the Levites 22,000 (V39) equals difference of 273
- B. It is of interest that the 1,365 shekels equals the number of shekels procured by collecting five shekels each from 273 people. (Coffman)
- C. It is significant that in the case of the cattle mentioned here, there was evidently permitted a redemption, through exchange, of both clean and unclean animals, some of which, according to legislation in [Num 18:15-17](#), had to be sacrificed and not redeemed. Obviously, this was a special case not subject to normal requirements. Plaut noted that, normally, only "unclean animals could be redeemed, and therefore the Talmud applied this chapter only to clean animals."
(Coffman)
- D. The owner of the unclean animals, if unwilling to redeem, might destroy the beasts. (Redeem means to buyback) (Barnes)

NUMBERS 4

Duties of the Sons of Kohath

1 Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: 2 "Take a census of the sons of Kohath from among the children of Levi, by their families, by their fathers' house, 3 from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, all who enter the service to do the work in the tabernacle of meeting. 4 "This is the service of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of meeting, relating to the most holy things:

- A. Kohath appears to have been the second son of Levi ([Num 3:17](#)), but the Kohathites here stand first because Moses and Aaron belonged to them, and it was their office to bear the Ark. (Ellicott)
- B. The previous census of the Levites was from a month old. The present census was with a view to the discharge of duties requiring a considerable amount of physical strength, and hence the prescribed age for entering upon these duties was fixed at this time at thirty, and limited to fifty. It has been supposed by some that five years were spent in preparation for the service, and that it is in this way that the apparent discrepancy between this verse and [Num 8:24](#), where the age for entering upon the service is fixed at twenty-five, is to be reconciled. (Ellicott)

5 When the camp prepares to journey, Aaron and his sons shall come, and they shall take down the covering veil and cover the ark of the Testimony with it. 6 Then they shall put on it a covering of badger skins, and spread over that a cloth entirely of blue; and they shall insert its poles. 7 On the table of showbread they shall spread a blue cloth, and put on it the dishes, the pans, the bowls, and the pitchers for pouring; and the showbread shall be on it. 8 They shall spread over them a scarlet cloth, and cover the same with a covering of badger skins; and they shall insert its poles. 9 And they shall take a blue cloth and cover the lampstand of the light, with its lamps, its wick-trimmers, its trays, and all its oil vessels, with which they service it. 10 Then they shall put it with all its utensils in a covering of badger skins, and put it on a carrying beam. 11 Over the golden altar they shall spread a blue cloth, and cover it with a covering of badger skins; and they shall insert its poles. 12 Then they shall take all the utensils of service with which they minister in the sanctuary, put them in a blue cloth, cover them with a covering of badger skins, and put them on a carrying beam. 13 Also they shall take away the ashes from the altar, and spread a purple cloth over it. 14 They shall put on it all its implements with which they minister there--the firepans, the forks, the shovels, the basins, and all the utensils of the altar--and they shall spread on it a covering of badger skins, and insert its poles. 15 And when Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is set to go, then the sons of Kohath shall come to carry them; but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest

they die. These are the things in the tabernacle of meeting which the sons of Kohath are to carry.

- A. Under ordinary circumstances the high priest himself might only enter the most holy place on one day in the year. At the time of the moving of the camp, however, the Divine Presence seems to have departed from the Holy of Holies, and to have ascended in the cloud which gave the signal for the removal. (Ellicott)
- B. In their normal placement, the staves were to be left in, when made ready for travel, they were removed (necessarily) for the wrapping, and replaced for the purpose of their transportation. (see [Exo 25:14-15](#)) (Coffman)
- C. It is a matter of wonder and amazement that no instructions were here given for the transporting of the great bronze laver, certainly one of the principal features of the whole complex, stationed near the door and the great bronze altar. (Coffman)

[16](#) The appointed duty of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest is the oil for the light, the sweet incense, the daily grain offering, the anointing oil, the oversight of all the tabernacle, of all that is in it, with the sanctuary and its furnishings."

[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 in regard to them, that they may live and not die when they approach the most holy things: Aaron and his sons shall go in and appoint each of them to his service and his task. [20](#) But they shall not go in to watch while the holy things are being covered, lest they die."

- A. When all of these preparations were carefully made, then, and then only were the Kohathites permitted to enter and remove the sacred furniture. (Coffman)
- B. Moses and Aaron are charged not to be guilty of such negligence in respect of it as might expose the Kohathites to death in consequence of their unlawful treatment of the holy things. (Ellicott)

Duties of the Sons of Gershon

[21](#) Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: [22](#) "Also take a census of the sons of Gershon, ... [25](#) They shall carry the curtains of the tabernacle and the tabernacle of meeting with its covering, the covering of badger skins that is on it, the screen for the door of the tabernacle of meeting, [26](#) the screen for the door of the gate of the court, the hangings of the court which are around the tabernacle and altar, and their cords, all the furnishings for their service and all that is made for these things: so shall they serve.

[27](#) Aaron and his sons shall assign all the service of the sons of the Gershonites, all their tasks and all their service. And you shall appoint to them all their tasks as their duty.

[28](#) This is the service of the families of the sons of Gershon in the tabernacle of meeting. And their duties shall be under the authority of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.

- A. The Gershonites take charge of the curtains of the tabernacle and the court. As these were of great weight two ox-wagons were employed in their transport: [\(Num 7:7\)](#) (Dummelow)

Duties of the Sons of Merari

[29](#) "As for the sons of Merari, ... [31](#) And this is what they must carry as all their service for the tabernacle of meeting: the boards of the tabernacle, its bars, its pillars, its sockets, [32](#) and the pillars around the court with their sockets, pegs, and cords, with all their furnishings and all their service; and you shall assign to each man by name the items he must carry. [33](#) This is the service of the families of the sons of Merari, as all their service for the tabernacle of meeting, under the authority of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest."

- A. The Merarites take charge of the framework of the tabernacle and employ four ox-wagons: [\(Num 7:8\)](#). (Dummelow)

Census of the Levites

[34](#) And Moses, Aaron, and the leaders of the congregation numbered the sons of the Kohathites by their families and by their fathers' house, [35](#) from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, everyone who entered the service for work in the tabernacle of meeting; [36](#) and those who were numbered by their families were two thousand seven hundred and fifty.

- A. This same wording is repeated for sons of Gershon and Merari (V37-49)
B. There were numbered of the Kohathites 2,750, and of the Gershonites 2,630, and of the Merarites 3,200, yielding a total of 8,580.

NUMBERS 5

Supplemental Information/Regulations

Ceremonially Unclean Persons Isolated

[1](#) And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: [2](#) "Command the children of Israel that they put out of the camp every leper, everyone who has a discharge, and whoever becomes defiled by a corpse. [3](#) You shall put out both male and female; you shall put them outside the camp, that they may not defile their camps in the midst of which I dwell."

[4](#) And the children of Israel did so, and put them outside the camp; as the Lord spoke to Moses, so the children of Israel did.

- A. When compared with the rules in Leviticus, it is evident that supplementary information is here supplied. (1) The rule applies to females, as well as males. (2) The reason for the exclusion is the place where God Himself dwelt in their midst. (3) There also appears the extension of including "all," "every one" who had any kind of issue, as distinguished from those who had certain kinds only. 4) the prevention of contagion was also a vital reason for these exclusions. (Coffman)
- B. The camp was an emblem of the church, where nothing that is defiled should enter, and in which nothing that is unholy should be tolerated (Clarke)
- C. With the Jews, cleanliness was not next to godliness, it was "part of godliness!" (Whitelaw)

Confession and Restitution

[5](#) Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, [6](#) "Speak to the children of Israel: 'When a man or woman commits any sin that men commit in unfaithfulness against the Lord, and that person is guilty, [7](#) then he shall confess the sin which he has committed. He shall make restitution for his trespass in full, plus one-fifth of it, and give it to the one he has wronged. [8](#) But if the man has no relative to whom restitution may be made for the wrong, the restitution for the wrong must go to the Lord for the priest, in addition to the ram of the atonement with which atonement is made for him.

[9](#) 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 the priest shall be his.' " (*this goes to the priest taking the confession*)

- A. On the law of restitution, see [Lev 5:14](#) to [Lev 6:7](#), to which the present passage is a supplement, providing that if the injured person dies and has no kindred to whom the price of restitution may be paid, it has to be given to the priest.

(Dummelow)

(Remember: All sin against man is also a sin against God Gen 39:9 Joseph and Potifur wife)

Concerning Unfaithful Wives

[11](#) And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, [12](#) "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'If any man's wife goes astray and behaves unfaithfully toward him, [13](#) and a man lies with her carnally, and it is hidden from the eyes of her husband, and it is concealed that she has defiled herself, and there was no witness against her, nor was she caught-- [14](#) if the spirit of jealousy comes upon him and he becomes jealous of his wife, who has defiled herself; or if the spirit of jealousy comes upon him and he becomes jealous of his wife, although she has not defiled herself-- [15](#) then the man shall bring his wife to the priest. He shall bring the offering required for her, one-tenth of an ephah of barley meal; he shall pour no oil on it and put no frankincense on it, because it is a grain offering of jealousy, an offering for remembering, for bringing iniquity to remembrance.

- A. This law was given both as a strong discouragement to conjugal infidelity on the part of a wife, and a sufficient protection of her from the consequences of a hasty and groundless suspicion on the part of the husband. His suspicions, however, were sufficient, in the absence of witnesses (Lev 20:10), to warrant the trial described; (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)

[16](#) 'And the priest shall bring her near, and set her before the Lord. [17](#) The priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel, and take some of the dust that is on the floor of the tabernacle and put it into the water. [18](#) Then the priest shall stand the woman before the Lord, uncover the woman's head, and put the offering for remembering in her hands, which is the grain offering of jealousy. And the priest shall have in his hand the bitter water that brings a curse.

- A. "Holy water" This is the only place where this phrase is found, and it is not explained. Water from the laver is probably meant (Dummelow)
- B. "Dust from the floor of the tabernacle ..." This was a symbol of "vileness and misery." It will be recalled that the curse upon the serpent was that he should eat dust (Coffman)
- C. "Let the woman's hair go loose ..." "As a person under suspicion, she was thus deprived of her dignity." (Coffman)

[19](#) And the priest shall put her under oath, and say to the woman, "If no man has lain with you, and if you have not gone astray to uncleanness while under your husband's authority, be free from this bitter water that brings a curse. [20](#) But if you have gone astray while under your husband's authority, and if you have defiled yourself and some man other than your husband has lain with you"-- [21](#) then the priest shall put the woman under the oath of the curse, and he shall say to the woman--"the Lord make you a curse and an oath among your people, when the Lord makes your thigh rot and your belly swell; [22](#) and may this water that causes the curse go into your stomach, and make your belly swell and your thigh rot." Then the woman shall say, "Amen, so be it."

[23](#) 'Then the priest shall write these curses in a book, and he shall scrape them off into the bitter water. [24](#) And he shall make the woman drink the bitter water that brings a curse, and the water that brings the curse shall enter her to become bitter. [25](#) Then the priest shall take the grain offering of jealousy from the woman's hand, shall wave the offering before the Lord, and bring it to the altar; [26](#) and the priest shall take a handful of the offering, as its memorial portion, burn it on the altar, and afterward make the woman drink the water.

[27](#) When he has made her drink the water, then it shall be, if she has defiled herself and behaved unfaithfully toward her husband, that the water that brings a curse will enter her and become bitter, and her belly will swell, her thigh will rot, and the woman will become a curse among her people. [28](#) But if the woman has not defiled herself, and is clean, then she shall be free and may conceive children.

- A. Of itself, the drink was not noxious; and could only produce the effects here described by a special interposition of God. We do not read of any instance in which this ordeal was resorted to: a fact which may be explained either (with the Jews) as a proof of its efficacy, since the guilty could not be brought to face its terrors at all, and avoided them by confession; or more probably by the license of divorce tolerated by the law of Moses. Since a husband could put away his wife at pleasure, a jealous man would naturally prefer to take this course with a suspected wife rather than to call public attention to his own shame by having recourse to the trial of jealousy. The trial by red water, which bears a general resemblance to that here prescribed by Moses, is still in use among the tribes of Western Africa. (Barnes)

[29](#) 'This is the law of jealousy, when a wife, while under her husband's authority, goes astray and defiles herself, [30](#) or when the spirit of jealousy comes upon a man, and he becomes jealous of his wife; then he shall stand the woman before the Lord, and the priest shall execute all this law upon her. [31](#) Then the man shall be free from iniquity, but that woman shall bear her guilt.' "

NUMBERS 6

Five features. It is voluntary, can be done by either men or women, has a specific time frame, has specific requirements and restrictions, and at its conclusion a sacrifice is offered.

The Law of the Nazirite

The general subject embracing this list of instructions is that of protecting the spiritual life of Israel, and this chapter has the rules for those who became Nazirites. There were two types of this vow: (1) The Nazirite for Life and (2) the Nazirite of Days, the rules in this chapter applying only to the latter of the two classes. This type of vow had existed for ages prior to the times of Moses and was known in pagan lands as well as among the Jews. (Coffman)

We find life-long Nazirites among the Israelites, e.g., Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist, who were vowed or dedicated to the Lord by their parents even before they were born (Judg 13:5,14; 1 Sam 1:11; Luke 1:15). (Keil and Delitzsch)

Moses does not expressly require that limits should be assigned to the vow; but a rule was afterward imposed that no Nazirite vow should be taken for less than thirty days. (Barnes)

The Nazirites were known in the streets and respected as purer than snow, whiter than milk, -Lam 4:7. (Matthew)

[1](#) Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, [2](#) "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When either a man or woman consecrates an offering to take the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself to the Lord, [3](#) he shall separate himself from wine and similar drink; he shall drink neither vinegar made from wine nor vinegar made from similar drink; neither shall he drink any grape juice, nor eat fresh grapes or raisins. [4](#) All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, from seed to skin.

- A. The law of the Nazirite in this respect was more strict than that which was enjoined upon the priests, The priests were forbidden to drink wine, or strong drink, when they entered the tabernacle to perform service there, but were not prohibited the use of wine at other times. (Lev 10:9) (Ellicott)

[5](#) All the days of the vow of his separation no razor shall come upon his head; until the days are fulfilled for which he separated himself to the Lord, he shall be holy. Then he shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow.

- A. It is significant that the long hair of the Nazirite "separated" even in the matter of his appearance, because in antiquity long hair for a man was considered a shame, even as the apostle Paul himself taught in the N.T. ([1 Cor 11:14](#)) (Coffman)

[6](#) All the days that he separates himself to the Lord he shall not go near a dead body.

[7](#) He shall not make himself unclean even for his father or his mother, for his brother or

his sister, when they die, because his separation to God is on his head. [8](#) All the days of his separation he shall be holy to the Lord. [9](#) 'And if anyone dies very suddenly beside him, and he defiles his consecrated head, then he shall shave his head on the day of his cleansing; on the seventh day he shall shave it. (Note V10-17 list the offerings to be clean again) [18](#)... and shall take the hair from his consecrated head and put it on the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offering. (Note V19-20 wave offering) [21](#) "This is the law of the Nazirite who vows to the Lord the offering for his separation, and besides that, whatever else his hand is able to provide; according to the vow which he takes, so he must do according to the law of his separation."

- A. The practice of shaving one's head is part of the vow of a Nazirite. Note Paul's vow and the shaving of his head in the book of Acts. Paul honoured the Mosaic Law. ([Acts 18:18](#); [Acts 21:23-26](#)) (Everett)

The Priestly Blessing

[22](#) And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: [23](#) "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say 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 upon you, And give you peace." ' [27](#) "So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them."

- A. The repetition of the name Lord or Yahweh" three times, expressed the great mystery of the Godhead-three persons, and yet one God. The expressions the separate clauses correspond to the respective offices of the Father, to "bless and keep us;" of the Son, to be "gracious to us;" and of the Holy Spirit, to "give us peace." (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)
- B. It was a Jewish tradition that this blessing was given at the close of the daily sacrifice. (Barnes)

NUMBERS 7

Offering of the Leaders

1 Now it came to pass, when Moses had finished setting up the tabernacle, that he anointed it and consecrated it and all its furnishings, and the altar and all its utensils; so he anointed them and consecrated them.

2 Then the leaders of Israel, the heads of their fathers' houses, who were the leaders of the tribes and over those who were numbered, made an offering. **3** And they brought their offering before the Lord, six covered carts and twelve oxen, a cart for every two of the leaders, and for each one an ox; and they presented them before the tabernacle.

4 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, **5** "Accept these from them, that they may be used in doing the work of the tabernacle of meeting; and you shall give them to the Levites, to every man according to his service." **6** So Moses took the carts and the oxen, and gave them to the Levites. **7** Two carts and four oxen he gave to the sons of Gershon, according to their service; **8** and four carts and eight oxen he gave to the sons of Merari, according to their service, under the authority of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest. **9** But to the sons of Kohath he gave none, because theirs was the service of the holy things, which they carried on their shoulders.

- A. Apparently, Moses was at first reluctant to accept these magnificent gifts of wagons, since no commandment had been given for such gifts and there was the problem of what to do with them. God promptly supplied the answer. (Coffman)

10 Now the leaders offered the dedication offering for the altar when it was anointed; so the leaders offered their offering before the altar. **11** For the Lord said to Moses, "They shall offer their offering, one leader each day, for the dedication of the altar."

12 And the one who offered his offering on the first day was Nahshon the son of Amminadab, from the tribe of Judah. **13** His offering was one silver platter, the weight of which was one hundred and thirty shekels, and one silver bowl of seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering; **14** one gold pan of ten shekels, full of incense; **15** one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb in its first year, as a burnt offering; **16** one kid of the goats as a sin offering; **17** and for the sacrifice of peace offerings: two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs in their first year. This was the offering of Nahshon the son of Amminadab.

- A. The next 66 verses of this chapter repeat verbatim the gifts of exactly the same tally of gifts on the part of each of the remaining eleven princes of Israel. (Coffman)
- B. 12 silver platters (130 shekels each) filled with flour
- C. 12 silver bowls, (70 shekels each) (2,400 shekels of silver)

- D. 12 gold spoons (10 shekels each), full of incense (120 Shekels of gold)
- E. 12 bulls, 24 oxen, 72 rams, 72 goats, 72 he-lambs (252 animals)
- F. The princes appeared with their gifts in the exact order of their marching formation given in Numbers 2. Despite all this, the total time elapsed between the events of Sinai and the departure of Israel was only a matter of about six weeks. (Coffman)
- G. Every tribe offers the same kind of offering, and in the same quantity, to show, that as every tribe was equally indebted to God for its support, so each should testify an equal sense of obligation. Besides, the vessels were all sacrificial vessels, and the animals were all clean animals, such as were proper for sacrifices; and therefore everything was intended to point out that the people were to be a holy people, fully dedicated to God (Clarke)
- H. There were three classes of offerings (a) meal; (b) sin; and (c) peace.

[89](#) Now when Moses went into the tabernacle of meeting to speak with Him, he heard the voice of One speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the Testimony, from between the two cherubim; thus He spoke to him.

- A. Since a king gives private audience to his minister, so special license was granted to Moses, who, though not a priest, was admitted into the sanctuary to receive instructions from his Heavenly King as occasion demanded. (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)

NUMBERS 8

The information here is supplementary to that given in previous chapters of the Pentateuch. Much of the Pentateuch appears somewhat in the form of a Mosaic diary, but without any strict attention to the chronological fixation regarding the subjects treated. (Coffman)

Arrangement of the Lamps

[1](#) And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: [2](#) "Speak to Aaron, and say to him, 'When you arrange the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light in front of the lampstand.' " [3](#) And Aaron did so; he arranged the lamps to face toward the front of the lampstand, as the Lord commanded Moses. [4](#) Now this workmanship of the lampstand was hammered gold; from its shaft to its flowers it was hammered work. According to the pattern which the Lord had shown Moses, so he made the lampstand.

- A. The details of the lampstand are given elsewhere: (1) in [Ex 25:31-40](#), where it is planned; (2) in [Ex 37:17-34](#), where it is made; (3) in [Ex 40:24,25](#), where it is actually set up; (4) in [Lev 24:2](#), where details for the sacred oil is given; and (5) here we find the actual lighting of it in a particular manner. (Coffman)

CLEANSING OF THE LEVITES

[5](#) Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: [6](#) "Take the Levites from among the children of Israel and cleanse them ceremonially. [7](#) Thus you shall do to them to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purification on them, and let them shave all their body, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean. [8](#) Then let them take a young bull with its grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil, and you shall take another young bull as a sin offering. [9](#) And you shall bring the Levites before the tabernacle of meeting, and you shall gather together the whole congregation of the children of Israel. [10](#) So you shall bring the Levites before the Lord, and the children of Israel shall lay their hands on the Levites; [11](#) and Aaron shall offer the Levites before the Lord, like a wave offering from the children of Israel, that they may perform the work of the Lord. [12](#) Then the Levites shall lay their hands on the heads of the young bulls, and you shall offer one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering to the Lord, to make atonement for the Levites.

- A. They were to be set apart by a special ceremony, which, however, was much simpler than that appointed for the priests; neither washing, nor anointing, nor investiture with official robes, was necessary. (Jamieson, Fausset, Brown)
- B. The words, "the whole assembly," often signify all the elders, or principal persons in the several tribes - [Num 15:4](#), [Num 25:7](#), [Num 35:12](#). And they cannot well have any other sense here; for it would be impossible for all the children of Israel to put their hands on the Levites (Torrey, Treasury of Scripture Knowledge)

[17](#) For all the firstborn among the children of Israel are Mine, both man and beast; on the day that I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them to Myself.

[18](#) I have taken the Levites instead of all the firstborn of the children of Israel. [19](#) And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the work for the children of Israel in the tabernacle of meeting, and to make atonement for the children of Israel, that there be no plague among the children of Israel when the children of Israel come near the sanctuary."

- A. Exempt from all military duty or secular work; free from all pecuniary imposition, and wholly devoted to the custody and service of the sanctuary. (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)
- B. These servants, like Him, were substitutes, taking the place of the children of Israel, by their service making an atonement, providing the ransom that brought deliverance from the wrath of God. (Wycliffe)

[23](#) Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, [24](#) "This is what pertains to the Levites: From twenty-five years old and above one may enter to perform service in the work of the tabernacle of meeting; [25](#) and at the age of fifty years they must cease performing this work, and shall work no more. [26](#) They may minister with their brethren in the tabernacle of meeting, to attend to needs, but they themselves shall do no work. Thus you shall do to the Levites regarding their duties."

- A. There are a number of important considerations in these verses. First, there is the "contradiction" in the giving of age twenty-five as the age when Levites began their service, whereas, previously the age of thirty years was specified. Different situations in view explain the difference: "The age varied for different kinds of service: (1) for a soldier, it was age twenty, (2) for a priest, it was age thirty, and (3) for the Levites, it was age twenty-five
- B. As for the age of thirty indicated for Levites in [Num 4:3](#), this evidently referred particularly to those charged with moving the sacred furniture of the tabernacle. The work envisioned here is of a much wider nature. Another explanation, suggested by some, is that an apprenticeship of five years was also required, which would account for the variation. (Coffman)
- C. David employed the Levites from their twentieth year ([1 Chr 23:24-25](#)), and expressly stated that he did so because the Levites had no longer to carry the dwelling and its furniture. (Keil & Delitzsch)

NUMBERS 9

The Second Passover

1 Now the Lord spoke 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 "Let the children of Israel keep the Passover at its appointed time. 3 On the fourteenth day of this month, at twilight, you shall keep it at its appointed time. According to all its rites and ceremonies you shall keep it." ...

- A. The reason that it was necessary to repeat the commandment to observe the Passover in the wilderness came out of the fact that the first institution of that ordinance did not contemplate Israel's long sojourn in the wilderness, a thing that developed later, due to the sin of Israel. "It was necessary because the law in Exodus (**Ex 12:25**) did not contemplate the possibility of a Passover in the wilderness." (Coffman)
- B. The date of this command to keep the Passover in the wilderness was given shortly after the erection and consecration of the tabernacle, and preceded the numbering of the people by a month (cf. Num 9:1 with Num 1:1-2). (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)
- C. In some details, the present Passover differed both from that kept at the Exodus itself and from all subsequent Passovers. For example, the direction of Ex 12:22 could not be carried out in the letter while the people were dwelling in tents; and may be regarded as superseded by Lev 17:3-6 (compare Deut 16:5 ff). (Barnes)

6 Now there were certain men who were defiled by a human corpse, so that they could not keep the Passover on that day; and they came before Moses and Aaron that day.

7 And those men said to him, "We became defiled by a human corpse. Why are we kept from presenting the offering of the Lord at its appointed time among the children of Israel?" 8 And Moses said to them, "Stand still, that I may hear what the Lord will command concerning you." 9 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 10 "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'If anyone of you or your posterity is unclean because of a corpse, or is far away on a journey, he may still keep the Lord's Passover.

11 On the fourteenth day of the second month, at twilight, they may keep it. They shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. 12 They shall leave none of it until morning, nor break one of its bones. According to all the ordinances of the Passover they shall keep it. 13 But the man who is clean and is not on a journey, and ceases to keep the Passover, that same person shall be cut off from among his people, because he did not bring the offering of the Lord at its appointed time; that man shall bear his sin.

14 And if a stranger dwells among you, and would keep the Lord's Passover, he must do so according to the rite of the Passover and according to its ceremony; you shall have one ordinance, both for the stranger and the native of the land.' "

- A. As frequently observed in Numbers, additional instruction regarding some previous regulation resulted from some emergency need for further clarification; and, in these verses, a similar instance arose. Certain men came to Moses and presented the problem caused by their uncleanness from touching a dead body, with a result that they were ceremonially forbidden to take the Passover at the proper time. Moses did not presume to answer this "from his experience," or from his own conclusions. He promptly commanded the men to wait until **GOD** would speak concerning their problem. "These men were probably Mishael and Elizaphan, who buried their cousins, Nadab and Abihu, within a week of when this Passover was held ([Lev 10:4,5](#) [Num 19:11](#))

The Cloud and the Fire

[15](#) Now on the day that the tabernacle was raised up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the Testimony; from evening until morning it was above the tabernacle like the appearance of fire. [16](#) So it was always: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night. [17](#) Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, after that the children of Israel would journey; and in the place where the cloud settled, there the children of Israel would pitch their tents. [18](#) At the command of the Lord the children of Israel would journey, and at the command of the Lord they would camp; as long as the cloud stayed above the tabernacle they remained encamped. [19](#) Even when the cloud continued long, many days above the tabernacle, the children of Israel kept the charge of the Lord and did not journey. [20](#) So it was, when the cloud was above the tabernacle a few days: according to the command of the Lord they would remain encamped, and according to the command of the Lord they would journey. [21](#) So it was, when the cloud remained only from evening until morning: when the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they would journey; whether by day or by night, whenever the cloud was taken up, they would journey. [22](#) Whether it was two days, a month, or a year that the cloud remained above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would remain encamped and not journey; but when it was taken up, they would journey. [23](#) At the command of the Lord they remained encamped, and at the command of the Lord they journeyed; they kept the charge of the Lord, at the command of the Lord by the hand of Moses.

- A. "At the commandment of the Lord ..." This phrase occurs no less than seven times in this paragraph, stressing the important truth that God directed and controlled the movements of Israel in the wilderness. (Coffman)
- B. Though they were an obstinate and perverse people, and must in general be desirous of getting as soon as they could into the land of promise, yet in this case, in all their stations and journeys, were submissive and obedient to the divine will, (Gill)

C. Plaut stated that, "The reason for this detailed passage containing previously stated information is not clear." To us it seems quite logical that at this very moment when Israel was to depart from Sinai on an extended series of journeys that would cover a period of almost forty years and involve no less than forty-two stations for their encampment, it was appropriate indeed that there should have been just such a recapitulation as we find here. (Coffman)

NUMBERS 10

Two Silver Trumpets

1 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: **2** "Make two silver trumpets for yourself; you shall make them of hammered work; you shall use them for calling the congregation and for directing the movement of the camps. **3** When they blow both of them, all the congregation shall gather before you at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. **4** But if they blow only one, then the leaders, the heads of the divisions of Israel, shall gather to you. **5** When you sound the advance, the camps that lie on the east side shall then begin their journey. **6** When you sound the advance the second time, then the camps that lie on the south side shall begin their journey; they shall sound the call for them to begin their journeys. **7** And when the assembly is to be gathered together, you shall blow, but not sound the advance. **8** The sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow the trumpets; and these shall be to you as an ordinance forever throughout your generations. **9** When you go to war in your land against the enemy who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, and you will be remembered before the Lord your God, and you will be saved from your enemies. **10** Also in the day of your gladness, in your appointed feasts, and at the beginning of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; and they shall be a memorial for you before your God: I am the Lord your God."

- A. As the trumpets were emblematic of the voice of God, the priests only were to use them. At this time there were only two "sons of Aaron;" but in later times, when the number of priests was greater, more trumpets were used; we read of seven in the times of Joshua and David and of a hundred and twenty in that of Solomon ([2 Chron 5:12](#)). (Barnes)
- B. There seem to have been signals made by a difference in the loudness and variety in the notes, suited for different occasions, and which experience made the Israelites easily distinguish. (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)
- C. What a need exists today for such a priestly ministry to call the Lord's people and their leaders **BACK TO THE BIBLE** (Coffman)

Israel Ordered To Leave Sinai

11 Now it came to pass on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle of the Testimony. **12** And the children of Israel set out from the Wilderness of Sinai on their journeys; then the cloud settled down in the Wilderness of Paran. **13** So they started out for the first time according to the command of the Lord by the hand of Moses.

A. This is the beginning of the second major division of Numbers, ending in [Num 20](#). It was a significant moment indeed in the history of Israel. The deliverance from Egypt has been accomplished, the Decalogue Covenant has been ratified, the rebellion in the matter of the golden calf was behind them, the tabernacle had been constructed, set up, and staffed with the appointed priesthood, the numbering of the tribes, the instructions for their march, the clarification of certain laws with added instructions had been given, the tribal leaders appointed, and even the silver trumpets made ready. The cloud lifted, the trumpets sounded. "They went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came" ([Gen 12:5](#)). However, it was not to be with this generation of Israel, exactly as it had been with their distinguished ancestor. (Coffman)

[14](#) The standard of the camp of the children of Judah set out first according to their

Order of March		
Tribe	Leader	Men
Levi	Kohathites carrying the Ark	
Judah	Nahson	74,600
Issachar	Nethanel	54,400
Zebulun	Eliab	57,400
Levi	Sons of Gershon / Merari carrying the tabernacle	
Reuben	Elizur	46,500
Simeon	Shelumiel	59,300
Gad	Eliasaph	45,650
Levi	Kohathites carrying the holy things	
Ephraim	Elishama	40,500
Manass	Gamaliel	32,200
Benjami	Abidan	35,400
Dan	Ahiezer	62,700
Asher	Pagiel	41,500
Naphtali	Ahira	53,400

armies; ... [17](#) Then the tabernacle was taken down; and the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari set out, carrying the tabernacle. [21](#) Then the Kohathites set out, carrying the holy things. (The tabernacle would be prepared for their arrival.) ... [25](#) Then the standard of the camp of the children of Dan (the rear guard of all the camps) set out according to their armies; ... [28](#) Thus was the order of march of the children of Israel, according to their armies, when they began their journey.

A. We should remember the purpose of this book and not be too overly concerned about the exact movements of Israel in Numbers. True, a list of all the stations is given in [Num 33](#), but that does not appear at all to be the order

in which Israel made those encampments. (Coffman)

B. Although these verses in the main part simply repeat the marching orders given in [Num 2](#), there is a variation in that the ark of the covenant goes ahead instead of remaining in the center of the column of Levites as first commanded. Any one of four good reasons for this change might be correct

- Cook thought that for this very first journey, the ark's proceeding in front was just another exception, as was the case also, "when the ark preceded the people into the bed of the Jordan River ([Jos 3:3,6](#))
- Smick pointed out that the instructions to go in advance might have applied merely to the men actually transporting the tabernacle
- The explanation given by the Jews is that, Although the ark traveled in the midst of the people, in a figurative sense it led them.

- d. "The `ark went before them' in the Hebrew is literally `to their faces,' which also bears the translation, `in their sight' (Coffman)
- C. Verse 33 says "the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them for the three days' journey, to search out a resting place for them."

[29](#) Now Moses said to Hobab the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, "We are setting out for the place of which the Lord said, 'I will give it to you.' Come with us, and we will treat you well; for the Lord has promised good things to Israel." [30](#) And he said to him, "I will not go, but I will depart to my own land and to my relatives." [31](#) So Moses said, "Please do not leave, inasmuch as you know how we are to camp in the wilderness, and you can be our eyes. [32](#) And it shall be, if you go with us--indeed it shall be--that whatever good the Lord will do to us, the same we will do to you."

- A. What did Moses want a man for, when he had the cloud? What do we want common sense for, when we have the Holy Spirit? What do we want experience and counsel for, when Divine guidance has been promised us? The two things work together. God's promise of guidance and success never relieved any person of the utmost watchfulness and labor toward the same objective. (Maclaren)

[33](#) So they departed from the mountain of the Lord on a journey of three days; and the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them for the three days' journey, to search out a resting place for them. [34](#) And the cloud of the Lord was above them by day when they went out from the camp. [35](#) So it was, whenever the ark set out, that Moses said: "Rise up, O Lord! Let Your enemies be scattered, And let those who hate You flee before You." [36](#) And when it rested, he said: "Return, O Lord, To the many thousands of Israel."

- A. The prayer uttered by Moses in the last two verses became a classic, and the two sayings are included in the synagogue's traditional Torah service, at the beginning, and at the end. (Plaut)
- B. The wilderness experience made a profound impression upon the Hebrew nation, and one of their Psalms ([Ps 68](#)) is closely related to this very chapter. (Coffman)

NUMBERS 11

This, and the next three chapters, deal with some of the numerous disaffections, rebellions, and murmurings of the children of Israel, not with any view of recording all that they did, but with the purpose of setting forth for the benefit of all people afterward several of their deeds as "examples" and for "the admonition" of those upon whom the ends of the ages have come ([1 Cor 10:11](#)). (Coffman)

The People Complain

[1](#) Now when the people complained, it displeased the Lord; for the Lord heard it, and His anger was aroused. So the fire of the Lord burned among them, and consumed some in the outskirts of the camp. [2](#) Then the people cried out to Moses, and when Moses prayed to the Lord, the fire was quenched. [3](#) So he called the name of the place Taberah, because the fire of the Lord had burned among them.

- A. What the cause of this complaining was, we know not. The conjecture of Jerome is probable; they complained because of the length of the way. But surely no people had ever less cause for murmuring; they had God among them, and miracles of goodness were continually wrought in their behalf. (Clarke)

[4](#) Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: "Who will give us meat to eat? [5](#) We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; [6](#) but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!" [7](#) Now the manna was like coriander seed, and its color like the color of bdellium. [8](#) The people went about and gathered it, ground it on millstones or beat it in the mortar, cooked it in pans, and made cakes of it; and its taste was like the taste of pastry prepared with oil. [9](#) And when the dew fell on the camp in the night, the manna fell on it.

- A. Plaut gave the meaning of this as "the riffraff." **[6]** Owens called them, the rabble, adding that "the word occurs nowhere else in the O.T." **[7]** They were part of the great mob of people that followed Israel out of Egypt ([Ex 12:38](#)). In the account here, it is very evident that this vast throng of stragglers and hangers-on were a major source of trouble. (Coffman)
- B. There are some people who have come to Jesus Christ but they have what is classified by Christ as a lukewarm relationship, which is the same as the mixed multitude, for lukewarmness is actually an add-mixture of hot and cold. (Smith)
- C. Daily familiarity had disgusted them with the sight and taste of the monotonous food; and, ungrateful for the heavenly gift, they longed for a change of fare. (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)

- D. It is true they possessed herds of cattle, but these would not have been sufficient to supply their wants, as cattle could not be bought for slaughtering, and it was necessary to spare what they had. (Keil and Delitzsch)

[10](#) Then Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families, everyone at the door of his tent; and the anger of the Lord was greatly aroused; Moses also was displeased. [11](#) So Moses said to the Lord, "Why have You afflicted Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of all these people on me? [12](#) Did I conceive all these people? Did I beget them, that You should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom, as a guardian carries a nursing child,' to the land which You swore to their fathers? [13](#) Where am I to get meat to give to all these people? For they weep all over me, saying, 'Give us meat, that we may eat.' [14](#) I am not able to bear all these people alone, because the burden is too heavy for me. [15](#) If You treat me like this, please kill me here and now--if I have found favor in Your sight--and do not let me see my wretchedness!"

- A. One can easily understand the frustration and desperation of Moses. From his point of view, the situation was just about unbearable. His request that God would slay him is like that of Jonah and Elijah, other great men of God, who requested God's release of them from the duties and burdens of life. (Coffman)
- B.
- C. Moses, a weak man, was wanting in the omnipotent power which alone could satisfy the crying of the people for flesh. (Keil and Delitzsch)

The Seventy Elders

[16](#) So the Lord said to Moses: "Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; bring them to the tabernacle of meeting, that they may stand there with you. [17](#) Then I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit that is upon you and will put the same upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone.

- A. [I will take of the spirit which is upon thee] From this place Origen and Theodoret take occasion to compare Moses to a lamp at which seventy others were lighted, without losing any of its brightness. (Clarke)
- B. This institution of the seventy persons to help Moses the rabbis consider as the origin of their grand council called the Sanhedrin. But we find that a council of seventy men, elders of Israel, had existed among the people a year before this time. See Ex 24:9; see the advice given to Jethro to Moses, Ex 18:17, etc (Clarke)

[18](#) Then you shall say to the people, 'Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat; for you have wept in the hearing 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 five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, [20](#) but for a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you, because you have despised the Lord who is among you, and have wept before Him, saying, "Why did we ever come up out of Egypt?" ' "

- A. A punishment for having despised Jehovah in the midst of them, in their contempt of the manna given by God, and for having shown their regret at leaving the land of Egypt in their longing for the provisions of that land. (Keil and Delitzsch)

[21](#) And Moses said, "The people whom I am among are six hundred thousand men on foot; yet You have said, 'I will give them meat, that they may eat for a whole month.'

[22](#) Shall flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, to provide enough for them? Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to provide enough for them?"

[23](#) And the Lord said to Moses, "Has the Lord's arm been shortened? Now you shall see whether what I say will happen to you or not."

- A. Moses himself was incredulous that even God could do such a thing, as indicated by his protest. However, Moses had enough faith to command the people as God had said.
- B. Here is one of the great questions that abound in the O.T. The simple meaning of it: "Is anything too hard for God to do?" (Coffman)

[24](#) So Moses went out and told the people the words of the Lord, and he gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tabernacle.

[25](#) Then the Lord came down in the cloud, and spoke to him, and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and placed the same upon the seventy elders; and it happened, when the Spirit rested upon them, that they prophesied, although they never did so again. [26](#) But

two men had remained in the camp: the name of one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad. And the Spirit rested upon them. Now they were among those listed, but who had not gone out to the tabernacle; yet they prophesied in the camp. [27](#) And a young man ran and told Moses, and said, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." [28](#) So Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, one of his choice men, answered and said, "Moses my lord, forbid them!" [29](#) Then Moses said to him, "Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!" [30](#) And Moses returned to the camp, both he and the elders of Israel.

- A. This miraculous manifestation of the Spirit was intended simply to give to the whole nation the visible proof that God had endowed them with His Spirit, as helpers of Moses, and had given them the authority required for the exercise of their calling. (Keil and Delitzsch)
- B. No account has been handed down of the further action of this committee of elders. It is impossible to determine, therefore, in what way they assisted Moses in bearing the burden of governing the people. (Keil and Delitzsch)

The Lord Sends Quail

[31](#) Now a wind went out from the Lord, and it brought quail from the sea and left them fluttering near 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 two cubits above the surface of the ground. [32](#) And the people stayed up all that day, all 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](#) But while the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was aroused against the people, and the Lord struck the people with a very great plague. [34](#) So he called the name of that place Kibroth Hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had yielded to craving. [35](#) From Kibroth Hattaavah the people moved to Hazeroth, and camped at Hazeroth.

- A. Had the quails lain upon the earth in a heap for any considerable time, life could only have been preserved by miraculous interference with the ordinary laws of nature, and the Israelites were not allowed to eat of that which had died of itself. Quails commonly fly low, and when wearied with a long flight might fly only about breast-high. On the other hand, the more obvious interpretation of the words is that the quails were spread over the ground, and covered it in some places to the height of two cubits. They were probably taken and killed immediately on their descent, as the following verse seems to indicate, and then spread out and dried and hardened in the sun. (See [Ps 78:26-31](#)) (Ellicott)
- B. A surfeit (an excessive amount of something), such as that in which the Israelites had indulged, would naturally produce a considerable amount of sickness. (Ellicott)

NUMBERS 12

Dissension of Aaron and Miriam

1 Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman. **2** So they said, "Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?" And the Lord heard it. **3** (Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.)

- A. It appears that jealousy of the power and influence of Moses was the real cause of their complaint (Clarke)
- B. Miriam, as a prophetess no less than as the sister of Moses and Aaron, took the first rank among the women of Israel; and Aaron may be regarded as the ecclesiastical head of the whole nation. But instead of being grateful for these high dignities they challenged the special vocation of Moses and the exclusive authority which God had assigned to him. Miriam was the instigator, from the fact that her name stands conspicuously first, and that the punishment fell on her alone. (Barnes)
- C. The words are inserted to explain how it was that Moses took no steps to vindicate himself, and why consequently the Lord so promptly intervened. (Barnes)

4 Suddenly the Lord said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, "Come out, you three, to the tabernacle of meeting!" So the three came out. **5** Then the Lord came down in the pillar of cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both went forward. **6** Then He said, "Hear now My words: "If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream.

7 Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house. **8** I speak with him face to face, Even plainly, and not in dark sayings; And he sees the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant Moses?"

- A. The divine interposition was made thus openly and immediately, in order to suppress the sedition, and prevent its spreading among the people. (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)
- B. This reminds us of the opening words of Hebrews that, "By divers portions and in divers manners" God spake of old to the fathers by the prophets. Moses excelled all others of that whole era as the receiver and communicator of the word of God. (Coffman)

9 So the anger of the Lord was aroused against them, and He departed. **10** And when the cloud departed from above the tabernacle, suddenly Miriam became leprous, as white as snow. Then Aaron turned toward Miriam, and there she was, a leper. **11** So Aaron said to Moses, "Oh, my lord! Please do not lay this sin on us, in which we have

done foolishly and in which we have sinned. **12** Please do not let her be as one dead, whose flesh is half consumed when he comes out of his mother's womb!" **13** So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying, "Please heal her, O God, I pray!" **14** Then the Lord said to Moses, "If her father had but spit in her face, would she not be shamed seven days? Let her be shut out of the camp seven days, and afterward she may be received again."

15 So Miriam was shut out of the camp seven days, and the people did not journey till Miriam was brought in again.

16 And afterward the people moved from Hazeroth and camped in the Wilderness of Paran.

- A. Leprosy was nothing short of a living death, a poisoning of the springs, a corrupting of all the humors, of life; a dissolution little by little of the whole body, so that one limb after another actually decayed and fell away. (Barnes)
- B. The Jews, in common with all people in the East, seem to have had an intense abhorrence of spitting; and for a parent to express his displeasure by doing so on the person of one of his children, or even on the ground in his presence, separated that child as unclean from society for seven days. (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)

Note: Moses in this place is said to be: (a) the meekest of all men; (b) the faithful servant in all God's house; (c) that he had an intimate face to face relation to God; and (d) that God revealed all truth to him clearly. Of Jesus Christ alone could all these be said without reservation, leaving the certainty that God gave these words, though applied to the type, as eloquent witnesses of the Greater Prophet "like unto Moses." (Clarke)

NUMBERS 13

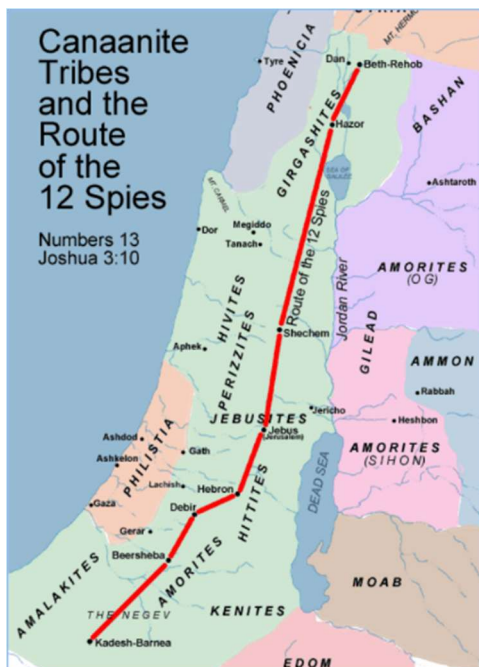
Spies Sent Into Canaan

1 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, **2** "Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel; from each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, every one a leader among them." **3** So Moses sent them from the Wilderness of Paran according to the command of the Lord, all of them men who were heads of the children of Israel. (Note v. 4-15 list the 12 tribes) **16** These are the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun, Joshua.

- A. See also Deuteronomy ([Deut 1:20-22](#))
- B. "Hoshea ..." means "desire of salvation." Moses changed the name to Joshua by adding the prefix "Jeh" for Jehovah, giving the meaning of "divinely appointed, head of salvation," or "Savior." The name as changed is the same as "Savior", or "Jesus." (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)

17 Then Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said to them, "Go up this way into the South, and go up to the mountains, **18** and see what the land is like: whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, few or many; **19** whether the land they dwell in is good or bad; whether the cities they inhabit are like camps or strongholds; **20** whether the land is rich or poor; and whether there are forests there or not. Be of good courage. And bring some of the fruit of the land." Now the time was the season of the first ripe grapes.

- A. The first-ripe grapes came in late July or early August, but the full vintage came in September and October. This corresponds exactly with the time elapsed since their leaving Sinai. (Keil)



21 So they went up and spied out the land from the Wilderness of Zin as far as Rehob, near the entrance of Hamath. **22** And they went up through the South and came to Hebron; Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi, the descendants of Anak, were there. (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) **23** Then they came to the Valley of Eshcol, and there cut down a branch with one cluster of grapes; they carried it between two of them on a pole. They also brought some of the pomegranates and figs. **24** The place was called the Valley of Eshcol, because of the cluster which the men of Israel cut down there.

[25](#) And they returned from spying out the land after forty days. [26](#) Now they departed and came back to Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; they brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. [27](#) Then they told him, and said: "We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. [28](#) Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there. [29](#) The Amalekites dwell in the land of the South; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and along the banks of the Jordan."

- A. It is a wonder how the people of Israel had patience to stay forty days for the return of their spies, when they were just ready to enter Canaan, under all the assurances of success they could have from the divine power, and a constant series of miracles that had hitherto attended them; but they distrusted God's power and promise, and were willing to be held in suspense by their own counsels, rather than be brought to a certainty by God's covenant. (Henry)

[30](#) Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it." [31](#) But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we." [32](#) And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. [33](#) There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

- A. Their commission had been to view the land and to report back on what they saw. It was not their job to determine if the Israelites could overcome the Canaanites. God had promised that He would give the land to His people. (Constable)
- B. Caleb's magnificent challenge here stands out as the words of a true believer. Caleb's confidence was not in Caleb, but in the God of Israel. (Coffman)
- C. Caleb understood Paul's concept of God in [Rom 8:31](#) (What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?) and John's concept in [1 John 4:4](#) (You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.) (Everett)

NUMBERS 14

The repeated rebellions of Israel against the will of God reached their climax in this chapter with the Divine sentence that condemned that whole generation to die in the wilderness, allowing the possession of Canaan to their children, who, reared in the hardships of the wilderness, possessed the faith and ability to enable their success. (Coffman)

Israel Refuses to Enter Canaan

1 So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. **2** And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! **3** Why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?" **4** So they said to one another, "Let us select a leader and return to Egypt."

- A. God's unbelieving children have never ceased to indulge in such conduct. Every congregation of believers on earth has within it some whose contribution to the success of the kingdom is nothing but complaining and murmuring. God was sorely displeased with it then, and he still is. What were those "good old days" in Egypt? They consisted of endless drudgery under the slave whips of their oppressors. Here the people seem to have forgotten the "service with rigor" that was their lot in Egypt. (Coffman)
- B. They blame God Himself, despite all that God had done for them, pretending to be concerned for their children. That was not the real problem at all. They were the problem. (Coffman)
- C. For the believer, the choice is inevitable, either he must go forward in Christ to possess the land, or go back to the world (Egypt) and die. It seems from [Neh 9:17](#) that they actually appointed another leader under whose direction they were about to return to Egypt. (Unger)
- D. "Return into Egypt": downright madness; they must expect to be deserted by Moses, whose miracles had been wrought for them,; and by Aaron their priest, who offered their sacrifices; and by such a valiant general as Joshua; and by the Lord himself, so that they could not expect the manna, nor the pillar of cloud and fire, nor protected from their enemies,; so that their destruction seemed inevitable; and what reception could they expect to find in Egypt, on whose account all the firstborn of man and beast among them were slain, whom they had spoiled of their riches, and whose king and his army, and in it perhaps the, flower of the nation, were drowned in the Red sea, for their sakes? (Gill)

5 Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel. **6** But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; **7** and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: "The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. **8** If the Lord delights in us, then 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 are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the Lord is with us. Do not fear them."
10 And all the congregation said to stone them with stones. Now the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of meeting before all the children of Israel.

- A. Forsaking any thought of their personal dignity, these faithful leaders moved to do everything in their power to thwart the evil purpose of the people. (Coffman)
- B. At this murmuring, Moses and Aaron fell upon their faces before the whole of the assembled congregation, namely, to pour out their distress before the Lord, and move Him to interpose; [Deut 1:29-31](#) (Keil and Delitzsch)

Moses Intercedes for the People

11 Then the Lord said to Moses: "How long will these people reject Me? And how long will they not believe Me, with all the signs which I have performed among them? **12** I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they."

- A. Jehovah resented the conduct of the people as base contempt of His deity, and as utter mistrust of Him, notwithstanding all the signs which He had wrought in the midst of the nation; and declared that He would smite the rebellious people with pestilence, and destroy them, and make of Moses a greater and still mightier people. This was just what He had done before, when the rebellion took place at Sinai ([Ex 32:10](#)). (Keil and Delitzsch)

13 And Moses said to the Lord: "Then the Egyptians will hear it, for by Your might You brought these people up from among them, **14** and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that You, Lord, are among these people; that You, Lord, are seen face to face and Your cloud stands above them, and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. **15** Now if You kill these people as one man, then the nations which have heard of Your fame will speak, saying, **16** 'Because the Lord was not able to bring this people to the land which He swore to give them, therefore He killed them in the wilderness.' **17** And now, I pray, let the power of my Lord be great, just as You have spoken, saying, **18** 'The Lord is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears the

guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation.' [19](#) Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy, just as You have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now."

- A. This great intercession by Moses is one of the glorious passages of the O.T. Pleading for God to spare the Chosen Nation, despite their wickedness, and pleading no merit of the people but the goodness and honor of God as the true basis of his petition, he prevailed! The self-effacing goodness of Moses shines in this passage. God could indeed have made of Moses a people greater and mightier than Israel, but Moses sought the honor of God rather than his own personal glory. (Coffman)

[20](#) Then the Lord said: "I have pardoned, according to your word; [21](#) but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord-- [22](#) because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice, [23](#) they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it. [24](#) But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it. [25](#) Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwell in the valley; tomorrow turn and move out into the wilderness by the Way of the Red Sea."

- A. See the power of prayer... He designed a pardon, but Moses shall have the praise of obtaining it by prayer: See what countenance and encouragement God gives to our intercessions for others, that we may be public-spirited in prayer. Here is a whole nation rescued from ruin by the effectual fervent prayer of one righteous man. (Henry)
- B. These ten times... Rabbi Judah from the second century enumerated ten instances of Israel's rebellion. There were two instances at the Red Sea, [Ex 14:11](#); [Ps 106:11](#); two in demanding water, [Ex 15:23](#); [Ex 17:2](#); two for food, [Ex 16:27](#); two for flesh, [Ex 16:3](#); [Num 11:4](#); in the matter of the golden calf, and in the sending out of the spies. (Gray)

Sentence upon the Murmuring Congregation

26 And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, **27** "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who complain against Me? I have heard the complaints which the children of Israel make against Me.

28 Say to them, 'As I live,' says the Lord, 'just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you: **29** The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from

twenty years old and above. **30** Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, you shall by no means enter the land which I swore I would make you dwell

in. **31** But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised. **32** But as for you, your carcasses shall fall in

this wilderness. **33** And your sons shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years, and bear the brunt of your infidelity, until your carcasses are consumed in the wilderness.

34 According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, namely forty years, and you shall know My rejection. **35** I the Lord have spoken this; I will surely do so to all this evil congregation

who are gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.' "

- A. Those that would follow God fully must have another spirit, another from the spirit of the world, and another from what their own spirit has been. They must have the spirit of Caleb. (Henry)
- B. This is apparently a qualifier of the general proscription of the "whole number" that were numbered in the opening chapters of Numbers, with the meaning that any who did not murmur against God would have been exempted. (Coffman)
- C. Except the Levites, for they were not numbered with the other tribes; their number was taken from a month old and upwards; we find that there were of them who did not fall in the wilderness, but entered into the land of Canaan, as it is certain Eleazar the priest, the son of Aaron, did. (Gill)
- D. It full forty years from their coming out of Egypt to their entrance into Canaan (Henry)
- E. The period during which the rebellious generation, consisting of those who were numbered at Sinai, died out, was actually thirty-eight years, reaching from the autumn of the second year after their departure from Egypt to the middle of the fortieth year of their wanderings, and terminating with the fresh numbering (ch. 26) that was undertaken after the death of Aaron, and took place on the first of the fifth month of the fortieth year ([Num 33:38](#)). (Keil and Delitzsch)

Death Sentence on the Rebels

36 Now the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned and made all the congregation complain against him by bringing a bad report of the land, **37** those very men who brought the evil report about the land, died by the plague before the Lord.

38 But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh remained alive, of the men who went to spy out the land.

- A. Mercy to Caleb and Joshua, that though they should wander with the rest in the wilderness, yet they should survive the years of banishment and live to enter Canaan. (Henry)

A Futile Invasion Attempt

39 Then Moses told these words to all the children of Israel, and the people mourned greatly. **40** And they rose early in the morning and went up to the top of the mountain, saying, "Here we are, and we will go up to the place which the Lord has promised, for we have sinned!" **41** And Moses said, "Now why do you transgress the command of the Lord? For this will not succeed. **42** Do not go up, lest you be defeated by your enemies, for the Lord is not among you. **43** For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and you shall fall by the sword; because you have turned away from the Lord, the Lord will not be with you." **44** But they presumed to go up to the mountaintop; nevertheless, neither the ark of the covenant of the Lord nor Moses departed from the camp. **45** Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who dwelt in that mountain came down and attacked them, and drove them back as far as Hormah.

- A. They found themselves on the very borders of the land, and they heard God say they should not enter it, but should be consumed by a forty years' wandering in the wilderness notwithstanding, they are determined to render vain this purpose of God, probably supposing that the temporary sorrow they felt for their late rebellion would be accepted as a sufficient atonement for their crimes. (Clarke)
- B. Whereas at first they had refused to enter upon the conflict with the Canaanites, through their unbelief in the might of the promise of God, now, through unbelief in the severity of the judgment of God, they resolved to engage in this conflict by their own power, and without the help of God, and to cancel the old sin of unbelieving despair through the new sin of presumptuous self-confidence-(Keil and Delitzsch)

NUMBERS 15

This chapter and the next four (through [Num 19](#)) provide a brief account of what happened in Israel during the next 38 years. How pitifully short is this grand summary of all that was worth writing of those long tragic years in which God simply waited for a faithless generation to die in order that another generation could seize and exploit the golden opportunity which their predecessors forfeited through cowardice and unbelief. And, what is recorded is, in major part, negative. How often in the progress of Christianity has God simply had to WAIT until someone died before any further progress could be registered! A thousand congregations today occupy the same status of having to wait until certain faithless and short-sighted leaders have passed over the river. It is futile to seek any exact dates for events and revelations in these chapters. "While the children of Israel were in the wilderness" ([Num 15:32](#)) is the only date given, the same being the period after the rebellion of [Num 14](#) and until just prior to their entry into Canaan. (Coffman)

Law of Grain and Drink Offering

[1](#) And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, [2](#) "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you have come into the land you are to inhabit, which I am giving to you, [3](#) and you make an offering by fire to the Lord, a burnt offering or a sacrifice, to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering or in your appointed 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 grain offering of one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of oil; [5](#) and one-fourth of a hin of wine as a drink offering you shall prepare with the burnt offering or the sacrifice, for each lamb. [11](#) Thus it shall be done for each young bull, for each ram, or for each lamb or young goat. [12](#) According to the number that you prepare, so you shall do with everyone according to their number.

- A. Verse 6-11 describes increased offering amount for ram and then bull.
- B. Corresponding to the size and value of the animals offered, the meal-offering increases from the lesser to the greater as one fourth, one third, and one half of an ephah of fine flour. And the amount of oil increases in the same ratio. Inherent in these gradations is the principle that men should give "as the Lord has prospered them," the same principle being carried over more specifically into the N.T. (Coffman)
- C. The laws here are addressed to the new generation, the condemned generation apparently being ignored altogether, as indicated by the words, "When ye are come into the land of your habitations". This is also an indication of a very probable time-lapse between this and the last chapter. (Coffman)

- D. Another important indication of these verses is that the children of Israel did not scrupulously keep God's laws in the matter of all these ceremonial requirements during their wilderness sojourn. They did not circumcise their children ([Jos 5](#)). They did not offer the required sacrifices ([Amos 5:25](#)). They continued in idolatry. "Ye have borne ... the shrine of your images, the star of your god which ye made yourselves" ([Amos 5:26](#)). They even worshipped "the host of heaven" (the sun, moon and stars) ([Acts 7:42,43](#)). (Coffman)

13 All who are native-born shall do these things in this manner, in presenting an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord. **14** And if a stranger dwells with you, or whoever is among you throughout your generations, and would present an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord, just as you do, so shall he do. **15** One ordinance shall be for you of the assembly and for the stranger who dwells with you, an ordinance forever throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the stranger be before the Lord. **16** One law and one custom shall be for you and for the stranger who dwells with you.

- A. A stranger - one who had become a proselyte. There was not any of the national privileges of the Israelites, with hardly an exception, in which the Gentile stranger might not, on conforming to certain conditions, fully participate. (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)
- B. God let them know that the sons of the stranger were as welcome to him as the sons of Jacob; no man's birth or parentage shall turn either to his advantage or his prejudice in his acceptance with God. This likewise intimated that, as believing strangers should be accounted Israelites, so unbelieving Israelites should be accounted strangers. ([Isa 56:1-8](#)) (Henry)

Heave Offering

17 Again the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, **18** "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land to which I bring you, **19** then it will be, when you eat of the bread of the land, that you shall offer up a heave offering to the Lord. **20** You shall offer up a cake of the first of your ground meal as a heave offering; as a heave offering of the threshing floor, so shall you offer it up. **21** Of the first of your ground meal you shall give to the Lord a heave offering throughout your generations.

- A. The heave offering was often used in conjunction with a wave offering, and both were then given to the priests. The heave and the wave refer to the movement of the sacrificed item over the altar. With a wave offering, the priest moved the offering from side to side over the altar, and, with a heave offering, the sacrificed item is presented with an up-and-down motion.

Law Concerning Unintentional Sin-Congregation

[22](#) 'If you sin unintentionally, and do not observe all these commandments which the Lord has spoken to Moses--[23](#) all that the Lord has commanded you by the hand of Moses, from the day the Lord gave commandment and onward throughout your generations--[24](#) then it will be, if it is unintentionally committed, without the knowledge of the congregation, that the whole congregation shall offer one young bull as a burnt offering, as a sweet aroma to the Lord, with its grain offering and its drink offering, according to the ordinance, and one kid of the goats as a sin offering. [25](#) So the priest shall make atonement for the whole congregation of the children of Israel, and it shall be forgiven them, for it was unintentional; they shall bring their offering, an offering made by fire to the Lord, and their sin offering before the Lord, for their unintended sin. [26](#) It shall be forgiven the whole congregation of the children of Israel and the stranger who dwells among them, because all the people did it unintentionally.

- A. The ceremonial observances were so numerous, and so various, that, it might easily be supposed, some of them by degrees would be forgotten and disused, as particularly that immediately before concerning the heave-offering of their dough: now if, in process of time, upon consulting the law, there should appear to have been a general neglect of that or any other appointment, then a sacrifice must be offered for the whole congregation. (Henry)
- B. See [Lev 4:13-21](#) for more detail

Law Concerning Unintentional Sin-Person

[27](#) 'And if a person sins unintentionally, then he shall bring a female goat in its first year as a sin offering. [28](#) So the priest shall make atonement for the person who sins unintentionally, when he sins unintentionally before the Lord, to make atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him. [29](#) You shall have one law for him who sins unintentionally, for him who is native-born among the children of Israel and for the stranger who dwells among them.

- A. Paul seems to allude to this law concerning sins of ignorance ([1 Tim 1:13](#)), I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly and in unbelief. (Henry)
- B. See [Lev 4:27-35](#) for more detail

Law Concerning Presumptuous Sin

[30](#) 'But the person who does anything presumptuously, whether he is native-born or a stranger, that one brings reproach on the Lord, and he shall be cut off from among his people. [31](#) Because he has despised the word of the Lord, and has broken His commandment, that person shall be completely cut off; his guilt shall be upon him.' "

- A. Presumptuously - something done willfully and openly; in the case of a sin against God it implies that the act is committed ostentatiously and in bravado.
- B. A reading of the whole passage just cited ([Heb 10:25-29](#)) makes it absolutely certain that the sacred N.T. writer had this very passage in mind when the passage was given. (Coffman)

Penalty for Violating the Sabbath

[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](#) They put him under guard, because it had not been explained what should be done to him. [35](#) Then the Lord said to Moses, "The man must surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp." [36](#) So, as the Lord commanded Moses, all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him with stones, and he died.

- A. This is an excellent example of how judgment can appear harsh to one individual, but in the long run, it will save the lives of many people ([Pro 16:6](#)) (Everett)
- B. [EX 35:1-3](#) tell the punishment, but here it says how the punishment is to be carried out

Tassels and Garments

[37](#) Again the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, [38](#) "Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners. [39](#) And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them, and that you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined, [40](#) and that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for 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."

- A. The [~taliyth] to which the fringe was attached was an oblong rectangular garment with a hole in the center for the head, much in the manner of the "poncho" seen in Latin America. (Coffman)
- B. This device was psychological. By associating the commandments of God with the very garment of men, it naturally led to a more faithful remembrance and observance of the Divine commandments. Today, the Orthodox Jew wears this garment at all religious services. And when he dies, he is wrapped in it for his burial. The garment utilized multiple knots in the fringe in order to be able to identify each thread (with the knots), and each knot with a particular commandment. (Coffman)

C. The arrangement of the threads and knots, to which the Jews attached the greatest importance, was so adjusted as to set forth symbolically the 613 precepts of which the Law was believed to consist. In our Lord's time the Pharisees enlarged their fringes [Mat 23:5](#) in order to obtain reputation for their piety. (Barnes)

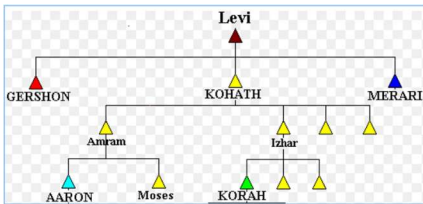
NUMBERS 16

Rebellion Against Moses and Aaron

1 Now Korah the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with 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 some of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, representatives of the congregation, men of renown.

3 They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?"

A. Amram and Izhar were brothers and thus Korah, was connected by distant



cousinship with Moses and Aaron. Though being a Kohathite, he was of that division of the Levites which had the most honorable charge, yet as Elizaphan, who had been made "chief of the families of the Kohathites" ([Num 3:30](#)), belonged

to the youngest branch descended from Uzziel ([Num 3:27](#)), Korah probably regarded himself as injured; and therefore took the lead in this rebellion. (Barnes)

B. Among his associates were the Reubenites, Dathan and Abiram, who, no doubt, were unable to get over the fact that the birthright had been taken away from their ancestor, and with it the headship of the house of Israel ([Gen 49:1-4](#)) (Keil and Delitzsch)

C. The rebels thought that they were holy already, because God had called them to be a holy nation, and in their carnal self-righteousness forgot the condition attached to their calling, "If ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant" ([Ex 19:5-6](#)) (Keil and Delitzsch)

4 So when Moses heard it, he fell on his face; **5** and he 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 come near to Him. That one whom He chooses He will cause to come near to Him. **6** Do this: Take censers, Korah and all your company; **7** put fire in them and put incense in them before the Lord tomorrow, and it shall be that the man whom the Lord chooses is the holy one. You take too much upon yourselves, you sons of Levi!"

A. The offering of incense was the peculiar prerogative and the holiest function of the priesthood. The destruction of Nadab and Abihu ought to have served as a warning to Korah and his company not to provoke a similar exhibition of the Divine displeasure. (Ellicott)

- B. He (Moses) did not make this proposal hastily and at random, but by the inspiration of the Spirit had recourse to the sure judgment of God. The effect of his prayer was that God suggested an easy and expeditious mode of conquest. He, therefore, grants them some space of time for repentance (Calvin)

8 Then Moses said to Korah, "Hear now, you sons of Levi: **9** Is it a small thing to you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself, to do the work of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to serve them; **10** and that He has brought you near to Himself, you and all your brethren, the sons of Levi, with you? And are you seeking the priesthood also? **11** Therefore you and all your company are gathered together against the Lord. And what is Aaron that you complain against him?"

- A. These last words, as an expression of wrath, are elliptical, or rather an aposiopesis, and are to be filled up in the following manner: "Therefore,...as Jehovah has distinguished you in this manner,...what do ye want? Ye rebel against Jehovah! why do ye murmur against Aaron? He has not seized upon the priesthood of his own accord, but Jehovah has called him to it, and he is only a feeble servant of God" (Keil and Delitzsch)
- B. He reminds them how great the honour was to which they were preferred, as Levites. instead of complaining that Aaron's family was advanced above theirs, they ought to have been thankful that their tribe was advanced above the rest of the tribes To those who neglect opportunities of drawing near to God, who are careless and formal in it, to whom it is a task and not a pleasure, we may properly put this question: "Seemeth it a small thing to you that God has made you a people near unto him?" (Calvin)

12 And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, but they said, "We will not come up! **13** Is it a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, that you should keep acting like a prince over us? **14** Moreover you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor given us inheritance of fields and vineyards. Will you put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up!" **15** Then Moses was very angry, and said to the Lord, "Do not respect their offering. I have not taken one donkey from them, nor have I hurt one of them."

- A. And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram He desired, in this way, if it might be, by his holy admonitions, to withhold them from that destruction, on which they were rushing. he was unwilling to pass sentence without hearing the cause, but also because he endeavored to bring them to repentance (Calvin)

- B. "Land flowing..." With perverse contempt for the promises, Dathan and Abiram designate Egypt by the terms appropriated elsewhere to the land of Canaan.
(Barnes)
- C. They refused to obey the summons; and their refusal was grounded on the plausible pretext that their stay in the desert was prolonged for some secret and selfish purposes of the leader, who was conducting them, like blind men, wherever it suited him. Putting out the eyes was the Eastern punishment of treason and rebellion; and in this view the language of the rebels to Moses is very significant (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)
- D. Moses was so disturbed by these scornful reproaches, that he entreated the Lord, not to accept the sacrifice which they should bring. "I have not taken one ass from them, nor done harm to one of them," i.e., I have not treated them as a ruler, who demands tribute of his subjects, and oppresses them (cf. [1 Sam 12:3](#)).
(Keil and Delitzsch)

[16](#) And Moses said to Korah, "Tomorrow, you and all your company be present before the Lord--you and they, as well as Aaron. [17](#) Let each take his censer and put incense in it, and each of you bring his censer before the Lord, two hundred and fifty censers; both you and Aaron, each with his censer." [18](#) So every man took his censer, put fire in it, laid incense on it, and stood at the door of the tabernacle of meeting with Moses and Aaron. [19](#) And Korah gathered all the congregation against them at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Then the glory of the Lord appeared to all the congregation.

- A. Note that Korah is the one who assembled the people, his purpose, no doubt, being that of demonstrating the great "victory" he had won before Moses. Lo, Korah himself and all of his company will go right in and perform the highest function of the priesthood, and everybody will see it! Well, that is, no doubt, what he thought. (Coffman)
- B. It is manifest how greatly they were blinded by pride, since, although admonished both by the confidence of Moses and also by the previous examples, they still obstinately go forward. Surely if any spark of the fear of God had remained in them, their censers would straightway have fallen from their hands
(Calvin)

[20](#) And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, [21](#) "Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment." [22](#) Then they fell on their faces, and said, "O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and You be angry with all the congregation?" [23](#) So the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, [24](#) "Speak to the congregation, saying, 'Get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.'" [25](#) Then Moses rose and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him. [26](#) And he spoke to the congregation, saying, "Depart now from the

tents of these wicked men! Touch nothing of theirs, lest you be consumed in all their sins." [27](#) So they got away from around the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the door of their tents, with their wives, their sons, and their little children.

- A. Moses and Aaron, being true leaders, immediately fell on their faces before the Lord and interceded for the nation. Why should all the people die because of the sin of these men? Moses frequently had to intercede for the people, and they probably didn't appreciate what he did for them. On two occasions, God was ready to destroy the entire nation, but Moses' intercession saved them ([Num14:13-19](#); [Ex 32:7-14](#)). (Wiersbe)
- B. "Shall one man sin ...?" He was Korah, the leader of the rebellion. Moses interceded for God to spare the congregation, and God responded favorably (Coffman)
- C. The tent, "the tabernacle" of Korah, as a Kohathite, stood on the south side of the tabernacle of the Lord; and those of Dathan and Abiram, as Reubenites, in the outer line of encampment on the same side. (Barnes)

[28](#) And Moses said: "By this you shall know that the Lord has sent me to do all these works, for I have not done them of my own will. [29](#) If these men die naturally like all men, or if they are visited by the common fate of all men, then the Lord has not sent me. [30](#) But if the Lord creates a new thing, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the pit, then you will understand that these men have rejected the Lord."

[31](#) Now it came to pass, as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground split apart under them, [32](#) and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all their goods. [33](#) So they and all those with them went down alive into the pit; the earth closed over them, and they perished from among the assembly. [34](#) Then all Israel who were around them fled at their cry, for they said, "Lest the earth swallow us up also!" [35](#) And a fire came out from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering incense.

- A. The other 250 rebels, who were probably still in front of the tabernacle, were then destroyed by fire which proceeded from Jehovah, as Nadab and Abihu had been before ([Lev 10:1-2](#)). (Keil and Delitzsch)
- B. Korah's sons, who, as we learn from [Num26:11](#), "died not" when the company of Korah died. His descendants are mentioned in [1 Chr 6:22-38](#), and mention is made of "the sons of Korah" in the titles of eleven of the Psalms. Samuel the prophet and Heman the singer were of this family ([1 Chr 6:22](#); [1 Chr 6:33](#)). (Ellicott)

- C. It is most probable that Korah himself was consumed with those 250 that presumed to offer incense; for the priesthood was the thing he aimed at, and therefore we have reason to think that he would not quit his post at the door of the tabernacle. (Henry) Note: Others disagree saying he was at his tent.

[36](#) Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: [37](#) "Tell Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, to pick up the censers out of the blaze, for they are holy, and scatter the fire some distance away. [38](#) The censers of these men who sinned against their own souls, let them be made into hammered plates as a covering for the altar. Because they presented them before the Lord, therefore they are holy; and they shall be a sign to the children of Israel." [39](#) So Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers, which those who were burned up had presented, and they were hammered out as a covering on the altar, [40](#) to be a memorial to the children of Israel that no outsider, who is not a descendant of Aaron, should come near to offer incense before the Lord, that he might not become like Korah and his companions, just as the Lord had said to him through Moses.

- A. The great purpose of preserving the bronze censers and of making from them a memorial "unto the children of Israel" was that of perpetuating the Aaronic priesthood as exclusive possessors of that priesthood, as stated in [Num 16:40](#). (Coffman)
- B. "that is not of the seed of Aaron..." This regulation displeased many in Israel, and when Jeroboam came to the throne of the Northern Israel, one of his sins was that of appointing priests of all the people ([1 Kings 13:33,34](#)). It was from this basic root that the eventual destruction of the Northern Israel derived. (Coffman)

Complaints of the People

[41](#) On the next day all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron, saying, "You have killed the people of the Lord." [42](#) Now it happened, when the congregation had gathered against Moses and Aaron, that they turned toward the tabernacle of meeting; and suddenly the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared. [43](#) Then Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of meeting. [44](#) And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, [45](#) "Get away from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment." And they fell on their faces. [46](#) So Moses said to Aaron, "Take a censer and put fire in it from the altar, put incense on it, and take it quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them; for wrath has gone out from the Lord. The plague has begun." [47](#) Then Aaron took it as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the assembly; and already the plague had begun among the people. So he put in the incense and made atonement for the people. [48](#) And he stood between the dead and the living; so the plague was stopped. [49](#) Now those who died in the plague were fourteen thousand seven hundred, besides those

who died in the Korah incident. [50](#) So Aaron returned to Moses at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, for the plague had stopped.

- A. This shows how widespread was the discontent that Korah had taken advantage of in the organization of his revolt. God had judged and destroyed the leaders of this defection, but the people themselves who also were a definite part of the trouble, although having escaped up to this point, would now also suffer a severe judgment from the Lord. (Coffman)
- B. A striking proof of the efficacy of that very Aaronic priesthood which the rebels had presumed to reject. The incense offering which had brought down destruction when presented by unauthorized hands, now in the hand of the true priest is the medium of instant salvation to the whole people. Aaron by his acceptable ministrations and his personal self-devotion foreshadows emphatically in this transaction the perfect mediation and sacrifice of Himself made by Christ. (Barnes)
- C. The three centers of their rebellion were those pertaining to: (1) Korah; (2) Dathan and Abiram; and (3) the people in general. The three punishments visited upon the three centers were: (a) the swallowing up of Dathan and Abiram; (b) the burning of Korah and the two hundred and fifty by fire from Jehovah; and (c) the plague that destroyed over 14,000 of the people. How appropriately these punishments were meted out! Furthermore, as the great purpose of the rebellion had been that of dividing Israel. God divided them (the rebels), disposing of them by the most severe punishments in three separate instances. "God divided the people, to separate them from Korah and his group; he divided Korah's group by severing the faction under Dathan and Abiram; he divided the earth and caused it to swallow them; he divided the rebellious people, making a separation between the 'dead and the living', "with Aaron standing between with the censers of incense and the prayer of atonement." It is a blind exegete indeed who cannot see the hand of God in this narrative.

NUMBERS 17

The Budding of Aaron's Rod

1 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: **2** "Speak to the children of Israel, and get from them a rod from each father's house, all their leaders according to their fathers' houses—twelve rods. Write each man's name on his rod. **3** And you shall write Aaron's name on the rod of Levi. For there shall be one rod for the head of each father's house. **4** Then you shall place them in the tabernacle of meeting before the Testimony, where I meet with you. **5** And it shall be that the rod of the man whom I choose will blossom; thus I will rid Myself of the complaints of the children of Israel, which they make against you."

- A. Thou shalt write Aaron's name upon the rod of Levi - The Levites had taken part in the late outbreak. It was therefore necessary to vindicate the supremacy of the house of Aaron over them; and accordingly his name was written on the rod of Levi, although being the son of Kohath, the second son of Levi ([Ex 6:16](#) ff), he would not be the natural head of the tribe. (Coffman)
- B. The controversy with Moses and Aaron about the priesthood was of such a nature and magnitude as required a decisive and authoritative settlement. For the removal of all doubts, and the silencing of all complaining future regarding the holder of the office, a miracle was performed of a remarkable character and permanent duration, and in the manner of performing it all the people were made to have a direct and special interest. (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)
- C. Write thou every man's name upon his rod.—This was in accordance with an Egyptian custom. (Wilkinson's *Ancient Egyptians*, III. 388.) The prophet Ezekiel received a similar injunction ([Ez 37:16](#)). (Ellicott)

6 So Moses spoke to the children of Israel, and each of their leaders gave him a rod apiece, for each leader according to their fathers' houses, twelve rods; and the rod of Aaron was among their rods. **7** And Moses placed the rods before the Lord in the tabernacle of witness. **8** Now it came to pass on the next day that Moses went into the tabernacle of witness, and behold, the rod of Aaron, of the house of Levi, had sprouted and put forth buds, had produced blossoms and yielded ripe almonds. **9** Then Moses 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** And the Lord said to Moses, "Bring Aaron's rod back before the Testimony, to be kept as a sign against the rebels, that you may put their complaints away from Me, lest they die."

- A. It is not stated here that the rod was put within the ark. Nor is it so stated in [Ex 16:33](#) with regard to the pot of manna. Neither of these was within the ark when it was brought into Solomon's temple ([1 Kings 8:9](#)); but this statement is by no means inconsistent with that contained in [Heb 9:4](#), inasmuch as the assertion that

there was nothing but the tables of the law in the ark at that time does not prove that there were not other things in it at an earlier period, and may be thought to suggest the inference that such was actually the case. The Jews have a tradition that when King Josiah ordered the ark to be put in the house which King Solomon built, the rod of Aaron and the pot of manna and the anointing oil were hidden with the ark, and that at that time the rod of Aaron had buds and almonds. (Ellicott)

11 Thus did Moses; just as the Lord had commanded him, so he did. **12** So the children of Israel spoke to Moses, saying, "Surely we die, we perish, we all perish! **13** Whoever even comes near the tabernacle of the Lord must die. Shall we all utterly die?"

A. The people were terror-stricken by the fate of the company of Korah and by the plague. Presumption passed by reaction into despair. Was there any approach for them to the tabernacle of the Lord? Was there any escape from death, except by keeping aloof from His presence? The answers are supplied by the ordinances which testified that the God of judgment was still a God of grace and of love.

(Barnes)

B. The fear of death expressed by Israel following the astounding wonders of this chapter and the preceding one did not afford any evidence of deep repentance on Israel's part but was rather the expression of, "a natural fear in view of the events just recounted." Whatever the source of their fear, however, the effective discipline of these wonders quelled completely this rebellion (Coffman)

NUMBERS 18

Duties of Priest and Levites

1 Then the Lord said to Aaron: "You and your sons and your father's house with you shall bear the iniquity related to the sanctuary, and you and your sons with you shall bear the iniquity associated with your priesthood.

2 Also bring with you your brethren of the tribe of Levi, the tribe of your father, that they may be joined with you and serve you while you and your sons are with you before the tabernacle of witness. **3** They shall attend to your needs and all the needs of the tabernacle; but they shall not come near the articles of the sanctuary and the altar, lest they die--they and you also. **4** They shall be joined with you and attend to the needs of the tabernacle of meeting, for all the work of the tabernacle; but an outsider shall not come near you. **5** And you shall attend to the duties of the sanctuary and the duties of the altar, that there may be no more wrath on the children of Israel.

- A. Bear the iniquity ..." This means take the responsibility of preserving the ritual requirements, and to bear the responsibility for any violations. In connection with this, note that in case any Levite touched the vessels of the sanctuary, not only would they die, but also would Aaron for not preventing it, "they and you also" (Coffman)
- B. The iniquity of your priesthood... As the priests themselves were but men, they were strengthened to bear the iniquity of their own unintentional offences, by being entrusted with the ceremonial means of taking it away ([Lev 16](#)). (Barnes)

6 Behold, I Myself have taken your brethren the Levites from among the children of Israel; they are a gift to you, given by the Lord, to do the work of the tabernacle of meeting. **7** Therefore you and your sons with you shall attend to your priesthood for everything at the altar and behind the veil; and you shall serve. I give your priesthood to you as a gift for service, but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death."

- A. The priesthood was God's gift to Israel, for without priests the people couldn't approach God. The Levites were God's gift to the priests, relieving them of menial tasks so they could devote themselves fully to serving God and the people. (Wiersbe)

Offering for Support of the Priests

8 And the Lord spoke to Aaron: "Here, I Myself have also given you charge of My heave offerings, all the holy gifts of the children of Israel; I have given them as a portion to you and your sons, as an ordinance forever. **9** This shall be yours of the most holy things reserved from the fire: every offering of theirs, every grain offering and every sin offering and every trespass offering which they render to Me, shall be most holy for you and your sons. **10** In a most holy place you shall eat it; every male shall eat it. It shall be holy

to you. [11](#) This also is yours: the heave offering of their gift, with all the wave offerings of the children of Israel; I have given them to you, and your sons and daughters with you, as an ordinance forever. Everyone who is clean in your house may eat it. [12](#) All the best of the oil, all the best of the new wine and the grain, their firstfruits which they offer to the Lord, I have given them to you. [13](#) Whatever first ripe fruit is in their land, which they bring to the Lord, shall be yours. Everyone who is clean in your house may eat it.

- A. God assigned to the priests portions of the meal offerings, sin offerings, trespass offerings, and peace offerings (Lev 6:14-7:38), as well as the firstfruits (Deut 26:1-11) and the firstborn animals that the people brought to the Lord. Some of this food only the priests could eat, but much of it could be shared with their families. However, whoever in the priestly family ate of the sacrifices given to God had to be ceremonially clean and treat the food with reverence, because it had been sanctified by being presented to God. (Wiersbe)
- B. "The first-ripe fruits of all that is in their land ..." These words are clearly anticipatory of Israel's entry into their land, which were intended to apply fully only after they truly possessed it. This explains why the more limited system of tithing, later given in Deuteronomy, probably was an "interim" provision to be observed during the long and never fully successful campaign to possess it. (Coffman)
- C. Of all best ..." Plaut tell us that the Jews interpreted this to apply only to the seven principal fruits for which the land was famous: (1) wheat; (2) barley; (3) grapes; (4) figs; (5) pomegranates; (6) olive oil; and (7) dates (including honey).

[14](#) Every devoted thing in Israel shall be yours. [15](#) Everything that first opens the womb of all flesh, which they bring to the Lord, whether man or beast, shall be yours; nevertheless the firstborn of man you shall surely redeem, and the firstborn of unclean animals you shall redeem. [16](#) And those redeemed of the devoted things you shall redeem when one month old, according to your valuation, for five shekels of silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs. [17](#) But the firstborn of a cow, the firstborn of a sheep, or the firstborn of a goat you shall not redeem; they are holy. You shall sprinkle their blood on the altar, and burn their fat as an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to the Lord. [18](#) And their flesh shall be yours, just as the wave breast and the right thigh are yours. [19](#) All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer to the Lord, I have given to you and your sons and daughters with you as an ordinance forever; it is a covenant of salt forever before the Lord with you and your descendants with you." [20](#) Then the Lord said to Aaron: "You shall have no inheritance in their land, nor shall you have any portion among them; I am your portion and your inheritance among the children of Israel.

- A. "A covenant of salt ..." ([Num 18:19](#)) signified "an everlasting covenant." It was founded upon the ancient understanding throughout all the East that one's

eating with a person established a binding and perpetual obligation between them. Behind this is the fact that all of the sacrifices offered unto God were "salted." "All Hebrew sacrifices were mingled with salt ([Lev 2:13](#); [Mark 9:49](#))."[13] "God ... gave the kingdom ... to David ... by a covenant of salt" ([2 Chr 13:5](#)). (Coffman)

- B. The wisdom of God in thus providing abundantly for the support of the Divine system of worship which he gave to Israel is clearly visible, for without this there could have been no lasting respect for the Mosaic institution, and by the same token, the Church herself should abundantly maintain and support her servants. (Coffman)
- C. In the early church, there was no special priesthood. The way to God was opened, through Christ, High Priest. But, in time, a priestly class arose in the Christian church, with privileges and prerogatives strangely similar to those of the times of Aaron, and with the same seeds of its deterioration and decay. This brought on the great Reformation and the Protestant principle of the priesthood. (Butzer)

Tithes for Support of the Levites

[21](#) "Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work which they perform, the work of the tabernacle of meeting.

[22](#) Hereafter the children of Israel shall not come near the tabernacle of meeting, lest they bear sin and die. [23](#) But the Levites shall perform the work of the tabernacle of meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity; it shall be a statute forever, throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance. [24](#) For the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer up as a heave offering to the Lord, I have given to the Levites as an inheritance; therefore I have said to them, 'Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.' "

- A. "The payment of tithes to the Levites is recognized in [Neh 10:37,12:44](#), but here for the first time assigned to them as theirs" Carson mentioned a "contradiction" in this with [Deu 14:22-29](#), where for two years the tithes were eaten by the worshippers and the Levites. "Contradiction," however, is far too strong a word for the variation. As we have seen, there were Divine adjustments to accommodate the extremely unusual circumstances of the conquest. The tithe was an ancient custom recognized by people of the greatest antiquity. Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek ([Gen 14](#)), and Jacob vowed to give the tithe of all his possessions ([Gen 28:20-22](#)). The N.T. states that "There he (Jesus) receiveth them (tithes)" ([Heb 7:8](#)). (Coffman)

The Tithe of the Levites

25 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, **26** "Speak thus to the Levites, and say to them: 'When you take from the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them as your inheritance, then you shall offer up a heave offering of it to the Lord, a tenth of the tithe. **27** And your heave offering shall be reckoned to you as though it were the grain of the threshing floor and as the fullness of the winepress. **28** Thus you shall also offer a heave offering to the Lord from all your tithes which you receive from the children of Israel, and you shall give the Lord's heave offering from it to Aaron the priest.

29 Of all your gifts you shall offer up every heave offering due to the Lord, from all the best of them, the consecrated part of them.' **30** Therefore you shall say to them: 'When you have lifted up the best of it, then the rest shall be accounted to the Levites as the produce of the threshing floor and as the produce of the winepress. **31** You may eat it in any place, you and your households, for it is your reward for your work in the tabernacle of meeting. **32** And you shall bear no sin because of it, when you have lifted up the best of it. But you shall not profane the holy gifts of the children of Israel, lest you die.' "

- A. The Levites were the smallest tribe of the twelve, and yet, besides all other advantages, they had a tenth part of the yearly profits, without the trouble and expense of ploughing and sowing; such care did God take of those that were devoted to his service (Henry)
- B. Appropriation of the Tithe. - Vv. 26 ff. When the Levites took (received) from the people the tithe assigned them by Jehovah, they were to lift off from it a heave-offering for Jehovah, a tithe of the tithe for Aaron the priest (Keil and Delitzsch)
- C. The Jewish people didn't always obey this law and bring their tithes to the Lord, and as a consequence the ministry at the tabernacle and temple suffered. (See Neh 10:35-39; 12:44-47; 13:10-14; Mal 1:6-2:9.) If the priests and Levites didn't have food for their families, then they had to leave the sanctuary and go to work in the fields (Neh 13:10). It's tragic when God's people don't love the Lord and the Lord's house enough to support it faithfully. (Wiersbe)

What were the various sacrifices in the Old Testament?

There are five main types of sacrifices, or offerings, in the Old Testament. The burnt offering ([Leviticus 1; 6:8–13; 8:18–21; 16:24](#)), the grain offering ([Leviticus 2; 6:14–23](#)), the peace offering ([Leviticus 3; 7:11–34](#)), the sin offering ([Leviticus 4; 5:1–13; 6:24–30; 8:14–17; 16:3–22](#)), and the trespass offering ([Leviticus 5:14–19; 6:1–7; 7:1–6](#)). Each of these sacrifices involved certain elements, either animal or fruit of the field, and had a specific purpose. Most were split into two or three portions—God’s portion, the portion for the Levites or priests, and, if there was a third, a portion kept by the person offering the sacrifice. The sacrifices can be broadly categorized as either voluntary or mandatory offerings.

Voluntary Sacrifices

There were three voluntary offerings. The first was the [burnt offering](#), a voluntary act of worship to express devotion or commitment to God. It was also used as an atonement for unintentional sin. The elements of the burnt offering were a bull, a bird, or a ram without blemish. The meat and bones and organs of the animal were to be totally burnt, and this was God’s portion. The animal’s hide was given to the Levites, who could later sell it to earn money for themselves.

The second voluntary offering was the [grain offering](#), in which the fruit of the field was offered in the form of a cake or baked bread made of grain, fine flour, and oil and salt. The grain offering was one of the sacrifices accompanied by a [drink offering](#) of one-quarter hin (about a quart) of wine, which was poured into the fire on the altar ([Numbers 15:4–5](#)). The purpose of the grain offering was to express thanksgiving in recognition of God’s provision and unmerited goodwill toward the person making the sacrifice. The priests were given a portion of this offering, but it had to be eaten within the court of the tabernacle.

The third voluntary offering was the [peace offering](#), which consisted of any unblemished animal from the worshiper’s herd, and/or various grains or breads. This was a sacrifice of thanksgiving and fellowship followed by a shared meal. The high priest was given the breast of the animal; the officiating priest was given the right foreleg. These pieces of the offering were called the “[wave offering](#)” and the “heave offering” because they were waved or lifted over the altar during the ceremony. The fat, kidneys, and lobe of the liver were given to God (burnt), and the remainder of the animal was for the participants to eat, symbolizing God’s provision. The vow offering, thanksgiving offering, and freewill offering mentioned in the Old Testament were all peace offerings.

Mandatory Sacrifices

There were two mandatory sacrifices in the Old Testament Law. The first was the sin offering. The purpose of the sin offering was to atone for sin and cleanse from defilement. There were five possible elements of a sin sacrifice—a young bull, a male goat, a female goat, a dove/pigeon, or 1/10 ephah of fine flour. The type of animal depended on the identity and

financial situation of the giver. A female goat was the sin offering for the common person, fine flour was the sacrifice of the very poor, a young bull was offered for the high priest and the congregation as a whole, and so on. These sacrifices each had specific instructions for what to do with the blood of the animal during the ceremony. The fatty portions and lobe of the liver and kidneys were given to God (burnt); the rest of the animal was either totally burned on the altar and the ashes thrown outside the camp (in atoning for the high priest and congregation), or eaten within the tabernacle court.

The other mandatory sacrifice was the trespass offering, and this sacrifice was exclusively a ram. The trespass offering was given as atonement for unintentional sins that required reimbursement to an offended party, and also as a cleansing from defiling sins or physical maladies. Again, the fat portions, kidneys, and liver were offered to God, and the remainder of the ram had to be eaten inside the court of the tabernacle.

The sacrifices in the Old Testament pointed forward to the perfect and final sacrifice of Christ. As with the rest of the Law, the sacrifices were "a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ" ([Colossians 2:17](#)). Christians today recognize Christ's atoning death on the cross as the only needed sacrifice for sin, offered once for all ([Hebrews 10:1–10](#)). His death opened the "holy place" for us ([Hebrews 10:19–22](#)) so that we can freely enter God's presence and offer our "sacrifice of praise" ([Hebrews 13:15](#); cf. [9:11–28](#); [4:14–5:10](#)).

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Old-Testament-sacrifices.html>

NUMBERS 19

This short chapter deals entirely with the ceremonial sprinkling of the ashes of a red heifer for the removal of sin, particularly the cleansing of defilement derived from touching corpses and things related to them.

More elaborate laws for the removal of such uncleanness had been given in Leviticus but, due to the sentence of God pronounced upon that whole generation in [Num 14](#), and with a greatly increased number of dead that resulted from it, a special provision was required in Israel's circumstance at that time. The estimated number of the older part of that generation, sentenced to die within a thirty-eight year period would have augmented the number of the dying by at least a hundred every day. Besides that, "It even appears that the normal ceremonial observances in the wilderness at this time, even the routine sacrifices, were suspended through the poverty, distress, and disfavor with God under which they lived"; and this chapter gives every evidence of being a "short-form" substitute for the more elaborate ceremonies intended.

And what a blessing this proved to be! This ceremony was cheap, the red heifer being the commonest of beasts, and even that was provided at public expense, and the ashes of one red heifer properly preserved and economically used would last an indefinite time for a whole people. If there was ever a "short form," this was it.

Nevertheless, Christ left not himself without witness even in this emergency situation, for there were indelible foreshadowings of the true Saviour in this sprinkling of the ashes of the red heifer. (Collman)

Laws of Purification

1 Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, **2** "This is the ordinance of the law which the Lord has commanded, saying: 'Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring you a red heifer without blemish, in which there is no defect and on which a yoke has never come.

- A. The following curious particulars have been remarked in this ordinance:
1. A heifer was appointed for sacrifice, in opposition to the Egyptian superstition, which held these sacred, and worshipped their goddess Isis under this form; and this appears the more likely, because males only were chosen for sacrifice. So Herodotus says, they sacrifice males, both old and young; but it is not lawful for them to offer females.
 2. It was to be a red heifer, because the Egyptians sacrificed red bulls to the evil demon Typhon.
 3. It was to be without spot, having no mixture of any other colour. Plutarch says, the Egyptians "sacrifice red bulls, and select them with such scrupulous attention, that if the animal has a single black or white hair, they reckon it unfit to be sacrificed."

4. Without blemish. ([Le 22:21](#))
 5. On which never came yoke: because an animal which had been used for a common purpose was deemed improper for sacrifice. (The Treasure of Scripture Knowledge)
- B. Also note:
1. Red-A fit colour to shadow forth the bloody nature of sin, and the blood of Christ, from which this water and all other rites had their purifying virtue.
 2. No blemish-A fit type of Christ. ([Heb 7:26](#); [1Pe 1:19](#))
 3. Upon which never came yoke-Whereby may be signified, either that Christ in himself was free from all the yoke or obligation of God's command, till for our sakes he put himself under the law; or that Christ was not forced to undertake our burden and cross, but did voluntarily chose it. [Joh 10:17,18](#) (Wesley)

[3](#) You shall give it to Eleazar the priest, that he may take it outside the camp, and it shall be slaughtered before him; [4](#) and Eleazar the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger, and sprinkle some of its blood seven times directly in front of the tabernacle of meeting. [5](#) Then the heifer shall be burned in his sight: its hide, its flesh, its blood, and its offal shall be burned. [6](#) And the priest shall take cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet, and cast them into the midst of the fire burning the heifer. [7](#) Then the priest shall wash his clothes, he shall bathe in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp; the priest shall be unclean until evening. [8](#) And the one who burns it shall wash his clothes in water, bathe in water, and shall be unclean until evening.

- A. The sacrifice itself was to be superintended by Eleazar the priest, the eldest son of the high priest; because Aaron, whose duty it was to present the sin-offerings for the congregation ([Lev 4:16](#)), could not, which required him to avoid all uncleanness of death ([Lev 21:11-12](#)), perform such an act as this, which stood in the closest relation to death and the uncleanness of death, and for that very reason had to be performed outside the camp. (Keil and Delitzsch)

[9](#) Then a man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and store them outside the camp in a clean place; and they shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for the water of purification; it is for purifying from sin. [10](#) And the one who gathers the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until evening. It shall be a statute forever to the children of Israel and to the stranger who dwells among them.

- A. "There was a very good reason for this rite. When the children of Israel were on the march, and a man sinned, they could not stop right there and put up the tabernacle and offer the prescribed offerings, etc." The generation to which these

instructions were issued were already condemned, with death multiplying fantastically around them day by day, and yet it was most necessary that the instruction of those coming of age should continue, and that the long period of thirty-eight years should not result in the total forgetfulness of God by the younger ones who would yet inherit Canaan. The sacrifices in general were omitted; they did not circumcise their children; and it seems certain that many of the more elaborate ceremonies ordained earlier were not observed at all, or at least only occasionally during the wanderings. (Coffman)

11 'He who touches the dead body of anyone shall be unclean seven days. **12** He shall purify himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day; then he will be clean. But if he does not purify himself on the third day and on the seventh day, he will not be clean. **13** Whoever touches the body of anyone who has died, and does not purify himself, defiles the tabernacle of the Lord. That person shall be cut off from Israel. He shall be unclean, because the water of purification was not sprinkled on him; his uncleanness is still on him.

- A. He shall purify himself...Note how the priesthood is so effectively by-passed, no priest whatever being involved. This has to be considered typical of the Kingdom of God in which all the members are a royal priesthood, having no need whatever of any other mediator, except Jesus Christ alone. (Coffman)
- B. They would have to wait three days after their defilement and then go out of the camp with a ceremonially clean man to the place where the ashes were kept. The man would mix some of the ashes with running water in a vessel, dip hyssop into the water and sprinkle it on the unclean person. This would be repeated four days later on the seventh day. The cleansed persons would then wash themselves and their clothes and wait until evening to return to the camp. (The Bible Exposition Commentary)

14 'This is the law when a man dies in a tent: All who come into the tent and all who are in the tent shall be unclean seven days; **15** and every open vessel, which has no cover fastened on it, is unclean. **16** Whoever in the open field touches one who is slain by a sword or who has died, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days.

- A. It was from this that the Pharisees of Jesus' day whitewashed all the graves to prevent one's accidentally incurring uncleanness by unintentionally touching, or walking over one. (Coffman)
- B. The LXX has 'house' here instead of tent, and it appears that the law was transferred without modification from tent-dwellers to house-dwellers. (Whitelaw)
 - a. The Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) and used by the early Church. The Septuagint is also called the translation of the seventy because tradition states that the Septuagint

was translated by seventy. In academia, the Septuagint is often abbreviated as LXX (the Roman numeral for seventy) in honor of this tradition. (LXX)

- b. Few people could speak and even fewer could read in the Hebrew language during the Second Temple period; Koine Greek and Aramaic were the most widely spoken languages at that time among the Jewish community. The Septuagint therefore satisfied a need in the Jewish community. (Wikipedia)

17 And for an unclean person they shall take some of the ashes of the heifer burnt for purification from sin, and running water shall be put on them in a vessel. **18** A clean person shall take hyssop and dip it in the water, sprinkle it on the tent, on all the vessels, on the persons who were there, or on the one who touched a bone, the slain, the dead, or a grave. **19** The clean person shall sprinkle the unclean on the third day and on the seventh day; and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, wash his clothes, and bathe in water; and at evening he shall be clean.

20 'But the man who is unclean and does not purify himself, that person shall be cut off from among the assembly, because he has defiled the sanctuary of the Lord. The water of purification has not been sprinkled on him; he is unclean. **21** It shall be a perpetual statute for them. He who sprinkles the water of purification shall wash his clothes; and he who touches the water of purification shall be unclean until evening. **22** Whatever the unclean person touches shall be unclean; and the person who touches it shall be unclean until evening.' "

- A. Another of the mysteries of this ceremony appears here. Why should the one sprinkling the water of impurity be unclean, whereas it was the same water that purified the unclean person? (Coffman)
- B. One important lesson, however, was thus taught, that its purifying efficacy was not inherent in itself, but arose from the divine appointment, as in other ordinances of religion, which are effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them or in him that administers them, but solely through the grace of God communicated thereby. (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)

NUMBERS 20

Between the first verse of this chapter and the last verse of [Num 14](#), there was an interval of about thirty-eight years, only five short chapters ([Num 15-19](#)) having been allotted by Moses to record everything of any great importance that happened to Israel during the whole thirty-eight years. Even the things recorded do not appear to have been given in any pattern, and not even chronologically. "People talk about Israel being God's Chosen People, but they didn't amount to anything when not doing the will of God." During the long interval of a generation, Israel was in a period of "great declension, even apostasy. O.T. passages confirming this are in [Eze 20:15f](#); [Amos 5:25f](#); and [Hosea 9:10](#)." This view is fully confirmed by [Acts 7:42f](#).

The purpose of this chapter is apparently that of recounting the death of the great leaders of Israel before their entry into Canaan, the only reason for Moses' own death not being recounted here probably being that Moses did not write the account of his own death, that account in Deuteronomy ([Deut 34](#)) being reserved for its addition by the inspired Joshua. Even so, Moses fully recounted the tragic failure, momentarily, of his great faith and the ensuing displeasure of God. Over and beyond the sin of Moses at Meribah, it was contrary to the will of God for Moses to enter Canaan as the leader of Israel. Had he done so, the essential truth that neither Moses (nor the Law that came through him) could lead men into heaven would have been compromised. That achievement belonged to Christ only, and Moses, as the great O.T. type of Christ, was destined at last to lay his homage at the feet of Jesus on the Holy Mountain. Not even Moses could save men from sin, and had he led Israel into Canaan the accuracy of the typology would have been compromised. (Coffman)

Moses' Error at Kadesh

1 Then the children of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the Wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh; and Miriam died there and was buried there.

- A. "the whole congregation" assembled together once more in the very same place where the sentence had been passed thirty-seven years and a half before, that they should remain in the desert for forty years, until the rebellious generation had died out. (Keil and Delitzsch)
- B. Miriam -It is supposed that she was at the time of her death one hundred and thirty years of age, having been at least ten years old at her brother's birth. See Ex 2. She appears to have died about four months before her brother Aaron, Num 33:38, and eleven before her brother Moses, so that these three, the most eminent of human beings, died in the space of one year! (Clarke)

2 Now there was no water for the congregation; so they gathered together against Moses and Aaron. **3** And the people contended with Moses and spoke, saying: "If only we had died when our brethren died before the Lord! **4** Why have you brought up the assembly of the Lord into this wilderness, that we and our animals should die here? **5** And why have you made us come up out of Egypt, to bring us to this evil place? It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates; nor is there any water to drink."

- A. It was a conditioned reflex: whenever the Israelites faced a difficulty, they complained about it to Moses and Aaron and wept because they hadn't stayed in Egypt. Difficulties either bring out the best in people or the worst; they either mature us or make us more childish ([Jam 1:2-8](#)). Israel's words and attitudes revealed clearly that their hearts were still in Egypt. What a picture of the professed Christian who still loves the world ([1 John 2:15-17](#)) and turns to the world for help whenever there's a problem! (The Bible Exposition Commentary)

6 So Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and they fell on their faces. And the glory of the Lord appeared to them. **7** Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, **8** "Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals." **9** So Moses took the rod from before the Lord as He commanded him. **10** And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?" **11** Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank. **12** Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them." **13** This was the water of Meribah, because the children of Israel contended with the Lord, and He was hallowed among them.

- A. God commanded Moses to SPEAK to the rock. Instead he addressed a rebuke to the people! See any difference?
- B. God commanded Moses to SPEAK to the rock. Instead he omitted this altogether and struck the rock twice. Any difference here?
- C. God had most carefully instructed Moses in all the prior forty years that God alone actually did any of the wonders mentioned, but in this passage Moses ascribed the SOURCE of the miracle as being from him and Aaron, "Shall we bring you forth water out of this rock?" Where does God's honor appear in a public announcement like this? (Coffman)

D. Here there is another Meribah. one place we met with before of that name, in the beginning of their march through the wilderness, which was so called *because of the chiding of the children of Israel*, [Exo 17:7](#). And now we have another place, at the latter end of their march, which bears the same name for the same reason.

(Henry)

E. The faithful servant of God, worn out by the reiterated perversities of the people, breaks down; and in the actual discharge of his duty as God's representative before Israel, acts unworthily of the great function entrusted to him. Thus, Moses did not "sanctify God in the eyes of the children of Israel." Aaron might have checked the intemperate words and acts of Moses, and did not. Hence, God punishes both by withdrawing them from their work for Him, and handing over its accomplishment to another. (Barnes)

Passage Through Edom Refused

[14](#) Now Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom. "Thus says your brother Israel: 'You know all the hardship that has befallen us, [15](#) how our fathers went down to Egypt, and we dwelt in Egypt a long time, and the Egyptians afflicted us and our fathers. [16](#) When we cried out to the Lord, He heard our voice and sent the Angel and brought us up out of Egypt; now here we are in Kadesh, a city on the edge of your border. [17](#) Please let us pass through your country. We will not pass through fields or vineyards, nor will we drink water from wells; we will go along the King's Highway; we will not turn aside to the right hand or to the left until we have passed through your territory.' " [18](#) Then Edom said to him, "You shall not pass through my land, lest I come out against you with the sword." [19](#) So the children of Israel said to him, "We will go by the Highway, and if I or my livestock drink any of your water, then I will pay for it; let me only pass through on foot, nothing more." [20](#) Then he said, "You shall not pass through." So Edom came out against them with many men and with a strong hand. [21](#) Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his territory; so Israel turned away from him.

- A. The Edomites were the descendants of Edom or Esau, the brother of Jacob or Israel, from whom the Israelites were descended. (Clarke)
- B. "The king's highway ..." This road was in use during the 23rd and 22nd centuries B.C.; and it was marked along its length with early Bronze Age settlements. "It led from the gulf of Aqaba in the south up through Edom to Damascus; the fortifications along it were destroyed; and the road was rebuilt by the Romans in 108 A.D. (Coffman)
- C. Even ignoring the family connection of the Jews and the Edomites, the king's highway had been used for ages by the people of all nations, and Israel made earnest and specific promises with regard to the territory and the possessions of

the Edomites - all of these things made the act of Edom in this instance, "A severe act of cruelty and oppression." (Coffman)

- D. They had three routes to Canaan to decide upon. The one that led northward was the most direct and the shortest-that by which an unsuccessful attempt had been made on the first encampment at Kadesh ([Num 13](#)). The second, which was much longer, penetrated through the Edomite territory ([2 Kings 14:7](#)), and winding to the left along the eastern shore of the Dead Sea. But permission to go by this road having been denied, the Israelites were constrained to adopt the only remaining line-by far the most circuitous-namely, that of traveling southward, and then, crossing by the northern extremity of the Red Sea, march in a northerly direction to the land of Moab. (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)

Death of Aaron

[22](#) Then the children of Israel, the whole congregation, journeyed from Kadesh and came to Mount Hor. [23](#) And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor by the border of the land of Edom, saying: [24](#) "Aaron shall be gathered to his people, for he shall not enter the land which I have given to 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](#) and strip Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar his son; for Aaron shall be gathered to his people and die there." [27](#) So Moses did just as the Lord commanded, and they went up to Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation. [28](#) Moses stripped Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there on the top of the mountain. Then Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain. [29](#) Now when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, all the house of Israel mourned for Aaron thirty days.

- A. Aaron died on the first day of the fifth month in Israel's fortieth year ([Num 33:37-38](#)). He was 123 years old ([Num 33:39](#)).
- B. But although the time of his death was hastened by the divine displeasure, as punishment for his sins, the manner of his death was arranged in tenderness of love, and to do him honour at the close of his earthly service. His ascent of the mount was to afford him a last look of the camp and a distant prospect of the promised land. (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)
- C. "Neither Moses the representative of the law, nor Miriam the representative of the prophets, nor Aaron the representative of the priesthood and its sacrificial rites, could bring the Israelites into possession of the promised land. This was reserved for Joshua (Clarke)
- D. Here begins the fourth and last leg of the Israelites' journey from Egypt to the Promised Land.
1. From Egypt to Sinai (Exodus 12-19)

2. From Sinai to Kadesh (Numbers 11-12)
 3. From Kadesh back to Kadesh-38 years of wilderness wandering (Numbers 15-19)
 4. From Kadesh to Transjordan (Numbers 20-21)
- The first two of these journeys each began with triumph but ended in tragedy. The third and fourth each began with tragedy but ended in triumph. (Constable)

NUMBERS 21

In this chapter we move very close to the entry into Canaan, but a number of experiences prior to that entry which would aid Israel in the struggles to come remained to be recorded, and the record of them would fill the Pentateuch, all the way to the end of Deuteronomy. (Coffman)

III. Numbers 21-32 : The Sojourning on River Jordan

Chapter 21	The Serpent of Brass (compare John 3:14); Victory over Sihon and Og
Chapter 22	Balak calls for Balaam to curse Israel
Chapter 23-24	Balaam's Four Parables of Blessing over Israel
Chapter 25	Fornication and Idolatry of Israel and the Zeal of Phinehas for Jehovah
Chapter 26	Second Numbering of the People of Israel
Chapter 27	The Daughters of Zelophehad; Joshua is Called to be Moses' Successor
Chapter 28-29	Offerings at the Feasts of Jehovah
Chapter 30	Laws of Vows
Chapter 31	Israel's Vengeance of the Midianites
Chapter 32	Two and a Half Tribes beyond Jordan (Reuben, Gad and Manasseh)

Canaanites Defeated at Hormah

1 The king of Arad, the Canaanite, who dwelt in the South, heard that Israel was coming on the road to Atharim, then he fought against Israel and took some of them prisoners.

2 So Israel made a vow to the Lord, and said, "If You will indeed deliver this 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.

So the name of that place was called Hormah.

- A. This was the Israelites' first victory over the Canaanites, and it was undoubtedly a great confidence builder for them. It came after the Israelites vowed to obey God completely by exterminating these Canaanites if He would give them victory as He had promised. In this vow the Israelites simply promised to obey God. The conquest of Canaan must have seemed more certain to the Israelites now than ever before. (Constable)
- B. Regarding what some humanists like to call the "morality" of God's decree that the Canaanites should be utterly destroyed, it is sufficient here to note that only a fool can question the morality of God Himself. Yes, God decreed that all the earth at once (save Noah and his family) should be drowned. Was this right, or moral? Certainly. When any civilization reached a state of rebellion against God which, in the eyes of God, made its continued existence on earth a hazardous danger to all mankind, history indicates that God removed the offensive portion of humanity. It was true of the Canaanites. (Coffman)

The Bronze Serpent

4 Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way. **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 food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread." **6** So the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the 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 you; pray to the Lord that He take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. **8** Then the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live." **9** So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived. (Coffman)

- A. They had been indulging a hope of the better and more varied fare enjoyed by a settled people: and disappointment, always the more bitter as the hope of enjoyment seems near, drove them to speak against God and against Moses ([1 Cor 10:9](#)). (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)
- B. God's response in this situation was swift and fatal for Israel; many of them perished from the poisonous venom of deadly snakes God sent upon His murmuring people. It was about time. Many, many times before this the sinful and unreasonable complaints of the people of God had long ago exceeded the merciful and understanding forbearance of God.
- C. The great significance of this derives from Jesus' mention of it as follows: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life" ([John 3:14-15](#)). Also [John 12:32-33](#), "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself. But this he said, signifying by what manner of death he should die." It is nothing short of amazing that the Christ should have found foreshadowings in this event of his own redemptive work on the Cross, but there cannot be any doubt of it, and we therefore receive this event in certain particulars of it as a Type of Christ. (Coffman)
- D. The brazen image of the serpent was taken by the Israelites to Canaan, and preserved till the time of Hezekiah, who had it broken in pieces, because the idolatrous people had presented incense-offerings to this holy relic ([2 Kings 18:4](#)). (Keil and Delitzsch)

From Mount Hor to Moab

[10](#) Now the children of Israel moved on and camped in Oboth. [11](#) And they journeyed from Oboth and camped at Ije Abarim, in the wilderness which is east of Moab, toward the sunrise. [12](#) From there they moved and camped in the Valley of Zered. [13](#) From there they moved and camped on the other side of the Arnon, which is in the wilderness that extends from the border 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, The brooks of the Arnon, [15](#) And the slope of the brooks That reaches to the dwelling of Ar, And lies on the border of Moab." [16](#) From there they went to Beer, which is the well where the Lord said to Moses, "Gather the people together, and I will give them water." [17](#) Then Israel sang this song: "Spring up, O well! All of you sing to it-- [18](#) The well the leaders sank, Dug by the nation's nobles, By the lawgiver, with their staves." And from the wilderness they went to Mattanah, [19](#) from Mattanah to Nahaliel, from Nahaliel to Bamoth, [20](#) and from Bamoth, in the valley that is in the country of Moab, to the top of Pisgah which looks down on the wasteland.

- A. The list of places where Israel camped ([Num 21:10-13](#)) is different from that in [Num 33](#), making this an abbreviated account, or minor adjustments associated collectively with the same camp. It makes no difference at all. First, the names of many of the places were certainly dual, making two different names to be assigned here and there to the same place; and nobody knows whether, in each case, "all Israel" or only its headquarters was moved here or there, and to which, reference is here made. (Coffman)
- B. Of particular interest is the mention of "The Book of the Wars of Jehovah." Moses here quoted from it; but we cannot know all that was in it or in fact anything that was in it except what is quoted here. Certainly, it has the utility of showing that "books" were being written in that era of time, and that there were perhaps many of them. Writing had been known for centuries, as witnessed by the Code of Hammurabi dated from about 2000 B.C. (Coffman)
- C. This song was sung for centuries in the Temple in Jerusalem on every Third Sabbath. (Plaut)
- D. "Pisgah ..." The mention of this place appears somewhat ominous, as it was from its summit that Moses received his only glimpse of the Holy Land. "It is located in the Abarim mountains, opposite Jericho, east of the northern tip of the Dead Sea. Here Moses viewed Canaan; and he died there. ([Deu 34:1,5](#)). (Ibid)

King Sihon Defeated

[21](#) Then Israel sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, saying, [22](#) "Let me pass through your land. We will not turn aside into fields or vineyards; we will not drink water from wells. We will go by the King's Highway until we have passed through your

territory." [23](#) But Sihon would not allow Israel to pass through his territory. So Sihon gathered all his people together and went out against Israel in the wilderness, and he came to Jahaz and fought against Israel. [24](#) Then Israel defeated him with the edge of the sword, and took possession of his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok, as far as the people of Ammon; for the border of the people of Ammon was fortified. [25](#) So Israel took all these cities, and Israel dwelt in all the cities of the Amorites, in Heshbon and in all its villages. [26](#) For Heshbon was the city of Sihon king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab, and had taken all his land from his hand as far as the Arnon.

- A. Here the formal conquest of the land of Canaan began in earnest. Israel conquered the powerful kingdom of the Amorites and possessed their land as far north as the Jabbok. Moses was still in charge of Israel for this campaign and also for that against Jazer, another satellite kingdom of the Amorites. (Coffman)
- B. The whole country, embracing all the low-lying as well as highland regions east of the Jordan, had been formerly occupied by the descendants of Lot, until the portion known as the province of Belka, belonging to Moab, was, century before that time, invaded and seized by the chief of a wandering tribe of mountaineers (the Amorites) from southern Judea, where they were intermingled with the Anakim, and who, taking advantage of the decay of the Moabite nation, effected a permanent settlement between the territories of the two brethren, Moab on the south and Ammon on the north. (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)
- C. Whereas the Lord forbade the Israelites to make war upon their kinsmen the Edomites, He now commanded them to make war upon the Amorite king, and take possession of his land ([Deut 2:24-27](#)); for the Amorites belonged to the Canaanitish tribes which were ripe for the judgment of extermination ([Gen 15:16](#)). And if, notwithstanding this, the Israelites sent to him with words of peace, this was simply done to leave the decision of his fate in his own hand. (Keil and Delitzsch)
- D. The statement in v. 25, that Israel settled in all the towns of the Amorites, is somewhat anticipatory of the history itself, as the settlement did not occur till Moses gave the conquered land to the tribes of Reuben and Gad for a possession (ch. 32). (Keil and Delitzsch)

[27](#) Therefore those who speak in proverbs say: "Come to Heshbon, let it be built; Let the city of Sihon be repaired. [28](#) "For fire went out from Heshbon, A flame from the city of Sihon; It consumed Ar of Moab, The lords of the heights of the Arnon. [29](#) Woe to you, Moab! You have perished, O people of Chemosh! He has given his sons as fugitives, And his daughters into captivity, To Sihon king of the Amorites. [30](#) "But we have shot at them; Heshbon has perished as far as Dibon. Then we laid waste as far as Nophah,

Which reaches to Medeba." [31](#) Thus Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites. [32](#) Then Moses sent to spy out Jazer; and they took its villages and drove out the Amorites who were there.

- A. Again, Moses mentioned the song (or proverbs) sung by the people in celebration of the victory. These amazing lines (fourteen) have somewhat the nature of a sonnet, the first eleven lines extolling the power and might of Heshbon and Sihon, and the last three extolling the utter destruction of Heshbon. (Coffman)
- B. "Thou art undone, O people of Chemosh ..." Chemosh was the national god of the Moabites ([1 Kings 11:7](#); [Jer 48:7](#)), and to some extent the god of the Ammonites ([Jud 11:24](#)). (Whitelaw)
- C. He is the same as Milcom, or Molech, and was worshipped with the sacrifice of children. Solomon built a shrine to this deity ([1 Kings 11:7](#)). "Jerome stated that Chemosh was only another name for Baal-Peor (see [Num 26](#)), a sun-god worshipped as a god of war. (Keil)

King Og Defeated

[33](#) And they turned and went up by the way to Bashan. So Og king of Bashan went out against them, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei. [34](#) Then the Lord said to Moses, "Do not fear him, for I have delivered him into your hand, with all his people and his land; and you shall do to him as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon." [35](#) So they defeated him, his sons, and all his people, until there was no survivor left him; and they took possession of his land.

- A. Og was a giant, and he might have inspired fear by his size, and also because of strongly fortified cities which he had built, "Which are still a wonder to all who behold their ruins." (Coffman)
- B. Og's kingdom was largely peopled with Amorites, but the fealty of the region belonged to Og. Thus, with the total destruction of the Amorite kingdoms, Israel had at this point secured their rear and were then standing opposite the city of Jericho, the first of the cities of Canaan proper that were destined to fall before the invincible armies of Israel. Before the entry into Canaan, however, other important episodes of their history would be recorded, notably their defection at Baal-Peor ([Num 25](#)), and the pitiful efforts of Balaam to seduce Israel, which, in fact, he accomplished in the fiasco at Baal-Peor. (Coffman)
- C. Read [Deut 3:1-11](#)

NUMBERS 22

BALAAM

Since Balaam is the principal actor in these chapters, we shall take a little closer look at this Biblical character. That he was indeed a historical person is attested by the place-names which memorialize him, dating from the mid-second millenium B.C. But actually, who was he? Was he a true prophet of God who went wrong, or was he a mere charlatan soothsayer whom God used as a special vehicle of the prophecies he uttered? There is no conclusive evidence either way.

His name, Balaam, means "devourer, destroyer, or devourer of the people." In [2 Peter 2:15,16](#), Balaam was referred to as having "forsaken the right way," indicating that certainly, at one time, he was in the right way. Also, it is clearly declared in the narrative before us that "the Spirit of God" enabled him to deliver valid prophecies. Thus, there was surely a period of his life when he walked in the truth, even praying that his "latter end" be like that of the faithful. Peter also called Balaam a prophet ([2 Peter 2:16](#)).

However, upon the occasion of Balaam's death, when he was slain along with the enemy opposing Israel, Joshua referred to him as "the soothsayer" ([Num 13:22](#)), a description that fits both the beginning and the final period of Balaam's life. Soothsayers were proscribed under the law of Moses, and the practice of that art was utterly forbidden to Israel.

Despite God's use of this prophet in the matter of frustrating the desires of Balak, however, this favor of God was insufficient to keep Balaam in the right way. The reason for this stated in the N.T. is that "he loved the wages of the unrighteousness." Balaam evidently thought to make amends for his failure to give satisfaction to Balak, and this he did by advising Balak to accomplish the destruction of Israel by seducing them to commit adultery with the daughters of Moab. The manner in which this seduction was carried out is reported in [Num 25](#). Balaam also joined forces with the Moabites against Israel and died in the battle that resulted in their defeat. The account of this evil counsel which originated with Balaam is in [Num 31:16](#). That this was one of Balaam's greatest sins is evident in the fact that in the message of the Holy Spirit to the church at Pergamum ([Rev 2:14](#)), one finds this:

"But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication."

Thus, the total picture of Balaam reveals a man who by disposition and desire was a pagan, but who nevertheless had a knowledge of the true God of Israel, perhaps handed down to him from his remote ancestors of primal times. His name suggests a descent from that Beor who was the father of Bela, first king of the Edomites ([Gen 36:32](#)). Edom (Esau) was of course a brother of Jacob, the son of Isaac, and from that source, certainly some knowledge of the true God still remained among all the connections of the family. There also appears in the prophetic utterances of Balaam, during that period, a strong desire of Balaam to follow the Word of God, but, like Demas of the N.T., the allurements of riches and his unholy desire to compensate Balak for the performance of a task that he could not accomplish resulted, at last, in his total departure from the truth. Alas, this also has been the record of many a Christian in our own times. (Coffman)

1 Then the children of Israel moved, and camped in the plains of Moab on the side of the Jordan across from Jericho.

- A. This verse actually concluded the preceding chapter, placing Israel during the times of the episode about to be related as poised upon the banks of the Jordan before beginning the assault on Canaan at Jericho. The incident centering around Balaam was one of the very greatest importance to Israel, for it was at Baal-Peor that they formally rejected God and "joined themselves to Baal," a decision that would finally result in the destruction of both Israel and of Judah, following the turbulent days of the monarchy. (Coffman)

Balak Send for Balaam

2 Now Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. **3** And Moab was exceedingly afraid of the people because they were many, and Moab was sick with dread because of the children of Israel. **4** So Moab said to the elders of Midian, "Now this company will lick up everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field." And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time.

- A. Many have wondered where Moses received all of the remarkable details in these chapters about Balaam and his "cursing" of Israel. The detailed records of Balaam's unhappy excursion were probably in the archives of Moab, and when Israel completely defeated them, their archives, or library, naturally fell into the hands of the victors. (Coffman)
- B. "lick up everything"...This was an allusion most significant to the minds of a pastoral people, who were familiar with the manner in which the ox collects his food, with the quantity which he devours, and the rapidity with which he eats down the pasture. (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)

[5](#) Then he sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor at Pethor, which is near the River in the land of the sons of his people, to call him, saying: "Look, a people has come from Egypt. See, they cover the face of the earth, and are settling next to me! [6](#) Therefore please come at once, curse this people for me, for they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land, for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed."

- A. There was no ground for such alarm, as the Israelites, in consequence of divine instructions ([Deut 2:9](#)), had offered no hostilities to the Moabites, but had conscientiously spared their territory and property; and even after the defeat of the Amorites, had not turned their arms against them, but had advanced to the Jordan to take possession of the land of Canaan. (Keil and Delitzsch)

[7](#) So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the diviner's fee in their hand, and they came to Balaam and spoke to him the words of Balak. [8](#) And he said to them, "Lodge here tonight, and I will bring back word to you, as the Lord speaks to me." So the princes of Moab stayed with Balaam. [9](#) Then God came to Balaam and said, "Who are these men with you?" [10](#) So Balaam said to God, "Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent to me, saying, [11](#) 'Look, a people has come out of Egypt, and they cover the face of the earth. Come now, curse them for me; perhaps I shall be able to overpower them and drive them out.' " [12](#) And God said to Balaam, "You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed." [13](#) So Balaam rose in the morning and said to the princes of Balak, "Go back to your land, for the Lord has refused to give me permission to go with you."

- A. According to v. 7, the elders of Midian went to Balaam with the elders of Moab; and there is no doubt that the Midianite elders advised Balak to send for Balaam with whom they had become acquainted upon their trading journeys ([Gen 37:28](#)), to come and curse the Israelites. Another circumstance also points to an intimate connection between Balaam and the Midianites, namely, the fact that, after he had been obliged to bless the Israelites in spite of the inclination of his own natural heart, he went to the Midianites and advised them to make the Israelites harmless, by seducing them to idolatry ([Num 31:16](#)). (Keil and Delitzsch)
- B. "What men are these with thee ..." ([Num 22:11](#)). This is like the question in [Gen 4:9](#), "Where is Abel thy brother?" God already knew the answer to this; the question was merely to warn Balaam of the evil purpose of his guests. (Coffman)
- C. This answer has an appearance of being good; but it studiously concealed the reason of the divine prohibition, and it intimated his own willingness and desire to go-if permitted. Balak (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)

14 And the princes of Moab rose and went to Balak, and said, "Balaam refuses to come with us." **15** Then Balak again sent princes, more numerous and more honorable than they. **16** And they came to Balaam and said to him, "Thus says Balak the son of Zippor: 'Please let nothing hinder you from coming to me; **17** for I will certainly honor you greatly, and I will do whatever you say to me. Therefore please come, curse this people for me.' " **18** Then Balaam answered and said to the servants of Balak, "Though 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 less or more. **19** Now therefore, please, you also stay here tonight, that I may know what more the Lord will say to me." **20** And God came to Balaam at night and said to him, "If the men come to call you, rise and go with them; but only the word which I speak to you--that you shall do." **21** So Balaam rose in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the princes of Moab.

- A. Lodge here this night ... God usually revealed His will in visions and dreams; and Balaam's birth and residence in Mesopotamia, where the remains of patriarchal religion still lingered, account for his knowledge of the true God. (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)
- B. At this point Balaam had already compromised himself; and God gave his permission, in exactly the same manner as he granted Israel's request for a king. It was permitted, but it was still contrary to the will of God. Long before this, "Balaam should have dropped the matter, but he was lured on by the love of money." (Coffman)

Balaam, the Donkey, and the Angel

22 Then God's anger was aroused because he went, and the Angel of the Lord took His stand in the way as an adversary against him. And he was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him. **23** Now the donkey saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand, and the donkey turned aside out of the way and went into the field. So Balaam struck the donkey to turn her back onto the road.

24 Then the Angel of the Lord stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on this side and a wall on that side. **25** And when the donkey saw the Angel of the Lord, she pushed herself against the wall and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall; so he struck her again. **26** Then the Angel of the Lord went further, and stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left.

- A. How is it consistent that God should be angry when Balaam had attempted nothing, thus far, contrary to His command? But we must bear in mind that God apparently permits much which He does not approve. He allowed the people in the wilderness to eat flesh: He permitted men to give a writing of divorce to their wives, and even to marry several at once; still it was not right for them to eat the

flesh, nor were divorce and polygamy free from culpability. At any rate, Balaam sinned by pertinaciously urging what was sinful. On this point it behoves us also to be soberly wise, lest, when God's secret judgments differ from our moral sense, we should cry out against Him. (Calvin)

- B. This triggered the anger of God. "Because he went" (Numbers 22:22) therefore has the meaning of "went with the intention of disobeying God." (Coffman)

27 And when the donkey saw the Angel of the Lord, she lay down under Balaam; so Balaam's anger was aroused, and he struck the donkey with his staff. **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 to the donkey, "Because you have abused me. I wish there were a sword in my hand, for now I would kill you!" **30** So the donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden, ever since I became yours, to this day? Was I ever disposed to do this to you?" And he said, "No."

- A. It is a mysterious and miraculous providence through which God Himself warned the prophet: "He was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet." ([2 Peter 2:16](#)) (Coffman)
- B. When God granted visions, they alone for whom they were intended saw them, while others in the company saw nothing ([Dan 10:7](#); [Acts 9:7](#)) (Clarke)

31 Then the Lord opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand; and he bowed his head and fell flat on his face. **32** And the Angel of the Lord said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to stand against you, because your way is perverse before Me. **33** The donkey saw Me and turned aside from Me these three times. If she had not turned aside from Me, surely I would also have killed you by now, and let her live." **34** And Balaam said to the Angel of the Lord, "I have sinned, for I did not know You stood in the way against me. Now therefore, if it displeases You, I will turn back." **35** Then the Angel of the Lord said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but only the word that I speak to you, that you shall speak." So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.

- A. I have sinned ... if it displease thee. Notwithstanding this confession, he evinced no spirit of penitence, as he speaks of desisting only from the outward act. (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary)

- B. Balaam's offer to return home shows that he already knew this journey to be contrary to God's will. However, he had already committed himself to go, and God permitted no turning back. (Coffman)

36 Now when Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at the city of Moab, which is on the border at the Arnon, the boundary of the territory. **37** Then Balak said to Balaam, "Did I not earnestly send to you, calling for you? Why did you not come to me? Am I not able to honor you?" **38** And Balaam said to Balak, "Look, I have come to you! Now, have I any power at all to say anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that I must speak."

- A. Balak honored Balaam by going to meet him, but chided him for his delay, still assuming that the delay was occasioned by Balaam's desire for greater rewards. Balaam explained that even though he had come, he would not be able to speak anything except that which God commanded; however, Balak did not for an instant believe him. (Coffman)

Balaam's First Prophecy

39 So Balaam went with Balak, and they came to Kirjath Huzoth. **40** Then Balak offered oxen and sheep, and he sent some to Balaam and to the princes who were with him. **41** So it was the next day, that Balak took Balaam and brought him up to the high places of Baal, that from there he might observe the extent of the people.

- A. Balak proceeded to take the prophet up "into the high places of Baal." Now, Baal was one of the most detestable of pagan gods; and what a place for the prophet of the true God to find himself! (Coffman)

NUMBERS 23

This chapter gives the first two of some seven of the prophecies of Balaam. These are called parables in our version, but these utterances of Balaam bear no resemblance whatever to N.T. parables of Jesus. Whitelaw explained that this type of utterance resembled the "burden" of the later prophets, "in that it was not a discourse uttered to men, but a thing revealed in a man, of which he had to deliver himself as best he might in such words as came to him. His inward eye was fixed on this revelation, and he gave utterance to it without consideration of those who heard." It appears that such communications came when the prophet was in an unusual type of trance, in which his eyes remained open. Today, we would refer to these pronouncements simply as "prophecies."

The great mystery of this entire episode continues to be connected with God's manifest use of a wicked and corrupt man, such as Balaam proved to be, as the heavenly spokesman for some of the grandest prophecies to be found in the entire word of God. Balaam's roots were pagan, he had the confidence of pagan rulers, and was in their employ, seeking their favor, when these prophecies were uttered, making his acceptability to the pagan world as a competent witness almost perfect, despite his acquaintance with and knowledge of the true God. What a devastating effect the prophecies of such a prophet must have had upon the entire pagan world of that era. This, of course, would have been an enormous help for the Israelites in the conquest they were about to begin, and it could have been that such a benefit to the conquering hosts of Israel was exactly the kind of thing God planned in his use of such a messenger to the pagan populations of that day. (Coffman)

1 Then Balaam said to Balak, "Build seven altars for me here, and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams." **2** And Balak did just as Balaam had spoken, and Balak and Balaam offered a bull and a ram on each altar. **3** Then Balaam said to Balak, "Stand by your burnt offering, and I will go; perhaps the Lord will come to meet me, and whatever He shows me I will tell you." So he went to a desolate height. **4** And God met Balaam, and he said to Him, "I have prepared the seven altars, and I have offered on each altar a bull and a ram.

- A. It is obvious from Balaam's mention of his having prepared "the seven altars, etc.," that he was acting upon God's specific instructions regarding his procedure upon that occasion. That all of this is unusual in a most extraordinary sense is obvious, but it was the will of God thus to communicate with Balak, and through him, with all the pagan rulers of that day." (Coffman)
- B. Balaam's procedure here was that of following the usual customs of paganism. "Balaam here was going out to look for a manifestation of Jehovah in the significant phenomena of nature." The pagan world had no "sure word of

Prophecy," and, therefore, they sought to know the mind of God by looking for clues in the sky, in nature, or in natural phenomena. Any such thing as an eclipse of the sun, for example, would have been hailed as an omen of disaster. (Coffman)

- C. Despite God's permissive use of such pagan devices on this occasion, however, he made it most clear and certain that the message received by Balaam on that occasion was in no sense whatever suggested or derived from any such thing. Balaam was not left to conclude that this or that was meant, because God "put a very distinct and unmistakable word into Balaam's mouth, and commanded him to make it known to Balak." (Coffman)

THE FIRST ORACLE

5 Then the Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, "Return to Balak, and thus you shall speak." **6** So he returned to him, and there he was, standing by his burnt offering, he and all the princes of Moab. **7** And he took up his oracle and said: "Balak the king of Moab has brought me from Aram, From the mountains of the east. 'Come, curse Jacob for me, And come, denounce Israel!' **8** "How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? And how shall I denounce whom the Lord has not denounced? **9** For from the top of the rocks I see him, And from the hills I behold him; There! A people dwelling alone, Not reckoning itself among the nations. **10** "Who can count the dust of Jacob, Or number one-fourth of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, And let my end be like his!"

- A. "Aram ..." ([Num 23:7b](#)). "This is the ancient name of Mesopotamia." "It includes the northern part of Mesopotamia and Syria as far south as the borders of Palestine and the larger part of Arabia Petraea." (Coffman)
- B. God had promised Abraham that his posterity should be as innumerable as the stars of the heaven or the "dust of the earth" ([Gen 13:16](#)) (Coffman)

THE SECOND ORACLE

11 Then Balak said to Balaam, "What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies, and look, you have blessed them bountifully!" **12** So he answered and said, "Must I not take heed to speak what the Lord has put in my mouth?" **13** Then Balak said to him, "Please come with me to another place from which you may see them; you shall see only the outer part of them, and shall not see them all; curse them for me from there." **14** So he brought him to the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars, and offered a bull and a ram on each altar **15** And he said to Balak, "Stand here by your burnt offering while I meet the Lord over there." **16** Then the Lord met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, "Go back to Balak, and thus you shall speak."

- A. The strategy of Balak here was that Balaam should see only the outposts of Israel, the stragglers, the "fringes" and with such a limited view before him, perhaps

Balaam could come up with a curse. This is still the strategy of the Devil. He challenges his Satanic followers not to look at the mighty hosts of true believers who receive and obey the truth, seeking to focus attention upon the "fringes" of God's kingdom, the weak, the failing, the backsliders, and the quitters. It has been said that Satan has not designed a new strategy in 10,000 years. (Coffman)

- B. Balak himself now understood that Balaam was wholly under the influence of Yahweh, and would say nothing but what God commanded him; but not knowing Yahweh as Balaam did, he hoped that he might be induced to change his mind, and curse a people whom he had hitherto determined to bless. (Clark)

17 So he came to him, and there he was, standing by his burnt offering, and the princes of Moab were with him. And Balak said to him, "What has the Lord spoken?" **18** Then he took up his oracle and said: "Rise up, Balak, and hear! Listen to me, son of Zippor! **19** "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good **20** Behold, I have received a command to bless; He has blessed, and I cannot reverse it. **21** "He has not observed iniquity in Jacob, Nor has He seen wickedness in Israel. The Lord his God is with him, And the shout of a King is among them **22** God brings them out of Egypt; He has strength like a wild ox. **23** "For there is no sorcery against Jacob, Nor any divination against Israel. It now must be said of Jacob And of Israel, 'Oh, what God has done!' **24** Look, a people rises like a lioness, And lifts itself up like a lion; It shall not lie down until it devours the prey, And drinks the blood of the slain."

- A. The first eight lines of this second oracle have the impact upon Balak, saying, in effect, "Look, Balak, what a fool you are to think that Almighty God, having blessed his people already, will now withhold that blessing, or curse Israel!" The rest of this second oracle reaffirms in stronger tones than ever the blessing of Jacob by Jehovah, promising, among other blessings, that he shall destroy his enemies as a lion slays and devours the prey. (Coffman)
- B. "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob" Many flagrant sins were observed and punished in this people; but no such universal and hopeless apostasy had as yet appeared to induce their heavenly King and Guardian to abandon them. (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)
- C. The shout of a king is not the shout raised by a king, but the shout raised at the presence of a king. Israel rejoices at having God as their king. (Dummelow)
- D. "What hath God wrought ...!" ([Num 23:23](#)). This verse has always been a source of wonder and challenge. When S. F. B. Morse sent the first message by wireless telegraph from Washington, D.C., to Baltimore, MD, on May 24, 1844, these four words constituted the message. In context, the words are an affirmation that men shall never cease to wonder and to praise God for what he did on behalf of Israel. A whole mighty nation delivered from slavery in a single night, armed for their

journey and launched upon a course of conquest that would make them, for a while, the greatest nation in antiquity! Who could have imagined such a thing? Yet God did it! (Coffman)

[25](#) Then Balak said to Balaam, "Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all!" [26](#) So Balaam answered and said to Balak, "Did I not tell you, saying, 'All that the Lord speaks, that I must do'?" [27](#) Then Balak said to Balaam, "Please come, I will take you to another place; perhaps it will please God that you may curse them for me from there." [28](#) So Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, that overlooks the wasteland. [29](#) Then Balaam said to Balak, "Build for me here seven altars, and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams." [30](#) And Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered a bull and a ram on every altar.

- A. Balak again and again sought "another place" for the attempted cursing of Israel, as if one place could have been more or less desirable than another for such a purpose. He had to learn the hard way that God is everywhere! Jonah could not actually "lose" God by fleeing to Tarshish; and neither could Balak have found any place on earth from which God would have cursed Israel. Nevertheless, Balak, at once set the stage for the third oracle on top of Peor. (Coffman)
- B. The first two oracles came from the top of Pisgah, but the stage is now changed to the top of Peor. Although the precise location of this peak is not surely known, its general locality is, "somewhere to the North of the Dead Sea, and opposite Jericho. This location was extremely important to Israel. It was at Baal-Peor, somewhere in the vicinity of this mountain, that the Wilderness Generation of Israel engaged in a crucial rebellion against God, a tragedy that would later divide and destroy both the kingdoms of Israel. Balaam himself is revealed to have been a vital part of that tragic failure of Israel, hence, the appropriateness of this full account of Balaam's devices against Israel. (Coffman)

NUMBERS 24

This great chapter is the climax of the Balaam narrative, culminating in glorious prophecy of the Star that in "the last days" would rise out of Jacob, a manifest reference prophetically to Him who is called the Bright and Morning Star. The tragedy of this age is that "scholars" who have first been intellectually castrated in some unbelieving seminary are by the thoughtless being consulted for their opinions on such Scriptures as this chapter. Even in the dim light of pre-Christian gloom the writers of the Dead Sea Scrolls enthusiastically accepted the Messianic import of this chapter. Also, the Jewish scholars of all ages read the passage as a promise of the blessed Messiah. Like so many prophecies, this one also is fulfilled twice. King David of Israel who defeated and subjugated Moab was the first fulfillment, but David himself was an eloquent type of the Greater David, the Christ, who is the ultimate and glorious fulfillment of it. (Coffman)

THE THIRD ORACLE

1 Now when Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he did not go as at other times, to seek to use sorcery, but he set his face toward the wilderness. **2** And Balaam raised his eyes, and saw Israel encamped according to their tribes; and the Spirit of God came upon him.

- A. These lines are an introduction to Oracle III, but several things of particular importance are revealed. The mention of the Spirit of God coming upon Balaam attributes a higher value to the remaining five oracles than that which belongs to the first two. The omission by Balaam of the usual pagan procedure of going to some appropriate place to look for "signs," enchantments, or omens, shows that Balaam recognized the utter uselessness of such customs. (Coffman)

3 Then he took up his oracle and said: "The utterance of Balaam the son of Beor, The utterance of the man whose eyes are opened, **4** The utterance of him who hears the words of God, Who sees the vision of the Almighty, Who falls down, with eyes wide open: **5** "How lovely are your tents, O Jacob! Your dwellings, O Israel! **6** Like valleys that stretch out, Like gardens by the riverside, Like aloes planted by the Lord, Like cedars beside the waters. **7** He shall pour water from his buckets, And his seed shall be in many waters. "His king shall be higher than Agag, And his kingdom shall be exalted. **8** "God brings him out of Egypt; He has strength like a wild ox; He shall consume the nations, his enemies; He shall break their bones And pierce them with his arrows. **9** 'He bows down, he lies down as a lion; And as a lion, who shall rouse him?' "Blessed is he who blesses you, And cursed is he who curses you."

- A. Balak evidently had hoped that this third effort to curse Israel would be successful, but Balaam's words here went further than ever in the opposite

direction, going so far as to pronounce blessings upon all who blessed Israel, and curses upon all who cursed them! Balak's patience was exhausted, and his anger kindled against Balaam, as indicated by his clapping his hands after the oracle was spoken. (Coffman)

- B. *"May those who bless you be blessed and those who curse you be cursed!"* By this statement Balaam knowingly or unknowingly repeated God's promise to Abraham and the patriarchs concerning Israel's special redemptive role ([Gen 12:3](#)). (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

[10](#) Then Balak's anger was aroused against Balaam, and he struck his hands together; and Balak said to Balaam, "I called you to curse my enemies, and look, you have bountifully blessed them these three times! [11](#) Now therefore, flee to your place. I said I would greatly honor you, but in fact, the Lord has kept you back from honor." [12](#) So Balaam said to Balak, "Did I not also speak to your messengers whom you sent to me, saying, [13](#) 'If Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of the Lord, to do good or bad of my own will. What the Lord says, that I must speak'?"

- A. The 'smiting of the hands together' is, among Oriental people, an indication of the most violent rage ([Ezek 21:17](#); [22:13](#), [Job 27:23](#)) and ignominious dismissal. (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)

THE FOURTH ORACLE

[14](#) And now, indeed, I am going to my people. Come, I will advise you what this people will do to your people in the latter days." [15](#) So he took up his oracle and said: "The utterance of Balaam the son of Beor, And the utterance of the man whose eyes are opened; [16](#) The utterance of him who hears the words of God, And has the knowledge of the Most High, Who sees the vision of the Almighty, Who falls down, with eyes wide open: [17](#) "I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; A Star shall come out of Jacob; A Scepter shall rise out of Israel, And batter the brow of Moab, And destroy all the sons of tumult. [18](#) "And Edom shall be a possession; Seir also, his enemies, shall be a possession, While Israel does valiantly. [19](#) Out of Jacob One shall have dominion, And destroy the remains of the city."

- A. The fourth oracle, of course, is the outstanding prophecy of the whole Balaam narrative. The focal point is that mysterious person who rises out of Jacob/Israel, called a Star, then a Sceptre. "One who shall have dominion." Interpreters of all ages, races, and persuasions of mankind have invariably found in these verses a prophecy of the Messiah. "Even the men of the Dead Sea Scrolls community regarded this passage as Messianic." The whole Jewish people also so received it.

Even a pretended Messiah built up his claims by assuming a name (Bar Kochba) which means "son of a star.". (Coffman)

We shall pass over the remaining three oracles with little comment. The principal thrust of all three is that the destruction prophesied was to be universal and extend to all nations, not merely to Israel. The interpretation of any of these last three is uncertain, as Gray said, "Due to their brevity, and to certain defects in the text, anything approaching certainty in the interpretation is out of the question." Despite this, there are a few points of very great significance. (Coffman)

THE FIFTH ORACLE

20 Then he looked on Amalek, and he took up his oracle and said: "Amalek was first among the nations, But shall be last until he perishes."

THE SIXTH ORACLE

21 Then he looked on the Kenites, and he took up his oracle and said: "Firm is your dwelling place, And your nest is set in the rock; **22** Nevertheless Kain shall be burned. How long until Asshur carries you away captive?"

THE SEVETH ORACLE

23 Then he took up his oracle and said: "Alas! Who shall live when God does this? **24** But ships shall come from the coasts of Cyprus, And they shall afflict Asshur and afflict Eber, And so shall Amalek, until he perishes." **25** So Balaam rose and departed and returned to his place; Balak also went his way.

- A. It was not long until he died in the defeat of the Midianites ([Num 31:8](#)). Balaam probably offered to mollify the anger of Balak by counseling him with regard to the seduction of the Israelites by the Moabite women, a seduction surely carried out on Balaam's advice, and we are apparently justified in supposing that it came about from Balaam's further seeking to win the approval of Balak ([Num 31:16](#)). (Coffman)
- B. It seems almost beyond doubt that there was from early times a double tradition regarding this famous soothsayer. According to one, Balaam is a Mesopotamian soothsayer who becomes the instrument of God in blessing His people and foretelling their future greatness; according to the other, he is a Midianitish counsellor who sets himself to seduce the people of Jehovah and suffers the extreme penalty of his error. (Dummelow)

NUMBERS 25

Israel's Harlotry in Moab

The great importance of this chapter arises from the pivotal nature of it in the subsequent history of Israel. Right here began the religious apostasy of Israel that was to continue for centuries, resulting in the total corruption: (1) of the Northern Israel, and (2) later of the Southern Israel also, with the result that both nations went into captivity, and only the southern remnant survived. A careful study of the episode also reveals the basis of Israel's rejection of their sacred covenant with God. It simply came down to this, that the people rejected the strict moral requirements of the Decalogue.

1 Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. **2** They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. **3** So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel.

- A. Acacia Grove (Shittim) ([Num 22:1](#)), to which the camp of the Israelites in the steppes of Moab reached ([Num 33:49](#)), was at this northern point of the camp that the Israelites came into contact with the Moabites, and that the latter invited them to take part in their sacrificial meals; and in [Jos 2:1](#) and [Jos 3:1](#), because it was from this spot that the Israelites commenced the journey to Canaan, as being the nearest to the place where they were to pass through the Jordan. (Keil & Delitzsch)
- B. The Israelites, who have just been exhibited as proof against enchantments, are not able to resist the temptations to idolatry, and its connected sin of immorality, arising from their proximity to the tribes of Moab and Midian. In [Num 31:16](#) their apostasy is attributed to the counsel of Balaam (see also [Rev 2:14](#)), who is afterwards put to death for it (Dummelow)
- C. The Moabites and the Midianites were allies. Their kingdoms at the moment being under a common ruler, Balak, a Midianite who was also king of Moab. Balak was serving the interests of both Midian and Moab by his seeking to frustrate the progress of Israel. (Coffman)

4 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of the people and hang the offenders before the Lord, out in the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may turn away from Israel." **5** So Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Every one of you kill his men who were joined to Baal of Peor."

- A. Assemble the chiefs and judges, institute an inquiry concerning the transgressors, and hang them who shall be found guilty before the Lord, as a matter required by his justice. (Clarke)

- B. [Deut 21:22](#). "If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, ²³ his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance.

[6](#) And indeed, one of the children of Israel came and presented to his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. [7](#) Now when Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose 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 body. So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel. [9](#) And those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand.

- A. *Weeping before the door*. Some of the rulers and well-disposed persons were deploring the dreadful wickedness of the people, and supplicating the mercy of God to avert impending judgments. Such public lamentations on account of national sins, at the entrance into the sanctuary, were frequent, and allowed at all times, except on festivals (Josephus, 'Antiquities,' b. xi., ch. v., sec. 5). (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)
- B. From this instance, and from the example of Samuel's slaying of Agag, the Jews formulated what they called the "jus zelotarum," by which, any person seeing another in the very act of violating divine law might take vengeance into his own hand and slay the offender. God authorized no such thing. It was under this corrupt law (so-called) that the Jews stoned the Christian martyr Stephen to death, and under which, more than once, they tried to stone the Christ himself. The blind error of the Jews on this is that they failed to see why God commended Phinehas. It certainly was not for his taking justice into his own hands. It was his zeal that God commended. The next paragraph deals with God's commendation of Phinehas. (Coffman)
- C. [1 Cor 10:8](#) says 23,000 people died in this incident, whereas Num 25:9 has 24,000. This apparent discrepancy can be explained by Paul's mention of "one day," with the understanding that another 1,000 may have died on another day or days. Or 24,000 may have included the leaders, whereas 23,000 did not. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)
- D. The names of the Israelite and Midianite culprits, Zimri (a Simeonite) and Cozbi, appear here probably to emphasize that the matter was public. Another reason might be to explain the great reduction in the Simeonite male population between the first census (59,300, 1:23) and the one after this incident (22,200, 26:14). If mainly Simeonites had been involved in the immorality and idolatry it

would account for much of the difference in the totals. Also the identity of the woman is stressed in order to explain Israel's subsequent action of decimating the Midianite population (25:16-18; cf. 31:1-24). (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

WHY ISRAEL DID THIS

At this point, we shall address the question of what actually lay behind this conduct, and the whole conception of implacable hatred against God's people by the pagan nations. All of it went back to the strict moral code of the Decalogue. In a pagan world organized around the temples of Aphrodite, Bacchus, a host of Baals, and a whole stable of pagan gods and goddesses, where the sale and exploitation of sex and all other vices was their appeal, their source of income, and the evil evangelistic apparatus of their orgiastic religion ... what a challenge the pure morality of the Decalogue presented to that kind of world! No wonder the world of that day hated it.

Israel had been in the wilderness environment for forty years, and now that renewed conflict with the pagan world was available, many found the temptation more than they could overcome. That the Moabite-Midianite conspiracy was aimed squarely at breaking the influence of the Decalogue in Israel cannot for a moment be doubted. (Coffman)

10 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: **11** "Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with My zeal among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal. **12** Therefore say, 'Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace; **13** and it shall be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel.' "

- A. The act of Phinehas must be regarded as exceptional. It was an extraordinary deed of vengeance, justified by the singular atrocity of the crime which provoked it; but it does not confer the right to every man to punish summarily any gross and flagrant breach of divine law committed in his presence. (Barnes)
- B. God established with Phinehas in particular that covenant which He had made generally with all his people; and among its blessings peace is especially mentioned, because of the peace between God and the congregation which Phinehas had brought about. ([Isa 54:10](#), [Ezek 34:25](#)) (Barnes)
- c. He was "zealous with God's zeal," and abhorred the presumptuous wickedness of Zimri, as God abhorred it. He therefore risked his own life by dealing according to their deserts with two influential and defiant evil-doers; and his act was accepted by God as a national atonement; and rewarded by the people (compare the leadership assigned to him in [Num 31:6](#); [Josh 22:13](#)). (Barnes)

- D. Phinehas became high priest after the death of his father Eleazar, and the office, with a short interruption from the days of Eli to those of David, when for unknown reasons it was filled by the descendants of his uncle Ithamar, was perpetuated in his line; nor indeed is it known to have departed from that line again until the typical priesthood of the sons of Aaron was merged in the actual priesthood of the Saviour of mankind. (Barnes)

14 Now the name of the Israelite who was killed, who was killed with the Midianite woman, was Zimri the son of Salu, a leader 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; he was head of the people of a father's house in Midian.

- E. NOT INSPIRED...Josephus has a very interesting account of the part played by Zimri. In no sense was he just an innocent who became enamoured with a beautiful princess. No, he was a rebel against God! In a great assembly before all the people, Zimri said the Ten Commandments were not of God, but of Moses, and that Moses had made up those laws himself, and that he was "harder on the Hebrews than were the Egyptians themselves"! Zimri further boasted that he had "married a strange woman" and that "of course, he had sacrificed to her gods," saying, "I think it is right to seek the truth by inquiring of many people (gods) and not of merely one." It is certain that Zimri had a large popular following. Josephus stated that unless he had been executed, the contagion might have become far greater. (Coffman)

16 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: **17** "Harass the Midianites, and attack them; **18** for they harassed you with their schemes by which they seduced you in the matter of Peor and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of a leader of Midian, their sister, who was killed in the day of the plague because of Peor."

- A. The immediate result of the events related in this chapter was a war of extermination waged against the Midianites by Israel. In this Divine order, we read the truth that the Midianites indeed were the perpetrators of this evil assault upon God's people. The Moabites were merely tools of the Midianites in the whole episode. (Coffman)
- B. Carson is correct in his statement that the fact of God's order calling for war against Midian, but not against Moab, was "because it was the Midianites that Balaam counseled ([Num 31:16](#)), and they (the Midianites) were the chief agents in the corruption of Israel." Israel would never fully recover from the disastrous events unfolded in this chapter. Sure, God would go right on with his plans. They would fight and win wars against all their enemies. The debauched kingdoms of Canaan would fall like over-ripe figs when the tree sustains a mighty wind. But

here at Baal-Peor the cancer began that would eventually consume the Chosen Race. The rest of the Bible is the record of how God dealt with the problems that resulted. (Coffman)

NUMBERS 26

The mustering of the tribes described in this chapter was immediately preparatory to the war against Midian, and to the invasion of Canaan which shortly followed. With a view also to an equitable allotment of the land to be conquered (compare Numbers 26:54) the numbers of the several tribes were taken according to their families.

The Second Census of Israel

1 And it came to pass, after the plague, that the Lord spoke to Moses and Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, saying: **2** "Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel from twenty years old and above, by 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, across from Jericho, saying: **4** "Take a census of the people from twenty years old and above, just as the Lord commanded Moses and the children of Israel who came out of the land of Egypt."

5 Reuben was the firstborn of Israel. The children of Reuben were: of Hanoch, 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: those who were numbered of them were forty-three thousand seven hundred and thirty. **8** And the son of Pallu was Eliab. **9** The sons of Eliab were Nemuel, Dathan, and Abiram. These are the Dathan and Abiram, representatives of 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 together with Korah when that company died, when the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men; and they became a sign. **11** Nevertheless the children of Korah did not die.

A. From here to verse 50 all the tribes are listed and the sons and families that make up the tribe.

51 These are those who were numbered of the children of Israel: six hundred and one thousand seven hundred and thirty.

Tribe	1 st Census	2 nd Census	Change	%	Division	%
Reuben	46,500	43,730	-2,770	-6%	South	-30%
Simeon	59,300	22,200	-37,100	-63%		
Gad	45,650	40,500	-5,150	-11%		
Judah	74,600	76,500	1,900	3%	East	8%
Issachar	54,400	64,300	9,900	18%		
Zebulun	57,400	60,500	3,100	5%	West	21%
Ephraim	40,500	32,500	-8,000	-20%		
Manasseh	32,200	52,700	20,500	64%		
Benjamin	35,400	45,600	10,200	29%	North	4%
Dan	62,700	64,400	1,700	3%		
Asher	41,500	53,400	11,900	29%		
Naphtali	53,400	45,400	-8,000	-15%		
Total:	603,550	601,730	-1,820	0%		0%

Jacob	1
Patriarchs	12
<i>Families</i>	
Reuben	4
Simeon	5
Gad	7
Judah	5
Issachar	4
Zebulun	3
Ephraim	4
Manasseh	8
Benjamin	7
Dan	1
Asher	5
Naphtali	4
Total:	70

70... the exact number of the souls in Jacob's house that went down to Egypt, Gen 46:27. (Clarke)

- A. The most remarkable decrease is in Simeon, which now shows less than half its former offender strength. To this tribe Zimri, the chief in the recent transgression, belonged [Num 25:14](#). Probably his tribesmen generally had followed his example, and had accordingly suffered most severely in the plague. In the parting blessing of Moses, uttered at no great interval from this date, the tribe of Simeon alone is omitted. ([Duet 33:6-23](#)) (Barnes)

[52](#) Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: [53](#) "To these the land shall be divided as an inheritance, according to the number of names. [54](#) To a large tribe you shall give a larger inheritance, and to a small tribe you shall give a smaller inheritance. Each shall be given its inheritance according to those who were numbered of them.

[55](#) But the land shall be divided by lot; they shall inherit according to the names of the tribes of their fathers. [56](#) According to the lot their inheritance shall be divided between the larger and the smaller."

- A. We have instructions for dividing the land of Canaan among the Israelites. It was to be done by "lot," that is, by casting lots; and yet it was also to be carried out in a manner proportionately to the numerical size of the various tribes, the larger ones getting more, and the smaller ones getting less. Noth declared that these divine commands were "incompatible," and contradictory, but the Israelites found no difficulty in carrying out God's instructions. They evidently cast lots for the general sectors of the Promised land in which the tribes would be settled, and then, the actual amount of land that went to each was apportioned on the basis of the numbers of the people. The real wonder of the dividing of the land lies not in how it was done, but in the fact that God divided it to Israel BEFORE they ever entered it! What God promises is already AS GOOD AS DONE! (Coffman)

- B. Lots were cast to determine the locality of each tribe's inheritance, but its size was regulated by the number of the names, the relative fertility of each locality being also no doubt taken into consideration. The twelve lots, which would be

tablets of wood or stone, each inscribed with the name of a tribe, were probably put in an urn; and, as the name of each portion of land was called out, the high priest or representative of a tribe drew a lot, and the tribe whose name was drawn inherited that territory. The precise boundaries would be adjusted afterwards, according to the population shown by the census. ([Num 34:16-29](#))

[16](#) And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, [17](#) "These are the names of the men who shall divide the land among you as an inheritance: Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun. [18](#) And you shall take one leader of every tribe to divide the land for the inheritance. (Dummelow)

- C. According to the lot ... - This method was adopted not only in order to preclude jealousies and disputes, but also that the several tribes might regard the territories as determined for them by God Himself: compare [Pro16:33](#). [33](#) The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the Lord. (Barnes)
- D. The land shall be divided by lot. The appeal to the lot did not place the matter beyond the control of God; because it is at His disposal (Prov 16:33), and he has fixed to all the bounds of their habitation. The manner in which the lot was taken has not been recorded. But it is evident that the lot was cast for determining the quarter of the country on which each tribe should be located, not the quantity of their possessions. In other words, when the lot had decided that a particular tribe was to be settled in the north or the south, the east or the west, the extent of territory was allocated according to the rule (Num 26:54). 'By this regulation provision was made for the support of upwards of 600,000 yeomanry, with from six to twenty acres of land each,' (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)

[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 the Levites: the family of the Libnites, the family of the Hebronites, the family of the Mahlites, the family of the Mushites, and the family of the Korathites. And Kohath begot Amram. [59](#) The name of Amram's wife was Jochebed the daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt; and to Amram she bore Aaron and Moses and their sister Miriam. [60](#) To Aaron were born Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. [61](#) And Nadab and Abihu died when they offered profane fire before the Lord. [62](#) Now those who were numbered of them were twenty-three thousand, every male from a month old and above; for they were not numbered among the other children of Israel, because there was no inheritance given to them among the children of Israel.

- A. The Levites were not mustered along with the rest of the tribes of Israel, because the mustering took place with especial reference to the conquest of Canaan, and the Levites were not to receive any territory as a tribe ([Num 18:20](#)). (Keil & Delitzsch)

- B. The total number of male Levites, 23,000, shows an increase of 1,000 on the number at Sinai [Num 3:39](#). It is doubtless to be taken as a round number; and, as before, includes the male children from a month old and upward, as well as the male adults. (Barnes)

[63](#) These are those who were numbered by Moses and Eleazar the priest, who numbered the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, across from Jericho.

[64](#) But among these there was not a man of those who were numbered by Moses and Aaron the priest 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." So there was not left a man of them, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun.

- A. Concluding formula with the remark in [Num 26:65](#), that the penal sentence which God had pronounced in [Num 14:29](#) and [Num 14:38](#) upon the generation which came out of Egypt, had been completely carried out. (Keil & Delitzsch)
- B. The statement in this verse must not be considered absolute. For, besides Caleb and Joshua, there were alive at this time Eleazar and Ithamar, and in all probability a considerable number of Levites, who had no participation in the popular defections in the wilderness. The tribe of Levi, having neither sent a spy into Canaan nor being included in the enumeration at Sinai, must be regarded as not coming within the range of the fatal sentence, and therefore would exhibit a spectacle not to be witnessed in the other tribes, of many in their ranks above 60 years of age. (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary)

NUMBERS 27

Inheritance Laws

1 Then came the daughters of Zelophehad the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, from the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph; and these were the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.

2 And they stood before Moses, before Eleazar the priest, and before the leaders and all the congregation, by the doorway of the tabernacle of meeting, saying: **3** "Our father died in the wilderness; but he was not in the company of those who gathered together against the Lord, in company with Korah, but he died in his own sin; and he had no sons.

4 Why should the name of our father be removed from among his family because he had no son? Give us a possession among our father's brothers." **5** So Moses brought their case before the Lord.

- A. Jamieson is probably correct in his surmise that these daughters of Zelophehad brought up the subject of their inheritance because at that very moment Moses and the High Priest, and all the princes of the people were gathered in the tent of meeting, or near it, making plans to divide up the land of Canaan among males only, with their father's house left out because there had been no sons of his to register. Consequently, they seized the opportunity to bring the matter to the attention of all the leaders of the people, which they effectively did. (Coffman)
- B. Women in Israel had not, up to the present time, enjoyed any distinct right of inheritance. Yet a father, whether sons had been born to him or not, had the power, either before or at his death, to cause part of his estate to pass to a daughter; in which case her husband married into her family rather than she into his, and the children were regarded as of the family from which the estate had come. (Barnes)

6 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: **7** "The daughters of Zelophehad speak what is right; you shall surely give them a possession of inheritance among their father's brothers, and cause the inheritance of their father to pass to them.

8 And you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'If a man dies and has no son, then you shall cause his inheritance to pass to his daughter. **9** If he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers. **10** 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 the relative closest him in his family, and he shall possess it.' " And it shall be to the children of Israel a statute of judgment, just as the Lord commanded Moses.

- A. The law of the inheritance of daughters (in cases where they had no brother) was that the land should pertain to their father's brothers in perpetuity; and in case he had no brothers, it went to his uncles; and if there were no uncles, the "next of kin" inherited. The purpose of all this was to keep the land of Canaan within the tribes to whom it was originally allocated; that this was the case appears in [Num 36](#) where the law was amended to prevent any marriage of the inheriting daughters outside of their tribe. The civilization of the ancient Jews was built upon the land; and it was a great crime for a Jew to part with his inheritance. The incident of Ahab and the vineyard of Naboth highlights this and also shows how mercilessly the evil kings of Israel destroyed the whole concept of inalienable ownership of the land. (Coffman)

Joshua the Next Leader of Israel

[12](#) Now the Lord said to Moses: "Go up into this Mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given to the children of Israel. [13](#) And when you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother was gathered. [14](#) For in the Wilderness of Zin, during the strife of the congregation, you rebelled against My command to hallow Me at the waters before their eyes." (These are the waters of Meribah, at Kadesh in the Wilderness of Zin.)

- A. These words prepare us for an account of Moses' death, but the last nine chapters of Numbers and all of Deuteronomy come between this announcement of it and the actual record of it in [Deu 34:1-8](#). (Coffman)
- B. "This mountain of Abarim ..." Basing his conclusion on [Deu 32:49](#), Plaut identified this mountain as, "Nebo, some 2,740 in altitude." All the older commentaries also agree with this. "It was certainly Mount Nebo, which is the same as Pisgah."

[15](#) Then Moses spoke to the Lord, saying: [16](#) "Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, [17](#) who may go out before them and go in before them, who may lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the Lord may not be like sheep which have no shepherd." [18](#) And the Lord said to Moses: "Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; [19](#) set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and inaugurate him in their sight. [20](#) And you shall give some of your authority to him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. [21](#) He shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire before the Lord for him by the judgment of the Urim. At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, he and all the children of Israel with him--all the congregation." [22](#) So Moses did as the Lord commanded him. He took Joshua and set him before Eleazar the priest and before all

the congregation. [23](#) And he laid his hands on him and inaugurated him, just as the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses.

- A. "Go out before them ... come in before them ... lead them out ... bring them in ..." These are the metaphors of a shepherd. God Himself was the Shepherd of Israel, and when Jesus said, "I am the Good Shepherd," no bolder claim to absolute Divinity on our Lord's part could have been stated. (Coffman)
- B. "And thou shalt put of thine honor upon him ..." Joshua was not to have the same place in Israel's history as Moses had. The word here rendered "honor" has the meaning of "authority," and in some of the affairs of the Chosen People, Joshua was subordinate to the High Priest. In the whole conception of the Theocracy, this was an essential element. Whereas God spake directly with Moses, Joshua sought to know the will of God through the high priest who consulted the "Urim" (Coffman)
- C. Joshua was to be neither the lawgiver nor the absolute governor of Israel, but to be placed under the judgment of the Urim, with which Eleazar was entrusted, so far as the supreme decision of the affairs of Israel was concerned. (Keil and Delitzsch)
- D. It should be noted that Moses offered no complaint when God told him of his impending death. He did not protest, or plead for any change or delay in the sentence. His only thoughts appear to have been concerned with the safety, the leadership, and the continued progress of Israel. What a noble and self-effacing attitude. (Coffman)

NUMBERS 28

Chapters 28 and 29 constitute a summary of the offerings Israel was commanded to make throughout the whole year. Every one of the requirements laid down has already been discussed at length under those verses where they were first mentioned in the Pentateuch.

Neither is there very much mystery as to just why the summary appears at this particular place in the Books of Moses. God's people had certainly not been able, for many reasons, to observe all of the sacrifices and ordinances commanded at Sinai. In fact, "The whole Mosaic system presupposed an almost immediate entry into Canaan." But then, through human rebellion, there resulted the forty-year delay, and during that forty years it is clear enough that all of those ordinances so clearly designed for a people settled in Canaan were in fact neglected and disobeyed, but now that entry into the Promised Land was immediately to be an accomplished fact, it was appropriate indeed that God should again have given a summary of what their duties in Canaan would be.

When Joshua brought the people into their inheritance, the thrill and joy of having a homeland could have led to a sense of having arrived or of having concluded their purpose.

Such a danger was averted by this divine summary of the strict and continual duties of worship and sacrifices which God expected of them. Israel in no sense had arrived! It was not the end of God's purpose with them, but only the beginning. (Coffman)

Further information can be found at [The Expositor's Bible Commentary](#)

<https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/teb/numbers-28.html#verse-1-31>

Daily Offerings

1 Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, **2** "Command the children of Israel, and say to them, 'My offering, My food for My offerings made by fire as a sweet aroma to Me, you shall be careful to offer to Me at their appointed time.' **3** And you shall say to them, 'This is the offering made by fire which you shall offer to the Lord: two male lambs in their first year without blemish, day by day, as a regular burnt offering. **4** The one lamb you shall offer in the morning, the other lamb you shall offer in the evening, **5** and one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour as a grain offering mixed with one-fourth of a hin of pressed oil. **6** It is a regular burnt offering which was ordained at Mount Sinai for a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the Lord. **7** And its drink offering shall be one-

fourth of a hin for each lamb; in a holy place you shall pour out the drink to the Lord as an offering. [8](#) The other lamb you shall offer in the evening; as the morning grain offering and its drink offering, you shall offer it as an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord.

A. The rugged simplicity of all these sacrifices should be particularly noted. As Whitelaw said, "A great variety of observances which were zealously followed by the Jews of later ages find no place here." This offering of the lamb morning and evening was called the "daily sacrifice" and was continued right up until the destruction of Jerusalem. "This offering was basic to all the others," and was not to be omitted, no matter what other sacrifices were to be made on any given day or days. All such sacrifices were offered additionally. (See under [Ex 29:38f.](#))

(Coffman)

B. The daily offering had been already commanded [Ex 29:38](#), and no doubt additional offerings had become customary on festivals. But no such elaborate system as is here prescribed was or could possibly have been observed in the wilderness: compare [Deu 12:8-9](#). The regulations of this and the next chapter therefore point to the immediate prospect of that settlement in Canaan which alone could enable the Israelites to obey them. Compare the ordinances in [Num 15:0](#). (Barnes)

Sabbath Offering

[9](#) 'And on the Sabbath day two lambs in their first year, without blemish, and two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour as a grain offering, mixed with oil, with its drink offering--

[10](#) this is the burnt offering for every Sabbath, besides the regular burnt offering with its drink offering.

A. Though the Sabbath itself had been set apart (Ex 20:8-11), this is the first instruction given concerning Sabbath ritual. It consisted of regular burnt offerings, just described, plus two lambs a year old with their accompanying drink and grain offerings. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

Monthly Offering

[11](#) 'At the beginnings of your months you shall present a burnt offering to the Lord: two young bulls, one ram, and seven lambs in their first year, without blemish; [12](#) three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour as a grain offering, mixed with oil, for each bull; two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour as a grain offering, mixed with oil, for the one ram;

[13](#) and one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour, mixed with oil, as a grain offering for each lamb, as a burnt offering of sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the Lord. [14](#) Their drink offering shall be half a hin of wine for a bull, one-third of a hin for a ram, and one-

fourth of a hin for a lamb; this is the burnt offering for each month throughout the months of the year. [15](#) Also one kid of the goats as a sin offering to the Lord shall be offered, besides the regular burnt offering and its drink offering.

- A. Although it is true that the Jewish lunar months called special attention to "feasts of the new moons" which were prevalent among the pagans, they were specifically commanded not to worship the moon ([Deu17:3](#)), but it would seem from Paul's words in [Col 2:16](#) that the Jews continued to participate in "new moon" festivals, whether or not this was the original intention. Under Judaism they served a different purpose from the customs of pagans. (Coffman)
- B. These were held as sacred festivals; and though not possessing the character of solemn feasts, they were distinguished by the blowing of trumpets over the sacrifices ([Num 10:10](#)), by the suspension of all labour, except the celebration of public worship ([2 Kings 4:23](#)), and by social or family feasts ([1 Sam 20:5](#)). These observances are not prescribed in the law, though they obtained in the practice of a later time. The beginning of the month was known, not by astronomical calculations, but, according to Jewish writers, by the testimony of messengers appointed to watch the first viable appearance of the new moon, and then the fact was announced through the whole country by signal-fires kindled on the mountaintops. The new moon festivals having been common among the pagan, it is probable that an important design of their institution in Israel was to give the minds of that people a better direction; and assuming this to have been one of the objects contemplated, it will account 'for one of the kids being offered unto the Lord' (Num 28:15), not unto the moon, as the Egyptians and Syrians did. The Sabbath and the new moon are frequently mentioned together. (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)

Offerings at Passover

[16](#) '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](#) On the first day you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work.

[19](#) And you shall present an offering made by fire as a burnt offering to the Lord: two young bulls, one ram, and seven lambs in their first year. Be sure they are without blemish. [20](#) Their grain offering shall be of fine flour mixed with oil: three-tenths of an ephah you shall offer for a bull, and two-tenths for a ram;

[21](#) you shall offer one-tenth of an ephah for each of the seven lambs; [22](#) also one goat as a sin offering, to make atonement for you. [23](#) You shall offer these besides the burnt offering of the morning, which is for a regular burnt offering. [24](#) In this manner you shall offer the food of the offering made by fire daily for seven days, as a sweet aroma to the Lord; it shall be

offered besides the regular burnt offering and its drink offering. [25](#) And on the seventh day you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work.

- A. This feast celebrated Israel's exodus from Egypt and also marked the beginning of the nation's religious year (The Bible Exposition Commentary)
- B. It is clear that all of these sacrifices were supplementary to the ones already prescribed for Passover in [Exo 12](#) and [Lev 23:4-8](#). Of particular interest is the fact that the seven days feast of Unleavened Bread that always began on the day after Passover required the observance of "a holy convocation" with abstinence from all "servile" work. In fact, these were simply additional sabbaths (rests), and were different from the weekly sabbaths in that they could come on any day of the week. This phenomenon resulted in the back-to-back sabbaths on Friday and Saturday the week our Lord was crucified. The Greek text of [Mat 28:1](#) refers to these back-to-back "sabbaths" (plural). Servile work here prohibited primarily meant that all "occupational" work, or work done for making a living was prohibited. (Coffman)
- C. Here is, The appointment of the pass-over sacrifices; not that which was the chief, the paschal lamb, but those which were to be offered upon the seven days of unleavened bread, which followed it, v. 17-25. The first and last of those seven days were to be sanctified as Sabbaths (Henry)

Offerings at the Feast of Weeks

[26](#) 'Also on the day of the firstfruits, when you bring a new grain offering to the Lord at your Feast of Weeks, you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work. [27](#) You shall present a burnt offering as a sweet aroma to the Lord: two young bulls, one ram, and seven lambs in their first year, [28](#) with their grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil: three-tenths of an ephah for each bull, two-tenths for the one ram, [29](#) and one-tenth for each of the seven lambs; [30](#) also one kid of the goats, to make atonement for you. [31](#) Be sure they are without blemish. You shall present them with their drink offerings, besides the regular burnt offering with its grain offering.

- A. This great feast day was honored by God in the sending of the Holy Spirit and the beginning of the Church of Christ on earth. (See the extensive comments on the Pentecost in [Acts 2](#) in this series.) Through the ages several names have attached to this festival: First-fruits, Feast of Weeks, Pentecost, Whitsunday, etc. (See under [Lev 23:9-23](#).) (Coffman)
- B. The joyous character of this festival was signified by the use of leaven in the cakes or loaves that were presented as firstfruits. The people rejoiced in the blessing of another harvest, the fulfilment once more by Jehovah of His promise to supply the needs of His flock. ([Lev 23:17](#)) (The Expositor's Bible Commentary)

C. A new sacrifice is ordered for the celebration of this festival, in addition to the other offering, which was to accompany the first-fruits (Lev 23:18). The "feast of weeks" is here called "the day of the first-fruits," because at that time were offered the first of their second or wheat harvest; hence, it is called "the feast of harvest" (Ex 23:16), and also, in a later age, Pentecost, from its being celebrated 50 days after the Passover. (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)

NUMBERS 29

The Jews had a dual system of years; there was the religious year which began with the month Abib (Nisan), the first part of which was honored by the Passover ceremonies and the feast of Unleavened Bread; and then there was the year which began on the first of Tisri, this being the occasion of the blowing of the trumpets ([Num 10:10](#)) and the celebration of Rosh Hoshannah, the Jewish New Year. Also, during this seventh month (religious), there came the great Day of Atonement and all of the ritual performed by the high priest on that day ([Exo 16](#)). This was marked by the Jews as Yom Kippur, or, more accurately, "Yom ha-Kippurim." Our comments on this are found in [Exo 16](#) and [Lev 23](#). All of these offerings mentioned here are additional to the bullocks, rams, and goats offered by the high priest on the Day of Atonement. (Coffman)

Offerings at the Feast of Trumpets

1 'And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work. For you it is a day of blowing the trumpets. **2** You shall offer a burnt offering as a sweet aroma to the Lord: one young bull, one ram, and seven lambs in their first year, without blemish. **3** Their grain offering shall be fine flour mixed with oil: three-tenths of an ephah for the bull, two-tenths for the ram, **4** and one-tenth for each of the seven lambs; **5** also one kid of the goats as a sin offering, to make atonement for you; **6** besides the burnt offering with its grain offering for the New Moon, the regular burnt offering with its grain offering, and their drink offerings, according to their ordinance, as a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the Lord.

- A. The special offerings, appointed for certain days, were not to interfere with the offerings usually requisite on these days; because in Num 29:6 it is said that the daily offerings, as well as those for the first day of the month, were to take place in their ordinary course. (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)
- B. The blowing of the trumpets on the first day of the seventh month signaled the beginning of a new civil year for Israel. On that day the Jews were not to work and the priests were to offer a burnt offering of one bull, one ram, and seven male lambs, as well as a sin offering of one male goat.
- C. According to Num 10, the trumpets could be blown for several reasons: to call the people together (v. 2), to sound an alarm (v. 5), or to announce a battle (v. 9). Today, the Jews are a scattered people (Deut 28; Lev 26:1), but one day the trumpet will sound to call them back to their land and prepare them for the return of their Messiah (Isa 27:12-13; Matt 24:29,31). The trumpet sound that Christians are awaiting will announce the return of the Savior for His church (1 Thess 4:13-18). (The Bible Exposition Commentary)

Offerings on the Day of Atonement

7 'On the tenth day of this seventh month you shall have a holy convocation. You shall afflict your souls; you shall not do any work. **8** You shall present a burnt offering to the Lord as a sweet aroma: one young bull, one ram, and seven lambs in their first year. Be sure they are without blemish. **9** Their grain offering shall be of fine flour mixed with oil: three-tenths of an ephah for the bull, two-tenths for the one ram, **10** and one-tenth for each of the seven lambs; **11** also one kid of the goats as a sin offering, besides the sin offering for atonement, the regular burnt offering with its grain offering, and their drink offerings.

- A. Note that this whole series of offerings follows a pattern in the number and kind of animals to be offered, in the amount of the meal-offerings in each case, and the inclusion of the drink-offerings. All of these are supplementary and additional to the regular sacrifices and ceremonies already prescribed in Exodus and Leviticus. Day of Atonement was the tenth day of the seventh month. Another great Jewish festival occurred in this month, namely, the Feast of Tabernacles which took place on the fifteenth day of this same month. The offerings for this day were extensive, more than for any other day, as appears at once in the text.

(Coffman)

- B. The great ceremonies of the day are described in [Lev 16:0](#).[Lev 23:26-32](#)

Offerings at the Feast of Tabernacles

In the aggregate, the total sacrifices for this Feast of Tabernacles were larger than any other of the special assignments made for Israel in these chapters. This feast, coming in the fall of the year, was also called the feast of Harvest Home, the Feast of Ingathering, etc. During the feast, the Jews constructed primitive shelters, or "booths" made of the branches of trees and dwelt in these for a whole week, a custom that was continued for centuries after the Jews came into the land of Canaan. It symbolized their poverty and homelessness during the days of the wanderings after God delivered them from Egypt. (See further comment in [Lev 23](#).)

In later centuries, the Jews established other special feasts: the Feast of Purim, celebrating God's deliverance through Esther and Mordecai, and centuries later following the triumph over Antiochus Epiphanes which permitted the reopening of the Temple and the reading of the Torah, they established the Feast of Lights (circa 164 B.C.)

(Coffman)

12 'On the fifteenth day of the seventh month you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work, and you shall keep a feast to the Lord seven days.

- A. On each succeeding day one bullock *less*, till on the seventh day there were only *seven*, making in all *seventy*. What an expensive service! How should we magnify God for being delivered from it! Yet these were all the taxes they had to pay. At the public charge there were annually offered to God, independently of trespass-offerings and voluntary vows, fifteen goats, twenty-one kids, seventy-two rams, one hundred and thirty-two bullocks, and eleven hundred and one lambs! But how little is all this when compared with the lambs slain every year at the *passover*, which amounted in one year to the immense number of 255,600 slain in the temple itself, which was the answer that *Cestius*, the Roman general, received when he asked the priests *how many persons* had come to Jerusalem at their annual festivals; the priests, numbering the *people* by the *lambs* that had been slain, said, "twenty-five myriads, five thousand and six hundred." - For an account of the feast of tabernacles, [Lev 23:34](#). (Clarke)

The offerings of the [first day](#), thirteen bullocks, two rams, fourteen lambs, and one kid, v. 13-16.
The offerings of the [second day](#), twelve bullocks, two rams, fourteen lambs, and one kid, v.17-19.
The offerings of the [third day](#), eleven bullocks; the rest as before, v. 20-22.
The offerings of the [fourth day](#), ten bullocks; the rest as before, v. 23-25.
The offerings of the [fifth day](#), nine bullocks, etc., v. 26-28.
The offerings of the [sixth day](#), eight bullocks, etc., v. 29-31.
The offerings of the [seventh day](#), seven bullocks, etc., v. 32-34.
The offerings of the [eighth day](#), one bullock, one ram, seven lambs, and one goat, v. 35-38.

[13](#) You shall present a burnt offering, an offering made by fire as a sweet aroma to the Lord: thirteen young bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs in their first year. They shall be without blemish. [14](#) Their grain offering shall be of fine flour mixed with oil: three-tenths of an ephah for each of the thirteen bulls, two-tenths for each of the two rams, [15](#) and one-tenth for each of the fourteen lambs; [16](#) also one kid of the goats as a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offering.

[17](#) 'On the second day present twelve young bulls, two rams, fourteen lambs in their first year without blemish, [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](#) also one kid of the goats as a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering with its grain offering, and their drink offerings.

[20](#) 'On the third day present eleven bulls, two rams, fourteen lambs in their first year without blemish, [21](#) 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; [22](#) also one goat as a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offering.

[23](#) 'On the fourth day present ten bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs in their first year, without blemish, [24](#) 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; [25](#) also one kid of the goats as a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offering.

[26](#) 'On the fifth day present nine bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs in their first year without blemish, [27](#) 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; [28](#) also one goat as a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offering.

[29](#) 'On the sixth day present eight bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs in their first year without blemish, [30](#) 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; [31](#) also one goat as a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offering.

[32](#) 'On the seventh day present seven bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs in their first year without blemish, [33](#) 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; [34](#) also one goat as a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offering.

[35](#) 'On the eighth day you shall have a sacred assembly. You shall do no customary work. [36](#) You shall present a burnt offering, an offering made by fire as a sweet aroma to the Lord: one bull, one ram, seven lambs in their first year without blemish, [37](#) and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bull, for the ram, and for the lambs, by their number, according to the ordinance; [38](#) also one goat as a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offering. [39](#) 'These you shall present to the Lord at your appointed feasts (besides your vowed offerings and your freewill offerings) as your burnt offerings and your grain offerings, as your drink offerings and your peace offerings.' " [40](#) So Moses told the children of Israel everything, just as the Lord commanded Moses.

NUMBERS 30

The Law Concerning Vows

The diary conception will aid substantially in understanding the organization of the books of Moses. Apparently, the ancient lawgiver kept a careful record of all the things God commanded him to say to Israel, but it is noticeable that the legislation on vows, for example, which is given in this chapter also appears in several other places. It is supposed that the reason for these instructions being given right here lies simply in the fact that at this particular point in Moses' continual record of what God had commanded, the questions came up which led to these regulations. (Coffman)

1 Moses said to the heads of the tribes of Israel: "This is what the LORD commands:

2 When a man makes a vow to the LORD or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.

- A. When you make a promise unto God, God takes it seriously and God expects you to keep your vow. He doesn't want you to make a vow or a promise and then break it. In fact, in the Bible it said, "it's better not to vow at all than to vow and to break it" ([Ecc 5:5](#)). Vows are something that a person does voluntarily. God doesn't demand that you make a vow of certain things unto Him. (Smith)
- B. Right here is the little end of that tap-root which feeds and nourishes all of the corruption and immorality threatening to engulf all mankind today. What is it? It is simply this, that men cannot be counted on to do what they say they will do. How casually men take their most solemn vows! Behold how countless thousands dishonor, deny, and repudiate their marriage vows! And in the matter of holy religion, how many millions are there today who have forsaken and abandoned even their baptismal vows! May all people cease and desist from the sin of broken vows. This vital sub-structure of all human truth and order is crumbling; and, unless there shall come about a change, the future of our modern world is indeed dismal and threatening. (Coffman)
- C. No man can be bound by his own promise to do what he is already, by the Divine precept, forbidden to do. In other matters the command is, that he shall not break his words, through he may change his mind. (Henry)
- D. This legislation applied to all men, the commandment being simply that a man shall keep his word or suffer the disfavor of God Himself. Particularly, anything that a man promises solemnly to do, that he must do. The pioneer conception in America that a man's word was "as good as his bond" honored this law in the very manner that God intended. The importance of this principle is so great that it is impossible to exaggerate it. "Indeed, a wholesome society can be maintained only by the integrity of the rank and file of its men and women. (Coffman)

3 "When a young woman still living in her father's household makes a vow to the LORD or obligates herself by a pledge **4** and her father hears about her vow or pledge but says nothing to her, then all her vows and every pledge by which she obligated herself will stand. **5** But if her father forbids her when he hears about it, none of her vows or the pledges by which she obligated herself will stand; the LORD will release her because her father has forbidden her.

- A. Note also that a father could "disallow" a daughter's vows (or oaths) only if he did so on the very day he first heard of it. He could not play fast and loose in the exercise of this authority. If he once allowed it, either by tacit approval (holding his peace) or verbal permission, he could not later revoke his decision. (Coffman)

6 "If she marries after she makes a vow or after her lips utter a rash promise by which she obligates herself **7** and her husband hears about it but says nothing to her, then her vows or the pledges by which she obligated herself will stand. **8** But if her husband forbids her when he hears about it, he nullifies the vow that obligates her or the rash promise by which she obligates herself, and the LORD will release her.

- A. Case of a woman who has entered into a vow while unmarried, but who marries before her vow is fulfilled. The husband has the power either to confirm his wife's vow, or disallow it when he hears of it. (Dummelow)

9 "Any vow or obligation taken by a widow or divorced woman will be binding on her.

10 "If a woman living with her husband makes a vow or obligates herself by a pledge under oath **11** and her husband hears about it but says nothing to her and does not forbid her, then all her vows or the pledges by which she obligated herself will stand. **12** But if her husband nullifies them when he hears about them, then none of the vows or pledges that came from her lips will stand. Her husband has nullified them, and the LORD will release her. **13** Her husband may confirm or nullify any vow she makes or any sworn pledge to deny herself. **14** But if her husband says nothing to her about it from day to day, then he confirms all her vows or the pledges binding on her. He confirms them by saying nothing to her when he hears about them. **15** If, however, he nullifies them some time after he hears about them, then he must bear the consequences of her wrongdoing."

- A. This paragraph is somewhat of a summary of the whole chapter, but it has one new thing. The father (or husband) also is under a divine caution. There is, under certain circumstances, a finality in what he says or does not say. If, for example, he should allow certain rash vows to stand by "holding his peace" his action is

irrevocable and may not be changed at some later time. His power and authority are forbidden to be used capriciously. (Coffman)

- B. After this there follows the general statement, that a husband could establish or dissolve every vow of performance or abstinence made by his wife. If, however, he remained silent "from day to day," he confirmed it by his silence; and if afterwards he should declare it void, he was to bear his wife's iniquity. the sin which the wife would have had to bear if she had broken the vow of her own accord. (Keil & Delitzsch)

16 These are the regulations the LORD gave Moses concerning relationships between a man and his wife, and between a father and his young daughter still living at home.

NUMBERS 31

This chapter records the war of extermination commanded by God against Midian. It was not a war of personal vengeance, but a war of execution of the wrath of a just God against a people who deliberately became God's enemies and sought by every device they knew to frustrate the Divine purpose with regard to Israel. (Coffman)

The Lord commanded Moses to carry out that hostility to the Midianites which had already been commanded in [Num 25:16-18](#). The revenge of the children of Israel" was revenge for the wickedness which the tribes of the Midianites who dwelt on the east of Moab ([Num 22:4](#)) had practiced upon the Israelites, by seducing them to the idolatrous worship of Baal Peor. (Keil & Delitzsch)

Vengeance on the Midianites

1 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: **2** "Take vengeance on the Midianites for the children of Israel. Afterward you shall be gathered to your people."

- A. Doubtless there were many among the Midianites who were personally guiltless as regards Israel. But the rulers deliberately adopted the counsel of Balaam against Israel, and their behests had been but too readily obeyed by their subjects. The sin therefore was national, and the retribution could be no less so. (Barnes)
- B. Midianites - a semi-nomadic people, descended from Abraham and Keturah, occupying a tract of country east and southeast of Moab, which lay on the eastern coast of the Dead Sea. They seem to have been the principal instigators of the infamous scheme of seduction planned to entrap the Israelites into the double crime of idolatry and licentiousness, by which it was hoped the Lord would withdraw from that people the benefit of His protection and favour. (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)
- C. The Lord commanded Moses to carry out that hostility to the Midianites which had already been commanded in Num 25:16-18. Moses was to revenge (i.e., to execute) the revenge of the children of Israel upon the Midianites, and then to be gathered to his people, i.e., to die, as had already been revealed to him (Num 27:13). (Keil and Delitzsch)

3 So Moses spoke to the people, saying, "Arm some of yourselves for war, and let them go against the Midianites to take vengeance for the Lord on Midian. **4** A thousand from each tribe of all the tribes of Israel you shall send to the war." **5** So there were recruited from the divisions of Israel one thousand from each tribe, twelve thousand armed for war.

6 Then Moses sent them to the war, one thousand from each tribe; he sent them to the war with Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, with the holy articles and the signal trumpets in his hand.

- A. Israel received their instructions from God and trusted God to go before them and give them victory. We assume that Joshua led the army, but Phinehas, the son of the high priest, was also there with the priests who carried the ark of the covenant and blew the trumpets ([Num 10:1-10](#)). It was Phinehas who had demonstrated great courage and devotion to God when the sin of Baal Peor invaded the camp of Israel (25:7-15). (The Bible Exposition Commentary)
- B. It was an extraordinary war, and not conducted on the common principle, for we do not find that peace was offered to the Midianites, and that they refused it; see [Deu 20:10](#), c. In such a case only hostilities could lawfully commence but they were sinners against GOD; the cup of their iniquity was full, and God thought proper to destroy them. Though a leader there certainly was, and Joshua was probably that leader, yet because God, for the above reason, was considered as *commander-in-chief*, therefore no one else is mentioned; for it is evident that the sole business of Phinehas was to take care of the *holy instruments* and to *blow with the trumpet*. (Clarke)

7 And they warred against the Midianites, just as the Lord commanded Moses, and they killed all the males. **8** They killed the kings of Midian with the rest of those who were killed--Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. Balaam the son of Beor they also killed with the sword. **9** And the children of Israel took the women of Midian captive, with their little ones, and took as spoil all their cattle, all their flocks, and all their goods. **10** They also burned with fire all the cities where they dwelt, and all their forts.

11 And they took all the spoil and all the booty--of man and beast.

- A. It should always be remembered that in this terrible act of vengeance, Israel did not act upon their own behalf at all, but as instruments of God, and upon his express command to do so. As Henry pointed out, they had authority for their actions which no man or nation on earth today can claim. They had Moses to relate to them, "what God commanded." People today have no such authority. (Coffman)
- B. We should note another thing. "Midian" as used in these lines evidently does not mean the whole extensive race of the Midianites, but, as indicated by the names of the kings slain, and especially the limited number of them, they were that portion of the Midianites who "dwelt in the country," namely, that part of the country about to be occupied by Israel, as related in [Jos 13:20](#). This understanding harmonizes with the fact that, "The Midianites appeared again some two centuries later as a very formidable power." (Coffman)

- C. In [Num 31:11](#),(KJV) the mention of the prey and the spoil refers to two different portions of the total booty. "Prey refers to the captives and livestock; the spoil refers to the ornaments and other effects." (Clarke)
- D. Kings of Midian... from [Jos 13:21](#) we learn that these were princes or chiefs, and that they were tributary to Sihon, king of the Amorites. (Dummelow)

Return from the War

[12](#) Then they brought the captives, the booty, and the spoil to Moses, to Eleazar the priest, and to the congregation of the children of Israel, to the camp in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, across from Jericho. [13](#) And Moses, Eleazar the priest, and all the leaders of the congregation, went to meet them outside the camp. [14](#) But Moses was angry with the officers of the army, with the captains over thousands and captains over hundreds, who had come from the battle. [15](#) And Moses said to them: "Have you kept all the women alive? [16](#) Look, these women caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the Lord in the incident 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 who has known a man intimately. [18](#) But keep alive for yourselves all the young girls who have not known a man intimately. [19](#) And as for you, remain outside the camp seven days; whoever has killed any person, and whoever has touched any slain, purify yourselves and your captives on the third day and on the seventh day. [20](#) Purify every garment, everything made of leather, everything woven of goats' hair, and everything made of wood."

- A. In disobedience to God's command, the soldiers did not exterminate all the Midianites but brought the women and children back as captives. This angered Moses, for the presence of the Midianite women and girls in the camp only gave further opportunity for the sin that had almost destroyed Israel. ([Num 25](#))The nation had won the battle but was now in danger of losing the victory, a mistake that God's people have made more than once down through the centuries. (The Bible Exposition Commentary)
- B. All the women except the virgins were then sentenced to death along with all the boys. This insured the extermination of the Midianites and thus prevented them from ever again seducing Israel to sin. Reference to Midianites in later history ([Judg 6:1-6](#)) no doubt implies either a different clan or family from those in Numbers or the possibility that some escaped God's vengeance. The virgins were spared because they obviously had had no role in the Baal of Peor incident nor could they by themselves perpetuate the Midianite peoples. Nonetheless, strict application of the rules of holy war dictated that they too should have been killed ([Deut 20:16](#)), so it was only a concession by Moses that allowed them to live. (Bible Knowledge Commentary/Old)

- c. We hold no agreement whatever with those scholars who speak of the "immorality" of God's actions here. In the very nature of things, if Israel was to be given the land of Canaan, Canaan's populations being forced off their lands, and all their religious institutions destroyed, there was simply no other way to accomplish it. (Coffman)
- D. Read principles governing warfare in [Deut 20: 10-15](#) versus [Deut 20: 16-18](#)

[21](#) Then Eleazar the priest said to the men of war who had gone to the battle, "This is the ordinance of the law which the Lord commanded Moses: [22](#) Only the gold, the silver, the bronze, the iron, the tin, and the lead, [23](#) everything that can endure fire, you shall put through the fire, and it shall be clean; and it shall be purified with the water of purification. But all that cannot endure fire you shall put through water. [24](#) And you shall wash your clothes on the seventh day and be clean, and afterward you may come into the camp."

- A. This Divine vengeance against Midian was scheduled as the final act of Moses' leadership of Israel, and a glimpse of the subsequent order as it would prevail after the death of Moses appears in the fact that, not Moses, but Eleazar, explains the law of purification as previously given by God through Moses. (Coffman)
- B. The verse is curious as illustrating the variety of metals in use at this early date for domestic purposes. All these metals were common in Egypt centuries before the date of the Exodus. (Barnes)
- C. On this purification by means of the 'water of separation' see [Num 19:11-13](#). (Dummellow)

Division of the Plunder

[25](#) Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: [26](#) "Count up the plunder that was taken--of man and beast--you and Eleazar the priest and the chief fathers of the congregation; [27](#) and divide the plunder into two parts, between those who took part in the war, who went out to battle, and all the congregation. [28](#) And levy a tribute for the Lord on the men of war who went out to battle: one of every five hundred of the persons, the cattle, the donkeys, and the sheep; [29](#) take it from their half, and give it to Eleazar the priest as a heave offering to the Lord. [30](#) And from the children of Israel's half you shall take one of every fifty, drawn from the persons, the cattle, the donkeys, and the sheep, from all the livestock, 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.

- A. This arrangement was only made for this particular case, and not as a law for all times, although it was a general rule that those who remained at home received a

share of the booty brought back by the warriors (cf. [Jos 22:8](#); [1 Sam 30:24-25](#)) (Keil & Delitzsch)

[32](#) The booty remaining from the plunder, which the men of war had taken, was six hundred and seventy-five thousand sheep, [33](#) seventy-two thousand cattle, [34](#) sixty-one thousand donkeys, [35](#) and thirty-two thousand persons in all, of women who had not known a man intimately. [36](#) And the half, the portion for those who had gone out to war, was in number three hundred and thirty-seven thousand five hundred sheep; [37](#) and the Lord's tribute of the sheep was six hundred and seventy-five. [38](#) The cattle were thirty-six thousand, of which the Lord's tribute was seventy-two. [39](#) The donkeys were thirty thousand five hundred, of which the Lord's tribute was sixty-one. [40](#) The

persons were sixteen thousand, of which the Lord's tribute was thirty-two persons. [41](#) So Moses gave the tribute which was the Lord's heave offering to Eleazar the priest, as the Lord

Type	Total	Soldiers Portion	People Portion	Soldier To Lord	People To Levites
Sheep	875,000	337,500	337,500	675	6,750
Cattle	72,000	36,000	36,000	72	720
Donkey	81,000	30,500	30,500	81	810
Maidens	32,000	16,000	16,000	32	320

commanded Moses. [42](#) And from the children of Israel's half, which Moses separated from the men who fought-- [43](#) now the half belonging to the congregation was three hundred and thirty-seven thousand five hundred sheep, [44](#) thirty-six thousand cattle, [45](#) thirty thousand five hundred donkeys, [46](#) and sixteen thousand persons-- [47](#) and from the children of Israel's half Moses took one of every fifty, drawn from man and beast, and gave them to the Levites, who kept charge of the tabernacle of the Lord, as the Lord commanded Moses.

- A. The enormous quantities of live-stock mentioned here were "in accordance with the habits of the Midianites in the days of Gideon ([Jud 6](#)) and of their modern representatives today. (Coffman)

[48](#) Then the officers who were over thousands of the army, the captains of thousands and captains of hundreds, came near to Moses; [49](#) and they said to Moses, "Your servants have taken a count of the men of war who are under our command, and not a man of us is missing. [50](#) Therefore we have brought an offering for the Lord, what every man found of ornaments of gold: armllets and bracelets and signet rings and earrings and necklaces, to make atonement for ourselves before the Lord." [51](#) So Moses and Eleazar the priest received the gold from them, all the fashioned ornaments. [52](#) And all the gold of the offering that they offered to the Lord, from the captains of thousands

and captains of hundreds, was sixteen thousand seven hundred and fifty shekels.

[53](#) (The men of war had taken spoil, every man for himself.) [54](#) And Moses and Eleazar the priest received the gold from the captains of thousands and of hundreds, and brought it into the tabernacle of meeting as a memorial for the children of Israel before the Lord.

- A. Whitelaw noted that we should not be surprised by such enormous quantities of gold and jewels captured from a race of nomadic wanderers. "It is still the case with peoples of that area and under circumstances far less favorable." The same author also calculated the weight of the gold mentioned here as some 11,000 ounces (Troy). At the current price of gold \$325.00 per ounce, the value of this free-will offering was more than \$3,500,000.00! (Coffman).
- B. The quantity of jewelry seized as booty is quite in harmony with the well-known love of nomads, and even of barbarous tribes, for ornaments of this kind; and the peculiar liking of the Midianites for such things is confirmed by the account in [Jud 8:26](#), according to which Gideon took as much as 1700 shekels in weight of golden rings from the Midianites alone, beside ornaments of other kinds. (Keil & Delitzsch)

NUMBERS 32

Settlement of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh

1 Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of livestock; and when they saw the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead, that indeed the region was a place for livestock, **2** the children of Gad and the children of Reuben came and spoke to Moses, to Eleazar the priest, and to the leaders of the congregation, saying, **3** "Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Shebam, Nebo, and Beon, **4** the country which the Lord defeated before the congregation of Israel, is a land for livestock, and your servants have livestock." **5** Therefore they said, "If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to your servants as a possession. Do not take us over the Jordan."

- A. Was this a sinful request on the part of these tribes? Differences of opinion are expressed, but in the light of Moses' severe rebuke in the next verses, our own conclusion is that their request represented a fundamental departure by those tribes away from the true will of God. It has been the same in all generations where men looked on present advantages and temporal benefits and elected instead of following God's will to choose their own changes and walk in their own ways instead of God's. (Coffman)
- B. The places mentioned here belonged to Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, which being conquered by the Israelites. (Clarke)

6 And Moses said to the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben: "Shall your brethren go to war while you sit here? **7** Now why will you discourage the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the Lord has given them? **8** Thus your fathers did when I sent them away from Kadesh Barnea to see the land. **9** For when they went up to the Valley of Eshcol and saw the land, they discouraged the heart of 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 was aroused on that day, and He swore an oath, saying, **11** 'Surely none of the men who came up from Egypt, from twenty years old and above, shall see the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because they have not wholly followed Me, **12** except Caleb the son of Jephunneh, the Kenizzite, and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have wholly followed the Lord.' **13** So the Lord's anger was aroused 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 gone. **14** And look! You have risen in your father's place, a brood of sinful men, to increase still more the fierce anger of the Lord against Israel. **15** For if you turn away from following Him, He will once again leave them in the wilderness, and you will destroy all these people."

- A. This response, of course, was a rehearsal of events following Kadesh-Barnea and the sending out of the spies which resulted as follows: (1) it discouraged Israel; (2) Jehovah's anger was kindled against Israel; (3) God forbade any of that generation except Caleb and Joshua to enter Canaan; and (4) the Lord punished the whole nation by some forty years of aimless wanderings in the wilderness. Now, forty years later, once more standing on the verge of entering Canaan, here the sons of those original sinners once more appear with a plan of their own. They would NOT enter Canaan at all, but settle EAST of Jordan! What a fine place to pasture sheep! . (Coffman)

16 Then they came near to him and said: "We will build sheepfolds here for our livestock, and cities for our little ones, **17** but we ourselves will be armed, ready to go before the children of Israel until we have brought them to their place; and our little ones will dwell in the fortified cities because of the inhabitants of the land. **18** We will not return to our homes until every one of the children of Israel has received 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 eastern side of the Jordan."

- A. It was impossible for these, numerous as they might be, to build cities and fortify them for the defence of their families in their absence. Calmet supposes they meant no more than repairing the cities of the Amorites which they had lately taken; which work might have been very easily accomplished in the time which they spent on this side of Jordan (Clarke)
- B. Here is the essential departure from God's will, based upon the same grounds that always underlies disobedience, "We will not!" Oh yes, the promises were excellent, no doubt made in good faith, and with the approving support of the whole nation; so Moses yielded. After all, it was the end of the line for him, and Israel would face the responsibilities of the future WITHOUT Moses. Therefore, he granted their request but included a final warning of what would be involved if they failed to keep their promises. (Coffman)

20 Then Moses said to them: "If you do this thing, if you arm yourselves before the Lord for the war, **21** and all your armed men cross over the Jordan before the Lord until He has driven out His enemies from before Him, **22** and the land is subdued before the Lord, then afterward you may return and be blameless before the Lord and before Israel; and this land shall be your possession before the Lord. **23** But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the Lord; and be sure your sin will find you out. **24** Build cities for your little ones and folds for your sheep, and do what has proceeded out of your mouth." **25** And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben spoke to Moses, saying: "Your servants will do as my lord commands. **26** Our little ones, our

wives, our flocks, and all our livestock will be there in the cities of Gilead; [27](#) but your servants will cross over, every man armed for war, before the Lord to battle, just as my lord says."

- A. DID THEY KEEP THESE PROMISES? No! They certainly did not. The women and children left behind under this arrangement could by no means have manned and defended the fortified towns and villages where they lived. (Coffman)
- B. Many of the men of war from these tribes were, of course, left behind. The total roster of the men of war for Reuben, Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh was 110,580, according to the census in [Num 26](#), but how many actually aided in the conquest? From [Jos 4:13](#), we learn that of those two and one half tribes, only forty thousand armed men passed over Jordan, meaning that 70,580 armed men remained at home for the defense of the women and children." (Clarke)

[28](#) So Moses gave command concerning them to Eleazar the priest, to Joshua the son of Nun, and to the chief fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel. [29](#) And Moses said to them: "If the children of Gad and the children of Reuben cross over the Jordan with you, every man armed for battle before the Lord, and the land is subdued before you, then you shall give them the land of Gilead as a possession. [30](#) But if they do not cross over armed with you, they shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan." [31](#) Then the children of Gad and the children of Reuben answered, saying: "As the Lord has said to your servants, so we will do. [32](#) We will cross over armed before the Lord into the land of Canaan, but the possession of our inheritance shall remain with us on this side of the Jordan."

- A. Moses wouldn't be alive when the nation crossed the river, so he called Eleazar, Joshua, and the leaders of the tribes and told them of the agreement. It would be their responsibility to see to it that the Transjordanic tribes kept their promise and crossed over the river to battle the nations in Canaan. The land they requested was theirs, but they would lose it if they didn't keep their promise. (The Bible Exposition)

[33](#) So Moses gave to the children of Gad, to the children of Reuben, and to 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 its cities within the borders, the cities of the surrounding country. [34](#) And the children of Gad built Dibon and Ataroth and Aroer, [35](#) Atroth and Shophan and Jazer and Jogbehah, [36](#) Beth Nimrah and Beth Haran, fortified cities, and folds for sheep. [37](#) And the children of Reuben built Heshbon and Elealeh and Kirjathaim, [38](#) Nebo and Baal Meon (their names being changed) and Shibmah; and they gave other names to the cities which they built. [39](#) And the children

of Machir the son of Manasseh went to Gilead and took it, and dispossessed the Amorites who were in it. [40](#) So Moses gave Gilead to Machir the son of Manasseh, and he dwelt in it. [41](#) Also Jair the son of Manasseh went and took its small towns, and called them Havoth Jair. [42](#) Then Nobah went and took Kenath and its villages, and he called it Nobah, after his own name.

- A. The nation lingered long enough for the two and a half tribes to move into their land, defeat the enemies that remained, and get their families and flocks settled safely. But we can't help wondering if these Transjordanic tribes made a wise choice. They were outside the land of promise and separated from the rest of the nation. They made their choice only on the basis of personal gain: the land was good for their flocks and herds. Like Lot, they were walking by sight and not by faith (Gen 13:10-11). The tribes did keep their promise, but in spite of that, their location across the Jordan created some problems ([Read Josh 22](#)). (The Bible Exposition)
- B. Half the tribe of Manasseh - That is, (compare [Num 32:39](#); [Jos 17:1](#)) the families of Machir. Moses, when assigning to the pastoral tribes the inheritance which they desired, appropriated to these Manassites especially the district they had already subdued, as a reward for their valour and exploits. Thus the whole of the conquered country was provisionally disposed of, and the forwardness anti valour of the Machirites rewarded. It seems clear that the claims of the Machirites arose simply out of their exploits. (The Bible Exposition)
- C. The word 'build' as used here means to reconstruct or to fortify. The Israelites were very diligent to change any names founded upon pagan deities. Such alterations of ancient names has made it exceedingly difficult to identify certain places mentioned in ancient writings. (Coffman)

NUMBERS 33

IV. Numbers 33-36 : Retrospect and Forecast

Chapter 33 Israel's Route of Wandering

Chapter 34 Canaan's Boundaries

Chapter 35 Cities of the Levites and Cities of Refuge

Chapter 36 Daughters of Zelophehad and Law of Succession for Women

Israel's Journey from Egypt Reviewed

- 1** These are the journeys of the children of Israel, who went out of the land of Egypt by their armies under the hand of Moses and Aaron.
- 2** Now Moses wrote down the starting points of their journeys at the command of the Lord. And these are their journeys according to their starting points:
- 3** They departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the day after the Passover the children of Israel went out with boldness in the sight of all the Egyptians.
- 4** For the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn, whom the Lord had killed among them. Also on their gods the Lord had executed judgments.
- 5** Then the children of Israel moved from Rameses and camped at Succoth.
- 6** They departed from Succoth and camped at Etham, which is on the edge of the wilderness.
- 7** They moved from Etham and turned back to Pi Hahiroth, which is east of Baal Zephon; and they camped near Migdol.
- 8** They departed from before Hahiroth and passed through the midst of the sea into the wilderness, went three days' journey in the Wilderness of Etham, and camped at Marah.
- 9** They moved from Marah and came to Elim. At Elim were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees; so they camped there.
- 10** They moved from Elim and camped by the Red Sea.
- 11** They moved from the Red Sea and camped in the Wilderness of Sin.
- 12** They journeyed from the Wilderness of Sin and camped at Dophkah.
- 13** They departed from Dophkah and camped at Alush.
- 14** They moved from Alush and camped at Rephidim, where there was no water for the people to drink.
- 15** They departed from Rephidim and camped in the Wilderness of Sinai.
- 16** They moved from the Wilderness of Sinai and camped at Kibroth Hattaavah.
- 17** They departed from Kibroth Hattaavah and camped at Hazeroth.
- 18** They departed from Hazeroth and camped at Rithmah.
- 19** They departed from Rithmah and camped at Rimmon Perez.

20 They departed from Rimmon Perez and camped at Libnah.

21 They moved from Libnah and camped at Rissah.

22 They journeyed from Rissah and camped at Kehelathah.

23 They went from Kehelathah and camped at Mount Shepher.

24 They moved from Mount Shepher and camped at Haradah.

25 They moved from Haradah and camped at Makheloth.

26 They moved from Makheloth and camped at Tahath.

27 They departed from Tahath and camped at Terah.

28 They moved from Terah and camped at Mithkah.

29 They went from Mithkah and camped at Hashmonah.

30 They departed from Hashmonah and camped at Moseroth.

31 They departed from Moseroth and camped at Bene Jaakan.

32 They moved from Bene Jaakan and camped at Hor Hagidgad.

33 They went from Hor Hagidgad and camped at Jotbathah.

34 They moved from Jotbathah and camped at Abronah.

35 They departed from Abronah and camped at Ezion Geber.

36 They moved from Ezion Geber and camped in the Wilderness of Zin, which is Kadesh.

37 They moved from Kadesh and camped at Mount Hor, on the boundary of the land of Edom.

38 Then Aaron the priest went up to Mount Hor at 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 Aaron was one hundred and twenty-three years old when he died on Mount Hor.

40 Now the king of Arad, the Canaanite, who dwelt in the South in the land of Canaan, heard of the coming of the children of Israel.

41 So they departed from Mount Hor and camped at Zalmonah.

42 They departed from Zalmonah and camped at Punon.

43 They departed from Punon and camped at Oboth.

44 They departed from Oboth and camped at Ije Abarim, at the border of Moab.

45 They departed from Ijim and camped at Dibon Gad.

46 They moved from Dibon Gad and camped at Almon Diblathaim.

47 They moved from Almon Diblathaim and camped in the mountains of Abarim, before Nebo.

48 They departed from the mountains of Abarim and camped in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, across from Jericho.

49 They camped by the Jordan, from Beth Jesimoth as far as the Abel Acacia Grove in the plains of Moab.

This remarkable chapter details the so-called "stations" of the children of Israel during the approximately forty years that elapsed between their exodus and their entry into Canaan. Practically nothing is known about most of the places mentioned here, although, here and there, one of the names corresponds with the location of events related in Exodus. "Twelve of the places mentioned are mentioned nowhere else in the Bible. Of all the seventeen places listed between [Num 33:19-36](#), not a single one is known or can be pointed out with certainty. there are **EXACTLY FORTY-TWO** of these. It is most likely that it is in this number that we should seek the principal significance of the whole chapter. The very fact that so **LITTLE** is known about most of these places forces the conclusion that God Almighty had some other weighty reason for commanding the great Lawgiver to write these down. Our own conviction is that God does not have any worthless material in his Book (the Bible), and therefore we conclude that some very great significance lies in the very number **FORTY-TWO** itself.

In both the O.T. and the N.T., the grand analogy between the Two Israels of God is an ever-present, recurring phenomenon. Whole sections of the N.T. are based upon it, as in [1 Cor 10](#), and the Book of Hebrews. It is an axiom known to every true preacher of the Word that the wilderness wanderings of Israel are typical of the current Christian dispensation. Their baptism in the Red Sea is typical of Christian baptism. Their passage over the Jordan into Canaan typifies the entry of the Christian into heaven, after death (the Jordan), etc., etc.

Just as Israel was led through **FORTY-TWO** stations to the brink of entry into Canaan, into which promised land they were led by Joshua, a remarkable type of Jesus Christ in name and function; just so, the redemption of all men was accomplished through **FORTY-TWO** generations from Abraham to Jesus Christ as stressed in the very first chapter of the N.T. There can hardly be any doubt whatever that "the forty-two months" of the Apocalypse is an anti-typical reference to these **FORTY-TWO** stations of the wandering Israel. The further such a premise is explored the more compelling is the evidence of its validity.

THE WHOLE CURRENT DISPENSATION OF GOD'S GRACE IS CALLED FORTY-TWO MONTHS

- A. God nourishes his church during her probation (present dispensation) for "a thousand two hundred and three-score days" (exactly forty-two months). (See [Rev12:6](#))
- B. The persecuted church is protected for "time, and times, and half a time" ([Rev12:14](#)). This means 3 1/2 years, that is, forty-two months!
- C. The great scarlet Sea-Beast of [Rev 13](#), one of the three great enemies of God throughout this whole dispensation will continue "forty and two months" (the whole dispensation). [Rev 13:5](#).

- D. God's two witnesses (His Word and the Word-indwelt Church) will prophecy "a thousand two hundred and three score days" (forty-two months ... the whole dispensation). [Rev 11:3](#).
- E. The Holy City (Jerusalem) shall be trodden under foot "forty and two months" ([Rev 11:2](#)). Jesus gave the same prophecy in these words: "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles (nations), until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (identified as this whole dispensation). (Compare [Rev 11:2](#) and [Luk 21:24](#).)
- F. In the era of the "ten horns" (ten kings), during the days of the governmental hatred of "The Most High" and his "Saints," all the time until the eternal judgment is depicted as "a time, and times and half a time." [Dan 7:25](#).
- G. During the final era of the fourth judicial hardening of Adam's race and very near the judgment when evil shall almost totally prevail ... that whole era was mentioned by Daniel thus: "It shall be for a time, times, and a half; when they have made an end of breaking in pieces the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished." ([Dan 12:7](#))

There could hardly be any other source of all these repeated instances of the **FORTY-TWO** months theme (or equivalent) than that found here in the exact number of these **FORTY-TWO** stations of the wilderness wanderings.

Gray noted that there are only two dates available for these journeys. There is the date of the start (given in Exodus), "the 15th day of the first month of the first year; and the date of Aaron's death (at Hor) on the first day of the fifth month of the fortieth year (at the 34th station).

As already suggested, however, it is not in the information that we may garner here and there about any of those ancient places which carries any great significance for believers. It is the number of the stations, the constant protection and blessing of God bestowed upon his people in all kinds of circumstances, and God's unyielding purpose of saving Adam's race through Israel - these are the areas where we find the greatest inspiration of our faith.

Very little is known about what happened to Israel during most of the forty years wandering. Outside of the sabbath-breaker's execution and Korah's rebellion ([Num. 15](#); [Num 16](#)) what is written in this chapter just about sums up the record. What a comment this is on the deeds of men who have already rebelled against God! Nothing whatever that they do is of any consequence whatever! With their rebellion against God that "Lost Generation" terminated utterly their significance upon earth. It is the same today for any man who rejects the service of God! (Coffman)

Instructions for the Conquest of Canaan

50 Now the Lord spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, across from Jericho, saying, **51** "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you have crossed the Jordan into the land of Canaan, **52** then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, destroy all their engraved stones, destroy all their molded images, and demolish all their high places; **53** you shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land and dwell in it, for I have given you the land to possess. **54** And you shall divide the land by lot as an inheritance among your families; to the larger you shall give a larger inheritance, and to the smaller you shall give a smaller inheritance; there everyone's inheritance shall be whatever falls to him by lot. You shall inherit according to the tribes of your fathers.

55 But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall be that those whom you let remain shall be irritants in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall harass you in the land where you dwell.

56 Moreover it shall be that I will do to you as I thought to do to them.' "

This directive effectually ordered the extermination of the Canaanites whom Israel was commissioned to destroy and to possess their land. Men may scream about this if they wish; but it was altogether a just and necessary condition of Israel's achievement of what God intended through them.

"Think of all the innocent people and little babies this condemned to death!" All right, let's think of them. Their culture had become so vile, so reprobate and contrary to God's will, that it was impossible for little children to be reared in such an environment in such a manner as to allow any possibility of their pleasing their Creator! Their whole civilization was out of control and justly consigned to destruction. As for the innocents and little children, Christ himself would take care of their redemption in the times and manner known to himself; and it was a mercy for them (in their depraved environment) to die. Furthermore, another phase of this often overlooked is that the vast majority of Adam's race at that time were approaching a stage of wickedness, if indeed they had not already reached it, in which they deserved the same fate as the antediluvians who were totally removed by the Great Deluge. What a mercy it was, therefore, on the part of God, that he would continue the vast majority of Adam's evil race as they were, but destroy only that portion of it that was necessary to provide a haven for the Chosen Race, through whom the hopes of all mankind were eventually to be delivered in the person of the holy Christ!

The only shameful thing about this commission to destroy the Canaanites was that Israel refused to do it, and in that alone lay their own total failure at last. Why did they not do it?

- (1) The custom of the times allowed captured peoples to be used as slaves. It is not hard to see how Israel reacted to that.
- (2) The lust of Israel was aroused and captured by the allurements of vast numbers of women, many of whom no doubt were persons of great physical beauty and attractiveness.
- (3) There were still remnants of the old pagan superstitions in Israel as revealed in Stephen's valedictory in [Acts 7](#), and, in the case of the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim, those pagan traditions went back to the very roots of their tribes. Rachel herself seems to have been, at least partially, an idolater, as witnessed by her stealing the gods of Laban; and Joseph married the daughter of the Egyptian Priest of On, and it is exceedingly likely that from these pagan roots, there eventually flowered the full paganism of the Northern Israel as denounced by all the minor prophets.
- (4) Added to all of this, the natural revulsion of normal human beings against taking the lives of vast numbers of helpless and defeated peoples must have entered into Israel's utter failure to follow the Divine instructions here given.
- (5) And, in addition to all this, the deployment of two and a half tribes of Israel east of Jordan robbed Israel of sufficient strength to have disposed of this commission quickly and efficiently.

"Demolish all their high places ..." (Num 33:52). Orlinisky gave the meaning of "high places" in this verse as, "cult places." These were sex-oriented shrines erected under any convenient grove of trees or upon any hill-top eminence, and were characterized by the most depraved acts of orgiastic sex and perversion. The shameful immorality was rationalized as the "worship" of the Baalim (the gods of the land), the theory being that the sexual practices in those cultic centers was a form of "procuring the help of the gods in the production of fruitful harvests." Of course, this destruction of that kind of worship was the absolute necessity that underlay God's order to exterminate the Canaanites. The subsequent history of Northern Israel, and later, that of the Southern Israel also, afford an overwhelming demonstration of just how absolutely necessary such an order of extermination really was, and just what a wretched tragedy overwhelmed Israel because they failed to obey it!

Israel was commanded to drive out all of the inhabitants of the land. It was not enough for them to clear off enough land where they could exist. They were to take complete control of it for their God. God would not share this land with any other gods.

We should not leave this chapter without observing that this and the final three chapters of Numbers are actually interim preparations for the crossing of Jordan, although, of course, the actual entry into Canaan will be related only after a number of Moses' final words to the people have been given in the Book of Deuteronomy. (Coffman)

NUMBERS 34

The Appointed Boundaries of Canaan

1 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

2 "Command the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land of Canaan, this is the land that shall fall to you as an inheritance--the land of Canaan to its boundaries.

3 Your **southern** border shall be from the Wilderness of Zin along the border of Edom; then your southern border shall extend eastward to the end of the Salt Sea; **4** your border shall turn from the southern side of the Ascent of Akrabbim, continue to Zin, and be on the south of Kadesh Barnea; then it shall go on to Hazar Addar, and continue to Azmon; **5** the border shall turn from Azmon to the Brook of Egypt, and it shall end at the Sea.

6 'As for the **western** border, you shall have the Great Sea for a border; this shall be your western border.

7 'And this shall be your **northern** border: From the Great Sea you shall mark out your border line to Mount Hor; **8** from Mount Hor you shall mark out your border to the entrance of Hamath; then the direction of the border shall be toward Zedad; **9** the border shall proceed to Ziphron, and it shall end at Hazar Enan. This shall be your northern border.

10 'You shall mark out your **eastern** border from Hazar Enan to Shepham; **11** the border shall go down from Shepham to Riblah on the east side of Ain; the border shall go down and reach to the eastern side of the Sea of Chinnereth; **12** the border shall go down along the Jordan, and it shall end at the Salt Sea. This shall be your land with its surrounding boundaries.' "



- A. This small area of Canaan would have been fully ample for all Israel, if God's people had only stayed together and had driven out the pagan populations. Due to the selfishness of some of the tribes, however, God's plan was thwarted to some extent. The whole land of Canaan was about 150 miles long and about 50 miles wide, but it was an exceedingly productive, fertile area.
- B. The western border required no further description. The Mediterranean Sea was the western border of the Holy Land. Strangely enough, the children of Israel were never able to possess that seacoast. Not even in the glorious reigns of David and Solomon did the land of the Philistine belong to Israel. As we noted in [Num 32](#), the settlement of a very large part of Israel east of Jordan must have proved to be a key factor in that failure. (Coffman)

13 Then Moses commanded the children of Israel, saying: "This is the land which you shall inherit by lot, which the Lord has commanded to give to 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 the half-tribe of Manasseh has received its inheritance.

15 The two tribes and the half-tribe have received their inheritance on this side of the Jordan, across from Jericho eastward, toward the sunrise."

- A. Much of what is said concerning this land is peculiarly emphatic. It is a land that contains a multitude of advantages in its climate, its soil, situation, c. It is bounded on the *south* by a *ridge of mountains*, which separate it from *Arabia*, and screen it from the burning and often pestiferous winds which blow over the desert from that quarter. On the *west* it is bounded by the *Mediterranean Sea* on the *north*, by *Mount Libanus*, which defends it from the cold northern blasts; and on the *east* by the *river Jordan*, and its fertile, well-watered plains. It is described



by God himself as "a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains, and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of olive oil and honey; a land wherein there was no scarcity of bread, and where both iron and copper mines abounded," [Deu 8:7-9](#): a land finely diversified with hills and valleys, and well watered by the rain of heaven, in this respect widely different from Egypt; a land which God cared for, on which his eyes were continually placed from the beginning to the end of the year; watched over by a most merciful Providence; in a word, a land which flowed with milk and honey, and was the most pleasant of all lands; [Deu 11:11-12](#); [Eze 20:6](#). Such was *the land*, and such were the advantages that this most favoured people were called to possess. They were called to possess it *by lot* that each might be satisfied with his possession, as considering it to be appointed to him by the especial providence of God; and its boundaries were ascertained on Divine authority, to prevent all covetousness after the territories of others. (Clarke)

The Leaders Appointed to Divide the Land

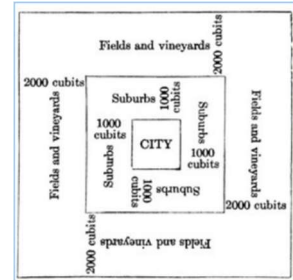
[16](#) And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, [17](#) "These are the names of the men who shall divide the land among you as an inheritance: Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun. [18](#) And you shall take one leader of every tribe to divide the land for the inheritance. [19](#) These are the names of the men: from the tribe of **Judah**, Caleb the son of Jephunneh; [20](#) from the tribe of the children of **Simeon**, Shemuel the son of Ammihud; [21](#) from the tribe of **Benjamin**, Elidad the son of Chislon; [22](#) a leader from the tribe of the children of **Dan**, Bukki the son of Jogli; [23](#) from the sons of Joseph: a leader from the tribe of the children of **Manasseh**, Hanniel the son of Ephod, [24](#) and a leader from the tribe of the children of **Ephraim**, Kemuel the son of Shiphtan; [25](#) a leader from the tribe of the children of **Zebulun**, Elizaphan the son of Parnach; [26](#) a leader from the tribe of the children of **Issachar**, Paltiel the son of Azzan; [27](#) a leader from the tribe of the children of **Asher**, Ahihud the son of Shelomi; [28](#) and a leader from the tribe of the children of **Naphtali**, Pedahel the son of Ammihud." [29](#) These are the ones the Lord commanded to divide the inheritance among the children of Israel in the land of Canaan.

- A. Led by the high priest, Eleazar, and the commanding general of the Israeli armies, Joshua, the twelve men selected, one from each tribe, gave every assurance that the land would be divided fairly and that the tribes would accept their allotments without complaint. Evidently, that is what happened. (Coffman)

NUMBERS 35

Cities for the Levites

1 And the Lord spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho, saying: **2** "Command the children of Israel that they give the Levites cities to dwell in from the inheritance of their possession, and you shall also give the Levites common-land around the cities. **3** They shall have the cities to dwell in; and their common-land shall be for their cattle, for their herds, and for all their animals. **4** The common-land of the cities which you shall give the Levites shall extend from the wall of the city outward a thousand cubits all around. **5** And you shall measure outside the city on the east side two thousand cubits, on the south side two thousand cubits, on the west side two thousand cubits, and on the north side two thousand cubits. The city shall be in the middle. This shall belong to them as common-land for the cities.



- A. The statements in the two verses refer to totally different things - the one to the extent of the suburbs from the walls of the city, the other to the space of 2,000 cubits from their extremity. In point of fact, there was an extent of ground, amounting to 3,000 cubits, measured from the wall of the city. One thousand were most probably occupied with out-houses for the accommodation of shepherds and other servants, with gardens, vineyards, or oliveyards. And these which were portioned out to different families ([1 Chron 6:48-81](#)) might be sold by one Levite to another, but not to any individual of another tribe. The other 2,000 cubits remained a common for the pasturing of cattle ([Lev 25:34](#)) (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)

6 Now among the cities which you will give to the Levites you shall appoint six cities of refuge, to which a manslayer may flee. ([Jos 20:7-8](#)) And to these you shall add forty-two cities. **7** So all the cities you will give to the Levites shall be forty-eight; these you shall give with their common-land. **8** And the cities which you will give shall be from the possession of the children of Israel; from the larger tribe you shall give many, from the smaller you shall give few. Each shall give some of its cities to the Levites, in proportion to the inheritance that each receives."

CITIES OF REFUGE	
WEST OF JORDAN	
KEDESH	in Galilee from the tribe of Naphtali.
SHECHEM	from the tribe of Ephraim.
HEBRON (Kiriath-arba)	from the tribe of Judah.
EAST OF JORDAN	
BEZER	from the tribe of Reuben.
RAMOTH-GILEAD	of the tribe of Gad.
GOLAN	in Bashan from the tribe of Manasseh.

- A. It was left to Joshua actually to appoint and open the cities of refuge and to supervise the distribution of the other 42 cities to the Levites. To be sure, when Joshua did this, he incorporated the Divine instructions here with his order of execution for the project, as in [Jos 20:1-4](#), where it is stated that "Jehovah spake

unto Joshua, saying, Assign you the cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by Moses" [1 Chr 6:48-81](#) (Coffman)

- B. Before the cities of refuge were appointed, the *altar* appears to have been a sanctuary for those who had killed a person unwittingly; see on [Exo 21:13-14](#).
(Clarke)

Cities of Refuge

[9](#) Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, [10](#) "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, [11](#) then you shall appoint cities to be cities of refuge for you, that the manslayer who kills any person accidentally may flee there. [12](#) They shall be cities of refuge for you from the avenger, that the manslayer may not die until he stands before the congregation in judgment.

[13](#) And of the cities which you give, you shall have six cities of refuge. [14](#) You shall appoint three cities on this side of the Jordan, and three cities you shall appoint in the land of Canaan, which will be cities of refuge. [15](#) These six cities shall be for refuge for the children of Israel, for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them, that anyone who kills a person accidentally may flee there.

- A. The conception of a place for persons in jeopardy for manslaughter or other crimes was widely received throughout the East during the times of the exodus. The temple of Diana at Ephesus proclaimed "a sanctuary" for a quarter of a mile in all directions from the temple, with the result that the greatest concentration of violent criminals on earth dwelt in the very shadow of the pagan temple. Joab, it will be remembered, sought sanctuary at the altar of God, but God's people did not honor such "sanctuaries." This institution of the cities of refuge was a far different thing from the heathen sanctuaries where the guilty were protected. These cities of refuge merely protected the refugee from the avenger until his case could be heard before his own congregation, and all turned upon their decision. If they declared him really to have committed unintentional manslaughter, he was confined to the area of the city of refuge until the death of the high priest, and if they declared him guilty of murder, he was given over to the vengeance of the avenger of blood. As Keil said, "These cities of refuge were never intended to save the criminal from any punishment that he deserved, but were simply established for the purpose of securing a just sentence, whereas, the pagan sanctuaries actually answered the purpose of rescuing the criminal from the punishment that he legally deserved." (Coffman)
- B. Among the Arab tribes, who are under the control of no central authority, the practice of blood-revenge subsists in full force to the present day. (Barnes)

16 'But if he strikes him with an iron implement, so that he dies, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. **17** And if he strikes him with a stone in the hand, by which one could die, and he does die, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. **18** Or if he strikes him with a wooden hand weapon, by which one could die, and he does 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; when he meets him, he shall put him to death. **20** If he pushes him out of hatred or, while lying in wait, hurls something at him so that he dies, **21** or in enmity he strikes him with his hand so that he dies, the one who struck him shall surely be put to death. He is a murderer. The avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death when he meets him.

- A. Here we are given a group of situations in which the blood guilt of an offender must be assumed. Note the frequency of the stern words, "The murderer shall surely be put to death!" This is God's law; it was not a new law, but merely a re-affirmation of the Divine order given to Noah and his posterity in [Genesis 9:6](#). Modern man is nowhere at fault quite so much as he is in the casual manner of his lenience with murderers. (Coffman)

22 'However, if he pushes him suddenly without enmity, or throws anything at him without lying in wait, **23** or uses a stone, by which a man could die, throwing it at him without seeing him, so that he dies, while he was not his enemy or seeking his harm, **24** then the congregation shall judge between the manslayer and the avenger of blood according to these judgments. **25** So the congregation shall deliver the manslayer from the hand of the avenger of blood, and the congregation shall return him to the city of refuge where he had fled, and he shall remain there until the death of the high priest who was anointed with the holy oil. **26** But if the manslayer at any time goes outside the limits of the city of refuge where he fled, **27** and the avenger of blood finds him outside the limits of his city of refuge, and the avenger of blood kills the manslayer, he shall not be guilty of blood, **28** because he should have remained in his city of refuge until the death of the high priest. But after the death of the high priest the manslayer may return to the land of his possession.

- A. Under the excitement of a sudden provocation or violent passion, an injury might be inflicted issuing in death; and for a person who had thus undesignedly committed slaughter, the Levitical cities offered the benefit of full protection. Once having reached the nearest-for one or other of them was within a day's journey of all parts of the land-he was secure. But he had to "abide in it." His confinement within its walls was a wise and salutary rule, designed to show the sanctity of human blood in God's sight, as well as to protect the manslayer himself, whose presence and contact in society might have provoked the vindictive passions of deceased's relatives. (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)

B. The atoning death of the Saviour cast its shadow before on the statute-book of the Law and on the annals of Jewish history. The high priest, as the head and representative of the whole chosen family of sacerdotal mediators, as exclusively entrusted with some of the chief priestly functions, as alone privileged to make yearly atonement within the holy of holies, and to gain, from the mysterious Urim and Thummim, special revelations of the will of God, was, preeminently, a type of Christ. And thus the death of each successive high priest presignified that death of Christ by which the captives were to be freed, and the remembrance of transgressions made to cease. (Barnes)

[29](#) 'And these things shall be a statute of judgment to you throughout your generations in all your dwellings. [30](#) Whoever kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death on the testimony of witnesses; but one witness is not sufficient testimony against a person for the death penalty. [31](#) Moreover you shall take no ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death. [32](#) And you shall take no ransom for him who has fled to his city of refuge, that he may return to dwell in the land before the death of the priest. [33](#) So you shall not pollute the land where you are; for blood defiles the land, and no atonement can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it. [34](#) Therefore do not defile the land which you inhabit, in the midst of which I dwell; for I the Lord dwell among the children of Israel.'

A. Murder is such a serious crime that it cannot be atoned for by the payment of a money fine; nor can the man who has unintentionally killed another purchase his release from the city of refuge before the death of the high priest. St. Peter reminds Christians that they were not redeemed with silver or gold but with the precious blood of Christ ([1 Peter 1:18-19](#)). (Dummelow)

NUMBERS 36

Marriage of Female Heirs

1 Now 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 spoke before Moses and before the leaders, the chief fathers of the children of Israel. **2** And they said: "The Lord commanded my lord Moses to give the land as an inheritance by lot to the children of Israel, and my lord was commanded by the Lord to give the inheritance of our brother Zelophehad to his daughters.

- A. Numbers is essentially a diary, in which Moses recorded events as they happened, and the reason this legislation and that regarding the daughters of Zelophehad are recorded in different chapters is that the problems came up on different occasions. The first legislation in [Num 27](#) allowing daughters without brothers to inherit was brought before Moses on one occasion by the daughters of Zelophehad.
- B. "My lord ... my lord ..." There was a vast difference in the respect that this generation of Israelites paid to Moses when compared with the attitude of the generation that came out of Egypt. In all of the Bible, prior to this instance of it, "Only Aaron ever referred to Moses as 'my lord,' and that only because at the moment of his doing so he was under the influence of terror ([Exo 32:22](#); [Num 12:11](#)), and Joshua in [Num 11:28](#) (Coffman)

3 Now if they are married to any of the sons of the other tribes of the children of Israel, then their inheritance will be taken from the inheritance of our fathers, and it will be added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they marry; so it will be taken from the lot of our inheritance. **4** And when the Jubilee of the children of Israel comes, then their inheritance will be added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they marry; so their inheritance will be taken away from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers."

- A. Not even the jubilee could remedy the situation discussed here. The key factor here was stressed by Plaut: "The jubilee ([Lev 25:10ff](#)) applied only to the sale of property, not to inheritance!" (Coffman)

5 Then Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of the Lord, saying: "What the tribe of the sons of Joseph speaks is right.

6 "This is what the Lord commands concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, 'Let them marry whom they think best, but they may marry only within the family of their father's tribe.' **7** So the inheritance of the children of Israel shall not change hands from tribe to tribe, for every one of the children of Israel shall keep the inheritance of

the tribe of his fathers. **8** And every daughter who possesses an inheritance in any tribe of the children of Israel shall be the wife of one of the family of her father's tribe, so that the children of Israel each may possess the inheritance of his fathers. **9** Thus no inheritance shall change hands from one tribe to another, but every tribe of the children of Israel shall keep its own inheritance." **10** Just as the Lord commanded Moses, so did the daughters of Zelophehad; **11** for Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, were married to the sons of their father's brothers. **12** They were married into the families of the children of Manasseh the son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained in the tribe of their father's family.

13 These are the commandments and the judgments which the Lord commanded the children of Israel by the hand of Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, across from Jericho.

- A. The Book of Numbers closes with the summary statement that all the foregoing record was communicated to Moses by the LORD... on the plains of Moab (cf. 22:1). Without question, this statement says that the Book of Numbers is the very Word of God through His servant Moses. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

THUS ends the book of Numbers, containing a series of astonishing providences and events. Scarcely any piece of history in the sacred writings is better calculated to impress the mind of a serious reader with a sense of the goodness and severity of God. In every transaction his holiness and justice appear in closest union with his benevolence and mercy. From such a *Being* what have the wicked not to fear! From such a *Father* and *Friend* what have the upright not to hope! His *justice* requires him to punish iniquity, but his *mercy* inclines him to pardon all who truly repent and believe in the Son of his love.

The journeyings of this people, from the time they left Egypt, exhibit a series of *providential wonders*. Every *where*, and in every *circumstance*, God appears: and yet there is no *circumstance* or *occasion* that does not justify those signal displays of his GRACE and his JUSTICE. The genuine history of God's providence must be sought for in this book alone and as every *occurrence* happened as an *example*, we have authority to conclude that in every case where his own glory and the salvation of man are interested, he will interfere and give the fullest proofs that he is the *same to-day* that he was *yesterday*, and will continue unchangeable for *ever* and *ever*. Reader, are these matters *ensamples to thee*? Art *thou*, like the Israelites, come into the plains of Moab, on the very verge of the promised land? Jordan alone separates thee from the promised inheritance. O, watch and pray, that thou come not short of the glory of God. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is *death*; see then that the sting of death, which is *sin*, be extracted from thy soul, that, being justified by Christ's blood, thou mayest be made an heir according to the hope of an eternal life. Amen, amen.

"I will bring you into the WILDERNESS of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face, like as I pleaded with your fathers in the WILDERNESS of the land of Egypt. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and bring you into the bond of the covenant," [Eze 20:35-37](#).

"He (Christ) is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance," [Heb 9:15](#). (Clarke)

And now may the Lord help you to assimilate that which we have studied and may He bring to remembrance those things which He has commanded. And may you be enriched in the knowledge of God and His will and His plan for your life. May the Lord be with you to bless you, to guide you, and may you be kept by that power of God through faith and trust in Him, in Jesus' name. " (Smith)