



THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

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INTRODUCTION

The five books of Moses were collectively called the Pentateuch, a word of Greek origin meaning ‘the five-fold book.’ The Jews called them the Torah, i.e., ‘the law.’ It’s probable that the division of the Torah into five books proceeded from the Greek translators of the Old Testament.

The names by which these several books are generally known are Greek. Genesis through to Deuteronomy is known as the Torah, which means Law. In Greek, the word Pentateuch is ‘Pente’, which means five and ‘uch’, which means Law.

All the events recorded in the Book of Numbers took place around eleven months after the Israelites arrived at the foot of Mount Sinai. The book itself is appropriately named Numbers because within it, there is a lot of counting.

There are three censuses recorded in the Pentateuch, the first one is recorded when Israel was at Mount Sinai, and a census was taken to organise the Israelite families in order to establish a regular support for the Levitical priesthood, Exodus 30:11-16.

The second census was taken before departing from Mount Sinai in order to count the military men of the nation, Numbers 1-4. And finally, the third census was taken just before Israel entered Canaan, Numbers 26.

AUTHOR

It is generally accepted that Moses is the author of the book, and when we read through the book, we find the words, ‘the Lord spoke to Moses’ no less than eighty times.

Throughout the book, we find Moses taking on several roles within Israel, he is the lawgiver, the counsellor, the provider, the intercessor, the peacemaker, the religious and civil leader, and the servant of God on behalf of Israel.

DATE

We know the book covers a period of around thirty-nine years, which started with Israel leaving Mount Sinai, to the time they were getting ready to enter Canaan.

If the book was written shortly before Israel entered Canaan, and if we accept the date of the exodus from Egypt to be around 1445 B.C., then Numbers was probably written sometime around 1,400 B.C.

OUTLINE

Israel gets ready for the journey to Canaan, Numbers 1:1-10:10

The Israelites start complaining about everything, Miriam and Aaron dispute with Moses, and Israel refuse to listen to Joshua and Caleb and refuse to enter the Promised Land, Numbers 10:11-14:45

Israel wanders in the desert for forty years as a punishment for not trusting God, Numbers 15:1-21:35

As Israel approaches Canaan again, a king tries to hire Balaam to put a curse on Israel. Balaam is able only to bless the Israelites, not curse them, Numbers 22:1-26:1

Moses takes another census of the people, Moses commissions Joshua to succeed him, and God gives instructions on offerings and feasts, Numbers 26:1-30:16
The Israelites take vengeance on the Midianites, Numbers 31:1-36:13

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

‘The LORD spoke to Moses in the tent of meeting in the Desert of Sinai on the first day of the second month of the second year after the Israelites came out of Egypt. He said: “Take a census of the whole Israelite community by their clans and families, listing every man by name, one by one. You and Aaron are to count according to their divisions all the men in Israel who are twenty years old or more and able to serve in the army.’ Numbers 1:1-3

THE CENSUS

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A month had passed since the setting up of the tabernacle, Exodus 40:2 / Exodus 40:17, and the Sinaitic legislation was now complete, Leviticus 27:34.’

The text begins with the words, ‘the LORD spoke to Moses’, Numbers 1:1, which occurs around eighty through the book. He spoke to Moses at the tent of meeting, Numbers 1:1, that is, the tabernacle and told him to take a census of every male, that is, men who were able to fight in the army, Numbers 1:2-3.

Notice that these men had to be twenty years of age or older, Numbers 1:3. This could be significant, because no one over this age actually entered the Promised Land, because if we remember, they refused to enter Canaan when God commanded them to, except Joshua and Caleb, Numbers 14:29-30 / Numbers 32:11.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘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 in war.’

‘One man from each tribe, each of them the head of his family, is to help you. These are the names of the men who are to assist you: from Reuben, Elizur son of Shedeur; from Simeon, Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai; from Judah, Nahshon son of Amminadab; from Issachar, Nethanel son of Zuar; from Zebulun, Eliab son of Helon; from the sons of Joseph: from Ephraim, Elishama son of Ammihud; from Manasseh, Gamaliel son of Pedahzur; from Benjamin, Abidan son of Gideon; from Dan, Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai; from Asher, Pagiel son of Okran; from Gad, Eliasaph son of Deuel; from Naphtali, Ahira son of Enan.” These were the men appointed from the community, the leaders of their ancestral tribes. They were the heads of the clans of Israel. Moses and Aaron took these men whose names had been specified, and they called the whole community together on the first day of the second month. The people registered their ancestry by their clans and families, and the men twenty years old or more were listed by name, one by one, as the LORD commanded Moses. And so he counted them in the Desert of Sinai.’ Numbers 1:4-19

The counting was done according to the heads of each tribe, family, and household of Israel, Numbers 1:4. The reason for counting the families was probably for the benefit of future generations.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The princes of the tribes, selected Numbers 1:4, under divine direction, were for the most part the same persons as those chosen a few months previously at the counsel of Jethro, Exodus 18:21-26. Nahshon, prince of Judah, is mentioned in Exodus 6:23, and Elishama, in 1 Chronicles 7:26-27. The peers of men like these were no doubt entitled, among their fellows, to the epithet ‘renowned,’ Numbers 1:16.’

Nahshon son of Amminadab, was the head of Judah, Numbers 1:7 / Matthew 1:4. Eliasaph, the son of Deuel, Numbers 1:14 is called Reuel, Numbers 2:14 / Numbers 10:20.

The heads of each tribe would stand with Moses and represent their own tribe, Numbers 1:16. We’re not told how they went about choosing a head for each tribe, but it’s certainly possible they chose the individual from among themselves.

‘From the descendants of Reuben, the firstborn son of Israel: All the men twenty years old or more who were able to serve in the army were listed by name, one by one, according to the records of their clans and families. The number from the tribe of Reuben was 46,500. From the descendants of Simeon: All the men twenty years old or more who were able to serve in the army were counted and listed by name, one by one, according to the records of their clans and families. The number from the tribe of Simeon was 59,300. From the descendants of Gad: All the men twenty years old or more who were able to serve in the army were listed by name, according to the records of their clans and families. The number from the tribe of Gad was 45,650. From the descendants of Judah: All the men twenty years old or more who were able to serve in the army were listed by name, according to the records of their clans and families. The number from the tribe of Judah was 74,600. From the descendants of Issachar: All the men twenty years old or more who were able to serve in the army were listed by name, according to the records of their clans and families. The number from the tribe of Issachar was 54,400. From the descendants of Zebulun: All the men twenty years old or more who were able to serve in the army were listed by name, according to the records of their clans and families. The number from the tribe of Zebulun was 57,400. From the sons of Joseph: From the descendants of Ephraim: All the men twenty years old or more who were able to serve in the army were listed by name, according to the records of their clans and families. The number from the tribe of Ephraim was 40,500. From the descendants of Manasseh: All the men twenty years old or more who were able to serve in the army were listed by name, according to the records of their clans and families. The number from the tribe of Manasseh was 32,200. From the descendants of Benjamin: All the men twenty years old or more who were able to serve in the army were listed by name, according to the records of their clans and families. The number from the tribe of Benjamin was 35,400. From the descendants of Dan: All the men twenty years old or more who were able to serve in the army were listed by name, according to the records of their clans and families. The number from the tribe of Dan was 62,700. From the descendants of Asher: All the men twenty years old or more who were able to serve in the army were listed by name, according to the records of their clans and families. The number from the tribe of Asher was 41,500. From the descendants of Naphtali: All the men twenty years old or more who were able to serve in the army were listed by name, according to the records of their clans and families. The number from the tribe of Naphtali was 53,400. These were the men counted by Moses and Aaron and the twelve leaders of Israel, each one representing his family. All the Israelites twenty years old or more who were able to serve in Israel’s army were counted according to their families. The total number was 603,550.’

Numbers 1:20-46

Here we read that only those who were twenty years old and older were to be chosen, Numbers 1:20 / Numbers 1:3 / Numbers 1:18 / Numbers 1:20 / Numbers 1:22 / Numbers 1:24 / Numbers 1:26 / Numbers 1:28 / Numbers 1:30 / Numbers 1:32 / Numbers 1:34 / Numbers 1:36 / Numbers 1:38 / Numbers 1:40 / Numbers 1:42 / Numbers 1:45.

Some have noted that there are twelve tribes mentioned, but not Levi. However, when we count Jacob’s son Joseph as two, that is, Ephraim and Manasseh, Numbers 1:32-33 / Numbers 1:10 / Joshua 14:4, then we have twelve. Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Ephraim, as he was blessed beyond his eldest brother Manasseh, Genesis 48:20, so here he is increased by thousands more than Manasseh, and more than the whole tribe of Benjamin, and his blessing continued above his brother, Deuteronomy 33:17. And thus the prophecy, Genesis 48:19, was fulfilled: His younger brother (Ephraim) shall be greater than he, (Manasseh.).’

Those who are good at maths will notice that there were 603,550 men of war chosen, Numbers 1:46.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘What an astonishing increase from seventy souls that went down into Egypt, Genesis 46:27, about 215 years before, where latterly they had endured the greatest hardships! But God’s promise cannot fail, Genesis 16:5, and who can resist his will, and bring to nought his counsel?’

When a later census is taken, Numbers 26, this number falls to 601,730.

‘The ancestral tribe of the Levites, however, was not counted along with the others. The LORD had said to Moses: “You must not count the tribe of Levi or include them in the census of the other Israelites. Instead, appoint the Levites to be in charge of the tabernacle of the covenant law—over all its furnishings and everything belonging to it. They are to carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings; they are to take care of it and encamp around it. Whenever the tabernacle is to move, the Levites are to take it down, and whenever the tabernacle is to be set up, the Levites shall do it. Anyone else who approaches it is to be put to death. The Israelites are to set up their tents by divisions, each of them in their own camp under their standard. The Levites, however, are to set up their tents around the tabernacle of the covenant law so that my wrath will not fall on the Israelite community. The Levites are to be responsible for the care of the tabernacle of the covenant law.” The Israelites did all this just as the LORD commanded Moses.’ Numbers 1:47-54

Earlier, we noted that Levi wasn’t counted among the twelve tribes, but here they are mentioned, but weren’t to be counted among the fighting men, Numbers 1:47-49.

This is because they were to be totally dedicated to service within the tabernacle, and they were to offer the services on behalf of the people, Numbers 1:50-54. God Himself would be their inheritance, and they wouldn’t inherit land in Canaan, Numbers 3:1-4:49.

The Levites were to be in charge of the tabernacle of the covenant law, over all its furnishings and everything belonging to it, Numbers 1:50. They were to carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings, and they were to take care of it and encamp around it, Numbers 1:50.

Whenever the tabernacle is to move, the Levites are to take it down, and whenever the tabernacle is to be set up, the Levites are responsible for doing this, Numbers 1:51. Notice the warning: if anyone else approaches the tabernacle, they are to be put to death, Numbers 1:51.

The Israelites are to set up their tents by divisions, each of them in their own camp under their standard, Numbers 1:52. However, the Levites are to set up their tents around the tabernacle so that God’s wrath doesn’t fall on the Israelite community, Numbers 1:53. The Israelites did all this just as the LORD commanded Moses, Numbers 1:54. Spencer, in his commentary, says the following.

TRIBE	1ST CENSUS	2ND CENSUS
Ruben	48,500	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	TOTAL: 601,730

‘Numbers 1:49-53 clearly outlines the requirements for the militaristic protection of the tabernacle by the Levites.’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning the census.

‘As already noted, 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.

Counting Manasseh and Ephraim together as the posterity of Joseph, it is evident that the families of these two patriarchs predominate in the makeup of Israel. Also, the surprising losses of Simeon during the wilderness

journeys are compensated by substantial increases in the tribes of Manasseh, Issachar, Benjamin, and Asher.’

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION

‘The LORD said to Moses and Aaron: “The Israelites are to camp around the tent of meeting some distance from it, each of them under their standard and holding the banners of their family.” On the east, toward the sunrise, the divisions of the camp of Judah are to encamp under their standard. The leader of the people of Judah is Nahshon, son of Amminadab. His division numbers 74,600. The tribe of Issachar will camp next to them. The leader of the people of Issachar is Nethanel, son of Zuar. His division numbers 54,400. The tribe of Zebulun will be next. The leader of the people of Zebulun is Eliab, son of Helon. His division numbers 57,400. All the men assigned to the camp of Judah, according to their divisions, number 186,400. They will set out first. On the south will be the divisions of the camp of Reuben under their standard. The leader of the people of Reuben is Elizur, son of Shedeur. His division numbers 46,500. The tribe of Simeon will camp next to them. The leader of the people of Simeon is Shelumiel, son of Zurishaddai. His division numbers 59,300. The tribe of Gad will be next. The leader of the people of Gad is Eliasaph, son of Deuel. His division numbers 45,650. All the men assigned to the camp of Reuben, according to their divisions, number 151,450. They will set out second. Then the tent of meeting and the camp of the Levites will set out in the middle of the camps. They will set out in the same order as they encamp, each in their own place under their standard. On the west will be the divisions of the camp of Ephraim under their standard. The leader of the people of Ephraim is Elishama, son of Ammihud. His division numbers 40,500. The tribe of Manasseh will be next to them. The leader of the people of Manasseh is Gamaliel, son of Pedahzur. His division numbers 32,200. The tribe of Benjamin will be next. The leader of the people of Benjamin is Abidan, son of Gideoni. His division numbers 35,400. All the men assigned to the camp of Ephraim, according to their divisions, number 108,100. They will set out third. On the north will be the divisions of the camp of Dan under their standard. The leader of the people of Dan is Ahiezer, son of Ammishaddai. His division numbers 62,700. The tribe of Asher will camp next to them. The leader of the people of Asher is Pagiel, son of Okran. His division numbers 41,500. The tribe of Naphtali will be next. The leader of the people of Naphtali is Ahira, son of Enan. His division numbers 53,400. All the men assigned to the camp of Dan number 157,600. They will set out last, under their standards. These are the Israelites, counted according to their families. All the men in the camps, by their divisions, number 603,550. The Levites, however, were not counted along with the other Israelites, as the LORD commanded Moses. So the Israelites did everything the LORD commanded Moses; that is the way they encamped under their standards, and that is the way they set out, each of them with their clan and family.’ Numbers 2:1-34

THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE TRIBAL CAMPS

This chapter describes how the tribes of Israel were organised in reference to the setting up and the movement of the tabernacle. Notice the word ‘standard’ is used throughout this chapter, [Numbers 2:2-3](#) / [Numbers 2:10](#) / [Numbers 2:17-18](#) / [Numbers 2:25](#) / [Numbers 2:31](#) / [Numbers 2:34](#). This probably refers to a flag or banner of some sort.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The ‘standard’ marked the division, or camp, [Numbers 1:9](#) / [Numbers 1:16](#) / [Numbers 1:24](#) / [Numbers 1:31](#), the ‘ensign’ the family. There would thus be four ‘standards’ only, one for each ‘camp’ of three tribes. The ‘standard’ was probably a solid figure or emblem mounted on a pole, such as the Egyptians used. Tradition appropriates the four cherubic forms, [Ezekiel 1:5-12](#) / [Revelation 4:7-8](#), the lion, man, ox, and eagle, to the camps of Judah, Reuben, Ephraim, and Dan respectively; and this, as to the first, has a certain support from [Genesis 49:9](#), compare [Revelation 5:5](#), and as to the third, from [Deuteronomy 33:17](#).’

Here is a diagram of what this setup would look like.

Some commentators suggest that the name Deuel is Reuel, [Numbers 2:14](#) / [Numbers 1:14](#) / [Numbers 10:20](#).

Noth, in his commentary, says the following.



‘From the position of Numbers 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.’

The area of the camp might be around three-square miles, Numbers 2:3-32.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Such was the ideal form of the encampment in the wilderness, a form reproduced in the square court with which the temple was eventually surrounded, and in the vision of the heavenly city as seen by Ezekiel, Ezekiel 48:20, and by John, Revelation 21:16 / Revelation 20:9.

Thus, the camp of God’s earthly people was divinely ordered so as to set forth the completeness of His Church, and to illustrate by its whole arrangement, which was determined by the tabernacle in the centre, both the dependence of all on God and the access which all enjoyed to God.’

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

‘This is the account of the family of Aaron and Moses at the time the LORD spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai. The names of the sons of Aaron were Nadab, the firstborn and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. Those were the names of Aaron’s sons, the anointed priests, who were ordained to serve as priests. Nadab and Abihu, however, died before the LORD when they made an offering with unauthorised fire before him in the Desert of Sinai. They had no sons, so Eleazar and Ithamar served as priests during the lifetime of their father Aaron.’ Numbers 3:1-4

THE LEVITES

This chapter begins by reminding us that God spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai and that the sons of Aaron, who were Moses’ brother, were specifically anointed and ordained to the Lord as the high priests. From Aaron, priests were to come to minister the services of the tabernacle, Numbers 3:1-3.

Notice that Nadab and Abihu, two sons of Aaron, sinned against the Lord, and as a result, they were struck dead, Numbers 3:4 / Leviticus 10:1-2. It appears that Eleazar and Ithamar inherited the priesthood and passed it down to their sons after them, Numbers 3:4 / Exodus 6:23 / Exodus 30:30.

‘The LORD said to Moses, “Bring the tribe of Levi and present them to Aaron the priest to assist him. They are to perform duties for him and for the whole community at the tent of meeting by doing the work of the tabernacle. They are to take care of all the furnishings of the tent of meeting, fulfilling the obligations of the Israelites by doing the work of the tabernacle. Give the Levites to Aaron and his sons; they are the Israelites who are to be given wholly to him. Appoint Aaron and his sons to serve as priests; anyone else who approaches the sanctuary is to be put to death.” The LORD also said to Moses, “I have taken the Levites from among the Israelites in place of the first male offspring of every Israelite woman. The Levites are mine, for all the firstborn are mine. When I struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, I set apart for myself every firstborn in Israel, whether human or animal. They are to be mine. I am the LORD.” Numbers 3:5-13

Here we read that the sons of Levi helped in their duties as priests with the sons of Aaron, Judges 17:5 / Judges 17:10 / Judges 17:13. It’s at this point in time that the tribe of Levi was separated from the other tribes of Israel so that they can focus on ministering to the spiritual needs of the nation, Numbers 3:5-7 / Numbers 8:11.

They are to take care of all the furnishings of the tent of meeting, fulfilling the obligations of the Israelites by doing the work of the tabernacle, Numbers 3:8. The Levites are to be given to Aaron and his sons, and they are to be given wholly to him, Numbers 3:9.

Notice that if anyone else approached the sanctuary, they were to be put to death, Numbers 3:10 / Numbers 3:38. This tells us that no one or anything unclean was allowed to do the tasks which were given specifically only to the Levites. God says the Levites are His, all the firstborn are His; in other words, the firstborn belonged to God, Leviticus 3:11-13.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘God selected the Levites and their cattle in place of the firstborn. God bestowed this privilege on the Levites because they stood with God when the rest of the nation apostatised by worshipping the golden calf, Exodus 32:26-29.’

God had consecrated the firstborn of Israel at the time of the exodus from Egypt, Exodus 13:2 / Exodus 13:11-12.

God didn’t want human sacrifice, so He took the tribe of Levi as Israel’s firstborn. Instead of taking all the firstborn of Israel, He took only the sons of Levi.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There is important symbolism in this. ‘As representatives of the hallowed first-born, Exodus 22:29-30 / Exodus 34:19-20, the Levites picture the saints composing ‘the church of the first-born, written (registered) in heaven,’ Hebrews 12:23, having no earthly inheritance, but a heavenly place and service.’

‘The LORD said to Moses in the Desert of Sinai, “Count the Levites by their families and clans. Count every male a month old or more.” So Moses counted them, as he was commanded by the word of the LORD. These were the names of the sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath and Merari. These were the names of the Gershonite clans: Libni and Shimei. The Kohathite clans: Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel. The Merarite clans: Mahli and Mushi. These were the Levite clans, according to their families. To Gershon belonged the clans of the Libnites and Shimeites; these were the Gershonite clans. The number of all the males a month old or more who were counted was 7,500. The Gershonite clans were to camp on the west, behind the tabernacle. The leader of the families of the Gershonites was Eliasaph, son of Lael. At the tent of meeting, the Gershonites were responsible for the care of the tabernacle and tent, its coverings, the curtain at the entrance to the tent of meeting, the curtains of the courtyard, the curtain at the entrance to the courtyard surrounding the tabernacle and altar, and the ropes—and everything related to their use. To Kohath belonged the clans of the Amramites, Izharites, Hebronites and Uzzielites; these were the Kohathite clans. The number of all the males a month old or more was 8,600. The Kohathites were responsible for the care of the sanctuary. The Kohathite clans were to camp on the south side of the tabernacle. The leader of the families of the Kohathite clans was Elizaphan, son of Uzziel. They were responsible for the care of the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, the articles of the sanctuary used in ministering, the curtain, and everything related to their use. The chief leader of the Levites was Eleazar, son of Aaron, the priest. He was appointed over those who were responsible for the care of the sanctuary. To Merari belonged the clans of the Mahlites and the Mushites; these were the Merarite clans.

The number of all the males a month old or more who were counted was 6,200. The leader of the families of the Merarite clans was Zuriel, son of Abihail; they were to camp on the north side of the tabernacle. The Merarites were appointed to take care of the frames of the tabernacle, its crossbars, posts, bases, all its equipment, and everything related to their use, as well as the posts of the surrounding courtyard with their bases, tent pegs and ropes. Moses and Aaron and his sons were to camp to the east of the tabernacle, toward the sunrise, in front of the tent of meeting. They were responsible for the care of the sanctuary on behalf of the Israelites. Anyone else who approached the sanctuary was to be put to death. The total number of Levites counted at the LORD’s command by Moses and Aaron according to their clans, including every male a month old or more, was 22,000.’ Numbers 3:14-39

In the Desert of Sinai, Moses is told to count the Levites by their families and clans, Numbers 3:14. We read that the census included counting all the male children who were over one month old, Numbers 3:15-16.

It also included counting the children between the ages of thirty and fifty. The total number of males between thirty and fifty was 8,580, Numbers 4:48. Those between thirty and fifty would care for the tabernacle under the supervision of the sons of Aaron.

They were to be grouped by the families, with the main grouping according to Levi's three sons, Gershon, Kohath, and Merari, [Numbers 3:17](#) / [Genesis 46:11](#). The counting included the Gershonites, Kohathites, Merarites, with Moses and Aaron.

Gill, in his commentary, says the following concerning Libni and Shimei, the sons of Gershon, [Numbers 3:18](#). 'Who are elsewhere mentioned as his sons, [Exodus 6:17](#), and from hence were the families of the Libnites and Shemites, as in [Numbers 3:21](#).'

Kohath was the second son of Levi, [Numbers 3:19](#).

Gill, in his commentary, says the following concerning Amram, and Izechar, Hebron, and Uzziel, the sons of Kohath, [Numbers 3:19](#).

'So in [Exodus 6:18](#), and from whom were named the family of the Amramites, to which Moses and Aaron belonged, and the families of the Izecharites, Hebronites, and Uzzielites, as they are called, [Numbers 3:27](#).'

Merari was the third son of Levi, [Numbers 3:20](#).

Gill, in his commentary, says the following concerning Mahli and Mushi, the sons of Merari, [Numbers 3:20](#).

'The same as in [Exodus 6:19](#), from whom were denominated the families of the Mahlites and Mushites, who, as the preceding families, were numbered at this time.'

Gershon was the first son of Levi, [Numbers 3:21](#). The Gershonites were to camp westward to the tabernacle, which is in between Judah and the tabernacle itself, [Numbers 3:21-23](#).

Their job was to take care of the skins that covered the tabernacle itself, [Numbers 3:24-26](#) / [Exodus 26:14](#) / [Exodus 26:1](#) / [Exodus 26:7](#) / [Exodus 26:36](#) / [Exodus 27:9](#) / [Exodus 27:16](#).

Kohath was probably a cousin of Moses, [Numbers 3:27](#). They served in taking care of the ark and ceremonial utensils, and they were responsible for the transportation of the ark and ceremonial utensils, [Numbers 3:28-32](#) / [Numbers 4:32](#).

Gill, in his commentary, says the following concerning Elizaphan, [Numbers 3:30](#).

'The same man, who, with his brother Mishael, carried Nadab and Abihu out of the camp, and buried them, [Leviticus 10:4](#), he descended from the last and youngest of the families of the Kohathites; and some think this was one reason at least of Korah's dissatisfaction, and of his entering into a conspiracy against Moses and Aaron, because one of a younger family of his house was preferred to this dignity before him.'

The family of Merari were to camp northward to the tabernacle, [Numbers 3:33-35](#), in between Dan and the tabernacle itself. Their job involved taking care of the structural aspects of the tabernacle, that is, the pillars, the boards, and so forth, [Numbers 3:36-37](#) / [Exodus 26:26](#) / [Exodus 26:32](#) / [Exodus 26:19](#) / [Exodus 27:9](#) / [Exodus 27:19](#).

The total number of males one month and older was 22,000, [Numbers 3:39](#). The total number that is given in [Numbers 3:39](#) doesn't include an additional three hundred.

The three hundred were possibly the firstborn of the Levites, and so, didn't need to be counted with the total number since they were already consecrated to the Lord. I'm sure those of you who are good at maths would have noticed that the numbers don't add up.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'A number on which the commutation with the firstborn of the twelve tribes depends, [Numbers 3:43-46](#). The actual total of the male Levites is 22,300, [Numbers 3:22](#) / [Numbers 3:28](#) / [Numbers 3:34](#), and the extra 300 are considered by some to represent those who, being first-born themselves in the tribe of Levi, could not be available to redeem the first-born in other tribes.'

Wenham, in his commentary, says the following.

'The total of 22,000 Levites given in [Numbers 3:39](#) does not tally with the totals of the individual clans given in [Numbers 3:22](#) / [Numbers 3:28](#) / [Numbers 3:34](#), which come to 22,300. The discrepancy is most easily explained as

textual corruption in Numbers 3:28. The number of Kohathites may originally have been 8,300. 3, Hebrew ‘sls’, could quite easily have been corrupted into 6, ‘ss’.

Moses, Aaron, and his sons were to camp to the east of the tabernacle, Numbers 3:38. They were responsible for the care of the sanctuary on behalf of the Israelites, Numbers 3:38. Anyone else who approached the sanctuary was to be put to death, Numbers 3:38 / Numbers 3:10.

‘The LORD said to Moses, “Count all the firstborn Israelite males who are a month old or more and make a list of their names. Take the Levites for me in place of all the firstborn of the Israelites, and the livestock of the Levites in place of all the firstborn of the livestock of the Israelites. I am the LORD.” So Moses counted all the firstborn of the Israelites, as the LORD commanded him. The total number of firstborn males a month old or more, listed by name, was 22,273. The LORD also said to Moses, “Take the Levites in place of all the firstborn of Israel, and the livestock of the Levites in place of their livestock. The Levites are to be mine. I am the LORD. To redeem the 273 firstborn Israelites who exceed the number of the Levites, collect five shekels for each one, according to the sanctuary shekel, which weighs twenty gerahs. Give the money for the redemption of the additional Israelites to Aaron and his sons.” So Moses collected the redemption money from those who exceeded the number redeemed by the Levites. From the firstborn of the Israelites, he collected silver weighing 1,365 shekels, according to the sanctuary shekel. Moses gave the redemption money to Aaron and his sons, as he was commanded by the word of the LORD.’ Numbers 3:40-51

Moses is to count all the firstborn Israelite males who are a month old or more and make a list of their names, Numbers 3:40. He is to take the Levites for God in place of all the firstborn of the Israelites, and the livestock of the Levites in place of all the firstborn of the livestock of the Israelites, Numbers 3:41.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘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 Numbers 18:15-17, had to be sacrificed and not redeemed. Obviously, this was a special case not subject to normal requirements.’

Remember, there were 22,273 firstborn sons in Israel, Numbers 3:42-43, and there were only 22,000 Levite males, Leviticus 3:39, so we have a difference of 273 between the final total of the firstborn and the total of the tribe of Levi.

To make up the difference, there was a plan of redemption. Instead of the firstborn of all the nation being given for service to the Lord, an offering of five shekels was given for each one, Numbers 3:44-48 / Numbers 18:16 / 1 Peter 1:18-19.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The number of the first-born, and that of the Levites, came near to each other. Known unto God are all his works beforehand; there is an exact proportion between them, and so it will appear when they are compared together. The small number of first-born, over and above the number of the Levites, were to be redeemed, and the redemption money given to Aaron.’

Moses collected the redemption money from those who exceeded the number redeemed by the Levites and from the firstborn of the Israelites. He collected silver weighing 1,365 shekels, according to the sanctuary shekel, Numbers 3:49-50 / Numbers 18:16. Moses then gave the redemption money to Aaron and his sons, as he was commanded, Numbers 3:51.

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION

‘The LORD said to Moses and Aaron: “Take a census of the Kohathite branch of the Levites by their clans and families. Count all the men from thirty to fifty years of age who come to serve in the work at the tent of meeting. “This is the work of the Kohathites at the tent of meeting: the care of the most holy things. When the camp is to move, Aaron and his sons are to go in and take down the shielding curtain and put it over the ark of the covenant law. Then they are to cover the curtain with a durable leather, spread a cloth of solid blue over that and put the poles in place. “Over the table of the Presence, they are to spread a blue cloth and put on it the plates, dishes and bowls, and the jars for drink offerings; the bread that is continually there is to remain on it. They are to spread a scarlet cloth over them, cover that with the durable leather and put the poles in place. “They are to take a blue cloth and cover the lampstand that is for light, together with its lamps, its wick trimmers, and trays, and all its jars for the olive oil used to supply it. Then they are to wrap it and all its accessories in a covering of the durable leather and put it on a carrying frame. “Over the gold altar, they are to spread a blue cloth and cover that with the durable leather and put the poles in place. “They are to take all the articles used for ministering in the sanctuary, wrap them in a blue cloth, cover that with the durable leather, and put them on a carrying frame. “They are to remove the ashes from the bronze altar and spread a purple cloth over it. Then they are to place on it all the utensils used for ministering at the altar, including the firepans, meat forks, shovels, and sprinkling bowls. Over it, they are to spread a covering of the durable leather and put the poles in place. “After Aaron and his sons have finished covering the holy furnishings and all the holy articles, and when the camp is ready to move, only then are the Kohathites to come and do the carrying. But they must not touch the holy things, or they will die. The Kohathites are to carry those things that are in the tent of meeting. “Eleazar son of Aaron, the priest, is to have charge of the oil for the light, the fragrant incense, the regular grain offering and the anointing oil. He is to be in charge of the entire tabernacle and everything in it, including its holy furnishings and articles.” The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “See that the Kohathite tribal clans are not destroyed from among the Levites. So that they may live and not die when they come near the most holy things, do this for them: Aaron and his sons are to go into the sanctuary and assign to each man his work and what he is to carry. But the Kohathites must not go in to look at the holy things, even for a moment, or they will die.” Numbers 4:1-20

THE KOHATHITES

Moses and Aaron are to take a census of the Kohathite branch of the Levites by their clans and families, Numbers 4:1-2. They are to count all the men from thirty to fifty years of age who come to serve in the work at the tent of meeting, Numbers 4:3 / Numbers 4:23 / Numbers 4:30. Notice the age range was those who were thirty to fifty years of age.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This minimal age of thirty was reduced to twenty-five in Numbers 8:23-26, probably for the purpose of allowing a five-year apprenticeship. To question the accuracy of this account on the basis of 1 Chronicles 23:24-27, where the age was reduced to twenty, is unacceptable. The Jews of the whole temple era departed in many particulars from the Word of God.’

The sons of Kohath, that is, the Kohathites, as well as the Gershonites and Merarites, were given specific duties in reference to the tabernacle, Numbers 4:4.

The Kohathites had the job of taking care of the utensils of worship, that is, the ark of the covenant, the table of showbread, the candlestick, and the golden altar, together with the furniture inside, Numbers 4:5-14.

The third and external covering of the ark only was to be solid blue, Numbers 4:6-7 / Numbers 4:9 / Numbers 4:1-12 / Exodus 25:4. The table of showbread had an outer wrapping of scarlet, Numbers 4:8, and the altar was to be covered with a purple cloth, Numbers 4:13.

The poles were never taken out of the golden rings by which the ark was to be carried, Exodus 25:14-15, but would need adjustment, Numbers 4:6 / Numbers 4:8 / Numbers 4:11 / Numbers 4:14.

The Kohathites were to operate under the direction of Eleazar, the priest, [Numbers 4:16](#) / [Numbers 4:28](#) / [Numbers 4:33](#) / [Numbers 3:32](#). Eleazar was the older of the two surviving sons of Aaron, and the elder of the two other families by Ithamar.

Since they were under more strict regulations than the Gershonites and Merarites, they had a greater responsibility in their service to the tabernacle, [Numbers 4:16](#).

Moses and Aaron are to ensure that the Kohathite tribal clans are not destroyed from among the Levites, [Numbers 4:18](#), in order that they may live and not die when they come near the most holy things, [Numbers 4:19](#).

Aaron and his sons are to go into the sanctuary and assign to each man his work and what he is to carry, but the Kohathites must not go in to look at the holy things, even for a moment, or they will die, [Numbers 4:20](#).

THE GERSHONITES

‘The LORD said to Moses, “Take a census also of the Gershonites by their families and clans. Count all the men from thirty to fifty years of age who come to serve in the work at the tent of meeting. “This is the service of the Gershonite clans in their carrying and their other work: They are to carry the curtains of the tabernacle, that is, the tent of meeting, its covering and its outer covering of durable leather, the curtains for the entrance to the tent of meeting, the curtains of the courtyard surrounding the tabernacle and altar, the curtain for the entrance to the courtyard, the ropes and all the equipment used in the service of the tent. The Gershonites are to do all that needs to be done with these things. All their service, whether carrying or doing other work, is to be done under the direction of Aaron and his sons. You shall assign to them as their responsibility all they are to carry. This is the service of the Gershonite clans at the tent of meeting. Their duties are to be under the direction of Ithamar, son of Aaron, the priest.’ [Numbers 4:21-28](#)

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Moses is also to take a census of the Gershonites by their families and clans, [Numbers 4:21-22](#). He is to count all the men from thirty to fifty years of age who come to serve in the work at the tent of meeting, [Numbers 4:23](#) / [Numbers 4:3](#) / [Numbers 4:30](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the words ‘serve in the work at the tent of meeting,’ [Numbers 4:23](#).

‘The language is military. The service of God is a sacred warfare ([Numbers 8:24-25](#) marginal reading).’

The sons of Gershon had the job and responsibility of the tent structure, which included the curtains and outer curtain, [Numbers 3:24-26](#). All their service, whether carrying or doing other work, is to be done under the direction of Aaron and his sons, [Numbers 4:27](#), who shall assign to them as their responsibility all they are to carry. They worked under the direction of Aaron’s son, Ithamar, [Numbers 4:28](#) / [Exodus 38:21](#).

Dummelow, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The curtains of the tabernacle and of the court were of great weight, and two ox-wagons were required for their transport. The Merarites, charged with the even heavier transport of the framework of the tabernacle, were given four ox-wagons for the purpose, [Numbers 7:7](#).’

THE MERARITES

‘Count the Merarites by their clans and families. Count all the men from thirty to fifty years of age who come to serve in the work at the tent of meeting. As part of all their service at the tent, they are to carry the frames of the tabernacle, its crossbars, posts, and bases, as well as the posts of the surrounding courtyard with their bases, tent pegs, ropes, all their equipment and everything related to their use. Assign to each man the specific things he is to carry. This is the

service of the Merarite clans as they work at the tent of meeting under the direction of Ithamar son of Aaron, the priest.” Numbers 4:29-33

Next, Moses is to count the Merarites by their clans and families, Numbers 4:29. He is to count all the men from thirty to fifty years of age who come to serve in the work at the tent of meeting, Numbers 4:30 / Numbers 4:3 / Numbers 4:23.

The sons of Merari had the job and responsibility of taking care of the boards, bars, pillars, sockets, and the solid parts of the curtains, Numbers 3:31-32. They worked under the direction of Aaron’s son, Ithamar, Numbers 4:33, who had the responsibility of organising the construction of the tent of meeting, Exodus 38:21.

THE NUMBERING OF THE LEVITE CLANS

‘Moses, Aaron, and the leaders of the community counted the Kohathites by their clans and families. All the men from thirty to fifty years of age who came to serve in the work at the tent of meeting, counted by clans, were 2,750.

This was the total of all those in the Kohathite clans who served at the tent of meeting. Moses and Aaron counted them according to the LORD’s command through Moses. The Gershonites were counted by their clans and families.

All the men from thirty to fifty years of age who came to serve in the work at the tent of meeting, counted by their clans and families, were 2,630. This was the total of those in the Gershonite clans who served at the tent of meeting. Moses and Aaron counted them according to the LORD’s command. The Merarites were counted by their clans and families. All the men from thirty to fifty years of age who came to serve in the work at the tent of meeting, counted

by their clans, were 3,200. This was the total of those in the Merarite clans. Moses and Aaron counted them according to the LORD’s command through Moses. So Moses, Aaron and the leaders of Israel counted all the Levites by their clans and families. All the men from thirty to fifty years of age who came to do the work of serving and carrying the tent of meeting numbered 8,580. At the LORD’s command through Moses, each was assigned his work and told what to carry. Thus they were counted, as the LORD commanded Moses.’ Numbers 4:34-49

Moses, Aaron, and the leaders of the community counted 2,750 Kohathites, Numbers 4:34-37, 2,630 Gershonites, Numbers 4:38-41, and 3,200 Merarites, Numbers 4:42-45, giving us a total of 8,580, Numbers 4:46-49.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘God so ordered it, that though the Merarites were the fewest in number, yet they should have the most able men among them; for whatever service God calls men to, he will furnish them for it, give strength in proportion to the work, and grace sufficient. The least of the tribes had many more able men than the Levites; those who engage in the service of this world are many more than those devoted to the service of God. May our souls be wholly devoted to his service.’

It’s worth noting that the age to begin any priestly responsibility was thirty, Numbers 4:43 / Numbers 4:47, hence why Jesus, Himself began His earthly ministry at the age of thirty, Luke 3:23. Here we are informed that the sons of Levi could retire from their priestly responsibilities at the age of fifty, Numbers 4:43 / Numbers 4:47.

In other words, their service began at the age of thirty and ended when they were fifty years of age, after which, they could live in their own homes for the remainder of their lives, Numbers 8:23-26. Note that once again, Moses did what God commended him to do, Numbers 4:49 / Numbers 1:54 / Numbers 3:33-34 / Numbers 4:42 / Hebrews 3:5.

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION

‘The LORD said to Moses, “Command the Israelites to send away from the camp anyone who has a defiling skin disease or a discharge of any kind, or who is ceremonially unclean because of a dead body. Send away male and female alike; send them outside the camp so they will not defile their camp, where I dwell among them.” The Israelites did so; they sent them outside the camp. They did just as the LORD had instructed Moses.’ Numbers 5:1-4

THE PURITY OF THE CAMP

In this chapter, Moses is commanded by God to make sure the camp in which Israel was to live remains clean and free from any impurities, Numbers 5:1-3. We can imagine how important this would be when we consider just how many Israelites there were living in the camp, some estimate around three million.

There are three specific cases of uncleanness mentioned: defiling skin, Numbers 5:2, which is probably leprosy, Leviticus 13:3, discharges from infection, Numbers 5:2 / Leviticus 15:2, and contact with a dead body, Numbers 5:2, except that of a close relative, Leviticus 21:1.

Anyone, male or female, who fell into these categories was to be put outside the camp until they were ceremonially clean, Numbers 5:3. Just as we have seen throughout the world concerning COVID-19, people who had the virus were isolated and quarantined for a certain time.

Those who had become unclean were to be put outside the camp to isolate and quarantine, in order to prevent a pandemic within the camp. In other words, because God lives in the camp, sin and its effects must be kept separated.

The Israelites did so, and they sent them outside the camp just as the LORD had instructed Moses, Numbers 5:4. The reason for these measures was to ensure that Israel remained a holy people.

Cleanliness and holiness are connected in the sense that if a person violates the laws concerning cleanliness, they would be violating the law of God, and so, be unholy before God.

RESTITUTION FOR WRONGS

‘The LORD said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites: ‘Any man or woman who wrongs another in any way and so is unfaithful to the LORD is guilty and must confess the sin they have committed. They must make full restitution for the wrong they have done, add a fifth of the value to it and give it all to the person they have wronged. But if that person has no close relative to whom restitution can be made for the wrong, the restitution belongs to the LORD and must be given to the priest, along with the ram with which atonement is made for the wrongdoer. All the sacred contributions the Israelites bring to a priest will belong to him. Sacred things belong to their owners, but what they give to the priest will belong to the priest.’” Numbers 5:5-10

In these verses, we read that God wants His people to be honest. Here, the text deals with someone who was sinning against another. This would include theft, Leviticus 5:14-6:7, or holding back from God anything which belongs to Him, Leviticus 6:1-7.

If anyone wrongs another in any way and so is unfaithful to the LORD is guilty and must confess the sin they have committed, Numbers 5:5-7. Notice that if the person wanted to right the wrong they had done, they needed to repent. Their repentance was seen in their actions to right the wrong; it is seen in the actual doing of the restitution.

Restitution is commanded, Numbers 5:7, which implies this is commanded to ensure that peace will remain within Israel. If something was stolen, twenty per cent was to be added to the value of that which was stolen, with the restitution of that which was stolen, Numbers 5:7.

After the restitution was made, there was to be reconciliation with God by the person who made the restitution, this was done by the offering of a ram for atonement, Numbers 5:8.

In Leviticus 5:16, this sacrifice is called the ram of the trespass offering, stressing man's offence, here it is called the ram of the atonement, Numbers 5:8, stressing God's alienation.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Trespasses against one's neighbour, Leviticus 6:1-7, needed atonement because they constituted acts of ‘unfaithfulness’ to God, Numbers 5:6. The Israelites had to maintain proper horizontal relationships with their brethren to maintain a proper vertical relationship with Yahweh, Matthew 5:23-24.’

All the sacred contributions the Israelites bring to a priest will belong to him, and the sacred things belong to their owners, but what they give to the priest will belong to the priest, Numbers 5:9-10.

Because the aim of restitution is to maintain peace, when the Israelites offered a peace offering, the offeror was to have a piece of the meat returned to them, so that they and their family could have a fellowship meal with the LORD, Leviticus 3.

THE TEST FOR AN UNFAITHFUL WIFE

‘Then the LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘If a man's wife goes astray and is unfaithful to him so that another man has sexual relations with her, and this is hidden from her husband and her impurity is undetected (since there is no witness against her and she has not been caught in the act), and if feelings of jealousy come over her husband and he suspects his wife and she is impure—or if he is jealous and suspects her even though she is not impure—then he is to take his wife to the priest. He must also take an offering of a tenth of an ephah of barley flour on her behalf. He must not pour olive oil on it or put incense on it, because it is a grain offering for jealousy, a reminder-offering to draw attention to wrongdoing.’ Numbers 5:11-15”

God not only wanted the camp to be holy and honest, but He also wanted the camp to be free from immorality.

Please note that Numbers 5:11-15 aren't dealing with the case of adultery because the penalty for committing that sin was death, Leviticus 20:10.

Here, the text implies that if a wife is behaving in such a way which causes any kind of suspicion, Numbers 5:12, but her husband couldn't prove it, Numbers 5:13-14, then the husband was to take her to the priest for judgment, Numbers 5:15.

The point of this law is to prevent any wife from flirting with any other man except her husband. It's interesting to note that Israel must have obeyed this law because there is no example in Scripture of this actually happening.

The doubting husband must also take an offering of a tenth of an ephah of barley flour on his wife's behalf, Numbers 5:15. He mustn't pour olive oil on it or put incense on it, because it is a grain offering for jealousy, a reminder-offering to draw attention to wrongdoing, Numbers 5:15.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning the offering which was to be made.

‘Such meal-offerings were normally offered with oil and frankincense, but these were especially commanded to be omitted here. Why? The usual meal-offering was an occasion of joyful thanksgiving, but this was a different situation. The omission of these symbols of joy and thanksgiving, along with the designation of the water later as bitter water, pinpoints the fact of jealousy itself being an inglorious and bitter business. A tenth of an ephah was about seven pints.’

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The offering was to be of the cheapest and coarsest kind, barley, 2 Kings 7:1 / 2 Kings 7:16 / 2 Kings 7:18, representing the abused condition of the suspected woman. It was, like the sin-offering, Leviticus 5:11, to be made without oil and frankincense, the symbols of grace and acceptableness. The woman herself stood with head uncovered, Numbers 5:18, in token of her shame.’

‘The priest shall bring her and have her stand before the LORD. Then he shall take some holy water in a clay jar and put some dust from the tabernacle floor into the water. After the priest has had the woman stand before the LORD, he shall loosen her hair and place in her hands the reminder-offering, the grain offering for jealousy, while he himself holds the bitter water that brings a curse. Then the priest shall put the woman under oath and say to her, “If no other man has had sexual relations with you and you have not gone astray and become impure while married to your husband, may this bitter water that brings a curse not harm you. But if you have gone astray while married to your husband and you have made yourself impure by having sexual relations with a man other than your husband”—here the priest is to put the woman under this curse— “may the LORD cause you to become a curse among your people when he makes your womb miscarry, and your abdomen swell. May this water that brings a curse enter your body so that your abdomen swells or your womb miscarries.” “Then the woman is to say, “Amen. So be it.” “The priest is to write these curses on a scroll and then wash them off into the bitter water. He shall make the woman drink the bitter water that brings a curse, and this water that brings a curse and causes bitter suffering will enter her. The priest is to take from her hands the grain offering for jealousy, wave it before the LORD and bring it to the altar. The priest is then to take a handful of the grain offering as a memorial offering and burn it on the altar; after that, he is to have the woman drink the water. If she has made herself impure and been unfaithful to her husband, this will be the result: When she is made to drink the water that brings a curse and causes bitter suffering, it will enter her, her abdomen will swell and her womb will miscarry, and she will become a curse. If, however, the woman has not made herself impure but is clean, she will be cleared of guilt and will be able to have children. “This, then, is the law of jealousy when a woman goes astray and makes herself impure while married to her husband, or when feelings of jealousy come over a man because he suspects his wife. The priest is to have her stand before the LORD and is to apply this entire law to her. The husband will be innocent of any wrongdoing, but the woman will bear the consequences of her sin.”’

Numbers 5:16-31

We can only imagine the embarrassment and humiliation the wife had to go through whilst she stood in front of the priest and the LORD for judgment, Numbers 5:16. The priest is to take some holy water in a clay jar and put some dust from the tabernacle floor into the water, Numbers 5:17.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning the holy water.

‘This is significant as the only use of this expression in the whole Bible. The most likely source of this was the holy laver, which would have afforded an abundant water supply for the whole tabernacle. The notion that it came from some holy spring comes from the intention of making this whole chapter as pagan as possible. It is significant that the Septuagint (LXX) has pure running water here.’

Dust, Numbers 5:17, is an emblem of a state of condemnation, Genesis 3:14 / Micah 7:17. Notice that the wife’s hair was to be loosened, Numbers 5:18, which implies she is losing her dignity.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘To take off a woman’s veil, and expose her to the sight of men, would be considered a very great degradation in the East. To this St. Paul appears to allude, 1 Corinthians 11:5-6 / 1 Corinthians 11:10.’

After the priest has had the woman stand before the LORD, loosened her hair, and placed in her hands the reminder-offering, the grain offering for jealousy, he is to hold the bitter water that brings a curse, Numbers 5:19.

Next, the priest is to put the woman under oath and say to her, if no other man has had sexual relations with her and she hasn’t gone astray and become impure while married to her husband, may this bitter water that brings a curse not harm her, Numbers 5:20.

However, if she has gone astray while married to her husband and she has made herself impure by having sexual relations with a man other than her husband, then the priest is to put the woman under this curse: may the LORD

cause her to become a curse among her people when he makes her womb miscarry and her abdomen swell, Numbers 5:21.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning her becoming a curse, Numbers 5:21.

‘Let thy name and punishment be remembered and mentioned as an example and terror to all others. As mentioned in Jeremiah 29:22-23.’

May this water that brings a curse enter her body so that her abdomen swells or her womb miscarries, Numbers 5:22 / 1 Corinthians 11:29. The wife was then to agree with the curse by saying ‘Amen, so be it’, Numbers 5:22.

The priest is to write these curses on a scroll and then wash them off into the bitter water, Numbers 5:23. The woman is made to drink the bitter water that brings a curse, and this water that brings a curse and causes bitter suffering will enter her, Numbers 5:24.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the drinking of the bitter water.

‘This was symbolised both her full acceptance of the hypothetical curse, Ezekiel 3:1-3 / Jeremiah 15:16 / Revelation 10:9, and its actual operation upon her if she should be guilty, Psalms 109:18.’

The priest is to take from her hands the grain offering for jealousy, wave it before the LORD and bring it to the altar, Numbers 5:25. Next, the priest is to take a handful of the grain offering as a memorial offering and burn it on the altar, and after that, he is to have the woman drink the water, Numbers 5:26.

If the woman was guilty of infidelity, the drinking of the bitter water would cause serious reactions in her female organs, but if she was innocent, the bitter water would cause her to bear children, Numbers 5:27-28.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Though the rabbis think that the priest put some bitter substance in the water, yet as nothing of the kind is intimated by Moses, we may consider the word as used here metaphorically for affliction, death. These waters were afflicting and deadly to her who drank them, being guilty. In this sense, afflictions are said to be bitter, Isaiah 38:17, so also is death, 1 Samuel 15:32 / Ecclesiastes 7:26.’

When matters of jealousy arose between a husband and a wife, it was possible that the husband was right concerning his suspicions about his wife, or he may be wrong because he was simply jealous, Numbers 5:29-30. If his wife had been adulterous, which meant her husband’s suspicions were right, then she would bear the consequences of her sin, Numbers 5:31.

CHAPTER 6

INTRODUCTION

‘The LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘If a man or woman wants to make a special vow, a vow of dedication to the LORD as a Nazirite, they must abstain from wine and other fermented drink and must not drink vinegar made from wine or other fermented drink. They must not drink grape juice or eat grapes or raisins. As long as they remain under their Nazirite vow, they must not eat anything that comes from the grapevine, not even the seeds or skins. “During the entire period of their Nazirite vow, no razor may be used on their head. They must be holy until the period of their dedication to the LORD is over; they must let their hair grow long.

“Throughout the period of their dedication to the LORD, the Nazirite must not go near a dead body. Even if their own father or mother or brother or sister dies, they must not make themselves ceremonially unclean on account of them, because the symbol of their dedication to God is on their head. Throughout the period of their dedication, they are consecrated to the LORD.’ Numbers 6:1-8

THE NAZIRITE

For men or women, taking on a Nazarite vow meant they would consecrate themselves or dedicate their lives for service to God, Numbers 6:1-2 / Amos 2:11-12.

Whitelaw, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A recognition of the Divine liberty of the Holy Spirit, and an anticipation of the time when the spirit of self-devotion should be poured out without distinction upon men and women.’

There were three stipulations regarding this divine calling, which we find here.

1. They couldn’t partake of the ‘fruit of the vine’, which meant they were to abstain from drinking wine, in order to live a simple and sober life, Numbers 6:3-4.

The Nazarites were essentially prohibited from eating or drinking anything that was produced from the grapevine. Samson’s mother had to abstain during her pregnancy, as Samson was set apart from the womb, Judges 13:4. Samson also broke this vow, Judges 14:10.

2. Nazirites had to refrain from cutting their hair as an observable sign of their vow, Numbers 6:5.

The outward symbol of the vow was necessary in order that others would not offer the Nazarite something that would contradict his or her vow. For the Jews, if a person had an abundance of hair, this was seen as a sign of physical strength and perfection, 2 Samuel 14:25-26. However, if a man was bald, this was regarded as a grave blemish, Leviticus 13:40-46 / Leviticus 21:20 / 2 Kings 2:23 / Isaiah 3:24.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘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 New Testament, 1 Corinthians 11:14.’

3. Nazirites were to avoid contact with a dead body, which would disqualify them for tabernacle worship, Numbers 6:6-7.

There was a chance that they would become unclean, and so, the Nazarite wasn’t even permitted to help in the burial of his or her own family members, Leviticus 21:1-3. Samson broke this vow too when he touched a dead carcass, Judges 14:8-9.

They were to a people separated for the Lord, and so, committed to the Lord’s service. And so, to take the Nazirite vow was indeed a privilege for any man or woman to take, but it also carried with it a lot of responsibility.

‘If someone dies suddenly in the Nazirite’s presence, thus defiling the hair that symbolises their dedication, they must shave their head on the seventh day—the day of their cleansing. Then on the eighth day, they must bring two doves or two young pigeons to the priest at the entrance to the tent of meeting. The priest is to offer one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering to make atonement for the Nazirite because they sinned by being in the presence of the dead body. That same day, they are to consecrate their head again. They must rededicate themselves to the LORD for the same period of dedication and must bring a year-old male lamb as a guilt offering. The previous days do not count, because they became defiled during their period of dedication.’ Numbers 6:9-12

There was a possibility that someone could die suddenly in the presence of a Nazarite, which indirectly would lead to them defiling their hair, Numbers 6:9. If this happens, they were to shave their head on the seventh day and take two doves or two young pigeons to the priest for an offering, Numbers 6:10.

Notice that there are three Levitical sacrifices required.

1. The sin offering, Numbers 6:11.

2. The burnt offering, Numbers 6:11.

3. The guilt offering, Numbers 6:12.

What was done with the hair that was shaved off after such a violation?

Jewish tradition says the following concerning the hair.

‘They buried it because it was then considered defiled. The hair shaved off after the completion of the vow was burnt as a sacrifice, Numbers 6:18.’

‘Now this is the law of the Nazirite when the period of their dedication is over. They are to be brought to the entrance to the tent of meeting. There they are to present their offerings to the LORD: a year-old male lamb without defect for a burnt offering, a year-old ewe lamb without defect for a sin offering, a ram without defect for a fellowship offering, together with their grain offerings and drink offerings, and a basket of bread made with the finest flour and without yeast—thick loaves with olive oil mixed in, and thin loaves brushed with olive oil. “The priest is to present all these before the LORD and make the sin offering and the burnt offering. He is to present the basket of unleavened bread and is to sacrifice the ram as a fellowship offering to the LORD, together with its grain offering and drink offering. “Then at the entrance to the tent of meeting, the Nazirite must shave off the hair that symbolises their dedication. They are to take the hair and put it in the fire that is under the sacrifice of the fellowship offering. “After the Nazirite has shaved off the hair that symbolises their dedication, the priest is to place in their hands a boiled shoulder of the ram, and one thick loaf and one thin loaf from the basket, both made without yeast. The priest shall then wave these before the LORD as a wave offering; they are holy and belong to the priest, together with the breast that was waved and the thigh that was presented. After that, the Nazirite may drink wine. “This is the law of the Nazirite who vows offerings to the LORD in accordance with their dedication, in addition to whatever else they can afford. They must fulfil the vows they have made, according to the law of the Nazirite.” Numbers 6:13-21

The Nazirite vow was to last at least one year, Numbers 6:13, and at the end of this time, the Nazirite would bring offerings before the priest in order to end the time of the vow, Numbers 6:14 / Acts 21:23-26.

They are to present a year-old male lamb without defect for a burnt offering, a year-old ewe lamb without defect for a sin offering, a ram without defect for a fellowship offering, together with their grain offerings and drink offerings, and a basket of bread made with the finest flour and without yeast, thick loaves with olive oil mixed in, and thin loaves brushed with olive oil, Numbers 6:14-15.

The priest is to present all these before the LORD and make the sin offering and the burnt offering, Numbers 6:16.

The priest is to present the basket of unleavened bread and sacrifice the ram as a fellowship offering to the LORD, together with its grain offering and drink offering, Numbers 6:17.

Once the priest did all the proper ceremonies to end the vow, the Nazirite’s head was shaved to show the public that they had finished the time of the vow, Numbers 6:18.

Jewish tradition says the following concerning the hair.

‘It was burned, not as a sacrifice, but in order to keep an object of consecration from being profaned.’

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The burning of the hair ‘in the fire under the sacrifice of the peace offering’ represented the eucharistic communion with God obtained by those who realised the ideal which the Nazirite set forth.’

After the Nazirite has shaved off the hair that symbolises their dedication, the priest is to place in their hands a boiled shoulder of the ram, Leviticus 7:30, and one thick loaf and one thin loaf from the basket, both made without yeast, Numbers 6:19.

Next, the priest is to wave these before the LORD as a wave offering. Numbers 6:20. They are holy and belong to the priest, together with the breast that was waved and the thigh that was presented and after that, the Nazirite may drink wine, Numbers 6:20.

The fellowship offerings, Numbers 6:18, were normally consumed by the offeror and his friends, celebrating at the same time the lifting of the ban against drinking wine.

This is the law of the Nazirite who vows offerings to the LORD in accordance with their dedication, in addition to whatever else they can afford, Numbers 6:21. Notice they must fulfil the vows they have made, according to the law of the Nazirite, Numbers 6:21.

THE PRIESTLY BLESSING

‘The LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron and his sons, ‘This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: “The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.’ “So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.” Numbers 6:22-27

Moses, Aaron, and their spiritual descendants were commanded to bless the people, Numbers 6:22-27. By raising up the character of God before the people, the people were in turn encouraged to live holy lives before God, who is holy, Isaiah 6:3.

The blessing reassured the people, Numbers 6:24 / Psalm 91 / John 17:9-15 / 1 Thessalonians 5:23, and reminded them that God’s favour was to them, Numbers 6:25 / Psalm 21:6 / Psalm 34:15.

It gave them assurance of God’s peace, Numbers 6:26 / John 14:26-27, and gave them confidence in that God had claimed His people by putting His name on them, Numbers 6:27 / John 14:26-27.

This blessing is incredible and very personal. Notice the word ‘you’ is said six times; in other words, there’s no mistaking the point of this blessing, God really wants to bless them.

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The name Jehovah is three times repeated. The Jews think there is some mystery, and we know what it is, the New Testament having explained it. There we are directed to expect the blessing from the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of the Father, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, 2 Corinthians 13:14, each of which Persons is Jehovah, and yet they are not three Lords, but one Lord.’

CHAPTER 7

INTRODUCTION

‘When Moses finished setting up the tabernacle, he anointed and consecrated it and all its furnishings. He also anointed and consecrated the altar and all its utensils. Then the leaders of Israel, the heads of families who were the tribal leaders in charge of those who were counted, made offerings. They brought as their gifts before the LORD six covered carts and twelve oxen—an ox from each leader and a cart from every two. These they presented before the tabernacle. The LORD said to Moses, “Accept these from them, that they may be used in the work at the tent of meeting. Give them to the Levites as each man’s work requires.” So Moses took the carts and oxen and gave them to the Levites. He gave two carts and four oxen to the Gershonites, as their work required, and he gave four carts and eight oxen to the Merarites, as their work required. They were all under the direction of Ithamar, son of Aaron, the priest. But Moses did not give any to the Kohathites, because they were to carry on their shoulders the holy things, for which they were responsible.’ Numbers 7:1-9

OFFERINGS AT THE DEDICATION OF THE TABERNACLE

When Moses finished setting up the tabernacle, he anointed and consecrated it and all its furnishings and he also anointed and consecrated the altar and all its utensils, [Numbers 7:1](#).

The leaders of Israel, the heads of families who were the tribal leaders in charge of those who were counted, made offerings and they brought as their gifts six covered carts, [Isaiah 66:20](#), and twelve oxen, an ox from each leader and a cart from every two, [Numbers 7:2-3](#).

God then tells Moses to accept these from them, that they may be used in the work at the tent of meeting, and he is to give them to the Levites as each man's work requires, and Moses does as he was asked, [Numbers 7:4-6](#).

The sons of Gershon, [Numbers 7:7](#) / [Numbers 4:25-26](#), and Merari, [Numbers 7:8](#) / [Numbers 4:31-32](#), used the carts and oxen to transport all the furnishings and the structure. They were all under the direction of Ithamar, son of Aaron, the priest, [Numbers 7:8](#).

Notice the sons of Kohath had the responsibility of transporting the ark and holy things used for the offerings, but on their shoulders, [Numbers 7:9](#) / [Numbers 3:25-26](#) / [Numbers 3:31](#) / [Numbers 3:36-37](#) / [Numbers 4:4](#) / [Numbers 4:5-15](#).

When we read through this chapter, we see that the tabernacle was never designed to stay in one place all the time, hence why they used carts and oxen. This made it possible for them to carry the tabernacle with them as they journeyed through the wilderness.

‘When the altar was anointed, the leaders brought their offerings for its dedication and presented them before the altar. For the LORD had said to Moses, “Each day one leader is to bring his offering for the dedication of the altar.”
Numbers 7:10-11

When the altar was anointed, the leaders brought their offerings for its dedication and presented them before the altar, [Numbers 7:10](#). In the following verses, we read that twelve leaders of the twelve tribes brought dedication gifts to the tabernacle, one on each day for twelve days, [Numbers 7:11](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This was a free-will thing on their part, no commandment to this effect having been given. It appears likely that these leaders of Israel, anticipating the march into the land of Canaan, expected to begin soon, decided to expedite the transfer of the tabernacle by these contributions of wagons and oxen.’

‘The one who brought his offering on the first day was Nahshon, son of Amminadab of the tribe of Judah. His offering was one silver plate weighing a hundred and thirty shekels and one silver sprinkling bowl weighing seventy shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel, each filled with the finest flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering; one gold dish weighing ten shekels, filled with incense; one young bull, one ram and one male lamb a year old for a burnt offering; one male goat for a sin offering; and two oxen, five rams, five male goats and five male lambs a year old to be sacrificed as a fellowship offering. This was the offering of Nahshon, son of Amminadab.’
Numbers 7:11-17

On day one, Nahshon, son of Amminadab of the tribe of Judah, brought his offering, [Numbers 7:12-17](#).

‘On the second day, Nethanel son of Zuar, the leader of Issachar, brought his offering. The offering he brought was one silver plate weighing a hundred and thirty shekels and one silver sprinkling bowl weighing seventy shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel, each filled with the finest flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering; one gold dish weighing ten shekels, filled with incense; one young bull, one ram and one male lamb a year old for a burnt offering; one male goat for a sin offering; and two oxen, five rams, five male goats and five male lambs a year old to be sacrificed as a fellowship offering. This was the offering of Nethanel, son of Zuar.’ Numbers 7:18-23

On day two, Nethanel, son of Zuar, the leader of Issachar, brought his offering, [Numbers 7:18-23](#).

‘On the third day, Eliab, son of Helon, the leader of the people of Zebulun, brought his offering. His offering was one silver plate weighing a hundred and thirty shekels and one silver sprinkling bowl weighing seventy shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel, each filled with the finest flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering; one gold dish weighing ten shekels, filled with incense; one young bull, one ram and one male lamb a year old for a burnt offering; one male goat for a sin offering; and two oxen, five rams, five male goats and five male lambs a year old to be sacrificed as a fellowship offering. This was the offering of Eliab, son of Helon.’ Numbers 7:24-29

On day three, Eliab, son of Helon, the leader of the people of Zebulun, brought his offering, Numbers 7:24-29.

‘On the fourth day, Elizur, son of Shedeur, the leader of the people of Reuben, brought his offering. His offering was one silver plate weighing a hundred and thirty shekels and one silver sprinkling bowl weighing seventy shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel, each filled with the finest flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering; one gold dish weighing ten shekels, filled with incense; one young bull, one ram and one male lamb a year old for a burnt offering; one male goat for a sin offering; and two oxen, five rams, five male goats and five male lambs a year old to be sacrificed as a fellowship offering. This was the offering of Elizur, son of Shedeur.’ Numbers 7:30-35

On day four, Elizur, son of Shedeur, the leader of the people of Reuben, brought his offering, Numbers 7:30-35.

‘On the fifth day, Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai, the leader of the people of Simeon, brought his offering. His offering was one silver plate weighing a hundred and thirty shekels and one silver sprinkling bowl weighing seventy shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel, each filled with the finest flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering; one gold dish weighing ten shekels, filled with incense; one young bull, one ram and one male lamb a year old for a burnt offering; one male goat for a sin offering; and two oxen, five rams, five male goats and five male lambs a year old to be sacrificed as a fellowship offering. This was the offering of Shelumiel, son of Zurishaddai.’ Numbers 7:36-41

On day five, Shelumiel, son of Zurishaddai, the leader of the people of Simeon, brought his offering, Numbers 7:36-41.

‘On the sixth day, Eliasaph son of Deuel, the leader of the people of Gad, brought his offering. His offering was one silver plate weighing a hundred and thirty shekels and one silver sprinkling bowl weighing seventy shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel, each filled with the finest flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering; one gold dish weighing ten shekels, filled with incense; one young bull, one ram and one male lamb a year old for a burnt offering; one male goat for a sin offering; and two oxen, five rams, five male goats and five male lambs a year old to be sacrificed as a fellowship offering. This was the offering of Eliasaph, son of Deuel.’ Numbers 7:42-47

On day six, Eliasaph, son of Deuel, the leader of the people of Gad, brought his offering, Numbers 7:42-47.

‘On the seventh day, Elishama son of Ammihud, the leader of the people of Ephraim, brought his offering. His offering was one silver plate weighing a hundred and thirty shekels and one silver sprinkling bowl weighing seventy shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel, each filled with the finest flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering; one gold dish weighing ten shekels, filled with incense; one young bull, one ram and one male lamb a year old for a burnt offering; one male goat for a sin offering; and two oxen, five rams, five male goats and five male lambs a year old to be sacrificed as a fellowship offering. This was the offering of Elishama, son of Ammihud.’
Numbers 7:48-53

On day seven, Elishama son of Ammihud, the leader of the people of Ephraim, brought his offering, Numbers 7:48-53.

‘On the eighth day, Gamaliel, son of Pedahzur, the leader of the people of Manasseh, brought his offering. His offering was one silver plate weighing a hundred and thirty shekels and one silver sprinkling bowl weighing seventy shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel, each filled with the finest flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering; one gold dish weighing ten shekels, filled with incense; one young bull, one ram and one male lamb a year old for a burnt offering; one male goat for a sin offering; and two oxen, five rams, five male goats and five male lambs a year old to be sacrificed as a fellowship offering. This was the offering of Gamaliel, son of Pedahzur.’
Numbers 7:54-59

On day eight, Gamaliel, son of Pedahzur, the leader of the people of Manasseh, brought his offering, Numbers 7:54-59.

‘On the ninth day, Abidan son of Gideoni, the leader of the people of Benjamin, brought his offering. His offering was one silver plate weighing a hundred and thirty shekels and one silver sprinkling bowl weighing seventy shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel, each filled with the finest flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering; one gold dish weighing ten shekels, filled with incense; one young bull, one ram and one male lamb a year old for a burnt offering; one male goat for a sin offering; and two oxen, five rams, five male goats and five male lambs a year old to be sacrificed as a fellowship offering. This was the offering of Abidan, son of Gideoni.’ Numbers 7:60-65

On day nine, Abidan, son of Gideoni, the leader of the people of Benjamin, brought his offering, [Numbers 7:60-65](#).

‘On the tenth day, Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai, the leader of the people of Dan, brought his offering. His offering was one silver plate weighing a hundred and thirty shekels and one silver sprinkling bowl weighing seventy shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel, each filled with the finest flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering; one gold dish weighing ten shekels, filled with incense; one young bull, one ram and one male lamb a year old for a burnt offering; one male goat for a sin offering; and two oxen, five rams, five male goats and five male lambs a year old to be sacrificed as a fellowship offering. This was the offering of Ahiezer, son of Ammishaddai.’ Numbers 7:66-71

On day ten, Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai, the leader of the people of Dan, brought his offering, [Numbers 7:66-71](#).

‘On the eleventh day, Pagiel, son of Okran, the leader of the people of Asher, brought his offering. His offering was one silver plate weighing a hundred and thirty shekels and one silver sprinkling bowl weighing seventy shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel, each filled with the finest flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering; one gold dish weighing ten shekels, filled with incense; one young bull, one ram and one male lamb a year old for a burnt offering; one male goat for a sin offering; and two oxen, five rams, five male goats and five male lambs a year old to be sacrificed as a fellowship offering. This was the offering of Pagiel, son of Okran.’ Numbers 7:72-77

On day eleven, Pagiel, son of Okran, the leader of the people of Asher, brought his offering, [Numbers 7:72-77](#).

‘On the twelfth day, Ahira son of Enan, the leader of the people of Naphtali, brought his offering. His offering was one silver plate weighing a hundred and thirty shekels and one silver sprinkling bowl weighing seventy shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel, each filled with the finest flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering; one gold dish weighing ten shekels, filled with incense; one young bull, one ram and one male lamb a year old for a burnt offering; one male goat for a sin offering; and two oxen, five rams, five male goats and five male lambs a year old to be sacrificed as a fellowship offering. This was the offering of Ahira, son of Enan.’ Numbers 7:78-83

On day twelve, Ahira son of Enan, the leader of the people of Naphtali, brought his offering, [Numbers 7:78-83](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is worthy of remark that the different tribes are represented here as bringing their offerings precisely in the same order in which they encamped about the tabernacle. See [Numbers 2:1-31](#) and [Numbers 10:13-27](#).’

SILVER AND GOLD OFFERINGS

Notice that the offering of each leader was the same. Each of them brought one silver plate: [Numbers 7:13](#) / [Numbers 7:19](#) / [Numbers 7:25](#) / [Numbers 7:31](#) / [Numbers 7:37](#) / [Numbers 7:43](#) / [Numbers 7:49](#) / [Numbers 7:55](#) / [Numbers 7:61](#) / [Numbers 7:67](#) / [Numbers 7:73](#) / [Numbers 7:79](#). The silver plate was used to knead the paste, [Exodus 25:29](#). Each of them brought one silver basin, [Numbers 7:13](#) / [Numbers 7:19](#) / [Numbers 7:25](#) / [Numbers 7:31](#) / [Numbers 7:37](#) / [Numbers 7:43](#) / [Numbers 7:49](#) / [Numbers 7:55](#) / [Numbers 7:61](#) / [Numbers 7:67](#) / [Numbers 7:73](#) / [Numbers 7:79](#). The silver basin was used to receive the blood of the sacrifice in [Exodus 27:3](#).

Each of them brought one gold dish: [Numbers 7:14](#) / [Numbers 7:20](#) / [Numbers 7:26](#) / [Numbers 7:32](#) / [Numbers 7:38](#) / [Numbers 7:44](#) / [Numbers 7:50](#) / [Numbers 7:56](#) / [Numbers 7:62](#) / [Numbers 7:68](#) / [Numbers 7:74](#) / [Numbers 7:80](#).

Each silver plate weighed about three pounds, [Numbers 7:13](#) / [Numbers 7:19](#) / [Numbers 7:25](#) / [Numbers 7:31](#) / [Numbers 7:37](#) / [Numbers 7:43](#) / [Numbers 7:49](#) / [Numbers 7:55](#) / [Numbers 7:61](#) / [Numbers 7:67](#) / [Numbers 7:73](#) / [Numbers 7:79](#).

Each silver basin is about two pounds, [Numbers 7:13](#) / [Numbers 7:19](#) / [Numbers 7:25](#) / [Numbers 7:31](#) / [Numbers 7:37](#) / [Numbers 7:43](#) / [Numbers 7:49](#) / [Numbers 7:55](#) / [Numbers 7:61](#) / [Numbers 7:67](#) / [Numbers 7:73](#) / [Numbers 7:79](#).

A gold dish about four ounces, [Numbers 7:14](#) / [Numbers 7:20](#) / [Numbers 7:26](#) / [Numbers 7:32](#) / [Numbers 7:38](#) / [Numbers 7:44](#) / [Numbers 7:50](#) / [Numbers 7:56](#) / [Numbers 7:61](#) / [Numbers 7:68](#) / [Numbers 7:74](#) / [Numbers 7:80](#).

THE SACRIFICIAL OFFERINGS

Notice also that the sacrificial offerings of each leader were the same. Each of them brought a grain offering, [Numbers 7:13](#) / [Numbers 7:19](#) / [Numbers 7:25](#) / [Numbers 7:31](#) / [Numbers 7:37](#) / [Numbers 7:43](#) / [Numbers 7:49](#) / [Numbers 7:55](#) / [Numbers 7:61](#) / [Numbers 7:67](#) / [Numbers 7:73](#) / [Numbers 7:79](#).

Each of them brought a burnt offering, [Numbers 7:15](#) / [Numbers 7:21](#) / [Numbers 7:27](#) / [Numbers 7:33](#) / [Numbers 7:39](#) / [Numbers 7:45](#) / [Numbers 7:51](#) / [Numbers 7:57](#) / [Numbers 7:63](#) / [Numbers 7:69](#) / [Numbers 7:75](#) / [Numbers 7:81](#).

Each of them brought a sin offering: [Numbers 7:16](#) / [Numbers 7:22](#) / [Numbers 7:28](#) / [Numbers 7:34](#) / [Numbers 7:40](#) / [Numbers 7:46](#) / [Numbers 7:52](#) / [Numbers 7:58](#) / [Numbers 7:64](#) / [Numbers 7:70](#) / [Numbers 7:76](#) / [Numbers 7:82](#).

Each of them brought a peace offering, also called a fellowship offering, [Numbers 7:17](#) / [Numbers 7:23](#) / [Numbers 7:29](#) / [Numbers 7:35](#) / [Numbers 7:41](#) / [Numbers 7:47](#) / [Numbers 7:53](#) / [Numbers 7:59](#) / [Numbers 7:65](#) / [Numbers 7:71](#) / [Numbers 7:77](#) / [Numbers 7:83](#). Apart from the burnt offering, the offerings were for a meal of celebration for the dedication of the tabernacle.

‘These were the offerings of the Israelite leaders for the dedication of the altar when it was anointed: twelve silver plates, twelve silver sprinkling bowls and twelve gold dishes. Each silver plate weighed a hundred and thirty shekels, and each sprinkling bowl seventy shekels. Altogether, the silver dishes weighed two thousand four hundred shekels, according to the sanctuary shekel. The twelve gold dishes filled with incense weighed ten shekels each, according to the sanctuary shekel. Altogether, the gold dishes weighed a hundred and twenty shekels. The total number of animals for the burnt offering came to twelve young bulls, twelve rams and twelve male lambs a year old, together with their grain offering. Twelve male goats were used for the sin offering. The total number of animals for the sacrifice of the fellowship offering came to twenty-four oxen, sixty rams, sixty male goats and sixty male lambs a year old.’

Numbers 7:84-88

[Numbers 7:84-87](#) is basically a summary of everything which took place concerning the offerings of the Israelite leaders for the dedication of the altar when it was anointed. These were all the offerings for the dedication of the altar after it was anointed, [Numbers 7:88](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘By the anointing, the altar was consecrated to God; by this dedication it was solemnly appointed to that service for which it had been erected.’

‘When Moses entered the tent of meeting to speak with the LORD, he heard the voice speaking to him from between the two cherubim above the atonement cover on the ark of the covenant law. In this way, the LORD spoke to him.’

Numbers 7:89

Here we read that Moses met with God at the tabernacle and heard His voice, Exodus 25:17. For the next forty years, this is the way God would communicate with Moses, implying that Moses was going to be God's leader among His people.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Thus was the promise of Exodus 25:20-22 fulfilled, and that as an immediate response on the part of God to the cheerful readiness with which the tribes had made their offerings and supplied everything needful for the Holy place and its service. All being now complete as God had appointed, and the camp purified from defilements, God meets Moses the mediator of the people, not as before on the peak of Sinai far away, but in the midst of them, in the dwelling-place which He henceforth vouchsafed to tenant.’

CHAPTER 8

INTRODUCTION

‘The LORD said to Moses, “Speak to Aaron and say to him, ‘When you set up the lamps, see that all seven light up the area in front of the lampstand.’” Aaron did so; he set up the lamps so that they faced forward on the lampstand, just as the LORD commanded Moses. This is how the lampstand was made: It was made of hammered gold, from its base to its blossoms. The lampstand was made exactly like the pattern the LORD had shown Moses.’ Numbers 8:1-4

SETTING UP THE LAMPS

It appears that the priests are now ready to offer people's sacrifices to God, Exodus 40:4. Now that the tabernacle was completed, the lighting of lamps showed that God was among His people and ready to receive their sacrifices, Numbers 7:89.

It is back in Exodus 25:31-40, where we read about God's original design for the lampstand. Later, in Exodus 37:17-34, we read that the lampstand was made as God wanted it, and in Exodus 40:24-25, we read about it being set up, and finally, in Leviticus 24:2, we read about the sacred oil which was to be used. In the passages above, we're told that Aaron set up the lamps so that they faced forward on the lampstand, Numbers 8:1-3 / Revelation 1:20.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning the lamps, Numbers 8:2.

‘The whole seven shall be lighted at one time, that seven may be ever burning.’

The lampstand was made of hammered gold from its base to its blossoms, Numbers 8:4 / Exodus 25:31-40 / Revelation 1:12-20. Notice the lampstand was made exactly like the pattern the LORD had shown Moses, Numbers 8:4 / Exodus 25:31-40.

THE SETTING APART OF THE LEVITES

‘The LORD said to Moses: “Take the Levites from among all the Israelites and make them ceremonially clean. To purify them, do this: Sprinkle the water of cleansing on them; then have them shave their whole bodies and wash their

clothes. And so they will purify themselves. Have them take a young bull with its grain offering of the finest flour mixed with olive oil; then you are to take a second young bull for a sin offering. Bring the Levites to the front of the tent of meeting and assemble the whole Israelite community. You are to bring the Levites before the LORD, and the Israelites are to lay their hands on them. Aaron is to present the Levites before the LORD as a wave offering from the Israelites, so that they may be ready to do the work of the LORD. “Then the Levites are to lay their hands on the heads of the bulls, using one for a sin offering to the LORD and the other for a burnt offering, to make atonement for the Levites. Have the Levites stand in front of Aaron and his sons and then present them as a wave offering to the LORD. In this way, you are to set the Levites apart from the other Israelites, and the Levites will be mine. “After you have purified the Levites and presented them as a wave offering, they are to come to do their work at the tent of meeting. They are the Israelites who are to be given wholly to me. I have taken them as my own in place of the firstborn, the first male offspring from every Israelite woman. Every firstborn male in Israel, whether human or animal, is mine. When I struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, I set them apart for myself. And I have taken the Levites in place of all the firstborn sons in Israel. From among all the Israelites, I have given the Levites as gifts to Aaron and his sons to do the work at the tent of meeting on behalf of the Israelites and to make atonement for them so that no plague will strike the Israelites when they go near the sanctuary.” Numbers 8:5-19

Any work which was to be done within the tabernacle needed to be holy work. The tabernacle was a holy place, and those who worked within it must also be holy.

The priests had their dedication, Leviticus 8-9, and here, we read that the Levites, that is, the priests, needed to be ceremonially clean before doing any work within the tabernacle, Numbers 8:5-7.

Unger, in his commentary, says the following concerning the specifics required for the cleansing of the Levites.

1. By sprinkling with water, Numbers 8:7 / Ezekiel 36:25.
2. By shaving all their flesh, Numbers 8:7 / Leviticus 14:9.
3. By washing their garments, Numbers 8:7.
4. By atonement being made for them, Numbers 8:8-12.
5. By identifying them with all Israel who were represented by them, Numbers 8:9-10.
6. By their being waved before Jehovah, Numbers 8:11-13.
7. By the subordination of the Levites to the priests, Numbers 8:13.
8. By commemorating the event of their being given unto Jehovah instead of the first-born, Numbers 8:16-19.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘As the water by which the Levites were here purified must have been the water prepared from the ashes of the red heifer, this ordinance was undoubtedly instituted before this time, though not described till Numbers 19:1-10 of this book; but that chapter might be in connection with any of the preceding ordinances, as well as where it is now found.’ Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘We see from Hebrews 9:13-14, that these ashes mingled with water, and sprinkled on the unclean, and which sanctified to the purification of the flesh, were intended to typify the blood of Christ, which purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God, Hebrews 9:15; for as without this sprinkling with the water of the sin-offering the Levites were not fit to serve God in the wilderness, so without this sprinkling of the blood of Christ no conscience can be purged from dead works to serve the living God, Numbers 19:1-10.’

Although we are not told exactly how they did this, as a bull was sacrificed, Numbers 8:8, the children of Israel laid their hands on the Levites, Numbers 8:9-10, to bless them and pray for their dedication before the LORD.

By putting their hands on the Levites, the people were demonstrating that they would accept the Levites for the uniqueness of their God-ordained function among the people.

Thomas, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The ‘laying on of hands’, Numbers 8:10, was likewise ‘done in some representative way, e.g., by the laying on of hands by the twelve tribal leaders upon the heads of the three division leaders of the Levites.’

They were also demonstrating that they would support the Levites as a tribe that was separated from Israel as special priests for the sake of Israel, Numbers 8:11. The Levites are to lay their hands on the heads of the bulls, using one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering, to make atonement for the Levites, Numbers 8:12. The Levites are stand in front of Aaron and his sons and then present them as a wave offering to the LORD, Numbers 8:13 / Zechariah 11:13.

Cook, in his commentary, says the following concerning the wave offering.

‘Ancient tradition says that Aaron merely pointed to the Levites and then waved his hands appropriately before the altar.’

The Levites are regarded as Israel’s firstborn given to God, Numbers 8:14-19 / Numbers 3:40-51 / Numbers 18:6. Notice that God has given the Levites as gifts to Aaron and his sons to do the work at the tent of meeting on behalf of the Israelites and to make atonement for them so that no plague will strike the Israelites when they go near the sanctuary, Numbers 8:19.

‘Moses, Aaron, and the whole Israelite community did with the Levites just as the LORD commanded Moses. The Levites purified themselves and washed their clothes. Then Aaron presented them as a wave offering before the LORD and made atonement for them to purify them. After that, the Levites came to do their work at the tent of meeting under the supervision of Aaron and his sons. They did with the Levites just as the LORD commanded Moses. The LORD said to Moses, “This applies to the Levites: Men twenty-five years old or more shall come to take part in the work at the tent of meeting, but at the age of fifty, they must retire from their regular service and work no longer. They may assist their brothers in performing their duties at the tent of meeting, but they themselves must not do the work. This, then, is how you are to assign the responsibilities of the Levites.’ Numbers 8:20-26

After the cleansing ceremonial, Numbers 8:20-21 / Hebrews 10:19-20, and their commitment to provide for the Levites, the Levities now assume their work, Numbers 8:22.

God tells Moses that men twenty-five years old or more are to come to take part in the work at the tent of meeting, but at the age of fifty, they must retire from their regular service and work no longer, Numbers 8:23-25.

After they retire, they may assist their brothers in performing their duties at the tent of meeting, but they themselves must not do the work, Numbers 8:26. This is how Moses is to assign the responsibilities of the Levites, Numbers 8:26 / Numbers 1:53.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning the ages mentioned here.

‘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. 3. For the Levites, it was age twenty-five.’

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning those twenty-five years old and upwards.

‘The permanent limit as distinguished from the temporary, Numbers 4:3 / Numbers 4:23 / Numbers 4:30, though David found it necessary to extend the period of the Levites’ service by causing it to commence at 20 years of age, 1 Chronicles 23:24-28. This rule continued in force from the time of David downward, 2 Chronicles 31:17 / Ezra 3:8.’

CHAPTER 9

INTRODUCTION

‘The LORD spoke to Moses in the Desert of Sinai in the first month of the second year after they came out of Egypt. He said, “Have the Israelites celebrate the Passover at the appointed time. Celebrate it at the appointed time, at twilight on the fourteenth day of this month, in accordance with all its rules and regulations.” So Moses told the Israelites to celebrate the Passover, and they did so in the Desert of Sinai at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month. The Israelites did everything just as the LORD commanded Moses. But some of them could not celebrate the Passover on that day because they were ceremonially unclean on account of a dead body. So they came to Moses and Aaron that same day and said to Moses, “We have become unclean because of a dead body, but why should we be kept from presenting the LORD’s offering with the other Israelites at the appointed time?” Moses answered them, “Wait until I find out what the LORD commands concerning you.” Then the LORD said to Moses, “Tell the Israelites: ‘When any of you or your descendants are unclean because of a dead body or are away on a journey, they are still to celebrate the LORD’s Passover, but they are to do it on the fourteenth day of the second month at twilight. They are to eat the lamb, together with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They must not leave any of it till morning or break any of its bones. When they celebrate the Passover, they must follow all the regulations. But if anyone who is ceremonially clean and not on a journey fails to celebrate the Passover, they must be cut off from their people for not presenting the LORD’s offering at the appointed time. They will bear the consequences of their sin. “A foreigner residing among you is also to celebrate the LORD’s Passover in accordance with its rules and regulations. You must have the same regulations for both the foreigner and the native-born.”’ Numbers 9:1-14

THE PASSOVER

It’s been a year now since Israel arrived at Mount Sinai; however, they hadn’t observed the Passover command. They need to observe the Passover so that they won’t forget their experience in Egypt and God’s deliverance from Egypt, [Numbers 9:1-3](#) / [Exodus 12:1-27](#).

Moses now tells Israel to celebrate the Passover, and they did in the Desert of Sinai at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month, [Numbers 9:4-5](#). The Israelites did everything just as the LORD commanded Moses, [Numbers 9:5](#). Notice that some of them couldn’t celebrate the Passover because they had become defiled by a dead body, [Numbers 9:6-7](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘These men were probably Mishael and Elizaphan, who buried their cousins, Nadab and Abihu, within a week of this Passover, [Leviticus 10:4-5](#).’

They ask Moses why they should be kept from presenting the LORD’s offering with the other Israelites at the appointed time? [Numbers 9:7](#). Moses needs to enquire of the LORD on this matter, [Numbers 9:8](#).

Gods tells Moses, when any of them or their descendants are unclean because of a dead body or are away on a journey, they are still to celebrate the LORD’s Passover, however, they are to do it on the fourteenth day of the second month at twilight, [Numbers 9:9-11](#).

They are to eat the lamb, together with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, [Numbers 9:11](#). They mustn’t leave any of it till morning or break any of its bones and they must follow all the regulations, [Numbers 9:12](#).

However, if anyone who is ceremonially clean and not on a journey fails to celebrate the Passover, they must be cut off from their people for not presenting the LORD’s offering at the appointed time and they will bear the consequences of their sin, [Numbers 9:12-13](#).

Notice also, there are provisions for the foreigner, [Numbers 9:14](#). This was someone who had determined to settle with Israel and accept the religious ceremonies of the law of God. These instructions to Israel concerning the foreigner reminded Israel that they weren’t to be a nation that excluded people from the law of God.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is of significance that here a number of the prime requirements are enumerated again. Four of the chief regulations governing the ordinance are here specified as governing also this supplementary Passover.

1. Observe it on the fourteenth day of the month, Numbers 9:11.
2. Eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, Numbers 9:12.
3. Leave none of it until morning, Numbers 9:12.
4. Nor break a bone thereof, Numbers 9:12.

Added to this was the requirement that ‘all of the statute and all of the ordinance of the Passover’ were to be observed, Numbers 9:12.’

Sailhamer, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The purpose of including this segment of narrative was perhaps to show that God’s laws were not arbitrary and unreasonable. The Israelites themselves even played a part in their formulation.’

THE CLOUD ABOVE THE TABERNACLE

‘On the day the tabernacle, the tent of the covenant law, was set up, the cloud covered it. From evening till morning, the cloud above the tabernacle looked like fire. That is how it continued to be; the cloud covered it, and at night it looked like fire. Whenever the cloud lifted from above the tent, the Israelites set out; wherever the cloud settled, the Israelites encamped. At the LORD’s command, the Israelites set out, and at his command they encamped. As long as the cloud stayed over the tabernacle, they remained in camp. When the cloud remained over the tabernacle a long time, the Israelites obeyed the LORD’s order and did not set out. Sometimes the cloud was over the tabernacle only a few days; at the LORD’s command, they would encamp, and then at his command, they would set out. Sometimes the cloud stayed only from evening till morning, and when it lifted in the morning, they set out. Whether by day or by night, whenever the cloud lifted, they set out. Whether the cloud stayed over the tabernacle for two days or a month or a year, the Israelites would remain in camp and not set out; but when it lifted, they would set out. At the LORD’s command, they encamped, and at the LORD’s command, they set out. They obeyed the LORD’s order, in accordance with his command through Moses.’ Numbers 9:15-23

If we cast our minds back to when God delivered His people from Egypt, Israel knew that God was with them and leading them using a cloud by day and fire by night, Exodus 13:21 / Exodus 23:21. When the tabernacle was originally built, God blessed it by showing His presence in the form of the cloud by day and the fire by night, Exodus 40:34-38.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The phenomenon first appeared at the Exodus itself, Exodus 13:21-22. The cloud did not cover the whole structure, but the ‘tent of the testimony,’ i.e. the enclosure which contained the ‘ark of the testimony’, Exodus 25:16 / Exodus 25:22, and the holy place. The phenomenon is now again described in connection with the journeyings which are to be narrated in the sequel of the book.’

Here, they are reminded that God would still remain with them as they journeyed through the Promised Land. However, His presence would be manifested through the tabernacle. Later, we read that God’s glory filled the temple, 1 Kings 8:10-11, but when Israel became idolatrous, God’s glory left the temple, Ezekiel 10:3-4 / Ezekiel 10:18-19

On the day the tabernacle, the tent of the covenant law, was set up, the cloud covered it and from evening till morning the cloud above the tabernacle looked like fire, Numbers 9:15.

The cloud covered it, and at night it looked like fire, Numbers 9:16. Whenever the cloud lifted from above the tent, the Israelites set out and wherever the cloud settled, the Israelites encamped, Numbers 9:17.

Notice at the LORD's command, the Israelites set out, and at His command, they encamped, Numbers 9:18. As long as the cloud stayed over the tabernacle, they remained in camp, Numbers 9:18, and when the cloud remained over the tabernacle a long time, the Israelites obeyed the LORD's order and did not set out, Numbers 9:18-19.

Sometimes the cloud was over the tabernacle only a few days and at the LORD's command they would encamp, and then at his command they would set out, Numbers 9:20.

Sometimes the cloud stayed only from evening till morning, and when it lifted in the morning, they set out, Numbers 9:21. Whether by day or by night, whenever the cloud lifted, they set out, Numbers 9:21.

Whether the cloud stayed over the tabernacle for two days or a month or a year, the Israelites would remain in camp and not set out, but when it lifted, they would set out, Numbers 9:22.

At the LORD's command they encamped, and at the LORD's command they set out, Numbers 9:23. This is all about teaching them obedience and following God's commands, Numbers 9:23.

Sailhamer, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The writer is intent on showing that at this point in their walk with the Lord, Israel was obedient and followed the Lord's guidance. The writer's concern to make this point can be seen in that seven times in this brief narrative, it is said that they ‘obeyed the commandment of the Lord’ and thus travelled when the cloud lifted from the tabernacle and moved, Numbers 9:18 / Numbers 9:20 / Numbers 9:23 / Exodus 17:1.’

CHAPTER 10

INTRODUCTION

‘The LORD said to Moses: “Make two trumpets of hammered silver and use them for calling the community together and for having the camps set out. When both are sounded, the whole community is to assemble before you at the entrance to the tent of meeting. If only one is sounded, the leaders—the heads of the clans of Israel—are to assemble before you. When a trumpet blast is sounded, the tribes camping on the east are to set out. At the sounding of a second blast, the camps on the south are to set out. The blast will be the signal for setting out. To gather the assembly, blow the trumpets, but not with the signal for setting out. “The sons of Aaron, the priests, are to blow the trumpets.

This is to be a lasting ordinance for you and the generations to come. When you go into battle in your own land against an enemy who is oppressing you, sound a blast on the trumpets. Then you will be remembered by the LORD your God and rescued from your enemies. Also at your times of rejoicing—your appointed festivals and New Moon feasts—you are to sound the trumpets over your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, and they will be a memorial for you before your God. I am the LORD your God.” Numbers 10:1-10

THE SILVER TRUMPETS

As we can imagine, moving a vast number of people was never going to be easy, and so, God instructs Moses to make two silver trumpets, Numbers 10:1-2, which, when blown, would certainly get everyone's attention. These trumpets were different from the ram's horn trumpets, which were used in reference to worship.

Cook, in his commentary, says the following concerning why there were only two trumpets.

‘It was because, at that time, Aaron had only two sons, and when the number of priests greatly increased at a later date, the number of trumpets was increased; there were seven in the times of Joshua and 120 in the times of Solomon, 2 Chronicles 5:12.’

When trumpets sound, the whole community is to assemble before Moses at the entrance to the tent of meeting, Numbers 10:3. If only one is sounded, the leaders, that is, the heads of the clans of Israel, are to assemble before Moses, Numbers 10:4.

When a trumpet blast is sounded, the tribes camping on the east are to set out, Numbers 10:5. At the sounding of a second blast, the camps on the south are to set out.

The blast will be the signal for setting out, Numbers 10:6. To gather the assembly, they are to blow the trumpets, but not with the signal for setting out, Numbers 10:7.

The sons of Aaron, Eleazar and Ithamar, Exodus 6:23, have the responsibility for blowing the trumpets, and this is to be a lasting ordinance for Israel and the generations to come, Numbers 10:8.

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 trumpets, that is ram horns, in the days of Joshua, Joshua 6:4, and of a hundred and twenty in the days of Solomon, 2 Chronicles 5:12.

When Israel goes into battle in their own land against an enemy who is oppressing them, sound a blast on the trumpets, Numbers 10:9. Then they will be remembered by God and rescued from their enemies, Numbers 10:9.

We know when the Lord returns, the trumpet will be blown, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18. In times of rejoicing and appointed festivals and New Moon feasts, they are to sound the trumpets over their burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, and they will be a memorial for them before God, Numbers 10:10.

Budd, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The cloud in Numbers 9:15-23 represents the divine initiative in leadership, the trumpets constitute the response of the human leadership as it summons the congregation to gather at the tent and signals the moment of advance for each tribal group.’

THE ISRAELITES LEAVE SINAI

‘On the twentieth day of the second month of the second year, the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle of the covenant law. Then the Israelites set out from the Desert of Sinai and travelled from place to place until the cloud came to rest in the Desert of Paran. They set out, this first time, at the LORD’s command through Moses. The divisions of the camp of Judah went first, under their standard. Nahshon, son of Amminadab, was in command. Nethanel, son of Zuar, was over the division of the tribe of Issachar, and Eliab, son of Helon, was over the division of the tribe of Zebulun. Then the tabernacle was taken down, and the Gershonites and Merarites, who carried it, set out.

The divisions of the camp of Reuben went next, under their standard. Elizur, son of Shedeur, was in command. Shelumiel, son of Zurishaddai, was over the division of the tribe of Simeon, and Eliasaph, son of Deuel, was over the division of the tribe of Gad. Then the Kohathites set out, carrying the holy things. The tabernacle was to be set up before they arrived. The divisions of the camp of Ephraim went next, under their standard. Elishama, son of Ammihud, was in command. Gamaliel, son of Pedahzur, was over the division of the tribe of Manasseh, and Abidan, son of Gideoni, was over the division of the tribe of Benjamin. Finally, as the rear guard for all the units, the divisions of the camp of Dan set out under their standard. Ahiezer, son of Ammishaddai, was in command. Pagiel, son of Okran, was over the division of the tribe of Asher, and Ahira, son of Enan, was over the division of the tribe of Naphtali. This was the order of march for the Israelite divisions as they set out. Now Moses said to Hobab, son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses’ father-in-law, “We are setting out for the place about 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.” He answered, “No, I will not go; I am going back to my own land and my own people.” But Moses said, “Please do not leave us. You know where we should camp in the wilderness, and you can be our eyes. If you come with us, we will share with you whatever good things the LORD gives us.” So they set out from the mountain of the LORD and travelled for

three days. The ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them during those three days to find them a place to rest. The cloud of the LORD was over them by day when they set out from the camp. Whenever the ark set out, Moses said, “Rise up, LORD! May your enemies be scattered; may your foes flee before you.” Whenever it came to rest, he said, “Return, LORD, to the countless thousands of Israel.” Numbers 10:11-36

After being at Mount Sinai for a year now, Exodus 19:1, notice that the ‘cloud lifted up’, Numbers 10:11 / Numbers 9:15-16, which meant it was time to move. Israel set out from the Desert of Sinai and travelled from place to place until the cloud came to rest in the Desert of Paran, Numbers 10:12. They set out, this first time, at the LORD’s command through Moses, Numbers 10:13 / Numbers 9:17-23.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This was three days’ journey from the wilderness of Sinai, Numbers 10:33, and the people had three stations; the first at Kibroth-Hattaavah, the second at Hazeroth, Numbers 11:35, and the third in the wilderness of Paran, Numbers 12:16.’

The listing of the tribes by their leaders was to set the order of their march throughout the wilderness, Numbers 2:1-31. The camp of Judah went first, under their standard and Nahshon son of Amminadab was in command, Numbers 10:14.

Nethanel son of Zuar was over the division of the tribe of Issachar, and Eliab son of Helon was over the division of the tribe of Zebulun, Numbers 10:15-16. Then the tabernacle was taken down, and the Gershonites and Merarites, who carried it, set out, Numbers 10:17.

The camp of Reuben went next, under their standard and Elizur son of Shedeur was in command, Numbers 10:18. Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai was over the division of the tribe of Simeon, and Eliasaph son of Deuel was over the division of the tribe of Gad, Numbers 10:19-20.

As we have mentioned in previous chapters, some commentators suggest that the name Deuel, Numbers 10:20 / Numbers 2:14, should actually be the name Reuel.

Jethro, that is, Reuel, Moses’ father-in-law, eventually returned to Midian. Then the Kohathites set out, carrying the holy things, and the tabernacle was to be set up before they arrived, Numbers 10:21.

The camp of Ephraim went next, under their standard, and Elishama son of Ammihud was in command, Numbers 10:22. Gamaliel son of Pedahzur was over the division of the tribe of Manasseh, and Abidan son of Gideon was over the division of the tribe of Benjamin, Numbers 10:23-24. Finally, as the rear guard for all the units, the camp of Dan set out under their standard, and Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai was in command, Numbers 10:25.

Pagiel son of Okran was over the division of the tribe of Asher, and Ahira son of Enan was over the division of the tribe of Naphtali, Numbers 10:26-27. This was the order of march for the Israelite divisions as they set out, Numbers 10:28.

Hobab, Numbers 10:29, one of Jethro’s sons, however, stayed with the Israelites while they were at Mount Sinai. But when the Israelites were moving on, Hobab also decided to return to his father’s house in Midian.

Notice that Moses wants Hobab to go with Israel, Numbers 10:29, but Hobab refuses as he wants to return to his own land and people, Numbers 10:30. Moses pleads with him not to leave because of his knowledge of the wilderness, Numbers 10:31. Moses promises him if he goes with them, then Israel will share with him whatever good things the LORD gives them, Numbers 10:32.

Moses’ perseverance convinced him to stay with Israel, and the proof of this is seen that his descendants are mentioned to be living in Canaan many years later, Judges 1:16 / 1 Samuel 15:6.

Thompson, in his commentary, says the following concerning Hobab.

1. Hobab is here called a Midianite, but in Judges 4:11, he is said to be a Kenite.

‘Hobab was the leader of a group known as the Kenites, a Midianite clan, Judges 1:16 / Judges 4:11. What is wrong with calling a man a ‘Texan’ on one occasion, and an ‘American’ on another?’

2. Moses' father-in-law is called 'Reuel', [Exodus 2:18](#), 'Jethro' in [Exodus 3:1](#) and 'Hobab' here.

Due to missing information, this problem is insoluble. The word here rendered father-in-law, in Hebrew, actually may mean father-in-law, brother-in-law, or some other close family relationship. There is also the question (unknown) as to whether any one, any two, or even all three of these names may have referred to one individual. Also, it is not clear whether the name Reuel, for example, might not have been a title held by Jethro, or whether Jethro might have been a title held by Reuel. It is a careless scholar indeed who can bring himself to allege a 'contradiction' in any area where such a profound lack of information exists.

3. Did Hobab actually go with Moses? 'From [Judges 1:16](#), it appears likely that Hobab acceded to Moses' request.' After travelling for three days, the ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them during those three days to find them a place to rest, [Numbers 10:33](#). The ark of the covenant was carried before the people, [Numbers 10:21](#) / [Joshua 3:6](#), which meant that God was taking the lead.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'From [Numbers 10:21](#) / [Numbers 2:17](#), it would appear that the usual place of the ark during the march was in the midst of the host. It was evidently an exceptional case when, in [Joshua 3:3](#) / [Joshua 3:6](#), the ark preceded the people into the bed of the Jordan. Hence, the words 'went before them' do not here imply local precedence. The phrase, or its equivalent, is used of a leader going out in command of his troops, [Numbers 27:17](#) / [Deuteronomy 31:3](#) / [1 Samuel 18:16](#) / [2 Chronicles 1:10](#), and similarly, the ark may well be said to have gone at the head of the Israelites, when it was borne solemnly in the midst of them as the outward embodiment of the presence whose sovereign word was their law.'

The cloud of the LORD was over them by day when they set out from the camp, [Numbers 10:34](#).

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

'The Israelites apparently carried the ark in front of the whole nation as they marched, [Numbers 10:33](#). The cloud was evidently over it but not necessarily over the whole nation, [Numbers 10:34](#). The cloud stood over the ark and led those carrying it and the nation as the Israelites moved forward.'

Whenever the ark set out, Moses said, 'Rise up, LORD! May your enemies be scattered; may your foes flee before you,' [Numbers 10:35](#). When Moses asks the Lord to rise up, [Numbers 10:35](#), he's praying that God would scatter Israel's enemies even before they begin their march.

Whenever the ark came to rest, he said, 'Return, LORD, to the countless thousands of Israel, [Numbers 10:36](#). When the ark of the covenant settled in a specific place, the prayer was that God remain among His people. As long as Israel was obedient to the will of God, this prayer was answered.

CHAPTER 11

INTRODUCTION

'Now the people complained about their hardships in the hearing of the LORD, and when he heard them, his anger was aroused. Then fire from the LORD burned among them and consumed some of the outskirts of the camp. When the people cried out to Moses, he prayed to the LORD, and the fire died down. So that place was called Taberah because fire from the LORD had burned among them.' [Numbers 11:1-3](#)

FIRE FROM THE LORD

If we know anything about the Israelites, it's simply this: they were complainers, [Exodus 14:11-12](#) / [Exodus 15:24-25](#). Here they are complaining about the hardships they were going through, [Numbers 11:1](#).

But God wants them to stop complaining and start being obedient to Him and trust Him. It appears that the only way they were going to start trusting God was with the use of fire, [Numbers 11:1](#) / [Psalms 78:21](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘For his extraordinary kindness was lost on such an ungrateful and rebellious people. And his anger was kindled; Divine justice was necessarily incensed against such inexcusable conduct.’

Notice that their punishment for not trusting God stopped only when Moses intervened on Israel's behalf, [Numbers 11:2](#). It also appears that Moses was totally aware that if he didn't intervene, then Israel would have been destroyed by the Lord. That place was called Taberah because fire from the LORD had burned among them, [Numbers 11:3](#).

QUAIL FROM THE LORD

‘The rabble with them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing and said, “If only we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost—also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic. But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!” The manna was like coriander seed and looked like resin. The people went around gathering it and then ground it in a hand mill or crushed it in a mortar. They cooked it in a pot or made it into loaves. And it tasted like something made with olive oil. When the dew settled on the camp at night, the manna also came down.’ [Numbers 11:4-9](#)

After everything which God has done for Israel in bringing them out of Egyptian slavery, we would think that going back to Egypt would be the last thing on their minds.

However, the rabble among them, [Numbers 11:4](#) / [Exodus 12:38](#), desired to have some meat to eat, [Numbers 11:4](#), and it appears to remind them of all the lovely food they enjoyed whilst they were slaves in Egypt, [Numbers 11:5](#). We must note that the rabble may be referring to those who came out of Egypt with the Israelites, [Exodus 12:38](#). If this is the case, then it's possible that all the complaining was started by them, and Israel followed their lead. Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This mongrel people, who had comparatively little of the knowledge of God, feeling the difficulties and fatigues of the journey, were the first to complain; and then we find the children of Israel joined them in their complaining, and made a common cause with these demi-infidels.’

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘As believers, we must be careful of the strong flavours of the interesting and stimulating fare that the world has to offer and not imbibe these things too much. Too much participation in these things can make us feel bored with and lose interest in what God has provided for our spiritual nourishment, which may seem bland and unappealing by comparison. God's provision for our nourishment and growth, our manna, is His written word and His incarnate Word, the Bread of Life, [1 Peter 2:2](#) / [John 6:48-58](#).’

They have lost their appetite, and they never see anything but this manna! [Numbers 11:6](#). The manna didn't seem to fulfil their desire for meat, [Exodus 16:14-36](#), and despite the miraculous presence of the manna, they still didn't understand that God was with them and taking care of their physical needs.

The feeding of the manna should have increased their faith in God, but here it appears to have the opposite effect, James 1:14. The bread from heaven is like coriander seed, Numbers 11:7, about the size of a sesame seed, and sweet like honey, Exodus 16:31. It was the colour of bdellium, a pear-like colour, Numbers 11:7, and it was either baked or boiled, Exodus 16:23.

The people went around gathering it and then ground it in a hand mill or crushed it in a mortar, and they cooked it in a pot or made it into loaves, Numbers 11:8. It tasted like something made with olive oil, and when the dew settled on the camp at night, the manna also came down, Numbers 11:8-9.

Though the bread from heaven may have been similar to the modern-day mana in the Sinai Peninsula, it wasn't the same thing. The modern-day mana never appears in great quantities, it doesn't last year-round, and it is confined to a small geographic region.

The purpose of giving the bread from heaven was not only to provide for the material needs of Israel but to teach them eternal lessons of dependence on God, Deuteronomy 8:3. When God puts us in a place of need, He wants us to do more than meet the need; He wants to teach an eternal lesson.

Feeding Israel through the bread from heaven was an example of God's way of cooperating with man. Israel could not bring the manna, and God would not gather it for them; each had to do their part.

The people call the bread from heaven manna, Exodus 16:15, and the name manna means 'what's that?' Exodus 16:31. When God's provision comes, we often do not recognise it as God has promised to meet our needs, not our expectations.

The instructions on the gathering of bread from heaven are found in Exodus 16:16-19. An omer could be as much as a gallon, but early, it may have meant only a 'cupful', an imprecise measure.

God commands some bread from heaven be set aside as a testimony to His provision, Exodus 16:31-36. This pot full of the bread from heaven was later put into the ark of the covenant, referred to here as the Testimony, Hebrews 9:4.

What did manna taste like?

Jewish legends have their own spin and say the following.

'One only had to desire a certain dish, and no sooner had he thought of it then manna had the flavour of the dish desired. The same food had a different taste to everyone who partook of it, according to his age, to the little children, it tasted like milk, to the strong youths like bread, to the old men like honey, to the sick like barley steeped in oil and honey.'

Ginzberg, in his commentary, says the following.

'They also say that manna was bitter in the mouth of Gentiles.'

What was this bread from heaven?

Buckingham, in his commentary, says the following.

'Many have sought to identify with what the Arabs today call 'mana', which is formed when a tiny insect punctures the bark of the tamarisk tree, drinks the sap, and exudes a clear liquid that solidifies as a sugary globule when it hits the ground. When the sun comes up, it melts quickly and disappears.'

'Moses heard the people of every family wailing at the entrance to their tents. The LORD became exceedingly angry, and Moses was troubled. He asked the LORD, "Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land you promised on oath to their ancestors? Where can I get meat for all these people? They keep wailing to me, 'Give us meat to eat!' I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. If this is how you are going to treat me,

please go ahead and kill me—if I have found favour in your eyes—and do not let me face my own ruin.” The LORD said to Moses: “Bring me seventy of Israel’s elders who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people.

Have them come to the tent of meeting, that they may stand there with you. I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take some of the power of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them. They will share the burden of the people with you so that you will not have to carry it alone.’ Numbers 11:10-17

Notice that the fire which came down from heaven didn’t stop their complaining, here we read that the people were organised in their protest in that every man wept at the door of his tent, Numbers 11:10 / Zechariah 12:12.

God is really angry with His people and Moses is deeply troubled, Numbers 11:10, I’m sure he thought that he has a failure in terms of being Israel’s leader. Moses appears to complain to God for giving him the leadership position among God’s people, and asks God a series of questions, Numbers 11:11-14, and it appears that it has become too much for him, 1 Thessalonians 3:3.

I guess Moses needed to learn not to rely on his own leadership skills and God was teaching him that he needs to trust in God to help him lead His people, 2 Corinthians 12:9.

In the midst of Moses’ despair, he asks God just to go ahead and kill him, Numbers 11:15 / Jonah 4:1-3, which tells us how much strain Moses was under trying to lead God’s people.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Moses’ use of the mother figure to describe God, Numbers 11:12, is unusual but not unique in Scripture, e.g., Exodus 4:22 / Isaiah 49:15 / Isaiah 66:13 / Hosea 11:1 / 1 Thessalonians 2:7. Normally, the Bible presents God as a male because He relates to people in traditionally male roles primarily. However, He also deals with us in ways that are more typically female, and in these instances He compares Himself to females.’

Notice what God did, in order to remove some of the burdens from his leadership, He chose seventy elders to share the responsibilities, Numbers 11:16 / Exodus 3:16 / Exodus 5:6 / Exodus 24:1 / Exodus 24:9.

If we remember this has happened before, as a result of Jethro’s counsel, Exodus 18:17-26. However, in this case, the emphasis is on the spiritual leadership of the people.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The gracious God never called a man to perform a work without furnishing him with adequate strength; and to refuse to do it on the pretence of inability is little short of rebellion against God.’

God assures Moses that He will come down and speak with him, and He will take some of the power of the Spirit that is on him and put it on the seventy elders, Numbers 11:17. By doing so, the seventy elders will share the burden of the people with Moses so that Moses will not have to carry it alone, Numbers 11:17.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Seventy is accordingly the number of colleagues assigned to Moses to share his burden with him. To it, the Jews trace the origin of the Sanhedrim. Subsequent notices, Numbers 16:25 / Joshua 7:6 / Joshua 8:10 / Joshua 8:33 / Joshua 9:11 / Joshua 23:2 / Joshua 24:1 / Joshua 24:31, so connect the elders with the government of Israel as to point to the fact that the appointment now made was not a merely temporary one, though it would seem to have soon fallen into desuetude. We find no traces of it in the days of the Judges and the Kings.’

‘Tell the people: ‘Consecrate yourselves in preparation for tomorrow when you will eat meat. The LORD heard you when you wailed, “If only we had meat to eat! We were better off in Egypt!” Now the LORD will give you meat, and you will eat it. You will not eat it for just one day, or two days, or five, ten or twenty days, but for a whole month—until it comes out of your nostrils and you loathe it—because you have rejected the LORD, who is among you, and have wailed before him, saying, “Why did we ever leave Egypt?”’ But Moses said, “Here I am among six hundred thousand men on foot, and you say, ‘I will give them meat to eat for a whole month!’ Would they have enough if flocks and herds were slaughtered for them? Would they have enough if all the fish in the sea were caught for them?” The LORD answered Moses, “Is the LORD’s arm too short? Now you will see whether or not what I say will come true for you.” Numbers 11:18-23

God asks the people to consecrate themselves in preparation for what is coming up, Numbers 11:18. God has heard their wailing and heard their words, Numbers 11:18, and so, He is going to provide the meat they desire in the form of quail, Numbers 11:18.

One might think God would be afraid of rewarding their complaining hearts, yet He knows He has plenty of ways to teach them, now, they need food! In this case, it was quail, Exodus 16:9-14.

Notice, though, that there is some punishment in the giving of the quail in that the people would initially be overwhelmed by one month's quail in one day, Numbers 11:19-20.

They followed their lusts for the pleasures of Egypt rather than the will of the Lord. They wanted to trust in the security of their life in Egypt, rather than put their faith in God.

The mercy of God is displayed; instead of answering their complaints with judgement or discipline, God gives them what they need instead. Moses says to God, He is among six hundred thousand men on foot, and You say, You will give them meat to eat for a whole month! Numbers 11:21.

Would they have enough if flocks and herds were slaughtered for them? Would they have enough if all the fish in the sea were caught for them? Numbers 11:22. The people couldn't eat their own flocks and herds, which were meant for sacrifices and daily milk.

While Moses asks God all these questions, God asks him if His arms are too short? Numbers 11:23. And so, to prove that God can absolutely care for His people, He produced a month's worth of quail for the people.

'So Moses went out and told the people what the LORD had said. He brought together seventy of their elders and had them stand around the tent. Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke with him, and he took some of the power of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied—but did not do so again. However, two men, whose names were Eldad and Medad, had remained in the camp. They were listed among the elders but did not go out to the tent. Yet the Spirit also rested on them, and they prophesied in the camp. A young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." Joshua, son of Nun, who had been Moses' aide since youth, spoke up and said, "Moses, my lord, stop them!" But Moses replied, "Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!" Then Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.' Numbers 11:24-30

Moses comes out and tells the people what the LORD had said, and he brings together seventy of their elders and has them stand around the tent, Numbers 11:24 / Numbers 11:16-17.

The LORD comes down in the cloud and speaks with Moses, and he took some of the power of the Spirit that was on Moses and put it on the seventy elders, Numbers 11:25. Notice the Holy Spirit came on the elders as He was upon Moses, Numbers 11:25.

Merrill, in his commentary, says the following.

'Though the Old Testament does not contain a fully developed theology of the Holy Spirit, it does reveal enough to show that the Spirit was a manifestation of God Himself and not merely a way of referring to some divine attribute, for example, Genesis 1:2 / Genesis 6:3 / Exodus 31:3 / Numbers 24:2 / Judges 3:10 / 1 Samuel 10:6 / 1 Samuel 10:10 / Isaiah 11:2 / Isaiah 42:1 / Isaiah 61:1.'

Their inspired praises of God and prophesying of the will of God, Numbers 11:25, were a witness to the faithfulness and presence of God, and it was through these things that the Israelites became encouraged by the presence of God.

Merrill, in his commentary, says the following.

'Prophesying here does not refer to prediction or even to proclamation but to giving (in song or speech) praise and similar expressions without prior training, see the comparable experience of Saul in 1 Samuel 10:9-11. See also 1 Chronicles 25:1.'

The text doesn't tell us if Eldad and Medad, Numbers 11:26, the two elders, were present at the tabernacle but the Lord still poured out His Spirit on them, Numbers 11:26.

A young man ran and told Moses that Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp, Numbers 11:27. Joshua recommended that they shouldn't be allowed to prophesy, Numbers 11:28, but Moses counselled that regardless of where they were, they were to be allowed to do the work of God, Numbers 11:29 / Luke 9:49-50.

We see in Moses's response to Joshua that he acknowledged that it would be good if everyone spoke the praises of God and prophesied His will. We see in this act of prophesying that God wanted His prophets not to isolate their work for themselves, but that they prophesy the wonderful works of God to the nations. Then Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp, Numbers 11:30.

'Now a wind went out from the LORD and drove quail in from the sea. It scattered them up to two cubits deep all around the camp, as far as a day's walk in any direction. All that day and night and all the next day, the people went out and gathered quail. No one gathered less than ten homers. Then they spread them out all around the camp. But while the meat was still between their teeth and before it could be consumed, the anger of the LORD burned against the people, and he struck them with a severe plague. Therefore, the place was named Kibroth Hattaavah because there they buried the people who had craved other food. From Kibroth Hattaavah, the people travelled to Hazeroth and stayed there.' Numbers 11:31-35

Notice it was the Lord who provided the wind and drove the quail in from the sea, Numbers 11:31 / Exodus 16:13 / Jonah 1:4. The wind scattered them up to two cubits deep, that is, around three feet deep all around the camp, as far as a day's walk in any direction, Numbers 11:31.

Cole, in his commentary, says the following.

'The quails mentioned here 'migrate regularly between southern Europe and Arabia across the Sinai Peninsula. They are small, bullet-headed birds with a strong but low flight, usually roosting on the ground or in the low bushes at nightfall. When exhausted, they would be unable to take off again. The birds are good eating and were a favourite delicacy of the Egyptians.'

All that day and night and all the next day the people went out and gathered quail, Numbers 11:32. The quail could easily be caught, so the one who caught the least caught ten homers, Numbers 11:32, which is around sixty-five bushels, Leviticus 27:16 / Psalms 78:27-31.

Notice, however, that the blessing was also a curse, Psalms 106:13-15. They were given quail because of their complaining, but it was given in such a way that it made the people sick, and as a result, many died, Numbers 11:33-34. In other words, they reaped the result of their sin of desiring the material security of Egypt, over trust in the Lord. The place they named Kibroth Hattaavah, Numbers 11:34, means 'Graves of Craving'. From Kibroth Hattaavah, the people travelled to Hazeroth and stayed there, Numbers 11:35.

CHAPTER 12

INTRODUCTION

'Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite. "Has the LORD spoken only through Moses?" they asked. "Hasn't he also spoken through us?" And the LORD heard this. (Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.) At once the LORD said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, "Come out to the tent of meeting, all three of you." So the three of them went out. Then the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud; he stood at the entrance to the tent and summoned Aaron and Miriam. When the two of them stepped forward, he said, "Listen to my words: "When there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, reveal myself to them in visions, I speak to them in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; he

is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?” The anger of the LORD burned against them, and he left them.’ Numbers 12:1-9

MIRIAM AND AARON OPPOSE MOSES

In the previous chapter, we learned that Israel complained about a lack of good food, despite the Lord providing manna and quail. Here, in this chapter, we find Miriam, the prophetess, [Exodus 15:20-21](#), and Aaron complaining about Moses marrying a foreigner, that is, Zipporah the Cushite, [Numbers 12:1](#). Note that some translations have the word Ethiopia.

We know that Moses did indeed marry a woman named Zipporah, [Exodus 2:21](#), but there are a few thoughts about the Zipporah who is mentioned here because back in [Exodus 3:16-22](#), Moses’ wife was called Zipporah, but she was from Midian.

Some commentators believe that Zipporah had died, and this was a second wife Moses took after her death. Other commentators believe that Moses took a second wife in addition to Zipporah.

While others suggest that Jethro, Zipporah’s father, was actually from Ethiopia and had moved to Midian, making Zipporah an Ethiopian by birth but living in Midian.

One other commentator suggested that it’s possible that the word Ethiopian which was being used here, was a derogatory term used to criticise Zipporah because of their dark skin.

Notice, however, there was a more serious complaint, they complained about Moses being the lone leader of the people, [Numbers 12:2](#) / [Matthew 13:57](#). We are told that Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth, [Numbers 12:3](#). This is one reason why God is about to deal with this matter quickly. Interestingly, God appears to ignore the complaints against Moses being married to Zipporah, but instead, focuses on the complaint against Moses being their leader and the authority he had. God didn’t waste any time in speaking, which tells us that in His eyes, this was a serious matter.

God tells Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, to come out to the tent of meeting, and they obeyed, [Numbers 12:4](#). The LORD comes down in a pillar of cloud and stands at the entrance to the tent and summoned Aaron and Miriam, [Numbers 12:5](#). When Aaron and Miriam stepped forward, God tells them to listen to His words, [Numbers 12:5-6](#).

God tells them that He spoke indirectly to other prophets through visions and dreams, [Numbers 12:6](#), but with Moses, who was His faithful servant, [Hebrews 3:5-6](#).

He spoke mouth to mouth, face to face, [Numbers 12:7-8](#) / [Exodus 33:20](#). This tells us that Moses had a real personal relationship with God. Remember that the words ‘face to face’ are a figure of speech, telling of great and unhindered intimacy. Moses’ face was not literally beholding the literal face of God, but he did enjoy direct, intimate conversation with the LORD.

Moses was God’s mediator between Himself and the people, and he became the example of how God would relate to all men personally through the mediatorship of Jesus, [Hebrews 3:2-6](#).

It was very clear that no one should challenge God’s appointed leader, Moses, [Numbers 12:8](#). The anger of the LORD burned against Aaron and Miriam, and He left them, [Numbers 12:9](#).

‘When the cloud lifted from above the tent, Miriam’s skin was leprous—it became as white as snow. Aaron turned toward her and saw that she had a defiling skin disease, and he said to Moses, “Please, my lord, I ask you not to hold against us the sin we have so foolishly committed. Do not let her be like a stillborn infant coming from its mother’s womb with its flesh half eaten away.” So Moses cried out to the LORD, “Please, God, heal her!” The LORD replied

to Moses, “If her father had spit in her face, would she not have been in disgrace for seven days? Confine her outside the camp for seven days; after that, she can be brought back.” So Miriam was confined outside the camp for seven days, and the people did not move on till she was brought back. After that, the people left Hazeroth and encamped in the Desert of Paran.’ Numbers 12:10-16

It appears that Miriam must have been the one who initiated the challenge against Moses, as she is the one who is punished with leprosy, which became as white as snow, Numbers 12:10. Notice that when Aaron saw what happened to his sister, his attitude towards Moses changed; he called Moses, ‘my lord’, Numbers 12:10-11.

Aaron pleads with Moses and asks that his sister not become like a stillborn infant coming from its mother’s womb with its flesh half eaten away, Numbers 12:12. He knows the only way to save his sister is by understanding Moses’ position and his job as mediator, and more importantly, accepting it.

Moses, after hearing Aaron’s pleas on behalf of Miriam, cries out to the LORD and asks Him to heal her, Numbers 12:13. The LORD replied to Moses and said, if her father had spit in her face, would she not have been in disgrace for seven days? Numbers 12:14.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning the spitting on the face.

‘In patriarchal times, this was a most severe penalty and entailed a period of seclusion and mourning on the part of the offender.’

Miriam is to be confined outside the camp for seven days, and after that she can be brought back, Numbers 12:14. Miriam was confined outside the camp for seven days, and the people didn’t move on till she was brought back, Numbers 12:15.

We must remember that Miriam would now, because of being a leper, have social disadvantages; she would have no social contact with anyone in Israel, Leviticus 13-14.

It’s certainly possible that she thought that she could rise to a position of power among the people, like Moses, but this led her to be humiliated and banished from among the people, Proverbs 16:18 / Isaiah 10:33.

Seven days were sufficient time to punish anyone who dared to question God’s anointed authority. Because of this incident, we know that the authority of God’s Word mustn’t be questioned either, John 12:48 / Galatians 1:6-9 / Revelation 22:18-19. The people left Hazeroth and encamped in the Desert of Paran, Numbers 12:16. The desert of Paran is Kadesh-Barnea, Deuteronomy 1:18.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

1. Zipporah, a Cushite married by Moses, shows the choice which Jesus Christ made in his calling the Gentiles to become his Bride, the Church.
2. The jealous opposition of Miriam and Aaron to Moses shows the envious hatred of the Jews against Christ and his apostles, when they saw that the Gentiles also were invited to share the heavenly banquet.
3. The leprosy that came to Miriam foreshadows the wretched state of the Jews as a consequence of their opposing God’s will, ever afterwards being: (a) without temple; (b) without sacrifice; (c) without state; (d) and without head.
4. 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.’

CHAPTER 13

INTRODUCTION

‘The LORD said to Moses, “Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites. From each ancestral tribe, send one of its leaders.” So at the LORD’s command, Moses sent them out from the Desert of Paran. All of them were leaders of the Israelites. These are their names: from the tribe of Reuben, Shammua son of Zakkur; from the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat son of Hori; from the tribe of Judah, Caleb son of Jephunneh; from the tribe of Issachar, Igal son of Joseph; from the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea son of Nun; from the tribe of Benjamin, Palti son of Raphu; from the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel son of Sodi; from the tribe of Manasseh (a tribe of Joseph), Gaddi son of Susi; from the tribe of Dan, Ammiel son of Gemalli; from the tribe of Asher, Sethur son of Michael; from the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi son of Vophsi; from the tribe of Gad, Geuel son of Maki. These are the names of the men Moses sent to explore the land. (Moses gave Hoshea, son of Nun, the name Joshua.)’ Numbers 13:1-16

EXPLORING CANAAN

This chapter begins with God asking Moses to send some men to explore the Promised Land.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Here at the outset, the question arises as to ‘whose idea was it?’ that the children of Israel should spy out the land. Here, there is no mention of the people as being behind such a plan, but in Deuteronomy, [Deuteronomy 1:20-22](#), it is revealed that the people themselves were behind this proposal.’

Notice that one man was taken from each tribe in order to form the exploration party, [Numbers 13:1-2](#) / [Deuteronomy 1:19-24](#). So at the LORD’s command, Moses sent them out from the Desert of Paran, and all of them were leaders of the Israelites, [Numbers 13:3](#).

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The men named as the spies were not the same as the tribal princes, conveners, [Numbers 1:5-15](#) / [Numbers 7:12](#). Their personal qualifications for this mission may have been the basis for their selection.’

From the tribe of Reuben, Shammua son of Zakkur, [Numbers 13:4](#). From the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat son of Hori, [Numbers 13:5](#). From the tribe of Judah, Caleb son of Jephunneh, [Numbers 13:6](#). From the tribe of Issachar, Igal son of Joseph, [Numbers 13:7](#).

From the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea son of Nun, [Numbers 13:8](#) / [Numbers 13:16](#). From the tribe of Benjamin, Palti son of Raphu, [Numbers 13:9](#). From the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel son of Sodi, [Numbers 13:10](#). From the tribe of Manasseh (a tribe of Joseph), Gaddi son of Susi, [Numbers 13:11](#).

From the tribe of Dan, Ammiel son of Gemalli, [Numbers 13:12](#). From the tribe of Asher, Sethur son of Michael, [Numbers 13:13](#). From the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi son of Vophsi, [Numbers 13:14](#). From the tribe of Gad, Geuel son of Maki, [Numbers 13:15](#).

Ephraim, [Numbers 13:8](#), and Manasseh, [Numbers 13:11](#), represented the descendants of Joseph, and because the Levites had been separated from the other tribes, they weren’t included.

These are the names of the men Moses sent to explore the land, and notice that Moses gave Hoshea, son of Nun, the name Joshua, [Numbers 13:16](#) / [Nehemiah 8:17](#).

Hess, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The name Joshua, [Numbers 13:16](#), describes a special role that Moses wished Joshua to have when he renamed him in [Numbers 13:16](#). Joshua’s earlier name, Hoshea, simply means ‘he has saved’. In the name Hoshea, the person or god who saves is not made clear. Moses specified the LORD as the source of salvation by renaming Joshua.’

‘When Moses sent them to explore Canaan, he said, “Go up through the Negev and on into the hill country. See what the land is like and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many. What kind of land do they live in? Is it good or bad? What kind of towns do they live in? Are they unwalled or fortified? How is the soil? Is it fertile or poor? Are there trees in it or not? Do your best to bring back some of the fruit of the land.” (It was the season for the first ripe grapes.) So they went up and explored the land from the Desert of Zin as far as Rehob, toward Lebo Hamath. They went up through the Negev and came to Hebron, where Ahiman, Sheshai and Talmai, the descendants of Anak, lived. (Hebron had been built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) When they reached the Valley of Eshkol, they cut off a branch bearing a single cluster of grapes. Two of them carried it on a pole between them, along with some pomegranates and figs. That place was called the Valley of Eshkol because of the cluster of grapes the Israelites cut off there. At the end of forty days, they returned from exploring the land.’ Numbers 13:17-25

Moses sent them to explore Canaan and told them to go up through the Negev and on into the hill country, [Numbers 13:17](#). The Negev is called the South Country and is a well-defined area lying from Kadesh North to the vicinity of Hebron and covering the whole area between the Jordan and the Dead Sea valley to the Mediterranean, [Joshua 15:21-32](#).

Moses tells them to inspect the land and see what the land is like and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many, [Numbers 13:18](#). They are to find out what kind of land the people live in. Is it good or bad? What kind of towns do they live in? Are they unwalled or fortified? [Numbers 13:19](#).

They are to inspect the soil, is it fertile or poor? Are there trees in it or not? [Numbers 13:20](#). They are to do their best to bring back some of the fruit of the land, [Numbers 13:20](#). We are told it was the season for the first ripe grapes, [Numbers 13:20](#).

So they went up and explored the land from the Desert of Zin as far as Rehob, toward Lebo Hamath, [Numbers 13:21](#) / [Judges 18:28](#). Throughout the Bible, Hamath is repeatedly referred to as the northern gateway to Palestine. Jeroboam restored the ancient Solomonic empire from the entrance of Hamath, etc. [2 Kings 14:25](#). They went up through the Negev and came to Hebron, where Ahiman, Sheshai and Talmai, the descendants of Anak, lived, [Numbers 13:22](#).

Constable, in his commentary, says the following concerning Hebron.

‘Hebron was a large, fortified town. Moses gave it special emphasis here because it was near Hebron that God had promised to give Abraham the land, [Genesis 13:14-18](#). From there Abraham had set out to defeat a coalition of kings, [Genesis 14:13](#).’

We are told that Hebron had been built seven years before Zoan in Egypt, [Numbers 13:22](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Zoan of the Scriptures is allowed to be the Tanis of the heathen historians, which was the capital of Lower Egypt. Some think it was to humble the pride of the Egyptians, who boasted the highest antiquity, that this note concerning the higher antiquity of Hebron was introduced by Moses. Some have supposed that it is more likely to have been originally a marginal note, which in the process of time crept into the text; but all the versions and all the MSS. that have as yet been collated acknowledge it.’

When they reached the Valley of Eshkol, they cut off a branch bearing a single cluster of grapes and two of them carried it on a pole between them, along with some pomegranates and figs, [Numbers 13:23](#).

That place was called the Valley of Eshkol because of the cluster of grapes the Israelites cut off there, [Numbers 13:24](#). At the end of forty days they returned from exploring the land, [Numbers 13:25](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The valley was, in all likelihood, originally named after one of the three chiefs who were confederate with Abraham [Genesis 14:24](#), but as often came to pass, the Israelites, wittingly or unwittingly, took up in a new and significant sense the name which they found; and to them the valley thus became the Valley of the Cluster. Bunches of grapes are found in Palestine in many pounds in weight.’

The normal requests for information were made by Moses in order to reassure the strength of the people of Canaan, as well as reconfirm their goal of dwelling in a land that flowed with milk and honey.

All the requests were indications of Israel's lack of faith in trusting God to take the land, as well as trusting in God's promise of what was waiting for them when they possessed the land.

Remember, Moses didn't need this information; he only asked the spies to bring the information back in order to reassure the people to go up and take the land immediately.

REPORT ON THE EXPLORATION

'They came back to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh in the Desert of Paran. There they reported to them and to the whole assembly and showed them the fruit of the land. They gave Moses this account: "We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there. The Amalekites live in the Negev; the Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live near the sea and along the Jordan." Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, "We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it." But the men who had gone up with him said, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are." And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, "The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them." Numbers 13:26-33

When the spies came back, Numbers 13:26, they confirmed that Canaan was indeed a land flowing with milk and honey, and provided the evidence, Numbers 13:27 / Exodus 3:8 / Exodus 13:5.

However, these spies also thought that the land was filled with a strong people who lived in fortified cities; they even saw descendants of Anak there, Numbers 13:28.

The Amalekites live in the Negev, Numbers 14:25; the Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live near the sea and along the Jordan, Numbers 13:29. We can safely assume that not all the people were giants in the land, and we can safely assume that not all the land was desolate.

Those with the negative report obviously just focused on the points which they wanted to focus on in order to give a discouraging report. And so, by being selective in what they reported, they discouraged the people. These guys were totally focused on all the negatives but totally refused to trust in God and His power.

It was Caleb who silenced the people and said, they need to go now, they need to trust and obey God and take the land because God had made them able, Numbers 13:30. He completely trusted God, Romans 3:4.

However, the men who had gone up with him said, We can't attack those people because they are stronger than we are, Numbers 13:31. Notice they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored and said, the land they explored devours those living in it, Numbers 13:32.

They report that they saw the Nephilim there, who are the descendants of Anak, come from the Nephilim, Numbers 13:33. The Nephilim were known as giants, Genesis 6:4.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

'The word 'Nephilim' means strong ones or tyrants, not people of gigantic stature, though it came to imply superhuman giants. The spies concluded that the Anakites were relatives of the Nephilim.'

Notice that these spies, except for Caleb and Joshua, compared themselves to grasshoppers when they observed those living in the land, Numbers 13:33.

There are two things to notice in this passage.

1. The lack of faith on the part of the people, and 2. The compliance of God with their request, for the purpose of educating them and letting them ‘have their foolish way and taste its bitter results.’

CHAPTER 14

INTRODUCTION

‘That night, all the members of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, “If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this wilderness! Why is the LORD bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn’t it be better for us to go back to Egypt?” And they said to each other, “We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt.” Then Moses and Aaron fell facedown in front of the whole Israelite assembly gathered there. Joshua, son of Nun and Caleb, son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes, and said to the entire Israelite assembly, “The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the LORD is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will devour them. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them.” But the whole assembly talked about stoning them. Then the glory of the LORD appeared at the tent of meeting to all the Israelites.’ Numbers 14:1-10

THE PEOPLE REBEL

In the previous chapter, we read that the spies came back with a negative report about the Promised Land, except for Joshua and Caleb, Numbers 13:30. They were lacking any real faith in God, and as a result, the people wept, Numbers 14:1 / Deuteronomy 1:27 / Hebrews 3:17-19. All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and notice once again, they thought it would be better to die in Egypt than in the wilderness, Numbers 14:2. They asked, Why is the LORD bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder, and notice they thought they would be better going back to Egypt, Numbers 14:3. In other words, they would rather live as slaves to the Egyptians than be led by God. They knew that there was no way they could survive in the wilderness; hence, they planned to choose another leader to take them back to Egypt, Numbers 14:4. The problem was that their plan was an outright rebellion against God’s will. Oh, how quickly they forgot the bondage they were in under the Egyptians. Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Here was a formal renunciation of the authority of Moses, and flat rebellion against God. And it seems from Nehemiah 9:17 that they had actually appointed another leader, under whose direction they were about to return to Egypt.’

Moses and Aaron fall facedown in front of the whole Israelite assembly gathered there, Numbers 14:5, and notice that Joshua and Caleb tore their clothes in disgust because they too had spied out the land, Numbers 14:6-7 / Numbers 13:33.

Joshua and Caleb tell the Israelites that if the LORD is pleased with them, He will lead them into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to them, Numbers 14:8. Joshua and Caleb tell the Israelites not to rebel against the LORD and don’t be afraid of the people of the land, because they will devour them, Numbers 14:9.

Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us, [Numbers 14:9](#) / [Psalms 91:1](#) / [Psalms 121:5](#) / [Isaiah 51:16](#) / [Isaiah 49:2](#) / [Isaiah 30:2](#). Joshua and Caleb tell them not to be afraid of them, [Numbers 14:9](#).

Joshua and Caleb saw everything the other spies saw; the difference is that Joshua and Caleb trusted in God, [Romans 8:31](#), and because they trusted in Him, they focused on the positive things they saw within the land.

Notice that after listening to Joshua and Caleb, there was a discussion about stoning them, [Numbers 14:10](#). When anyone, especially leaders, stands up for God and what is right, they will often be persecuted for doing so, [Acts 6:8-7:60](#).

However, here we read that God intervened at the exact moment by appearing at the tabernacle for everyone to see so that He could pronounce judgment upon all those who rebelled against Him and went against His leaders, [Numbers 14:10](#).

‘The LORD said to Moses, “How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the signs I have performed among them? I will strike them down with a plague and destroy them, but I will make you into a nation greater and stronger than they.” Moses said to the LORD, “Then the Egyptians will hear about it! By your power, you brought these people up from among them. And they will tell the inhabitants of this land about it. They have already heard that you, LORD, are with these people and that you, LORD, have been seen face to face, that your cloud stays over them, and that you go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. If you put all these people to death, leaving none alive, the nations who have heard this report about you will say, ‘The LORD was not able to bring these people into the land he promised them on oath, so he slaughtered them in the wilderness.’ “Now may the Lord’s strength be displayed, just as you have declared: ‘The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.’ In accordance with your great love, forgive the sin of these people, just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now.” Numbers 14:11-19

God asks Moses how long these people will treat Him with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in Him, in spite of all the signs He has performed among them? [Numbers 14:11](#). God says He is going to strike them down with a plague and destroy them, [Numbers 14:12](#).

It’s very clear that God is angry with His people, especially in light of everything He had done for them. God is so angry that He intends to make Moses into a greater nation than Israel was, [Numbers 14:12](#) / [Exodus 32:7-14](#).

God says Israel had seen the signs He sent with their very own eyes, but despite sending these signs, they still refused to totally trust in Him, [John 20:26-31](#). God had spoken to Israel and promised them the land was theirs, but they totally refused to act upon God’s promises and act in faith to take the land.

As a result of this, God was willing to wipe out the nation of Israel and start all over again with Moses in order to fulfil the seed promise He had given to Abraham, [Numbers 14:12](#) / [Genesis 12:1-3](#). Remember, the Messiah, the head crusher, was to come through Abraham, [Genesis 3:15](#).

Moses speaks to God and says, If He destroys Israel, then the Egyptians will hear about it! And He says it was by God’s power that He brought these people up from among them, [Numbers 14:13](#).

Moses continues and says, they will tell the inhabitants of this land about it and they have already heard that God are with these people and that He, have been seen face to face, that His cloud stays over them, and that He goes before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, [Numbers 14:14](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This cloud, the symbol of the Divine glory, and proof of the Divine presence, appears to have assumed three different forms for three important purposes.

1. It appeared by day in the form of a pillar of a sufficient height to be seen by all the camp and thus went before them to point out their way in the desert, [Exodus 40:38](#).

2. It appeared by night as a pillar of fire to give them light while travelling by night, which they probably sometimes did, Numbers 9:21, or to illuminate their tents in their encampment, Exodus 13:21-22.

3. It stood at certain times above the whole congregation, overshadowing them from the scorching rays of the sun; and probably at other times condensed the vapours, and precipitated rain or dew for the refreshment of the people. He spread a cloud for their covering; and fire to give light in the night, Psalms 105:39. It was probably from this circumstance that the shadow of the Lord was used to signify the Divine protection, not only by the Jews, but also by other Asiatic nations, Numbers 14:9 / Numbers 14:9 / Exodus 13:21.’

Moses interceded again, much as he had done at Sinai, Exodus 32:11-13. Moses says to God, if He puts all these people to death, leaving none alive, the nations who have heard this report about Him will say that the LORD wasn’t able to bring these people into the land He promised them on oath, so He slaughtered them in the wilderness, Numbers 14:15-16.

Moses pleads Israel’s case on the foundation of God’s attributes, His slowness to get angry, His abundant love and His forgiving nature, Numbers 14:17-19 / Exodus 34:6-8 / Joel 2:13 / Jonah 4:2.

The love Moses has for his people is clearly seen here, despite their lack of faith and rebellious nature. As the mediator between the Israelites and God, Moses now gives us the example of what Christ would do for all of mankind.

‘The LORD replied, “I have forgiven them, as you asked. Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the LORD fills the whole earth, not one of those who saw my glory and the signs I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times—not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their ancestors. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it. But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it. Since the Amalekites and the Canaanites are living in the valleys, turn back tomorrow and set out toward the desert along the route to the Red Sea.” The LORD said to Moses and Aaron: “How long will this wicked community grumble against me? I have heard the complaints of these grumbling Israelites. So tell them, ‘As surely as I live, declares the LORD, I will do to you the very thing I heard you say: In this wilderness your bodies will fall—every one of you twenty years old or more who was counted in the census and who has grumbled against me. Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home, except Caleb, son of Jephunneh and Joshua, son of Nun. As for your children that you said would be taken as plunder, I will bring them in to enjoy the land you have rejected. But as for you, your bodies will fall in this wilderness. Your children will be shepherds here for forty years, suffering for your unfaithfulness, until the last of your bodies lies in the wilderness. For forty years—one year for each of the forty days you explored the land—you will suffer for your sins and know what it is like to have me against you.’ I, the LORD, have spoken, and I will surely do these things to this whole wicked community, which has banded together against me. They will meet their end in this wilderness; here they will die.” So the men Moses had sent to explore the land, who returned and made the whole community grumble against him by spreading a bad report about it—these men who were responsible for spreading the bad report about the land were struck down and died of a plague before the LORD. Of the men who went to explore the land, only Joshua, son of Nun and Caleb, son of Jephunneh, survived. When Moses reported this to all the Israelites, they mourned bitterly.’ Numbers 14:20-39

After Moses pleaded with God on behalf of Israel, the Lord tells them He has forgiven them, Numbers 14:20.

However, there is still a price to pay for their disobedience and lack of trust in Him, Hebrews 3:19.

God says, as surely as He lives and as surely as the glory of the LORD fills the whole earth, Psalms 72:19 / Isaiah 40:5 / Habakkuk 2:14, not one of those who saw His glory and the signs He performed in Egypt and in the wilderness but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times, Numbers 14:21-22.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The ten times the Israelites tested God, Numbers 14:22, by complaining were probably these.

1. At the Red Sea, Exodus 14:11-12.

2. At Marah, Exodus 15:23.

3. In the wilderness of Sin, Exodus 16:2.

4. In the wilderness of Sin, Exodus 16:20.

5. In the wilderness of Sin, Exodus 16:27.
6. At Rephidim, Exodus 17:1-2.
7. At Horeb, Exodus 32.
8. At Taberah, Numbers 11:1-3.
9. At Kibroth-Hattaavah, Numbers 11:4-34.
10. At Kadesh, Numbers 14:1-3.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning the number ten.

‘Ten is the number which signifies completeness. It seems to refer to the ten evil spies.’ The Talmud understood this literally. Dummelow thought that ten is a round number indicating ‘full measure’. Rabbi Judah from the second century enumerated ten instances of Israel’s rebellion. Gray listed these as follows. ‘There were two instances at the Red Sea, Exodus 14:11 / Psalms 106:11, two in demanding water, Exodus 15:23 / Exodus 17:2, two for food, Exodus 16:27, two for flesh, Exodus 16:3 / Numbers 11:4, in the matter of the golden calf, and in the sending out of the spies.’

God continues and says, not one of them will ever see the land He promised on oath to their ancestors. No one who has treated Him with contempt will ever see it, Numbers 14:23.

Notice that God mentioned that His servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows Him wholeheartedly, and He says He will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it, Numbers 14:24.

God says, since the Amalekites and the Canaanites are living in the valleys, turn back tomorrow and set out toward the desert along the route to the Red Sea, Numbers 14:25.

God now speaks to Moses and Aaron and asks, how long will this wicked community grumble against Him? He has heard the complaints of these grumbling Israelites, Numbers 14:26-27.

They are to tell Israel that God will do to them the very thing He heard they say, Numbers 14:28. In this wilderness, their bodies will fall, every one of them twenty years old or more who was counted in the census and who has grumbled against Him, Numbers 14:29.

Everyone who was twenty years old and over wouldn’t now be permitted to enter the Promised Land, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, Numbers 14:30.

God says, as for their children that they said would be taken as plunder, He will bring them in to enjoy the land they have rejected, Numbers 14:31. But as for Israel, their bodies will fall in this wilderness, Numbers 14:32.

Notice that because the spies were in the land for forty days, their punishment was going to be forty years, Numbers 14:33-34 / Psalms 95:7-11. This was a whole generation of Israelites who would live in the wilderness and pass away in the wilderness, Numbers 14:35 / Nehemiah 9:16-17 / Psalms 106:24-27.

So the men Moses had sent to explore the land, who returned and made the whole community grumble against him by spreading a bad report about it, Numbers 13:32, these men were struck down and died of a plague before the LORD, Numbers 14:36-37.

Note that it was only those unbelieving spies who died from a plague. Of the men who went to explore the land, only Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh survived, Numbers 14:38 / Numbers 13:30.

After news concerning those who died in the plague reached Israel, they all mourned bitterly, Numbers 14:39. They did believe concerning their fate to live in the wilderness for forty years, hence, why they all mourned.

‘Early the next morning, they set out for the highest point in the hill country, saying, “Now we are ready to go up to the land the LORD promised. Surely we have sinned!” But Moses said, “Why are you disobeying the LORD’s command? This will not succeed! Do not go up, because the LORD is not with you. You will be defeated by your enemies, for the Amalekites and the Canaanites will face you there. Because you have turned away from the LORD, he will not be with you, and you will fall by the sword.” Nevertheless, in their presumption, they went up toward the highest point in the hill country, though neither Moses nor the ark of the LORD’s covenant moved from the camp.

Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down and attacked them and beat them down all the way to Hormah.’ Numbers 14:40-45

Early the next morning, it appears that Israel is now ready to obey God and admit their sinfulness, Numbers 14:40. But Moses asks them, why are they disobeying the LORD’s command? This will not succeed! Numbers 14:41. Moses warns them not to go up, because the LORD is not with them and they will be defeated by their enemies, for the Amalekites and the Canaanites will face them there, Numbers 14:42-43.

Moses tells them they will lose because they have turned away from the LORD, and He will not be with them, and they will fall by the sword, Numbers 14:43. It wasn’t so much a lack of believing God’s promises concerning the land; it was more to do with not taking the land straight away as God commanded.

Regardless of the pronouncement of God’s judgment, they couldn’t take the land; the people wanted to go on their own without the blessing of God. However, Israel had to pay the price for their rebellion, so they wouldn’t be able to change God’s mind by trying to take the land on their own merit, Numbers 14:44.

Ashley, in his commentary, says the following.

‘They are like children who had broken a valuable vase and decided to ‘make it better’ by glueing it back together. The result of such action looks nothing like the original.’

Notice they were beaten back by the Amalekites and the Canaanites, Numbers 14:45. This was proof enough that they couldn’t take the land on their own. Their children will remember this event when they sought to take the land forty years later under the command of Joshua. They would finally understand that when they go into the land, they need God’s blessings and God’s help to achieve their goal.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning Hormah, Numbers 14:45.

‘The original name of the place was Zephath, a royal city of the Canaanites on the southern border of the Holy Land. The circumstances that led to the change of its name to Hormah are given in Numbers 21:1-3. The name has the meaning of the ban place, coming from a root that means total destruction. It was given because of the slaughter of a vast number of Israelites there. The word is used proleptically both here and in Joshua 19:4, for it was so named only after Israel conquered the place and renamed it. This indicates that we have here another passage in which certain facts were added to the Pentateuch by Joshua, who was also inspired and who did so under the direct commandment of the Lord.’

CHAPTER 15

INTRODUCTION

Before we get into the text, I think it’s important to understand what’s been happening up to this point, because this chapter begins with Israel leaving Mount Sinai. There’s very little information given here concerning Israel’s thirty-eight years in the wilderness.

When Israel was in the wilderness, God continued to take care of their needs by feeding them quail and manna, and the ongoing miracle of their sandals and clothes not wearing out, Deuteronomy 8:2-6 / Deuteronomy 29:5-6.

It was during this time that they stopped circumcising their children, Joshua 5:2-8, and they didn’t celebrate the Passover, Joshua 5:10. However, they did observe the laws concerning the Sabbath, Numbers 15:32-36. God had punished them for forty years to humble them so that they would fully trust God, Deuteronomy 8:2-3.

SUPPLEMENTARY OFFERINGS

‘The LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘After you enter the land I am giving you as a home and you present to the LORD food offerings from the herd or the flock, as an aroma pleasing to the LORD—whether burnt offerings or sacrifices, for special vows or freewill offerings or festival offerings—then the person who brings an offering shall present to the LORD a grain offering of a tenth of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with a quarter of a hin of olive oil. With each lamb for the burnt offering or the sacrifice, prepare a quarter of a hin of wine as a drink offering. “With a ram prepare a grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with a third of a hin of olive oil, and a third of a hin of wine as a drink offering. Offer it as an aroma pleasing to the LORD.

“When you prepare a young bull as a burnt offering or sacrifice, for a special vow or a fellowship offering to the LORD, bring with the bull a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with half a hin of olive oil, and also bring half a hin of wine as a drink offering. This will be a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the LORD. Each bull or ram, each lamb or young goat, is to be prepared in this manner. Do this for each one, for as many as you prepare. “Everyone who is native-born must do these things in this way when they present a food offering as an aroma pleasing to the LORD. For the generations to come, whenever a foreigner or anyone else living among you presents a food offering as an aroma pleasing to the LORD, they must do exactly as you do. The community is to have the same rules for you and for the foreigner residing among you; this is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. You and the foreigner shall be the same before the LORD: The same laws and regulations will apply both to you and to the foreigner residing among you.” The LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you enter the land to which I am taking you, and you eat the food of the land, present a portion as an offering to the LORD. Present a loaf from the first of your ground meal and present it as an offering from the threshing floor. Throughout the generations to come, you are to give this offering to the LORD from the first of your ground meal.’

Numbers 15:1-21

This chapter tells us that Israel was commanded to offer different kinds of offerings to the Lord in order to please Him, Leviticus 1:2 / Leviticus 1:7. The offerings were going to be a sweet-smelling aroma, pleasing to the Lord, Numbers 15:1-3. This is always the way God sees our offerings when they are made with the proper heart and attitude, Mark 7:1-9.

Israel was not only to enjoy the blessings which come from God, but they must also recognise the God who is providing for them. The grain offering, along with the drink offering of wine, Numbers 15:4-5, were meant to accompany the blood sacrifice, and they speak of thanksgiving and joy, Exodus 29:40 / Leviticus 23:13.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Apostle Paul spoke of his life as a drink offering poured out as a sacrifice to God, Philippians 2:17 / 2 Timothy 4:6.’

With a ram, prepare a grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour, which is around seven pounds, Exodus 29:40, mixed with a third of a hin of olive oil, which is around a litre, and a third of a hin of wine as a drink offering, Numbers 15:6-7. They are to offer it as an aroma pleasing to the LORD, Numbers 15:7 / Numbers 15:3 / Numbers 15:10 / Numbers 15:13.

When they prepare a young bull as a burnt offering or sacrifice, for a special vow or a fellowship offering to the LORD, they are to bring with the bull a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with half a hin of olive oil and also bring half a hin of wine as a drink offering, Numbers 15:8-10.

This will be a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the LORD, Numbers 15:10 / Numbers 15:7 / Numbers 15:3 / Numbers 15:13. Each bull or ram, each lamb or young goat, is to be prepared in this manner, and they are to do this for each one, for as many as they prepare, Numbers 15:11-12.

Notice that the offering of the ram and bull, Leviticus 2:1-10, each needed progressively greater amounts of grain and wine to accompany them because they were progressively bigger sacrifices.

Notice also that everyone who made a sacrifice had to bring it with the thanksgiving of grain and the joy of wine, Exodus 22:29 / Exodus 23:19. In other words, God didn’t want sacrifices given to Him grudgingly.

Everyone who is native-born must do these things in this way when they present a food offering as an aroma pleasing to the LORD, [Numbers 15:13](#) / [Numbers 15:10](#) / [Numbers 15:7](#) / [Numbers 15:3](#).

For the generations to come, whenever a foreigner or anyone else living among them presents a food offering as an aroma pleasing to the LORD, they must do exactly as Israel does, [Numbers 15:14](#).

The community is to have the same rules for Israel and for the foreigner residing among them, and this is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, [Numbers 15:15](#).

Israel and the foreigner shall be the same before the LORD: The same laws and regulations will apply both to Israel and to the foreigner residing among them, [Numbers 15:15-16](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘We can see the absolute necessity of having one form of worship in the land. That alone was genuine, which was prescribed by God Almighty, and no others could be tolerated, because they were idolatrous.’

God tells Moses to speak to the Israelites and tell them, when they enter the land to which God is taking them and they eat the food of the land, present a portion as an offering to the LORD, [Numbers 15:17-19](#) / [Exodus 22:29](#) / [Exodus 23:19](#).

They are to present a loaf from the first of their ground meal, [Nehemiah 10:37](#) / [Ezekiel 44:30](#), and present it as an offering from the threshing floor, [Numbers 15:20](#). God says, throughout the generations to come they are to give this offering to the LORD from the first of their ground meal, [Numbers 15:21](#).

OFFERINGS FOR UNINTENTIONAL SINS

‘Now if you as a community unintentionally fail to keep any of these commands the LORD gave Moses—any of the LORD’s commands to you through him, from the day the LORD gave them and continuing through the generations to come—and if this is done unintentionally without the community being aware of it, then the whole community is to offer a young bull for a burnt offering as an aroma pleasing to the LORD, along with its prescribed grain offering and drink offering, and a male goat for a sin offering. The priest is to make atonement for the whole Israelite community, and they will be forgiven, for it was not intentional, and they have presented to the LORD for their wrong a food offering and a sin offering. The whole Israelite community and the foreigners residing among them will be forgiven, because all the people were involved in the unintentional wrong. “But if just one person sins unintentionally, that person must bring a year-old female goat for a sin offering. The priest is to make atonement before the LORD for the one who erred by sinning unintentionally, and when atonement has been made, that person will be forgiven. One and the same law applies to everyone who sins unintentionally, whether a native-born Israelite or a foreigner residing among you. “But anyone who sins defiantly, whether native-born or foreigner, blasphemes the LORD and must be cut off from the people of Israel. Because they have despised the LORD’s word and broken his commands, they must surely be cut off; their guilt remains on them.” Numbers 15:22-31

Here we read about offerings which were made for those who committed unintentional sins, [Leviticus 4:13-35](#). These were sins which were committed out of ignorance, but atonement could be made for such sins.

If Israel as a whole unintentionally fail to keep any of these commands the LORD gave Moses, any of the LORD’s commands to them through Moses, from the day God gave them and continuing through the generations to come.

And if this is done unintentionally without the community being aware of it, then the whole community is to offer a young bull for a burnt offering as an aroma pleasing to the LORD, along with its prescribed grain offering and drink offering, and a male goat for a sin offering, [Numbers 15:22-24](#) / [Leviticus 4:2](#) / [Leviticus 5:17](#).

The priest is to make atonement for the whole Israelite community, and they will be forgiven, for it was not intentional and they have presented to the LORD for their wrong a food offering and a sin offering, [Numbers 15:25](#).

The whole Israelite community and the foreigners residing among them will be forgiven, because all the people were involved in the unintentional wrong, Numbers 15:26. In other words, unintentional sins needed a blood atonement, a bull had to be sacrificed with the nation as a whole being guilty.

If just one person sins unintentionally, a female goat had to be sacrificed as a sin offering, Numbers 15:27. The priest is to make atonement before the LORD for the one who erred by sinning unintentionally, and when atonement has been made, that person will be forgiven, Numbers 15:28.

One and the same law applies to everyone who sins unintentionally, whether a native-born Israelite or a foreigner residing among them, Numbers 15:29. We also read of sins which were done defiantly, that is, sins against the will of God, Numbers 15:30 / Ezekiel 20:27. Anyone who committed this sin would be automatically cut off from the rest of Israel because they despised God's Word, Numbers 15:31.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Probably the presumption mentioned here implied an utter contempt of the word and authority of God, springing from an idolatrous or atheistical mind. In such a case, all repentance was precluded because of the denial of the word and being of God. It is probably a case similar to that mentioned in Hebrews 6:4-8 and Hebrews 10:26-31.’

THE SABBATH-BREAKER PUT TO DEATH

‘While the Israelites were in the wilderness, a man was found gathering wood on the Sabbath day. Those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron and the whole assembly, and they kept him in custody, because it was not clear what should be done to him. Then the LORD said to Moses, “The man must die. The whole assembly must stone him outside the camp.” So the assembly took him outside the camp and stoned him to death, as the LORD commanded Moses.’ Numbers 15:32-36

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This does not indicate a date for Numbers after their settlement in Canaan, but has the utility of placing this incident within the period of the 38-year sojourn in the wilderness following the rebellion at Kadesh. It applies to all of the events recorded here through Numbers 19.’

Here, Moses gives us an example of someone who gathered wood on the Sabbath, Numbers 15:32. Those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron and the whole assembly, and they kept him in custody, because it was not clear what should be done to him, Numbers 15:33-34 / Exodus 31:14 / Exodus 35:2.

God says the penalty for breaking this Sabbath rule was death by stoning, Numbers 15:35, because they should have known what the law taught, but chose to ignore it, Exodus 31:14-15 / Exodus 35:2-3.

God says, the whole assembly must stone him outside the camp and notice they did exactly what God told them to do, Numbers 15:36. God commanded the death penalty so that everyone would fear Him. Israel had to learn that God's laws were more important to obey than anyone's right to break His laws.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Moses mentions here, as is his wont, Leviticus 24:10-16, the first open transgression and its punishment in order to exemplify the laws which he is laying down. The offence of Sabbath-breaking was one for which there could be no excuse. This law, at least, might be observed even in the wilderness. Transgression of it was therefore a presumptuous sin and was punished accordingly.’

Riggins, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There are eleven offenses punishable by stoning according to the Old Testament: idolatry, Deuteronomy 17:2-7, encouragement of idolatry, Deuteronomy 13:6-10, child sacrifice, Leviticus 20:2-5, prophecy in the name of another

god, [Deuteronomy 13:1-5](#), divination, [Leviticus 20:27](#); blasphemy, [Leviticus 24:15-16](#), breaking the Sabbath (here), murder by an ox, [Exodus 21:28-29](#), adultery, [Deuteronomy 22:22-24](#), rebellion by a son, [Deuteronomy 21:18-21](#), violation of God's ban on plunder devoted to him, [Joshua 7:25](#).'

TASSELS ON GARMENTS

'The LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'Throughout the generations to come you are to make tassels on the corners of your garments, with a blue cord on each tassel. You will have these tassels to look at, and so you will remember all the commands of the LORD, that you may obey them and not prostitute yourselves by chasing after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes. Then you will remember to obey all my commands and will be consecrated to your God. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt to be your God. I am the LORD your God.'" Numbers 15:37-41

God now tells Moses to speak to the Israelites and tell them, throughout the generations to come they are to make tassels on the corners of their garments, with a blue cord on each tassel, [Numbers 15:37-38](#) / [Deuteronomy 6:6-9](#) / [Deuteronomy 22:12](#) / [Matthew 9:20](#).

Some commentators suggest that the colour blue was used because the ark of the covenant was covered with a blue cloth, blue curtains adorned the tabernacle, and blue was in the high priest's garments.

These tassels, which Israel was to make, were fringes on the borders of their clothing. They were put there so that they would remember the laws of God, [Numbers 15:39-40](#).

The other reason for wearing these tassels was to prevent them from committing idolatry, the lusts of their own hearts and eyes, [Numbers 15:39](#). The idea is, if they remember, they wouldn't sin ignorantly against God.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'In our Lord's time, the Pharisees enlarged their fringes, [Matthew 23:5](#), in order to obtain a reputation for their piety. In later times, however, the Jews have worn the fringed garment of a smaller size as an underdress. Its use is still retained, especially at morning prayer in the Synagogue.'

They are to remember that it was the LORD their God who brought them out of Egypt to be their God, [Numbers 15:41](#).

CHAPTER 16

INTRODUCTION

'Korah, son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and certain Reubenites—Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and On, son of Peleth—became insolent and rose up against Moses. With them were 250 Israelite men, well-known community leaders who had been appointed members of the council. They came as a group to oppose Moses and Aaron and said to them, "You have gone too far! The whole community is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is with them. Why then do you set yourselves above the LORD's assembly?" Numbers 16:1-3

KORAH, DATHAN, AND ABIRAM

In this chapter, we once again find certain men rising up against God's leaders, Numbers 16:1-2. Moses and Korah were descendants of Kohath, but by different sons, Moses through Amram, Numbers 26:58-59, and Korah through Izhar, Exodus 6:18.

The Kohathites had the responsibility of carrying the most holy things of the tabernacle, Numbers 4:15. Korah, the Levite, was joined by Dathan, Abiram and On, who were of the tribe of Reuben. It appears that Korah recruited 250 fellow accomplices from the tribe of Levi, Numbers 16:2.

The problem was that they tried to appoint themselves as leaders, hence why they questioned God's leadership, that is, Moses and Aaron, Numbers 16:3. Yes, they were part of the holy assembly of Israel, but they were wrong in thinking that could simply push Moses and Aaron to the side and remove them as leaders, Numbers 26:3 / Jude 1:11. Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There were three visible elements in this major challenge of Mosaic authority.

1. Korah, himself a Levite and a part of that group assigned to guard and transport the most sacred portions of the sanctuary, was not satisfied with his status and desired also a share of the priesthood, even the High Priesthood, and moved, through ambition and jealousy, to seize it contrary to the express commandment of God.
2. Dathan and Abiram and On were Reubenites, their ancestor, Reuben, the first-born of Jacob, having been deprived of the right of primogeniture (because of his adultery with Bilhah, the concubine of his father Jacob), thus losing the headship of Israel, and many have supposed that the participation of some of Reuben's descendants in this rebellion led by Korah was due to their hope of recovering some of the lost prerogatives of Reuben, especially as it pertained to the leadership of Israel.
3. Then, there were 250 princes from all of the Twelve Tribes. They, also, apparently were moved by a number of motives.
 - a. They had just been ‘passed over’ in previous enumerations of the leaders of the tribes and were perhaps jealous.
 - b. They were disgusted with the sentence of death announced for their whole generation in the previous chapters.
 - c. They possibly blamed Moses for their disastrous defeat at Hormah, where, it will be remembered, the ark did NOT accompany them.
 - d. And the ‘public’ always finds occasion to complain, disapprove, and ultimately reject public leaders, no matter who they are.’

‘When Moses heard this, he fell facedown. Then he said to Korah and all his followers: “In the morning the LORD will show who belongs to him and who is holy, and he will have that person come near him. The man he chooses, he will cause to come near him. You, Korah, and all your followers are to do this: Take censers and tomorrow put burning coals and incense in them before the LORD. The man the LORD chooses will be the one who is holy. You Levites have gone too far!” Moses also said to Korah, “Now listen, you Levites! Isn't it enough for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the rest of the Israelite community and brought you near himself to do the work at the LORD's tabernacle and to stand before the community and minister to them? He has brought you and all your fellow Levites near himself, but now you are trying to get the priesthood too. It is against the LORD that you and all your followers have banded together. Who is Aaron that you should grumble against him?” Numbers 16:4-11

It's not surprising that when Moses found out what was happening, he fell facedown, Numbers 16:4. It's important to point out that Moses prayed first before issuing a challenge where Korah and his followers would come before the LORD, along with Moses and Aaron, so that the LORD would choose His leaders.

Moses tells Korah and his followers, in the morning the LORD will show who belongs to him, 2 Timothy 2:19, and who is holy, and he will have that person come near him. The man he chooses he will cause to come near him, Numbers 16:5.

Korah and all his followers are to do this; they are to take censers and tomorrow put burning coals and incense in them before the LORD, Numbers 16:6-7. The man the LORD chooses will be the one who is holy, and then Moses says, The Levites have gone too far, Numbers 16:7.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The test involved offering incense because this was the most holy responsibility of the priests that brought them closest to God. God had already shown how He felt about those who took this privilege on themselves in the case of Nadab and Abihu, Numbers 10:1-3.’

Moses continues to speak to Korah and tells him to listen, Numbers 16:8. And then he asks the question, Isn’t it enough for Levites that the God of Israel has separated them from the rest of the Israelite community and brought them near himself to do the work at the LORD’s tabernacle and to stand before the community and minister to them? Numbers 16:9.

Moses continues and tells them that God has brought Korah and all their fellow Levites near himself, but now he is trying to get the priesthood too, Numbers 16:10.

Moses tells Korah that it is against the LORD that he and all his followers have banded together, Numbers 16:11. He then asks, Who is Aaron that he should grumble against him? Numbers 16:11.

It’s clear that Moses had no doubts as to how this challenge would end; he was confident that God would demonstrate that Moses was right and Korah was wrong. Moses’ words were a rebuke, but also a repetition of what Korah had said to Aaron and himself.

As I mentioned earlier, Korah was seeking the priesthood, which meant he was seeking to take over as leader. Korah had obviously forgotten about what happened to Nadab and Abihu, Numbers 10:1-10.

‘Then Moses summoned Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab. But they said, “We will not come! Isn’t it enough that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey to kill us in the wilderness? And now you also want to lord it over us! Moreover, you haven’t brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey or given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards. Do you want to treat these men like slaves? No, we will not come!” Then Moses became very angry and said to the LORD, “Do not accept their offering. I have not taken so much as a donkey from them, nor have I wronged any of them.” Moses said to Korah, “You and all your followers are to appear before the LORD tomorrow—you and they and Aaron. Each man is to take his censer and put incense in it—250 censers in all—and present it before the LORD. You and Aaron are to present your censers also.” So each of them took his censer, put burning coals and incense in it, and stood with Moses and Aaron at the entrance to the tent of meeting. When Korah had gathered all his followers in opposition to them at the entrance to the tent of meeting, the glory of the LORD appeared to the entire assembly.’ Numbers 16:12-19

Dathan and Abiram were the accomplices of Korah, Numbers 16:12 / Numbers 16:1; they were challenging the civil leadership of Moses by ignoring the fact that they couldn’t go into the land of milk and honey because of their own rebellion against God, Numbers 16:12-14.

They were accusing Moses of making himself a dictator over the people, one who lords it over them, Numbers 16:13-14. It’s incredible to believe that they thought they were better off as slaves in Egypt; they almost describe Egypt as the land flowing with milk and honey.

It’s even more incredible to believe that they thought Moses was trying to kill them in the wilderness. It appears that they forgot that Moses was their leader because God chose him to be.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The words of Moses in his wrath are broken. The Aaronic priesthood was of divine appointment, and thus in rejecting it, the conspirators were really rebelling against God.’

Remember, this new generation of leaders was prohibited by God from entering the land of promise, and thus, at this time, they thought they would set aside God’s appointed leadership.

Dathan and Abiram wouldn't even meet Moses or take up his challenge, but what they do instead is accuse Moses. It's not surprising that Moses gets very angry with them, but notice what he did, he left the matter in God's hands, [Numbers 16:15](#).

Moses' reply was that he hadn't led them for the purpose of gain, he hadn't taken one donkey, or did he lead them in a harsh manner, [Numbers 16:15](#). Moses' conscience was very clear, [Acts 20:26-27](#) / [Acts 20:33](#) / [Acts 20:35](#).

Yes, they were right when they said that Moses hadn't yet brought them to the Promised Land, and yes, they were right when they said that some of the blame must lie with Moses because he agreed to the demand of the people to send spies into the Promised Land, [Deuteronomy 1:19-23](#). However, they couldn't put all the blame on Moses.

Moses tells Korah that he and all his followers are to appear before the LORD tomorrow, that is, Korah, his followers and Aaron, [Numbers 16:16](#). Notice that God used the censers with fire and incense in this test for a good reason.

A censer is a metal pot used to burn incense, and they were used in the priestly worship of God. Each man is to take his censer and put incense in it, 250 censers in all and present it before the LORD.

Korah and Aaron are to present their censers also, [Numbers 16:17](#). So each of them took his censer, put burning coals and incense in it, and stood with Moses and Aaron at the entrance to the tent of meeting, [Numbers 16:18](#).

When Korah had gathered all his followers in opposition to them at the entrance to the tent of meeting, the glory of the LORD appeared to the entire assembly, [Numbers 16:19](#).

'The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Separate yourselves from this assembly so I can put an end to them at once." But Moses and Aaron fell facedown and cried out, "O God, the God who gives breath to all living things, will you be angry with the entire assembly when only one man sins?" Then the LORD said to Moses, "Say to the assembly, 'Move away from the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.'" Moses got up and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him. He warned the assembly, "Move back from the tents of these wicked men! Do not touch anything belonging to them, or you will be swept away because of all their sins." So they moved away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Dathan and Abiram had come out and were standing with their wives, children, and little ones at the entrances to their tents. Then Moses said, "This is how you will know that the LORD has sent me to do all these things and that it was not my idea: If these men die a natural death and suffer the fate of all mankind, then the LORD has not sent me. But if the LORD brings about something totally new, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them, with everything that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the realm of the dead, then you will know that these men have treated the LORD with contempt." As soon as he finished saying all this, the ground under them split apart, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them and their households, and all those associated with Korah, together with their possessions. They went down alive into the realm of the dead, with everything they owned; the earth closed over them, and they perished and were gone from the community. At their cries, all the Israelites around them fled, shouting, "The earth is going to swallow us too!" And fire came out from the LORD and consumed the 250 men who were offering the incense. The LORD said to Moses, "Tell Eleazar son of Aaron, the priest, to remove the censers from the charred remains and scatter the coals some distance away, for the censers are holy—the censers of the men who sinned at the cost of their lives. Hammer the censers into sheets to overlay the altar, for they were presented before the LORD and have become holy. Let them be a sign to the Israelites." So Eleazar the priest collected the bronze censers brought by those who had been burned to death, and he had them hammered out to overlay the altar, as the LORD directed him through Moses. This was to remind the Israelites that no one except a descendant of Aaron should come to burn incense before the LORD, or he would become like Korah and his followers.' [Numbers 16:20-40](#)

It appears that God has had enough of this rebellion and wants to bring the whole matter to an end as quickly as possible, [Numbers 16:20-21](#). Moses and Aaron once again plead with God and ask that He not destroy all of Israel because of the sin of one man, that is, Korah, [Numbers 16:22](#) / [Exodus 32:32](#).

God then tells Moses to tell the assembly to move away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, [Numbers 15:23-24](#). Moses gets up and goes to Dathan and Abiram and notice that the elders followed Moses, [Numbers 16:25](#) / [Numbers 10:16-30](#), which was exactly what they were supposed to do in backing up the leadership.

Moses does what God asks, in moving away from the tents, and he pleads with the people to separate themselves from them, [Numbers 16:26-27](#) / [Titus 3:10-11](#) / [Romans 16:17-18](#).

Moses tells them this is how they will know that the LORD has sent him to do all these things and that it was not his idea, Numbers 16:28. He says if these men die a natural death and suffer the fate of all mankind, then the LORD has not sent him, Numbers 16:29.

However, if the LORD brings about something totally new, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them, with everything that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the realm of the dead, then they will know that these men have treated the LORD with contempt, Numbers 16:30 / Romans 6:23.

As soon as Moses finished saying all this, the ground under them split apart and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them and their households, and all those associated with Korah, together with their possessions, Numbers 16:31-32 / Numbers 26:11.

They went down alive into the realm of the dead, with everything they owned, the earth closed over them, and they perished and were gone from the community, Numbers 16:33 / Numbers 26:3 / Jude 1:11.

Panic stations kick in when the Israelites hear their cries, and so they flee and shout, the earth is going to swallow us too! Numbers 16:34. The families of Korah, Dathan and Abiram were destroyed with their fathers as the judgment of God came upon them and the 250 other accomplices, Numbers 16:35.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and all that appertained to their respective families, went down into the pit caused by this supernatural earthquake, while the fire from the Lord consumed the 250 men that bore censers. Thus, there were two distinct punishments, the pit and the fire, for the two divisions of these rebels.’

God tells Moses to tell Eleazar, son of Aaron, the priest, to remove the censers from the charred remains and scatter the coals some distance away, for the censers are holy, the censers of the men who sinned at the cost of their lives, Numbers 16:36-38.

The censers were beaten flat and used to cover the main altar of sacrifice, Numbers 16:38. The censers of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were holy and preserved because even though they worshipped wrongly, they worshipped the right God, and they were to be a sign to the Israelites, Numbers 16:38.

Allen, in his commentary, says the following.

‘As we think about the notion of the ‘holy,’ we recognise that things are made holy in Scripture, not because people are holy, but because the things are presented to the Lord, who is holy. Since these wicked men presented their censers to the Lord, the censers are holy, despite the men’s own wickedness.’

Eleazar the priest collected the bronze censers brought by those who had been burned to death, and he had them hammered out to overlay the altar, as the LORD directed him through Moses, Numbers 16:39.

This was to remind the Israelites that no one except a descendant of Aaron should come to burn incense before the LORD, or they would become like Korah and his followers, Numbers 16:40.

It’s important to note that Korah’s son didn’t die with him, Numbers 26:11, it’s noted by some that his sons learned the lesson from their father’s mistakes, as they went on to serve as singers in the tabernacle and the temple, Numbers 26:58 / 1 Chronicles 6:18-22 / 1 Chronicles 9:9. They are also accredited with writing several psalms, Psalms 42-49 / Psalms 84-85 / Psalms 87-88.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning the descendants of Aaron.

‘This regulation displeased many in Israel, and when Jeroboam came to the throne of 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 Northern Israel derived. No priesthood of Israel in any sense was ever able either to add to or to diminish from the Sacred Scriptures, because, the power to augment is also the power to diminish, and it is simply inconceivable that if any such power had pertained to Jewish priests, particularly those of Northern Israel who

generally were not Aaronic in any sense, and still less any of those in Southern Israel (Judah), could ever have left in the Pentateuch (and the Prophets also) such a fantastic array of material that is detrimental to the image of that priesthood as actually found there. Aaron was an idolater in the matter of the golden calf. Nadab and Abihu were destroyed by Jehovah for disobedience. And God finally disinherited, outlawed, and cursed the whole Levitical priesthood for their sins and arrogant disobedience. ‘I will send the curse upon you: yea, I have cursed your blessings already’, Malachi 2:2.’

‘The next day, the whole Israelite community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. “You have killed the LORD’s people,” they said. But when the assembly gathered in opposition to Moses and Aaron and turned toward the tent of meeting, suddenly the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD appeared. Then Moses and Aaron went to the front of the tent of meeting, and the LORD said to Moses, “Get away from this assembly so I can put an end to them at once.” And they fell facedown. Then Moses said to Aaron, “Take your censer and put incense in it, along with burning coals from the altar, and hurry to the assembly to make atonement for them. Wrath has come out from the LORD; the plague has started.” So Aaron did as Moses said and ran into the midst of the assembly. The plague had already started among the people, but Aaron offered the incense and made atonement for them. He stood between the living and the dead, and the plague stopped. But 14,700 people died from the plague, in addition to those who had died because of Korah. Then Aaron returned to Moses at the entrance to the tent of meeting, for the plague had stopped.’ Numbers 16:41-50

After the death of Korah and his accomplices, Israel once again grumbled against Moses and Aaron, Numbers 16:41. They hold Moses and Aaron personally responsible for the judgment that came upon the accomplices, Numbers 16:41.

They accused them of killing the Lord’s people, Numbers 16:41. This tells us that the plots of Korah, Dathan and Abiram were also in the hearts of many of the people of Israel.

But when the assembly gathered in opposition to Moses and Aaron and turned toward the tent of meeting, suddenly the cloud covered it and the glory of the LORD appeared, Numbers 16:42.

Moses and Aaron go to the front of the tent of meeting, and God tells Moses to get away from this assembly so He can put an end to them at once and they fell facedown, Numbers 16:43-45 / Numbers 16:22 / Numbers 14:5.

Moses tells Aaron to take his censer and put incense in it, along with burning coals from the altar, and hurry to the assembly to make atonement for them, Numbers 16:46 / Leviticus 16:12 / Hebrews 9:4.

We are told the wrath has come out from the LORD and the plague has started, Numbers 16:46. Aaron did as Moses told him to do and ran into the midst of the assembly but the plague had already started among the people, but Aaron offered the incense and made atonement for them, Numbers 16:47.

A censer filled with burning incense was used to stop the plague, Leviticus 16:12 / Hebrews 9:4. This implies that Aaron prayed to God, Revelation 8:3-4, and interceded on behalf of the people. Notice, however, that the plague was stopped only when Aaron made atonement for Israel, Numbers 16:48.

Because of their grumbling and accusations, God unleashed His judgment against Israel, to the point that 14,700 perished from a plague that He sent among the people, Numbers 16:49. Aaron returns to Moses at the entrance to the tent of meeting, for the plague had stopped, Numbers 16:50.

CHAPTER 17

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, we saw how Korah, Dathan, and Abiram tried to take over as leaders of God's people, [Numbers 16:1-3](#). We also saw how the Israelites tried to challenge the leadership of Moses and Aaron, [Numbers 16:41-50](#); on both occasions, many people lost their lives. In this chapter, we read about the confirmation of the priesthood of Aaron. This was to be done to stop any more contesting for leadership positions.

THE BUDDING OF AARON'S STAFF

'The LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the Israelites and get twelve staffs from them, one from the leader of each of their ancestral tribes. Write the name of each man on his staff. On the staff of Levi write Aaron's name, for there must be one staff for the head of each ancestral tribe. Place them in the tent of meeting in front of the ark of the covenant law, where I meet with you. The staff belonging to the man I choose will sprout, and I will rid myself of this constant grumbling against you by the Israelites." So Moses spoke to the Israelites, and their leaders gave him twelve staffs, one for the leader of each of their ancestral tribes, and Aaron's staff was among them. Moses placed the staffs before the LORD in the tent of the covenant law. The next day, Moses entered the tent and saw that Aaron's staff, which represented the tribe of Levi, had not only sprouted but had budded, blossomed, and produced almonds. Then Moses brought out all the staffs from the LORD's presence to all the Israelites. They looked at them, and each of the leaders took his own staff. The LORD said to Moses, "Put back Aaron's staff in front of the ark of the covenant law, to be kept as a sign to the rebellious. This will put an end to their grumbling against me, so that they will not die." Moses did just as the LORD commanded him. The Israelites said to Moses, "We will die! We are lost, we are all lost! Anyone who even comes near the tabernacle of the LORD will die. Are we all going to die?" Numbers 17:1-13

God instructs Moses to speak to the Israelites and get twelve staffs from them, one from the leader of each of their ancestral tribes and write the name of each man on his staff, [Numbers 17:1-2](#). On the staff of Levi write Aaron's name, for there must be one staff for the head of each ancestral tribe, [Numbers 17:3](#). Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'Sceptres, or staves, or walking sticks, were considered to be of the greatest importance. 'Kings swore by them,' and Judah was condemned by Tamar, using his 'staff' as invincible proof, [Genesis 38:18](#). Esther touched only the sceptre of King Ahasuerus, but it saved her life, [Esther 4:11](#). The Holy Messiah was identified by Zechariah as the one, above all others, who would have both a rod and a staff, a thought also echoed in the Shepherd Psalm, 'Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me,' [Psalms 23:4](#).'

When the staffs were gathered together, the names of each tribe were written on them, and on Levi's staff, the name of Aaron was written. Notice that the staff was to be placed in front of the ark of the covenant law, [Numbers 17:4](#). This is a reference to the two stones tablets which contained the Ten Commandments, [Exodus 25:16](#). In the days of Solomon, there was nothing in the ark except the two tablets, [1 Kings 8:9](#), and so, it's possible that Aaron's staff was lost when the ark was taken by the Philistines.

God says the staff belonging to the man He chooses will sprout, and He will rid Himself of this constant grumbling by the Israelites, [Numbers 17:5](#). In doing this, God would declare which tribe possessed priestly authority by choosing one of the staffs. This was the issue at hand in light of Korah's rebellion.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'It was necessary that something further should be done to quiet the minds of the people, and forever to settle the dispute, in what tribe the priesthood should be fixed. God, therefore, took the method described in the text, and it had the desired effect; the Aaronical priesthood was never after disputed.'

Moses spoke to the Israelites, and their leaders gave him twelve staffs, one for the leader of each of their ancestral tribes, and Aaron's staff was among them, [Numbers 17:6](#). Then Moses placed the staffs before the LORD in the tent of the covenant law as God told him to, [Numbers 17:7](#) / [Numbers 17:4](#).

Aaron's staff was a symbol of the tribe of Levi, [Numbers 17:8](#), and the miracle recorded here was to prove to everyone in Israel that the sons of Aaron and the Levites were chosen by God and separated from Israel for the spiritual service of the nation, [Numbers 17:8](#).

In other words, they were not self-appointed; they were appointed by God. Almond blooms early with white blossoms, and its fruits were highly prized, [Numbers 17:8](#) / [Genesis 43:11](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the 'sprouting of almonds'.

'The name almond in Hebrew denotes the 'waking-tree', the 'waking-fruit' and is applied to this tree because it blossoms early in the season. It serves here, as in [Jeremiah 1:11-12](#), to set forth the speed and certainty with which, at God's will, His purposes are accomplished. So again, the blossoming and bearing of Aaron's rod, naturally impotent when severed from the parent tree, may signify the profitableness, because of God's appointment and blessing, of the various means of grace (e.g. the priesthood, the sacraments), which of themselves and apart from Him could have no such efficacy. [Isaiah 4:2](#) / [Isaiah 11:1](#) / [Isaiah 53:2](#) / [Jeremiah 33:5](#) / [Zechariah 6:12](#).'

Moses brought out all the staffs from the LORD's presence to all the Israelites, and they looked at them, and each of the leaders took his own staff, [Numbers 17:9](#).

The staff was kept as a sign that God had appointed Aaron and his sons and the tribe of Levi to be the priestly tribe of Israel, [Numbers 17:10](#) / [Exodus 16:33-34](#). In other words, no one was to presume to be a high priest of Israel other than those who descended from Aaron, or they would die, [Numbers 17:10](#).

There were three items in total, which were kept inside the ark of the covenant.

1. The two stone tablets of the Law, [Exodus 25:16](#) / [Exodus 25:21](#) / [Hebrews 9:4](#).
2. Aaron's rod that budded, [Numbers 17:10](#) / [Hebrews 9:4](#).
3. The golden pot of 'hidden' manna, [Exodus 16:33](#) / [Hebrews 9:4](#).

Together, these three items form the Testimony; the Ark is called the Ark of the Testimony.

Remember, Jesus is our high priest today, not because He was a descendant of Aaron, [Hebrews 2:17](#), but because of the order of Melchizedek, [Hebrews 7](#). Aaron's rod that budded was a sign of God's continued choice of Aaron as a priest, [Numbers 17:5](#), but Aaron's priesthood was interrupted by his death.

The Lord Jesus Christ, though, has a priesthood that is constituted with an indestructible life, [Hebrews 7:16](#). He is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, [Hebrews 7:25](#).

Moses did just as the LORD commanded him, and it's clear everyone took what had happened seriously. They now know if they try to rebel against God's leadership like Korah, Dathan, and Abiram did, they too will surely die, [Numbers 17:11-13](#).

Wouldn't we think we're next to be judged and die after seeing Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, along with their 250 followers, being killed? [Numbers 16:35](#). Wouldn't we think we're next to be judged and die after seeing the plague which killed 14,700 of those who sympathised with Korah and his followers? [Numbers 16:49](#).

CHAPTER 18

INTRODUCTION

'The LORD said to Aaron, "You, your sons and your family are to bear the responsibility for offences connected with the sanctuary, and you and your sons alone are to bear the responsibility for offences connected with the priesthood. Bring your fellow Levites from your ancestral tribe to join you and assist you when you and your sons minister

before the tent of the covenant law. They are to be responsible to you and are to perform all the duties of the tent, but they must not go near the furnishings of the sanctuary or the altar. Otherwise, both they and you will die. They are to join you and be responsible for the care of the tent of meeting—all the work at the tent—and no one else may come near where you are. “You are to be responsible for the care of the sanctuary and the altar, so that my wrath will not fall on the Israelites again. I myself have selected your fellow Levites from among the Israelites as a gift to you, dedicated to the LORD to do the work at the tent of meeting. But only you and your sons may serve as priests in connection with everything at the altar and inside the curtain. I am giving you the service of the priesthood as a gift. Anyone else who comes near the sanctuary is to be put to death.” Numbers 18:1-7

DUTIES OF PRIESTS AND LEVITES

In this chapter, we find the Lord emphasising the duties of the priests, [Numbers 3:1-4](#) / [Numbers 3:49](#).

Jensen, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A key phrase of this chapter is ‘I give you’, [Numbers 18:7](#) / [Numbers 18:12](#) / [Numbers 18:19](#) / [Numbers 18:26](#), etc. God takes care of His own.’

God tells Aaron that He and his sons and his family are to bear the responsibility for offences connected with the sanctuary, and Aaron and His sons alone are to bear the responsibility for offences connected with the priesthood, [Numbers 18:1](#) / [Numbers 17:12-13](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘They must be answerable for its legal pollutions and must make the necessary atonements and expiations. By this, they must feel that though they had got a high and important office confirmed to them by a miraculous interference, yet it was a place of the highest responsibility and that they must not be high-minded, but fear.’

Aaron is to bring his fellow Levites from his ancestral tribe to join him and assist him when he and his sons minister before the tent of the covenant law, [Numbers 18:2](#).

They are to be responsible to Aaron and are to perform all the duties of the tent, but they must not go near the furnishings of the sanctuary or the altar, otherwise both they and Aaron will die, [Numbers 18:3](#).

They are to join Aaron and be responsible for the care of the tent of meeting, all the work at the tent and no one else may come near where Aaron is, [Numbers 18:4](#). Aaron will be responsible for the care of the sanctuary and the altar, so that God’s wrath will not fall on the Israelites again, [Numbers 18:5](#).

The Levites are warned to assume the responsibilities of their appointment, and they needed to be very careful about following God’s will, [Numbers 17:13](#). They weren’t permitted to do what the priests did, [1 Corinthians 12:4-7](#).

God has selected Aaron’s fellow Levites from among the Israelites as a gift to him, dedicated to the LORD to do the work at the tent of meeting, [Numbers 18:6](#). Only Aaron and his sons may serve as priests in connection with everything at the altar and inside the curtain.

God is giving him the service of the priesthood as a gift and anyone else who comes near the sanctuary is to be put to death, [Numbers 18:7](#). Israel must learn the lesson from the previous events, if they complain against God’s anointed, that is, Aaron, his sons and the Levites, they were complaining against the will of God, [Numbers 16:1-3](#).

OFFERINGS FOR PRIESTS AND LEVITES

‘Then the LORD said to Aaron, “I myself have put you in charge of the offerings presented to me; all the holy offerings the Israelites give me I give to you and your sons as your portion, your perpetual share. You are to have the

part of the most holy offerings that is kept from the fire. From all the gifts they bring me as most holy offerings, whether grain or sin or guilt offerings, that part belongs to you and your sons. Eat it as something most holy; every male shall eat it. You must regard it as holy. “This also is yours: whatever is set aside from the gifts of all the wave offerings of the Israelites. I give this to you and your sons and daughters as your perpetual share. Everyone in your household who is ceremonially clean may eat it. “I give you all the finest olive oil and all the finest new wine and grain they give the LORD as the firstfruits of their harvest. All the land’s firstfruits that they bring to the LORD will be yours. Everyone in your household who is ceremonially clean may eat it. “Everything in Israel that is devoted to the LORD is yours. The first offspring of every womb, both human and animal, that is offered to the LORD is yours. But you must redeem every firstborn son and every firstborn male of unclean animals. When they are a month old, you must redeem them at the redemption price set at five shekels of silver, according to the sanctuary shekel, which weighs twenty gerahs. “But you must not redeem the firstborn of a cow, a sheep, or a goat; they are holy. Splash their blood against the altar and burn their fat as a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the LORD. Their meat is to be yours, just as the breast of the wave offering and the right thigh are yours.’ Numbers 18:8-18

God tells Aaron that He Himself have put Aaron in charge of the offerings presented to Him, all the holy offerings the Israelites give God, He will give to Aaron and his sons as their portion, their perpetual share, Numbers 18:8 / Leviticus 7:35. Aaron is to have the part of the most holy offerings that is kept from the fire, Numbers 18:9. From all the gifts they bring God as most holy offerings, whether grain or sin or guilt offerings, that part belongs to Aaron and his sons, Numbers 18:9 / Numbers 5:9. They are to eat it as something most holy, and every male shall eat it, Numbers 18:10 / Numbers 4:4.

The wave offerings were to be presented to God and waved before Him, Numbers 18:11 / Exodus 29:28 / Leviticus 7:14 / Numbers 6:20 / Numbers 15:19-21.

It was a choice portion of the animal, like the breast or the thigh, which was waved before the Lord. That portion of meat was for the priest and his family and was considered holy, so it had to be eaten in the holy place, Numbers 18:11.

God will give Aaron all the finest olive oil and all the finest new wine and grain they give the LORD as the firstfruits of their harvest, Numbers 18:12 / 2 Chronicles 31:5 / Nehemiah 10:36 / Nehemiah 10:38. All the land’s firstfruits that they bring to the LORD will be theirs and everyone in Aaron’s household who is ceremonially clean may eat it, Numbers 18:13.

Plaut, in his commentary, says the following concerning the firstfruit.

‘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.’

Everything in Israel that is devoted to the LORD is Aaron’s, Numbers 18:14. The first offspring of every womb, both human and animal, that is offered to the LORD is Aaron’s, but Aaron must redeem every firstborn son and every firstborn male of unclean animals, Numbers 18:15.

When they are a month old, Aaron must redeem them at the redemption price set at five shekels of silver, that is, around two ounces according to the sanctuary shekel, that is two ounces, which weighs twenty gerahs, Numbers 18:16.

Aaron mustn’t redeem the firstborn of a cow, a sheep, or a goat because they are holy, Numbers 18:17. He is to splash their blood against the altar and burn their fat as a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the LORD, Numbers 18:17. Their meat is to be Aaron’s, just as the breast of the wave offering and the right thigh are Aaron’s, Numbers 18:18.

Aaron is reminded that he, his sons, and the Levites, as the spiritual leaders of Israel, were to be supported by all of Israel. While they were busy working for God and the people offering sacrifices, the Israelites needed to understand that they now had the responsibility of taking care of their needs, 1 Corinthians 9:1-15.

‘Whatever is set aside from the holy offerings the Israelites present to the LORD I give to you and your sons and daughters as your perpetual share. It is an everlasting covenant of salt before the LORD for both you and your

offspring.” The LORD said to Aaron, “You will have no inheritance in their land, nor will you have any share among them; I am your share and your inheritance among the Israelites.’ Numbers 18:19-20

Whatever is set aside from the holy offerings the Israelites present to the LORD, God give to Aaron and His sons and daughters as their perpetual share, Numbers 18:19 / 2 Chronicles 13:5.

Notice the Lord mentions the covenant of salt, Numbers 18:19 / Leviticus 2:13. This was a covenant that wouldn’t be dissolved but would last throughout the generations of Israel. Only when the generations of Israel ended in Christ would the Levitical priesthood cease.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘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, Leviticus 2:13 / Mark 9:49. God gave the kingdom to David by a covenant of salt, 2 Chronicles 13:5.’

The priests were to be looked after by the rest of Israel because they had no inheritance in the land, Numbers 18:20. However, the Lord Himself was their portion and their inheritance, Numbers 18:20 / 1 Peter 2:9.

‘I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the tent of meeting. From now on, the Israelites must not go near the tent of meeting, or they will bear the consequences of their sin and will die. It is the Levites who are to do the work at the tent of meeting and bear the responsibility for any offences they commit against it. This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. They will receive no inheritance among the Israelites. Instead, I give to the Levites as their inheritance the tithes that the Israelites present as an offering to the LORD. That is why I said concerning them: ‘They will have no inheritance among the Israelites.’” The LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the Levites and say to them: ‘When you receive from the Israelites the tithe I give you as your inheritance, you must present a tenth of that tithe as the LORD’s offering. Your offering will be reckoned to you as grain from the threshing floor or juice from the winepress. In this way, you also will present an offering to the LORD from all the tithes you receive from the Israelites. From these tithes, you must give the LORD’s portion to Aaron the priest. You must present as the LORD’s portion the best and holiest part of everything given to you.’ “Say to the Levites: ‘When you present the best part, it will be reckoned to you as the product of the threshing floor or the winepress. You and your households may eat the rest of it anywhere, for it is your wages for your work at the tent of meeting. By presenting the best part of it, you will not be guilty in this matter; then you will not defile the holy offerings of the Israelites, and you will not die.’” Numbers 18:21-32

The priests were to receive a tenth from the nation, Numbers 18:21. The payment of tithes to the Levites is recognised in Nehemiah 10:37 / Nehemiah 12:44, but here for the first time assigned to them as theirs. Once, every three years, the tithe was collected and distributed not only to the Levites but also to the poor and needy in Israel, Deuteronomy 14:28-29.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

1. First, the Levites had the tenth of all the products of the land.
2. They had forty-eight cities, each forming a square of 4,000 cubits.
3. They had 2,000 cubits of ground round each city.

The total of the land they possessed was 53,000 acres.

4. They had the first-fruits and certain parts of all the animals killed in the land.’

Remember, Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, Genesis 14, and Jacob vowed to give the tithe of all his possessions, Genesis 28:20-22. We must remember that if people didn’t contribute the tithe, they weren’t robbing the priests; they were actually robbing God Himself, Malachi 3:8-10. As Christians, we’re not commanded to tithe, but we are commanded to give generously with a cheerful heart, 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 / 2 Corinthians 9.

From now on the Israelites mustn't go near the tent of meeting, or they will bear the consequences of their sin and will die, [Numbers 18:22](#). It is the Levites who are to do the work at the tent of meeting and bear the responsibility for any offenses they commit against it, [Numbers 18:23](#) / [Numbers 18:1](#).

This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, [Numbers 18:23](#). The Levites will receive no inheritance among the Israelites, [Numbers 18:23](#). Instead, God will give the Levites as their inheritance the tithes that the Israelites present as an offering to the LORD, [Numbers 18:24](#) / [Leviticus 27:30-33](#). That is why God said concerning them, they will have no inheritance among the Israelites, [Numbers 18:24](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning [Numbers 18:24](#).

‘Here, the tithes and in [Numbers 18:26](#), the priestly tithes are to be dedicated to their purpose by the ceremony of heaving them to the Lord. The tithes, being solemnly set apart for sacred purposes, became virtually a heave-offering, like the gifts for the tabernacle, [Exodus 25:2](#).’

Although the priests received a tenth from the nation, they in turn were to offer a tenth of the tithe as an offering to the Lord, [Numbers 18:25-26](#). This tells us that the priests themselves still had to make their own offerings to the Lord.

Although the priests worked full-time in offering sacrifices, they still had to tithe to the Lord that which they received from the people. Their offering will be reckoned to them as grain from the threshing floor or juice from the winepress, [Numbers 18:27](#).

In this way, they will present an offering to the LORD from all the tithes they receive from the Israelites and from these tithes, they must give the LORD's portion to Aaron the priest, [Numbers 18:28](#). Notice, they must present as the LORD's portion the best and holiest part of everything given to them, [Numbers 18:29](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘As the Levites had the tithe of the whole land, they themselves were obliged to give the tithe of this tithe to the priests, so that this considerably lessened their revenue. And this tithe or tenth they were obliged to select from the best part of the substance they had received, [Numbers 18:29](#). A portion of all must be given to God, as evidence of his goodness and their dependence on him. [Numbers 18:29](#).’

When the Levites present the best part, it will be reckoned to Aaron as the product of the threshing floor or the winepress, [Numbers 18:30](#). Moses and his households may eat the rest of it anywhere, for it is his wages for his work at the tent of meeting, [Numbers 18:31](#). By presenting the best part of it he will not be guilty in this matter and he will not defile the holy offerings of the Israelites, and he will not die, [Numbers 18:31](#).

CHAPTER 19

INTRODUCTION

‘The LORD said to Moses and Aaron: “This is a requirement of the law that the LORD has commanded: Tell the Israelites to bring you a red heifer without defect or blemish and that has never been under a yoke. Give it to Eleazar the priest; it is to be taken outside the camp and slaughtered in his presence. Then Eleazar the priest is to take some of its blood on his finger and sprinkle it seven times toward the front of the tent of meeting. While he watches, the heifer is to be burned—its hide, flesh, blood, and intestines. The priest is to take some cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet wool and throw them onto the burning heifer. After that, the priest must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water. He may then come into the camp, but he will be ceremonially unclean till evening. The man who burns it must also wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he too will be unclean till evening. “A man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer and put them in a ceremonially clean place outside the camp. They are to be kept by the Israelite

community for use in the water of cleansing; it is for purification from sin. The man who gathers up the ashes of the heifer must also wash his clothes, and he too will be unclean till evening. This will be a lasting ordinance both for the Israelites and for the foreigners residing among them.’ Numbers 19:1-10

THE WATER OF CLEANSING

Many commentators suggest this chapter deals with the events after the plague mentioned in [Numbers 16:46-50](#). After the plague, there were many dead bodies around, and so, Israel now needs to become physically and spiritually clean, [Leviticus 12-15](#).

God tells Moses and Aaron that this is a requirement of the law that He has commanded, they are to tell the Israelites to bring them a red heifer without defect or blemish, [Leviticus 4:3](#), and that has never been under a yoke, [Numbers 19:1-2](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The animal is certainly not called a red cow in the New Testament, and despite the fact that the word ‘cow’ can occasionally mean an older animal, even one with a calf, [1 Samuel 6:7](#).’

Keil, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The word for heifer here does not generally mean cow, but a young cow, a heifer, [Hebrews 9:13](#).’

The red heifer was to be presented to Eleazar and was to be slain outside the camp, [Numbers 19:3](#) / [Exodus 29:14](#) / [Leviticus 4:3](#) / [Leviticus 4:11-12](#) / [Leviticus 4:21](#) / [Hebrews 9:13-14](#) / [Hebrews 13:11-12](#).

Eleazar is to take some of its blood on his finger and sprinkle it seven times toward the front of the tent of meeting, [Numbers 19:4](#). While he watches, the heifer is to be burned, its hide, flesh, blood, and intestines, [Numbers 19:5](#).

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Israelites were to slay the animal outside the camp because of its connection with sin and death. The high priest was to observe the slaying, making sure the person in charge did it properly. This was a very important sacrifice. The sprinkling of the blood shows that this slaying was a sin offering. The animal died for the sin of the congregation, [Numbers 19:4](#).’

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

1. The red heifer with them signifies the flesh of our Lord, formed out of an earthly substance.
2. Being without spot, the infinite holiness of Christ.
3. The sex of the animal, the infirmity of our flesh, with which he clothed himself.
4. The red colour, his passion.
5. Being unyoked, his being righteous in all his conduct, and never under the yoke of sin.
6. Eleazar’s sacrificing the heifer instead of Aaron, [Numbers 19:3](#), signifies the change of the priesthood from the family of Aaron, in order that a new and more perfect priesthood might take place.
7. The red heifer being taken without the camp, [Numbers 19:3](#), to be slain, points out the crucifixion of our Lord without the city.
8. The complete consuming of the heifer by fire, the complete offering of the whole body and soul of Christ as a sacrifice to God for the sin of man: for as the heifer was without blemish, the whole might be offered to God, and as Christ was immaculate, his whole body and soul were made a sacrifice for sin.

9. As the fire of this sacrifice ascended up to God, so it points out the resurrection and ascension of our blessed Lord.

10. And as the ashes of this victim communicated a legal purity to those who were defiled, so true repentance, signified by those ashes, is necessary for the expiation of the offences committed after baptism. A great part of this is true in itself, but how little evidence is there that all these things were intended in the ordinance of the red heifer? Numbers 8:7.

Notice that when the heifer was burnt, the priest would also put cedarwood and hyssop, Numbers 19:6 / Leviticus 14:4 / Psalms 51:7 / Matthew 27:48, and scarlet wool, Exodus 26:31 / Exodus 28:5-6 / Numbers 4:8 / Joshua 2:21 / Matthew 27:28, into the fire.

Each of these three items is used in the cleansing ceremony for a leper, Leviticus 14:4-6. Each of these items has a special significance. After that, the priest must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water, Numbers 19:7. This water was used for the ceremonial cleansing of those who were impure from the defilement of sin, Numbers 8:7. The priest may then come into the camp, but he will be ceremonially unclean till evening, Numbers 19:7. The man who burns it must also wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he too will be unclean till evening, Numbers 19:8. A man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer and put them in a ceremonially clean place outside the camp, Numbers 19:9.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The ashes were to be kept, in order to be mixed with water, Numbers 19:17, and sprinkled on those who had contracted any legal defilement.’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There was indeed a genuine and pertinent symbolism in this ceremony is certain in the light of Hebrews 9:13 / Hebrews 13:11. In that New Testament passage, the sprinkling of the ashes of the heifer is ranked with all the other sacrifices as typical of the blood of Christ, the detail of the heifer’s being burnt ‘without (outside) the camp’ being applied specifically as a prophecy of Christ’s suffering ‘without the camp’.

Note that the KJV uses the words, ‘water of separation,’ in Numbers 19:9.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘In Numbers 8:7, the water of purification from sin is the ‘water of purifying.’ So that which was to remedy a state of legal separation is here called ‘water of separation.’

The ashes were then mixed with the water of separation that was used for the removal of sin, Numbers 19:9. The man who gathers up the ashes of the heifer must also wash his clothes, and he too will be unclean till evening, Numbers 19:10. This will be a lasting ordinance both for the Israelites and for the foreigners residing among them, Numbers 19:10.

‘Whoever touches a human corpse will be unclean for seven days. They must purify themselves with the water on the third day and on the seventh day; then they will be clean. But if they do not purify themselves on the third and seventh days, they will not be clean. If they fail to purify themselves after touching a human corpse, they defile the LORD’s tabernacle. They must be cut off from Israel. Because the water of cleansing has not been sprinkled on them, they are unclean; their uncleanness remains on them. “This is the law that applies when a person dies in a tent: Anyone who enters the tent and anyone who is in it will be unclean for seven days, and every open container without a lid fastened on it will be unclean. “Anyone out in the open who touches someone who has been killed with a sword or someone who has died a natural death, or anyone who touches a human bone or a grave, will be unclean for seven days. “For the unclean person, put some ashes from the burned purification offering into a jar and pour fresh water over them. Then a man who is ceremonially clean is to take some hyssop, dip it in the water and sprinkle the tent and all the furnishings and the people who were there. He must also sprinkle anyone who has touched a human bone or a grave, or anyone who has been killed, or anyone who has died a natural death. The man who is clean is to sprinkle those who are unclean on the third and seventh days, and on the seventh day he is to purify them. Those who are being cleansed must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and that evening they will be clean. But if those who are

unclean do not purify themselves, they must be cut off from the community, because they have defiled the sanctuary of the LORD. The water of cleansing has not been sprinkled on them, and they are unclean. This is a lasting ordinance for them. “The man who sprinkles the water of cleansing must also wash his clothes, and anyone who touches the water of cleansing will be unclean till evening. Anything that an unclean person touches becomes unclean, and anyone who touches it becomes unclean till evening.” Numbers 19:11-22

If this chapter is dealing with the previous plague, where there were many dead bodies around, Numbers 16:46-50, then many of the Israelites would have come into contact with a dead body.

Whoever touches a human corpse will be unclean for seven days and they must purify themselves with the water on the third day and on the seventh day and then they will be clean, Numbers 19:11-12 / Leviticus 11:24 / Leviticus 11:27 / Leviticus 11:39.

However, if they do not purify themselves on the third and seventh days, they will not be clean, Numbers 19:12. If they fail to purify themselves after touching a human corpse, they defile the LORD’s tabernacle.

And they must be cut off from Israel because the water of cleansing has not been sprinkled on them; they are unclean, and their uncleanness remains on them, Numbers 19:13.

This is the law that applies when a person dies in a tent: if anyone who enters the tent and anyone who is in it will be unclean for seven days, and every open container without a lid fastened on it will be unclean, Numbers 19:14-15.

If anyone out in the open touches someone who has been killed with a sword or someone who has died a natural death, or anyone who touches a human bone or a grave, they will be unclean for seven days, Numbers 19:16.

Although it was possible to become unclean through other means, Numbers 19:14-16, the emphasis here appears to be on those who had come into contact with a dead body, one of those who had died during the plague.

Remember, anyone who touched an unclean animal was classed as unclean, but only until evening, Leviticus 11:24-29. However, here, the uncleanness from touching the corpse of a human being lasted seven days, Numbers 19:14 / Numbers 19:16.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘God recognised that the incubation period for most bacteria is within seven days. This means that after exposure to a disease, a person will know within seven days whether the disease is contracted.’

For the unclean person, put some ashes from the burned purification offering into a jar and pour fresh water over them, Numbers 19:17. Then a man who is ceremonially clean is to take some hyssop, dip it in the water and sprinkle the tent and all the furnishings and the people who were there, Numbers 19:18.

He must also sprinkle anyone who has touched a human bone or a grave or anyone who has been killed or anyone who has died a natural death, Numbers 19:18.

The man who is clean is to sprinkle those who are unclean on the third and seventh days, and on the seventh day he is to purify them, Numbers 19:19. Those who are being cleansed must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and that evening they will be clean, Numbers 19:19.

However, if those who are unclean do not purify themselves, they must be cut off from the community, because they have defiled the sanctuary of the LORD, Numbers 19:20. The water of cleansing has not been sprinkled on them, and they are unclean, Numbers 19:20.

This is a lasting ordinance for Israel: the man who sprinkles the water of cleansing must also wash his clothes, and anyone who touches the water of cleansing will be unclean till evening, Numbers 19:21.

Anything that an unclean person touches becomes unclean, and anyone who touches it becomes unclean till evening, Numbers 19:21. This wasn’t just about being physically cleansed but spiritually cleansed, Deuteronomy 6:4-5 / Deuteronomy 30:6 / Ezekiel 36:25-38 / 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

And we must note that the priests were not even necessary in the cleansing ceremonies connected with the whole house, Matthew 23:7. All this cleansing was very important for Israel to remain right with God; however, all the

sacrifices and cleansing were a foreshadowing of what was to come and be fulfilled in Christ, [Hebrews 9:13-14](#) / [1 John 1:7-9](#).

Jamieson, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It taught that the purifying efficacy was not inherent in the ceremony itself, but arose from the Divine appointment, as in other ordinances of religion, which are effective means of salvation, not from any virtue in them, but solely from the grace of God.’

CHAPTER 20

INTRODUCTION

‘In the first month, the whole Israelite community arrived at the Desert of Zin, and they stayed at Kadesh. There Miriam died and was buried. Now there was no water for the community, and the people gathered in opposition to Moses and Aaron. They quarrelled with Moses and said, “If only we had died when our brothers fell dead before the LORD! Why did you bring the LORD’s community into this wilderness, that we and our livestock should die here? Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to this terrible place? It has no grain or figs, grapevines, or pomegranates. And there is no water to drink!” Moses and Aaron went from the assembly to the entrance to the tent of meeting and fell facedown, and the glory of the LORD appeared to them. The LORD said to Moses, “Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes, and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink.” So Moses took the staff from the LORD’s presence, just as he commanded him. He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock, and Moses said to them, “Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?” Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank. But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not trust in me enough to honour me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them.” These were the waters of Meribah, where the Israelites quarrelled with the LORD and where he was proved holy among them.’ Numbers 20:1-13

WATER FROM THE ROCK

The Israelites have now come to the end of their wilderness wandering and when they stayed at Kadesh, [Numbers 13:26](#) / [Exodus 16:1](#), they gathered together to get to enter the Promised Land, [Numbers 20:1](#) / [Numbers 13:26](#) / [Numbers 14:1](#).

We can only imagine what this new generation of Israelites coming together would have been like the excitement of seeing each other and getting acquainted with each other.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The year now spoken of was the last of their journeyings; for from the going out of the spies, [Numbers 13:1-2](#), unto this time, was about thirty-eight years, [Deuteronomy 1:22-23](#) / [Deuteronomy 2:14](#).’

Some commentators suggest that they would have stayed together here for a few months to get themselves organised to enter the Promised Land. This would make sense, especially if we take into account the mourning of Miriam and communication with the Edomites.

Remember, God said that no one from this generation would enter the Promised Land. Miriam's death shows us that God meant what He said, [Numbers 20:1](#) / [Numbers 14:29-34](#) / [Exodus 2:1-8](#).

Notice there was no water for the community, [Numbers 20:2](#). This could be because of a drought or simply because there wasn't enough water in the place where they were to keep them sustained; they had used it all. When we think that there may well have been around three million people, we can understand why they would run out of water.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'The whole guidance of Israel through the wilderness is constantly referred to God's special and immediately superintending care, [Deuteronomy 8:4](#) / [Deuteronomy 29:5](#) / [Nehemiah 9:21](#) / [Isaiah 63:11-14](#) / [Amos 2:10](#).'

We can only imagine what's going through the minds of Aaron and Moses as the people once again begin to complain and quarrel against them, [Numbers 20:1-2](#). They might have thought to themselves, these guys obviously don't understand that they are actually quarrelling against God Himself.

They said to Moses, if only we had died when our brothers fell dead before the LORD! [Numbers 20:3](#). Why did you bring the LORD's community into this wilderness, that we and our livestock should die here? [Numbers 20:4](#).

Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to this terrible place? [Numbers 20:5](#). It has no grain or figs, grapevines, or pomegranates. And there is no water to drink! [Numbers 20:5](#).

Remember, this younger generation wasn't slaves in Egypt; they didn't experience the hardship of slavery in Egypt. Although they were probably told about Egypt by their parents, their parents would have died in the wilderness. I guess this is why they complained about going somewhere they had never been before.

Moses and Aaron went from the assembly to the entrance to the tent of meeting and fell facedown, and the glory of the LORD appeared to them, [Numbers 20:6](#). God tells Moses to take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together, [Numbers 20:7-8](#).

This staff is the same one Moses used in Egypt, [Exodus 7:8-13](#) / [Exodus 7:19-21](#) / [Exodus 8:5-6](#), and which had been used on a similar occasion at Rephidim, [Exodus 17:5-7](#).

God tells Moses to speak to that rock before their eyes, and it will pour out its water, and you will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink, [Numbers 20:7-8](#).

Moses took the staff from the LORD's presence, just as He commanded him to, and he and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock, and Moses said to them, listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock? [Numbers 20:9-10](#).

Notice that Moses didn't do exactly what God told him to do; instead of speaking to the rock, [Numbers 20:8](#), he struck it twice in frustration, [Numbers 20:11](#) / [Psalm 106:32-33](#).

In the past, God told Moses to strike the rock in Meribah to get water for the grumbling Israelites, [Exodus 17:1-7](#), but here he was simply to speak to the rock, [Numbers 20:11](#). As a result of not doing exactly what God told him to do, his punishment would be he wouldn't enter the Promised Land, [Numbers 20:12](#).

Aaron would face the same punishment, [Numbers 20:12](#) / [James 3:1](#). The New Testament makes it clear this water-providing, life-giving rock was a picture of Jesus, [1 Corinthians 10:4](#). Jesus, being struck once, provided life for all who would drink of Him, [John 7:37](#).

We must note that although the Israelites did get the water, it was only because of God's power and grace to care for their needs that they received it, [Leviticus 10:3](#) / [Psalm 99:5](#) / [Psalm 99:9](#). These were the waters of Meribah, where the Israelites quarrelled with the LORD and where he was proved holy among them, [Numbers 20:13](#).

EDOM DENIES ISRAEL PASSAGE

‘Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom, saying: “This is what your brother Israel says: You know about all the hardships that have come on us. Our ancestors went down into Egypt, and we lived there many years. The Egyptians mistreated us and our ancestors, but when we cried out to the LORD, he heard our cry and sent an angel and brought us out of Egypt. “Now we are here at Kadesh, a town on the edge of your territory. Please let us pass through your country. We will not go through any field or vineyard, or drink water from any well. We will travel along the King’s Highway and not turn to the right or to the left until we have passed through your territory.” But Edom answered: “You may not pass through here; if you try, we will march out and attack you with the sword.” The Israelites replied: “We will go along the main road, and if we or our livestock drink any of your water, we will pay for it. We only want to pass through on foot—nothing else.” Again, they answered: “You may not pass through.” Then Edom came out against them with a large and powerful army. Since Edom refused to let them go through their territory, Israel turned away from them.’ Numbers 20:14-21

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It appears from comparing Numbers 20:1 with Numbers 33:38, that the host must have remained in Kadesh some three or four months. No doubt time was required for reorganisation. In order to gain the banks of Jordan by the shortest route, they had to march nearly due east from Kadesh and pass through the heart of the Edomite mountains. These are lofty and precipitous, traversed by two or three narrow defiles. Hence, the necessity of the request in Numbers 20:17.’

Moses sends messengers to the king of Edom and notice the Israelites call the Edomites their brothers, Numbers 20:14 / Genesis 33:1-17. The Edomites were the descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob, who was the father of the Israelites, Genesis 25:19-34.

Moses explains about all the hardships that have come on Israel and how their ancestors went down into Egypt, and we lived there many years, Numbers 20:14-15.

The Egyptians mistreated us and our ancestors, but when they cried out to the LORD, he heard their cry and sent an angel and brought us out of Egypt, Numbers 20:15-16.

The angel in question is the angel of the Lord, Genesis 12:7 / Exodus 3:2. This is a Christophany, which suggests that this is a preincarnate appearance of Christ. Remember the word ‘angel’ in Hebrew is ‘malak’, and it simply means messenger. Christ is God, not an angel, which becomes clearer when we read Genesis 16:13.

Haynes Jr, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A study of these passages reveals that the Angel of the Lord appeared in human form, Genesis 18:2 / Genesis 22:1-18 / Hebrews 13:2, and performed normal human functions, Genesis 32:24 / Numbers 22:23 / Numbers 22:31, yet he was an awe-inspiring figure, Genesis 32:30 / Judges 6:22 / Judges 13:22, exhibiting divine attributes and prerogatives including predicting the future, Genesis 16:10-12, forgiving sin, Exodus 23:21, and receiving worship, Exodus 3:5 / Judges 13:9-20.’

Moses explains that they are now here at Kadesh, a town on the edge of your territory and asks them if they can pass through their land without going into any field or vineyard, and they won’t drink any water from their wells, Numbers 20:16-17. He tells them they will travel along the King’s Highway, Numbers 20:17.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning the King’s Highway, Numbers 20:17.

‘This is the first time this phrase occurs; it appears to have been a public road made by the king’s authority at the expense of the state.’

Moses is trying to reassure the king of Edom that the Israelites wouldn’t plunder Edom on their journey through the land. They would travel on the normal trade route that all travellers took as they passed through Edom.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Forty years prior to the date in these passages, the government of Edom was still in the hands of various ‘dukes’, Exodus 15, and the mention of the King of Edom here shows that there had been some changes during the previous generation. The same thing had already occurred also in Moab, Judges 11:17.’

Despite these reassurances from Moses, the king of Edom refused them entry, and threatened them with an army who will attack them, Numbers 20:18. The Israelites replied and said, they will go along the main road, and if we or our livestock drink any of your water, we will pay for it. We only want to pass through on foot, nothing else, Numbers 20:19.

Again, they said, you may not pass through and gathered together his army to block Israel’s passage through the land, Numbers 20:20. Moses decides that Israel shouldn’t go into battle against Edom, their brothers, and so he turned his army away from Edom, Numbers 20:21 / Deuteronomy 23:7.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It appears, however, that it was only the Edomites of Kadesh that were thus unfriendly and cruel; for from Deuteronomy 2:29, we learn that the Edomites who dwelt in Mount Seir treated them in a hospitable manner. This cruelty in the Edomites of Kadesh is strongly reprehended and threatened by the Prophet Obadiah, Obadiah 1:10.’

Sadly, this decision the king made would eventually, in later years, end in judgment against the Edomites. God would judge them and remove them from the earth because of this one decision in refusing to allow Israel to pass through their land, Jeremiah 49:7-16 / Obadiah 1:21. Note that Numbers 20:21 tells us that Israel went around Edom, but Deuteronomy 2:4 says they passed through it. Is this a contradiction?

Defending Inerrancy says the following.

‘God would not allow Israel to do battle with the Edomites because He had given the land of Edom to Esau as an everlasting possession. Numbers 20:21 states that ‘Israel turned away from him.’ However, when Moses reviews these events in Deuteronomy 2:4, he states that the Lord said, ‘You are about to pass through the territory of your brethren, the descendants of Esau.’ Likewise, Deuteronomy 2:8 says Israel, ‘passed beyond our brethren the descendants of Esau.’ Did they pass through Edom, or did they go around it?

In one sense, it can be said that Israel passed through Edom when they entered it in order to make the request to continue their journey along the King’s highway that ran through their land. However, the text never actually says that they did or that they would pass through the land. Actually, the same Hebrew word ‘abar’ is used in each case. It can be used to mean pass through or pass by. The historical record clearly describes their journey as passing along the eastern border of Edom, Deuteronomy 2:8. God had warned Israel that as they would pass along the eastern border, they should not provoke the Edomites to war, Deuteronomy 2:5.’

THE DEATH OF AARON

‘The whole Israelite community set out from Kadesh and came to Mount Hor. At Mount Hor, near the border of Edom, the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “Aaron will be gathered to his people. He will not enter the land I give the Israelites, because both of you rebelled against my command at the waters of Meribah. Get Aaron and his son Eleazar and take them up Mount Hor. Remove Aaron’s garments and put them on his son Eleazar, for Aaron will be gathered to his people; he will die there.” Moses did as the LORD commanded: They went up Mount Hor in the sight of the whole community. Moses removed Aaron’s garments and put them on his son Eleazar. And Aaron died there on top of the mountain. Then Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain, and when the whole community learned that Aaron had died, all the Israelites mourned for him thirty days.’ Numbers 20:22-29

The whole Israelite community set out from Kadesh and came to Mount Hor, and it was here, near the border of Edom, that God told Moses and Aaron that Aaron would be gathered to his people.

He will not enter the land He is going to give the Israelites, because both of them rebelled against His command at the waters of Meribah, Numbers 20:22-24 / Numbers 20:12.

God ask Moses to get Aaron and his son Eleazar and take them up Mount Hor, Numbers 20:25. When they arrive, Moses is to remove Aaron's garments and put them on his son Eleazar, for Aaron will be gathered to his people; he will die there, Numbers 20:26.

Moses did as God commanded him to do, and so Moses and Aaron went up Mount Hor in the sight of the whole community, and then Moses removed Aaron's garments and put them on his son Eleazar, and Aaron died there on top of the mountain, Numbers 20:27-28.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The priestly garments, wherewith Moses had invested Aaron, Leviticus 8:7-9, were put upon Eleazar by way of solemn transference of Aaron's office to him, 1 Kings 19:19.’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning the death place of Aaron.

‘The difficulty cited by many is that Deuteronomy 10:6 states that Aaron died in Moserah. The only difficulty here is that nobody knows where either Hor or Moserah was located, so the natural conclusion is that both sites are only different designations of one place. Another possibility is that the children of Israel took the body of Aaron with them from Hor, if the places are different, and reburied it at Moserah, in which case, the verse in Deuteronomy 10:6 would apply only to the second burial of Aaron and not to his death. A slight emendation of the text would allow such a translation.’

Notice that when Aaron died, there was no fancy funeral ceremony; it was private and on a mountain, away from the rest of the Israelites, Numbers 20:28. When Moses and Eleazar came down from Mount Hor, the people saw that the spiritual leadership of Israel now rested on Eleazar, Numbers 20:29 / Leviticus 8:7-9.

When they learned that Aaron had died, they mourned his death for thirty days, Numbers 20:29, which was customary. Moses and Aaron weren't allowed to enter Canaan because of their rebellion at the waters of Meribah.

Moses was around one hundred and twenty years old at this time, Aaron was one hundred and twenty-three years old when he died, Numbers 33:38-39, and their leadership of Israel was now coming to an end. Aaron, who was older than Moses, was to die first.

CHAPTER 21

‘When the Canaanite king of Arad, who lived in the Negev, heard that Israel was coming along the road to Atharim, he attacked the Israelites and captured some of them. Then Israel made this vow to the LORD: “If you will deliver these people into our hands, we will totally destroy their cities.” The LORD listened to Israel's plea and gave the Canaanites over to them. They completely destroyed them and their towns; so the place was named Hormah.’

Numbers 21:1-3

ARAD DESTROYED

In the previous chapter, we saw how, after being refused entry through the land of Edom, Moses didn't want to get involved in any war with Israel's brother Edom, [Numbers 20:14-21](#). Here, we read that the Canaanite king, Arad, heard what was going on and decided to attack Israel and take some of them captive, [Numbers 21:1](#). After being attacked Israel make a vow to God saying if God will deliver them into Israel's hands, then, in turn, Israel will totally destroy them, their cities and their towns, [Numbers 21:2](#). It's difficult to understand why they would make such a vow when we remind ourselves that Israel were commanded by God to destroy all the Canaanites in the first place, [Deuteronomy 20:18](#). However, God listened to Israel's plea and gave the Canaanites over to them and they completely destroyed them and their towns and so the place was named Hormah, [Numbers 21:3](#). Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

'The Canaanites of Arad took the offensive against Israel. Perhaps they did so because 38 years earlier the Israelites had suffered defeat at Hormah (which means 'destruction'). Hormah lay very near Arad. The Israelites had experienced this defeat when they sought to enter the land after God had sentenced them to wander in the wilderness for 38 more years, [Numbers 14:45](#).'

THE BRONZE SNAKE

'They travelled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!" Then the LORD sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people, and many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us." So Moses prayed for the people. The LORD said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live." So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then, when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived.' [Numbers 21:4-9](#)

On their travels around Edom, [Numbers 21:4](#) / [Numbers 20:14-21](#), Israel, once again, complain against God and Moses, [Numbers 21:5](#) / [Exodus 15:24](#) / [Exodus 16:2](#) / [Exodus 17:3](#) / [Numbers 12:1](#) / [Numbers 14:2](#) / [Numbers 16:3](#) / [Numbers 16:41](#) / [Numbers 20:2](#).

They also question why were they brought up from Egypt in the first place, [Numbers 21:5](#), which is a repeat of what their forefathers said whilst in the wilderness, [Exodus 17:3-7](#).

They made the complaint that there was no bread, [Numbers 21:5](#), which obviously wasn't true because God had provided manna and quail for them to eat, [Exodus 16:13-14](#).

This is obviously a faith in God issue. They also make the complaint that there is no water, and they detest this miserable food, [Numbers 21:5](#) / [Exodus 16:3](#) / [Numbers 20:3-5](#).

As a result of Israel's lack of faith and lack of gratitude, God sent venomous snakes among them, [Numbers 21:6](#). The KJV uses the words, 'fiery serpents', [Deuteronomy 8:15](#); [Isaiah 14:29](#) / [Isaiah 30:6](#).

The term 'fiery serpent' refers to the bronze serpent Moses was instructed to create. The Hebrew word for 'fiery' can also mean 'burning,' possibly describing the burning sensation of the snake bites or the appearance of the bronze.

Serpents were common in the desert regions where the Israelites travelled, and their presence here serves as both a literal and symbolic representation of sin and judgment.

The snakes bit people, and many in Israel died from the snake bite, [Numbers 21:6](#) / [Hebrews 1:7](#). It appears that it took a bunch of venomous snakes to bring Israel to their senses, [Deuteronomy 8:15](#) / [Isaiah 14:29](#) / [Isaiah 30:6](#), hence, why they confessed they had sinned against God and Moses, [Numbers 21:7](#).

After praying to God on behalf of the people again, Numbers 21:7, the Lord tells Moses to make a bronze snake and put it on a pole and anyone who looked at it would be granted life, Numbers 21:8 / Isaiah 45:22.

What we find happening here is a very clear picture of the Christ, who in His sacrificial death, would be lifted upon the cross for the spiritual healing of all men, John 3:14-15 / Isaiah 53:5-6 / Romans 8:3 / 2 Corinthians 5:21.

Notice how simple this was for those in Israel to be saved; all they had to do was to look at the bronze serpent, and they would be healed and saved, Numbers 21:9 / Isaiah 45:22 / John 3:14-15.

The snakes were miraculously produced by God to punish them, and when they looked at the bronze snake, they would be miraculously healed, Numbers 21:9. We may wonder, whatever happened to this bronze snake?

We don't have to wonder, because the Scriptures tell us that the bronze snake was taken by the Israelites to Canaan, and preserved until the time of Hezekiah, who had it broken into pieces because the idolatrous people presented incense offerings to this holy relic, 2 Kings 18:4.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning the snake and Christ.

1. Man's enemy, Satan, appears here in the form of the venomous serpents, which, like 'That Old Serpent', Revelation 12:9, were the cause of sin and death.
2. The uniqueness of the remedy God here proposed is like that of Christ himself, being no other.
3. The lifting up of the serpent foretold the manner of Jesus' death on Calvary.
4. Just as the brass serpent had the likeness and form of the serpents themselves, Jesus also was 'made in the likeness of sinful flesh', Romans 8:3. And just as the brass serpent, which was lifted up was without any evil whatever, so was Christ.
5. Faith in what God commanded, demonstrated by 'looking unto' the serpent, was like the faith that obeys the Word of God with reference to what Christ commanded. Healing in both cases resulted from hearing, believing, and obeying the Divine commandments.
6. Some have equated 'looking unto' with 'faith alone' as the means of appropriating healing and salvation, but there is a fatal flaw in that analogy. 'Looking unto' was a positive and obedient objective action. 'Saving faith' as understood by solifidians is none of this!
7. The 'lifting up of the serpent upon the standard' is typical of the 'lifting up of Christ', not solely restricted to this death on a cross, but also applicable to the worldwide and perpetual 'lifting up' of the Saviour himself in the worship and adoration of all nations, tribes, tongues and peoples.

THE JOURNEY TO MOAB

'The Israelites moved on and camped at Oboth. Then they set out from Oboth and camped in Iye Abarim, in the wilderness that faces Moab toward the sunrise. From there, they moved on and camped in the Zered Valley. They set out from there and camped alongside the Arnon, which is in the wilderness extending into Amorite territory. The Arnon is the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites. That is why the Book of the Wars of the LORD says: "Zahab in Suphah and the ravines, the Arnon and the slopes of the ravines that lead to the settlement of Ar and lie along the border of Moab." From there, they continued on to Beer, the well where the LORD said to Moses, "Gather the people together, and I will give them water." Then Israel sang this song: "Spring up, O well! Sing about it, about the well that the princes dug, that the nobles of the people sank—the nobles with sceptres and staffs." Then they went from the wilderness to Mattanah, from Mattanah to Nahaliel, from Nahaliel to Bamoth, and from Bamoth to the valley in Moab where the top of Pisgah overlooks the wasteland.' Numbers 21:10-20

After the incident with the snakes, Israel continues their journey into Canaan. They set out from Obboth and camped in Iye Abarim, in the wilderness that faces Moab toward the sunrise, [Numbers 21:10-11](#).

From there, they moved on and camped in the Zered Valley, [Numbers 21:12](#) / [Deuteronomy 2:13-14](#). They set out from there and camped alongside the Arnon, which is in the wilderness extending into Amorite territory, [Numbers 21:13](#). We are told that the Arnon is the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites, [Numbers 21:13](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The list of places where Israel camped, [Numbers 21:10-13](#), is different from that in [Numbers 33](#), making this an abbreviated account, or minor adjustments associated collectively with the same camp. It makes no difference at all.’ That is why the Book of the Wars of the LORD says, Zahab in Suphah and the ravines, the Arnon and the slopes of the ravines that lead to the settlement of Ar and lie along the border of Moab, [Numbers 21:14-15](#). The Book of the Wars doesn’t exist today, and it was not inspired by God, but it was a record of Israel’s military exploits, especially the military conquest of the land of Canaan.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning the Book of the Wars.

‘This book seems to have been some book of remembrances and directions, written by Moses for Joshua’s private instruction for the management of the wars after him, [Exodus 17:14-16](#). It may be that this was the same book which is called the book of Jasher, i.e., the book of the upright, or a directory for Joshua, from Moses, what to do and what to expect in his wars; and in this book it seems as if Moses directed the setting up of archery, [2 Samuel 1:18](#), and warrants Joshua to command the sun, and expect its obedience, [Joshua 10:13](#).’

From there, they continued on to Beer, the well where God told Moses to gather the people together, and He would give them water, [Numbers 21:16](#). Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well! Sing about it, about the well that the princes dug, that the nobles of the people sank, the nobles with sceptres and staffs, [Numbers 21:17-18](#) / [Exodus 15:1](#). Before the snake incident, the people complained they had no water, [Numbers 21:5](#), here, we read that God once again would provide water, but this time the Israelites had to dig a well to access it. According to some commentators, the song which was sung here was sung for centuries in the temple in Jerusalem on every third Sabbath.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This song, recognised by all authorities as dating from the earliest times and suggested apparently by the fact that God in this place gave the people water not from the rock, but by commanding Moses to cause a well to be dug, bespeaks the glad zeal, the joyful faith, and the hearty cooperation among all ranks, which possessed the people. In after time, it may well have been the water-drawing song of the maidens of Israel.’

Then Israel went from the wilderness to Mattanah, from Mattanah to Nahaliel, from Nahaliel to Bamoth, and from Bamoth to the valley in Moab where the top of Pisgah overlooks the wasteland, [Numbers 21:18-20](#).

DEFEAT OF SIHON AND OG

‘Israel sent messengers to say to Sihon, king of the Amorites: “Let us pass through your country. We will not turn aside into any field or vineyard, or drink water from any well. We will travel along the King’s Highway until we have passed through your territory.” But Sihon would not let Israel pass through his territory. He mustered his entire army and marched out into the wilderness against Israel. When he reached Jahaz, he fought with Israel. Israel, however, put him to the sword and took over his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok, but only as far as the Ammonites, because their border was fortified. Israel captured all the cities of the Amorites and occupied them, including Heshbon and all its surrounding settlements. Heshbon was the city of Sihon, king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former

king of Moab and had taken from him all his land as far as the Arnon. That is why the poets say: “Come to Heshbon and let it be rebuilt; let Sihon’s city be restored. “Fire went out from Heshbon, a blaze from the city of Sihon. It consumed Ar of Moab, the citizens of Arnon’s heights. Woe to you, Moab! You are destroyed, people of Chemosh!

He has given up his sons as fugitives and his daughters as captives to Sihon, king of the Amorites. “But we have overthrown them; Heshbon’s dominion has been destroyed all the way to Dibon. We have demolished them as far as Nophah, which extends to Medeba.” So Israel settled in the land of the Amorites. After Moses had sent spies to Jazer, the Israelites captured its surrounding settlements and drove out the Amorites who were there. Then they turned and went up along the road toward Bashan, and Og, king of Bashan, and his whole army marched out to meet them in battle at Edrei. The LORD said to Moses, “Do not be afraid of him, for I have delivered him into your hands, along with his whole army and his land. Do to him what you did to Sihon, king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon.”

So they struck him down, together with his sons and his whole army, leaving them no survivors. And they took possession of his land.’ Numbers 21:21-35

Israel sent messengers to Sihon, who was the king of the Amorites, Numbers 21:21. The Amorites were one of the main cultural groups of the Canaanites, Genesis 10:16. The name was sometimes used to refer to all the Canaanites of the region, Deuteronomy 1:7 / Deuteronomy 1:19 / Deuteronomy 1:27.

When Israel arrived, Sihon was ruling over a part of the Amorites to the east of the Jordan River. The messengers ask Sihon to allow them to pass through his country and assured him that they would not turn aside into any field or vineyard, or drink water from any well, Numbers 21:22.

The messengers tell him that they will travel along the King’s Highway, Numbers 20:17, until we have passed through their territory, Numbers 21:22. It’s clear that it wasn’t Moses’ original plan to go to war against the Amorites and so, Sihon wouldn’t allow Israel to pass through the land, Numbers 21:23 / Deuteronomy 2:24-25 / Deuteronomy 2:30, but came out to fight against Israel, Numbers 21:23.

However, Israel fought against the Amorites and Sihon, both of whom were defeated by Israel, Numbers 21:24-25. Heshbon was the city of Sihon, king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab and had taken from him all his land as far as the Arnon, Numbers 21:26.

That is why the poets say: Come to Heshbon and let it be rebuilt; let Sihon’s city be restored. Fire went out from Heshbon, a blaze from the city of Sihon. It consumed Ar of Moab, the citizens of Arnon’s heights. Woe to you, Moab! You are destroyed, people of Chemosh! He has given up his sons as fugitives and his daughters as captives to Sihon, king of the Amorites, Numbers 21:27-29.

It’s interesting to note that Chemosh was a Moabite god, Judges 11:24 / 1 Kings 11:7 / Jeremiah 48:7. The point is that because God defeated Israel’s enemies, He would let everyone know that there is only one true living God and that He was very much working in and through His people.

But we have overthrown them; Heshbon’s dominion has been destroyed all the way to Dibon. We have demolished them as far as Nophah, which extends to Medeba, Numbers 21:30 / Isaiah 15:1-2. The city of Heshbon’s name means city of daughters or the mother city.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the poets.

‘The original word is almost equivalent to ‘the poets’. The word supplies the title of the Book of Proverbs itself and is used in the parable proper in Ezekiel 17:2, of the prophecies of Balsam in Numbers 23:7-10 / Numbers 24:3-9, etc. and of a song of triumph over Babylon in Isaiah 14:4.’

As a result of the victory over the Amorites and Sihon, Deuteronomy 3:1-17, Israel now occupied all the cities of the Amorites, Numbers 21:31 / Deuteronomy 2:30-37.

After Moses had sent spies to Jazer, the Israelites captured its surrounding settlements and drove out the Amorites who were there, Numbers 21:32. Then they turned and went up along the road toward Bashan, and Og king of Bashan and his whole army marched out to meet them in battle at Edrei, Numbers 21:33.

Although many of the cities didn’t have fortified walls around them, Deuteronomy 3:5, Og, who was one of the last of the tribes of giants in Canaan, was the king of a warrior nation who lived within walled cities.

However, well-fortified city walls are no match for God; they, too, were destroyed. The land where Og reigned was beautiful pastureland, and so, because of this, the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh desired to dwell in this land, Deuteronomy 3:15-17.

God had told Israel not to be afraid of Og and his army, Numbers 21:34, and Israel took God at His word, and so, God gave them the victory, Numbers 21:35. We must remember that the Israelites weren't warriors; they had little to no experience of war, and yet God blessed them with the victory because they trusted Him.

CHAPTER 22

INTRODUCTION

'Then the Israelites travelled to the plains of Moab and camped along the Jordan across from Jericho. Now, Balak, son of Zippor, saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites, and Moab was terrified because there were so many people. Indeed, Moab was filled with dread because of the Israelites. The Moabites said to the elders of Midian, "This horde is going to lick up everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field." So Balak, son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time, sent messengers to summon Balaam, son of Beor, who was at Pethor, near the Euphrates River, in his native land. Balak said: "A people has come out of Egypt; they cover the face of the land and have settled next to me. Now come and put a curse on these people because they are too powerful for me. Perhaps then I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land. For I know that whoever you bless is blessed, and whoever you curse is cursed." The elders of Moab and Midian left, taking with them the fee for divination. When they came to Balaam, they told him what Balak had said. "Spend the night here," Balaam said to them, "and I will report back to you with the answer the LORD gives me." So the Moabite officials stayed with him. God came to Balaam and asked, "Who are these men with you?" Balaam said to God, "Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab, sent me this message: 'A people that has come out of Egypt covers the face of the land. Now come and put a curse on them for me. Perhaps then I will be able to fight them and drive them away.'" But God said to Balaam, "Do not go with them. You must not put a curse on those people, because they are blessed." The next morning, Balaam got up and said to Balak's officials, "Go back to your own country, for the LORD has refused to let me go with you." So the Moabite officials returned to Balak and said, "Balaam refused to come with us." Then Balak sent other officials, more numerous and more distinguished than the first. They came to Balaam and said: "This is what Balak son of Zippor says: Do not let anything keep you from coming to me, because I will reward you handsomely and do whatever you say. Come and put a curse on these people for me." But Balaam answered them, "Even if Balak gave me all the silver and gold in his palace, I could not do anything great or small to go beyond the command of the LORD my God. Now spend the night here so that I can find out what else the LORD will tell me." That night God came to Balaam and said, "Since these men have come to summon you, go with them, but do only what I tell you." Numbers 22:1-20

BALAK SUMMONS BALAAM

In this chapter, we read that Israel wasn't only battling with other nations physically, but also morally. The Israelites travelled to the plains of Moab and camped along the Jordan across from Jericho, Numbers 22:1.

Balak, son of Zippor, saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites, Numbers 21:21-35, and Moab was terrified because there were so many people, Numbers 22:2-3. Moab was filled with dread because of the Israelites, Numbers 22:3.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The comparison of [Numbers 22:4](#) with [Numbers 21:26](#) suggests that Balak was not the hereditary king but a Midianite, and that a change of dynasty had taken place. His father’s name, Zippor, ‘Bird,’ reminds us of those of other Midianites, e. g., Oreb, ‘Crow,’ Zeeb, ‘Wolf.’ Possibly the Midianite chieftains had taken advantage of the weakness of the Moabites after the Amorite victories to establish themselves as princes in the land.’

The Moabites said to the elders of Midian, This horde is going to lick up everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field, [Numbers 22:4](#). It appears that Israel’s plan to take over the land had become well known throughout Palestine.

When the news got to Barak, everyone in the region was gripped by fear because they knew that no one could defeat the Israelites. Balak, who was king of Moab at that time, sent messengers to summon Balaam, son of Beor, who was at Pethor, near the Euphrates River, in his native land, [Numbers 22:5](#) / [Deuteronomy 23:4](#).

The name Balaam signifies ‘destroyer,’ or ‘glutton,’ and he was a Gentile who was known by Balak, the king of Moab. He appears to be a religious leader and a prophet, [2 Peter 2:15-16](#), but apart from what we have recorded here, we don’t know much about him. We do know that he was a leader who was very happy to get paid to say whatever someone wanted him to say, [Jude 11](#) / [Revelation 2:14](#).

Balak tells Balaam a people have come out of Egypt and they cover the face of the land and have settled next to me, [Numbers 22:5](#). Balak now asks Balaam to put a curse on these people, because they are too powerful for him, [Numbers 22:6](#).

Perhaps then he will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land, [Numbers 22:6](#). Balak thinks he knows that whoever Balaam blesses is blessed, and whoever he curses will be cursed, [Numbers 22:6](#).

The Canaanites appear to be living in peace with one another, which is why there were many cities built in that area. Here we read that the peace they had wasn’t that great because they wouldn’t come together to fight Israel.

Israel had no intentions of destroying Moab, [Deuteronomy 2:9](#); however, Balak, unfortunately for him, didn’t know this, and so, he hired Balaam to pronounce a curse upon Israel.

The elders of Moab and Midian left, taking with them the fee for divination, [2 Peter 2:15](#), and when they came to Balaam, they told him what Balak had said, [Numbers 22:7](#).

Balaam tells them to spend the night here, and he will report back to them with the answer the LORD gives him and so, the Moabite officials stayed with him, [Numbers 22:8](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘So it appears he knew the true God, and had been in the habit of consulting him, and receiving oracles from his mouth.’

God came to Balaam and asked, Who are these men with him? [Numbers 22:9](#). Balaam tells God that ‘Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab, sent him this message, which said, a people that has come out of Egypt covers the face of the land, and now come and put a curse on them for him, perhaps then he will be able to fight them and drive them away, [Numbers 22:10-11](#).

The first delegation from King Balak arrived, and God told Balaam to have nothing to do with them. God’s initial words to Balaam were, Do not go with them. You must not put a curse on those people, because they are blessed, [Numbers 22:12](#).

After Balaam enquired with the Lord as to what they should do, the Lord answered Balak’s messengers and told Balaam that he shouldn’t go with them, [Numbers 22:13](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Balaam must surely have known that God’s blessing was on the people with whose marvellous march forth from Egypt he was acquainted, [Exodus 15:14](#) / [Exodus 18:1](#) / [Joshua 2:9](#), and from whom he had himself probably learned much, compare the language of [Numbers 23:12](#) with [Genesis 13:6](#), and that of [Numbers 24:9](#) with [Genesis 49:9](#). But

his reply to the messengers next morning, Numbers 22:13, betrays the desire to venture to the utmost of that which God would not forbid rather than to carry out God's will in hearty sincerity.'

The Moabite officials returned to Balak and told him that Balaam refused to come with them, Numbers 22:14, and so, Balak sent other officials, more numerous and more distinguished than the first, Numbers 22:15.

They came to Balaam and said this is what Balak says, do not let anything keep you from coming to him, because he will reward them handsomely and do whatever they say, Numbers 22:16-17. Come and put a curse on these people for him, Numbers 22:17.

Balaam tells them even if Balak gave him all the silver and gold in his palace, he couldn't do anything great or small to go beyond the command of the LORD his God, Numbers 22:18.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'Balaam knew God too well to suppose he could reverse any of his purposes, and he respected him too much to attempt to do anything without his permission. Though he was covetous, yet he dared not, even when strongly tempted both by riches and honours, to go contrary to the command of his God.'

Notice all the officials got involved in the bribing of Balaam; however, despite saying that if he was offered silver and gold, he wouldn't go, Numbers 22:18, he still went ahead anyway.

Once again he asks them to spend the night here so that he can find out what else the LORD will tell him, Numbers 22:19. God came to Balaam again and tells him, since these men have come to summon him, go with them, but do only what He tells him, Numbers 22:20. Balaam wanted to go with them and God allowed him to go.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

'The Moabites' attempts to frustrate the fulfilment of God's promise to give Israel the land demonstrates His power in overcoming these enemies and His faithfulness, Genesis 12:3.'

Balaam, who was open to the seduction of money, eventually gave in to the request of Balak. Remember, Balaam was a religious leader who was happy to get paid to preach whatever anyone wanted him to preach if the price was right, Jude 11.

Jude tells us that some people today are like Balaam, they are greedy, they are covetous and willing to do any dishonourable thing whatever for the sake of money. Balaam lusted after the riches and prestige offered to him, and God gave him over to his own sin. God warned Balaam to turn back when he was on the way to see Balak. Yet his heart was set on the rich reward King Balak promised, and he continued on.

BALAAM'S DONKEY

'Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey and went with the Moabite officials. But God was very angry when he went, and the angel of the LORD stood in the road to oppose him. Balaam was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him. When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand, it turned off the road into a field. Balaam beat it to get it back on the road. Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path through the vineyards, with walls on both sides. When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, it pressed close to the wall, crushing Balaam's foot against it. So he beat the donkey again. Then the angel of the LORD moved on ahead and stood in a narrow place where there was no room to turn, either to the right or to the left. When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, it lay down under Balaam, and he was angry and beat it with his staff. Then the LORD opened the donkey's mouth, and it said to Balaam, "What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?" Balaam answered the donkey, "You have made a fool of me! If only I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you right now." The donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your own donkey, which you have always ridden, to this day? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you?" "No," he said. Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road with his sword drawn. So he bowed low and fell facedown. The angel of the LORD asked him, "Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? I have come here to oppose

you because your path is a reckless one before me. The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If it had not turned away, I would certainly have killed you by now, but I would have spared it.” Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, “I have sinned. I did not realise you were standing in the road to oppose me. Now, if you are displeased, I will go back.” The angel of the LORD said to Balaam, “Go with the men, but speak only what I tell you.” So Balaam went with Balak’s officials. When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at the Moabite town on the Arnon border, at the edge of his territory. Balak said to Balaam, “Did I not send you an urgent summons? Why didn’t you come to me? Am I really not able to reward you?” “Well, I have come to you now,” Balaam replied. “But I can’t say whatever I please. I must speak only what God puts in my mouth.” Then Balaam went with Balak to Kiriath Huzoth. Balak sacrificed cattle and sheep and gave some to Balaam and the officials who were with him. The next morning, Balak took Balaam up to Bamoth Baal, and from there he could see the outskirts of the Israelite camp.’ Numbers 22:21-41

Balaam got up from bed very early in the morning for his long journey and went with the Moabite officials, [Numbers 22:21](#). He would be travelling with the prince from Moab. ‘Wow what an honour!’ he thought to himself, not even thinking that God may be very angry because of his disobedience, [Numbers 22:22](#).

Balaam leapt upon his trusted donkey, and along with his two servants followed right behind the prince, [Numbers 22:22](#). Everything was great, and I’m sure Balaam would have had a big smile on his face.

Here we read that God approached Balaam in three different ways, to remind him of his position in relation to Balak and the Israelites.

1. The first obstacle to preventing Balaam from going to Balak came from the angel of the Lord, who could be seen only by the donkey, [Numbers 22:23](#) / [Numbers 20:16](#) / [Daniel 10:7](#) / [Acts 9:7](#).

Who is this angel of the LORD? This is a Christophany, which suggests that this is a preincarnate appearance of Christ, [Genesis 12:7](#) / [Joshua 6:13](#). Remember the word ‘angel’ in Hebrew is ‘malak’ and it simply means messenger. Haynes Jr, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A study of these passages reveals that the Angel of the Lord appeared in human form, [Genesis 18:2](#) / [Genesis 22:1-18](#) / [Hebrews 13:2](#), and performed normal human functions, [Genesis 32:24](#) / [Numbers 22:23](#) / [Numbers 22:31](#), yet he was an awe-inspiring figure, [Genesis 32:30](#) / [Judges 6:22](#) / [Judges 13:22](#), exhibiting divine attributes and prerogatives including predicting the future, [Genesis 16:10-12](#), forgiving sin, [Exodus 23:21](#), and receiving worship, [Exodus 3:5](#) / [Judges 13:9-20](#).’

The angel of the Lord stood in the road in order to restrict the passage of Balaam and the donkey saw the angel of the Lord with a sharp sword right there in the middle of the path, blocking the way, [Numbers 22:23](#). And so, instead of going straight ahead, she ran into a nearby field to avoid being hurt by the sword, but Balaam didn’t see anything, [Numbers 22:23](#).

He was very upset that his donkey would do such a thing. ‘How embarrassing!’ he thought, ‘you bad donkey’, and so, Balaam yelled as he beat her with a stick, [Numbers 22:23](#). Finally, he was able to get the sore donkey back onto the path.

2. The second effort to prevent Balaam was when the angel of the Lord stood in the road in the vineyard in order to block the passage of Balaam, [Numbers 22:24](#).

After going a little further, they came to a narrow passage with steep walls of rock on both sides, [Numbers 22:24](#). The donkey once again saw the angel of the Lord blocking the way and so she moved as close to the wall as possible to avoid being hurt by the sword, [Numbers 22:25](#).

But as she did, Balaam’s foot was crushed against the rocks, and he became very angry again. ‘You dumb donkey!’ Balaam yelled as he beat her several more times with a stick, [Numbers 22:25](#).

3. The third effort of God to stop Balaam was when the angel of the Lord stood in a narrow passage where it was impossible for the donkey to pass, [Numbers 22:26](#).

A little further, along the way, the angel of the Lord appeared again. Balaam still couldn't see the angel, but the donkey could. There was no way to turn this time, and the donkey thought to herself, 'What can I do now? I can't go left, I can't go right, and I can't even back up.'

She did the only thing possible and sat down right there on the path, Numbers 22:26. 'What a stupid donkey!' Balaam cried out as he beat her even harder than before, Numbers 22:27.

Notice, despite these three efforts, Balaam complained to the donkey and unmercifully struck his donkey, 2 Peter 2:16. At this point, he hadn't seen the angel of the Lord, but we can only imagine what was going through Balaam's mind when the LORD opened the donkey's mouth and started speaking to him, Numbers 22:28.

Suddenly, the donkey turned to Balaam, opened her mouth, and said, 'Hey! What did I do to you that you should beat me three times with a stick?' Numbers 22:28. For some reason, Balaam wasn't impressed to hear a donkey talk.

He only answered, 'You made me look like a fool, not following the path, and crushing me against the wall, then sitting down like a stubborn old mule. If I only had a sword, I'd stick it in you right now,' Numbers 22:29.

'Why are you saying this?' the donkey replied, 'Haven't I been faithful to you all these years, have I ever tried to harm you or make you look foolish?' Numbers 22:30.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

'Why did Balaam answer his donkey as though he normally conversed with it, Numbers 22:29? Perhaps spirits had spoken to him through animals previously, Genesis 3:1 / Genesis 3:4. Maybe the donkey exasperated him to the point that he answered before he realised what he was doing.'

Just then, Balaam saw the angel of the Lord standing there on the road, and Balaam fell to his knees and put his face very low to the ground to show his respect, Numbers 22:31.

Then the angel of the Lord spoke to Balaam, 'Why are you beating your donkey? He has come here to oppose Baalam because his path is a reckless one before Him, Numbers 22:32 / 2 Peter 2:16.

She saw the angel of the Lord in the path and didn't come near because she knew He would strike Baalam with God's sword, Numbers 22:33. Baalam had asked before if he could go to Moab, and He said, NO Balaam! But you went anyway. You asked for God's guidance, and He tried to guide him to do the right thing, but Balaam did not listen. The Word of the Lord was final, NO Balaam! Balaam knew that he had done wrong when he said, I have sinned. I did not realise you were standing in the road to oppose me. Now if you are displeased, I will go back, Numbers 22:34.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'Here is a proof that though he loved the wages of unrighteousness, yet he still feared God; and he is now willing to drop the enterprise if God be displeased with his proceeding.'

The angel of the LORD tells Balaam to go with the men but speak only what He tells him, Numbers 22:35 / Numbers 22:20, and so Balaam went with Balak's officials, Numbers 22:35.

He would continue on his journey with the prince after all, but God would not let him curse His people. When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at the Moabite town on the Arnon border, at the edge of his territory, Numbers 22:36.

Balak then says to Balaam, did he not send him an urgent summons? Why didn't he come to him? Is he really not able to reward Balaam? Numbers 22:37. Balaam tells Balak, he has come to him, but he can't say whatever he wants, he must speak only what God puts in his mouth, Numbers 22:38.

Then Balaam went with Balak to Kiriath Huzoth, Numbers 22:39, and Balak sacrificed cattle and sheep, and notice he gave some to Balaam and the officials who were with him, Numbers 22:40.

Allen, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The pieces given to Balaam presumably would have included the livers; for as a Baru diviner, Balaam was a specialist in liver divination.’

Balak took Balaam up to Bamoth Baal, which is the first reference to Baal worship in the Old Testament, and from there he could see the outskirts of the Israelite camp, Numbers 22:41.

Ralph, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Israel struggled with Baal and his worshippers from the beginning to the end of her national history. Baal worship was the most serious challenge and threat to the worship of Yahweh of all the pagan religions in the ancient Near East. This was true because some similarities and some vast differences existed between Baal and Yahweh.’

CHAPTER 23

INTRODUCTION

‘Balaam said, “Build me seven altars here, and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me.” Balak did as Balaam said, and the two of them offered a bull and a ram on each altar. Then Balaam said to Balak, “Stay here beside your offering while I go aside. Perhaps the LORD will come to meet with me. Whatever he reveals to me, I will tell you.” Then he went off to a barren height. God met with him, and Balaam said, “I have prepared seven altars, and on each altar I have offered a bull and a ram.” The LORD put a word in Balaam’s mouth and said, “Go back to Balak and give him this word.” So he went back to him and found him standing beside his offering, with all the Moabite officials. Then Balaam spoke his message: “Balak brought me from Aram, the king of Moab, from the eastern mountains. ‘Come,’ he said, ‘curse Jacob for me; come, denounce Israel.’ How can I curse those whom God has not cursed? How can I denounce those whom the LORD has not denounced? From the rocky peaks I see them, from the heights I view them. I see a people who live apart and do not consider themselves one of the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob or number even a fourth of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and may my final end be like theirs!” Balak said to Balaam, “What have you done to me? I brought you to curse my enemies, but you have done nothing but bless them!” He answered, “Must I not speak what the LORD puts in my mouth?” Numbers 23:1-12

BALAAAM’S FIRST MESSAGE

After the encounter with the talking donkey and being told time and time again that he wasn’t to go to Moab, Numbers 22:21-41, Balaam now has seven altars made, and he offers sacrifices on them, Numbers 23:1-2. Balaam tells Balak to stay where he was beside his offering, while Balaam will go aside, Numbers 23:3. He says, perhaps the LORD will come to meet with him, and whatever God reveals to him, he will tell Balak. Then he went off to a barren height, Numbers 23:3. God met with him, and Balaam said, He has prepared seven altars, and on each altar he has offered a bull and a ram, Numbers 23:4.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘God served His own purposes through the arts of Balaam and manifested His will through the agencies employed to seek it, dealing thus with Balaam in an exceptional manner. To God’s own people auguries were forbidden, Leviticus 19:26.’

The LORD put a word in Balaam’s mouth and said, Go back to Balak and give him this word, Numbers 23:5. So Balaam went back to Balak and found him standing beside his offering, with all the Moabite officials, Numbers 23:6.

Balaam tells them that Balak brought him from Aram, which was Balaam's home, Deuteronomy 23:4, the king of Moab from the eastern mountains. Come and curse Jacob for him, come, denounce Israel, Numbers 23:7. How can he curse those whom God has not cursed? How can he denounce those whom the LORD has not denounced? Numbers 23:8.

Because Israel believed in the One true God, they would live among the nations who worshipped false gods, and so, Israel would live apart because of their faith in God, Numbers 23:9.

Notice Balaam prophesied that Jacob, that is Israel, would be like dust, Numbers 23:10. In other words, they would grow into a mighty people just as God promised Abraham, Genesis 12:1-3 / Genesis 13:16 / Genesis 28:14. Balaam says let me die the death of the righteous, and may my final end be like theirs, Numbers 23:10.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The word ‘righteous’ here, Numbers 23:10, is plural and therefore refers to all of the nation of Israel. He also speaks in the same context of the nation “as a corporate unity.” As far as it pertained to Balaam, such a request was futile. He died fighting on the side of the enemies of Israel, Numbers 31:8.’

Israel was a righteous nation, that is, a nation that lived right with God, and because of this, they didn't deserve to be cursed. After hearing all of this, Balak realised that because Israel couldn't be cursed, they would end up against him, Numbers 23:11. Balaam then tells Balak that he could only speak what God put in his mouth, Numbers 23:12.

BALAAM'S SECOND MESSAGE

‘Then Balak said to him, “Come with me to another place where you can see them; you will not see them all, but only the outskirts of their camp. And from there, curse them for me.” So he took him to the field of Zophim on the top of Pisgah, and there he built seven altars and offered a bull and a ram on each altar. Balaam said to Balak, “Stay here beside your offering while I meet with him over there.” The LORD met with Balaam and put a word in his mouth and said, “Go back to Balak and give him this word.” So he went to him and found him standing beside his offering, with the Moabite officials. Balak asked him, “What did the LORD say?” Then he spoke his message: “Arise, Balak, and listen; hear me, son of Zippor. God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfil? I have received a command to bless; he has blessed, and I cannot change it. “No misfortune is seen in Jacob, no misery observed in Israel. The LORD their God is with them; the shout of the King is among them. God brought them out of Egypt; they have the strength of a wild ox. There is no divination against Jacob, no evil omens against Israel. It will now be said of Jacob and of Israel, ‘See what God has done!’ The people rise like a lioness; they rouse themselves like a lion that does not rest till it devours its prey and drinks the blood of its victims.” Then Balak said to Balaam, “Neither curse them at all nor bless them at all!” Balaam answered, “Did I not tell you I must do whatever the LORD says?” Numbers 23:13-26

Balak asks Baalam to go with him to another place where he can see them; he will not see them all, but only the outskirts of their camp, and from there, curse them for Balak, Numbers 23:13.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Balak thought that the sight of such an immense camp had intimidated Balaam, and this he might gather from what he said in Numbers 23:10, who can count the dust of Jacob, he thought therefore that he might get Balaam to curse them in detached parties, till the whole camp should be devoted to destruction by successive execrations.’

Here again, seven altars are built, and offerings were made, but in a different location, Numbers 23:14.

Coke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Zophim, signifies watchmen; and the field of Zophim seems to have been a plain on the top of the mountain, where watchmen were placed in order to give a signal upon the approach of enemies, Isaiah 21:11 / Isaiah 52:8. Pisgah was a very high mountain in the country of Moab, from some parts of which almost the whole extent of Canaan might be

seen, Deuteronomy 3:27. But Balak, it appears, brought Balaam to that side of it where he could not see much of the camp of Israel.’

Balaam once again tells Balak to stay where he was beside his offering, and Balaam will meet with him over there, Numbers 23:15.

The Pulpit Commentary says the following.

‘Balaam does not say whom or what he is going to meet, but from the use of the same term in Numbers 24:1-25. It is evident that he employed the language of soothsayers looking for auguries. He may have spoken vaguely on purpose, because he was in truth acting a part with Balak.’

And once again, the LORD met with Balaam and put a word in his mouth and said, go back to Balak and give him this word, Numbers 23:16. Balaam goes and meets Balak, who was standing beside his offering, with the Moabite officials, and Balak asked him, what did the LORD say? Numbers 23:17.

Notice that God speaks directly to Balak and tells him that He is not human, He is not a liar, and He doesn’t change His mind, Numbers 23:18-20. In other words, He isn’t a false god, a god made after the imagination of men, like Chemosh. He can’t lie like Balak wanted Him to, and He won’t change His mind as Balak wanted Him to.

Allen, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Balaam is constantly shifting, prevaricating, equivocating, changing-he is himself the prime example of the distinction between God and man.’

Notice he says, the LORD their God is with them, and the shout of the King is among them, Numbers 23:21.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Does this verse say that Israel, at the time this was written, was under the monarchy? Indeed, it says no such thing; but this very mention of such a word sets off a whole truckload of allegations to the effect that this episode was not written until long after Moses, in the days following the Judges, after which the monarch was set up in Israel. As a matter of truth, the word ‘king’ does not even belong in the rendition here. The Septuagint (LXX) and the Samaritan versions of the Pentateuch both render the passage: ‘The Lord his God is with him (with Jacob), and royal majesty accompanies him.’ This gives the true meaning of the passage. The ‘king’ in view here was in no sense an earthly ruler of the Jews, but God Himself.’

God reminds Balak that He was with Israel, and history has shown this to be true, especially concerning God bringing them out of Egypt, Numbers 23:22, and because of this, Israel was as strong and confident as a wild ox, Numbers 23:22.

Notice the KJV uses the word ‘unicorn’, Numbers 23:22 / Numbers 24:8. The word used in Hebrew is the word ‘r’em’, which is used nine times in the Old Testament.

The idea behind the word is either of one horn or a mighty horn. Some commentators suggest it refers to a rhinoceros, others suggest a wild ox or a strong goat.

God tells Balak that there is no divination against Jacob, no evil omens against Israel. It will now be said of Jacob and of Israel, See what God has done! Numbers 23:23 / Joshua 13:22.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning divination.

‘More strictly ‘augury’ and ‘soothsayer’s token’, or the omen that was superstitiously observed. ‘Soothsayer’ is the term applied to Balaam in Joshua 13:22.’

God tells him that Israel only existed as a nation because of Him, not because of any man, Numbers 23:23. Notice God says Israel would rise up like a lioness and like a lion, eat until the prey was consumed, Numbers 23:24 / Jeremiah 49:19.

In other words, there wasn't any nation which existed that would be able to stand against them. If Balak chose to go against Israel, the nation of Moab would be eaten for breakfast.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

'Israel would be victorious in battle as well as enjoy God's blessing, [Numbers 23:24](#) / [Genesis 49:9-11](#) / [Micah 5:8-9](#). This was the opposite of what Balak wanted to hear. No one can curse someone whom God has blessed.'

We can almost hear the frustration coming from Balak's words; he knows that Balaam can't curse Israel, and so he asks Balaam to say nothing at all, [Numbers 23:25](#). And so, once again, Balaam reminds Balak that He can only say what the Lord puts into his mouth, [Numbers 23:26](#).

BALAAM'S THIRD MESSAGE

'Then Balak said to Balaam, "Come, let me take you to another place. Perhaps it will please God to let you curse them for me from there." And Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, overlooking the wasteland. Balaam said, "Build me seven altars here, and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me." Balak did as Balaam had said and offered a bull and a ram on each altar.' [Numbers 23:27-30](#)

Once again, Balak takes Balaam to a different location in order for Balaam to curse Israel, [Numbers 23:27](#). The first two messages came from the top of Pisgah, but the stage is now changed to the top of Peor, [Numbers 23:28](#) / [Deuteronomy 34:6](#).

Coke, in his commentary, says the following.

'As the Syrians imagined that some gods were powerful in the hills, who could do nothing in the plains, [1 Kings 20:23](#) / [1 Kings 20:28](#), so it seems there was such a conceit at this time in these countries, that some gods had more power on one hill than on another. The idea of local deities was very general. Thus, Balak might imagine that his God had hitherto been withheld by the gods of Israel from granting his desire, but might be more powerful in another place.'

Notice again, there are another seven altars made and seven sacrifices are made, [Numbers 23:29](#). Balak did as Balaam had said and offered a bull and a ram on each altar, [Numbers 23:30](#).

It's certainly coming across that Balak is becoming more and more desperate to do something about these Israelites. In the next chapter, we read that Balak goes on to seek some kind of divine help in defeating the threat of Israel.

CHAPTER 24

INTRODUCTION

'Now, when Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he did not resort to divination as at other times but turned his face toward the wilderness. When Balaam looked out and saw Israel encamped tribe by tribe, the Spirit of God came on him and he spoke his message: "The prophecy of Balaam son of Beor, the prophecy of one whose eye sees clearly, the prophecy of one who hears the words of God, who sees a vision from the Almighty, who falls prostrate, and whose eyes are opened: "How beautiful are your tents, Jacob, your dwelling places, Israel! "Like valleys they spread out, like gardens beside a river, like aloes planted by the LORD, like cedars beside the waters. Water will flow from their buckets; their seed will have abundant water. "Their king will be greater than Agag; their

kingdom will be exalted. “God brought them out of Egypt; they have the strength of a wild ox. They devour hostile nations and break their bones in pieces; with their arrows, they pierce them. Like a lion, they crouch and lie down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse them? “May those who bless you be blessed and those who curse you be cursed!” Then Balak’s anger burned against Balaam. He struck his hands together and said to him, “I summoned you to curse my enemies, but you have blessed them these three times. Now leave at once and go home! I said I would reward you handsomely, but the LORD has kept you from being rewarded.” Balaam answered Balak, “Did I not tell the messengers you sent me, ‘Even if Balak gave me all the silver and gold in his palace, I could not do anything of my own accord, good or bad, to go beyond the command of the LORD—and I must say only what the LORD says’? Now I am going back to my people, but come, let me warn you of what this people will do to your people in days to come.” Numbers 24:1-14

Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, and so he decided he’s not going to resort to divination as at other times, but turned his face toward the wilderness, **Numbers 24:1**.

When Balaam looked out and saw Israel encamped tribe by tribe the Spirit of the Lord came upon Balaam, **Numbers 24:2**, he then prophesied what God’s plans and will were for Israel.

Remember, it’s been estimated that there were around three million Israelites at this point in time, and we can only imagine what Balaam was thinking as he saw Israel living in tents according to their tribes. Little did Balak or Balaam understand that God was going to bring about the Messiah of the world through the Israelites.

The prophecy of Balaam son of Beor, the prophecy of one whose eye sees clearly, the prophecy of one who hears the words of God, who sees a vision from the Almighty, who falls prostrate, and whose eyes are opened, **Numbers 24:3-4**. Note the KJV says he fell into a trance, **Numbers 24:4**.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There is no indication in the Hebrew that he fell into a trance; these words are added by our translators, but they are not in the original.’

How beautiful are your tents, Jacob, your dwelling places, Israel! Like valleys they spread out, like gardens beside a river, like aloes planted by the LORD, like cedars beside the waters, **Numbers 24:5-6**.

Water will flow from their buckets, and their seed will have abundant water. Their king will be greater than Agag; their kingdom will be exalted, **Numbers 24:7**.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning Agag.

‘The name Agag can scarcely refer to any other than Agag the king of the Amalekites known from the Saul story, 1 **Samuel 15:8-35**. On this account, this discourse must be dated in the time of Saul.’

God brought them out of Egypt, and they have the strength of a wild ox, **Numbers 24:8 / Numbers 23:22**. They devour hostile nations and break their bones in pieces with their arrows; they pierce them.

Like a lion, they crouch and lie down, like a lioness, who dares to rouse them? **Numbers 24:8-9 / Numbers 23:24**. In other words, there wasn’t any nation which existed that would be able to stand against them.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘These oracles, delivered by Balaam, are evident prophecies of the victories which the Israelites should gain over their enemies, and of their firm possession of the promised land. They may also refer to the great victories to be obtained by the Lord Jesus Christ, that Lion of the tribe of Judah, over sin, death, and Satan, the grand enemies of the human race and to that most numerous posterity of spiritual children which should be begotten by the preaching of the Gospel.’

Notice the text says, ‘may those who bless you be blessed and those who curse you be cursed!’ **Numbers 24:9**. Balak had no idea or couldn’t understand that God Himself was working in and through Israel to bring about the Messiah, **Genesis 3:15**.

Balak's anger burned against Balaam and he struck his hands together and said to him, he summoned Balaam to curse Balak's enemies, but Balaam has blessed them these three times, **Numbers 24:10**.

Balak now asks Balaam to leave at once and go home and reminds him that he would reward Balaam handsomely, **Numbers 22:17**, but the LORD has kept him from being rewarded, **Numbers 24:11**.

Balaam says to Balak, Did he not tell the messengers he sent him, even if he gave me all the silver and gold in his palace, **Numbers 22:18**. Balaam could not do anything of his own accord, good or bad, to go beyond the command of the LORD, and he must say only what the LORD says. **Numbers 24:12-13**.

Despite Balak's very justifiable anger against Balaam and the threatening manner of his abrupt dismissal, it appears that Balaam did not actually return to his 'own people' at all, **Numbers 24:14**, for it was not long until he died in the defeat of the Midianites, **Numbers 31:8**.

Anyone who supported Israel in God's plan to settle the nation in the land of Canaan would be blessed, but those who didn't support Israel would soon discover they were actually working against God Himself.

BALAAM'S FOURTH MESSAGE

'Then he spoke his message: "The prophecy of Balaam son of Beor, the prophecy of one whose eye sees clearly, the prophecy of one who hears the words of God, who has knowledge from the Most High, who sees a vision from the Almighty, who falls prostrate, and whose eyes are opened: "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a sceptre will rise out of Israel. He will crush the foreheads of Moab, the skulls of all the people of Sheth. Edom will be conquered; Seir, his enemy, will be conquered, but Israel will grow strong. A ruler will come out of Jacob and destroy the survivors of the city." **Numbers 24:15-19**

Balaam once again spoke his message and says, the prophecy of Balaam son of Beor, the prophecy of one whose eye sees clearly, the prophecy of one who hears the words of God, who has knowledge from the Most High, who sees a vision from the Almighty, who falls prostrate, and whose eyes are opened, **Numbers 24:15-16**.

Here we read that Balaam told Balak what Israel would do to Moab. I see him, but not now I behold him, but not near and he says, 'a star', that is, a king would come out of Israel and He will bring judgment upon Moab, **Numbers 24:17**. Although Balaam was speaking of earthly events among nations, some commenters suggest that this is a reference to 'the star' that appeared during the time of the birth of the Messiah, **Matthew 2:2-10**.

'The sceptre', **Numbers 24:17**, implies a king who rules, and this ruler would crush the rule of Moab, and He would have dominion over his enemies. Edom will be conquered, **2 Samuel 8:14**; Seir, his enemy, will be conquered, **Obadiah 1:21**, but Israel will grow strong, **Numbers 24:18**. A ruler will come out of Jacob and destroy the survivors of the city, **Numbers 24:19 / Genesis 49:10**.

In the immediate context of these events, the kings of Israel would eventually rule over Moab in the centuries to come. Some commentators also suggest this is speaking of the kingship and rulership of Christ, **Genesis 49:10 / Daniel 2:44 / Daniel 7:13-14 / Philippians 2:5-11 / Revelation 2:2 / Revelation 3:21**.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following concerning the city.

'It is urban civilisation in organised rebellion against God.' It is the City of Mankind, that entire organisation of rebellious Adam against his God, referred to in the plural in Revelation as 'the cities of the Gentiles,' **Revelation 16:19**. It is called 'Mystery, Babylon the Great'. The message of **Numbers 24:19** is simple enough. Even the remnant of Adam's rebellious race shall, at last, perish in the final holocaust that shall terminate God's Operation Adam, that occasion being depicted frequently in Holy Writ as the Judgment.'

BALAAM'S FIFTH MESSAGE

‘Then Balaam saw Amalek and spoke his message: “Amalek was first among the nations, but their end will be utter destruction.” Numbers 24:20

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This oracle began to be fulfilled by Saul, 1 Samuel 15:7-8, who overthrew the Amalekites, and took their king, Agag, prisoner. Afterwards they were nearly destroyed by David, 1 Samuel 27:8, and they were finally exterminated by the sons of Simeon in the days of Hezekiah, 1 Chronicles 4:41-43, since that time they have ceased to exist as a people, and now no vestige of them remains on the face of the earth; so completely is their posterity cut off, according to this prophecy.’

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Amalek was the first of the nations. Rather, is pre-eminent among the neighbouring nations, compare the same expression in Amos 6:1. Hence, the force of the words, Numbers 24:7, ‘higher than Agag’, i.e., than the king of this powerful nation, Numbers 14:45 / Exodus 17:8. This rank, due to the warlike prowess of the tribe, Balaam contrasts with its approaching downfall and extinction.’

Gill, in his commentary, says the following concerning Amalek’s end.

‘This was threatened to them by the Lord upon that battle and is confirmed by this prophecy of Balaam and after this, orders were given to Israel to blot out their remembrance, Deuteronomy 25:19, and which, in a good measure, though not completely, was done in the times of Saul, 1 Samuel 15:8, and after that, they were distressed by David, 1 Samuel 27:9, and the rest of them were smitten by the sons of Simeon, in the days of Hezekiah, 1 Chronicles 4:41, after which we hear of them no more.’

BALAAM'S SIXTH MESSAGE

‘Then he saw the Kenites and spoke his message: “Your dwelling place is secure, your nest is set in a rock, yet you Kenites will be destroyed when Ashur takes you captive.” Numbers 24:21-22

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘First mentioned in Genesis 15:19, as one of the tribes whose territory was promised to Abraham. In Judges 1:16, where we read of them as moving with the children of Judah, to establish themselves in the pastures south of Arad, Moses’ father-in-law is spoken of as a Kenite, Judges 4:11. It appears, therefore, since Moses’ father-in-law was a prince or priest of Midian, Exodus 2:15-20, that the Kenites must have been of Midianite extraction, and so descended from Abraham through Keturah, Genesis 25:2.’

Gill, in his commentary, says the following concerning the Kenites.

‘Though they were so strongly fortified, and closely immured and surrounded with rocks and mountains, yet they should gradually waste away, as they were but few in Saul’s time, 1 Samuel 15:6.’

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Assyrians and Babylonians who carried away captive the ten tribes, 2 Kings 17:6, and the Jews into Babylon, 2 Kings 25:1 / 2 Kings 25:11, probably carried away the Kenites also. Indeed, this seems pretty evident, as we find some Kenites mentioned among the Jews after their return from the Babylonian captivity, 1 Chronicles 2:55.’

BALAAM'S SEVENTH MESSAGE

‘Then he spoke his message: “Alas! Who can live when God does this? Ships will come from the shores of Cyprus; they will subdue Ashur and Eber, but they too will come to ruin.” Then Balaam got up and returned home, and Balak went his own way.’ Numbers 24:23-25

In this final message, Balaam turned his prophecy toward the nations. He asks, Who can live when God does this? Numbers 24:23.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There are two senses in which these words may be taken.

1. That the event is so distant that none then alive could possibly live to see it.
2. That the times would be so distressing and desolating that scarcely any should be able to escape.’

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning Cyprus, Numbers 24:24.

‘Cyprus, the nearest of the western islands, the only one visible from Palestine, and so the representative to Balsam and to Israel of all those unknown western regions across the Mediterranean Sea, from which were at length to come the conquerors of the mighty empires of the East, Isaiah 23:1 / Isaiah 23:12 / Jeremiah 2:10.’

The Kenites would be taken into captivity, and Ashur and Eber would become like the Edomites, that is, they would perish forever, Numbers 24:24. And so, this ends the final message of God through Balaam, after which both Balak and Balaam went their way, Numbers 24:25.

Balak, no doubt, went to come up with some ideas of how to get rid of the Israelites, but in the end, he would die, Numbers 31:8 / Numbers 31:16 / Revelation 2:14.

CHAPTER 25

INTRODUCTION

‘While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate the sacrificial meal and bowed down before these gods. So Israel yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor. And the LORD’s anger burned against them. The LORD said to Moses, “Take all the leaders of these people, kill them and expose them in broad daylight before the LORD, so that the LORD’s fierce anger may turn away from Israel.” So Moses said to Israel’s judges, “Each of you must put to death those of your people who have yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor.” Numbers 25:1-5

MOAB SEDUCES ISRAEL

Here we read that in Shittim, Joshua 2:1 / Joshua 3:1, the men of Israel began to have sexual relations with the Moabite women, who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods, Numbers 25:1-2.

Notice, the people ate the sacrificial meal and bowed down before these gods, Numbers 25:2. This was to be a problem for Israel for many years to come, hence why God warned them about this very thing, Exodus 34:12-16 / Deuteronomy 7:1-6.

As it is in most cases, one sin leads to another; here we find that the Moabite women led them to worship and sacrifice to foreign gods, the Baal of Peor, [Numbers 25:3](#) / [Numbers 23:28](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The joining to Baal-Peor, mentioned here, was probably what St. Paul had in view when he said, [2 Corinthians 6:14](#), Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. And this joining, though done even in a matrimonial way, was nevertheless fornication, [Revelation 2:14](#), as no marriage between an Israelite and a Midianite could be legitimate, according to the law of God. See the propositions at the close of the preceding chapter.’

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘By taking part in the sacrificial meals as described in the last verse, [Exodus 34:15](#) / [1 Corinthians 10:18](#). The worship of Baal was attended with the grossest impurity, and indeed partly consisted in it, [Hosea 4:14](#) / [Hosea 9:10](#).’ Baal was the Canaanite fertility god, and the worship of Baal was a constant temptation for Israel, [Hosea 4:14](#) / [Hosea 9:10](#). Balaam prophesied from the high places of Baal, [Numbers 22:41](#).

It does appear that Balaam played some part in this moral destruction of Israel in that he counselled both the Israelite men and Moabite women to commit fornication, [Numbers 31:16](#) / [Revelation 2:14](#).

Remember, after meeting with King Balak of Moab, Balaam prophesied over Israel four times but as he spoke forth God’s word, he didn’t curse Israel, instead, he blessed them each time.

When he was unsuccessful in cursing Israel, Balaam advised Balak on how to bring Israel under a curse. Instead of trying to have a prophet curse Israel, he should lead them into fornication and idolatry, and then God would curse a disobedient Israel. Balak did just that, sending his young women into the camp of Israel to lead Israel into sexual immorality and idolatry.

Balaam was guilty of the greatest of sins, deliberately leading others into sin. Worse yet, he did it for money. Greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, the greedy error of Balaam was that he was willing to compromise everything for money, [2 Peter 2:15-16](#). The certain men Jude warned about had the same heart, [Jude 11](#).

It’s no wonder the LORD’s anger burned against them, [Numbers 25:3](#). We read how serious this matter was before God, the leaders of the people were held responsible by God and as a result, they were hanged first, [Numbers 25:4](#). Moses is to take all the leaders of these people, kill them and expose them in broad daylight before the LORD, so that the LORD’s fierce anger may turn away from Israel, [Numbers 25:4](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Many scholars agree that the mode of execution here is not certainly known. Many believe that the exposure of the bodies in the sun was merely to advertise the penalty and not for the purpose of causing death, that being inflicted before the impaling.’

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This would be done by impaling the body or fastening it to a cross, [Deuteronomy 21:23](#) / [2 Samuel 21:9](#).’

Moses tells the Israel’s judges that each of them must put to death, those of their people who have yoked themselves to the Baal of Peor, [Numbers 25:5](#) / [Numbers 25:3](#).

The second action that had to be taken was to rid the nation of those who had committed the sin, and so, the judges executed those who had had sexual relations with the Moabite women and worshipped the Baal of Peor.

‘Then an Israelite man brought into the camp a Midianite woman right before the eyes of Moses and the whole assembly of Israel while they were weeping at the entrance to the tent of meeting. When Phinehas, son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, saw this, he left the assembly, took a spear in his hand, and followed the Israelite into the tent. He drove the spear into both of them, right through the Israelite man and into the woman’s stomach. Then the plague against the Israelites was stopped; but those who died in the plague numbered 24,000. The LORD said to

Moses, “Phinehas, son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, has turned my anger away from the Israelites. Since he was as zealous for my honour among them as I am, I did not put an end to them in my zeal. Therefore, tell him I am making my covenant of peace with him. He and his descendants will have a covenant of a lasting priesthood, because he was zealous for the honour of his God and made atonement for the Israelites.” The name of the Israelite who was killed with the Midianite woman was Zimri, son of Salu, the leader of a Simeonite family. And the name of the Midianite woman who was put to death was Kozbi, daughter of Zur, a tribal chief of a Midianite family. The LORD said to Moses, “Treat the Midianites as enemies and kill them. They treated you as enemies when they deceived you in the Peor incident involving their sister Kozbi, the daughter of a Midianite leader, the woman who was killed when the plague came as a result of that incident.” Numbers 25:6-18

Here we read that an Israelite man blatantly walked into camp with a Midianite woman while they were weeping at the entrance to the tent of meeting, Numbers 25:6 / Numbers 25:15.

This woman was brought into the camp even while supplications were being made to stop the plague that was ravaging through Israel. Phinehas, in righteous indignation, was moved to take immediate action.

When Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, saw this, he left the assembly, took a spear in his hand, and followed the Israelite into the tent and drove the spear into both of them, right through the Israelite man and into the woman’s stomach, Numbers 25:7-8, whose names are Zimri and Kozbi, Numbers 25:14-15.

Because of the people’s sin, God did curse Israel; He brought a plague of judgment upon Israel that killed 24,000, Numbers 25:8-9 / Exodus 32:35, but judgment would come upon Balaam later, Numbers 31:7-8.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning the number who died.

‘St. Paul, 1 Corinthians 10:8, reckons only twenty-three thousand; though some MSS. and versions, particularly the latter Syriac and the Armenian, have twenty-four thousand, with the Hebrew text. Allowing the 24,000 to be the genuine reading, and none of the Hebrew MSS. exhibits any various reading here, the two places may be reconciled thus: 1,000 men were slain in consequence of the examination instituted, Numbers 25:4, and 23,000 in consequence of the orders given, Numbers 25:5, making 24,000 in the whole. St. Paul probably refers only to the latter number.’ God tells Moses that Phinehas, son of Eleazar, has turned His anger away from the Israelites, and since he was as zealous for God’s honour among them as God is, God did not put an end to them in His zeal, Numbers 25:10-11 / Leviticus 1:4 / Psalms 106:30.

Phinehas and his descendants were rewarded with a covenant of peace, Numbers 25:12 / Psalms 106:30-31 / Ephesians 2:14, and a lasting priesthood in Israel, Numbers 25:13. The names of the two killed by Phineas are given in Numbers 25:14-15.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning Phinehas.

‘He therefore risked his own life by dealing according to their deserts with two influential and defiant evil-doers; and his act, done in the face of Moses and the people, and for them, was accepted by God as a national atonement; and rewarded by the people, compare the leadership assigned to him in Numbers 31:6 / Joshua 22:13.’

God tells Moses to treat the Midianites as enemies and kill them, Numbers 25:16-17. It appears that deception was part of the problem in reference to Israel’s sin with the Midianites, Numbers 25:18. It’s possible that the Midianites took advantage of Israel’s innocence.

Notice, however, that although the Israelites were innocently deceived, they were still held responsible for their sin, Numbers 25:18. The Midianites paid the price for the sin in that God judged them using the Israelite army, Numbers 31:1-20.

CHAPTER 26

INTRODUCTION

‘After the plague, the LORD said to Moses and Eleazar son of Aaron, the priest, “Take a census of the whole Israelite community by families—all those twenty years old or more who are able to serve in the army of Israel.” So on the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho, Moses and Eleazar the priest spoke with them and said, “Take a census of the men twenty years old or more, as the LORD commanded Moses.” These were the Israelites who came out of Egypt: The descendants of Reuben, the firstborn son of Israel, were: through Hanok, the Hanokite clan; through Pallu, the Palluite clan; through Hezron, the Hezronite clan; through Karmi, the Karmite clan. These were the clans of Reuben; those numbered were 43,730. The son of Pallu was Eliab, and the sons of Eliab were Nemuel, Dathan, and Abiram. The same Dathan and Abiram were the community officials who rebelled against Moses and Aaron and were among Korah’s followers when they rebelled against the LORD. The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them along with Korah, whose followers died when the fire devoured the 250 men. And they served as a warning sign. The line of Korah, however, did not die out. The descendants of Simeon by their clans were: through Nemuel, the Nemuelite clan; through Jamin, the Jaminite clan; through Jakin, the Jakinite clan; through Zerah, the Zerahite clan; through Shaul, the Shaulite clan. These were the clans of Simeon; those numbered were 22,200. The descendants of Gad by their clans were: through Zephon, the Zephonite clan; through Haggi, the Haggite clan; through Shuni, the Shunite clan; through Ozni, the Oznite clan; through Eri, the Erite clan; through Arodi, the Arodite clan; through Areli, the Arelite clan. These were the clans of Gad; those numbered were 40,500. Er and Onan were sons of Judah, but they died in Canaan. The descendants of Judah by their clans were: through Shelah, the Shelanite clan; through Perez, the Perezite clan; through Zerah, the Zerahite clan. The descendants of Perez were: through Hezron, the Hezronite clan; through Hamul, the Hamulite clan. These were the clans of Judah; those numbered were 76,500. The descendants of Issachar by their clans were: through Tola, the Tolaite clan; through Puah, the Puite clan; through Jashub, the Jashubite clan; through Shimron, the Shimronite clan. These were the clans of Issachar; those numbered were 64,300. The descendants of Zebulun by their clans were: through Sered, the Seredite clan; through Elon, the Elonite clan; through Jahleel, the Jahleelite clan. These were the clans of Zebulun; those numbered were 60,500. The descendants of Joseph by their clans through Manasseh and Ephraim were: The descendants of Manasseh: through Makir, the Makirite clan (Makir was the father of Gilead); through Gilead, the Gileadite clan. These were the descendants of Gilead: through Iezer, the Iezerite clan; through Helek, the Helekite clan; through Asriel, the Asrielite clan; through Shechem, the Shechemite clan; through Shemida, the Shemidaite clan; through Hephher, the Hephherite clan. (Zelophehad, son of Hephher, had no sons; he had only daughters, whose names were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milkah and Tirzah.) These were the clans of Manasseh; those numbered were 52,700. These were the descendants of Ephraim by their clans: through Shuthelah, the Shuthelahite clan; through Beker, the Bekerite clan; through Tahan, the Tahanite clan. These were the descendants of Shuthelah: through Eran, the Eranite clan. These were the clans of Ephraim; those numbered were 32,500. These were the descendants of Joseph by their clans. The descendants of Benjamin by their clans were: through Bela, the Belaite clan; through Ashbel, the Ashbelite clan; through Ahiram, the Ahiramite clan; through Shupham, the Shuphamite clan; through Hupham, the Huphamite clan. The descendants of Bela through Ard and Naaman were: through Ard, the Ardite clan; through Naaman, the Naamite clan. These were the clans of Benjamin; those numbered were 45,600. These were the descendants of Dan by their clans: through Shuham, the Shuhamite clan. These were the clans of Dan: All of them were Shuhamite clans; and those numbered were 64,400. The descendants of Asher by their clans were: through Imnah, the Imnite clan; through Ishvi, the Ishvite clan; through Beriah, the Beriite clan; and through the descendants of Beriah: through Heber, the Heberite clan; through Malkiel, the Malkielite clan. (Asher had a daughter named Serah.) These were the clans of Asher; those numbered were 53,400. The descendants of Naphtali by their clans were: through Jahzeel, the Jahzeelite clan; through Guni, the Gunitite clan; through Jezer, the Jezerite clan; through Shillem, the Shillemite clan. These were the clans of Naphtali; those numbered were 45,400. The total number of the men of Israel was 601,730. The LORD said to Moses, “The land is to be allotted to them as an inheritance based on the number of names. To a larger group give a larger inheritance, and to a smaller group a smaller one; each is to receive its inheritance according to the number of those listed. Be sure that the land is distributed by lot. What each group inherits will be according to the names for its ancestral tribe. Each inheritance is to be distributed by lot among the larger and smaller groups.” These were the Levites who were counted by their clans: through Gershon, the Gershonite clan; through Kohath, the Kohathite clan; through Merari, the Merarite clan. These also were Levite clans: the Libnite clan, the Hebronite clan, the Mahlite clan, the Mushite clan, the Korahite clan. (Kohath was the forefather of Amram; the name of Amram’s wife was Jochebed, a descendant of Levi, who was born to the Levites in Egypt. To Amram, she bore Aaron, Moses, and their sister Miriam. Aaron was the father of Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. But Nadab and Abihu died when they made an offering before the LORD with unauthorised fire.) All the male Levites a month old or more numbered 23,000. They were not counted along with the other Israelites because they received no inheritance among them. These are the ones counted by Moses and Eleazar the priest when they counted the Israelites

on the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho. Not one of them was among those counted by Moses and Aaron the priest when they counted the Israelites in the Desert of Sinai. For the LORD had told those Israelites they would surely die in the wilderness, and not one of them was left except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun.' Numbers 26:1-65

THE SECOND CENSUS

In this chapter, we read about the second census, which was taken of the nation of Israel. The laws for taking the census were given in [Exodus 30:12](#). Remember, the purpose of the first census was to establish the number of males who were eligible for war, [Numbers 26:1-2](#) / [Numbers 1:28](#). This census was taken to prepare Israel to occupy the Promised Land.

TRIBE	1ST CENSUS	2ND CENSUS
Reuben	46,500	43,730
Simeon	59,300	22,200
Gad	45,650	40,500
Judah	74,600	76,500
Issachar	54,400	54,300
Zebulun	57,400	60,500
Ephraim	40,500	32,500
Manasseh	32,200	32,700
Benjamin	31,400	45,600
Dan	62,700	64,400
Asher	41,500	53,400
Naphtali	51,400	45,400
	TOTAL: 603,550	TOTAL: 601,730

Notice that only those who were twenty years old and older were counted, [Numbers 26:3-4](#).

In the first census, 38 years ago, 46,500 men from the tribe of Reuben were counted and ready for war, [Numbers 1:21](#).

Here, they counted 43,730, [Numbers 26:5-7](#), that's a loss of 2,770 men.

The son of Pallu was Eliab, and the sons of Eliab were Nemuel, Dathan, and Abiram.

The same Dathan and Abiram were the community officials who rebelled against Moses and Aaron and were among Korah's followers when they rebelled against the

LORD, [Numbers 26:9](#).

The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them along with Korah, whose followers died when the fire devoured the 250 men, [Numbers 16:1-50](#), and they served as a warning sign, [Numbers 26:10](#). The line of Korah, however, did not die out, [Numbers 26:11](#) / [1 Chronicles 6:22](#) / [1 Chronicles 6:33](#) / [1 Chronicles 25:5](#) / [Psalms 42:1-11](#) / [Psalms 44](#) / [Psalms 45](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'It is difficult to reconcile this place with [Numbers 16:27](#) / [Numbers 16:31-33](#), where it seems to be intimated that not only the men, but the wives, and the sons, and the little ones of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, were swallowed up by the earthquake, see especially [Numbers 16:27](#), collated with [Numbers 16:33](#). But the text here expressly says, the children of Korah died not and on a close inspection of [Numbers 16:27](#) of the above-mentioned chapter, we shall find that the sons and the little ones of Dathan and Abiram alone are mentioned. So they get up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side: and Dathan and Abiram came out and their wives, and their sons, and their little ones. Here is no mention of the children of Korah; they therefore escaped, while it appears those of Dathan and Abiram perished with their fathers, [Numbers 16:30](#).'

In the first census, 38 years ago, there were 59,300 men from the tribe of Simeon counted and ready for war, [Numbers 1:23](#). Here, they counted 22,200, [Numbers 26:12-14](#). This was a huge loss of 37,100 men for this tribe. In the first census, 38 years ago, 45,650 men from the tribe of Gad were counted and ready for war, [Numbers 1:25](#). Here, they count 40,500, [Numbers 26:15-18](#). This was a loss of 5,150 fighting men. In the first census, 38 years ago, 74,600 men from the tribe of Judah were counted and ready for war, [Numbers 1:27](#). Here, they counted 76,500, [Numbers 26:20-22](#). This was a gain of 1,900.

In the first census, 38 years ago, 54,400 men from the tribe of Issachar were counted ready for war, Numbers 1:29. Here, they counted 64,300, Numbers 26:23-25. This was a gain of 9,900.

In the first census, 38 years ago, 57,400 men from the tribe of Zebulun were counted and ready for war, Numbers 1:31. Here, they counted 60,500, Numbers 26:26-27. This was a gain of 3,100.

In the first census, 38 years ago, 32,200 men from the tribe of Manasseh were counted and ready for war, Numbers 1:35. Here, they counted 52,700, Numbers 26:28-34. This was a huge gain of 20,500.

In the first census, 38 years ago, 40,500 men from the tribe of Ephraim were counted and ready for war, Numbers 1:33. Here, they counted 32,500, Numbers 26:35-37. This was a loss of 8,000 men.

In the first census, 38 years ago, 35,400 men from the tribe of Benjamin were counted and ready for war, Numbers 1:37. Here, they counted 45,600, Numbers 26:38-41. This was a gain of 10,200 men.

In the first census, 38 years ago, 62,700 men from the tribe of Dan were counted and ready for war, Numbers 1:39. Here, they counted 64,400, Numbers 26:42-43. This was a gain of 1,700 men.

In the first census, 38 years ago, 41,500 men from the tribe of Asher were counted and ready for war, Numbers 1:41. Here, they counted 53,400 men, Numbers 26:44-47. This was a gain of 11,900.

In the first census, 38 years ago, 53,400 men from the tribe of Naphtali were counted and ready for war, Numbers 1:43. Here, they counted 45,400 men, Numbers 26:48-50. This was a loss of 8,000.

In the first census, 38 years ago, Numbers 1:26 / Numbers 2:32, Israel counted 603,550 men ready for war, here they count 601,730 men, Numbers 26:51, which is a loss of 1,820 men.

The allocation of the land was to be according to the size of the tribes and then according to the casting of lots, Numbers 26:52-56 / Acts 1:26. The larger portions of land were probably first determined for the larger tribes, and then lots were cast for the land, Numbers 26:55 / Numbers 33:54. The casting of the lots made sure that no favouritism was practised in the distribution of the land, Proverbs 16:33.

The Levites who were counted by their clans through Gershon, the Gershonite clan, through Kohath, the Kohathite clan, through Merari, the Merarite clan, Numbers 26:57. These also were Levite clans, the Libnite clan, the Hebronite clan, the Mahlite clan, the Mushite clan, the Korahite clan, Numbers 26:58.

We are told that Kohath was the forefather of Amram, Numbers 26:58 / 1 Chronicles 6:18, and the name of Amram's wife was Jochebed, a descendant of Levi, who was born to the Levites in Egypt, Numbers 26:59 / Exodus 6:20.

To Amram, she bore Aaron, Moses and their sister Miriam, Numbers 26:60 / 1 Chronicles 6:1-3. Aaron was the father of Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Exodus 28:1, but Nadab and Abihu died when they made an offering before the LORD with unauthorised fire, Numbers 26:60-61 / Leviticus 10:1-2.

All the male Levites a month old or more numbered 23,000, Numbers 26:62. We read that no land inheritance was given to the Levites, Numbers 26:62, instead, they were allocated cities within the land, Numbers 18:20.

These are the ones counted by Moses and Eleazar the priest when they counted the Israelites on the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho, Numbers 26:63.

Remember, we are dealing with a new generation of Israelites here, and as God had said, the older generation, those who were twenty years old and over, would die in the wilderness, Numbers 14:29.

Note that God didn't hold their forefather's sin against them, and because of that, this new generation was ready to take possession of the Promised Land, Numbers 26:64.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'It appears from Deuteronomy 2:14-15 that the generation numbered at the former census had perished before the host crossed the brook Zered.'

As a result of Joshua and Caleb's faith to take the land for God the first time around, only they, from that older generation, were allowed to enter the land, Numbers 26:65 / Numbers 14:6-9 / Numbers 14:30 / Numbers 14:38.

CHAPTER 27

INTRODUCTION

‘The daughters of Zelophehad, son of Hephher, the son of Gilead, the son of Makir, the son of Manasseh, belonged to the clans of Manasseh, son of Joseph. The names of the daughters were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milkah and Tirzah. They came forward and stood before Moses, Eleazar the priest, the leaders, and the whole assembly at the entrance to the tent of meeting and said, “Our father died in the wilderness. He was not among Korah’s followers, who banded together against the LORD, but he died for his own sin and left no sons. Why should our father’s name disappear from his clan because he had no son? Give us property among our father’s relatives.” So Moses brought their case before the LORD, and the LORD said to him, “What Zelophehad’s daughters are saying is right. You must certainly give them property as an inheritance among their father’s relatives and give their father’s inheritance to them. “Say to the Israelites, ‘If a man dies and leaves no son, give his inheritance to his daughter. If he has no daughter, give his inheritance to his brothers. If he has no brothers, give his inheritance to his father’s brothers. If his father had no brothers, give his inheritance to the nearest relative in his clan, that he may possess it. This is to have the force of law for the Israelites, as the LORD commanded Moses.’” Numbers 27:1-11

ZELOPHEHAD’S DAUGHTERS

This chapter begins by telling us that the daughters of Zelophehad, son of Hephher, the son of Gilead, the son of Makir, the son of Manasseh, belonged to the clans of Manasseh, son of Joseph, Numbers 27:1. The names of the daughters were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milkah and Tirzah, Numbers 27:1.

They came forward and stood before Moses, Eleazar the priest, the leaders and the whole assembly at the entrance to the tent of meeting and said, Our father died in the wilderness, and he wasn’t among Korah’s followers, who banded together against the LORD, but died for his own sin and left no sons, Numbers 27:1-3 / Numbers 14:31.

Zelophehad died a natural death, Numbers 27:3 / Numbers 26:33, which tells us that Zelophehad wasn’t involved in the rebellion of Korah, Numbers 16:1-50. He only has daughters, but no sons, who, under normal substances would inherit from him, Deuteronomy 25:5-10.

And so, here, they have a valid claim to the inheritance, Numbers 27:4. This law of inheritance benefited the women of Israel, because it gave them the legal rights that they didn’t have previously.

Cook, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A father, whether or not sons had been born to him, 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. A Biblical example of this is Machir, one of the ancestors of Zelophehad; although he had a son, Gilead, he also left an inheritance to his daughter, the wife of Hezron of the tribe of Judah, by reason of which their descendants, including Jair, were reckoned as belonging to the tribe of Manasseh, Numbers 32:41 / 1 Chronicles 2:21-24.’

Moses brings their case before the LORD, and the LORD tells him that what Zelophehad’s daughters are saying is right, and so, you must certainly give them property as an inheritance among their father’s relatives and give their father’s inheritance to them, Numbers 27:5-7.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning Numbers 27:8-11.

‘The law, which is as reasonable as it is just, stands as follows.

1. On the demise of the father, the estate goes to the sons, Deuteronomy 25:5-10.
2. If there be no son, the daughters succeed, Numbers 27:8.
3. If there be no daughter, the brothers of the deceased inherit, Numbers 27:9.
4. If there be no brethren or paternal uncles, the estate goes to the brothers of his father, Numbers 27:10.
5. If there be no grand uncles or brothers of the father of the deceased, then the nearest akin succeeds to the inheritance, Numbers 27:11.

Beyond the fifth degree, the law does not proceed, because as the families of the Israelites were kept distinct in their respective tribes, there must always be some who could be called kinsmen, and were really such, having descended without interruption from the patriarch of the tribe.'

JOSHUA TO SUCCEED MOSES

'Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go up this mountain in the Abarim Range and see the land I have given the Israelites. After you have seen it, you too will be gathered to your people, as your brother Aaron was, for when the community rebelled at the waters in the Desert of Zin, both of you disobeyed my command to honour me as holy before their eyes." (These were the waters of Meribah Kadesh, in the Desert of Zin.) Moses said to the LORD, "May the LORD, the God who gives breath to all living things, appoint someone over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the LORD's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd." So the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit of leadership, and lay your hand on him. Have him stand before Eleazar the priest and the entire assembly and commission him in their presence. Give him some of your authority so the whole Israelite community will obey him. He is to stand before Eleazar the priest, who will obtain decisions for him by inquiring of the Urim before the LORD. At his command, he and the entire community of the Israelites will go out, and at his command, they will come in." Moses did as the LORD commanded him. He took Joshua and had him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole assembly. Then he laid his hands on him and commissioned him, as the LORD instructed through Moses.' Numbers 27:12-23

It was from Mount Abarim, Deuteronomy 32:49 / Deuteronomy 34:1, that God showed Moses the land of milk and honey, Numbers 27:12. Remember, Moses wasn't allowed to enter the land because of his sin of striking the rock twice instead of speaking to it, Numbers 20:1-13, however, in His grace, God allowed him to see it, Deuteronomy 34. Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'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 Deuteronomy 34:1-8.' After Moses had seen the Promised Land, he too would be gathered to his people, as his brother Aaron was, Numbers 20:22-29, for when the community rebelled at the waters in the Desert of Zin, both of them disobeyed God's command to honour Him as holy before their eyes, Numbers 27:13-14 / Numbers 20:1-13. These were the waters of Meribah Kadesh, in the Desert of Zin, Numbers 27:14 / Numbers 20:12.

Moses says to God, may He, the God who gives breath to all living things, Numbers 16:22 / Acts 17:28, appoint someone over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the LORD's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd, Numbers 27:15-17.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'This is a beautiful expression and shows us in what light Moses viewed himself among his people. He was their shepherd; he sought no higher place; he fed and guided the flock of God under the direction of the Divine Spirit and was faithful in all his Master's house. To this saying of Moses our Lord alludes, Matthew 9:36.'

Notice the lord tells Moses, that Joshua, a man in whom is the spirit of leadership, must take his place, [Numbers 27:18](#), so that Israel won't be like sheep without a shepherd, [Numbers 27:17](#). God wants His people to be led and the same still applies today, [Micah 5:2-4](#) / [John 10:11](#) / [Acts 20:28](#) / [1 Peter 5:2](#) / [1 Peter 5:4](#) / [John 21:15-17](#).

Moses is to lay his hand on Joshua and have him stand before Eleazar the priest and the entire assembly and commission him in their presence, [Numbers 27:18-19](#).

The laying on of Moses' hand was proof of his being appointed to and qualified for the work, [1 Timothy 5:22](#). Moses is to give Joshua some of his authority, so the whole Israelite community will obey him, [Numbers 27:20](#) / [Deuteronomy 34:9](#) / [Numbers 11:17](#) / [Numbers 11:28](#).

We see this in Joshua going before Eleazar the priest who would make judgments in reference to the Urim, [Numbers 27:21](#). The Urim and the Thummim were to be kept in the breastpiece, so they may be over Aaron's heart whenever he enters the presence of the LORD, and so Aaron will always bear the means of making decisions for the Israelites over his heart before the LORD, [Exodus 28:30](#).

The breastplate was folded double to form a pocket [Exodus 28:16](#) / [Exodus 39:9](#). Inside the pocket, the Urim and Thummim were kept. Urim means 'lights' and Thummim means 'perfections'. They were probably two jewels. When someone had to make an important decision, the request was made known to the high priest. He would stand before the lampstand, holding the Urim in one hand and the Thummim in the other.

As the light reflected from the Urim and the Thummim onto the stones of the breastplate, this flash of light provided up to twenty-four combinations, two by twelve. Since there are twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet, the flashes of light could produce strings of letters.

As God breathed through the ark, the veil would move, permitting a breeze to flicker the flames in the Lampstand to momentarily alter the direction of the light onto the Urim and Thummim, and thence to the Breastplate. Thus, God was able to communicate directly, but not audibly, to the high priest and answer the enquiry.

The Urim and Thummim were a means of revelation entrusted to the high priest. No description of them is given. This oracular apparently consisted of a material object or objects since it was physically stored in the breastpiece of the high priest, [Exodus 28:30](#) / [Leviticus 8:8](#).

Most people today think that the Urim and Thummim were a lottery oracle, but this is by no means certain. Besides being mentioned by their full name, [Exodus 28:30](#), and [Leviticus 8:8](#), and [Ezra 2:63](#), and [Nehemiah 7:65](#), in reverse order with possessives, [Deuteronomy 33:8](#), the Urim and Thummim could also be referred to by Urim alone, [Numbers 27:21](#), and [1 Samuel 28:6](#).

Sometimes the mention of the ephod, on which the breastpiece housing the Urim and Thummim were fastened, includes a reference to the Urim and Thummim, [1 Samuel 23:9-12](#), and [1 Samuel 30:7-8](#). Also, the verb 'inquire of' followed by 'the Lord' or 'God' when no means of revelation is specified refers to a usage of the Urim and Thummim.

The Urim and Thummim were used at critical moments in the history of God's people when special divine guidance was needed. The civil leader was expected to make use of this means for all important matters for which he needed direction.

Although referred to in [Ezra 2:63](#) and [Nehemiah 7:65](#), there is no convincing evidence that the Urim and Thummim were used after the time of David. The reason for the demise of the Urim and Thummim is not explicitly given. Since the Urim and Thummim, in whatever way they functioned, were a physical means of revelation, it appears that God was taking his people away from the easy certainty inherent in a mechanical means of revelation to the more consistent use of prophecy and the Word alone.

This would require the more difficult application of the norms for true and false prophecy, Deuteronomy 13:1-4 and Deuteronomy 18:20-22 and thus necessitate a faithful teaching priesthood, Deuteronomy 33:10 / Malachi 2:7. Although the lot theory has wide support today, there are significant difficulties in identifying the Urim and Thummim. It is questionable whether the key evidence, the Greek text of 1 Samuel 14:41, is really to be preferred over the Hebrew text.

Also, the vocabulary of lot casting is not used, and the answers contain more information than the casting of lots could yield, e.g. 1 Samuel 1:1, and 1 Samuel 5:23-24.

This last point suggests the involvement of prophecy and the divine inspiration of the high priest in giving revelation. It can also be noted that the use of the actual object(s) constituting the Urim and Thummim appears to have been self-authenticating.

Even in extremely difficult circumstances, the guidance of the Urim and Thummim is followed, Judges 20:18-28. It could be theorised that a perfect light that miraculously shone from the gem(s) constituting the Urim and Thummim, which belonged to God, Deuteronomy 33:8, gave the needed authentication to the actual answer spoken by the high priest under divine inspiration.

In this way, the judgment of the Urim, the light, may have been given, Numbers 27:21. Such authentication would not have been out of place in Old Testament times when special signs were provided more often.

Newton, in his commentary, says the following.

‘They were something in Aaron’s breastplate, but what, critics and commentators are by no means agreed. It is most probable that they were only names given to signify the clearness and certainty of Divine answers which were obtained by the High Priest consulting God with his breastplate on, in contradistinction to the obscure, enigmatical, uncertain, and imperfect answers of the heathen oracles.’

The time has now come for Moses to pass on the leadership of Israel to Joshua, in order that they can go and conquer and take possession of the land as God promised, Numbers 27:21 / Numbers 14:6-10.

Moses did as the LORD commanded him, and so he took Joshua and had him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole assembly, and then he laid his hands on Joshua and commissioned him, as the LORD instructed through Moses, Numbers 27:22-23. Joshua went before the assembly, and he was charged and appointed as Israel’s new leader, the one who would be Moses’ successor.

Joshua was in a position to lead Israel because he, like Caleb, was one of the only two people who gave a good report concerning the land when the twelve spies originally went to Canaan, Numbers 13:30. Moses spoke face to face with God; however, God’s communication with His main leader was now changing.

Moses, the servant, appointed by God who rendered important, faithful, voluntary, but temporary service, had finished his work, but the purpose of God must continue to go forward. Joshua was the man to whom God gave the responsibility of leading the people into the Promised Land.

Something that must be understood is that Joshua was not a replacement for Moses. Sometimes it is said that Joshua was Moses’ successor, but that is not true.

The only sense in which it may be said to be true is that Joshua succeeded him in time. He came after Moses, but he did not succeed him in office, i.e. he did not take over the position or role of Moses.

CHAPTER 28

INTRODUCTION

‘The LORD said to Moses, “Give this command to the Israelites and say to them: ‘Make sure that you present to me at the appointed time my food offerings, as an aroma pleasing to me.’ Say to them: ‘This is the food offering you are to present to the LORD: two lambs a year old without defect, as a regular burnt offering each day. Offer one lamb in the morning and the other at twilight, together with a grain offering of a tenth of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with a quarter of a hin of oil from pressed olives. This is the regular burnt offering instituted at Mount Sinai as a pleasing aroma, a food offering presented to the LORD. The accompanying drink offering is to be a quarter of a hin of fermented drink with each lamb. Pour out the drink offering to the LORD at the sanctuary. Offer the second lamb at twilight, along with the same kind of grain offering and drink offering that you offer in the morning. This is a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.’ Numbers 28:1-8

DAILY OFFERINGS

In preparation for entering Canaan, God wanted to remind His people of their relationship with Him. This was done through daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly offerings in worship to God.

God tells Moses to command to make sure that they present to God at the appointed time His food offerings, as an aroma pleasing to Him, [Numbers 28:1-2](#). They are to present to the LORD two lambs a year old without defect, as a regular burnt offering each day, [Numbers 28:3](#).

And notice they commanded to bring this lamb, every morning, and every evening, [Numbers 28:4](#) / [Exodus 29:38](#). There’s no better way to remember their relationship with God than by beginning and ending each day with the reminder of the need for atonement by sacrifice and expression of devotion to Him.

Whitelaw, in his commentary, says the following.

‘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, [Exodus 29:38-45](#).’ Together with a grain offering of a tenth of an ephah of the finest flour, that is, three and a half pounds, mixed with a quarter of a hin of oil from pressed olives, that is around one litre, [Numbers 28:5](#).

The grain offering didn’t involve the taking of a life, instead, it was made up of the finest flour, [Leviticus 2:1](#) / [Genesis 4:3](#) / [Genesis 3:10](#) / [Judges 3:15-18](#), oil, and incense, [Leviticus 2:1](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This meat-offering connected itself, from its very nature, with the life of the Israelites in Canaan, not with their life in the wilderness; and it was annexed to the animal sacrifices as a token that the people must dedicate to God their property and the fruits of their labour as well as their own persons, [Numbers 15:2](#) / [Leviticus 21:6](#).’

This is the regular burnt offering instituted at Mount Sinai as a pleasing aroma, a food offering presented to the LORD, [Numbers 28:6](#). The accompanying drink offering is to be a quarter of a hin of fermented drink with each lamb, and then they are to pour out the drink offering to the LORD at the sanctuary, [Numbers 28:7](#) / [Exodus 29:40-46](#).

Because the drink offering is ‘poured out’ upon the existing offering, there is a thought of ‘wasting’ or ‘being wasted’, [Matthew 26:6-8](#). In [Genesis 35:14](#), Jacob pours out a drink offering to signify he is giving his life back to God, consecrating himself for the house of God, ‘Beth-El’.

They are to offer the second lamb at twilight, along with the same kind of grain offering and drink offering that they offer in the morning, Numbers 28:8. This is a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the LORD, Numbers 28:8.

SABBATH OFFERINGS

‘On the Sabbath day, make an offering of two lambs a year old without defect, together with its drink offering and a grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with olive oil. This is the burnt offering for every Sabbath, in addition to the regular burnt offering and its drink offering.’ Numbers 28:9-10

Notice that on every Sabbath day, an additional lamb was sacrificed every morning and every evening, Numbers 28:9. Together with its drink offering and a grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour, which is around seven pounds, mixed with olive oil, Numbers 28:9. This is the burnt offering for every Sabbath, in addition to the regular burnt offering and its drink offering, Numbers 28:10.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The key words here are, ‘besides the continual burnt-offering’. It was not enough merely to double the offering of sabbath days; it was to be doubled and added to the continual burnt-offering.’

MONTHLY OFFERINGS

‘On the first of every month, present to the LORD a burnt offering of two young bulls, one ram and seven male lambs a year old, all without defect. With each bull, there is to be a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with oil; with the ram, a grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with oil; and with each lamb, a grain offering of a tenth of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with oil. This is for a burnt offering, a pleasing aroma, a food offering presented to the LORD. With each bull, there is to be a drink offering of half a hin of wine; with the ram, a third of a hin; and with each lamb, a quarter of a hin. This is the monthly burnt offering to be made at each new moon during the year. Besides the regular burnt offering with its drink offering, one male goat is to be presented to the LORD as a sin offering.’ Numbers 28:11-15

At the beginning of every month, Israel was to bring a burnt offering to the LORD, Numbers 28:11 / 1 Samuel 20:5.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘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, Deuteronomy 17:3, but it would seem from Paul’s words in Colossians 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.’

The burnt offering was to be two young bulls, one ram and seven male lambs a year old, all without defect, Numbers 28:11. With each bull there is to be a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with oil. And with the ram, a grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with oil and with each lamb, a grain offering of a tenth of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with oil, Numbers 28:12-13. This is for a burnt offering, a pleasing aroma, a food offering presented to the LORD, Numbers 28:13.

With each bull there is to be a drink offering of half a hin of wine, and with the ram, a third of a hin and with each lamb, a quarter of a hin, Numbers 28:14. This is the monthly burnt offering to be made at each new moon during the year, Numbers 28:14.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The New-moon offering is here also commanded for the first time. The goat as a sin-offering, though mentioned last, would seem in fact to have been offered first; compare the precedents in Exodus 29:1-10 / Leviticus 5:1-10 / Leviticus 8:1-10 / Leviticus 9:1-10 / Leviticus 14:1-10 / Leviticus 16:1-10. The sin-offering, which Numbers 15:22-26 had been contemplated in cases where a sin had been committed ignorantly without the knowledge of the congregation, was henceforth not to be offered merely at discretion, as circumstances might seem to require, but to be regularly repeated, not less frequently than once a month.’

Besides the regular burnt offering with its drink offering, one male goat is to be presented to the LORD as a sin offering, Numbers 28:15 / Exodus 29:10-14. The priests are to offer sin offerings for the people, but they first had to sacrifice for their own sins, Leviticus 4:1-35 / Leviticus 6:24-30 / Hebrews 5:3.

THE PASSOVER

‘On the fourteenth day of the first month, the LORD’s Passover is to be held. On the fifteenth day of this month, there is to be a festival; for seven days, eat bread made without yeast. On the first day, hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work. Present to the LORD a food offering consisting of a burnt offering of two young bulls, one ram and seven male lambs a year old, all without defect. With each bull, offer a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with oil; with the ram, two-tenths; and with each of the seven lambs, one-tenth. Include one male goat as a sin offering to make atonement for you. Offer these in addition to the regular morning burnt offering. In this way, present the food offering every day for seven days as an aroma pleasing to the LORD; it is to be offered in addition to the regular burnt offering and its drink offering. On the seventh day, hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work.’ Numbers 28:16-25

Remember, the Passover hadn’t been observed throughout the wilderness wanderings. Now it was time to rehearse the laws concerning the time and event of the Passover, Numbers 28:16-17 / Exodus 12:16 / Leviticus 23:7-8.

For seven days, Israel is to eat bread made without yeast, Numbers 28:17. On the first day, hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work, Numbers 28:18. They are to present to the LORD a food offering consisting of a burnt offering of two young bulls, one ram and seven male lambs a year old, all without defect, Numbers 28:19.

With each bull offer a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with oil and with the ram, two-tenths and with each of the seven lambs, one-tenth, Numbers 28:20-21.

They are to include one male goat as a sin offering to make atonement for them, Numbers 28:22, and they are to offer these in addition to the regular morning burnt offering, Numbers 28:23.

In this way, present the food offering every day for seven days as an aroma pleasing to the LORD, and it is to be offered in addition to the regular burnt offering and its drink offering, Numbers 28:24. Once again, they are told on the seventh day to hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work, Numbers 28:25 / Numbers 28:26.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is clear that all of these sacrifices were supplementary to the ones already prescribed for Passover in Exodus 12 and Leviticus 23:4-8. Of particular interest is the fact that the seven-day 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 Matthew 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.’

THE FESTIVAL OF WEEKS

‘On the day of firstfruits, when you present to the LORD an offering of new grain during the Festival of Weeks, hold a sacred assembly, and do no regular work. Present a burnt offering of two young bulls, one ram and seven male lambs a year old as an aroma pleasing to the LORD. With each bull, there is to be a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with oil; with the ram, two-tenths; and with each of the seven lambs, one-tenth. Include one male goat to make atonement for you. Offer these together with their drink offerings, in addition to the regular burnt offering and its grain offering. Be sure the animals are without defect.’ Numbers 28:26-31

Straight after the Passover, the feast of unleavened bread was to begin, Leviticus 23:5-6. This feast lasted for seven days and was the offering of the first fruits of the harvest, Exodus 34:22.

The main reason for the Festival of Weeks or the Feast of Pentecost wasn’t about atonement; it was about thanksgiving for the harvest. Yet every feast of Israel was to carry with it the idea of atonement.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This great feast day was honoured by God in the sending of the Holy Spirit and the beginning of the Church of Christ on earth, Acts 2. Through the ages, several names have been attached to this festival: First-fruits, Feast of Weeks, Pentecost, Whitsunday, etc. Leviticus 23:9-23.’

On the day of firstfruits, when Israel presents an offering of new grain during the Festival of Weeks, they are to hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work, Numbers 28:26 / Numbers 28:25. They are to present a burnt offering of two young bulls, one ram and seven male lambs a year old as an aroma pleasing to the LORD, Numbers 28:27.

With each bull there is to be a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with oil and with the ram, two-tenths and with each of the seven lambs, one-tenth, Numbers 28:28-29.

They are to include one male goat to make atonement for them, Numbers 28:30. They are to offer these together with their drink offerings, in addition to the regular burnt offering and its grain offering and make sure the animals are without defect, Numbers 28:31.

CHAPTER 29

INTRODUCTION

‘On the first day of the seventh month, hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work. It is a day for you to sound the trumpets. As an aroma pleasing to the LORD, offer a burnt offering of one young bull, one ram and seven male lambs a year old, all without defect. With the bull, offer a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with olive oil; with the ram, two-tenths; and with each of the seven lambs, one-tenth. Include one male goat as a sin offering to make atonement for you. These are in addition to the monthly and daily burnt offerings with their grain offerings and drink offerings as specified. They are food offerings presented to the LORD, a pleasing aroma.’
Numbers 29:1-6

THE FESTIVAL OF TRUMPETS

In a continuation of the previous chapter, Israel was called upon to remember their relationship with God on certain days and festivals. This feast was conducted in the middle of the Jewish year.

On the Jewish calendar, it is Erev Rosh Hashanah, the eve of Rosh Hashanah. In the evening at sundown, the Jewish Holy Day of Rosh Hashanah begins, marking the start of a new year.

Rosh Hashanah is a two-day celebration which begins on the first day of the Jewish month known as Tishri. On this day, the people of Old Testament Israel turned aside from their work and gathered for a full day of sacrifice and worship, Numbers 29:1-6 / Leviticus 23:23-24.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The ordinance of the Feast of Trumpets was to be observed on the opening day of that month within which the great Day of the Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles fell, Leviticus 23:23-40. The special offering for the day anticipated that of the great Day of Atonement.’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘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 honoured by the Passover ceremonies and the feast of Unleavened Bread; and then there was the civil year which began on the first of Tisri, this being the occasion of the blowing of the trumpets, Numbers 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 rituals performed by the high priest on that day, Exodus 16. This was marked by the Jews as Yom Kippur, or, more accurately, ‘Yom ha-Kippurim’. All of these offerings mentioned here are additional to the bullocks, rams, and goats offered by the high priest on the Day of Atonement.’

On the first day of the seventh month Israel are to hold a sacred assembly, they can work but no regular work was to be done, Leviticus 23:25 / Leviticus 23:21 / Leviticus 23:7-8 / Leviticus 23:35-36, and it’s a day for them to sound the trumpets, Numbers 29:1.

The feast of trumpets was called this because the trumpets were blown throughout the land. Israel communicated with each other by blowing the trumpets, which were made from ram’s horns and were usually blown only by the priests.

As an aroma pleasing to the LORD, they are to offer a burnt offering of one young bull, one ram and seven male lambs a year old, all without defect, Numbers 29:2.

With the bull offer a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour, which is around eleven pounds, mixed with olive oil and with the ram, two-tenths, which is around seven pounds and with each of the seven lambs, one-tenth, which is around three and a half pounds, Numbers 29:3-4 / Numbers 28:10. They are to include one male goat as a sin offering to make atonement for them, Numbers 29:5.

These are in addition to the monthly and daily burnt offerings with their grain offerings and drink offerings as specified. They are food offerings presented to the LORD, a pleasing aroma, Numbers 29:6.

The blowing of the trumpets was a plea to God to remember Israel, Numbers 10:10. At His return, Jesus will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Sometimes in Jerusalem today, you can hear a shofar echo across the city. I think of the Lord’s promise of His return when He calls His people to Himself, 1 Corinthians 15:50-52 / 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

I consider the grace that the shofar’s call represents, urging worshippers to come before the Lord who forgives sins on the basis of sacrifice, Leviticus 16:29-30. We know that the ultimate sacrifice was God’s own Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

‘On the tenth day of this seventh month, hold a sacred assembly. You must deny yourselves and do no work. Present as an aroma pleasing to the LORD, a burnt offering of one young bull, one ram and seven male lambs a year old, all without defect. With the bull, offer a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with oil; with the ram, two-tenths; and with each of the seven lambs, one-tenth. Include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the sin offering for atonement and the regular burnt offering with its grain offering, and their drink offerings.’

Numbers 29:7-11

On the tenth day of this seventh month, Israel is to hold a sacred assembly, [Numbers 28:7](#) / [Leviticus 16:29](#) / [Leviticus 23:24](#). Occupying a central place in the Book of Leviticus is the most holy day of the year, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. This is all about the Israelites, who were in a covenant relationship with God, being reconciled to God.

They must deny themselves, that is fast, [Leviticus 23:27-32](#), and do no work, [Numbers 29:7](#) / [Exodus 20:10](#) / [Leviticus 23:28](#), whether native-born or a foreigner residing among them, [Exodus 12:38](#) / [Exodus 12:48](#), because on this day atonement will be made for them, to cleanse them, then, before the LORD, they will be clean from all their sins, [Leviticus 16:29-30](#).

Dummelow, in his commentary, says the following concerning denying themselves.

‘This means observe a fast, as indicated by [Psalms 35:13](#) and [Isaiah 58:3](#) / [Isaiah 58:5](#). This was the only fast enjoined in the Mosaic law.’

The day of atonement was the day when an offering was made for the sins of the people. Notice this wasn’t a happy occasion; this was a day where people had to seriously think about their sin and its consequences.

They are to present as an aroma pleasing to the LORD a burnt offering of one young bull, one ram and seven male lambs a year old, all without defect, [Numbers 29:8](#) / [Numbers 29:2](#).

With the bull, offer a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with oil, and with the ram, two-tenths and with each of the seven lambs, one-tenth, [Numbers 29:9-10](#).

They are to include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the sin offering for atonement and the regular burnt offering with its grain offering, and their drink offerings, [Numbers 29:11](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘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.’

THE NEW COVENANT

Imagine being a new Jewish Christian living in Jerusalem around A.D.45, about fifteen years after the ministry and death of Jesus. The rich ceremonies of the Temple were continuing, and on the Day of Atonement, you and your family wonder if you should participate.

Jewish Christians in the early days of the church were wondering if they should return to their ancient sacrificial festivals. The book of Hebrews was penned to warn Jewish Christians not to lapse back into Judaism as if such ceremonies and festivals would provide more assured salvation.

In Hebrews 9-10, we find a full description of the Temple ceremonies and a remarkable critique. Jesus is our High Priest, Hebrews 9:11-13. Hebrews contrasts the ongoing, and futile, efforts of the High Priests, who annually bring the blood of bulls and goats into the inner sanctuary, with Jesus, who brought His own blood into a heavenly sanctuary, the true house of God.

Because the content of His sacrifice was superior and the venue of its offering superior, Jesus has ‘obtained eternal redemption’ for us, Hebrews 9:24-26. Why look to the Day of Atonement in Jerusalem when Jesus has accomplished an eternal work that makes all earthly works obsolete? Hebrews 8:6.

These Jewish Christians mentioned in Hebrews were also being persecuted for their failure to abide by religious custom, Hebrews 10:32-39. One day at Calvary outweighed the hundreds of complex sacrifices on Yom Kippur that had been going on for centuries.

THE FESTIVAL OF TABERNACLES

‘On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work. Celebrate a festival to the LORD for seven days. Present as an aroma pleasing to the LORD, a food offering consisting of a burnt offering of thirteen young bulls, two rams and fourteen male lambs, a year old, all without defect. With each of the thirteen bulls, offer a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with oil; with each of the two rams, two-tenths; and with each of the fourteen lambs, one-tenth. Include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering and drink offering. ““On the second day offer twelve young bulls, two rams and fourteen male lambs a year old, all without defect. With the bulls, rams, and lambs offer their grain offerings and drink offerings according to the number specified. Include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering, and their drink offerings. ““On the third day offer eleven bulls, two rams and fourteen male lambs a year old, all without defect. With the bulls, rams, and lambs offer their grain offerings and drink offerings according to the number specified. Include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering and drink offering. ““On the fourth day offer ten bulls, two rams and fourteen male lambs a year old, all without defect. With the bulls, rams, and lambs offer their grain offerings and drink offerings according to the number specified. Include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering and drink offering. ““On the fifth day offer nine bulls, two rams and fourteen male lambs a year old, all without defect. With the bulls, rams, and lambs offer their grain offerings and drink offerings according to the number specified. Include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering and drink offering. ““On the sixth day offer eight bulls, two rams and fourteen male lambs a year old, all without defect. With the bulls, rams, and lambs offer their grain offerings and drink offerings according to the number specified. Include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering and drink offering. ““On the seventh day offer seven bulls, two rams and fourteen male lambs a year old, all without defect. With the bulls, rams, and lambs offer their grain offerings and drink offerings according to the number specified. Include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering and drink offering. ““On the eighth day, hold a closing special assembly and do no regular work. Present as an aroma pleasing to the LORD, a food offering consisting of a burnt offering of one bull, one ram and seven male lambs, a year old, all without defect. With the bull, the ram, and the lambs offer their grain offerings and drink offerings according to the number specified. Include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering and drink offering. ““In addition to what you vow and your freewill offerings, offer these to the LORD at your appointed festivals: your burnt offerings, grain offerings, drink offerings and fellowship offerings.”’ Moses told the Israelites all that the LORD commanded him.’ Numbers 29:12-40

Most of us don’t pay much attention to the agricultural cycles of nature, but Israel was deeply aware of its own food cycles. The festivals of Judaism followed the agricultural cycle, Deuteronomy 8:8.

The first fruits of the harvest were collected in baskets and taken to Jerusalem, Deuteronomy 26:1-11. At sundown, the Jewish festival of Sukkot will begin, Numbers 29:12 / Leviticus 23:34. They can work, but no regular work is to be done, Numbers 29:12.

The feast of tabernacles, sometimes called booths or tents, lasted for seven days, [Numbers 29:12](#), and it was a happy occasion. They are to celebrate this as a festival for seven days each year, and this is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come.

Celebrate it in the seventh month, [Leviticus 23:41](#). For an entire week, the people were to live in booths, [Leviticus 23:42-43](#); in other words, they were to camp out. The reason for camping out was to remind them of their wilderness wanderings.

A TABERNACLE WAS A TEMPORARY DWELLING

According to the law, all Jews were to live in booths or huts during the celebration. These were outdoor shelters made from wild branches of olive, myrtle, palm, and other leaf trees, [Leviticus 23:42-43](#) / [Leviticus 23:40](#) / [Nehemiah 8:15](#). A booth or tabernacle was a temporary dwelling.

This was a time to be thankful to God for bringing them into the land of Canaan, where they could live in their own houses. All of the offerings and feasts were in thanksgiving to God for His grace in bringing them into the Promised Land.

Since this was the formal end of the harvest year, it was a time of celebration. The people joined parades of pilgrims at the Temple, and as they marched holding the lulav, they sang the Hallel Psalms, [Psalms 113-118](#).

Ceremonies around the Temple were extensive, and celebrations were full. Sacrifice was another way they praised God during this feast. But agriculture was not the only interest at Sukkoth or any of the other festivals. The Passover tells the story of Israel fleeing Egypt. Pentecost reminds them of their coming to Mount Sinai to receive the covenant.

Tabernacles reminded them of the forty years in the wilderness, when they lived in the desert, they worshipped God at His Tabernacle and built shelters for themselves as well, [Leviticus 23:42-43](#).

Notice there were thirteen young bulls, two rams, and fourteen male lambs a year old, all without defect, all of which were required on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, [Numbers 29:13](#).

With each of the thirteen bulls offer a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with oil and with each of the two rams, two-tenths and with each of the fourteen lambs, one-tenth, [Numbers 29:14-15](#). They are to include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering and drink offering, [Numbers 29:16](#).

Notice also, that on the second day there twelve young bulls, two rams, and fourteen male lambs a year old, all without defect, were required to be offered as sacrifices, [Numbers 29:17](#).

With the bulls, rams, and lambs, offer their grain offerings and drink offerings according to the number specified, [Numbers 29:18](#). They are to include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering, and their drink offerings, [Numbers 29:19](#).

On the third day, they are to offer eleven bulls, two rams and fourteen male lambs a year old, all without defect, [Numbers 29:20](#). With the bulls, rams, and lambs, offer their grain offerings and drink offerings according to the number specified, [Numbers 29:21](#). They are to include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering and drink offering, [Numbers 29:22](#).

On the fourth day, they are to offer ten bulls, two rams and fourteen male lambs a year old, all without defect, [Numbers 29:23](#). With the bulls, rams, and lambs, offer their grain offerings and drink offerings according to the number specified, [Numbers 29:24](#). They are to include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering and drink offering, [Numbers 29:25](#).

On the fifth day, they are to offer nine bulls, two rams and fourteen male lambs a year old, all without defect, Numbers 29:26. With the bulls, rams, and lambs, offer their grain offerings and drink offerings according to the number specified, Numbers 29:27. They are to include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering and drink offering, Numbers 29:28.

On the sixth day, they are to offer eight bulls, two rams and fourteen male lambs a year old, all without defect, Numbers 29:29. With the bulls, rams, and lambs, offer their grain offerings and drink offerings according to the number specified, Numbers 29:30. They are to include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering and drink offering, Numbers 29:31.

On the seventh day, they are to offer seven bulls, two rams and fourteen male lambs a year old, all without defect, Numbers 29:32. With the bulls, rams, and lambs, offer their grain offerings and drink offerings according to the number specified, Numbers 29:33. They are to include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering and drink offering, Numbers 29:34.

THE FINAL DAY OF TABERNACLES

On the Jewish calendar, the seventh and final day of the Feast of Tabernacles, and this last day of Tabernacles is known as Hoshana Rabbah. The Feast of Tabernacles, or Sukkot, was officially scheduled for the fifteenth day of the Jewish month of Tishri, and it lasted for seven days, Leviticus 23:39-43. They can work, but can't they do any regular work? Numbers 29:35.

The Feast of Tabernacles took place at the end of the dry season in Israel. In Israel, the rainy season begins in mid-October and ends in mid-April. In mid-April, the dry season begins, and sometimes there is absolutely no rain for six months straight! The Feast of Tabernacles began at the end of the dry season, and this festival lasted for seven days, plus the added eighth day of rest.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This among the Jews was esteemed the chief or high day of the feast, though fewer sacrifices were offered on it than on the others; the people seem to have finished the solemnity with a greater measure of spiritual devotion, and it was on this day of the feast that our blessed Lord called the Jews from the letter to the spirit of the law, proposing himself as the sole fountain whence they could derive the streams of salvation, John 7:37.’

They are to present as an aroma pleasing to the LORD a food offering consisting of a burnt offering of one bull, one ram and seven male lambs a year old, all without defect, Numbers 29:36 / Numbers 29:2.

With the bull, the ram, and the lambs, offer their grain offerings and drink offerings according to the number specified, Numbers 29:37. They are to include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering and drink offering, Numbers 29:38.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The offerings required at this feast were the largest of all. It was especially one of thankfulness to God for the gift of the fruits of the earth; and the quantity and the nature of the offerings, Numbers 29:7-11, were determined accordingly.’

The sacrifice of so many animals was proof that God really did take care of them whilst they were in the wilderness. As Christians, we too have much to be thankful for, and as God's priests, 1 Peter 2:9-10, we too should continually offer our lives in sacrifice to the Lord out of thankfulness, Romans 12:1-2 / 2 Corinthians 4:15.

HOSHANA RABBAH

Hoshana Rabbah was the final and most important day of the Feast of Tabernacles. Every day during the feast, there was a water ceremony, [Isaiah 12:3](#). The crowd would shake their lulavs and sing the Hallel Psalms, [Psalms 113-118](#). Rabbah means ‘great’ and Hoshana, Hosanna, means ‘God save us please!’ This was also a prayer for salvation from sin, for Hoshana Rabbah was understood by the Jews to be the absolutely final chance to have one’s sins for the year forgiven. Though Hoshana Rabbah was not mentioned by name in the Old Testament, it is mentioned in the New Testament, [John 7:37-38](#).

On Hoshana Rabbah, in the midst of this water pouring, trumpet blasting, palm waving, psalm chanting, and joy on the part of people seeking forgiveness, and in the presence of all twenty-four divisions of the priesthood, that Jesus cried out in the temple courts and spoke, [John 7:37-38](#) / [Jeremiah 2:13](#).

The Feast of Tabernacles is a helpful reminder that thanksgiving is an important part of our daily lives. A thoughtful person knows that the capacities and opportunities we enjoy often should be credited less to ourselves and more to God. Tabernacles says, bring samples of what God has given you to the Temple and with them in hand, wrapped in your personal lulav, thank Him.

In addition to what they vow and their freewill offerings, offer these to the LORD at their appointed festivals: their burnt offerings, grain offerings, drink offerings and fellowship offerings, [Numbers 29:39](#) / [Leviticus 7:11](#). Moses told the Israelites all that the LORD commanded him, [Numbers 29:40](#).

CHAPTER 30

INTRODUCTION

‘Moses said to the heads of the tribes of Israel: “This is what the LORD commands: 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.

“When a young woman still living in her father’s household makes a vow to the LORD or obligates herself by a pledge 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. 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. “If she marries after she makes a vow or after her lips utter a rash promise by which she obligates herself, and her husband hears about it but says nothing to her, then her vows or the pledges by which she obligated herself will stand. 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. “Any vow or obligation taken by a widow or divorced woman will be binding on her. “If a woman living with her husband makes a vow or obligates herself by a pledge under oath 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. 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. Her husband may confirm or nullify any vow she makes or any sworn pledge to deny herself. 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. If, however, he nullifies them some time after he hears about them, then he must bear the consequences of her wrongdoing.” 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 30:1-16

VOWS

In this chapter, we read that the Lord has commands for those men or women who made a vow. As we read, there were different vows made in this context, one is in reference to general vows and the other, which was more specific, as the vow of a Nazarite, Numbers 6:1-21.

Whenever anyone spoke the words of the vow, they were binding on them as a self-imposed law, Ecclesiastes 5:4-5. Notice there were no written contracts to be made; this is because people are supposed to be as good as their word, Psalms 15:4 / Matthew 5:34-37 / James 5:12.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The regulations respecting vows appropriately follow those given respecting sacrifices, since a large proportion of vows would always relate to the presentation of such offerings. Rules had already been given, Leviticus 27:1-10, for the estimation of things vowed to God.’

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

A vow is a religious promise made to God. Vows were of several kinds.

1. Of abstinence or humiliation, Numbers 30:13.
2. Of the Nazarite, Numbers 6:1-21.
3. Of giving certain things or sacrifices to the Lord, Leviticus 7:16.
4. Of alms given to the poor, Deuteronomy 23:21.

Wade, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There are two kinds of vows which are particularly under consideration in this chapter. They are a. promises to give or to dedicate something to Jehovah and b. pledges to practice some form of abstinence. It is easy to see the wisdom of such legislation. A dependent minor daughter might make a foolish and irresponsible vow to give vast sums of money to some project, such a vow, for some reason not being disallowed, and then the bridegroom marrying her would be saddled with an immense obligation unjustly. Here, there was certified to him the right of annulment. The husband had an absolute right to disallow and dissolve such obligations.’

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, Numbers 30:1-3. However, any woman who made a vow had to be certified by the man to whom she was responsible.

1. A young woman in her father’s house, Numbers 30:3-5.

If a young woman was still living with her father, then her vow had to have the approval of her father. When a young woman still living in her father’s household makes a vow to the LORD or obligates herself by a pledge, 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, Numbers 30:3-4.

However, 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, Numbers 30:5.

2. A married woman who vowed while she was still single, Numbers 30:6-8.

If she marries after she makes a vow or after her lips utter a rash promise by which she obligates herself, and her husband hears about it but says nothing to her, then her vows or the pledges by which she obligated herself will stand, Numbers 30:6-7.

However, 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, Numbers 20:8.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘After betrothal, a woman continued to reside, until the period of her marriage arrived, in her father’s house; but her property was from that time forward vested in her husband, and she was so far regarded as personally his, that an act of faithlessness to him was, like adultery, punishable with death, Deuteronomy 22:23-24. Hence, his right to control her vows even before he actually took her home as his wife.’

3. A widow or divorced person, Numbers 30:9.

Any vow or obligation taken by a widow or divorced woman will be binding on her, Numbers 30:9.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘In each of these cases, the one being loosed from the law of her husband by death, and the other by a bill of divorce, if they vowed, they have none over them to disapprove of, contradict, and make void their vows.’

The Pulpit Commentary says the following.

‘This is not one of the cases treated of in this section, Numbers 30:16, but is only mentioned in order to point out that it falls under the general principle laid down in Numbers 30:2.’

4. A wife in her husband’s house, Numbers 30:10-15.

If a woman living with her husband makes a vow or obligates herself by a pledge under oath, 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, Numbers 30:10-11.

However, 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, Numbers 30:12.

Her husband may confirm or nullify any vow she makes or any sworn pledge to deny herself, Numbers 30:13.

However, 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, Numbers 30:14.

He confirms them by saying nothing to her when he hears about them, Numbers 30:14. However, if he nullifies them some time after he hears about them, then he must bear the consequences of her wrongdoing, Numbers 30:15.

Note the attestation in Numbers 30:16 that Jehovah himself is the author of the legislation given. Apparently, Moses attached this to each entry in ‘the book’, which contained all of it.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is very probable that this law, like that concerning the succession of daughters, Numbers 27:1-11, rose from the exigency of some particular case that had just then occurred.’

CHAPTER 31

INTRODUCTION

‘The LORD said to Moses, “Take vengeance on the Midianites for the Israelites. After that, you will be gathered to your people.” So Moses said to the people, “Arm some of your men to go to war against the Midianites so that they may carry out the LORD’s vengeance on them. Send into battle a thousand men from each of the tribes of Israel.” So twelve thousand men armed for battle, a thousand from each tribe, were supplied from the clans of Israel. Moses sent them into battle, a thousand from each tribe, along with Phinehas, son of Eleazar, the priest, who took with him articles from the sanctuary and the trumpets for signalling. They fought against Midian, as the LORD commanded Moses, and killed every man. Among their victims were Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba—the five kings of Midian. They also killed Balaam, son of Beor, with the sword. The Israelites captured the Midianite women and children and

took all the Midianite herds, flocks, and goods as plunder. They burned all the towns where the Midianites had settled, as well as all their camps. They took all the plunder and spoils, including the people and animals, and brought the captives, spoils, and plunder to Moses and Eleazar the priest and the Israelite assembly at their camp on the plains of Moab, by the Jordan across from Jericho. Moses, Eleazar the priest and all the leaders of the community went to meet them outside the camp. Moses was angry with the officers of the army—the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds—who returned from the battle. “Have you allowed all the women to live?” he asked them. “They were the ones who followed Balaam’s advice and enticed the Israelites to be unfaithful to the LORD in the Peor incident, so that a plague struck the LORD’s people. Now kill all the boys. And kill every woman who has slept with a man, but save for yourselves every girl who has never slept with a man. “Anyone who has killed someone or touched someone who was killed must stay outside the camp seven days. On the third and seventh days, you must purify yourselves and your captives. Purify every garment as well as everything made of leather, goat hair or wood.” Then Eleazar the priest said to the soldiers who had gone into battle, “This is what is required by the law that the LORD gave Moses: Gold, silver, bronze, iron, tin, lead, and anything else that can withstand fire must be put through the fire, and then it will be clean. But it must also be purified with the water of cleansing. And whatever cannot withstand fire must be put through that water. On the seventh day, wash your clothes, and you will be clean. Then you may come into the camp.” Numbers 31:1-24

VENGEANCE ON THE MIDIANITES

In this chapter, we find Moses being obedient to God in reference to making war against the Midianites, Numbers 25:17-18. God tells Moses to take vengeance, Numbers 31:1-2 / Numbers 31:3, which implies that this is God Himself taking action against the Midianites because they had deceived His people.

This action would certainly send a strong message out to all of the other nations that if anyone tried to destroy Israel, they themselves would end up being destroyed.

Notice that God tells Moses that after this, he will be gathered to his people, Numbers 31:2. This means his life is coming to an end, Genesis 25:8 / Genesis 25:8 / Genesis 49:33.

So Moses tells the people to arm some of their men to go to war against the Midianites so that they may carry out the LORD’s vengeance on them, Numbers 31:3. He tells them to send into battle a thousand men from each of the tribes of Israel, Numbers 31:4.

So twelve thousand men armed for battle, a thousand from each tribe, were supplied from the clans of Israel, Numbers 31:5. Moses sent them into battle, a thousand from each tribe, along with Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, who took with him articles from the sanctuary and the trumpets for signalling, Numbers 31:6.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning Phinehas.

‘He was marked out as the fitting director of the expedition by his conduct, Numbers 25:7-13, in the matter of Zimri and Cozbi.’

Israel goes to war against the Midianites, using only 12,000 men, they caught the Midianites by surprise and killed all their males and five of their kings, Numbers 31:7-8 / Joshua 13:21.

Notice that Balaam was also among those who were killed, Numbers 31:8, because he counselled the women of Midian to seduce the men of Israel, Numbers 23:10 / Numbers 24:25 / Numbers 25:1-5 / Jude 11.

The Israelites captured the Midianite women and children and took all the Midianite herds, flocks, and goods as plunder, Numbers 31:9. They burned all the towns where the Midianites had settled, as well as all their camps, Numbers 31:10.

They took all the plunder and spoils, including the people and animals, and brought the captives, spoils and plunder to Moses and Eleazar the priest and the Israelite assembly at their camp on the plains of Moab, by the Jordan across from Jericho, Numbers 31:11-12.

Moses, Eleazar the priest and all the leaders of the community went to meet them outside the camp and notice that Moses was angry with those who returned from the battle, Numbers 31:13-14.

Moses was angry because he had ordered that the older women be killed, as well as all the male children, the army, however, had spared the lives of the women and children, Numbers 31:15.

They were the ones who followed Balaam's advice and enticed the Israelites to be unfaithful to the LORD in the Peor incident, so that a plague struck the LORD's people, Numbers 31:16.

It appears that the Israelite men had forgotten that it was the Midian women who had deceived them into committing fornication, Numbers 25:1-3. It's certainly possible that those men who had relationships with those Midianite women wanted to keep them alive. The point is that Israel was to kill all the adults to prevent any future influence of immortality from the nations around.

Moses commands them to kill all the boys and kill every woman who has slept with a man, but save for yourselves every girl who has never slept with a man, Numbers 31:17-18.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'Moses' outrage because the soldiers had brought the vast company of women, along with their children, with the purpose of bringing them into the camp of Israel is easily understood. To have permitted this would have been an unqualified disaster for Israel. Therefore, Moses ordered all except the virgins to be slain at once.'

Anyone who has killed someone or touched someone who was killed must stay outside the camp seven days and on the third and seventh days they must purify themselves and their captives, Numbers 31:19.

They are also to purify every garment as well as everything made of leather, goat hair or wood, Numbers 31:20. The ceremony of purification mentioned in Numbers 31:20, is fully elaborated in Numbers 19.

Then Eleazar the priest said to the soldiers who had gone into battle, this is what is required by the law that the LORD gave Moses: Gold, silver, bronze, iron, tin, lead, and anything else that can withstand fire must be put through the fire, and then it will be clean but it must also be purified with the water of cleansing. And whatever cannot withstand fire must be put through that water, Numbers 31:21-23. Note that the KJV uses the words, 'waters of separation, Numbers 31:23.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'The water of separation is the water in which the ashes of the red heifer were mingled, Numbers 8:7 / Numbers 8:7 / Numbers 19:2. The Garments, whether of cloth or skins, were to be washed. Gold, silver, brass, iron, tin, and lead, to pass through the fire, probably to be melted down.'

On the seventh day, wash their clothes and they themselves will be clean, then they may come into the camp, Numbers 31:24.

DIVIDING THE SPOILS

'The LORD said to Moses, "You and Eleazar the priest and the family heads of the community are to count all the people and animals that were captured. Divide the spoils equally between the soldiers who took part in the battle and the rest of the community. From the soldiers who fought in the battle, set apart as tribute for the LORD one out of every five hundred, whether people, cattle, donkeys, or sheep. Take this tribute from their half share and give it to Eleazar the priest as the LORD's part. From the Israelites' half, select one out of every fifty, whether people, cattle, donkeys, sheep, or other animals. Give them to the Levites, who are responsible for the care of the LORD's tabernacle." So Moses and Eleazar the priest did as the LORD commanded Moses. The plunder remaining from the spoils that the soldiers took was 675,000 sheep, 72,000 cattle, 61,000 donkeys and 32,000 women who had never slept with a man. The half share of those who fought in the battle was: 337,500 sheep, of which the tribute for the LORD was 675; 36,000 cattle, of which the tribute for the LORD was 72; 30,500 donkeys, of which the tribute for

the LORD was 61; 16,000 people, of whom the tribute for the LORD was 32. Moses gave the tribute to Eleazar the priest as the LORD's part, as the LORD commanded Moses. The half belonging to the Israelites, which Moses set apart from that of the fighting men—the community's half—was 337,500 sheep, 36,000 cattle, 30,500 donkeys and 16,000 people. From the Israelites' half, Moses selected one out of every fifty people and animals, as the LORD commanded him, and gave them to the Levites, who were responsible for the care of the LORD's tabernacle. Then the officers who were over the units of the army—the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds—went to Moses and said to him, "Your servants have counted the soldiers under our command, and not one is missing. So we have brought as an offering to the LORD the gold articles each of us acquired—armlets, bracelets, signet rings, earrings, and necklaces—to make atonement for ourselves before the LORD." Moses and Eleazar the priest accepted from them the gold, all the crafted articles. All the gold from the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds that Moses and Eleazar presented as a gift to the LORD weighed 16,750 shekels. Each soldier had taken plunder for himself. Moses and Eleazar the priest accepted the gold from the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds and brought it into the tent of meeting as a memorial for the Israelites before the LORD.'
Numbers 31:25-54

When the war was over, Israel counted all the spoils from the war which had been taken from their enemies, Numbers 31:25-26. After doing so, the spoils were then divided in half, with half going to the soldiers who actually went to war and the other half to the rest of the people who stayed at home and watched the camp, Numbers 25:28.

One-fifth of one per cent of what was given to the soldiers was to be given to Eleazar the priest, Numbers 31:29. Two per cent of the half that was given to the people was to be given to the Levites, Numbers 31:30-31.

The plunder remaining from the spoils that the soldiers took was 675,000 sheep, 33 72,000 cattle, 34 61,000 donkeys and 32,000 women who had never slept with a man, Numbers 31:32-35 / Numbers 31:18.

The half share of those who fought in the battle was: 337,500 sheep, of which the tribute for the LORD was 675; 36,000 cattle, of which the tribute for the LORD was 72; 30,500 donkeys, of which the tribute for the LORD was 61; 16,000 people, of whom the tribute for the LORD was 32, Numbers 31:36-40.

Moses gave the tribute to Eleazar the priest as the LORD's part, as the LORD commanded Moses, Numbers 31:42. The half belonging to the Israelites, which Moses set apart from that of the fighting men, the community's half was 337,500 sheep, 36,000 cattle, 30,500 donkeys and 16,000 people.

From the Israelites' half, Moses selected one out of every fifty people and animals, as the LORD commanded him, and gave them to the Levites, who were responsible for the care of the LORD's tabernacle, Numbers 31:41-47.

Then the officers who were over the units of the army, the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, went to Moses and said to him, Your servants have counted the soldiers under our command, and not one is missing, Numbers 31:48-49.

Because the soldiers were grateful that none of them had lost their lives during the war, they brought all the jewels of gold to the tabernacle to be offered as an atonement for themselves, Numbers 31:50 / Exodus 25:39 / Exodus 30:11-16.

The rings were finger-rings, or seal-rings, and the tablets were worn suspended from the neck, Exodus 35:22. These jewels of gold were stored in the tabernacle as a remembrance of the great victory that God had given them over the Midianites.

Whitelaw, in his commentary, says the following.

'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 people of that area and under circumstances far less favourable. The weight of the gold mentioned here is some 11,000 ounces. At the current price of gold, \$325.00 per ounce, the value of this free-will offering was more than \$3,500,000.00!'

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the atonement, Numbers 31:50.

‘The atonement was not for any special offence committed, which would have called for a sacrifice of bloodshedding, but rather like the half-shekel given at the census in the Book of Exodus, Exodus 30:11-16, was an acknowledgement of having received undeserved mercies. These, if unacknowledged, would have entailed guilt on the soul.’

CHAPTER 32

INTRODUCTION

‘The Reubenites and Gadites, who had very large herds and flocks, saw that the lands of Jazer and Gilead were suitable for livestock. So they came to Moses and Eleazar the priest and to the leaders of the community, and said, “Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam, Nebo and Beon—the land the LORD subdued before the people of Israel—are suitable for livestock, and your servants have livestock. If we have found favour in your eyes,” they said, “let this land be given to your servants as our possession. Do not make us cross the Jordan.” Numbers 32:1-

5

THE TRANSJORDAN TRIBES

After defeating the Moabites and the Midianites, Israel now finds itself on the east side of the Jordan River, which used to belong to the Amorites and Og. It was ideal for grazing their livestock. It appears that Reuben and Gad were very happy with this new land, and so, they asked if they could have it as their inheritance, Numbers 32:1-5. Although the request may sound good, it wasn’t God’s will. God’s will was that all the tribes should work together to take the land of Canaan and settle there. It appears that they didn’t want to cross the Jordan and take their responsibilities as part of the army of Israel.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘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 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.’

Gill, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Ataroth, Dibon, and Jazer, these were places which belonged to the Amorites, and were taken from Sihon, their king, of Ataroth we read nowhere else but in this chapter, of Dibon, Isaiah 15:2, Jazer was a city, from whence the land about it had its name, it is the same with Jazer, Numbers 21:32 and stood about fifteen miles from Heshbon, the capital city of the kingdom of Sihon and Nimrah, and Heshbon, and Elealeh, and Shebam, and Nebo, and Beon, these were all places in the same country; of Heshbon, Numbers 21:25, Nimrah is the same with Beth Nimrah, Numbers 32:36 and sometimes called Nimrim, famous for its water, Isaiah 15:6.’

‘Moses said to the Gadites and Reubenites, “Should your fellow Israelites go to war while you sit here? Why do you discourage the Israelites from crossing over into the land the LORD has given them? This is what your fathers did when I sent them from Kadesh Barnea to look over the land. After they went up to the Valley of Eshkol and viewed

the land, they discouraged the Israelites from entering the land the LORD had given them. The LORD's anger was aroused that day and he swore this oath: 'Because they have not followed me wholeheartedly, not one of those who were twenty years old or more when they came up out of Egypt will see the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—not one except Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua son of Nun, for they followed the LORD wholeheartedly.' The LORD's anger burned against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness for forty years, until the whole generation of those who had done evil in his sight was gone. "And here you are, a brood of sinners, standing in the place of your fathers and making the LORD even more angry with Israel. If you turn away from following him, he will again leave all this people in the wilderness, and you will be the cause of their destruction." Numbers 32:6-15

Moses doesn't mix his words here when he speaks to the tribes of Reuben and Gad. He interprets their request to settle there as an effort to ignore their responsibilities to fulfil the will of God.

He asks them if they should tell their fellow Israelites to go to war while they sit here? Why do they discourage the Israelites from crossing over into the land the LORD has given them? Numbers 32:6-7.

It's clear that Moses wants them to know and understand that there's still a war to fight and they need to be a part of it. He reminds the leaders of Reuben and Gad why Israel failed to enter the Promised Land thirty-eight years ago, Numbers 32:8-9.

He reminds us that God's anger was aroused that day and he swore this oath, because they had not followed me wholeheartedly, not one of those who were twenty years old or more when they came up out of Egypt, Numbers 14:29-30 / Numbers 32:11-12, will see the land He has promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Numbers 32:10-11. Not one except Caleb, son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite, and Joshua son of Nun, for they followed God, Numbers 32:12 / Numbers 14:24 / Numbers 14:29-30.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'It was Jephunneh that was the Kenizzite, and not Caleb. Kenaz was probably the father of Jephunneh.'

The LORD's anger burned against Israel, and He made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until the whole generation of those who had done evil in his sight was gone, Numbers 32:13.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'The generation of the Exodus was now substantially extinct, Numbers 26:64-65.'

Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh were planning on avoiding their military responsibilities to help the others conquer Canaan. Moses calls them a brood of sinners, who are standing in the place of their fathers and making the LORD even more angry with Israel, Numbers 32:14.

Moses tells them if they turn away from following God, He will again leave all this people in the wilderness, and they will be the cause of their destruction, Numbers 32:15. Moses tells them that they can perish just like the previous generation if they walk in the same unbelief.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'In our view, Moses' anger and frustration were fully justified. True, he listened to the glorying promises of these potential rebels and permitted them to do as they wished, but there can hardly be any doubt that Moses' first and immediate response to this was correct. 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.
4. The Lord punished the whole nation with 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!’

‘Then they came up to him and said, “We would like to build pens here for our livestock and cities for our women and children. But we will arm ourselves for battle and go ahead of the Israelites until we have brought them to their place. Meanwhile, our women and children will live in fortified cities for protection from the inhabitants of the land. We will not return to our homes until each of the Israelites has received their inheritance. We will not receive any inheritance with them on the other side of the Jordan, because our inheritance has come to us on the east side of the Jordan.” Numbers 32:16-20

Reuben or Gad came up to Moses and said, We would like to build pens here for our livestock and cities for our women and children, Numbers 32:16. None of the tribes would be envious of Reuben or Gad, resting in ease, while the rest of Israel are out battling for their lands.

After realising that their request may have been misunderstood, the men of Reuben and Gad decide they would go and fight with their brothers against the Canaanites until they have brought them to their place, Numbers 32:17. Meanwhile, our women and children will live in fortified cities, for protection from the inhabitants of the land, Numbers 32:18.

Poole, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Either all, or as many of us as shall be thought necessary, leaving only so many as may be necessary to provide for the sustenance and defence of our wives and children here, Joshua 4:12-13.’

They tell Moses that they will not return to their homes until each of the Israelites has received their inheritance and they will not receive any inheritance with them on the other side of the Jordan, because our inheritance has come to us on the east side of the Jordan, Numbers 32:19-20.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘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.’

‘Then Moses said to them, “If you will do this—if you will arm yourselves before the LORD for battle and if all of you who are armed cross over the Jordan before the LORD until he has driven his enemies out before him—then when the land is subdued before the LORD, you may return and be free from your obligation to the LORD and to Israel. And this land will be your possession before the LORD. “But if you fail to do this, you will be sinning against the LORD, and you may be sure that your sin will find you out. Build cities for your women and children, and pens for your flocks, but do what you have promised.” The Gadites and Reubenites said to Moses, “We, your servants, will do as our lord commands. Our children and wives, our flocks and herds, will remain here in the cities of Gilead. But your servants, every man who is armed for battle, will cross over to fight before the LORD, just as our lord says.”

Then Moses gave orders about them to Eleazar the priest and Joshua son of Nun and to the family heads of the Israelite tribes. He said to them, “If the Gadites and Reubenites, every man armed for battle, cross over the Jordan with you before the LORD, then when the land is subdued before you, you must give them the land of Gilead as their possession. But if they do not cross over with you armed, they must accept their possession with you in Canaan.” The Gadites and Reubenites answered, “Your servants will do what the LORD has said. We will cross over before the LORD into Canaan armed, but the property we inherit will be on this side of the Jordan.” Then Moses gave to the Gadites, the Reubenites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, son of Joseph, the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites and the kingdom of Og king of Bashan—the whole land with its cities and the territory around them. The Gadites built up Dibon, Ataroth, Aroer, Atroth Shophan, Jazer, Jogbehah, Beth Nimrah and Beth Haran as fortified cities, and built pens for their flocks. And the Reubenites rebuilt Heshbon, Elealeh and Kiriathaim, as well as Nebo and Baal Meon (these names were changed) and Sibmah. They gave names to the cities they rebuilt. The descendants of Makir, son of Manasseh, went to Gilead, captured it, and drove out the Amorites who were there. So Moses gave Gilead to the Makirites, the descendants of Manasseh, and they settled there. Jair, a descendant of Manasseh, captured their settlements and called them Havvoth Jair. And Nobah captured Kenath and its surrounding settlements and called it Nobah after himself.’ Numbers 32:20-42

Moses says to them if they will do this and if they will arm themselves before the LORD for battle and if all of them who are armed cross over the Jordan before the LORD until He has driven His enemies out before Him.

Then when the land is subdued before the LORD, they may return and be free from their obligation to the LORD and to Israel and this land will be their possession before the LORD, Numbers 32:20-22.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Note the repetition of the words ‘every man that is armed for war’ in Numbers 32:21 and Numbers 32:27. What these tribes actually did amounted to far less than half of what they promised, Joshua 4:13. Instead of the words ‘men armed for war’ in Numbers 32:17 / Numbers 32:21, and Numbers 32:27, some follow the rendition found in Jewish versions, namely, ‘shock-troops’.

If Reuben and Gad do as they said they would, then they would be blameless before the LORD and before Israel. But if they didn’t, they would be guilty. Moses says, if they sin by doing nothing, James 4:17, then their sin will be found out, Numbers 32:23.

In other words, if the tribes of Reuben and Gad did nothing, that is, if they stayed at home while their brothers went to war fighting for their lives to take possession of the land, then their sin of doing nothing would surely find them out.

Moses tells them to build cities for their women and children, and pens for their flocks, but do what they have promised, Numbers 32:24. The Gadites and Reubenites tells Moses that they are his servants and they will do as our lord commands, Numbers 32:25.

Their children and wives, their flocks and herds will remain here in the cities of Gilead, but every man who is armed for battle, will cross over to fight before the LORD, just as our lord says, Numbers 32:26-27.

Moses gave orders about them to Eleazar the priest and Joshua son of Nun and to the family heads of the Israelite tribes and says, if the Gadites and Reubenites, every man armed for battle, cross over the Jordan with him before the LORD, then when the land is subdued before him, Eleazar must give them the land of Gilead as their possession, however, if they do not cross over with him armed, they must accept their possession with him in Canaan, Numbers 32:28-30.

The Gadites and Reubenites agree that they will do what the LORD has said, and they will cross over before the LORD into Canaan armed, but the property they inherit will be on this side of the Jordan, Numbers 32:31-32.

Then Moses gave to the Gadites, the Reubenites and the half-tribe of Manasseh son of Joseph the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites and the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, the whole land with its cities and the territory around them, Numbers 32:33.

Half the tribe of Manasseh, were also happy to settle on the lands east of the Jordan River, and so, if they decided to stay at home instead of helping their brothers in taking the land, their sin too would be found out, Numbers 32:33.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning Numbers 32:34-38.

‘The cities here named fall into three groups. On Dibon, compare Numbers 21:19. The Moabite stone was discovered here in 1868. This city, occupied on the first acquisition of the territory by the Gadites and assigned by Joshua to the Reubenites, was eventually recaptured by the Moabites, in whose hands it remained. Ataroth, i.e., ‘crowns’ (Attarus?), was seven miles northwest of Dibon. Aroer (Arair) lay between Dibon and the Arnon.’

The descendants of Makir, son of Manasseh, went to Gilead, captured it, and drove out the Amorites who were there, and so, Moses gave Gilead to the Makirites, the descendants of Manasseh, and they settled there, Numbers 32:39-40.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Machirites did not exterminate the whole population of this district, Joshua 13:15, etc. The conquest of the district east of Jordan seems never to have been so effectually accomplished as that on the other side. During the troublesome times of the Judges, the eastern Manassites rendered good service to the nation, Judges 5:14. Gideon,

and probably Jephthah, were of this tribe, and reflect in a later generation the warlike and adventurous spirit which Jair and Nobah exhibited in the days of Moses.’

Jair, a descendant of Manasseh, captured their settlements and called them Havvoth Jair, 1 Chronicles 5:25-26, and Nobah captured Kenath and its surrounding settlements and called it Nobah after himself, Numbers 32:41-42.

CHAPTER 33

INTRODUCTION

‘Here are the stages in the journey of the Israelites when they came out of Egypt by divisions under the leadership of Moses and Aaron. At the LORD’s command, Moses recorded the stages in their journey. This is their journey by stages: The Israelites set out from Rameses on the fifteenth day of the first month, the day after the Passover. They marched out defiantly in full view of all the Egyptians, who were burying all their firstborn, whom the LORD had struck down among them; for the LORD had brought judgment on their gods. The Israelites left Rameses and camped at Sukkoth. They left Sukkoth and camped at Etham, on the edge of the desert. They left Etham, turned back to Pi Hahiroth, to the east of Baal Zephon, and camped near Migdol. They left Pi Hahiroth and passed through the sea into the desert, and when they had travelled for three days in the Desert of Etham, they camped at Marah. They left Marah and went to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees, and they camped there. They left Elim and camped by the Red Sea. They left the Red Sea and camped in the Desert of Sin. They left the Desert of Sin and camped at Dophkah. They left Dophkah and camped at Alush. They left Alush and camped at Rephidim, where there was no water for the people to drink. They left Rephidim and camped in the Desert of Sinai. They left the Desert of Sinai and camped at Kibroth Hattaavah. They left Kibroth Hattaavah and camped at Hazeroth. They left Hazeroth and camped at Rithmah. They left Rithmah and camped at Rimmon Perez. They left Rimmon Perez and camped at Libnah. They left Libnah and camped at Rissah. They left Rissah and camped at Kehelathah. They left Kehelathah and camped at Mount Shepher. They left Mount Shepher and camped at Haradah. They left Haradah and camped at Makheloth. They left Makheloth and camped at Tahath. They left Tahath and camped at Terah. They left Terah and camped at Mithkah. They left Mithkah and camped at Hashmonah. They left Hashmonah and camped at Moseroth. They left Moseroth and camped at Bene Jaakan. They left Bene Jaakan and camped at Hor Haggidgad. They left Hor Haggidgad and camped at Jotbathah. They left Jotbathah and camped at Abronah. They left Abronah and camped at Ezion Geber. They left Ezion Geber and camped at Kadesh, in the Desert of Zin. They left Kadesh and camped at Mount Hor, on the border of Edom.’ Numbers 33:1-37

STAGES IN ISRAEL’S JOURNEY

This chapter begins by informing us about the different stages of Israel’s journeys from Egypt to Moab, Numbers 33:1-2. There are forty-two places listed, each one was where Israel had camped in the wilderness, and the reason they are listed is simply for future generations.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Note that he did not describe the march by identifying the places where Israel stopped but by citing them as places from which they set out, Numbers 33:2.’

We read about Israel leaving Egypt in Numbers 33:3-4, but despite being slaves in Egypt, God gave them great confidence to leave, not as slaves but as victors. All the plagues which God brought upon Egypt were designed to humble the people and let them see the uselessness of the Egyptian deities.

We read about Israel's journey from Egypt to Mount Sinai in Numbers 33:5-15. This journey took them more than a year, but they spent most of the time at the foot of Mount Sinai receiving the law.

We read about Israel's journey from Mount Sinai to the Jordan River, Numbers 33:16-49. This part of the journey took them around thirty-eight years, only because they disobeyed God, and so, God led them in the wilderness until that generation died, Numbers 26:64-65. Not one except Caleb and Joshua, for they followed God, Numbers 32:12 / Numbers 14:24 / Numbers 14:29-30.

‘At the LORD’s command, Aaron the priest went up Mount Hor, where he died on the first day of the fifth month of the fortieth year after the Israelites came out of Egypt. Aaron was a hundred and twenty-three years old when he died on Mount Hor. The Canaanite king of Arad, who lived in the Negev of Canaan, heard that the Israelites were coming. They left Mount Hor and camped at Zalmonah. They left Zalmonah and camped at Punon. They left Punon and camped at Oboth. They left Oboth and camped at Iye Abarim, on the border of Moab. They left Iye Abarim and camped at Dibon Gad. They left Dibon Gad and camped at Almon Diblathaim. They left Almon Diblathaim and camped in the mountains of Abarim, near Nebo. They left the mountains of Abarim and camped on the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho. There on the plains of Moab they camped along the Jordan from Beth Jeshimoth to Abel Shittim.’ Numbers 33:38-49

Note the difference between this account and the one given in Numbers 21:4-20. This can be better understood when we remember that Israel was once scattered throughout the wilderness until they came together as one, Numbers 20:1. We are told that Aaron the priest went up Mount Hor and died, at God’s command. Aaron was a hundred and twenty-three years old when he died on Mount Hor, Numbers 33:38-39 / Numbers 20:22-29.

Sailhamer, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Within the list of encampments are two short narratives that focus on the work of Moses, Numbers 33:2-3, and Aaron, Numbers 33:38-39. Both narratives have the same comment that Moses, Numbers 33:2, and Aaron, Numbers 33:38, obeyed ‘the command of the LORD.’ Thus, one of the purposes of this list within the larger strategy of the book appears to be to give a brief review of the work of these two great leaders. God used them and their obedience to lead the people in the wilderness for the forty years.’

If the tribes were living in different places in the wilderness, then different names would have been given. Each list was given to highlight the experiences of any number of the tribes at the time they were at any particular campsite, Numbers 40-49.

Very little is known about what happened to Israel during most of the forty years of wandering. Outside of the sabbath breaker’s execution and Korah’s rebellion, Numbers 15 / Numbers 16, what is written in this chapter just about sums up the record.

‘On the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho, the LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you cross the Jordan into Canaan, drive out all the inhabitants of the land before you. Destroy all their carved images and their cast idols and demolish all their high places. Take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given you the land to possess. Distribute the land by lot, according to your clans. To a larger group give a larger inheritance, and to a smaller group a smaller one. Whatever falls to them by lot will be theirs. Distribute it according to your ancestral tribes. “‘But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land, those you allow to remain will become barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides. They will give you trouble in the land where you will live. And then I will do to you what I plan to do to them.”’ Numbers 33:50-56

God commands Israel to drive out all the inhabitants in the land, destroy all the carved images and idols, along with demolishing all the high places, Numbers 33:50-52. This was commanded for obvious reasons; God didn’t want them to be influenced by the Canaanite religion or culture.

Israel were to take possession of the land and settle in it, for God have given them the land to possess, Numbers 33:53. They are to distribute the land by lot, according to their clans and to a larger group give a larger inheritance, and to a smaller group a smaller one, Numbers 33:54.

Whatever falls to them by lot will be theirs but they are to distribute it according to their ancestral tribes, Numbers 33:54. However, if they do not drive out the inhabitants of the land, those they allow to remain will become barbs in their eyes and thorns in their sides.

And they will give them trouble in the land where they will live, and then God will do to them what He plans to do to them, Numbers 33:55-56. Sadly, as we know, they failed to obey these commands despite being warned by God of the consequences, Numbers 33:55-56.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following as to why they failed.

1. The customs of the times allowed captured people 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 allurement 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 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.'

CHAPTER 34

INTRODUCTION

'The LORD said to Moses, "Command the Israelites and say to them: 'When you enter Canaan, the land that will be allotted to you as an inheritance is to have these boundaries: "'Your southern side will include some of the Desert of Zin along the border of Edom. Your southern boundary will start in the east from the southern end of the Dead Sea, cross south of Scorpion Pass, continue on to Zin and go south of Kadesh Barnea. Then it will go to Hazar Addar and over to Azmon, where it will turn, join the Wadi of Egypt and end at the Mediterranean Sea. "'Your western boundary will be the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. This will be your boundary on the west. "'For your northern boundary, run a line from the Mediterranean Sea to Mount Hor and from Mount Hor to Lebo Hamath. Then the boundary will go to Zedad, continue to Ziphron and end at Hazar Enan. This will be your boundary on the north. "'For your eastern boundary, run a line from Hazar Enan to Shepham. The boundary will go down from Shepham to Riblah on the east side of Ain and continue along the slopes east of the Sea of Galilee. Then the boundary will go down along the Jordan and end at the Dead Sea. "'This will be your land, with its boundaries on every side.'" Moses commanded the Israelites: "Assign this land by lot as an inheritance. The LORD has ordered that it be given to the nine and a half tribes, because the families of the tribe of Reuben, the tribe of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh have received their inheritance. These two and a half tribes have received their inheritance east of the Jordan across from Jericho, toward the sunrise.'" Numbers 34:1-15

BOUNDARIES OF CANAAN

This chapter begins with God setting out the boundaries of the land that Israel would possess, [Numbers 34:1-2](#). The south began at the southern end of the Dead Sea, which borders extended to Edom and Kadesh-Barnea.

From Kadesh-Barnea it extended along the river of Egypt, which was a dry river called ‘Wadi El-Arish’. It then extended to the Mediterranean Sea, [Numbers 34:3-5](#). The western border was the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, but we don’t know how far north this border extended, [Numbers 34:6](#).

The northern border reached from the Mediterranean Sea to Mount Hor, and then to Hamath, Zedad and Hazar-Enan, [Numbers 34:7-9](#). The eastern border ran from Hazar-Enan south to the Sea of Galilee, south along the Jordan River, and eventually to the Dead Sea, [Numbers 34:10-12](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning [Numbers 34:13-15](#).

‘It should be particularly noted that the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh had requested their inheritance altogether outside the boundaries of the sacred land God promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. According to the boundaries here, the eastern bank of the Jordan was the eastern boundary of the Land of Promise.’

What is significant about these borders is that Israel has never truly possessed all this land. The borders are mentioned in [Joshua 15-19](#) / [Ezekiel 47:13-20](#) / [Ezekiel 48:28-29](#).

‘The LORD said to Moses, “These are the names of the men who are to assign the land for you as an inheritance: Eleazar the priest and Joshua son of Nun. And appoint one leader from each tribe to help assign the land. These are their names: Caleb son of Jephunneh, from the tribe of Judah; Shemuel son of Ammihud, from the tribe of Simeon; Elidad son of Kishon, from the tribe of Benjamin; Bukki son of Jogli, the leader from the tribe of Dan; Hanniel son of Ephod, the leader from the tribe of Manasseh son of Joseph; Kemuel son of Shiphtan, the leader from the tribe of Ephraim son of Joseph; Elizaphan son of Parnak, the leader from the tribe of Zebulun; Paltiel son of Azzan, the leader from the tribe of Issachar; Ahihud son of Shelomi, the leader from the tribe of Asher; Pedahel son of Ammihud, the leader from the tribe of Naphtali.” These are the men the LORD commanded to assign the inheritance to the Israelites in the land of Canaan.’ [Numbers 34:16-29](#)

When we think about how long Israel had to wait to possess the Promised Land, when they finally did and divided the land, it would truly be a historic moment in their history.

Joshua and Eleazar were appointed to divide the land, and notice the Lord asked twelve men to allot the land inheritance to each tribe according to the size of each tribe, [Numbers 34:16-19](#).

Lockyer, in his commentary, gives the following meaning of each of the men’s names.

‘The name Eleazar means God is helper, [Numbers 34:17](#). The name Joshua means Jehovah is salvation, [Numbers 24:17](#). The name Caleb means Bold, also ‘dog’ as applied to animals, [Numbers 24:19](#). The name Shemuel means Heard of God, [Numbers 34:20](#). The name Elidad means God has loved, [Numbers 34:21](#).’

‘The name Bukki means Mouth of Jehovah, [Numbers 34:22](#). The name Hanniel means Grace of God, [Numbers 34:23](#). The name Kemuel means Congregation of God, [Numbers 34:24](#). The name Elizaphan means God is protector, [Numbers 34:25](#).’

‘The name Paltiel means Deliverer of the Lord, [Numbers 34:26](#). The name Ahihud means Brother of honour, [Numbers 34:27](#). The name Pedahel means God has saved, [Numbers 34:28](#).’

These are the men the LORD commanded to assign the inheritance to the Israelites in the land of Canaan, [Numbers 34:29](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘None of these names is connected with a pagan god, and what a contrast this affords with the days of the monarchy under Saul, when two of the king’s sons were Esh-Baal and Meri-Baal, named after the Canaanite pagan god, Baal.’

CHAPTER 35

INTRODUCTION

‘On the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho, the LORD said to Moses, “Command the Israelites to give the Levites towns to live in from the inheritance the Israelites will possess. And give them pasturelands around the towns. Then they will have towns to live in and pasturelands for the cattle they own and all their other animals. “The pasturelands around the towns that you give the Levites will extend a thousand cubits from the town wall. Outside the town, measure two thousand cubits on the east side, two thousand on the south side, two thousand on the west and two thousand on the north, with the town in the centre. They will have this area as pastureland for the towns.’

Numbers 35:1-5

TOWNS FOR THE LEVITES

This chapter begins by addressing the Levites and because they were given no inheritance of land, God was their inheritance, Numbers 18:20. However, on the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho, God speaks to Moses and asks him to command the Israelites to give the Levites towns to live in from the inheritance the Israelites will possess and give them pasture lands that surrounded the towns Numbers 35:1-2.

The Levites will have towns to live in and pasturelands for the cattle they own and all their other animals, Numbers 35:3. The pasturelands around the towns that are to be given to the Levites will extend a thousand cubits, which is around one thousand five-hundred feet from the town wall, Numbers 35:4.

The outside of the town, measure two thousand cubits, which is around two thousand feet on the east side, two thousand on the south side, two thousand on the west and two thousand on the north, with the town in the centre, Numbers 35:5.

They will have this area as pastureland for the towns, Numbers 35:5. There were to be a total of forty-eight towns for the Levites, six cities of refuge, and forty-two additional cities.

CITIES OF REFUGE

‘Six of the towns you give the Levites will be cities of refuge, to which a person who has killed someone may flee. In addition, give them forty-two other towns. In all, you must give the Levites forty-eight towns, together with their pasturelands. The towns you give the Levites from the land the Israelites possess are to be given in proportion to the inheritance of each tribe: Take many towns from a tribe that has many, but few from one that has few.” Then the LORD said to Moses: “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you cross the Jordan into Canaan, select some towns to be your cities of refuge, to which a person who has killed someone accidentally may flee. They will be places of refuge from the avenger, so that anyone accused of murder may not die before they stand trial before the assembly. These six towns you give will be your cities of refuge. Give three on this side of the Jordan and three in Canaan as cities of refuge. These six towns will be a place of refuge for Israelites and for foreigners residing among them, so that anyone who has killed another accidentally can flee there.’ Numbers 35:6-15

Cities of refuge were established in reference to the civil laws of the nation, and six of the cities were given to the Levites to which a person who has killed someone may flee, Numbers 35:6 / Deuteronomy 4:41-43 / Deuteronomy 19:1-14 / Joshua 20:1-9. In addition, give them forty-two other towns, Numbers 35:6.

In all the Levites were to be given forty-eight towns, together with their pasturelands, Numbers 35:7. The towns the Levites are to be given are from the land the Israelites possess and are to be given in proportion to the inheritance of each tribe, Numbers 35:8. Moses is to take many towns from a tribe that has many, but few from one that has few, Numbers 35:8.

God tells Moses to speak to the Israelites and tell them that when they cross the Jordan into Canaan, they are to select some towns to be their place of refuge, to which a person who has killed someone accidentally may flee, Numbers 35:9-11.

They will be places of refuge from the avenger, Genesis 9:6, so that anyone accused of murder may not die before they stand trial before the assembly, Numbers 35:12 / Joshua 20:4 / Joshua 20:6.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘If he was found worthy of death, they delivered him to the avenger that he might be slain, Deuteronomy 19:12, if not, they sent him back to the city of refuge, where he remained till the death of the high priest, Numbers 35:25. Before the cities of refuge were appointed, the altar appears to have been a sanctuary for those who had killed a person unwittingly, Exodus 21:13 / Exodus 21:14.’

These six towns will be their cities of refuge, Numbers 35:13. There were three cities of refuge on the west side of the Jordan and three were on the east side, Numbers 35:14.

On the west side of the of Jordan, Hebron, Kiriath-Arba, was given from the tribe of Judah, Joshua 20:7. Shechem was given from the tribe of Ephraim, Joshua 21:21 and Kedesh in Galilee was given from the tribe of Naphtali, Joshua 21:32.

From the east side of the Jordan, Golan in Bashan was given from the tribe of Manasseh, Joshua 21:27. Bezer was given from the tribe of Reuben, Joshua 21:36 and Ramoth-Gilead was given from the tribe of Gad, Joshua 21:38. Back then, cities of refuge had meaning to their names. Shechem means shoulder or back or strength, Hebron means fellowship, Kedesh means holy, sanctuary, Golan means joy, exultation, Ramoth means high, exalted, and Bezer means fortification, stronghold.

These six cities will be a place of refuge for Israelites and for foreigners residing among them, so that anyone who has killed another accidentally can flee there, Numbers 35:15.

The cities are mentioned in Exodus 21 / Numbers 35 / Deuteronomy 19 / Joshua 20. Roads leading to these cities were kept in excellent condition, with signposts reading, ‘Refuge! Refuge!’ The cities were no more than half a day’s journey from any other city, Joshua 20:7-8.

The cities were in central locations where they could easily be reached from any part of the country. The cities of refuge were open to all, and the doors into the cities were never locked. The cities were stocked with food, and there was no protection if a man did not flee to a city of refuge.

The principle behind these cities is based on the law of the avenger who could avenge the death of a relative who was killed. The next of kin had the right to avenge the death of a relative.

Unless the avenging relative acted out of the heat of the moment when a relative was accidentally killed, the attacker could escape to a city of refuge until a judgment could be made, Genesis 9:6.

‘If anyone strikes someone a fatal blow with an iron object, that person is a murderer; the murderer is to be put to death. Or if anyone is holding a stone and strikes someone a fatal blow with it, that person is a murderer; the murderer is to be put to death. Or if anyone is holding a wooden object and strikes someone a fatal blow with it, that person is a murderer; the murderer is to be put to death. The avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death; when the avenger comes upon the murderer, the avenger shall put the murderer to death. If anyone with malice aforethought shoves another or throws something at them intentionally so that they die, or if out of enmity one person hits another with their fist so that the other dies, that person is to be put to death; that person is a murderer. The avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death when they meet. “But if, without enmity someone suddenly pushes

another or throws something at them unintentionally or, without seeing them, drops on them a stone heavy enough to kill them, and they die, then since that other person was not an enemy and no harm was intended, the assembly must judge between the accused and the avenger of blood according to these regulations. The assembly must protect the one accused of murder from the avenger of blood and send the accused back to the city of refuge to which they fled. The accused must stay there until the death of the high priest, who was anointed with the holy oil.’ Numbers 35:16-25

In these verses, we read about the classifications for those who had a right to flee to the cities of refuge. There was a difference between manslaughter, that is, someone who accidentally killed someone else, and an actual murderer. The difference between the two is based on intent.

If someone was killed by using a weapon, a weapon made of iron, Numbers 35:16, stone, Numbers 35:17, or wood, Numbers 35:18, then this would be classed as murder and was to be put to death, Numbers 25:16-18.

If a murder took place, the avenger could kill the murderer on the spot, Numbers 35:19. This same law applied to those who, out of hatred, killed another, Numbers 35:20-21.

The murderer was someone who intentionally killed someone else, whereas the manslaughterer was someone who had no such intent, but unintentionally killed someone. Anyone who killed someone accidentally was dealt with differently.

If, without enmity someone suddenly pushes another or throws something at them unintentionally or, without seeing them, drops on them a stone heavy enough to kill them, and they die, then since that other person was not an enemy and no harm was intended, the assembly must judge between the accused and the avenger of blood according to these regulations, Numbers 35:22-24.

Only those who accidentally killed someone were able to flee to the cities of refuge, Numbers 35:25. They could flee to the city of refuge in order to escape the vengeance of a near relative, Numbers 35:25. However, if anyone exercised the privilege of escaping to a refuge city, they had to stay in the city until the high priest died, Numbers 35:25.

‘But if the accused ever goes outside the limits of the city of refuge to which they fled and the avenger of blood finds them outside the city, the avenger of blood may kill the accused without being guilty of murder. The accused must stay in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest; only after the death of the high priest may they return to their own property. “This is to have the force of law for you throughout the generations to come, wherever you live. “Anyone who kills a person is to be put to death as a murderer only on the testimony of witnesses. But no one is to be put to death on the testimony of only one witness. “Do not accept a ransom for the life of a murderer, who deserves to die. They are to be put to death. “Do not accept a ransom for anyone who has fled to a city of refuge and so allow them to go back and live on their own land before the death of the high priest. “Do not pollute the land where you are. Bloodshed pollutes the land, and atonement cannot be made for the land on which blood has been shed, except by the blood of the one who shed it. Do not defile the land where you live and where I dwell, for I, the LORD, dwell among the Israelites.” Numbers 35:26-34

If that same person who killed someone accidentally decided to go outside of the city of refuge before the high priest died, then the near relative of the one who was killed could kill them without any guilt, Numbers 35:26-27.

If the high priest died, the one who accidentally killed someone could return to his property, and the near relative had no right to avenge the death of his relative, Numbers 35:28. This is to have the force of law for Israel throughout the generations to come, wherever they live, Numbers 35:29.

Notice that capital punishment could only be carried out when more than one witness could testify to the fact that murder was committed, Numbers 35:30 / Deuteronomy 17:6-7.

No amount of money could be paid to free the one who was guilty of murder, Numbers 35:31 / Exodus 21:30, and neither could any amount of money be paid in order that anyone who accidentally killed someone could leave a city of refuge before the death of the high priest, Numbers 35:32.

Israel must not pollute the land where they are because bloodshed pollutes the land, and atonement cannot be made for the land on which blood has been shed, except by the blood of the one who shed it, Numbers 35:33. Israel must not defile the land where they live because God's dwells there among them, Numbers 35:34.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘No wonder God is so particularly strict in his laws against murderers.

1. Because he is the author of life, and none has any right to dispose of it but himself.
2. Because life is the time to prepare for the eternal world, and on it the salvation of the soul accordingly depends, therefore it is of infinite consequence to the man that his life be lengthened out to the utmost limits assigned by Divine Providence. As he who takes a man's life away before his time may be the murderer of his soul as well as of his body, the severest laws should be enacted against this, both to punish and prevent the crime.’

The death penalty was given in order to keep society pure from the sickness of murderers. Once someone murders someone else, then the land is defiled by those who have no value for life. The death penalty, therefore, was God's way of keeping society clean from moral decay in reference to anyone who had no value for life, Genesis 9:6.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN CHRIST AND THE CITIES

The Bible Hub says the following.

1. Refuge and Safety.

Just as the Cities of Refuge provided a safe haven for the manslayer, Christ offers refuge to sinners seeking salvation. Hebrews 6:18 speaks of believers who ‘have fled to take hold of the hope set before us,’ drawing a parallel to the act of fleeing to a place of safety. In Christ, believers find protection from the ultimate avenger, the justice of God, which demands retribution for sin.

2. Accessibility.

The cities were strategically located and easily accessible, ensuring that anyone in need could reach them without undue delay. This reflects the availability of Christ to all who seek Him. Romans 10:13 declares, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ The open access to these cities symbolises the open invitation of the Gospel.

3. Impartiality.

The Cities of Refuge were available to all, regardless of social status or nationality, as stated in Numbers 35:15. ‘These six cities will serve as a refuge for the Israelites, as well as for the foreigner or temporary resident among them.’ This inclusivity prefigures the universal offer of salvation through Christ, who breaks down barriers and extends grace to all humanity, Galatians 3:28.

4. High Priest's Death.

The manslayer was required to remain in the city until the death of the high priest, at which point they could return home without fear, Numbers 35:25-28. This aspect foreshadows the death of Christ, our High Priest, whose sacrificial death liberates believers from the penalty of sin. Hebrews 9:15 states, ‘For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance.’

5. Judgment and Mercy.

The cities balanced justice and mercy, ensuring that the innocent were protected while the guilty were held accountable. This balance is perfectly embodied in Christ, who fulfils the law's demands while offering mercy through His atoning sacrifice. John 1:17 affirms, 'For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.'

CONCLUSION

The Cities of Refuge serve as a multifaceted type of Christ, illustrating His role as a sanctuary for sinners, His accessibility and impartiality, and the profound implications of His sacrificial death.

Through this typology, believers gain a deeper understanding of the comprehensive nature of Christ's redemptive work and the assurance of safety found in Him.

CHAPTER 36

INTRODUCTION

'The family heads of the clan of Gilead, son of Makir, the son of Manasseh, who were from the clans of the descendants of Joseph, came and spoke before Moses and the leaders, the heads of the Israelite families. They said, "When the LORD commanded my lord to give the land as an inheritance to the Israelites by lot, he ordered you to give the inheritance of our brother Zelophehad to his daughters. Now suppose they marry men from other Israelite tribes; then their inheritance will be taken from our ancestral inheritance and added to that of the tribe they marry into. And so part of the inheritance allotted to us will be taken away. When the Year of Jubilee for the Israelites comes, their inheritance will be added to that of the tribe into which they marry, and their property will be taken from the tribal inheritance of our ancestors." Then at the LORD's command, Moses gave this order to the Israelites: "What the tribe of the descendants of Joseph is saying is right. This is what the LORD commands for Zelophehad's daughters: They may marry anyone they please as long as they marry within their father's tribal clan. No inheritance in Israel is to pass from one tribe to another, for every Israelite shall keep the tribal inheritance of their ancestors. Every daughter who inherits land in any Israelite tribe must marry someone in her father's tribal clan, so that every Israelite will possess the inheritance of their ancestors. No inheritance may pass from one tribe to another, for each Israelite tribe is to keep the land it inherits." So Zelophehad's daughters did as the LORD commanded Moses. Zelophehad's daughters—Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milkah and Noah—married their cousins on their father's side. They married within the clans of the descendants of Manasseh, son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained in their father's tribe and clan. These are the commands and regulations the LORD gave through Moses to the Israelites on the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho.' Numbers 36:1-13

INHERITANCE OF ZELOPHEHAD'S DAUGHTERS

The family heads of the clan of Gilead son of Makir, the son of Manasseh, who were from the clans of the descendants of Joseph, came and spoke before Moses and the leaders, the heads of the Israelite families, Numbers 36:1.

They said when the LORD commanded Moses to give the land as an inheritance to the Israelites by lot, he ordered that he give the inheritance of our brother Zelophehad to his daughters, Numbers 36:2.

The laws mentioned in this chapter are to be viewed in reference to the laws that were given in Numbers 27:1-11, concerning the inheritance of the daughters of Zelophehad.

They tell Moses suppose they marry men from other Israelite tribes; then their inheritance will be taken from their ancestral inheritance and added to that of the tribe they marry into and so, part of the inheritance allotted to them will be taken away, Numbers 36:3.

When the Year of Jubilee for the Israelites comes, their inheritance will be added to that of the tribe into which they marry, and their property will be taken from the tribal inheritance of their ancestors, Numbers 36:4.

During the year of Jubilee, all land was to be returned to the original tribe, Leviticus 25:10 / Leviticus 25:13. This law placed restrictions on the ownership of land moved from one tribe to another when a man married the daughter of another tribe.

The deed of the land was always in the name of the man, and so, during the year of Jubilee, all land was returned to the male descendants of each particular tribe.

Then at the LORD's command, Moses gave this order to the Israelites: what the tribe of the descendants of Joseph is saying is right, Numbers 36:5. This is what the LORD commands for Zelophehad's daughters, they may marry anyone they please as long as they marry within their father's tribal clan, Numbers 36:6.

In reference to the daughters of Zelophehad, their original allotment of land was in the name of their father. Although they married outside their tribe, the land stayed in the name of their father, and so, the inheritance of their land stayed with their father's tribe. It wasn't passed on to the tribe of their husbands, Numbers 36:7-9.

So Zelophehad's daughters did as the LORD commanded Moses, Numbers 36:10. Zelophehad's daughters, Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milkah and Noah, married their cousins on their father's side, Numbers 36:11 / Numbers 26:33.

They married within the clans of the descendants of Manasseh son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained in their father's tribe and clan, Numbers 36:12 / Colossians 1:12.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'The daughters of Zelophehad had obtained an ordinance, which permitted the daughters of an Israelite dying without male issue to inherit their father's property. The chiefs of the Machirites, of whom Zelophehad had been one, now obtain a supplemental enactment, directing that heiresses should marry within their own tribe.'

These are the commands and regulations the LORD gave through Moses to the Israelites on the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho, Numbers 36:13 / Leviticus 26:15.

The Book of Numbers began with Israel in the wilderness, Numbers 1:1, and finishes with Israel being very near the Promised Land, the Jordan River, Numbers 36:13.