

The Book of Numbers

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Numbers Introduction

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My personal introduction to the book of Numbers came under the ministry of R. B. Thieme, Jr. I knew virtually nothing about the Bible and included his 1969 Basic Series as a part of my studies. He referred to a number of unusual books in that series, which included Numbers. Bob went back to this book on a number of occasions. He gave me a good understanding of what this book was about and how it fit into the Bible and into Moses' writings.

Introduction to the book of Numbers: Barthel, a confused commentator, writes: *The fourth book of Moses, Numbers, also does not have much to offer the modern reader. As its name implies, it is a detailed census report of the twelve tribes of Israel, along with a checklist of the dates prescribed for certain sacrifices and festivals, a survey of the boundaries between the grazing grounds allotted to the various tribes, and a complete itinerary of their early migrations. As usual, the unbeliever does not even have a clue.*¹ Much of Numbers, like the book of Leviticus, is a set of direct quotes from God, and therefore has been all but eliminated from the teaching in God's churches, slandered as we have here, and poorly and inconsistently rendered. All of this is unfortunate because the content of the book of Numbers is fascinating and completely relevant to our lives today. The NIV Study Bible calls Numbers *theologically significant*;² which is an understatement. As I write this introduction, my personal notes on this book exceed four hundred pages. This will not be some dusty book that, in your program to read through the Bible in one year, that you spend three hours with, recall little or nothing, and have moved on. We will, for awhile, live and breathe this book, and our lives will be the richer for it.

In the final four books of Moses, there is an interesting checkerboarding which occurs. The Exodus covers a period of eighty years,³ the last forty years of which is covered in detail. The book of Leviticus does not even cover a period of a month. Then Numbers covers a time period of almost forty years and Deuteronomy is only a few days long in its scope. However, its scope in time does not take from the direct quotes from God, which are plentiful in this book.

Theme: The book of Numbers deals with the various responsibilities of the sons of Israel—it is in this book where we see where the various tribes are stationed with regards to the tabernacle; we are given more specifics concerning the service of the sons of Aaron; and the responsibilities of the Levites are delineated in this book, not in the book of Leviticus.

Another theme found in this book is, and I attribute this to Zodiates, is that it was easier for God to get Israel out of Egypt than it was for Him to get the Egypt out of Israel. We will find Israel on many occasions in this book recalling their idyllic life in Egypt, resplendent with great foods (Numbers 11:4–6 14:2–4 20:4–5 21:5). It is as though they had completely forgotten that [the Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously; and they made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and field labor \[with\] all their labors which they rigorously imposed upon them...and the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage and they cried out; and their cry for help because of bondage rose up to God](#) (Exodus 1:13–14 2:23b).

The Title: The Jewish Scribes knew this portion of the Pentateuch as *In the Wilderness* (or, *In the Desert*), which is the Hebrew word B^emîd^ebar (בְּמִדְבָּר) [pronounced *b'meed^e-BAHR*] (?), which is the fifth word in this Numbers 1:1. This is a better description of this book than our name, *Numbers*. *In the Wilderness* gives us a feel for the entire book of Numbers, as this is where the Israelites spent their time. Our English name is derived from the two

¹ Manfred Barthel's *What the Bible Really Says*, p. 127.

² NIV Study Bible, p. 183.

³ It does, of course, reach back further than that, but only in the first few verses.

censuses which were taken in this book (the Greek and Latin designations are similarly named). In the Greek, the title is arithmoi (ΑΡΙΘΜΟΙ), from whence we obviously derive our word *arithmetic*. Although the numbering of the people for battle—the numbering of the first and second generations—was important, still, this is not the thrust of the book. Although the men were numbered for battle at the beginning of the book of Numbers, that generation failed in every respect in battle. The second generation was also numbered and they enter into several short wars with several peoples, emerging victorious. However, the actual numbering of these Israelites is but two significant events in a book which is packed with important doctrines.

The date of writing: The time during which the book of Numbers was written is dependent upon the time of the Exodus. Unfortunately, that time period is hotly disputed, being dated between 1440 B.C. and 1260 B.C. Conservative Biblical scholars lean toward the early date, archeologists toward the later. One renowned archeologist—Nelson Glueck—spent ten years (1930–1940) studying the Negev and the Trans-Jordanian area and his conclusions were that the regions mentioned, particularly in Numbers, were large uninhabited during the time period quoted by conservative theologians. In fact, it is his contention that that area was populated by other than nomads no sooner than 1300 BC. However, his conclusions were based on surface observations and climatic considerations made several thousand years after the fact, making his conclusions scientifically unviable. As I will state later, the climate during that time was very likely different than the climate is now. There were some dry areas and some areas where Israel went without water; however, they went for a long time when that was not an issue. You cannot judge the state of the Mideast then by how it is today. Since Glueck had published his findings, L. Harding has shown that during the Hyksos period of Egypt (1750–1550 BC), there were well-stocked tombs in the area of Amman (known in the Bible as Rabbath-Ammon). Nomads do not tend to bury their dead in tombs, so this calls into question Glueck's stand for the late date of the Exodus⁴.

There are other considerations which point toward the earlier date. Egypt had very little influence outside her realm during this time period (thought to be during the rule of Ikhnaton); which would make sense, since God all but decimated the army of Egypt prior to the Exodus. Furthermore, the run-ins with Midian as recorded in the book of Numbers, is consistent with the historical Midians of this era, but not of any other. During this time period, they did not own much territory, but they exercised control over a lot of territory due to their commercial enterprises which were protected by their military⁵.

As I will state in the chronology section, I believe that Moses did the majority of his final draft while Israel cooled her heels in Kadesh-barnea after their spectacular failure in Numbers 13–14. This would place the date of writing between 1438 BC and 1400 BC. The events herein described would have taken place between 1439 BC and 1400 BC.

Content: We begin the book of Numbers right after the majority of the Mosaic Law had been given and the construction of the tabernacle had been completed. The children of Israel are at the foot of Mount Sinai and will march into the Land of Promise with the intention of taking the land. Along this march, they are continually beset by their own mental attitude sins and lack of trust in God. Once they reach the land, the size of the occupants frightens them and they fall into serious disfavor with God (this is putting it mildly—God will kill every man, twenty years and older with the sin unto death). So Israel settles into a period of stagnation while God kills many of them off. Once most of that evil generation are destroyed, they approach the land once more, traveling in a much more circuitous route (however, in accordance with God's leading). The book of Numbers takes them right to the Jordan Jericho, just due east of their land, poised and prepared for combat.

Allow me to quote from Scofield's introduction: *Redeemed from Egypt, possessing the law, led by Moses, daily looking upon the Tabernacle, and supernaturally guided by cloud and pillar of fire, Israel should have walked triumphantly in in the perfect will of God. Instead they failed repeatedly, as this book records*⁶.

⁴ ZPEB, Vol. 4, p. 462.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ *Scofield's Reference Bible*, p. 166.

Like the book of Leviticus, much of the book of Numbers is quoted directly from God. To the untrained eye, the book of Numbers might seem to be an hodgepodge of events, battles, movement, laws and legal addendums. This may be attributed to the authorship of a man who has recently experienced the events herein found and has more to write about than he has time to write. Nevertheless, the book of Numbers tends to be generally chronological, the ordinances and laws recorded here are often an integral part of the events which were occurring at this time. For instance, the Exodus generation, generation X, were dying off in large numbers due to the sin unto death. Therefore, it would make sense to include here laws which dealt specifically with the uncleanness incurred when coming into contact with a dead body—a very common event of that time period only (Numbers 9).

Like all of the Old Testament, there are incidents and their meanings which are not completely perspicuous until after the death and resurrection of our Lord. The bronze serpent event, the movement toward and promise of the land of Canaan, the budding of Aaron's rod (Numbers 17), the seriousness of the mistake of Moses when he struck the rock twice instead of merely speaking to it (Numbers 20), the horrible infiltration of other religions into the life of Israel (Numbers 25) and the cities of refuge (Numbers 35) all have meaning which go beyond their simple historic recording. All of these events foreshadow and foretell the death of our Lord and His resurrection. Their complete meaning is easy to ascertain today, whereas the full import of these events would be less understood, even by their author, Moses. What I am telling you is that you, an individual Christian with whatever background you have, are in a position to have a better grasp of the events of this book and their spiritual import, guided by the ministry of God the Holy Spirit, than even Moses did, likely the greatest man in the history of Israel, and one of the greatest men in the history of the world.

One of the themes running throughout this book is one of the blessings of obedience to Y^ehowah and the cursing and discipline attendant to disobedience. When Israel listened to and obeyed God's Word, they received protection and blessing (Numbers 21:21–35). When they rebelled against God and His Laws, God punished them (Numbers 21:4–9).

Near the end of the book of Numbers, we not only see the deaths of the faithless Exodus generation, but we read of the unceremonial death of Miriam (she will also be involved in her own little rebellion against God's authority) as well as the death of Aaron, who was revered of the people and who was an honorable man, despite several glaring errors of judgment. Even Moses, in this book, will make one grave mistake—the extent of which, he will not fully understand in his own lifetime—but a mistake, nonetheless, which will keep him from even entering into the Promised Land with those he has led for forty years.

Throughout the Pentateuch, as well as from Joshua to Samuel, the Jews were under a theocracy—that is, they were ruled by God. They did not have a king as did the other nations.⁷ However, there was always someone who stood between the people and God, and, throughout their early history, this was Moses. God began right from the very start to teach that there is a mediator between God and man. We know that Mediator today as Jesus Christ; the Jews had their first mediator in the person of Moses, who, in occupying that office, was a shadow of Jesus Christ.

The more specific content can be found immediately below in the outline.

⁷ This leads me on a marvelous digression here: God has shown the Jews again and again that they cannot seem to choose for themselves God's man for the job. This is why God was reluctant to give them a king. For instance, the Jews chose Samuel, but God chose David. So it only stands to reason, that the Jews, who historically could not recognize God's man, would also be unable to recognize their own Savior: [For He grew up before Him like a tender root-shoot and like a root out of parched ground. He has not beauty or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should treasure Him. He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and he was like one from whom men hide their face. He was despised and we did not esteem Him \(Isaiah 53:2–3\).](#)

The Book of Numbers—a Visual Summary (a graphic); from Bethel Seminary; accessed January 12, 2021.

"IN THE WILDERNESS" NUMBERS DIRECTION

UNBELIEF EVIDENCED BY
GRUMBLING &
REBELLION

KEY vs. 10:29
c. 1445-1405
Wilderness & Transjordan

1. END OF
OLD GENERATION
1-25

2. BEGINNING OF
NEW GENERATION
26-36

9:15-23

MOSES PLEADS
14:19-20

PREPARATIONS
TO ENTER THE LAND
chs. 32-36



MURMURING
11:1

PLAGUE
11:33

MIRIAM & AARON
12

CALEB & JOSHUA
14:6-9

REBELLION

GRIPING

UNBELIEF

MOSES' SIN
20:11-12

BRONZE
SERPENT

21:5-9

God's remedy
JN 3:14



JOSHUA
COMMISSIONED
27:18-20

BALAAM'S
ASS
22:1-41



Outline of Chapter 1: The book of Numbers can essentially be divided into two parts: Part I: Generation X—the Exodus generation. Part II: The Second Generation. Throughout this book, we have a contrast between the fathers and the sons.

Generation X

- I. Israel is organized (Numbers 1:1–10:10)
 - A. A census is taken of the adult members of eleven tribes of Israel (Numbers 1:1–46)
 - B. The Levites are not included in this census and their general duties are given (Numbers 1:47–54)
 - C. The camps are arranged around the tabernacle (Numbers 2)
 - D. The Levites are a gracious gift to the Aaronic priesthood (Numbers 3:1–13)
 - E. The Levites are numbered, all males of a month of age and older and given duties (Numbers 3:14–39)
 - F. The first-born of the Levites are numbered and redeemed (Numbers 3:40–51)
 - G. Specific Levitical responsibilities (Numbers 4:1–33)
 1. Those of the Kohathites (vv. 1–20)
 2. Those of the Gershonites (vv. 21–28)
 3. Those of the Merarites (vv. 29–33)
 - H. The three Levitical families are numbered according to those who will actually serve (Numbers 4:34–49)
 - I. Sets of laws and customs (mostly peculiar to the Age of Israel) (Numbers 5–6)
 1. Concerning defilement (Numbers 5:1–4)
 2. Concerning confessions of sin and restitution (Numbers 5:5–10)
 3. The test for adultery (Numbers 5:11–31)
 4. Nazirite vows (Numbers 6:1–21)
 5. A blessing for Aaron to invoke (Numbers 6:22–27)
 - J. Rituals (Numbers 7:1–10:10)
 1. The leaders of the tribes bring offerings (Numbers 7:1–88)
 2. The lampstands (Numbers 7:89–8:4)
 3. The cleansing of the Levites (Numbers 8:5–26)
 4. The second Passover (Numbers 9:1–15)
 5. Erection of the tabernacle and the guidance of Y^ehowah (Numbers 9:16–23)
 6. The silver trumpets (Numbers 10:1–10)
- II. Israel moves out (Numbers 10:11–19:22)
 - A. The people leave Sinai (Numbers 10:11–36)
 - B. Complaints along the journey (Numbers 11–12)
 1. The people complain to Moses about being tired of manna (Numbers 11:1–9)
 2. Moses complains to leadership God about his position of leadership (Numbers 11:10–15)
 3. God provides leaders to assist Moses, quail for the people and the Holy Spirit (Numbers 11:16–35)
 4. Miriam, and Aaron, complain to Moses about their authority and God disciplines Miriam (Numbers 12)
 - C. The people at the edge of the Land of Promise (Numbers 13–14)
 1. Moses sends spies into the land (Numbers 13:1–24)
 2. The spies bring back their report (the majority report is that the inhabitants of the land are too big for Israel to oppose; the minority report is that the land is just as Y^ehowah said it is; let's go and take it (Numbers 13:25–33)
 3. The people whine and bitch and refuse to go into the land (Numbers 14:1–10)
 4. God threatens to destroy all of the sons of Israel; Moses intercedes; God will just kill those who are twenty years old and up (Numbers 14:11–38)
 5. The Israelites, in a burst of emotion, attack the Amalekites and the Canaanites, and Israel is struck down and forced back to Hormah (Numbers 14:39–45)
 - D. God's marvelous grace; His laws for entering into the Land of Canaan (Numbers 15:1–31)
 1. Offerings to be brought before God upon entering into the land (Numbers 15:1–13)
 2. God's laws apply to the temporary immigrant as well (Numbers 15:14–31)
 - E. An incident of Sabbath-breaking occurs (Numbers 15:32–41)
 - F. Korah's rebellion against Moses and subsequent actions

1. Korah, Dathan and Abiram all point to Moses as the reason that the Jews could not take the land of Promise (Numbers 16:1–14)
 2. Moses and his rebels face off; an earthquake envelops the rebels and lightening kills some of them (Numbers 16:15–35)
 3. The bronze incense burners of the rebels are hammered into sheets and used upon the altar as a sign to succeeding generations (Numbers 16:36–40)
 4. The people complain to Moses because of the harsh treatment of the rebels and God disciplines them with a plague (Numbers 16:41–50)
 5. Aaron's rod that buds is a sign to the rebels (Numbers 17)
- G. Spiritual ordinances (Numbers 18–19)
1. Levitical assistance (Numbers 18:1–7)
 2. The portion of the priests (Numbers 18:8–20)
 3. The portions and obligations of the Levites (Numbers 18:21–32)
 4. The red heifer sacrifice (Numbers 19:1–12)
 5. Personal contact with dead body (Numbers 19:13–22)

The Second Generation (the Generation of Hope)

- I. From Kadesh to Jazer: several victories and two deaths (Numbers 20–21)
 - A. The death of Miriam and the second generation's no-water test (Numbers 20:1–13)
 - B. Negotiations to transverse Edom fail (Numbers 20:14–23)
 - C. Aaron's death (Numbers 20:24–29)
 - D. The Israelites defeat the king of Arad of the Negev (Numbers 21:1–3)
 - E. The long additional journey causes the people to complain; the bronze serpent (Numbers 21:4–9)
 - F. Israel continues to advance (Numbers 21:10–20)
 - G. Victory over the Amorites (Numbers 21:21–32)
 - H. Victory over Og, the king of Bashan (Numbers 21:33–35)
- II. Israel, Balak and Balaam (Numbers 22–24)
 - A. Balak, king of Moab, sends for Balaam (Numbers 22:1–21)
 - B. Balaam goes to Balak (Numbers 22:22–41)
 - C. Balaam blesses Israel instead of cursing her (Numbers 23–24)
- III. The last of Generation X dies (Numbers 25)
 - A. The influence of the cults of the women of Moab and Midian and the subsequent plague (Numbers 25:1–9)
 - B. Phinehas stops the plague (Numbers 25:10–18)
- IV. Preparations for entrance into the Land of Promise (Numbers 26–36)
 - A. The second major census (Numbers 26)
 - B. Inheritance laws (Numbers 27:11–14)
 - C. Joshua is to succeed Moses (Numbers 27:15–23)
 - D. Offerings and vows (Numbers 28–30)
 1. The accompanying bread offerings (Numbers 28)
 2. Special offerings for the seventh month (Numbers 29)
 3. Special voluntary vows (Numbers 30)
 - E. The slaughter of Midian
 1. Preparation (Numbers 31:1–6)
 2. War (Numbers 31:7–10)
 3. The spoil and prey (Numbers 31:11–18)
 4. Purification of the men of war (Numbers 31:19–24)
 5. The division of the spoil (Numbers 31:25–54)
 - F. Reuben and Gad settle in the lands recently conquered (Jazer and Gilead) (Numbers 32)
 1. Their formal request to Moses (Numbers 32:1–5)
 2. Negotiations between Moses and the elders of Gad and Reuben (Numbers 32:6–27)
 3. The agreement is formally ratified in public (Numbers 32:28–32)

4. Gad, Reuben and a portion of the tribe of Manasseh settle their families there (Numbers 32:33–42)
- G. The journey from Egypt to Jordan Jericho is reviewed (Numbers 33:1–49)
- H. The apportioning of the land (Numbers 33:50–36:13)
 1. The general principle of possessing the land (Numbers 33:50–56)
 2. The borders of the land which is to be conquered are given (Numbers 34:1–15)
 3. Delegation of authority of land management (Numbers 34:16–29)
 4. The cities of the Levites (Numbers 35:1–5)
 5. The cities of refuge (Numbers 35:6–34)
 - a. The particular cities (Numbers 35:6–15)
 - b. Differentiating between manslaughter and capital murder (Numbers 35:16–34)
 6. The laws of inheritance of Numbers 27 appended (Numbers 36)

The author of the introduction breaks the book of Numbers into three parts, with a geographical emphasis. I mention this, so that when we get started, you will have some outlines of what is to occur in the back of your mind. Israel is camped at Mount Sinai for the first ten chapters; in the middle of chapter 10, they move toward the land of promise, and encamp for awhile at Kadesh-barnea; and, after thirty-eight years, move toward the east border of the Land of Promise. For the balance of Numbers (Numbers 22:2–36:13), the Israelites remained camped on the plains of Moab.

See notes on Numbers 1:1 in NIV. Incorporate Scofield's note for Numbers 15:1.

I have decided to place this chart in the Introduction, so that it is near the beginning of the book and easy to find. You can refer back to this chart to see where we have been, to gain context, and to see where we are going.

The first section (Leviticus 1–7) of Leviticus are direct instructions by God to Moses.

Chapter by Chapter Descriptions for the Book of Numbers

Chapter	Brief Description
Generation X (the generation that failed):	
1	All adult males (those over twenty) are numbered for Israel's army. The Levites are excepted.
2	The tribes of Israel are arranged around the Tabernacle and organized.
3	Aaron's sons, the duties of the Levites, and redemption of the firstborn.
4	The specific duties of the Kohathite, the Gershonite and the Merarite are given by God. Most of their responsibilities are centered around the moving of the Tabernacle.
5a	God speaks about leper, confession, restoration and a test for adultery is given.
6a	God gives the Nazarite vows and lifestyle.
6b	God blesses Aaron.
7	The Tabernacle is consecrated and offerings to God are made.
8	God speaks of the seven lampstands, the cleansing of the Levites and retirement of the Levites.
9a	The Passover is celebrated in the second year.
9b	The cloud over the Tabernacle.
10a	God on the silver trumpets.
10b	Israel moves out of Sinai.

Chapter by Chapter Descriptions for the Book of Numbers

Chapter	Brief Description
11a	The people complain, wistfully remembering Egypt.
11b	Elders are appointed to help Moses.
11c	God gives the people both quail and a plague.
12	Mariam and Aaron both oppose Moses because of the woman he marries.
13	Spies are sent into Canaan and they return with their report.
14a	The people rebel against God and Moses.
14b	Moses has to intercede for the people of God, but judgment is promised by God.
14c	Israel is defeated in battle.
15a	God gives specific information about sacrifices when Israel enters into the land.
15b	God gives laws on unintentional sins.
15c	One who breaks the Sabbath is executed.
15d	God speaks about tassels on garments.
16	Korah rebels against Moses and Aaron.
17	Buds grow from Aaron's staff.
18	God gives to Aaron the duties of priests and Levites.
19	God speaks to Moses and Aaron about purification rites.
20a	The death of Miriam. The waters of Meribah (and Moses' great failure).
20b	Edom does not allow Israel passage.
20c	The death of Aaron.
21a	Israel's vow concerning Arad; the bronze serpent.
21b	The song of the well.
21c	King Sihon and King Og are defeated.
22	Balaam and his talking ass.
23	Balaam's first and second oracles.
24	Balaam's third and fourth oracles.
25a	The children of Israel engage in Baal worship at Peor.
25b	Phinehas and his passion for the Lord.
The generation of promise:	
26	The census of the new generation is taken.

Chapter by Chapter Descriptions for the Book of Numbers

Chapter	Brief Description
27	The daughters of Zelophehad.
27b	Joshua is to be Moses' successor.
28	God tells Moses about the daily offerings, the Sabbath offerings, the monthly offerings, the Passover offerings and the offerings for the Feast of Weeks.
29	The list of offerings is continued to include the offerings for the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Booths.
30	Moses speaks to the people about vows.
31	Vengeance is taken on Midian.
32	Reuben and Gad decide to settle in Gilead. Israel has not specifically moved into the land of promise yet.
33a	Israel's journey to this point is recorded.
33b	God gives instructions about driving out the inhabitants of Canaan.
34a	God gives the boundaries of the land of Canaan.
34b	The chiefs of the tribes of Israel.
35	Cities which will be given to the Levites. The cities of refuge.
36	The marriages of female heirs.

Chronology: The book of Exodus ends with *Now it came about in the first month of the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was erected* (Exodus 40:17) and the book of Numbers begins in Numbers 1:1 with the date *Then Y^ehowah spoke to Moses in the desert of Sinai, in the tent of meeting on the first [day] of the second month in the second year after the had come out of the land of Egypt.* Although generally in chronological order, later, part way through the book of Numbers, we read: *Thus Y^ehowah had spoken to Moses in the desert of Sinai in the first month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying, "Now, let the sons of israel observe the Passover at its appointed time, on the fourteenth day of this month..."* (Numbers 9:1–3a). We are then told on what day Israel advanced from Mount Sinai: *Now it came to pass in the second year, in the second month, on the twentieth [day] of the month, that the cloud was lifted from over the tabernacle of the testimony, and the sons of Israel set out on their journeys from the wilderness of Sinai. Then the cloud settled down in the wilderness of Paran* (Numbers 10:11–12). Most of the way through the book of Numbers, we are given another date on which to hang our hats: *Then Aaron, the priest, went up to Mount Hor at the mouth of Y^ehowah and died there in the fortieth year after the sons of Israel had come from the land of Egypt on the first [day] of the fifth month* (Numbers 33:38). This tells us that the book of Numbers was not written immediately after these events, and therefore not all of it is in chronological order. However, the beginning and stopping points are clear: the Israelites are exactly one year out of Egypt and the book of Numbers concludes with them at Jordan Jericho (across the Jordan river from Jericho), preparing to enter into the land of Canaan and to dispossess the peoples in it. The book of Deuteronomy begins with: *And it came to pass in the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, that Moses spoke to the children of Israel, according to all that Y^ehowah had commanded him [to say] to them* (Deuteronomy 1:3). So the time span of the book of Numbers is exactly thirty-eight years, ten months. For those of you like myself, who are very linear and very time-oriented, this should appeal to you.

Previous Date	Earliest Date	Latest Date	Next Date
1/1/2 AE ⁸	1/?/2 AE	5/1/40 AE	11/1/40 AE
Exodus 40:17	Numbers 9:1	Numbers 33:38	Deuteronomy 1:3
Numbers 9:1 occurs prior to 1/14/2 AE; however, this passage may refer to a talk which Y ^e howah had with Moses prior to the incidents found in the book of Numbers. However, the date 2/1/2 AE is found in Numbers 1:1 and is an integral part of the incidents recorded in that chapter. So, in any case, Numbers begins at least with the second month of the second year and ends no later than the fifth month of the fortieth year.			

Authorship: This book was written by Moses, most of which was likely recorded during the thirty-eight silent years. You have no doubt heard theories wherein the Pentateuch was supposedly written by four different sets of authors over different period of time, all long after the actual occurrence of the events herein recorded. Numbers in particular is thought to be the product of more than one man because it is so diverse in its content (it is more diverse than any of the other four books of the Torah). However, diversity does not indicate that Numbers had to be written by a team of authors. Moses, apart from any religious connotation, was one of the greatest men of ancient history who, do to his great intelligence and strength of character, was quite diverse in his abilities and interests. He was raised royalty in the castle of Egypt, which would allow for his great background.

One of the primary reasons those who believe in the theory of documentary hypothesis (i.e., that the Pentateuch was the result of four sets of people or groups operating several hundred years apart long after the facts recorded) take such a stand is that they despise prophecy. They do not like the fact that God the Holy Spirit regularly predicted the near and the far future for Israel throughout the books of the Old Testament. It is way too *divinely-inspired* for them. Therefore, it is easier to claim that the predictions were written after they occurred. That way, one does not have to deal with things such as divine inspiration. This hypothesis and its refutation are dealt with in great detail in *Evidence Which Requires a Verdict, Book II* and *A Ready Defense*, both written by Josh McDowell.⁹ A shorter refutation of this flawed hypothesis can be found in ZPEB, Vol. 4, p. 463.

With what I have examined, it is much easier to argue that the writing of Numbers was done by a contemporary with the incidents recorded (i.e., Moses) as opposed to this being written hundreds of years later or redacted several times hundreds of years later. In fact, let me list some of the things which point to a contemporary, and therefore, Mosaic, authorship:

- The length of the genealogical line found in Numbers 3:1–3 extends from Aaron through his sons and goes no further. It reaches backward, in Numbers 3:17–21 to Levi; even an author writing a revision or an updating (i.e., a redactor) would have likely included the sons of Aaron's sons, as the priestly line went through Aaron.
- Numbers 33:2a calls Moses the author of at least that portion of Scripture, as it reads: **And Moses recorded their starting places according to their journeys by the command [lit., mouth] of Y^ehowah.**
- The special instructions concerning Passover and contact with the dead would have special meaning to the second generation, but would mean very little to us (Numbers 9:1–14).
- The careful attention to detail of Numbers 33, the naming of the individual stopping places, and the geography, would be logically the work of a contemporary to these travels. An author of several hundred years later would not have been interested in this material, and the names would have corresponded to the cities of his time, not to areas totally lost to history (roughly half the stopping places in Numbers 33 have no historical impact).

⁸ After the Exodus.

⁹ In fact, let me insert a plug for *Evidence which Demands a Verdict* (book one), or *A Ready Defense*. I personally did not want to fall into a position of intellectual lassitude upon becoming a Christian. Being raised in the hippy generation and being exposed to the Jesus freaks, I had come into contact with enough brain-dead people. I personally did not want to fall into some brainless abyss of fundamentalist Christianity. These books, along with a great many others, gave me the hope that I could become a believer in Jesus Christ and not simultaneously commit intellectual suicide. These two books deal primarily with Christian apologetics, which, I guess you could say, is the study of *is Christianity reasonable?* Another recommendation along these lines is C.S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity*.

- The splitting of the inheritance laws into two disjoint chapters (Numbers 27 and 36) would be logically done by a person who recorded these events as they occurred. An author of a later era would more likely group this ruling into one chapter.
- The events of Korah's rebellion, in Numbers 16, have the feel of an eyewitness, as opposed to an author writing about this hundreds of years later. Similar arguments for an eyewitness recording of events could be made for Numbers 25, 31 and 32.
- The fallibility of Moses, as seen in Numbers 20, includes material that only becomes truly significant after the death of our Lord and the Pauline dissection of same. Since the Pentateuch was in existence long before Paul wrote, this argues for divine authorship, as well as for Mosaic authorship.
- There is a lack of detail in the battles found in Numbers 21:1–3, 21–25 and 33–35, whereas the event of Numbers 21:4–9 is given more attention to detail. As commander in chief, Moses would not go into battle with Israel's troops, therefore what he writes about the actual battles will be quite sketchy (as contrasted to Joshua, who will give details to many of his battles). However, the bronze serpent incident, sandwiched between, is more meticulous with reference to detail, indicating an eyewitness. This would point to a Mosaic authorship. A later author might want to downplay Israel's failure and to boast more of her victories (furthermore, ancient authors would tend to embellish the great exploits of battle, as opposed to neglecting such details, as Moses did).
- Our Lord and almost every New Testament writer refer to Moses as the author of the Pentateuch (Matthew 8:4 19:7 22:24 Mark 1:44 10:3 Luke 5:14 20:28 John 1:17 Acts 3:22 Romans 10:5 2Corinthians 3:15 Hebrews 9:19 10:28—at least to the last four books), without arguing for it, indicating that was the basic belief during their time, and, because of the divine inspiration of Scripture, this clinches it for any believer. ZPEB points out that Jerome, of the Latin Vulgate translation, was the first early theologian to question the authorship of the Pentateuch.

Allow me to quote from the NASB's introduction to the book of Numbers: *Extremes of literary criticism have tried to deny that Moses could have written any of the book and have attempted to partition it into documents dating from several periods of Israel's history. Archaeological discoveries, however, have shown the antiquity of laws, institutions and living conditions described in Numbers. The view that Numbers comes from Moses and the period in which he lived is supported also by the great veneration which the Jews had for Moses and the sacred writings attributed to him.*

There is only one portion of the book of Numbers which is curious with regards to original authorship and that is the incident of Balaam being called by King Balak to curse Israel (Numbers 22–24). Moses was not an eyewitness to this event, yet it contains great detail. Portions of it, particularly Numbers 22:22–35, are very personal to Balaam, yet carry with them a feel of omniscience. The careful quotations of Numbers 23 and 24 sound as though they were recorded on the spot by an eyewitness, or soon thereafter. Here, I have a theory or two, but nothing that I am married to. I would think that Balaam might have chronicled these events, and, when faced with death at the hands of the Israelites several months later, he may have offered these writings as proof of his relationship with Y^ehowah. He was still unceremoniously killed and the writings were likely brought back to Moses. Explanation #2 (which I have even less regard for) is that God the Holy Spirit provided all of the details of this occurrence to Moses directly. Now, don't misunderstand me here: I have no problem with the ability of God the Holy Spirit to provide us with details of things that we have not seen and with details only an eyewitness would have. My problem with this kind of an explanation is that it goes against the general tenor of Scripture. When events out of the author's realm are recorded, there are often asides concerning this (the book of Luke, for instance, was based on several documents and the interviews of eyewitnesses—Luke did not just lock himself up in a room and say, "Okay, God, lay it on me; what happened?") His was a careful compilation of existing historical material and eyewitness reports. Moses shows the same attention to detail, and is wont to quote his sources (Numbers 21:14 and 27 for instance).

In the NASB, The introduction to the book of Numbers reads: *Since the Mosaic period is at least thirteen hundred years before christ, the book in its present form has passed through many hands, and even in the Hebrew itself has been transliterated from one type of script to another. Undoubtedly there are scribal or editorial additions here and there.* The NIV Study Bible reads: *It is not necessary, however, to claim that Numbers came from Moses'*

hand complete and in final form. Portions of the book were probably added by scribes or editors from later periods of Israel's history. This does not mean that this book has been rewritten or revised, but that there have been some changes made to the text. Those who have done so have been appropriately punished, as per Revelation 22:18–19: *I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book; if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.* Moses himself told the people: *"You will not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of Y^ehowah your God, which I command you...Whatever I command you, you will be careful to do; you will not add to nor take away from it."* (Deuteronomy 4:2 12:32). This is God's Word, and God is able to preserve His Word.

The Mishna and the Torah are two of the very best arguments today for the preservation of the original text. The Jews fell into legalism and developed the Mishna, the Midrash and the Talmud, whose intention was not unlike that of a Biblical exegete or a Bible commentary, except that they went off the deep end. Their interpretations of certain passages got incredibly intricate, going far beyond that enjoined in the Torah (the Law) of Moses. However, rather than insert some of these ideas and writings directly into Scripture, this information was passed down in written and oral form, and eventually committed to the writings which the Jewish scholars study today. In the Jewish world, these are given a lesser place than the books of Moses, yet they are studied more. However, the point of mentioning these books, is that rather than go into the actual text of Moses with a lot of farfetched ideas and legalistic commentary, even though some groups of Jews held firmly to these beliefs, these writings have remained separate from the Law and their place in Jewish theology is below that of the writings of Moses, generally speaking—and, again, this is a matter of verbal assent; but the reality is different. In Christianity, we also have great verbal deference given to the Word of God; however, those who place it on a pedestal of honor paradoxically rarely study God's Word nor do they obey God's Word. Also, there is extent today the spiritual gift of textual criticism, which scholars employ to determine what the original text was. My point in all of this is that, yes, there have certainly been changes, additions and adulterations in the text of Moses—on the other hand, these have been very minor, and many of the discrepancies in text will be examined as we study this fantastic book. Bear in mind, that this is God's Word and He has allowed a few adulterations to creep in, and He has given to us people who have devoted their lives to determine what these corruptions are. If you want numbers, let's say that the book of Numbers in the Hebrew is in agreement with the autographs¹⁰ 97–99.9% of the time (and even with that low 97%, much of it is exegetically inconsequential, as we will see).

You must understand that the Scribes who dedicated their lives to copying and recopying the books of Moses so that God's Word would be preserved had a deep and abiding dedication to this task. They did not take their work lightly. Therefore, they would make every attempt possible to achieve accuracy of the original text. ZPEB called the text of Numbers (along with that of the rest of the Pentateuch) *remarkably stable*.¹¹ The variations which we find in the various codices are quite minor (many of these will be pointed out early in the book of Numbers to give you an idea as to how inconsequential and unimportant they are).

Authority and Inspiration: The book of Numbers was authored, like all Scripture, by God the Holy Spirit (I originally wrote *co-authored*, but that does not fully convey what occurs). The writing of Scripture is as much the product of divine inspiration as it is a human accomplishment. It is completely and wholly God's Word and completely and wholly the Word of man. The written Word itself is a picture of Jesus Christ, fully human and fully divine. The book of Numbers is not merely inspired, nor does it contain God's Word, but it is God's Word, whether a quote directly from God or a narrative passage. However, just as I have listed several reasons why Moses is indeed the human author of this book, let me list why this book is the work of God the Holy Spirit:

- God continually speaks directly to Moses (and sometimes to Aaron), so that much of this book is quoted directly from God (Numbers 1:1 2:1 3:40 4:1, 21 5:1, 11 6:1 etc.). In fact, the NIV Study Bible points out

¹⁰ An autograph is a completely accurate copy of the original text.

¹¹ ZPEB, Vol. 4, p. 464.

that the book of Numbers says over 150 times that God spoke to Moses and states this in twenty different ways.¹²

- Moses has given us a general enjoinder not to add or subtract from these Laws given by God (Deuteronomy 4:2 12:32).
- Interestingly enough, no writer of Scripture, Old Testament or New, quotes directly from the book of Numbers. However, several of the incidents found in the book of Numbers are mentioned. The Israelites will be fed quails by God in Numbers and this is confirmed as an historical event in Psalm 78:26–30 105:40. 1Corinthians 10:8–10 carries an admonition against specific mistakes made by the Israelites in the book of Numbers, ending with v. 11: **Now these things happened to them as an example and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.** One of the most quoted New Testament passage, John 3:16, follows after John 3:14, which confirms the historicity of the bronze serpent of Numbers 21: **And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His uniquely-born Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.**" (John 3:14–16).
- Taken as a cohesive part of the Pentateuch, this book is given authority throughout the Old and New Testaments (2Kings 14:6 21:8 Dan. 9:11 Malachi 4:4).
- This book is included in the canon of Scripture without any reservation of any textual critic

Chronology of the Writing of Numbers: Now there is another sort of chronology which should be examined and that is the chronology of the writing of this book. Numbers 1:1 compared with Numbers 9:1 indicates that not everything is in exact chronological order; however, when examining the dates (Numbers 1:1 9:1 10:11 20:1 33:3, 38) which are found in this book, there is every indication that it is essentially written in chronological order. Furthermore, an examination of the incidents in comparison to the movement of the troops in Numbers 33 gives no contradiction in time of movement nor does it give rise to any serious argument for the contents of Numbers to be in some order other than chronological.

In Numbers 1–19, Moses was quite involved with the following activities: the movement of the Israelites through the wilderness area; the census taking; overseeing the removal of the tabernacle and the re-establishing of the tabernacle at every stage of movement; recording the Law as given him by Y^ehowah; speaking to the people as to the contents of the Law; dealing with revolt after revolt after revolt and with the grumbling and complaining that Generation X seemed to do on a regular basis (we only see a small portion of their degeneracy in God's Word); and, Moses was involved quite actively in the court system, hearing some cases as the originated and others on appeal. What I am saying to you that during this period of a year or so, Moses had no time whatsoever to himself. During the thirty-eight silent years, although Moses has most of these responsibilities, the tabernacle is remaining in one place, there is no troop movement, there are no spies to send out, the census taking has been completed, and Moses seems to have no close involvement with the thousands of people who were dying like flies in the desert—so it is my opinion that he compiled most of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus and the first half of the book of Numbers during this stay at Kadesh-barnea. Much of this material had already been written down—chiefly the Laws as given to Moses by Y^ehowah. Moses had been told on several occasions to write this down. **Then Y^ehowah said to Moses, "Write this in the book as a memorial and place it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under the heaven." (Exodus 17:14). And Moses wrote down all the words of Y^ehowah (Exodus 24:4a). Then Y^ehowah said to Moses, "Write down for yourself these words, for in accordance with these words, I have made a covenant with you and with Israel." (Exodus 34:17). And Moses recorded their starting places according to their journeys by the mouth of Y^ehowah, and these are their journeys according to their starting places (Numbers 33:2).** I would think that at Kadesh-barnea, he would have a little more time to reflect, insert historical events, and to essentially complete the bulk of the Pentateuch. Because Moses will not enter the land, there was a time period when the troops of Israel attacked and defeated the Amorites, Midian and the King of Bashan; then the tribes of Reuben, Gad and a portion of Manasseh settled them women and children east of the Jordan. This gave Moses some time to finish the last portion of the book of Numbers and to prepare several farewell sermons to the children of Israel, generation 2.

¹² p. 187.

It is possible that at this point, if not earlier, Moses used an amanuensis, although he did not necessarily need one. Furthermore, the likely candidate for that position would have been Joshua, son of Nun. This would explain the smooth transition at the end of Deuteronomy from the message of Moses to the death of Moses, which, as every author points out, Moses could have written prophetically, but which was likely written by Joshua, God's next choice to rule over Israel. Making copies of the Law was enjoined by the time of Deuteronomy 17:18, where the king was to sit on his throne and...[write for himself a copy of the Law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests.](#)

Geography: The book of Numbers begins at the foot of Mount Sinai after God has essentially given Moses most of the Laws and regulations by which the people of Israel are to live. From there, they will travel up north along the Gulf of Aqaba, probably along a river feeding into the gulf. At some point, much more north than is shown on most Bible maps, they will cut over almost due west to Kadesh-barnea. From there, they will send out spies to examine the land and plan for their first invasion. As the spies are looking over the land, the sons of Israel advance to Hormah and beyond. However, the report of the spies will frighten the people, and they will refuse to go into the land, to take it. Then, after they realize that they have screwed up and that God will discipline them for it, they go up to invade the land, apart from Y^ehowah, and they are repulsed and pushed back to Hormah. They stop and spend thirty-seven silent years in Kadesh-barnea [where perhaps they had left their women and children prior to the invasion?]. After most of the Exodus generation has died out, they travel east and then south, to where the Gulf of Aqaba began in those days (which I believe was much farther north than it is today). They had hoped to go north on the King's Highway, but the Edomites would not give them passage. There are two routes which they may have taken from here. I believe that they went west again, came up on the west side of Edom, and cut across just south of the Salt Sea. However, it is possible that they moved due east or due south, got out of the border of Edom that direction, and then proceeded north up along the east side of Edom's borders. They traveled outside the east border of Moab, cut across between Moab and Ammon, and got into an altercation with the Amorites who had recently taken a large chunk of land away from Moab (this is the land east and northeast of the Salt Sea). Then Israel got into an altercation with Og, the king of Bashan, and they conquered the land directly north of the Amorites and took a rather large chunk of land in that invasion. At the end of Numbers, they will stand perched, across the Jordan River from Jericho, from where Moses will deliver his famous Deuteronomic [pronounced *DOO-ter-uh-NOME-ik*] messages to the new generation of Israelites (the book of Deuteronomy) who are soon to invade the land of Canaan to take it (the book of Joshua)¹³.

In this book of Numbers, we will spend more time traveling through the Sinai Peninsula and through the various deserts than we do anywhere else in the Pentateuch. I think that it is important to note that the promised land today is under discipline from God. It is filled with wars and racial and religious strife and intense violence. To look at pictures of Palestine, one does not see a land flowing with milk and honey, but rather a lot of desert area interspersed with some patches of green and disputations. A little water can transform any area, as can the lack of water (Los Angeles is a prime example of what a little influx of water can do to a desert region). At least during the time of the exodus and the early settling of the promised land, there was a lot more rain and a much greater agricultural prosperity than we see today. In fact, I believe that the rain was much more plentiful for perhaps a time period of close to two thousand years. Areas which have water in them only during the rainy season probably had flowing water in them throughout the year. When Abraham and Moses looked out onto the promised land, they saw a land which was lush, and green and inviting, with great agricultural prosperity, unlike it is today. The gulf of Aqaba probably extended at least another 60 miles north, with water flowing between the Salt Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba, at least during the rainy season, if not year round. When I first studied the Pentateuch, instead of the standard translation, *the wilderness of Sinai* or *the wilderness of Zin*, I instead rendered it *the desert of Sinai* and *the desert of Zin*. However, my studies have caused me to conclude that this was not the desert region then that it is today. The translation *wilderness* would include some desert regions (obviously a problem at times when the Jews faced the *no-water* test), but it also included some areas which were basically uninhabited and sometimes difficult to transverse.

¹³ I need a map right here, showing other possible routes, other possible geographies, and how the sons of Israel really did travel.

There are two basic views that I am aware of when it comes to the forty-year wanderings of the sons of Israel. Most authors and commentaries take the stand that the Jews wandered in the desert for forty years. I personally believe that they transversed the wilderness, moving toward Sinai and then toward the land of Canaan in a space of about 2–3 years; then they camped in Kadesh-barnea, because there was no need for them to go anywhere. They were not going into the land. God had begun to kill off large numbers of the exodus generation. They had to deal with the deaths of two million people over a period of thirty-seven years. This would preclude a lot of travel because (1) they had no reason to travel anywhere; (2) they had no place to travel to; and (3) they were constantly busy with the rituals of coming into contact with dead people (cleansing from contact with dead people, although it does not play a prominent part in the book of Numbers, it is still given more time than one would think under normal circumstances). And, finally, (4) the Israelites did not just *wander* the desert. **Now on the day that the tabernacle was erected the cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the testimony, and in the evening it was like the appearance of fire over the tabernacle, until morning. So it was continuously: the cloud would cover it, and the appearance of fire by night. And whenever the cloud was lifted from over the tent, afterward, the sons of Israel would then set out; and in the place where the cloud settled down, there the sons of Israel would camp. At the mouth of Y^ehowah the sons of Israel would set out, and at the mouth of Y^ehowah, they would camp; as long as the cloud settled over the tabernacle, they remained camped. Even when the cloud lingered over the tabernacle for many days, the sons of Israel would keep Y^ehowah's charge and not set out (Numbers 9:15–19).** Do you follow this? The children of Israel did not wander aimlessly. There is no indication of that anywhere in Scripture. This passage, along with Exodus 13:21–22 and 40:34–38, tell us that God guided them every step of the way. At Kadesh-barnea, after their terrible failure, they had no place to go. God had no reason to lead them anywhere. **"Therefore, I was disgusted with this generation. And said, "They continually went astray in their thinking [lit., heart]; and they did not know My ways. As I swore in My wrath, they will not enter My rest."** (Hebrews 3:10–11 Psalm 95:10–11). What do you think is going to happen? Moses is going to get wanderlust and get up some morning and say, "Let's go for a forced march out into the desert." Do you think the sons of Israel will leave an area of their basic necessities and go back into the wilderness? Do you think that God is going to lift the cloud from above the tabernacle and commence to lead these sons of Israel on a wild goose chase, so to speak? Y^ehowah suddenly says, "I'm bored with us just being here, let's go wander aimlessly until you die." Many of this generation died en route to Kadesh-barnea and many of them will die when they go to enter the land once again from the east side between the two seas. However, many of them will simply die unceremonious deaths out there in the wilderness area of Kadesh-barnea. There is at least partial agreement with this viewpoint by David W. Kerr, Th.M., who wrote the introduction to the book of Numbers. He wrote *While these are usually described as years of wandering, it is fairly clear that the people lived south of Canaan proper, partly in the area known as the Negev, not far from Kadesh Barnea, for about thirty-seven years. During this time the tabernacle was the focal point of civil as well as religious life, since it was here that Moses carried out his administrative duties. It may be assumed that the people followed the domestic pursuits of nomads, living in tents, pasturing flocks in the semi-arid steppes. This circumstances required special divine provisions of food and water*¹⁴.

One quite interesting note, however, is that I cannot recall anything being said about the disposal of the bodies of their dead or rituals concerning burials and memorials. They came out of Egypt where the preservation of some of their dead bordered on fanaticism, however this topic is not even covered in the books of Numbers and Leviticus. My personal thought here is that they kept a large fire burning outside the camp and basically dumped the bodies onto this fire. This may seem rather callous to you, but we have an average of approximately 150 people dying every single day. That is a lot of dead people to bury and that requires a lot of room for burial plots (and, as I mentioned, burial is never discussed in these books).

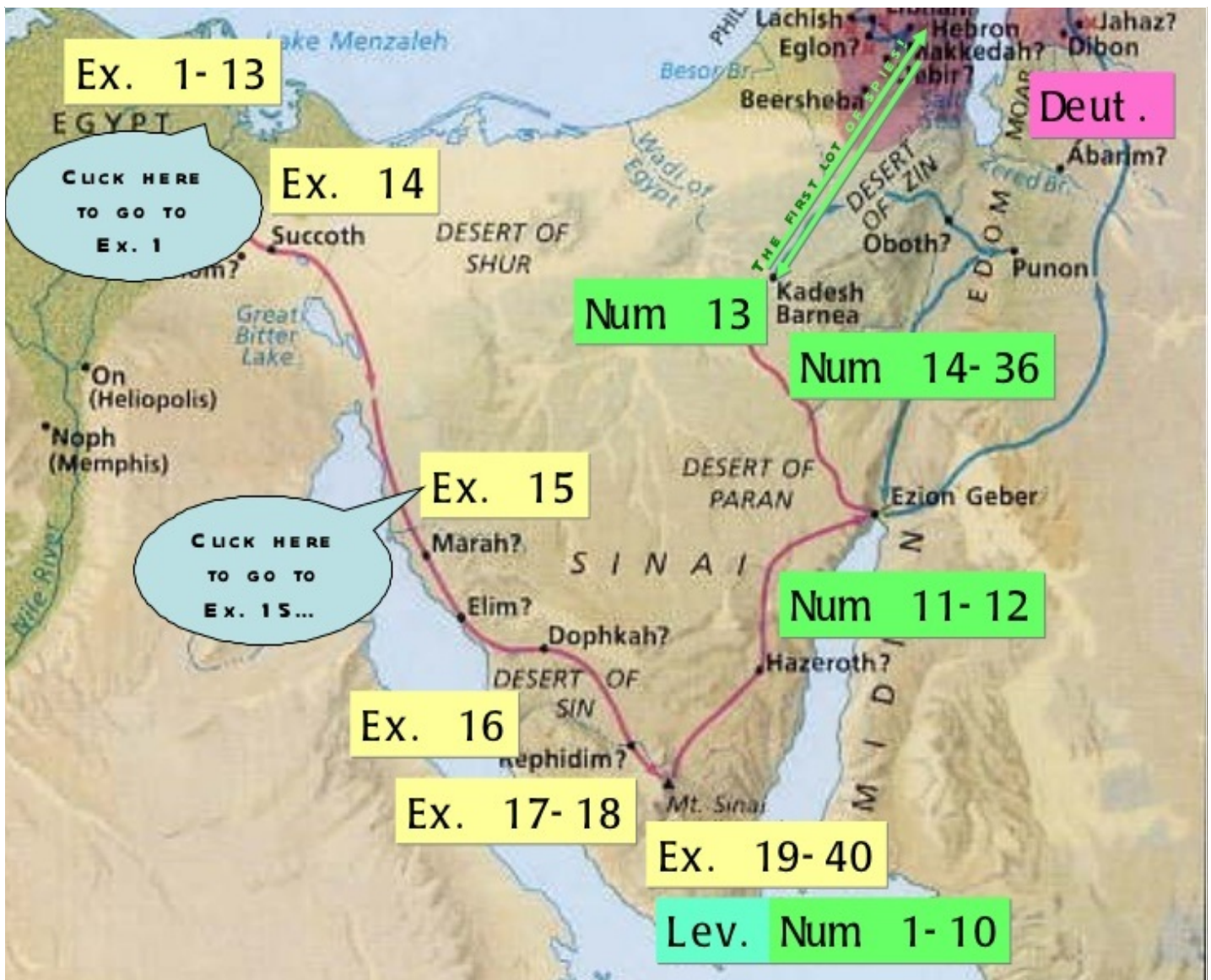
The Census: One of the greatest contemporary objections to the book of Numbers is the census. The book of Numbers is uncompromisingly consistent in this regard, but many object to this because how could two million people wander in the desert for forty years and live? (6) The Israelites did not wander throughout the desert for forty years; they traveled in the desert for a period of a year and a half, and then another half a year, (roughly). They cooled their heels in Kadesh-barnea for most of those forty years. (7) The climatic conditions of that area were more favorable at that time toward a large, nomadic group. (8) Too many of us picture the water coming from

¹⁴ NASB, p. 132.

the rock, an incident which took place in Exodus and was repeated for the second generation in the book of Numbers, to look like maybe a hose was in the middle of the rock. This idea is based upon pictures that we have seen in children's Bible stories. Obviously, two million thirsty people and their cattle cannot get enough water from a garden hose. Try standing at a water fountain behind two hundred people and see how fast your thirst is assauged. Much worst to be standing behind two million people. The first we can comprehend; the large number of the second makes this totally incomprehensible. However, this was not a garden hose-sized stream of water; Psalm 78:20 105:41 both indicate that quite a river was almost an immediate result of this miracle. (9) It was clearly miraculous for such a large group to be fed and clothed during this time in the wilderness. Our God is a God of the miraculous. Many of the miracles pertaining to the preservation of these people are not even recorded in Scripture, and others are alluded to very briefly (e.g., Moses said to the second generation: "[And I have led you forty years in the wilderness; your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandal has not worn out on your foot.](#)"—Deuteronomy 29:5). For these two generations of Jews, miracles were almost commonplace. They had no excuse for their unbelief.

For these reasons, you may read of many authors hedging on the numbers in Numbers; and some make some very good arguments, reducing the population of Israel to a hundred thousand or two, as opposed to two million. But ultimately, we have a problem that their numbers do not add up; they are not consistent. And such an increase in population from a group of seventy in Egypt would have not only not been noteworthy (as recorded in Exodus 1:7, 20), but, if anything, would indicate moderate growth at best.

Final Comments: Numbers, like much of the Old Testament, has been all but ignored in our day of apostasy; however, this is a great book which demands our attention, earns our interest and gives us invaluable historical data on the people of Israel.



The Location of the Sons of Israel During Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy (a graphic); from slideshare.net; accessed June 20, 2016.

Numbers 1

Numbers 1:1–54

Outline of Chapter 1:

- vv. 1–3 The command by God for Moses to take a census
- vv. 4–17 The heads of the tribes to assist with the census
- vv. 18–46 The census is taken
- vv. 47–54 The responsibilities of the Levites

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

Introduction: In Numbers 1 we have the first of two censuses taken in this book of Numbers, so aptly titled. The original plan was for Israel to immediately go into the land and conquer it. However, they will fail a major test at Kadesh Barnea and God will cause them to cool their heels in the desert for an additional forty years until the generation that God loathed dies out.

The Command by God for Moses to Take a Census

And Yahweh spoke to Moses in the desert of Sinai, in the tent of meeting, on the first of the second month, in the second year of their going out of the land of Egypt, saying, [Numbers 1:1]

Moses has been careful to give us a place and date in order to fix this point in history. He was a methodical person in this way. We were able to determine to the month when the book of Leviticus was written. According to Numbers 33:38, the scope of this book is 38–39 years. This is thirteen months after Israel began her exodus from Egypt and Aaron will die on the first day of the fifth month in the fortieth year. That makes this book 38 years and four months in its duration between Numbers 1:1 and 33:38. Since the book of Deuteronomy begins on the first day of the eleventh month of the fortieth year, Numbers spans 38 years and 9 months. During this time we will see this evil generation struck down by God.

The NIV points out that dating the time of their wanderings using the anchor of the Exodus is very similar to the Christian quoting dates as being A.D. or B.C. (before or after the year of our Lord). Our Lord's death is the great act of deliverance of our souls, just as the deaths of the first born of the sons of Egypt marked the great act of deliverance of Israel from Egypt.

Here, the Jews had packed up and began to wander through the desert. They had been at the foot of the Sinai mountains, which they had walked along. This was their second time to break a semi-permanent camp. After escaping the Egyptians, they had been traveling through the desert of Sinai and they parked themselves in front of Mount Sinai while Moses received the beginning of the Law from Yahweh (Exodus 19:1–2). They broke camp after the golden calf incident (Exodus 32) and moved along the mountains of Sinai (Exodus 33:1–6). However, they remained near to these mountains (Leviticus 27:34).

"Take a census [lit. head] [or, take a head count] of all the congregation of the sons of Israel by their families, by the house of their fathers, in the number of names—every male by their head by head. [Numbers 1:2]

Take is the masculine singular, Qal imperative of *nâsâ'* (נָסַא) [pronounced *naw-SAW*], a word with 46 renderings in the Authorized version, among them: exact, ease, contain, cast, lade, marry, respect, suffer; it means, as we have seen, *to lift, to take, to bear, to carry*. Moses bears the primary responsibility, so this verb is in the singular, even though Aaron will assist him and the twelve to be mentioned will also assist them. What Moses is *to take* is a *rô'sh* (רֹאשׁ or שָׂאָר) [pronounced *rohsh*] and it is from an unused root that means *shake*, and it generally means

head as the head is easily shaken. The closest we have to this idiom is *take a head count*. This idiom is reasonable since the word *head* has a variety of meanings (e.g., *top, chief, front, choicest, leading division*). We find a different word for *head*, used twice, at the end of this verse.

Moses is about to go into battle with the surrounding Gentiles and needs to know his strength.

"From a son of twenty years and upward, every one going out [to] war in Israel, you will number them by their armies, you and Aaron; [Numbers 1:3]

The census is to be taken of all the men *able* to go to war. The word translated *war* is tsâbâ' (צָבָא) [pronounced tsaw^b-VAW], and it can mean army, war, or warfare. It is usually translated *hosts* in the KJV, which often is sort of a pansy translation, as you do not realize that we are speaking of *war and warfare* when you hear the word *host*. Most people seem to think that we are speaking of a band of angels carrying harps and singing sweet hymns. However, the picture is more of a huge army of angels ready to do battle. In this context, we are speaking of all the sons of Israel who are draft age—who are old enough to go to war. God has clearly given the promised land to Israel; however, they will have to take it, which includes going to war against the present inhabitants. This census is not taken for the purposes of siple information or for taxation purposes, but to determine how many men will be going to war. This is a military census. We will see this phrase another thirteen times throughout this chapter.

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The Heads of the Tribes to Assist with the Census

"And with you there is a man for each tribe, a man he [is] a head to the house of his fathers. [Numbers 1:4]

Moses and Aaron will not personally count each and every person. There will be a man with them from each tribe of Israel, a head to the house of his fathers. That is, there will be a tribal leader from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. There is not word for *each* in this verse, although some translations have the word *each* occur twice. What is here twice is the word for *man*, 'îysh (אִישׁ) [pronounced eesh].

"And these [are] the names of the men who stand with you: [Numbers 1:5a]

God does not even expect Moses and Aaron to choose the men who would stand for the tribes—God chooses these men Himself. This way, there is no popularity contest, no one can resent Moses or Aaron because he was not chosen, and, most importantly, the correct people can be chosen to head up a tribe.

"For Reuben—Elizur [pronounced el-ee-TSOOR], son of Shedeur [pronounced shed-ay-OOR]; [Numbers 1:5b]

Bên (בֵּן) [pronounced bane] simply means *son*, a word that we find nearly 5000 times in the Old Testament. What we have here is essentially our equivalent of a first and last name: Elizur ben Shedeur—the primary difference being that the father's name is his father's first name. The tribe of Reuben would be on the south saide of the camp (Numbers 2:10). Although Reuben was the eldest of the sons of Jacob, he was called unstable as water—that is, he would take the form of the container that he was poured into—which means that he did not have the characteristics of a leader. He was not the oldest son to whom his brothers could look up to. Therefore, when offerings were presented by the leaders of the tribes, Elizur ben Shedeur was fourth, not a reflection upon his own character, but upon that of his *father*, Reuben. Elizur's name means *God of [the] rock*; his father's name means *spreader of light*. By their names, they both appear to have some doctrine and some divine viewpoint.

However, other than God choosing him for this important position of leadership, he did not distinguish himself in any way apart from the rest of the heads of Israel and is therefore not mentioned apart from the other tribe

leaders. All five references to him in the book of Numbers are the same standard five references given to the other eleven.

"For Simeon—Shelumiel [pronounced *shel-oo-mee-ALE*], son of Zurishaddai [pronounced *tsoo-ree-shad-DAH-ee*]; [Numbers 1:6]

He and his tribe also camped on the south side with the tribe of Reuben (Numbers 2:12). He was the fifth to offer sacrifices to God (Numbers 7:36) and also was not distinguished from the other tribal leaders. His name means *peace with God* and his father's name means *rock of [the] Almighty*. In the Apocraphyl book of Judith, his name is listed as Salamiel, son of Salasadai (Judith 8:1).

"From Judah—Nahshon [pronounced *nahk-SHONE*], son of Amminadab [pronounced *am-mee-naw-DAWB*]; [Numbers 1:7]

Although the tribes are being given in order of the birth of their fathers, Nahshon ben Amminadab is one of the pre-eminent of the tribal leaders. Amminadab means *people of liberality* and Nahshon means *enchanter*. He was in the line of David (Ruth 4:20–22 1Chronicles 2:10), in the legal line of our Lord (Matthew 1:4) and in the matriarchal line of our Lord (Luke 3:32). Furthermore, you may note with the pronounciations that we do not have a correct transliteration here (as well in several other cases). It appears as though the KJV set the standard for the names and most Bible translations go with it. Nahshon's sister became the wife of Aaron (Exodus 6:23). Due to his position in the line of Christ and the fact that his father, Judah, did eventually become a person with character, he gave his offering first of all (Numbers 7:12). He is also listed first when his tribe takes a position on the East side in Numbers 2:3. Furthermore, he took the lead when their troops set out (Numbers 10:14). It just goes to show that you can name your children whatever you want, but unless they are well-trained and use their own volition properly, there is no telling how they will turn out.

"For Issachar—Nethaneel [pronounced *neth-an-ALE*], son of Zuar [pronounced *tsoo-AWR*]; [Numbers 1:8]

Nethaneel means *given of God*, and Zuar means *small*. Although Nethaneel's name occurs several times throughout the Old Testament, the one spoken of here finds his name only five times, where we would expect it to be. Nethaneel gave his offering on the second day.

"From Zebulun—Eliab [pronounced *el-ee-AWB*], the son of Helon [pronounced *chay-LONE*]; [Numbers 1:9]

Eliab means *God of [his] father*. His offering was on the third day.

"From the sons of Joseph: from Ephraim—Elishama, the son of Ammihud; from Manasseh—Gamaliel, the son of Pedahzur; [Numbers 1:10]

Elishama [pronounced *el-ee-shaw-MAW*] means *God of Hearing*, Ammihud [pronounced *am-mee-OHOOD*] means *people of splendor*, Gamaliel [pronounced *gam-lee-ALE*] means *reward of God*, and Pedahzur [pronounced *ped-aw-TSOOR*] means *a rock has ransomed*. Elishama shows up in the standard five places of prominence plus one: we find out in 1Chronicles 7:26–7 that he is the father of Nun and the grandfather of Joshua. There are six other people in the Bible with his name. Gamaliel sounds as though he should have been a man of great spiritual growth; however, he is found in the typical five places (Numbers 1:10 2:20 7:54, 59 10:23).

"From Benjamin—Abidan, son of Gideoni; [Numbers 1:11]

Abidan [pronounced *ab-ee-DAWN*] means *father of judgement* (or, *of judge*) and Gideoni [pronounced *ghid-o-NEE*] means *warlike*. Although Benjamin was the youngest, Abidan made his offering on the ninth day.

"From Dan—Ahiezer, son of Ammishaddai; [Numbers 1:12]

Ahiezer [pronounced *akh, ee-EH-zer*] means *brother of help* and Ammishaddai [pronounced *am-mee-shad-DAH-ee*] means *people of [the] Almighty*. This man, other than being chosen of God, does not individually distinguish himself.

"From Asher—Pagiél, son of Ocran; [Numbers 1:13]

Pagiél [pronounced *pag-ee-ALE*] means *accident of God* (for those who thought that birth control and planned parenting is relatively new) and Ocran [pronounced *ak-RAWN*] means *muddler*. With names like these, you want these guys to come in first; however, Pagiél shows up in the appointed five portions of God's Word.

"From Gad—Eliasaph, son of Denel; [Numbers 1:14]

Eliasaph [pronounced *el-yaw-SAWF*] means *God [is] gatherer* and Denel [pronounced *deh-oo-ALE*] means *known of God*. He gave his offering on the sixth day (Numbers 7:42); but it only goes to show that you can give children all the advantages in the world (both he and his father have spectacular names), and it means nothing without the proper training.

"From Naphtali—Ahira, son of Enan; [Numbers 1:15]

Ahira [pronounced *akh-ee-RAH*] means *brother of wrong* (or, *brother [is] evil*) and Enan [pronounced *ay-NAWN*] means *having eyes*. Ahira was the last one named and the last to give an offering (Numbers 7:78). The sons younger than he are Joseph and Benjamin, yet he is named last.

"These [are] those summoned [by popular demand] of the company, princes of the ancestral tribes [or, tribes of their fathers]; they [are] heads of the thousands¹⁵ of Israel." [Numbers 1:16]

There is a word here found only three times in the Old Testament. Qârîy' (קָרִי') [pronounced *kaw-REE*] is found only here and in Numbers 16:2 26:9. Strong's #7148 BDB #896. The corresponding verb is qârâ' (קָרָא) [pronounced *kaw-RAW*] which we find many times throughout the Bible; it means *to read, to proclaim, to summon, to call*. In order to differentiate this from the words *called*, and *elected*, we will translate the adjective *summoned [by popular demand]*. Strong's #7121 BDB #894. It is an organic process where these are practically self-proclaimed leaders and men of reknown who stand before their tribe and are popularly affirmed.

Even though I have spoken poorly of these men, it is only in comparison to the others who were also chosen. This is the Exodus generation, a generation which God spoke of as loathing. Moses will live beyond the time of even these men, the leaders of their generation; God will strike these men down in the desert along with their brothers and sons.

And Moses (and Aaron) took these men, who were designated by name; [Numbers 1:17]

I placed Aaron's name in parentheses because the verb *took* is in the masculine singular. Nâkab (בָּכַב) [pronounced *naw-KA^{BV}*] means *pierce*, and you may be wondering about this, not seeing this word in this verse. Nâkab (בָּכַב) [pronounced *naw-KA^{BV}*] is in the Niphal (passive) perfect, meaning that they received the action of the verb. We have seen this verb in Leviticus 24:11, 16, when a young man *blasphemed* (or, *pierced*) the name of Yahweh (similar usage in Numbers 23:8, 25 Job 3:8 5:3). Strong #5344 BDB #666. We will see this word to mean a literal piercing in 2Kings 12:9 18:2. However, here it refers to someone who has been *designated* or *distinguished* or *appointed* to a position. What I would like to find, but cannot, is this word used to bore a hole in the ear of a slave which *earmarked* the slave for lifetime service. That is a different verb entirely (found only in Exodus 21:6).

¹⁵ Some translations render this word *clans*; we will deal with this particular word later in the chapter.

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The Census Is Taken

And all the congregation they assembled on the first of the second month, and they declared their births by thir families, by the house of thir fathers, in the number of names from a son of twenty years and upward, by their polls; [Numbers 1:18]

The leaders were all chosen and the men were all assembled all on the same day. Even their leaders did not do a head count, per se, but they assembled in groups and gave the number of males who were twenty years and older from each family. The point is that this was done in an organized fashion.

As Yahweh had commanded Moses; and he numbered them in the desert of Sinai. [Numbers 1:19]

God gave Moses the command on the first day of the second month and Moses has everything organized and going on the very same day. Verse 19 summarizes the action and the next 33 verses provide the details. A similar census was taken of the new generation in Numbers 26.

So there were: the people of Reuben, Israel's first born—their births by their families, by the house of their fathers, its numbered ones in the number of names by their polls, every male from a son of twenty years and upward, and everyone of draft age [lit., going out to the army]. [Numbers 1:20]

Only the males would be numbered here. The word for *families* is mish^opâchâh (משפחה) [pronounced *mish-paw-KHAWH*] and it means *family, clan, class (of people), species (of animals), or sort (of things)*. Strong's #4940 BDB #1046.

Their numbered ones, for the tribe of Reuben, are 46,500 [lit., six and forty thousand and five hundred]. [Numbers 1:21]

One of the theories which I have been exposed to is that there were fewer people of Israel at this time. The key is the word 'eleph (אֶלֶף) [pronounced *EH-lef*], which has several meanings. Strong's #505 (and #504) BDB #48. I first of all examined similar words to make certain that a change in the vowel point would not change to meaning to a similar and also applicable word. No such changes would have likely occurred without rendering this verse nonsense. This word appears to be rendered *a thousand* most of the time, in some places only that rendering would make sense, such as Exodus 18:21 and 25, which read, in part, *leaders of thousands, leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties, and leaders of tens* (see also Exodus 38:25, 29 1Samuel 29:2). The other meaning is *families* (however, this is not the same word as we find used for families in the previous verse), which rendering is not found near as often (BDB gives the passages Judges 6:15 1Samuel 10:19 Micah 5:2). This same word is translated *kine* or *cattle* in Deuteronomy 7:13 28:4, 18, 51; the reference is to the large number of cattle rather than to the animals themselves. In these few passages where this word could mean something other than *a thousand*, it could be translated *a thousand* without obliterating the meaning. However, there are a significant number of passages where a rendering other than *one thousand* would not make sense. Therefore, whereas I have no emotional attachment to the actual physical number of Jews included in this census, meaning it doesn't make any difference to me whether there are 200 or 2,000,000 Israelites, I think that we, purely on linguistic grounds, need to stay with the traditional numbering of 46,500. Furthermore, the context of this verse seems to indicate a head count (recall Numbers 2:2: *Take a census of all the congregation of the sons of Israel, by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, every male, head by head*). The Septuagint offers a slightly different number: 46,400 (for those who are wondering, the words for *four* and for *five* are very different in the Hebrew). Therefore, the rendering *one thousand* is supported by the Hebrew, by the context and by the Septuagint.

There are a lot of men who hold to 'elep not meaning a thousand and most of that is based upon the fact that this is an incredibly large army; the total population of Israel would have had to have been at least two million, which is a lot of people to be meandering through the desert. We have already seen that God has provided them with a bread-like substance, manna; and meat (quail)—which in itself is miraculous, and even more so considering the large numbers that are being fed. We have examined the growth of the Israelites from 70 to two million and have shown that it is possible; there would just had to have been large families and a population explosion, which the Bible alludes to (Exodus 1:7–12). For your own study, the NIV Study Bible gives several possible explanations in fairness in its introduction to Numbers, but you can tell that the author of Numbers, like myself, still lean toward the large numbers presented here. Gleason L Archer in the *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*¹⁶ also lists some of the alternate theories and in more detail. He goes into more detail. With those who hold to the alternate theories, their beginning point is not God's Word, but human logic. They begin with the fact that it is unlikely for two million people to live in the desert for forty years, a valid objection; and list a variety of reasons; along with the point of view that for 70 people to become two million in 400 years, that would be a sizable population explosion. From that standpoint, they rationalize what is found in the Scriptures to fit their viewpoint. I might as well give the alternate theories. We have looked at the concept that 'elep could mean *families, clans*, but this linguistically does not stand, nor is this the way you take a census to determine how many men you have. In determining your own military strength, you do not settle for one division of 147 families as an accurate census. The other theory is that 'elep could be the word 'allûp, which means *chiefs*, so that we are listing the number of chiefs and the number of enlisted men. Our problem here is fivefold: (1) once or twice a mistake like this can be made with the vowel points, but every single time is not likely; (2) this would put us in disagreement with all the codices; (3) we would have several instances of too many chiefs and not enough Indians—for instance, Manasseh would have 32 chiefs and 300 Indians; (4) the Israelites are just now being counted in preparation to be mobilized for war—no one has even begun to think about military training and officer selection; such a view is premature; and, (5) this interpretation does not jive with all of the other numbers given in the Bible.¹⁷ For those who wish to read an author who does hold to one of these theories dogmatically, there is Robert W. Fair's *A More Scientific Approach to More Biblical Mysteries*, pp. 71–78; however, it all boils down to all the Biblical evidence lands on the side of the large numbers and all the human viewpoint lands on the side of smaller numbers.

Some additional points which Gleason brings out: even if you reduce the number of people, 30,000 draft age men in the desert would die from thirst and hunger as easily as 600,000.

In regard to the sons of Simeon—their births by their families, by the house of their fathers, its numbered ones in the number of names by their polls, every male from a son of twenty years and upward, everyone going out to the army— [Numbers 1:22]

The second-born was numbered next.

Their numbered ones, in regard to the tribe of Simeon: 59,300. [Numbers 1:23]

The Septuagint's number is the same here.

In regard to the sons of Gad—their births by their families, by the house of their fathers, its numbered ones in the number of names by their polls, every male from a son of twenty years and upward, everyone going out to the army— [Numbers 1:24]

Gad was numbered next.

Their numbered ones, in regard to the tribe of Gad: 45,650. [Numbers 1:25]

¹⁶ pp. 129–134.

¹⁷ In order to get the numbers to jive, there would have had to have been corruptions in four other portions of the Old Testament, and there could have been no surviving manuscripts or codices which are uncorrupted—this is highly unlikely.

The Septuagint places Gad much later in this list.

In regard to the sons of Judah—their births by their families, by the house of their fathers, its numbered ones in the number of names by their polls, every male from a son of twenty years and upward, everyone going out to the army— [Numbers 1:26]

Judah was numbered next.

Their numbered ones, in regard to the tribe of Judah: 74,600. [Numbers 1:27]

The Septuagint's number is 74,600.

In regard to the sons of Issachar—their births by their families, by the house of their fathers, its numbered ones in the number of names by their polls, every male from a son of twenty years and upward, everyone going out to the army— [Numbers 1:28]

The NASB renders this as:Of the sons of Issachar, their genealogical registration by their families, by their father's households, according to the number of names from twenty years old and upward, whoever *was able to go out to war*.

Their numbered ones, in regard to the tribe of Issachar: 54,400. [Numbers 1:29]

The Septuagint's number is the same.

In regard to the sons of Zebulun—their births by their families, by the house of their fathers, its numbered ones in the number of names by their polls, every male from a son of twenty years and upward, everyone going out to the army— [Numbers 1:30]

Zebulun was numbered next.

Their numbered ones, in regard to the tribe of Zebulun: 57,400. [Numbers 1:31]

The Septuagint's number is the same.

In regard to the sons of Joseph: in regard to the sons of Ephraim—their births by their families, by the house of their fathers, its numbered ones in the number of names by their polls, every male from a son of twenty years and upward, everyone going out to the army— [Numbers 1:32]

Note that Joseph's tribe is counted as two. Joseph, due to his great spiritual character, received the double portion normally afforded to Reuben, the firstborn. Furthermore, the tribe of Levi is not included in this census, so the double portion of Joseph gives us the magic number *twelve* for the number of tribes.

Their numbered ones, in regard to the tribe of Ephraim: 40,500. [Numbers 1:33]

The Septuagint's number is the same.

In regard to the sons of Manasseh—their births by their families, by the house of their fathers, its numbered ones in the number of names by their polls, every male from a son of twenty years and upward, everyone going out to the army— [Numbers 1:34]

Manasseh was numbered next.

Their numbered ones, in regard to the tribe of Manasseh: 32,200. [Numbers 1:35]

The Septuagint's number is the same. Note that together, Joseph's children number 72,500, which is the second largest family (after Judah) and almost twice the size of some families, such as Benjamin and Reuben.

In regard to the sons of Benjamin—their births by their families, by the house of their fathers, its numbered ones in the number of names by their polls, every male from a son of twenty years and upward, everyone going out to the army— [Numbers 1:36]

Benjamin was numbered next.

Their numbered ones, in regard to the tribe of Benjamin: 35,400. [Numbers 1:37]

The Septuagint's number is the same. It is after this verse that the Septuagint inserts the tribe of Gad.

In regard to the sons of Dan—their births by their families, by the house of their fathers, its numbered ones in the number of names by their polls, every male from a son of twenty years and upward, everyone going out to the army— [Numbers 1:38]

Dan was numbered next. This also puts us back on track with the Septuagint.

Their numbered ones, in regard to the tribe of Dan: 62,700. [Numbers 1:39]

The Septuagint's number is the same.

In regard to the sons of Asher—their births by their families, by the house of their fathers, its numbered ones in the number of names by their polls, every male from a son of twenty years and upward, everyone going out to the army— [Numbers 1:40]

The tribe of Asher was numbered next.

Their numbered ones, in regard to the tribe of Asher: 41,500. [Numbers 1:41]

The Septuagint's number is the same.

In regard to the sons of Naphtali—their births by their families, by the house of their fathers, its numbered ones in the number of names by their polls, every male from a son of twenty years and upward, everyone going out to the army— [Numbers 1:42]

The tribe of Naphtali was numbered next.

Their numbered ones, in regard to the tribe of Naphtali: 53,400. [Numbers 1:43]

The Septuagint's number is the same.

These [are] those numbered, whom Moses numbered—and Aaron, and the princes of Israel, twelve men, each was for the house of his fathers [Numbers 1:44]

This is a testimonial to authority and organization, as we got an accurate census taken of over 600,000 men.

And they are, all those numbers of [lit., all a numbering of] the sons of Israel, by the house of their fathers, from a son of twenty years and upward, everyone going out to the army in Israel; [Numbers 1:45]

By the numbers given, this tells us that they had a reasonable arithmetic system, not exactly based upon ten digits, but similar to that; furthermore, it should be obvious that they have rounded these numbers off to the nearest fifty men.

All those numbered are 603,550. [Numbers 1:46]

This is the same number given in the Septuagint. The numbers given in the Massoretic text do add up to 603,550, whereas the numbers for the Septuagint do not. All of these men, except for Joshua and Caleb, will die in the desert. The total number of men conscripted for the army is mentioned here, in Numbers 2:3–32 and Exodus 12:37, which reads Now the sons of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth—about 600,000 men on foot aside from children. A more exact figure is named in Exodus 38:26, a portion of which is evidently an addendum to that passage. This indicates that every figure throughout these portions of Scripture became corrupted—including the codices—or that they stand unabashedly as simply a very large number of Israelites. Recall that Yahweh had made a promise to Abraham that his seed would be as the sand of the sea and the stars of the heavens—and since Abraham had but one son, God had to take up the slack somewhere.

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The Responsibilities of the Levites

But the Levites, for the tribe of their fathers, have not numbered themselves in their midst; [Numbers 1:47]

This is the first place where we will see that God will treat the Levite differently than the other tribes. This was not the case in the book of Leviticus. The general responsibilities of the Levites will be stated in Numbers 3:6: "Bring the tribe of Levi near and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him."

For Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 1:48]

Just as in the Book of Leviticus, Yahweh speaks directly to Moses. In the book of Numbers, also a neglected book of the Bible, this particular phrase or one like it occurs over 150 times in 20 different ways. As the NIV Study Bible says, from Numbers 1:1 to the last verse, Numbers 36:13, this book is filled with direct quotations from God spoken to Moses.

"Only the tribe of Levie you will not number, and you will not take their census in Israel [lit., their heads you will not take up in the midst of the sons of Israel]; [Numbers 1:49]

The reason why God is numbering those in Israel, but not numbering the Levites is the Levites will not be involved in the war other than on a spiritual level. The other sons of Israel were numbered because they will be going to war against the cancerous heathen in the land.

"And you are to authorize [or, appoint] the Levites over the tabernacle of the testimony, and over all its articles [or, vessels], and over all that it has; they will bear [or, carry] the tabernacle, and all its articles [or, vessels], and they serve it; and round about the tabernacle, they encamp. [Numbers 1:50]

As you will recall, the tabernacle was a temporary tent and the articles of furniture were all designed so that they could be carried. The Levites were the ones authorized by God to do the moving of the furniture. Their camping about the tabernacle was to guard it. Since the tables of the Law were kept inside the ark, which was inside the tabernacle, this structure became known as the tabernacle of the testimony.¹⁸ The Law was kept in the Ark of the

¹⁸ This can all be verified by Exodus 25:16, 21–22 26:33–34 31:18 32:15 34:29 40:20.

covenant, and it would be reasonable to assume that Levites were also used to make copies of the Law, as well as to make copies of other documents and other literature. See the **Doctrine of the Levites—not finished yet!**

"And in the journeying of the tabernacle, the Levites take it down, and in the encamping of the tabernacle, the Levites raise it up; and the stranger who is coming near is put to death." [Numbers 1:51]

Here the specific responsibilities of the Levites is given; also, a prohibition of the contact of Gentiles with the tabernacle. In order to have fellowship with God, you must be born again. There is no relationship with God apart from being regenerated. In those days, that meant becoming a Jew. However, in this context, the stranger is anyone who is not a Levite. The Israelites, due to the holiness of God and their own natural depravity, could not approach the tabernacle except as specified in their sacrifices and offerings.

And the sons of Israel have encamped each by his camp, and each by his standard, by their armies. [Numbers 1:52]

Chânah (חָנָה) [pronounced *khaw-NAW*] properly means *to incline*; it is used primarily *to pitch a tent, to encamp*. Strong's #2583 BDB #333. This word was used in the past three verses: the Levites were to encamp (Qal imperfect—the Qal is the normal stem of a verb and the imperfect looks at the action of the verb as unfinished or in progress) about the tabernacle; the tabernacle itself is *pitched (or, setup)* (Qal infinitive—the infinitive is similar to our infinitive where the verb is preceded by *to*); and the sons of Israel have pitched their tents (Qal perfect—the action is looked upon as one event or as an event or action having been completed) near their tribe, near the standard, or the flag of their tribe.

And the Levites encamp round about the tabernacle of the testimony and there is no wrath on the company of the sons of Israel, and the Levites will keep charge [or, will take custody, or will take the responsibility] of the tabernacle of the testimony. [Numbers 1:53]

Encamp is in the Qal imperfect. The Levites camping about the tabernacle are a protection that Yahweh does not bring His wrath down upon the Israelites. There is a play on words which we do not see in my English renderings; it could read: and the Levites will guard what is to be guarded; this is the Qal perfect of *shâmar* (שָׁמַר) [pronounced *shaw-MAR*], which means *guard, keep, watch, preserve*; Strong's #8104 BDB #1036. Then there is *mish^omereth* (מִשְׁמֶרֶת) [pronounced *mish^e-MEH-reth*] and it refers to something which someone has been given charge of or responsibility for. It is that which is guarded or taken charge of. Strong's #4931 BDB #1038. God would designate only certain people to be able to have contact with the tabernacle; everyone else had to only observe.

And the sons of Israel did according to all the Yahweh had commanded Moses; so they have done. [Numbers 1:54]

The word for *do* is *âsâh* (עָשָׂה) [pronounced *gaw-SAWH*] which means *to do, to make, to construct*. Strong's #6213 BDB #793. It is found twice in this verse, first in the Qal imperfect, which describes the individual responsibilities involved in obeying God's Word; and then it is in the Qal perfect which tells us that they had completed God's commands. Recall that they are only a year plus one month out of the land of Egypt and they have seen many miracles and they have seen the execution of several people. They Jews can handle obedience over a short term, but in the long haul, their old sin natures will win out and God will have to strike them down in the desert.

Numbers 2

Numbers 2:1–34

Outline of Chapter 2:

- Vv. 1–2 Yahweh's command to Moses
- Vv. 3–9 The eastern division
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- Vv. 18–24 The western division
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- Vv. 32–34 A census summary and the obedience of the Israelites

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

Introduction: Numbers 2

Yahweh's Command to Moses

And Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, [Numbers 2:1]

What other book testifies to God speaking to man?

"The sons of Israel will encamp each man [lit. a man] by his standard, with ensigns of the house of their fathers; they will encamp facing from a distance from round about [or, on every side of] the tent of meeting. [Numbers 2:2]

Facing from a distance from is the prefixed preposition *mîn* and the preposition/adverb *neged* (נָגַד) [pronounced *NEH-ged*]. *Mîn* is a preposition which involves separation and *neged* means *in front of, opposite to, in the sight of*. Strong's #5048 BDB #617. The Levites were to be close to the tabernacle, thus protecting the other Israelites from God's wrath (Numbers 1:53); so this short word tells us that the Israelites were to face the tabernacle and camped a distance away from it. We find a similar usage in Genesis 1:16 Deuteronomy 32:52. A more interesting usage of the same combination can be found in Deuteronomy 28:66 and 2Kings 2:15 (spiritual separation or aloofness is the key in these passages).

Each tribe had an ensign or a banner, different from the other tribes; and each trio of tribes had a standard which they rallied around. The ensign was carried at the head of each tribe and possibly for each subdivision of a tribe; the standard was a much larger field sign. We are not told in the Bible what these flags looked like (if they were flags; however, they were probably more similar to Egyptian standards than our modern flags. Egyptian standards were made of wood and/or metal and the top was shaped like some sacred entity. Freeman gives us some various pictures in his books and at the end of a stick there might be a carved bird or an animal, the head of a Pharaoh or some other symbol.

Jewish tradition, which is not always correct (and rarely has a basis in Bible doctrine) has it that each banner was the color of whatever stone on the high priest's breastplate represented that particular tribe. I don't particularly but that nor is it important, as it is not covered in the Bible. There is also a tradition the the standard of Judah had the figure of a lion on it; Reuben the figure of a man; Ephraim, the figure of an ox; and Dan, the figure of an eagle (to correspond with Ezekiel 1:10 and Revelation 4:7). This is more reasonable and satisfying than the first tradition, but, again, has no basis in fact¹⁹.

¹⁹ NIV Study Bible, p. 189.

The direction of God in our lives is pervasive. It encompasses every portion of our lives. For a new Christian, this is frightening, and for those who are unsaved, it might even put you off. However, God's desire for us is the absolute best and he works in every aspect of our lives. Here he organizes the way that the Israelites will camp. Up until this time, they have just been traveling as a huge swath of men, women and livestock in a width of several miles without any sort of real organization. **For our God is not God of confusion...let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner** (1Corinthians 14:33a, 40b).

The Eastern Division

"And those encamping eastward towards the sun-rising [are] the standard of the camp of Judah, by their companies [lit., armies]; and the prince of the sons of Judah [is] Nashon, son of Amminadab; [Numbers 2:3]

This chapter will be very much like the portion of the previous chapter which was very repetitious. Yahweh will position these men around the camp. You would expect the leading division to be Reuben, as he was the first-born, but it is Judah. "Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you. Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; and as a lion, who [dares] wake him up? The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet until Shiloh comes, and to him will be the obedience of the peoples." (Jacob speaking to his sons in Genesis 49:8–10). Reuben was the eldest and he should have been in the lead of the first division. However, when the brothers plotted against Joseph and were about to kill them, Reuben, as the first-born, should have put a stop to it. He meekly offered that they should not kill Joseph rather than take a stand as a leader (Genesis 37:18–30). The next two oldest, Levi and Simeon, viciously killed every man in a city to avenge the rape of their sister, whereas there was but two guilty parties, the rapist, and his overindulgent father, Shechem (Genesis 34). This left Judah, who, although not perfect (Genesis 38:1–24), he could at least admit to being wrong and he did not continue with his injustice against Tamar (Genesis 38:25–26). What these brothers did, did not determine the future of their tribe; however, it set up a pattern or precedence for their progeny. I know you are wondering about the Levites and how we see this pattern in them...fast forward to the time of our Lord and examine the priests in the gospels—Jesus was persecuted and physically attacked by them on several occasions (Matthew 16:21 Mark 11:27 14:55–56 John 18:19–24). As we have seen, Judah will be the line of Christ.

"And his army, and their numbered ones: 74,600 [lit., four and seventy thousand and six hundred]. [Numbers 2:4]

This is the same figure found in Numbers 1:27, the population of the men in this tribe who were of draft age.

"And those encamped by him [are] the tribe of Issachar; and the prince of the sons of Issachar [is] Nethaneel, son of Zuar; [Numbers 2:5]

Notice that our order is different than we had in Numbers 1.

"And his army, and its numbered ones: 54,400. [Numbers 2:6]

God has certain men that He would like to function together as a unit.

"The tribe of Zebulun; and the prince of the sons of Zebulun: Eliab ben Helon; [Numbers 2:7]

Notice that the sentence structure is not as repetitive. Judah, Issachar and Zebulun are all sons of Leah.

"And his army, and its numbered ones: 57,400. [Numbers 2:8]

So far, all of this is in accord with the Septuagint.

"All those numbered of the camp of Judah: 186,400 [lit., a hundred thousand, and eighty thousand, and six thousand, and four hundred] by their armies; they journey first. [Numbers 2:9]

The wording here makes it even less likely that *thousand* really means *chiefs* or *clans*. Judah will take the lead in most of the movement and most of the wars. Our Lord will come from the tribe of Judah.

The Southern Division

"The standard of the camp of Reuben: southward; by their companies [lit., armies]; and the prince of the sons of Reuben: Elizur ben Shedeur; [Numbers 2:10]

God has grouped the Israelites into three brigades to make a division.

"And his army, and their numbered ones: 46,500 [lit., six and forty thousand and five hundred]. [Numbers 2:11]

This number agrees with chapter 1 and with the Septuagint.

"And those encamped by him: the tribe of Simeon; and the prince of the sons of Simeon: Shelumiel ben Zurishaddai; [Numbers 2:12]

Reuben was the lead brigade on the south side.

"And his army, and its numbered ones: 59,300. [Numbers 2:13]

The numbers again check with Numbers 1 and the Septuagint.

"The tribe of Gad; and the prince of the sons of Gad: Eliasaph ben Reuel;²⁰ [Numbers 2:14]

Reuben, Simeon and Gad are grouped together. Reuben and Simeon were sons of Leah and Gad was a son of her handmaid, Zilpah.

"And his army, and its numbered ones: 45,650. [Numbers 2:15]

Again the numbers check.

"All those numbered of the camp of Reuben: 115,450 [lit., a hundred thousand, and one and fifty thousand, and four hundred and fifty] by their armies; they journey second. [Numbers 2:16]

Notice, as has been the pattern, all of those numbered in Reuben, Simeon and Gad are combined and the total checks, as it should. When the Israelites move out, they will move as three divisions, with Judah's triad in front, Reuben's triad second, Ephraim's third and Dan's will be in the rear.

The Responsibilities of the Levites

"And the tent of meeting, the camp of the Levites in the midst of the camps as they encamp; so shall they set out each in position standard by standard. [Numbers 2:17]

²⁰ *Deuel* in many of the Masoretic texts and so found in the Samaritan, Pentateuch and the Vulgate, as the Hebrew *r* (ר) and the Hebrew *d* (ד) are easily confused. The majority of the Masoretic manuscripts read *Reuel*.

The book of Numbers begins to give the tribe of Levi, a son of Leah, a place in God's plan. They were to surround the tabernacle and protect the surrounding troops from being in too close of contact with a holy and just God. We have become so informal in our thinking about God that some men, seeing our Lord Jesus Christ would go right up to Him and shake His hand and introduce themselves. Maybe they would say a nice thing about our Lord. We have lost sight of the fact that we are corrupt in His sight; our sins caused the worst pain and suffering ever known to man to our Lord; our old sin nature and our personal sins keep us afar from a holy and just God. God is not some namby pamby, sit out on the lawn with all of us holding hands and smelling flowers. He is the perfect God of the universe who demands no less than perfection and our sins sentence us to no better than everlasting torment in separation from Him. God cannot come into contact with sinful man. The Levites formed a barrier from God's Presence and the Israelite.

The Western Division

"The standard of the camp of Ephraim by their companies [lit., armies]—westward [lit., on the sea-side]; and the prince of the sons of Ephraim: Elishama ben Ammihud; [Numbers 2:18]

When compass directions are given, they are always given in terms of Israel. *East* is often described as the *sun rising* and *west* is often described as the *sea* as the Mediterranean Sea is West of Israel. The word found here is *yâm* (יָם) [pronounced *yawm*] and it does not mean *west* strictly speaking, but *sea*. We find this word used in Genesis 1:10, 22, 26, 9:2 as well as a half dozen references to compass direction (Genesis 12:8 13:14 28:14 Exodus 10:19 26:22, 27, etc.). Exodus 10:19 has *yâm* used twice and translated both *sea* and *west*. In fact, until 1Chronicles 12:15, there is no specific word for *west* in the Hebrew. Strong's #3220 BDB #410.

However, here, the people have not been in the land and its lay out is unknown to them. This tells us that a great Sea is on their west side for this to make sense to them. West of them is the Gul of Suez, which they have crossed over. They do not realize that east of them is the Gulf of Jordan. Now, God is speaking and God is consistent; therefore, He will refer to that which is on the west by using the word *sea*. However, this would not have made any sense to the Israelites unless they also had a sea on their western side at this time. One of the unfortunate things when a translation is made to help clarify what is being said is that some things are lost. His helps us place the Jews on the map. Tradition has them on the Sinai Peninsula and this verse is consistent with that.

Ephraim led the division on the West side. Jacob gave precedence to Ephraim over Manasseh (Genesis 48:13–20). **But Israel stretch out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, crossing his hands, although Manasseh was the first-born...When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on Ephraim's head, it displeased him; and he grasped his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. And Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this one is the first-born. Place your right hand on his head." But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know; he also shall become a people and he also will be great. However, his younger brother will be greater than he, and his descendants will become a multitude of nations."** Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh (Genesis 48:14, 17–19, 20b).

"And his army, and their numbered ones: 40,500 [lit., forty thousand and five hundred]. [Numbers 2:19]

If these numbers are incorrect, it is amazing that we do not have hundreds of contradictory manuscripts.

"And by him: the tribe of Manasseh; and the prince of the sons of Manasseh; Gamaliel ben Pedahzur; [Numbers 2:20]

Manasseh and Ephraim were the two sons of Joseph.

"And his army, and its numbered ones: 32,200. [Numbers 2:21]

Our numbers check again.

"The tribe of Benjamin; and the prince of the sons of Benjamin: Abidan ben Gideoni; [Numbers 2:22]

Jacob was in love with Rachel. He served seven years as a slave, thinking that he was serving this time for her. So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her (Genesis 29:20); one of the most romantic verses of the Bible. His father-in-law to be deceived him and gave him Rachel's sister instead and they had sex before Jacob realized that she was not Rachel. Jacob served Laban, his evil father-in-law, for another seven years and took Rachel as his second bride. Rachel produced two sons, Joseph and Benjamin and Joseph later had two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. It is Benjamin, Ephraim and Manasseh who form the third division of the Israelite army.

"And his army, and its numbered ones: 35,400. [Numbers 2:23]

God is very careful to inform us of the census figures. There is a reason for that.

"All those numbered of the camp of Ephraim: 108,100 by their armies; they journey third. [Numbers 2:24]

The division is then totaled, not as a check to Moses or Aaron, but as a check for us reading God's Word.

The Northern Division

"The standard of the camp of Dan: northward; by their companies [lit., armies]; and the prince of the sons of Dan: Ahiezer ben Ammishaddai; [Numbers 2:25]

The fourth and final division was led by Dan.

"And his army, and their numbered ones: 62,700. [Numbers 2:26]

Dan had one of the larger populations; he was a son of Bilhah, Rachel's maid.

"And those encamped by him: the tribe of Asher; and the prince of the sons of Asher: Pagiël, ben Ocran; [Numbers 2:27]

Asher was one of the two sons of Zilpah, Leah's maid.

"And his army, and its numbered ones: 41,500. [Numbers 2:28]

The size of Asher's regiment was about average.

"The tribe of Naphtali; and the prince of the sons of Naphtali; Ahira ben Enan; [Numbers 2:29]

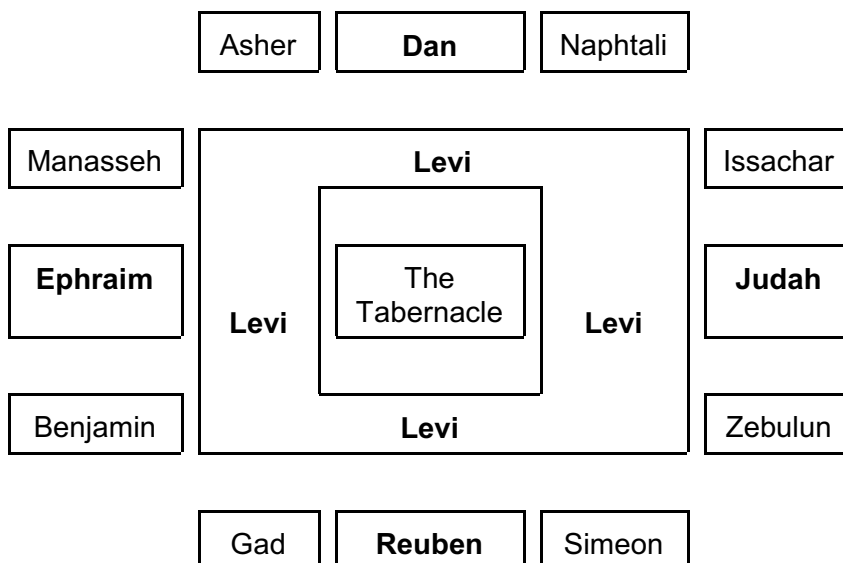
Naphtali was the only other son of Bilhah, Rachel's maid.

"And his army, and its numbered ones: 53,400. [Numbers 2:30]

Our numbers check once again.

"All those numbered of the camp of Dan: 157,600 by their armies; they journey second. [Numbers 2:31]

Again, God provides us with a checking figure, rubbing our noses in the fact that there were over 600,000 men in the army of Israel, and over two million Jews that God guided through the desert, an extraordinary miracle.



A Census Summary and the Obedience of the Israelites

"The are those numbered of the sons of Israel by the house of their fathers; all those numberdd of the camps by their armies: 603,550. [Numbers 2:32]

This shows the positioning of the troops around the tabernacle

Again, this figure matches the one from Numbers 1 and is a sum of the four divisions of Israel's army.

"And the Levites have not numbered themselves in the midst of the sons of Israel, as Yahweh had commanded Moses. [Numbers 2:33]

This tells us that we did not see the entirety of Yahweh's orders to Moses.

"And the sons of Israel did according to all that Yahweh commanded Moses; so they have encamped by their standards, and so they have journeyed, each by his families by the house of his fathers. [Numbers 2:34]

The Israelites went from total disarray wandering through the desert to a very orderly camp, which is quite impressive for a group of this size. For all intents and purposes, they have been a mob (witness the golden calf incident or the murmuring prior to the water coming from the rock). Our armed forces have found out that the first step in molding a fighting unit out of a bunch of undisciplined, egocentric young men, is to first instill discipline and orderliness.

You may be wondering throughout this chapter why was this recorded. It is fine that God wanted the sons of Israel to assemble in a certain way and group together in a certain way, but why the repetitive details? Why number the four divisions? Why even name the number of men if this has already been done in the previous chapter? Whereas this is certainly not anyone's favorite passage, it shows us that God has a specific plan for our lives to which we must adhere for blessing. There are no alternatives and the Christian life is not a seat of the pants experience. God has a direct will within which we will find our greatest earthly blessing. Often what is emphasized in teh Christian life is what we cannot do and how much fun we are missing. What is missed is that in following God's Word, we enter into the greatest earthly life that we can have. God gives us His very best here on earrth and then gives us even greater blessings in eternity. However, I have strayed fromthe questions which I raised. What is most important is that we have some checks and balances to the numbers found in Numbers 1. God knew that during our time period, many authors and many Christian men would take issue with the numbers presented in the first chapter of Numbers. However, we are given even more checks and balances in this chapter. They are groups by three's and those populations are summed; then the final summation comes at the end.

Furthermore, we will have a census of the next generation and it will be reasonable, considering the numbers that we have here. God is telling us that he has done the impossible. He has fed and protected and guided over two million people in the desert between Egypt and Israel, a miracle which is as great as those which accompanied the exodus from Egypt. God knew there would be skepticism so he just rubbed it in verse after verse. Each verse has more men than human viewpoint scholars would like to see, but these people were sustained in the desert because God is able. We have an analogous situation in the first chapter of Genesis. So there is no confusion as to the time period alluded to, over and over in Genesis we have a literal 24-hour day presented repetitively in language that can only be understood to mean six literal days. Those who hold to the day--age theory skim that chapter lightly, as those who hold to the various theories concerning a small population here skim the verses lightly.

Numbers 3

Numbers 3:1–51

Outline of Chapter 3:

- Vv. 1–4 The Aaronic priesthood
- Vv. 5–10 Yahweh sets aside the Levites to serve Aaron and his sons
- Vv. 11–13 The Levites will replace the first-born as dedicated to Yahweh
- Vv. 14–39 Census of the Levites and duties assigned to the Levites
- Vv. 40–51 Redemption of the first-born

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

Introduction: Numbers 3 covers the Levite tribe, their genealogy and their background.

The Aaronic Priesthood

And this is the genealogy of [lit., these are the generations of] Aaron and Moses in the day of Yahweh's speaking with Moses near mount Sinai: [Numbers 3:1]

Tôwl^edôth (תולדות) [pronounced *tohl^e-DOTH*] means *generations* and usually refers to the account of a man and his descendants (as BDB puts it). Strong's #8435 BDB #410. The writer is not the person at the top of the list, but he is often either at the end of the list or he is the second to the last. In the book of Genesis, the author generally began with a far ancestor and worked his way down to himself. *Genealogy* is a good modern translation (Young uses the word *births*). We are used to seeing the emphasis upon Moses and when Moses and Aaron are named in Scripture, Moses comes first. However, in v. 2, we will examine the line of Aaron, so he takes precedence in this verse.

This is a title of sorts, one which we have seen repeated several times throughout the book of Genesis. What this often connoted was there was a new author and he was about to cover his own genealogical information which would end with himself or with his sons.

And these [are] the names of the sons of Aaron: the first-born [was] Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar; [Numbers 3:2]

You will notice that for the past book plus two chapters, we have been reading one long extended quote from God to Moses or to the people of Israel. It was certainly given over various points in time for the past several weeks and now Moses records some personal information. This begins in this verse and continues in v. 17.

These²¹ [are] the names of the sons of Aaron, the anointed priests, whom he ordained as priests [lit., whose hand he has filled to function as a priest]. [Numbers 3:3]

When one receives a responsibility or is ordained into an office, this is spoken of as *filling one's hand*. The last word is the verb cognate for the noun *priest*; we have no easy way to translate this word except *to perform the duties of a priest, to function as a priest, to perform priestly functions*. Just bear in mind that is one word.

²¹ Most codices read *And these*.

And Nadab died—Abihu also [lit., and Abihu]—before the face of Yahweh, in their approaching with strange fire before Yahweh, in the desert of Sinai, and sons they had not; and Eleazar—Ithamar also—acts as priest before the face of Aaron, their father. [Numbers 3:4]

Moses has written an awful lot of material and realizing that one may just pick up this portion of God's Word in the middle and begin reading, Moses gives a brief history of what happened to the first two sons of Aaron (Leviticus 10:1–2).

Yahweh Sets Aside the Levites to Serve Aaron and His Sons

And Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 3:5]

Unlike before, this will be a relatively short quotation.

"Cause the tribe of Levi to approach and cause it to stand before Aaron, the priest, and they will serve him. [Numbers 3:6]

Aaron only had two sons and there was far too much to do with the sacrifices to think about doing anything else. They did not have the time to move the articles of furniture and the rest of the tabernacle. Therefore, God will assign certain responsibilities to the Levites. There is a great many things about the Levite tribe in this book and this book ought to have been named *Leviticus*.

"And they will guard his commission and [the] commission of the whole congregation before the face of the tent of meeting to serve [or, work] the labor of the tabernacle. [Numbers 3:7]

We have a pair of cognates here; *they will guard his guarding*, and *to serve the service* or *to work the work of the tabernacle* is what is actually said in the Hebrew. All of Israel had a responsibility before Yahweh—they may not have known the full extent of it quite yet, but they did have spiritual responsibilities as well as the sons of Aaron had specific spiritual responsibilities and the Levites were to assist in these. These will be specified:

"And they will take responsibility for [lit., keep or guard] all the furniture [lit., vessels] of the tent of meeting, and the responsibility [or, charge] of the sons of Israel to labor in the labor of the tabernacle. [Numbers 3:8]

Again we have a general and a more general responsibility: they are to take charge or take responsibility of the furniture of the tabernacle. That is, it will need to be cleaned, moved, repaired, etc., and they are to see to those responsibilities. In doing so, they will be doing the work of the tabernacle.

"And you will give the Levites to Aaron and to his sons; in their being given, they are given to him.²² [Numbers 3:9]

We have a repetition of the verb for *give*, *set*, *place* both times in the masculine plural, Qal passive participle. The Qal is the common stem; the passive voice means that God places them before Aaron or gives them to Aaron. They repetition of the verb means that this is a solemn gift of great importance. **"And observe that I, even I have taken your brothers the Levites from among the sons of Israel; they are a gift to you, given to Yahweh, to perform the service for the tent of meeting."** (Numbers 18:6). We will see more spiritual responsibilities dropped into the lap of the Levites in Numbers 4 and Deuteronomy 17 and 31. In Deuteronomy 31, we will review the responsibilities of the Levites.

²² Most of the Masoretic texts read *to him*; there are a few, along with the Septuagint and the Syriac Codices which read *to me*.

You may be wondering why did God choose the Levites; why not the tribe of Judah or Issachar? Exodus 32:25–29 reads: Now when Moses saw that the people were out of control—for Aaron had let them get out of control to be a derision among their enemies; then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, "Whoever is for Yahweh, to me!" And all the sons of Levi gathered together to him. and he said to them, "Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel, 'Every man put his sword upon his thigh and go back and forth from gate to gate in the camp and kill every man his brother, and every man his friend and every man his neighbor.' " So the sons of Levi did as Moses instructed and about 3000 men fell that day. Then Moses said, "Dedicate yourselves today to Yahweh—for every man has been against his son and against his brother—in order that He may bestow a blessing upon you today."

"And you have appointed Aaron and his sons and they have taken the responsibility of their priesthood; and to the stranger who approaches, he will be executed." [Numbers 3:10]

There is a play on words which I do not entirely get. It is this very difficult verb *pâqad* (פָּקַד) [pronounced *paw-KAHD*]. This is the verb used for taking a census and generally translated *numbered*. However, this is also the verb often translated *appoint, visit, punish*; and these are all meanings from the Qal stem. The Levites did not have to be *numbered* as they served Aaron and his sons, who had been *numbered [appointed]* by Moses. Strong's #6485 BDB #823. As I said, it is there in the Hebrew, but I don't quite grasp precisely what is being said.

As for the execution of the stranger; this is not just for the non-Jew. No one but the priest could come into the temple. Being able to come to God is an act of mercy. However, there were strict rules and regulations set up in order to present God's holiness and righteousness and ceremonies which clearly revealed the gospel of Jesus Christ to anyone who was positive toward God at God-consciousness. Those who feel that God is their best friend or that He overlooks their shortcomings out of love is confused as to Who and What God is. Just as the Jews could not approach God directly, neither can we. Our approach to God is done only in the power of the Holy Spirit through our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no worship in whatever way you feel is correct and God will bless your sincerity—it was God's way or no way at all, and His policy has not changed.

This remained God's policy even beyond the need for the tabernacle (which became a temple). Only the priests could enter into the Holy Place and only the High Priest, once a year, was allowed into the Holy of Holies. None of the disciples went into the sanctuary, nor did our Lord (although He would have been qualified). When our Lord taught in the temple, this would be the temple enclosure. As *The Amplified Bible* points out, the Greek word used is always the outer area (*hieron* (ἱερόν) [pronounced *hee-er-OM*]) and never the sanctuary (*naos* (ναός) [pronounced *nah-OSS*]). Our Lord, at His death, entered into the true Holy of Holies, the throne room and Presence of God.

There is one time in God's Word where a king attempted to enter into the Holy Place; King Uzziah attempted to go into the sanctuary in order to burn incense to God. Eighty priests forced him out and he became a leper for this transgression (2Chronicles 26:16–21).

The Levites were to surround the tent of meeting. They were the only one authorized in the service to the tabernacle. Only the priests could go into the tabernacle. There was to be absolutely no contact between the sons of Israel and any part of the tabernacle or its furniture. They could at best come into the courtyard and observe what was being done. What a marvelous picture of our salvation. All the work was done by Aaron, his sons and the Levites—just as all of our salvation was provided for us by God the Son. Everything for our lives on earth have been provided for us by God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. They have given to us a whole host of angels as guardian angels, our wall of fire, a protection that is about every single one of us. The Israelites could bring a lamb or a goat without spot and without blemish, as we come to God in Christ. Then the Jew could at best, just observe as this animal is slaughtered before him. Again, the incredible shadow presented here. It was the Jews, the corrupt, unregenerate Judas, along with **the chief priests and the elders of the people** (Matthew 26:47b), who came and seized our Lord and brought him before the various courts to be tried and executed. Aaron, who is in charge, is analogous to God the Father; he is the spiritual head of the tent of meeting. One of his two sons kills the sacrifice, putting his hand on its head and identifying with it—analogous to our Lord Jesus Christ. The second son is there doing work which we do not see—analogous to God the Holy Spirit. The Levites, a great number of people, were responsible themselves for taking care of a great many things which we

do not see—analogous to the ministering angels given us by God. The Jews who day after day bring forward the sacrifices represent both the sinner coming to God with nothing but the sacrifice of our Lord in his hand; and also representative of the unregenerate Jews who seized our Lord and brought him to be crucified.

The Levites Will Replace the First-Born as Dedicated to Yahweh

And Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 3:11]

Again, God speaks to Moses.

"Observe, I, even I have taken the Levites from the midst of the sons of Israel instead of every first-born opening a womb among the sons of Israel, and the Levites have been mine. [Numbers 3:12]

Prior to this, the first-born had been set apart to God: "Set aside to Me every first-born, the first offspring of every womb among the sons of Israel, both of man and beast; it belongs to Me." (Exodus 13:2). This is because God struck down every first-born of Egypt. This was a substitution; God paid for every first-born of Israel with the death of the first-born of Egypt. See also Exodus 11:4–5 12:21–29 13:11–16. The substitution of one for another is a major theme in Old Testament Scripture.

Those who will serve as ministering saints to God are the Levites, taken from among the Jews. Recall that previously, the Jews were a disorganized mob which God had recently organized and from out of this disorganized mob, He pulled out the Levites to serve Him, as the believers are taken out of this world. We are in a mob which we are taken out of by God. This is the mob of the unregenerates in the world and we are thoroughly mixed in with them, insofar as the world sees. In fact, many believers lives do not even begin to reveal a separation. However, we are pulled out to serve our Lord, rather than those who would be the pre-eminent, the first-born. We are all a family, brothers, as the family of the Levites—called to serve God.

"For every first-born is mine. In the day of My striking every first-born in the land of Egypt, I have sanctified to Myself every first-born in Israel, from man to beast; they are Mine; I [am] Yahweh." [Numbers 3:13]

Jesus Christ, when He slaughtered the first-born of the Egyptians, in this sacrifice, He set aside the first-born of Israel for Himself. **You are not your own, for you have been bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body** (1Corinthians 6:19b–20). God has paid a fair price for each of the first born of the Israelites—a first-born for a first-born. When our Lord died for our sins, His death was far more painful than we could ever imagine as He took upon Himself the sins of all of us from Adam down to the last sinner in the millennium. See the **Doctrine of the Firstborn**.

The complete **Doctrine of the Firstborn** can be found elsewhere, this is the abbreviated version.

The Abbreviated Doctrine of the Firstborn

1. Two of the related Hebrew words are:
 - a. In the Hebrew, the word *firstborn* is $b^{\text{e}}k\hat{o}w\text{r}$ (בְּרִוֶּבֶת) [pronounced $b^{\text{e}}KOHR$]. Metaphorically, this word is used for *anything which is chief or first* of its kind Strong's #1060 BDB #114.
 - b. The feminine noun is $b^{\text{e}}k\hat{o}w\text{r}\hat{a}h$ (הַבְּרִוֶּבֶת) [pronounced $b^{\text{e}}koh\text{-RAW}$], which means *rights and responsibilities of the firstborn, privileges of the firstborn, birthright [of the firstborn]; primogeniture*. By virtue of being born first, each firstborn has certain rights and privileges which are bestowed upon him. We have several instances in the Bible where this is taken away. There was never, by God's Law, a set of definite rights and responsibilities which belonged to the firstborn. That was a matter of tradition and culture, but not Law. See Genesis 29:26. Strong's #1062 BDB #114.
2. The related Greek words:
 - a. The noun/adjective $pr\hat{o}totos$ (πρωτοτόκος) [pronounced $proh\text{-tot-OK-oss}$], which means *firstborn*

The Abbreviated Doctrine of the Firstborn

[of man or animals]; the beginning [first] [of a new series]. Used as an adjective only in Luke 2:7; elsewhere as a noun. Strong's #4416.

- b. The neuter noun: prōtotokia (πρωτοτόκια) [pronounced *proh-toht-OHK-ee-ah*], which means *birthright, right [or privilege] of primogeniture, the right or advantages of the firstborn son*. This references the religious leadership of a family (the firstborn belongs to God); and the double-portion of the father's wealth went to him. Strong's #4415.
3. Webster gives us two sets of definitions for *first-born*, which is important in order to interpret the next point:
 - a. First brought forth; first in the order of nativity; eldest; as the first-born son.
 - b. Most excellent; most distinguished or exalted. Christ is called the first-born of every creature.¹
4. It is very important in the Bible, the first time a word is used. This sort of sets the tone and/or the parameters for this word.
 - a. When the first man born to a woman occurs in Scripture, he is named Abel but he is not called Adam and Eve's firstborn. We associate this term with the firstborn of Abel's flock which he brings to God to be sacrificed, a sacrifice which God respects (which sacrifice speaks of Jesus Christ). Genesis 4:4
 - b. The first time *firstborn* is used in the New Testament (Luke 2:7), it also refers to Jesus Christ (the only use of that term in the gospels).
5. It is in Genesis 25 where we have our first indication that being the firstborn carries with it some privileges. This is the chapter where Esau, the firstborn, and Jacob interact with Isaac, their very old and mostly blind father. Jacob is after the blessing of the firstborn. As we go over the sub-points, bear in mind that the Mosaic Law is not been spoken yet and what we are examining here is more tradition than anything else.
 - a. Esau and Isaac were twins, with Esau being delivered first. Isaac came out next, holding onto the heel of Esau. God spoke to Rebekah concerning these two, saying that they would become two nations who would struggle against one another and that the older would eventually serve the younger (Genesis 25:22–26).
 - b. Unfortunately, both Isaac and Rebekah developed favorites—Isaac preferred his firstborn, Esau, the hunter; and Rebekah preferred Jacob, who apparently learned to cook (Genesis 25:27–29).
 - c. When Esau came in from the field, he was starving—hungry to the point of great weakness. Jacob had made a stew. When Esau asked for some, Jacob made Esau give up his birthright for a bowl of stew. Esau's rationalization is that he was so hungry, he was about to die and what good is a birthright after death? Just exactly what this birthright entailed is not told to us. We also do not know who was later told about the exchange of the birthright. It is never disclosed whether this was simply between Esau and Jacob, or whether Jacob informed his parents of this information; however, it is implied that this was known in their family in Genesis 27:36. Genesis 25:29–34
 - d. In Genesis 27, Jacob steals the blessing of his father to Esau. He pretends to be Esau (at the urging and help of his mother), and receives the blessing from Isaac that was meant for Esau. This is not necessarily related to one being firstborn or not. Isaac simply, prior to his death, was going to bless Esau, but blessed Jacob instead. Jacob, when masquerading as his brother, identified himself several times to his father as his *firstborn*.
6. Jacob also blesses his own sons, referring to Reuben as his firstborn. Then he tells Reuben that he is spineless. Reuben lacked character and judgment. When he comes to Judah, Jacob says that his brothers would praise him and bow down to him, meaning that the descendants of his brothers would bow down and praise his Descendant. Actually, this has a double-fulfillment: it is fulfilled in the royal line which extends David to the last king of Judah; and this is fulfilled in our Lord as well, Whose humanity is in the line of Judah (Luke 3:23–33). What had happened was that Reuben, due to his lack of leadership, particularly with regards to the brothers' treatment of Joseph, lost his birthright. He lost the leadership aspect of his birthright to Judah and the double portion to Joseph. We will touch on this in 1Chronicles 5:1–2, where the passage is properly exegeted (we will examine this probably after the book of Ruth).
7. Although, traditionally, the firstborn was seen as the primary continuation of the line of the father, and often due more blessing and inheritance, God blessed men based upon their regeneration and cursed men if they were negative toward Him. Genesis 41:51 49:3–4 1Chronicles 5:1–2
8. The Levites were taken as God's firstborn, instead of the firstborn from every family, as a tribe dedicated to Him. Numbers 3:12, 45, 50 The close association with the number of Levites as compared to the

The Abbreviated Doctrine of the Firstborn

- number of firstborn was to indication (1) that redemption was involved in setting apart the firstborn; (2) setting apart the Levites as firstborn was analogous to God setting apart Jesus as His firstborn; and (3) the redemption had to be exactly the right amount. Jesus could not just go and suffer on the cross for awhile, and that would do the trick; He had to pay for the sins of all mankind. *Redemption*, by the way, means *payment*. This redemption was continued so that all of the firstborn had to be redeemed. Numbers 18:15 Again, the idea was to connect redemption with the firstborn with a specific amount (a specific redemption amount).
9. The Passover: The final judgment against Egypt was to kill their firstborn. This was a type of Christ. Exodus 11–12 Numbers 8:16–18 9 Deuteronomy 16:1–6 Psalm 105:36 135:8 136:10 (which passage associates God's love with striking them down) 1Corinthians 5:7 Hebrews 11:28
 - a. God calls Israel His *firstborn* in Exodus 4:22. The implication is that there could be another born of God. However, God used it in this way: Pharaoh was to let God's firstborn go or He would kill Pharaoh's firstborn (Exodus 4:23).
 - b. God has Moses threaten the Pharaoh with this in Exodus 11:4–6.
 - c. Death of the firstborn is a type of Christ, as Christ is the Firstborn of God. 1Corinthians 5:7 Hebrews 1:6
 - d. Prior to the carrying out of this curse, God instructs Moses in the Passover. All of Israel is to, by household, slaughter a lamb. What God says is chilling: "[The whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight.](#)" (Exodus 12:6b). The blood of the lamb is then smeared on both sides and at the top of the door frame (Exodus 12:7, 22). That believers were passed over because of the blood about their door (matching the blood on our Lord's hands, head and feet), is a picture of God not judging us because He has judged His Firstborn in our stead. When God saw the blood of the Passover at the entrance of the house, God would not go into the house and kill the firstborn (Exodus 12:13, 23). Then they were to roast the lamb with fire without removing any part of it, and then to eat the lamb (Exodus 12:7–11). Fire speaks of God's judgment, which is put upon His Lamb rather than upon mankind, who deserves death.
 - e. Easton tells us about the Egyptian Pharaoh who was probably the one whose firstborn died during this time: *Menephtah is probably the Pharaoh whose first-born was slain. His son did not succeed or survive his father, but died early. The son's tomb has been found at Thebes unfinished, showing it was needed earlier than was expected. Some of the records on the tomb are as follows: "The son whom Menephtah loves; who draws towards him his father's heart, the singer, the prince of archers, who governed Egypt on behalf of his father. Dead."*²
 10. Jesus Christ is called the firstborn in Psalm 89:27.
 11. Jesus is called the *firstborn* in the New Testament:
 - a. The first occasion, already mentioned, is Luke 2:7.
 - b. Paul associates Christ as the firstborn of many brothers with election. **For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified, and those whom He justified He also glorified (Romans 8:29–30).**
 - c. Jesus is called the *firstborn of all creation* in Colossians 1:15–16: **He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things were created through Him and for Him.**
 - d. He is also called the *firstborn from the dead* in Colossians 1:18–20: **And He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross. He has this same title in Revelation 1:5**
 - e. Hebrews 1:5–6: **For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"? Or again, "I will be to him a father, and He shall be to Me a son"? And again, when He brings the firstborn into the world, He says, "Let all God's angels worship Him." (Psalm 2:7 2Samuel 7:14 Deuteronomy 32:43 LXX?).**

The Abbreviated Doctrine of the Firstborn

- f. We should glean two things from these references: Jesus is not actually born or created, but He is preeminent among all that which has been created. Secondly, His title *Firstborn* is also to tie Him to the Passover event, where the death of the firstborn, redemption, the blood of the Lamb and the passing over all those under His blood are all gathered together as a type, for which Jesus is the antitype.

Again, this is the abbreviated version of this doctrine.

¹ Noah Webster's 1828 Dictionary of American English from e-sword; topic: first-born.

² M.G. Easton M.A., D.D., *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*; 1897; from e-Sword, topic: first-born.

[Chapter Outline](#)

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Census of the Levites and Duties Assigned to the Levites

And Yahweh spoke to Moses in the desert of Sinai, saying, [Numbers 3:14]

God is no longer speaking to Moses near Mount Sinai but in the desert region of Sinai, which means that the mountains should be far out of view.

""Number the sons of Levi by the house of their fathers, by their families; every male from a son of a month [in age] and upward you will number them." [Numbers 3:15]

So this is after they have begun their forced march, as they are now in the desert of Sinai. *Number* is the same word used for *visit*, *punish*, *appoint*. Here, a census is being taken of the Levites.

And Moses numbered them according to the word of Yahweh, as he had been commanded. [Numbers 3:16]

Moses had enough sense to obey when he heard God's Word.

And these are the sons of Levi by their names: Gershon, and Kohath, and Merari. [Numbers 3:17]

We have this information in the records of Genesis (Genesis 46:11) and Exodus (Exodus 6:16–25). Moses has already traced his lineage back in Exodus. This is done so that the various tribes of Levi could be separated.

And these [are] the names of the sons of Gershon by their families: Libne and Shemei. [Numbers 3:18]

We have covered these two men and their families back in Exodus 6:17.

And the sons of Kohath, by their families [are] Amram and Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel. [Numbers 3:19]

Exodus 6:18.

And the sons of Merari by their families [are] Mahli and Mushi; there are the families of the Levites by the house of their fathers . [Numbers 3:20]

Exodus 6:19.

Of Gershon [is] the family of the Libnite, and the family of the Shimite; ther are the families of Gershonite. [Numbers 3:21]

The purpose of recalling the family line is so that the Levites can be counted and organized as each family will have its own function and place to be.

Their numbered ones, in number, every male from a son of a month and upward, their numbered ones [are] 7500. [Numbers 3:22]

This is the Gershonite tribe.

The families of the Gershonite, behind the tabernacle, do encamp westward [lit., toward the sea]. [Numbers 3:23]

When it comes to their position with regard to thee tabernacle, they will be on the westward, sea side. By this we know they have traveled past the Gulf of Suez but they could not see the Gulf of Aqaba (which would be to the east or to the southeast).

And the prince of a father's house for the Gershonite [is] Eliasaph ben Lael. [Numbers 3:24]

Eliasaph means God gathers and Lael means [belonging] to God. Eliasaph is obviously not the same Eliasaph that we saw in Numbers 1:14 and 2:14; That Eliasaph was also chosen as a great leader, but he was the son of Deuel (or, Reuel) in the Gaddite tribe.

And the responsibility of the sons of Gershon in [lit., out of] the tent of meeting: the tabernacle, and the tent, its covering²³ and the veil at the opening of the tent of meeting; [Numbers 3:25]

Our second Eliasaph was in charge of the tabernacle coverings, the curtains fo the court and the main altar. There was a curtain at the entrance to the courtyard (Numbers 4:26); at the entrance of the tabernacle itself (Numbers 4:25); and between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies (Numbers 4:5). The tribe of Gershon was responsible for these coverings.

And the hangings of the court and the veil at the opening of the court, which [is] by the tabernacle and by the altar round about, and its cords, in regard to all its service. [Numbers 3:26]

This family took the responsibility of the care of these items and the protection of them when moved. (as the Jews will be on the move for the next 39 years).

And of Kohath, the family of the Amramite, and the family of the Izharite, and the family of the Hebronite, and the family of the Uzzielite; these are the families of the Kohathite. [Numbers 3:27]

Exodus 6:18.

In number, all the males from a son of a month and upward: 8600—keeping the responsibility of the sanctuary. [Numbers 3:28]

With the lack of verbs, this reads more like a list than prose. Moses in this verse records the census result and their general function with respect to the tabernacle. The Septuagint reads 8300 here and 8300 is the proper amount needed so that the total would be 22,000. This is one of the very few places where the minority of manuscripts support a number which is incorrect. Likely this was a copiest error.

²³ Most codices read *and its covering*.

The families of the sons of Kohath encamp by the side of the tabernacle southward. [Numbers 3:29]

Notice that even for these families, they are organized by God.

And the prince of a father's house for the families of the Kohathites: Elizaphan ben Uzziel. [Numbers 3:30]

Elizaphan means *God of treasure* (or, possibly, *God has protected*) and Uzziel means *strength of God* (recall that *El* means God).

And their responsibility: the ark and the table and the candlestick and the altars and the furniture [lit., vessels] of the sanctuary with which they serve, and the veil and all its service. [Numbers 3:31]

The general statement was in v. 28 and the more specific duties, or responsibilities, are listed here. They are responsible for the articles of furniture within the tabernacle.

And the prince of the princes of the Levites: Eleazar ben Aaron, the priest: the oversight of those who perform the duties of the sanctuary [lit., the keepers of the charge—or, guardians of the responsibility—of the sanctuary]. [Numbers 3:32]

A prince of princes (or, a chief of chiefs), where a noun in the Hebrew is repeated in the genitive plural, is an expression of a very emphatic superlative. There is no superlative in the Hebrew, so it is often expressed using a figure of speech like this, known technically as a polyptoton [pronounced *po-LYP-to-ton*].

The Levites will not have four chiefs over them, but one, to whom the four chiefs will report. We have a God of order and authority. Aaron's son will assume that authority. At this point I do not know how old this son is, however, Aaron is approximately 85, so this son is probably between 40-60 years of age.

Of Merari, the family of the Mahlite, and the family of the Mushite—these [are] the families of Merari. [Numbers 3:33]

Exodus 6:19. We have the interesting figure of speech here: an epanadiplosis [pronounced *EP-an-a-di-PLO--sis*], which where we have the same word at the beginning and the end of a sentence. What is implied is a complete circle, which in this case draws attention to the completeness of the statement.

And their numbered ones, in number, all the males from a son of a month and upward: 6200. [Numbers 3:34]

Note that the population of the Levites, even combined, is among the lowest of the the populations of the other tribes. The other tribes numbered the males who were twenty years and older; these are males who are a month old or older. The reason this numbering is done is that these men are not being numbered for war but for service to yahweh, which can begin at any age beyond the age of accountability (and training prior to that is a must, as we will see).

And the prince of a father's house for the families of Merari: Zuriel ben Abihail; by the side of the tabernacle they encamp northward. [Numbers 3:35]

Zuriel means *rock of God* and Abihail means *father (or, possessor) of might*. Zuriel is mentioned only here in God's Word.

And the oversight—the responsibility of the sons of Merari: the boards of the tabernacle, and its bars and its pillars and its sockets and all its vessels and all its service; [Numbers 3:36]

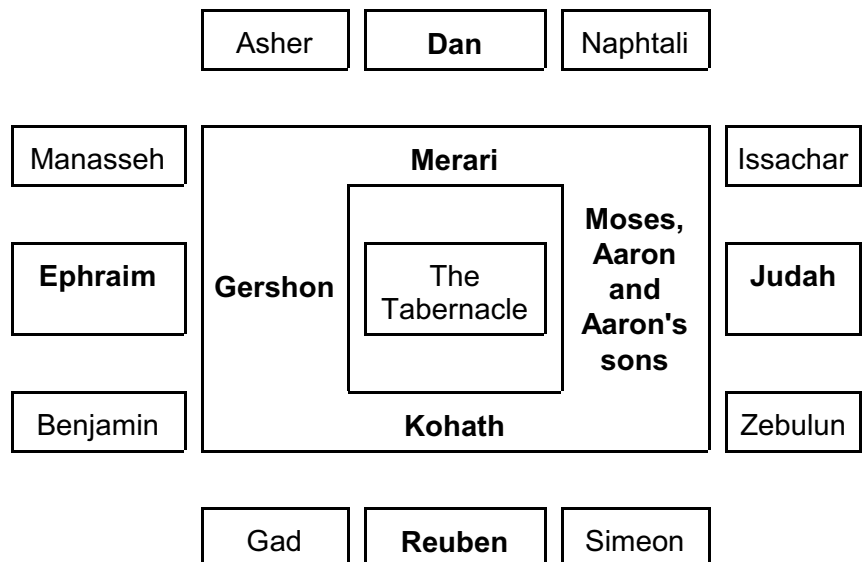
So that we understand here, every tribe and every subdivision had a specific function, a specific part to play in God's plan. Today, we all have specific functions and a specific plan for our lives, found only by being filled with the Holy Spirit, remaining in fellowship and studying God's Word (and not on our own).

And the pillars of the court round about and their sockets and their pins and their cords.
[Numbers 3:37]

Someday I will know—when I am in heaven—why those who set up the verses would stop midway in a sentence, midway in a thought, and then finish it in the next verse.

And those encamping before the tabernacle eastward, before the tent of meeting at the east: Moses and Aaron and his son, keeping the responsibility of the sanctuary for the responsibility of the sons of Israel, and the stranger who approaches is executed. [Numbers 3:38]

Again, the stranger is anyone outside of the Levite tribe. The eastward side, or the side of the sun rising, is the most honored place, in general. This reasonably belongs to Moses and Aaron and also to the tribe of Judah, which would produce King David, King Solomon and our Lord Jesus Christ.



This shows the positioning of the Levite families around the tabernacle

All those numbered of the Levites whom Moses numbered—Aaron also²⁴—by the command of Yahweh, by their families, every male from a son of a month and upward: 22,000. [Numbers 3:39]

This means that there were probably 10,000-15,000 males who were of age 20 and above.

Redemption of the First-born

And Yahweh said to Moses, "Number every first-born male of the sons of Israel from a son of a month and upward, and make a list of their names [lit., take up the number of their names]." [Numbers 3:40]

Now God requires Moses to take a census of just the first-born.

"And you have taken the Levites for Me—I Yahweh—instead of every first-born among the sons of Israel and the cattle of the Levites, instead of every firstling among the cattle of the sons of Israel." [Numbers 3:41]

The Levites were to be in place of the first-born, which belonged to God. The Levites would belong to God instead. God has paid for the first-born of Israel, which in turn paid for the Levites.

²⁴ Aaron also may not be a part of the original text; for more information see Dr. Ginsburg's *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical edition of the Hebrew Bible* (1897), pp. 320–329; and his Hebrew notes for his edition of the Hebrew Bible.

And Moses numbered, as Yahweh had commanded him, all the first-born among the sons of Israel. [Numbers 3:42]

Moses again follows God's orders without question or delay.

And all the first-born—male—by the number of names, from a son of a month and upward, of their numbered ones, are 22,273. [Numbers 3:43]

This is the first exact figure which was taken and you will note that there are just enough Levites to stand in the steads of the first-born. We should examine some numbers now: if, say, 200,000 of the men of the 600,000 are married and have children, then the number for first-born would reasonably be between 20,000 and 60,000. If a higher number of men are married, that would increase these figures. Well, this is going to cause us some problems with the large population of the Israelites. Under any one of the theories proposed, this number of first-born would have been far too large. However, if you read this carefully, the number of first-born being 20,000 would appear to be too small. This would mean that each family would average ten children, which is excessive at this point. The key here is that the sanctification of the first-born did not occur until Exodus 13:1–2; prior to that, the first-born were not set aside to God. So from that point on, the first-born belonged to Yahweh. This gives us a great many births between Exodus 13 and now (less than two years later). This may not be too large a number; this means that for a period of less than two years, 1 out of 30 men age twenty or above, got married, or were recently married, and they sired their first-born since the Exodus. The population of Israel had grown had a good rate during their persecution; this probably leveled off with the tremendous pressures put upon them by the Egyptian Pharaohs, and this sudden freedom probably blossomed into many marriages and first-born children. This is not too unlike the baby boomer generation of the United States which generated a tremendous population growth immediately following World War II.

Alfred Eldersheim in his book *Bible History Old Testament*, points out that you cannot judge past population figures by present growth. He gives the example of Austria that, in 1851, saw roughly one marriage for every ten people; which country in 1854, had less than one marriage per 100 people.²⁵ He also gives the example of England increasing in population by a million in the space of three years, whereas, during the same time period, the number of marriages decreased by 11, 000.

And Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 3:44]

I am beginning to think that not only did the worst translators get assigned to Leviticus and Numbers, but the very worst guys when it came to dividing up verses.

"Take the Levites instead of every first-born among the sons of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of their cattle; and the Levites have been Mine—I [am] Yahweh. [Numbers 3:45]

The Levites are kept alive as an even trade for every first-born, just as our Lord was raised again and stands as a perfect substitute for our deserving death upon the cross.

"And those ransomed of the 273 (who are more than the Levites) of the first-born of the sons of Israel; [Numbers 3:46]

There are an excess of first-born sons who are not covered by the Levitical population. There were 22,000 Levites (Numbers 3:39) and 22,273 firstborn (Leviticus 3:43). Therefore, God required Israel to pay a ransom for the excess of 273 men.

"You will take five shekels each by the poll—by the shekel of the sanctuary you will take; twenty gerahs the shekel; [Numbers 3:47]

²⁵ |This is from p. 231 in the footnotes (if I am reading this correctly; there was a textual error in his book).

A gerah is approximately 1/40th of an ounce, making a shekel about 1/2 an ounce (other sources read 4/10ths of an ounce).

Yahweh will not ignore this disparity. Similarly, every sin that we have ever committed and will commit was paid for on the cross. God did not allow a single sin to go without being paid for.

"And you will give the money to Aaron and to his sons, whereby those over and above are ransomed." [Numbers 3:48]

A major topic of the Old Testament is the ransoming of fallen man.

And Moses took the ransom money from those over and above those ransomed by the Levites; [Numbers 3:49]

God requires an exact accounting for every last person. This 273 first-born which were not redeemed man-for-man by the Levites, were redeemed with silver at five shekels each.

From the first-born of the sons of Israel he took the money, 1365 [shekels] by the shekel of the sanctuary. [Numbers 3:50]

The shekel of the sanctuary means that there is a divine standard.

The Levites were taken as God's firstborn, instead of the firstborn from every family, as a tribe dedicated to Him. Numbers 3:12, 45, 50 The close association with the number of Levites as compared to the number of firstborn was to indication (1) that redemption was involved in setting apart the firstborn; (2) setting apart the Levites as firstborn was analogous to God setting apart Jesus as His firstborn; and (3) the redemption had to be exactly the right amount. Jesus could not just go and suffer on the cross for awhile, and that would do the trick; He had to pay for the sins of all mankind.

And Moses gave the money of those ransomed to Aaron and to his sons, according to the word [lit., mouth] of Yahweh, as Yahweh had commanded Moses. [Numbers 3:51]

That which is spoken is often called in the Hebrew *according to the mouth of*.

Numbers 4

Numbers 4:1–49

Outline of Chapter 4:

- Vv. 1–20 **The responsibilities of the Kohathites**
- Vv. 21–28 **The responsibilities of the Gershonites**
- Vv. 29–33 **The responsibilities of the sons of Merari**
- Vv. 34–49 **Census figures and summary**

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

Introduction: Numbers 4 deals even more specifically with the duties of the Levites; primarily it covers their responsibilities in the moving of the Tabernacle.

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The Responsibilities of the Kohathites

And Yahweh spoke to Moses, and to Aaron, saying, [Numbers 4:1]

Again, this is a direct quote from God. Whoever developed the idea of a red-lettered edition of the Bible did not take it far enough.

"Take up a numbering [lit., a head count] of the sons of Kohath from among the sons of Levi by their families and their fathers' houses; [Numbers 4:2]

Rō'sh (שָׂרָא or שָׂרָה) [pronounced *rohsh*], as we have seen, means *shake*, and it generally means *head count*, as an idiom, although it is used in several other ways. Strong's #7218 BDB #910. Initially, you should be confused; didn't we just take a census of the sons of Kohath? However, the key here is that this is an unfinished sentence.

"From a son of thirty years and upward, even till a son of fifty years, everyone going in to the service [lit., army], to do the work in the tent of meeting. [Numbers 4:3]

The word here used for service is the same one used for the men entering the armed forces. The Levites are entering into a spiritual battle, the likes of which we learn from God's Word, but will never completely appreciate until we are face to face with the Lord.

This is to the Levites: from twenty-five years old and upward they will enter to perform service in the work of the tent of meeting; but at fifty years they will retire from service in the work and not work any more (Numbers 8:24–25). Apparently between ages twenty-five and thirty, the Levites went through an apprentice program of sorts.

"This [is] the service of the sons of Kohath in the tent of meeting, the holy of holies: [Numbers 4:4]

This will be a list of the services that they will perform, primarily with respect to the moving of the tabernacle. The Kohathites have one of the most sacred positions of responsibility—they will be handling the furniture of the Holy Place and from the Holy of Holies. However, they are not to touch it directly (v. 15) or even look at it (v. 20); or they will be executed by God. The Kohathites were under the direct supervision of Aaron and his sons, who would help to keep them from violating God's holiness.

There is a continual emphasis in the Old Testament on the absolute holiness of God and the fact that man can have no direct contact with God. Those who claim to have a casual, friendly relationship with God the Father or with Jesus Christ have not read the Scriptures and do not realize how painfully sinful we are in the light of His perfection.

"And Aaron will go in and his sons when the camp is to set out; and they will take down the veil of the hanging and have covered with it the ark of the testimony. [Numbers 4:5]

The veil hanging between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies is used to cover the ark.

"And they will put on it a covering of animal skin, and they will spread²⁶ a garment completely of blue [possibly, violet] above, and have placed its poles. [Numbers 4:6]

We do not know really what kind of a skin is being talked about here. Various translations use *badger* or *dolphin*; so you can see there is no real agreement. The poles being placed are those poles which are used in order to carry the ark. The idea here is simple: the Ark represents Jesus Christ, and what was seen of the Ark, the gold plating, represented His deity. Man cannot look directly upon God's deity, due to man's inherent sinfulness. Therefore, the Ark had to be covered when it was moved. We have one incident when the Ark was transported on the orders of King David, that one of the men reached out to steady the Ark, and God struck him dead for that irreverence (2Samuel 6:2–7).

"And on the table of the Presence, they will spread a garment of blue [or, possibly violet], and they will place on it the dishes and the spoons and the bowls and the cups of the libation, and the perpetual bread [lit., bread of continuity] is on it. [Numbers 4:7]

Qas^evâh/qâsâh (קַשְׁוֹה/קַשְׂוֹה) [pronounced *kahs-VAW/kaw-SAW*] does not mean *covers* as the KJV has, nor does it mean *basins*, as implied by *The Emphasized Bible*; they are simply *cups* or *jugs* and this word is found only here and in Exodus 25:29 37:16 1Chronicles 28:17. Strong's #7184 BDB #903.

The *perpetual bread* or the *bread of continuity* is simply bread which is always there; the bread speaks of fellowship and even though God and Israel are now estranged, there is a place in God's plan for every single Israelite, both now and in the future. Furthermore, this fellowship with the nation Israel will be restored in the future when Israel returns to the Lord Who bought her.

We might go down to the local liquor store and pick up a few boxes in order to pack the breakables; however, they did not have that luxury; therefore, the related items were placed over the garment which was on the table.

"And they will spread over them a garment of scarlet, and have covered it with a covering of animal skin; and they will place its poles. [Numbers 4:8]

The first garment, from a practical viewpoint, holds everything in place; and the animal (of whatever kind) skin, holds everything in place as sort of a ballast. These things which are holy are surrounded by a cloth of blue, which speaks of the third heaven; by a cloth of scarlet, speaking of our Lord's blood; and an animal skin, speaking of our Lord's sacrifice. The latter two items may seem as though they overlap, but recall in the Lord's supper, we partake both of the body and the blood of our Lord (symbolically).

"And they will take a garment of blue [possibly, violet] and they will cover the candlestick of the lamp, and its lights, and its snuffers, and its snuff-dishes, and all its oil vessels with which they minister to them. [Numbers 4:9]

God is very explicit as to how these articles of furniture will be moved. There is no *use your best judgement here*. It is the same for our lives; there is the correct way to conduct ourselves and the incorrect way. God has a perfect

²⁶ The Septuagint and the western Samaritan codices add the word *thereupon*.

plan for our life and we can fulfill that plan. The only way that we can have complete fulfillment in our lives is through fulfilling His plan for our lives. It is the difference between competing in a sporting event on the side of the winning team and watching the game from the bench on the sidelines. Our team will win; there is no doubt about that. We will all share in the glory. However, there will be greater prestige and rewards for those who actually played. They will feel the greatest about our final victory of the Devil and his angels.

"And they will place it and all its utensils [lit., vessels] into a covering of animal skin and they will place it on the carrying frame [or, pole]. [Numbers 4:10]

We have a tough word here: *môwt* (מֹוֹת) [pronounced *moht*] and it means *wavering, fall*. This is found only six times in the Old Testament (Numbers 4:10, 12 13:23 Psalm 66:9 121:3 Nahum 1:13). This is apparently a pole used to carry things on, although in the Psalms it refers to stability or possibly dependence and reliance. Strong's #4132 BDB #557.

"And on the golden altar they are to spread a garment of blue, and they will cover it with a covering of animal skin, and they will place [or, position] its poles. [Numbers 4:11]

Each article of furniture was to be covered, partially to keep it from being marred or bruised, and partly to shield it from the Israelites as its holiness was just too great.

"And they will take all the utensils [lit., vessels] of service with which they serve in the sanctuary, and they will place [them] into a garment of blue, and they will cover them with a covering of animal skin, and they will place [them] on the bar. [Numbers 4:12]

Like the other items of the sanctuary which are carried, these were also placed between the garments and the skin to be carried in a protective way.

"And they will remove the fat-ashes of the altar and have spread over it a garment [of purple]; [Numbers 4:13]

It is the altar that the garment is spread over. This tells us that the altar was a repository for ashes.

"And they will put on it [the garment] all its vessels with which they serve about it, the censers, the hooks and the shovels and the bowls, all the utensils [lit., vessels] of the altar, and they will spread on it a covering of animal skin, and they will place its poles. [Numbers 4:14]

To remind you, vessels was an all purpose term; it did stand specifically for bowls and containers, but it was a general designation for anything which was used for the altar (or for any of the other pieces of furniture of the tabernacle).

"And Aaron will finish—and his sons also—covering the sanctuary, and all the vessels of the sanctuary, in the journeying of the camp, and afterward the sons of Kohath will come in to carry [it]; however [lit., and] they do not come into the Holy Place, or they will die; these [things are] the burden of the sons of Kohath in regards to the tent of meeting. [Numbers 4:15]

The tenses of the Hebrew language are very difficult to translate consistently as time is not a major concern of the Hebrew tense system. An imperfect tense can be used to describe ongoing past action, present action, or even future action, which is not looked at from an accomplished standpoint. However, the perfect tense, which is usually a completed action, can also stand for an event which is past, present or future. In any case here, the sons of Aaron and their descendants see to the disassembly of the tabernacle before the sons of Kohath move anything.

One portion of this verse may seem awkward—the relative adjective *these* (referring to the duties enumerated in this passage) and the predicate nominative (as we would know it in the English) of *burden*, which is in the singular. However, I have added a couple of words to help smooth out the translation.

"And the oversight of Eleazar, son of Aaron, the priest: the oil of the lamp and the spice-perfume, and the present of continuity, and the anointing oil, the oversight of the sanctuary, and in regards to its vessels." [Numbers 4:16]

The noun found here is a difficult one: p^oquddâh (פְּקֻדָּה) [pronounced *peh-kood-DAWH*] is the noun cognate for pâqad (פָּקַד) [pronounced *paw-KAHD*], which we have translated *appoint, set, make, committed, laid up, authorize, delegate, designate, number or install*. We find p^oquddâh used to mean *visitation* in Jeremiah 8:12 10:15 and it appears to be a time when God has particular contact with someone, whether it be a positive or a negative *visitation* (recall the verb is used *to visit and to punish* in Leviticus 18:25 Isaiah 13:11 26:14; but also it has been used *to visit and to bless or to take care of* in Genesis 50:24–25). P^oquddâh (פְּקֻדָּה) is Strong's #6486 BDB #824 and pâqad (פָּקַד) is Strong's #6485 BDB #823.

What appears to be implied here is direct contact with God; so in this context, Eleazar will have direct contact with the items named; that is, they will be under his *oversight* or under his *visitation*. Only the High Priest was allowed this kind of contact with the most holy of things here on earth, representing God's perfection and righteousness. Even he, being human, could only enter into that Holy of Holies once a year. He merely represent our Lord, Who is perfect and can draw near to God the Father. It is important to note that all this is merely representative of God's perfection and our inadequacies. This will help us to understand David's transport of the ark in a more casual manner in 2Samuel 6.

The oil speaks of the Holy spirit, the spice-perfume of propitiation and satisfaction with our Lord's work upon the cross; the present of continuity (the bread) is fellowship; the anointing oil is the function of the Holy spirit in a person's life—these things are all the responsibility of the priest, who represents the God-man. A priest is a go between God and man and represents Jesus Christ in that way, Who was indwelt by the Holy Spirit, empowered by the Spirit, Who was in fellowship continually with God the Father; whose death on the cross was a sweet-savor, inasmuch as it brought us all to God.

And Yahweh spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, [Numbers 4:17]

Where else is it so clear that this is God speaking to man?

"You will not cut off the tribe of the families of the Kohathites from the midst of the Levites; [Numbers 4:18]

I am nonplussed here; why is Moses being told not to cut the Kohathites out of the loop?

"But do this to them and they will live and do not die in their approaching the Holy of Holies; Aaron and his sons will enter, and they will place them, each man in accordance with his service, and to his burden; [Numbers 4:19]

This explains v. 18; if the Kohathites just barge into the Holy of Holies, then God will kill them, thus cutting them off from the midst of the Levites. Therefore, there will be a specific procedure which will be followed whenever the Jews break camp.

"And they will not go in to see when the holy thing is swallowed, so that they don't die." [Numbers 4:20]

Bâlâ' (עָלַב) [pronounced *baw-LAHḠ*] does not mean *even for a moment*, as some Bibles translate it (RSV and NASB, for instance) but it means *engulf, swallow up*. We saw this same word used when the seven thin ears of corn swallowed up the seven fat ears in Joseph's dream (Genesis 41:7, 24) and when the earth swallows up the

degenerate idolaters in Exodus 15:12. All this means is that the holy things will first be covered by the sons of Aaron before these Levites have anything to do with them. Strong's #1104 BDB #118.

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The Responsibilities of the Gershonites

And Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 4:21]

This is a continuation of the responsibilities and the regulations concerning the Levites.

"Take up the number of the sons of Gershon also they, by the house of their fathers, by their families; [Numbers 4:22]

The sub-tribe of the Gershonites are examined next. The *they* belongs in v. 22, even though it is not found in many of the English translations.

"From a son of thirty years and upward, till a son of fifty years, you will number them, everyone who is going in to serve the host [lit., army], to do the service [lit., to serve the service] in the tent of meeting. [Numbers 4:23]

The NASB gives another meaning for *number* here: muster. Moses would be not necessarily counting these Israelites but determining how many they were and delegating certain duties to each set which He interviewed.

The use of the verb and its cognate give great emphasis to these words; it is almost equivalent to the superlative in the Hebrew (even though there is no superlative, strictly speaking, in the Hebrew).

To the branches of the tribes of the Levites are examined one at a time. Again, spiritual service is equivalent to going to war. We are in a constant warfare against Satan and his angels. **For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual [forces] or evil in the heavenlies** (Ephesians 6:12).

"This is the service of the families of the Gershonite, to serve—and for burdens: [Numbers 4:24]

Their duties and responsibilities will follow:

"And they will bear the curtains of the tabernacle and the tent of meeting, its covering and the covering of the animal skin, which is on it above, and the veil at the opening of the tent of meetings; [Numbers 4:25]

Their responsibilities include primarily the curtains and the coverings for the tabernacle.

"And the hangings of the court, and the veil at the opening of the gate of the court which [is] by the tabernacle, and by the altar round about, and their cords and all the vessels of their service, and all that is made for them—so they will serve. [Numbers 4:26]

Everything to do with the curtains and coverings are their responsibilities.

"By the word [lit., mouth] of Aaron and his sons will be all the service of the sons of the Gershonite in regard to all their burden [or, responsibility] and in all their service; and you have laid a responsibility [or, charge] on them concerning the responsibility [or, charge] of all their burden. [Numbers 4:27]

A chain of command is set up where the Gershonites report to Aaron and his sons.

"This is the service of the families of the sons of the Gershonite in the tent of meeting; and their charge [is] by the hand of Ithamar, son of Aaron, the priest. [Numbers 4:28]

Over the Gershonites is Aaron's son, Ithamar.

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The Responsibilities of the Sons of Merari

"The sons of Merari, by their families, by the house of their fathers, you will number them; [Numbers 4:29]

This is the third sub-tribe of the Levites which will be counted and given spiritual responsibilities.

"From a son of thirty years and upward even to a son of fifty years will you number them, everyone who is entering into the host [lit., army], to perform the service of the tent of meeting. [Numbers 4:30]

Like the other tribes, these are numbered as to their involvement in the service to God.

"And this [is] the responsibility of their burden: of all the service in the tent of meeting; the boards of the tabernacle, and its bars and the pillars, and its sockets [or, bases]; [Numbers 4:31]

The framework of the tabernacle was their responsibility.

"Also [lit., and] the pillars of the court round about, and their sockets [or, bases], and their pins, and their cords; [Numbers 4:32a]

It is a matter of how carefully you want to read this; if you are trying to get the general idea of what is occurring, after reading through the various translation, you have it. All the stuff which is related to the framework of the tent and the court is what they are responsible for; each person will have a specific assignment—specific items which they are responsible for and which they will carry. That is all fairly clear. From the standpoint of a translator, this is kind of a mess because the actual vocabulary is so different and inconsistent with the same words being used elsewhere in the Old Testament.

At the beginning of the sentence, we have the *pillars of the court* followed by three conjunctions, three nouns and three masculine plural suffixes, meaning the next three things belong to the function of the pillars: their sockets, their pegs and their cords. Then the sentence structure changes and we have the lamed prefixed preposition (to, for, in regard to), the word for *all* the noun for *vessels* (and a masculine plural suffix), a conjunction and lamed again with the word for *all* and another noun. This change in sentence structure means that we are now talking not about the pillars or anything to do with the pillars, but this refers back to the sons of Merari—they are the masculine plural suffix here. So it should read: *in regards to all their [the sons of Merari's]....and in regards to their [the sons's of Merari's]...*

The first noun in use is specifically *vessels*; this became an all-purpose word. In the ancient world, a vessel was used for a great many things and it could take all shapes, forms and sizes. Things were stored in vessels, including food, utensils, clothing; vessels were used to carry liquid, to be used to drink from, to be used as food containers for a meal. They had such a wide variety of uses, that anything connected with a particular function in life was grouped under the general title of *vessel*. It doesn't matter that some of the items alluded to were not themselves vessels; therefore, we have the renderings of *accessories, articles, instruments, equipment*. You see, a *vessel* can mean different things depending upon what it is a vessel for. That is, it does not even have to mean

specifically something in which you could place water if it is attached to a function which has nothing to do with that. I will translate this word *component parts*; these are the things they will carry. This word is found twice in the plural at the end of this verse, which is why most translations have the same word repeated. Others translators did not do this purely because it would sound funky to the English ear.

Then we have the same sentence structure (*and with regard to all of their...*) and the word *burden*, which, in the Hebrew, is 'ābōdāh (עֲבֹדָה) [pronounced *ávu^p-vo-DAWH*] and it means *labour, service*. In a more modern vocabulary, we might use *load, cargo, freight, payload*. It is that which is lifted and carried; however, this refers to the act of service as well as to that which is lifted. In other words, the specific things which the sons of Merari are carrying are covered in Numbers 4:31b–32a and this last portion of v. 32 is an all purpose phrase naming that these are the freight and responsibilities of the sons of Merari. Strong's #5656 & #5647 BDB #715.

At the end of the verse we have a verb which has many applications. It is the Qal imperfect of *pâqad* (פָּקַד) [pronounced *paw-KAHD*]. We have looked at this word in the Hiphil, the causative stem, and translated it *appoint, set, make, committed, laid up, authorize, delegate, designate, or install*. This is the word that we have used in taking a census; we have translated it *number*. What is being done is that each component part is being *assigned* or matched to a different person, just as each person was numbered in the census. They are being counted off and assigned a particular piece of freight. This is preceded by the word for *name*, which is preceded by the prefixed *bêyth* conjunction, which means *in, into, at, by*; proximity is. Strong's #6485 BDB #823.

"In regards to all of their [referring to the sons of Merari] component parts [lit., vessels], and with regard to all of their service [or, freight]; and by name you will assign [or number] the component parts [lit., vessels]²⁷ of the responsibility of their burden [or, load]. [Numbers 4:32b]

The end of this verse is variously translated:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	...and all their accessories for service; and you will assign to them by name the articles which they are to carry [on the march].
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	...to the extent of all their articles, to the extent of all they labour,—and by names shall ye put under their care the articles of their charge of burdens.
KJV	...with all their instruments, and with all their service; and by name ye shall reckon the instruments of the charge of their burden.
NASB	...with all their equipment and with all their service; and you shall assign <i>each man</i> by name the items he is to carry.
NIV	...all their equipment and everything related to their use. Assign to each man the specific things he is to carry.
NRSV	...with all their equipment and al their related service; and you shall assign by name the objects that they are required to carry.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	...of all their vessels, and of all their service; and by name ye do number the vessels of the charge of their burden.

Even though what is occurring may seem trivial or unimportant to us, it is still nice to have a correct translation and a reasonable understanding of what is occurring here.

"This is the service [or, responsibility] of the families of the sons of Merari, for all their service, in the tent of meeting, by the hand of Ithamar and Aaron the priest." [Numbers 4:33]

This is a summary statement, meaning that we will go onto a slightly different subject, we will go into an overall summary of this chapter or a fulfillment of the directives of Yahweh.

²⁷ Instead of having *articles of their service*, several codices (western Samaritan, Septuagint and the targum of Jonathon) have *all of their service*.

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Census Figures and Summary

And Moses numbered—and Aaron also, and the leaders of this assembly—the sons of the Kohathites, by their families, and by the house of their fathers. [Numbers 4:34]

The imperfect tense for *numbering* means that Moses took some time to do this census taking; the verb examines this as a process and a continuing action and not as a completed action. This verse tells us it is the Kohathites who are numbered here.

From a son of thirty years and upward, even to a son of fifty years, every one who is entering to the host [lit. army], for service in the tent of meeting. [Numbers 4:35]

This verse tells us which group of the Kohathites were numbered.

And their numbered ones, by their families, are 2750. [Numbers 4:36]

This is a reasonable portion of the males to fall between the ages of 30 and 50 given the previous numbers that we have had.

These [are] those numbered of the families of the Kohathite, every one who is serving in the tent of meeting, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the commandment [lit., mouth] of Yahweh by the hand of Moses. [Numbers 4:37]

This tells us what was done, who took the census; that the census was taken as God spoke (meaning not *while* God spoke but in the manner prescribed by God); and that Moses was in charge.

And those numbered of the sons of Gershon, by their families, and by the house of their fathers; [Numbers 4:38]

This short passage is a summary of the census taken of the sub-tribe of Gershon. Notice how they are spoken of slightly differently than the Kohathites. We speak of the families of the Kohathite and the sons of Gershon.

From a son of thirty years and upward, even to a son of fifty years, every one who is entering to the host [lit. army], for service in the tent of meeting. [Numbers 4:39]

This verse tells us which sub-group of the Gershonites were numbered.

And their numbered ones, by their families, are 2630. [Numbers 4:40]

This is a reasonable portion of the males to fall between the ages of 30 and 50 given the previous numbers that we have had.

These [are] those numbered of the families of the sons of Gershon, every one who is serving in the tent of meeting, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the commandment [lit., mouth] of Yahweh. [Numbers 4:41]

This tells us what was done, who took the census; that the census was taken as God charged Moses.

And those numbered of the families of the sons of Merari, by their families, by the house of their fathers; [Numbers 4:42]

Finally we move to the exact numbers of the sons of Merari; notice that they are named in even a different way than the Kohathites. I don't know how noteworthy that is.

From a son of thirty years and upward, even to a son of fifty years, every one who is entering to to the host [lit. army], for service in the tent of meeting. [Numbers 4:43]

This verse tells us which sub-group of the sons of Merari were numbered.

And their numbered ones, by their families, are 3200. [Numbers 4:44]

This is a reasonable portion of the males to fall between the ages of 30 and 50 given the previous numbers that we have had. This means that the large numbers overall which have been given are probably accurate. From the standpoint of human viewpoint, we may not like them, but God's plan does not depend upon human viewpoint.

These [are] those numbered of the families of the sons of Merari, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the commandment [lit., mouth] of Yahweh by the hand of Moses. [Numbers 4:45]

This tells us what was done, who took the census; that the census was taken as God spoke to Moses.

All of those numbered, whom Moses numbered—and Aaron also—, and the leaders of Israel—of the Levites, by their families, and by the house of their fathers; [Numbers 4:46]

This is a final summary verse of the census taken overall of the Levites population which fell between the ages of 30 and 50.

From a son of thirty years and upward even to a son of fifty years, every one who is going in to do the work of the service, even the service of burden in the tent of meeting; [Numbers 4:47]

Why these couple verse are broken up, I have no clue.

Even their numbered one are 8580; [Numbers 4:48]

The three numbers given previously add up to this number.

By the command [lit., mouth] of Yahweh, he has numbered them, by the hand of Moses, each man by his service and by his burden, with his numbered ones [or, thus they were numbered by him], as Yahweh had commanded Moses. [Numbers 4:49]

The last phrase of this verse was translated according to the western Samaritan, the Targum of Jonathan, the Septuagint, the Syriac and the Vulgate codices; in the Masoretic text, this reads: ...thus they were numbered by him were they whom Yahweh command Moses.

Yahweh commanded Moses to number the people and Moses obeyed, delegating the responsibility out as a good leader should do. Furthermore, each man and each group was given their particular responsibilities during the numbering. As we have seen, the word *to number* can refer to taking a census and it can refer to an assignment of duties.

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Numbers 5

Numbers 5:1–31

Outline of Chapter 5:

- vv. 1–4 Uncleaness is removed from the camp of Israel
- vv. 5–10 Confession and restitution
- vv. 11–31 The determination of the unfaithfulness of a wife

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

- v. 16 **What happens at a new dispensation or increment of a dispensation?**

Introduction: In the first portion of Numbers 5, we will see certain defiled people removed from the camp of Israel. Then we quickly examine restitution when the person to be compensated is no longer on the scene. Finally, in part II, we will see a test applied to determine whether one has committed adultery or not. These are not necessarily connected in anyway—these are three different topics presented that way. The fact that they are in the same chapter is nothing more than a convenient man-made division, which has been quite helpful, but not necessarily inspired.

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Uncleaness Is Removed from the Camp of Israel

And Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 5:1]

A true *red-lettered edition* of the Bible would just about run out of red ink in Leviticus and Numbers. The parallel passage for the next four verses is Leviticus 15:1–33.

"Command the sons of Israel, and they will send out of the camp every leper and everyone with an issue and everyone defiled in regard to the dead body [lit., in regard to the soul]. [Numbers 5:2]

According to the NIV Study Bible, these discharges from the body were primarily continual discharges from the sexual organs. This is not merely confined to sexually transmitted diseases, but could also refer to women who are hemorrhaging, as in Luke 8:43–48.

We might look upon this as cruel, but the camp of Israel is illustrative of those who are set aside for Yahweh and the only ones who can be set aside are those who are without spot and without blemish. Everyone else is dismissed from the camp, as they are illustrative of what it means to be lost. The NIV Study Bible called them *object lessons*. The concept of uncleaness was not left abstract nebulous; but God gave Israel concrete illustrations of uncleaness. Any uncleaness whatsoever, and you are kept from fellowship with God and from God's blessing. In this day and age when so many people claim to visit face to face with Jesus while they are shaving, or visit with God the Son in between watching *Lavern and Shirley*,²⁸ we have totally lost track that God is perfection; God is holy. Contact with God is not some whimsical notion. God does not have any contact with that which is unclean.

The ultimate, if you will, in the realm of uncleaness, was that of a dead body. This is a person whose entire earthly existence has stopped; his internal organs no longer function; his body has run out of energy and has begun to decay. It illustrates the absolutely lost state that we find ourselves in with no way out of this life except

²⁸ John MacArthur, Jr.'s *Charismatic Chaos*, pp. 29–30, 37.

death. This is why contact with the dead is considered an act of uncleanness. We are not speaking of punishment here or wrongdoing, but contact which makes one unclean. Just as the entire earth and the entire realm of humanity became unclean due to the sins of Adam and the woman; so now we, as of the earth, are unclean. Our Lord, whose work on the cross cleanses us from all unrighteousness, had contact with the dead, as in the case of the daughter of the synagogue official in Mark 5:41—His contact gave her life instead of making Him unclean, as He that is in us is greater than he that is in the world.

"From male even to female, you [plural] will send out—outside the camp; so that [lit., and] they will not defile their camps in the midst of which I am temporarily dwelling. [Numbers 5:3]

We are going to look at a couple of prepositions in the verse and the final verb:

ʿAd (אֲד) [pronounced *gahd*] is used in four entirely different ways: it can be a noun which means *perpetuity*, a noun which means *booty, prey*, a preposition that means *as far as, even to, up to, until, while*, and a conjunction that means *until, until that, to the point that, so that even*. Here is a preposition which clearly states that every single person is subject to this ban from the camp. Strong's #5704 BDB #723.

Describing where one is sent with regard to the camp is two prepositions. ʾEl (אֵל) [pronounced *eh*] and it is a preposition which denotes direction and is often rendered *in, into, unto*. Strong's #413 BDB #39. It is followed by the prefixed preposition *min* (מִן) [pronounced *min*], a preposition which denotes separation (*away from, out from, out of from*). The noun which follows means *outside*. They are being sent in the direction of the outside of the camp away with everyone else. This is all said by placing these two little prepositions prior to the word *outside*.

After the first person pronoun, the final verb is the Qal active participle of *shākan* (שָׁכַן) [pronounced *shaw-KAHN*], the verbal cognate for our word *tabernacle (tent)*. This is why many translations render this *where I tabernacle*. God dwelling in the camp of Israel, in the tent of meeting, speaks of fellowship on earth and of an eternal relationship in heaven. Strong's #7931 BDB #1014.

In the Bible, we have distinctions between the sexes—that is the laws are applied differently. We have areas where either the man or the woman is named, but what is covered is applicable to both sexes. And, there are passages like this where it is made clear that uncleanness cuts across sexual lines. So there is no confusion, all males and females alike were cast outside the camp. A marvelous illustration, untouched here but implied: what of the man whose wife is unclean and put outside the camp, yet he loves her? What are his options? He chooses to join her in the area of the unclean outside the camp, just as our Lord Jesus Christ left the throne room of God to pursue His beloved Israel, who is outside the camp through uncleanness.

God's Presence remained with Israel in the tent of meeting, foretelling what would occur in eternity. **And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the tent of God is among men and He will dwell among them and they will be His people and God Himself will be among them. And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be death; there will no longer be mourning, or crying or pain; the first things have passed away." And nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying will ever come into it [the new Jerusalem], but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life (Revelation 21:3–4, 27).**

"And the sons of Israel did so, and they sent them outside the camp; as Yahweh had spoken to Moses, so have the sons of Israel done. [Numbers 5:4]

Our often used verb for *to do, manufacture, make*—ʾâsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced *gaw-SAWH*]—is found here twice; first in the Qal imperfect tense, referring to a process; and then in the Qal perfect, meaning the action was completed. Strong's #6213 BDB #793.

They rounded up those who were with physical defects, which took time—this is a process; and finally, they were removed from the camp. That was the completed (perfective) action. This in no way means that these persons were unbelievers or that they had no chance of being saved. They played a part in God's plan. We all have a place in God's plan and their was outside the camp to portray God's absolute perfection and holiness.

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Confession and Restitution

Leviticus 6:1–7

And Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 5:5]

We covered the doctrine of inspiration back in Genesis; however, it does not get much more inspired than this. There are people who try to draw a connection between v. 4 and v. 5 (and between vv. 10 and 11; however, there is no need for such a relation to exist. This are presented as different periods of time when Yahweh spoke to Moses. Therefore, just because they appear in the same chapter, does not mean they hae to be related or connect, nor is there necessarily a natural segue between these three portions of scripture.

"Speak to the sons of Israel, man or woman, when they do any of the sins of mankind, in regard to acting unfaithfully in unfaithfulness against Yahweh and that person is guilty. [Numbers 5:6]

The direct vocabulary of God is sometimes more complex than what I am able to deal with without examining it. There are two different words for *man* here, the first, with *woman*, is without the definite article and is therefore rendered by some Bibles as *a man or a woman*; and the second word for *man* has the definite article and is more of a generic term. Since it is in the singular, I have gone with *mankind*. This is a sin which was against another person, which is why it is called a *sin of mankind*. This is followed by the verb and its cognate, *acting unfaithfully* and *unfaithful*. This gives great emphasis upon the transgression.

The Bible so far has already given us a list of transgressions against God. Now we are going to deal with those who have transgressed against Him.

"And they will confess their sin which they have done and he will make restitution [for] his guilt with its principal [lit. full amount], and it fifth is added to it, and he will give it to him in reference to whom he had been guilty. [Numbers 5:7]

Confess is the Hithpael perfect of *yâdâh* (יָדָה) [pronounced *yaw-DAWH*]. This word is used sparingly to cast or throw when found in the Qal or the Piel;²⁹ in the Hiphil, the causative stem, it is used to give thanks (1Chronicles 16:4 23:30 Psalm 106:47) and occasionally *to confess* (1Kings 8:33, 35 Job 40:14—this is usually the infinitive and the imperative), and *to praise* (Psalm 54:6 76:10 99:3—this is usually in the imperfect tense). Finally, in the Hithpael, which is the reflexive intensive (the reflexive of the Piel stem), it means *confess* (Leviticus 5:5 2Chronicles 30:22 Ezra 10:1). In all of these examples, we are throwing something down; we are placing our thanks before Yahweh, we are throwing our confession before Him. Strong's #3034 BDB #392.

Shûwb (שׁוּב) [pronounced *shoo^bv*] is found over a thousand times in the Old Testament. In the simple Qal stem, it just means *to turn back, to return* (Genesis 16:9 Josh. 2:23 Judges 15:19); however, in the Hiphil (the causative) stem, it can mean *to be caused to return* (2Samuel 19:11 2Chronicles 6:25), *to bring* (Genesis 14:16 28:15), or *to return something, to restore, to make restitution*. (Neh. 5:11 Proverbs 24:12 Lam. 3:64). Strong's #7725 BDB #996.

Obviously what has happened it that the guilty party has defrauded or caused harm to the plaintive, and he is restoring to him what was due plus 20%.

V. 8 is somewhat confusing. It's difficult to tell whether the guilty party is making restitution to a kinsman or whether the kinsman is making restitution on his behalf. The translations read:

²⁹ It is only used three times this way—Jeremiah 50:14 Lam. 3:53 and Zech. 1:21

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	But if the man [wronged] has no kinsman to whom the restitution may be made, let it be given to the Lord for the priest, besides the ram of atonement with which atonement shall be made for the offender.
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	But if one have no kinsman unto whom he may make good that wherein he is guilty then that wherein he is guilty, which is to be restored to Yahweh shall be the priest's,—besides the ram of propitiation, wherewith a propitiatory covering is to be put over him.
KJV	But if the man have no kinsman to recompense the trespass unto, let the trespass be recompensed unto the LORD, <i>even</i> to the priest; beside the ram of the atonement, whereby an atonement shall be made for him.
NASB	But if the man has no relative to whom restitution may be made for the wrong, the restitution which is made for the wrong <i>must</i> go to the LORD for the priest, besides the ram of atonement, by which atonement is made for him.
NIV	But if that person has no close relative to whom restitution can be made for hte wrong, the restitution belongs to the LORD and must be given to the priest, along with the ram with which atonement is made for him.
NRSV	If the injured party has no next of kin to whom restitution may be made for the wrong, the restitution for wrong shall go to the LORD for the priest, in addition to the ram of atonement with which atonement is made for the guilty party.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	And if the man have no redeemer to restore the guilt to, the guilt which is restored <i>is</i> Jehovah's, the preist's, apart from the ram of the atonements, whereby he maketh atonement for him.

This obviously is not going to be an easy verse to exegete. This verse begins with a conjunction, an hypothetical particle (*if*) and a negative. Then we have the word for *man* that we had in the previous verse—'îysh (אִישׁ) [pronounced *eesh*]*—*this was the word found where we had *man or woman*. Strong's #376 BDB #35. Therefore, this is likely the guilty party, although grammatically it is not impossible for this to refer to the one who was transgressed against. So far this would read: *And if not a man...* However, preceding *a man* is the prefixed lâmed preposition, which means *to, for, in regard to*. Therefore it reads: *And if not to a man...* This is followed by the Qal active participle of gâ'al (גָּאֵל) [pronounced *gaw-AHL*], the verb for *redeem*. Because we have a preposition before *man* and because there is no verb for *has* or *is*, we would translate this: *And if not to a man [there is] one redeeming...* This makes reasonable sense when one leaves out the helping phrase *there is*. Strong's #1350 BDB #145.

What follows is the lâmed prefixed preposition and the Hiphil infinitive construct of shûwb (שׁוּב) [pronounced *shoo^bv*], which means *to restore, to make restitution*. The lâmed plus the infinitive makes this act just like an verb infinitive in the English. This is followed by the definite article and the word for *guilt, offense* or *guilt-offense*. Unlike most of the translations, there are no relative pronouns and no prepositions here. This portion should read *to restore the offense*. We have seen that this word can stand for the guilt one has, the offense that he has committed, or the offering which is given on behalf of the offense, the guilt-offering. Strong's #7725 BDB #996.

Then we have a preposition which could be rendered *regarding, to, unto*; which gives us some leeway for interpretation here. It is affixed to a singular masculine suffix. This is followed by the definite article and the word for *guilt-offense* again, and the Hophal participle of *restore*. The Hophal stem is the passive causative stem. The subject receives the action of the verb. In the participle, we do not have to have a subject per se, yet the verb is still in the passive-causative stem. Then we have the lâmed preposition and Yahweh, and the lâmed preposition, a definite article, and the masculine singular of *priest*. So far, we have *And if not to a man one redeeming to restore the offense regarding him, the offense being restored for Yahweh, for the priest...*

Finally we have some agreement in [most of] the translations: *apart from the ram of atonements [or, coverings], with which it covers [or, atones] for him*.

"And if not to a man a redeemer—to restore the offense [or, the guilt] to him—the offense restoring [is] for Yahweh—for the priest, apart from the ram of the coverings [lit., atonements], with which it covers [or, atones] for him. [Numbers 5:8]

Here is a case where there is not someone to whom the guilty party can make restitution for what he has done wrong; that which he should use to restore to another is given directly to Yahweh—actually, to the priests, who represent Yahweh. Here the *redeemer* is the one who receives restitution. He is not doing the redeeming but receiving the redemption. In addition to the redemption amount, there is the ram which is sacrificed for the sin.

"And every contribution to the holy things of the sons of Israel, which they approach [with] to the priest will be his; [Numbers 5:9]

When things are contributed to the tabernacle or for the sacrifices or for the furniture, these things become the priests'. We have a large segment of the population of Israel who serve God directly and have to be remunerated for not being able to go out in a free enterprise system and make a lot of money. In fact, they cannot make any money—it is only what God provides them.

"And any man's hallowed [lit., set apart] things are his; whatever³⁰ any man gives to the priest is his." [Numbers 5:10]

God allowed for all things given to Him to go directly to the priests as His particular people. Just as Israel were a peculiar people to God among the nations, the priests are a peculiar people to God among the sons of Israel.

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The Determination of the Unfaithfulness of a Wife

And Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 5:11]

This means we are dealing with a new topic.

"Speak to the people of Israel and you will say to them, a man of a man—when his woman goes astray and acts unfaithfully [or, commits an infraction] against him—an act of unfaithfulness [or, infraction]. [Numbers 5:12]

We have just recently had the verb *ma'al* (מָאַל) [pronounced *MAH-ġah!*] and its noun cognate used together. It is usually translated *to act unfaithfully*, *to act treacherously* and I have often rendered this as *to commit an infraction*. We had a similar construction in v. 6. Here is the verb in the Qal imperfect, the prepositional phrase *against him* and the noun. Strong's #4604 BDB #591.

"And a man lies with her—the laying of seed—and it is concealed from the eyes of her man, and she goes undetected, yet [lit., and] she has been defiled and [there is] no witness against her and she has not been taken in the act [lit. she has not been seized]; [Numbers 5:13]

Although it is fairly obvious what is occurring here, I will cover some of these words anyway. We have the Niphal (passive) perfect of *'âlam* (עָלַם) [pronounced *ġaw-LAHM*] means *to veil from sight*, *to conceal*. Strong's #5956 BDB #761.

The next verb is the Niphal perfect of *çâthar* (סָתַר) [pronounced *saw-THAR*] and it means *to hide*, *to conceal*. The difference between these two words is that the first verb describes what is done behind closed doors, in a tent,

³⁰ Some codices, the Septuagint, Syriac and the Vulgate, read *but what*.

under a veil—that is, an act which is concealed; and the second word is an act of concealment. Strong's #5641 BDB #711.

The final verb is tâphas (תָּפַח) [pronounced *taw-FAHS*] and it means *to manipulate, to seize*. What is amazing here is that the woman, who is a responder, has committed this act of adultery. However, every single verb in this verse of the last four verbs is in the Niphal, the passive, stem—the receiving, responding stem. Only the first verb is in the Qal, where the man is the subject of the verb. Strong's #8610 BDB #1074.

"And a spirit of jealousy has passed over him, and he is jealous of his woman, yet [lit., and] she has not been [discovered as having been] defiled; [Numbers 5:14]

We have the exact same construction as v. 13 where it reads *she has been defiled* except there is a negative here. What is implied, but not outrightly stated is that *she has not been discovered to receive defilement*. There is a terrific closeness between a man and wife and when adultery has occurred, very often the wronged party knows it has occurred. They cannot put their finger on it, but something is terribly wrong. This does not mean that every time a person is suspicious that adultery has occurred; some people are mentally ill and are in almost a constant state of jealousy. The other way to look at these two verses is in v. 13, she has defiled herself and in v. 14 she has not defiled herself and, in both cases, the husband is suspicious of her activity. Whichever the scenario, the woman is not exposed unquestionably as an adulteress, yet the husband suspects infidelity on her part. **For jealousy enrages a man and he will not spare in the day of vengeance; he will not accept any ransom nor will he be content though you give many gifts (Proverbs 6:34–35).**

The thrust of this passage is the determination of the innocence or the guilt of the woman. Adultery is terribly destructive and hurtful to any marriage and the accusation of unfaithfulness is almost as devastating when the accuser is wrong. It is important to discern at this point if the woman is guilty.

What has to be emphasized next is that early on in God's relationship with Israel, God was more spectacular in the realm of signs and wonders. Yahweh performed more miracles and did more things which were extraordinary than occurred later in the history of Israel and certainly more than the church age after the first century. Therefore, the next portion of this chapter should be examined in that context.

"Then [lit., and] the man will bring his woman to the priest and he will bring in her offering for her, a tenth of the ephah of barley meal. He will not pour oil on it nor will he put on it frankincense, for it [is] a tribute-offering of jealousy—it [is] a tribute-offering of remembrance—a remembrance of guilt-iniquity. [Numbers 5:15]

Let me take an unpopular stance. When either party of a marriage has been unfaithful, it is damaging often beyond repair. However, I think that unfaithfulness on the part of the wife cuts deeper into the soul of the man than his infidelities cut into her soul. A woman seems to be better able to forgive such a trespass, although it may take years for her to do so; a man often cannot ever forgive such a thing. This is not a matter of right or wrong; just a matter of a generalized difference between the sexes.

Marriage illustrates Yahweh's relationship to Israel.³¹ The most famous analogy—which was based on historical fact—is the relationship between Hosea and Gomer. Hosea took a wife who was unfaithful to him and he continued to go after her until he finally found her at a slave auction and purchased her for the price of a gored bull. His compassion and love, despite her unfaithfulness, illustrates our Lord's love for Israel. God has not cast Israel aside because of her continued unfaithfulness. **"And it will never again be the confidence of the house of Israel, bringing to mind the iniquity of their having turned to Egypt. Then they will know that I am Yahweh Elohim."**

³¹ Marriage also illustrates the relationship between Christ and the church. Even though Yahweh Elohim and Jesus Christ are one and the same, He is not an adulterer or a bigamist—marriage is an illustration, an analogy. Such literary things are used to make something more understandable, but not every single aspect of marriage can be pursued to explain the relationship between Yahweh Elohim and Israel. The doctrine is known to God and known to the one teaching it; the analogy is a reference point to hang the doctrine on. An analogy helps to explain a doctrine; it is not the doctrine itself.

(Ezekiel 29:16). Although a husband whose wife has been unfaithful to might bear this in his soul forever, God will not recall the unfaithfulness of Israel.

"And the priest will bring her near and will cause her to stand before Yahweh; [Numbers 5:16]

We are coming to a portion of Scripture which was abused in later years. You have to always take into consideration that although what is described is true and worked in those days; this does not mean that this particular function will last for all time. The only reason I am able to go to the Old Testament and dig out what is there is because I had an outstanding Bible teacher, R.B. Thieme, guide me through the New Testament doctrine and place everything into perspective. So many cults and so-called *Christian* movements have been waylaid by charismatic leaders who did not have a clue as to how to interpret the Old Testament. So let me make this clear:

What happens at a new dispensation or increment of a dispensation?

1. God has just delivered the newly formed nation Israel from Egypt.
2. Yahweh delivered Israel using great signs, wonders and miracles.
3. The Jews were used to God working great deeds before their eyes. They were almost callous toward such miracles.
4. At the beginning of almost any dispensation or at any change of a dispensation, there is often a preponderance of supernatural activity which belongs to God.
5. Therefore, what follows has to be put into that historical context, just as we place the miracles and wonders of our Lord into the context of His first coming; and just as we put the miracles and wonders performed by the apostles during the first part of the first century into that historical perspective.
6. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever refers to His essence as God; it obviously does not refer to His incarnation, His actual time spent here on earth. It has nothing to do with signs and wonders being present during every period of time during every dispensation.

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"And the priest will take holy water in an earthen vessel, and of the dust which is on the floor of the tabernacle, the priest will take it and place [it] into the water; [Numbers 5:17]

For those who believe that talking face-to-face with God while alive on earth or speaking in tongues or healings; you may want to take careful notes here and perform this determiner of guilt or innocence.

"And the priest will cause the woman to stand before Yahweh, and he will uncover the woman's head and he will give into her palms the offering of remembrance—it [is] an offering of jealousy, and in the hand of the priest are the bitter waters—the [waters of] cursing. [Numbers 5:18]

Which cause the curse or that bring the curse, are two common renders of the end of this verse—albeit, not altogether grammatically accurate. This is a masculine plural (referring back to waters), Piel (intensive stem) participle (making this verb act like an adjectival noun) and a definite article (referring to a specific substantive) means this verse should end as —*the cursing*. I have supplied additional words to attempt to give this more readability in the English language without entirely destroying the grammatical correctness.

One of the things that we totally miss in this verse is the paronomasia [pronounced *par-o-no-MA-si-a*—the term, paronomasia, is the two Greek words, para (for *beside*) and onomazō (meaning, *to name*). Two things which sound the same are placed next to one another, either for emphasis, contrast, additional information.

Bullinger writes: *The figure is very frequently used and is never to be disregarded. This figure is common to all languages, but the instances cannot readily be translated from one language to another.*³²

The last three words of this verse read: *mêy hammârîym ham'êl'ârîym* (יֵם מִיִּרְמָה מִיִּרְאָמָה) [pronounced *may-ham-maw-reem-ham'aw-ra-eem*]. As we saw, it was difficult to put together a flowing translation, but part of that problem was the grammar of this verse takes second place to the paronomasia.

So the priest has the woman stand before Yahweh—it is not specified whether this is a public trial or not—and he uncovers her head; and he places the barley meal into her hands. He has the water mixed with dust in his hand (also called the dirty water). The uncovering of the woman's hair shows her submission to the court of law.

"And the priest will cause her to swear, and will say to the woman, 'If no man has lain with you, and if you have not turned aside [to] uncleanness while you under your man—[then] be free of these waters of bitterness bringing the curse; [Numbers 5:19]

The woman will testify before God that she has not been unfaithful to her man while being under him.

" 'And you, if you have turned aside under your husband and if you have been defiled and a man has place in you copulation other than your husband;' [Numbers 5:20]

I am not certain how far I want to examine the word *copulation* here except to say that it is only found here and in Leviticus 5:33 18:20 and 20:15. Does it mean what you think it means? I am not certain; I haven't studied these verse enough in the original languages.

"And the priest will make the woman take an oath—an oath of a solemn pledge [lit., swear a swearing of a solemn pledge] and the priest will say to the woman, 'Yahweh give you a solemn pledge and an oath in the midst of your people in Yahweh's giving your uterus [or, reproductive system] to fall [or, to be brought down] and your womb to swell; [Numbers 5:21]

We have looked at the word for *swearing an oath* before—*shâba'* (שָׁבַע) [pronounced *shaw^b-VAHG*] and it may be recognizable to some because it looks so close to the word for Sabbath and seven. It is a verb which literally means to seven oneself or to bind oneself with seven things. It is a verb for *swearing to something, binding yourself to something, giving your word on something, even taking an oath*. Here it is found first in the Hiphil perfect—the causative stem with completed action—so this one word is translated *will make...take an oath*. Strong's #7650 BDB #989.

This is followed by the noun cognate, *shebû'âh* (שִׁבְעָה) [pronounced *she^b-voo-ÇAH*]; in the original Hebrew, it is formed by merely adding an *h*; however, the pronunciation was also quite different. We simply render this *swear a swearing* to illustrate the solemnity of the oath (in the English, it just sounds corny; in the Hebrew, it carries great weight). Strong's #7621 BDB #989

At the other end of the Hebrew dictionary we have the word *'âlâh* (אָלַח) [pronounced *aw-LAW*], commonly translated *oath, curse, or execration* (whatever the heck an *execration* is). We might also think to translate this as *attestation, solemn oath, statement under oath, vow, guarantee, pledge, judicial oath, solemn declaration, solemn promise*. We first find this word used in Genesis 24:41, and although most translators use the word *oath*, even a superficial examination of that context finds that this is not the best rendering of *'âlâh*. An *oath* is something that you make to someone else. Therefore, in this context, it is more of *an agreement, a pact, an obligation, a commitment, a verbal contract*. Strong's #423 BDB #46.

The difference between the two words is *'âlâh* is a *solemn oath, a verbal contract, a guarantee, or a pledge* that you make to another person; whereas *shebû'âh* is an oath *extracted* from someone else. Furthermore, *'âlâh* can

³² Bullinger's *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, p. 307.

mean a *cursing* (see Deuteronomy 30:7 Psalm 10:7 59:12);³³ however, it appears to me that *cursing* is a short-cut for saying that a solemn promise has been made which involves the cursing to whomever this promise is made. That is, Yahweh makes a solemn promise and this solemn promise includes His wrath to fall upon someone.

The next verb found twice in this verse is the very common *nâthan* (נָתַן) [pronounced *naw-THAHN*], which means *to give, to set, to place, to put*. A full four pages of BDB are given to this word, making it rank right up there with most prepositions (which BDB gives the most space to in general). It is first found in the Qal perfect and then in the Qal infinitive construct (the construct simply means that you can follow the word with our English word *of*). Strong's #5414 BDB #678.

Yahweh will cause the thigh to *nâphal* (נָפַל) [pronounced *naw-FAHL*]. This word is given two pages in BDB and means *to fall, to lie, to die a violent death, to be brought down, to settle, to sleep deeply*. Strong's #5307 BDB #656 This woman has possibly lain with another man. Therefore, God will bring her uterus or reproductive system to fall, to be brought down.

The word translated *thigh* in the KJV is *yârek*^e (יָרֵךְ) [pronounced *yaw-REK^e*] and this word is also found in Genesis 24:2, 9 Exodus 32:25, 31–32 46:26 47:29 Exodus 1:5 25:31 Judges 3:16. In most of these verses, it is translated *thigh*, with the notable exceptions of Genesis 46:26 and Exodus 1:5, where Jacob's immediate progeny were said to have come out of his *yârek*^e (יָרֵךְ) [pronounced *yaw-REK^e*], which is rendered *loins* in these two verses (also, see Judges 8:30). This use connects it unquestionably with progeny; so we care causing the *loins* to fall here. The same word is rendered *shaft* in Exodus 25:31 and 37:17, as in the *shaft* of the lampstand. This word is found translated *side* in Exodus 32:27 40:22, 24 Leviticus 1:11 Numbers 3:29, 35. So, to explain my translation: It does not make much sense to cause someone's thigh or side *to fall, to be brought down, to die a violent death*. *Yârek*^e (יָרֵךְ) [pronounced *yaw-REK^e*] is clearly associated with progeny in some passages (Genesis 46:26 Judges 8:30). *Yârek*^e can be translated in the dual and there can be a *right yârek*^e (יָרֵךְ) [pronounced *yaw-REK^e*] (Exodus 28:42 Judges 3:21 SOS 7:1). *yârek*^e (יָרֵךְ) [pronounced *yaw-REK^e*] can also be clearly singular where there is no *left* or *right yârek*^e possible (Exodus 25:31 Numbers 8:4). Context should always be taken into account when rendering a translation. The next word means *womb*. Therefore, I have translated this *uterus or reproductive system*. Strong's #3409 BDB #437.

I am certain that there are many who think that I get far too technical when it comes to the language and the examination of the language. Just how the heck do you think you got any English translation? These translators did not sit around calling upon the Holy Ghost to guide their hands and their hearts and then just wrote what their hearts told them to write. Those who were believers certainly called upon God the Holy spirit for guidance; however, their ability to translate a verse came from years upon years of study of the original languages. Prior to the were years of preparation. They worked to get the best manuscripts and examined with great scrutiny alternate readings. A translation just does not happen without great formal training and your examination of God's Word does just not happen. Not only am I fortunate enough to have spent roughly 8000 hours under the teaching of one of the best Bible exegetes of the 20th century, but I stand upon the shoulders of many great men whose works in philology, history, textual criticism and language are fundamental—absolutely crucial—to my own work. Without such dedicated men as R.B. Thieme, Robert Young, George Wigram, James Strong, Dr. Spiros Zodhiates, John Owens, Brown, Driver, Briggs and Gesenius, James Freeman, E.W. Bullinger, and hundreds—probably thousands more—many of whom I will not know even by name until I reach heaven, my work would be trivial and absolutely mediocre at best. The finger has no meaning or use apart from the hand, which is useless apart from the arm—my place in the Christian community, albeit as humble as it is, would be a thousand times less without the dedication and hard, lifetime work of these men. You will never know how many hundreds of thousands of believers from centuries past have touched and enriched your life with their personal dedication and you have no idea how many lives that you will touch in your representation of Jesus Christ here on earth and for how many generations your impact will be felt. In eternity future, I suspect that we will all be amazed as to the intricacy and interdependency of God's plan and how incredibly blessed we are to be able to take any part in it.

³³ Also examine in particular Deuteronomy 29:12, 14, 19, 20, and 21—Yahweh goes back and forth between the meanings *giving a verbal guarantee* and *cursing*.

Beṭen (בֶּטֶן) [pronounced *BEH-ten*] primarily means womb, and, so far in the Bible, has been used in no other way (Genesis 25:23–24 30:2 36:27 are all of the prior references).³⁴ Strong's #990 BDB #105.

The final word, translated *to swell*, sounds as though it speaks of pregnancy. However, this verb is found only in Numbers 5:22, 27 and this related adjective is found only in this verse.³⁵ We don't have anything else to guide us, other than the fact that we are speaking of a womb. At this point in time, I will take the easy way out and say the God will promise that she will be impregnated by this other person. The problem is that there are other more common words which could have been used, either for giving birth or for swelling, which were not. The NIV Study Bible take on this verse, which is interesting, and has great application to this day, is that what is being said is that these waters, through God's intervening action, will cause the woman to miscarry and to become barren. Since the meanin of *swell* is not certain, and because the word translated *thigh* in most English Bibles is almost nonsensical, this is not an unreasonable take on this verse's meaning. Looking at it from the perspective of the ancient world, no man would bring his woman before a priest under these circumstances if the child in her womb could be his. From the perspective of this age, this clearly allows for an abortion under certain circumstances—but note who makes the choice—the husband when he suspects infidelity. This would allow for abortion, by application, for cases of rape. Personally, if the woman's life was at stake, I would support an abortion, although that inference cannot be gotten from this verse.

Recall that in Leviticus 20:10, the punishment for being taken in adultery was death. Here, the man is uncertain, so he depends upon God to (1) determine the woman's guilt or innocence; and (2) he further depends upon God for the punishment of the woman. **Marriage [is] in honor among all, and let the bed [be] undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers** (Hebrews 13:4).

It is interesting that we have the same offense dealt with differently because of the way guilt was determined. Let me give you an application—when a person is undeniably guilty of a particular crime, no amount of legal maneuvering or loopholes should preclude the swift application of justice. A lawyer should not be faulted for the clever and dedicated defense provided for his client; however, our system of law should be faulted when it allows cleverness to supplant justice.

"And these waters which cause the curse [lit., the solemn promise] to go into your bowels, to cause your womb to swell and to cause [the] uterus [or, reproductive system] to fall;' and the woman will say, 'Amen amen [lit., truly truly].' [Numbers 5:22]

To fall was in the Hiphil, or causative stem. God clearly will promise that her sin will be revealed and that there will be physical manifestations of her sin. It appears as though there are more physical manifestations than simply pregnancy. As many know, *amen* is merely a transliteration of the Hebrew, which means *truly, verily*. Often our Lord would say, *verily, verily, I say unto you*. This is the same idea.

"And the priest will write these solemn promises in a book and he will blot out with the bitter waters; [Numbers 5:23]

Leaving the immediate context, note that we have one of the many references to writing here. People could write in that day and time and it was not an abnormal thing for someone to be able to do. Yahweh does not call for a priest who has the ability to write; this is assumed with this verse, indicating that this skill was wide spread, if not relatively universal in Israel. We are not dealing with cave men here—these people were very likely our superiors in intellect; this is revealed in their rich vocabulary and in the nuances of the Hebrew grammar and syntax. There are times that we cannot fully grasp what is being said in a verse of Hebrew not always due to understanding the individual meanings of the words, but that these thoughts are sometimes more complex than our minds are willing to ponder. God's Word can be complex and we do not plumb its depths by closing our eyes and putting our finger

³⁴ It is also found in Numbers 5:22, 27 Deuteronomy 7:13 28:4, 11, 18, 33 30:9; these are **all** the references to it in the Torah.

³⁵ For those who are checking up on my and wonder what about Isaiah 29:7—that is the verb ^ʿāḇvā' (אָבַו) [pronounced *aw^b-VAW*] and not 'ābeh.

on a verse. Nor do we go to the Bible to find our *life verse*.³⁶ Our ignorance before God is so unbelievably pathetic and our lack of interest in His truth is so appalling. We have so many superficial brethren who—let's put it this way, in many families there is this one person that you do not really want anyone else to know you are related to. These, in God's family, are the *life-versers* and the people who close their eyes and place their finger on a verse for guidance. We might spend eternity with them and without their old sin natures, they may even be likeable. However, when they're invited over for Thanksgiving dinner, I might end up going out to MacDonald's.

Back to exegesis. The man's jealous feelings have brought the woman before the priest; the priest records in a book her solemn oath that she has not lain with another man. God has made a promise of definite physical manifestations of her sin before all of Israel. Many husbands, in these circumstances, are unable to copulate with their wives, and, if a pregnancy results, it is clear to them they were not the father.

In this verse we have the Qal perfect of *mâchâh* (מָחָה) [pronounced *maw-KHAWH*]*—it means to stroke, to rub, to erase, and the implication is that something is being smoothed. This can be used in a positive or a negative way. God promised to wipe out every living thing in Genesis 7:4 (prior to the flood); see also Deuteronomy 25:19 29:20 2Kings 21:13 Psalm 9:5. However, it can be used to wipe away sin, or to blot out transgressions, as in Psalm 51:1, 9 Isaiah 43:25. Furthermore, it can be used to wipe away every tear (Isaiah 25:8). What has happened is that the priest writes her oath on papyrus and then washes or wipes it with the bitter water which he has prepared. Strong's #4229 BDB #562.*

"Then he will cause the woman to drink the bitter waters the cursing [waters]; and the water—the cursing—will enter into her for bitterness. [Numbers 5:24]

Now we have a word for curse: the Piel participle of *'ârar* (אָרַר) [pronounced *aw-RAHR*], which means *to bitterly curse*. The previous words given did not appear to be curses—that is, they did not appear to be used in the negative sense, although that could be implied. What seems to be the case is that they were given promises or extracted promises. Here, it means *curse*, pure and simple (Genesis 12:3 Exodus 22:28 Judges 5:23 Malachi 2:2). This is in the Piel stem, which is intensive, and it has the grammatical notation of a direct object, which is why I translated as though it read that the woman was drinking the...cursing waters. This verb is repeated; it is used again as a direct object. If the woman has slept with another man, her action is one that will cause great bitterness in the soul of her man—as some have found it, this can be an irreparable bitterness. Strong's #779 BDB #76.

"And the priest will take out of the hand of the woman the tribute-offering of the jealousy and he will wave the tribute offering before Yahweh, and he will approach with it to the altar; [Numbers 5:25]

The woman has brought an offering; she may or may not be guilty but her husband suspects her of being guilty. The priest takes the offering and approaches Yahweh with the offering.

"And the priest will take a handful of the tribute-offering—its memorial—and he will cause it to smoke on the altar; and afterwards, he will cause the woman to drink the water. [Numbers 5:26]

Many of the tribute offerings were grain offerings (though not all), so this is how the priest is able to take a handful of it. Then the priest puts this handful of the tribute offering on the altar, where there probably is something already burning, and this causes smoke to come up to God. Recall that a grain offering is often one of fellowship

³⁶ For those of you who are lucky enough to not know what I am talking about; a *life verse* is a verse which corresponds with your birthday. Mine is October 9th, 10/9, so, since I was just in Isaiah, I have just turned to Isaiah to find my *life verse*, the verse that I will memorize and use for comfort and guidance throughout my life: Isaiah 10:9: **Is not Calno [possibly, Calneh] like Carchemish, or Hamath like Arpad, or Samaria like Damascus?** I have a feeling that many times in the future I will find great comfort and solace in this, my life verse. However, to be fair to those who propagate this superficial *life verse* idea, I really should have gone to Numbers, the book I am presently studying, for 10:9. I guess that I will have to start carrying a trumpet wherever I go.

and if the woman has committed adultery, then she is out of fellowship. Finally, the priest causes the woman to drink the water³⁷.

"In fact [lit., and], he will cause her to drink the water and it will come to pass for her [lit. she will become]—if she has been defiled and has acted unfaithfully [in] unfaithfulness against her husband—the cursing waters have gone into her for bitter things, and her womb will swell and her uterus [or, reproductive system] will fall, and the woman will become a curse in the midst of her people. [Numbers 5:27]

I don't quite follow why her *thigh would fall* or even what that means, other than perhaps an allusion to morning sickness; however, what appears to be the likely scenario is that she makes a public declaration of her innocence and several months later, her unfaithfulness will become known through her pregnancy. In reading through some of the English translations, it sounded more mysterious and elaborate than that.

"And if the woman has not been defiled but is clean; then [lit., and] she will be acquitted and she may sow seed. [Numbers 5:28]

Nâqâh (נָקָה) [pronounced *naw-KAWH*], although said to mean *to clean, to empty*, it really means *to be acquitted, unpunished, declared free or declared guiltless* (Niphal, or passive, stem—Genesis 24:8 Exodus 21:19 Jeremiah 2:35), and *cleansed, acquitted, declared innocent* (Piel, or intensive, stem—Exodus 20:7 Psalm 19:12 Joel 3:21). This verb is found in the Qal stem only in Jeremiah 49:12. Strong #5352 BDB #667.

The last verb is the Niphal perfect of the verb which means *to sow seed* and this is followed by the masculine singular of the word for *seed*; this means that, once acquitted, she can return to having children by her husband.

The NIV Study Bible points out that, while some of us may look upon these steps as severe and damaging, a greater wrong would give the woman no recourse whatsoever when accused. A man tired of his wife or a man who has an affair on the side could not frivolously accuse his wife of adultery, divorce her and establish a relationship with another woman. In such a strongly male-dominated society, this sort of action would leave a former wife without financial support and branded for the rest of her life. This law along with the laws dealing with slavery provided rights and legal protection for slaves and women, something almost unheard of in other societies³⁸.

"This: the law of jealousies, when a woman turns aside under her husband and has been defiled; [Numbers 5:29]

This verse summarizes what we have just studied.

"Or when a spirit of jealousy passes over a man and he has become jealous of his wife; then he will cause the woman to stand before Yahweh and the priest will do to her all of this law; [Numbers 5:30]

This is the other side of the coin. Here, the woman is placed before Yahweh and the priest and she will turn out to be guilty.

"And the man will be acquitted from iniquity, and the woman will bear her iniquity." [Numbers 5:31]

³⁷ There is no word for *cause* in this verse; in each case, it is the proper translation of the Hiphil stem, which is the causal stem. The burning of the tribute offering is in the perfect voice, indicating completed action, and the drinking of the water is portrayed as a process. It is not taken in in one gulp, but requires several tries to drink all of it.

³⁸ I really should substantiate this with some legal systems contemporary to Moses.

The man is jealous and that is a sin; however, if the woman has committed adultery, then he is acquitted from being jealous. This is prior to the giving of the Holy Spirit; but still, this is an amazing verse. There are very few sins which God *overlooked*, so to speak; yet, in the case of marriage and unfaithfulness, the man was acquitted of the sin of jealousy if his wife committed adultery.

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Numbers 6

Numbers 6:1–27

Outline of Chapter 6:

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Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

Doctrines Covered	Doctrines Alluded To
	Nazarites

Introduction: Numbers 6 deals with an unusual breed of character—the Nazarite (and the Nazarite vows). Of the stories with which everyone is familiar, that of Sampson is one of the most notorious. Samson was a Nazarite. This is a vocation of personal choice, possibly for those who wished that they were Levites, but were not. Their interest in spiritual service might be greater than that of the average Levite, therefore, the lifestyle of the Nazarite might appeal to such a one. However, this is in no way to be confused with a Nazarene—that is, a person either born or raised in Nazareth. Our Lord was a Nazarene; He was not a Nazarite. So Samson had long hair, as per the Nazarite vows; Jesus Christ did not, because He was not a Nazarite (by vow).

Nazarite Vows

And Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 6:1]

"Speak to the sons of Israel, and you will say to them, when a man or a woman is caused to do that which is extraordinary—to vow the vow of a Nazarite—to separate himself to Yahweh;
[Numbers 6:2]

The first thing which should catch your eye, if you recall anything about Samson, is that a Nazarite can be a man or a woman. Until now, I had never thought of a woman becoming a Nazarite. We have seen before the verb *pâlâ'* (פָּלַא) [pronounced *paw-LAW*], which is usually used of God in reference to doing that which is miraculous or extraordinary. Here, we find this word used the same way, except with reference to a person who has chosen to do that which is extraordinary—set himself apart fully to Yahweh. This is in the Hiphil imperfect, meaning causative continuous action. So this person is caused to make such a choice and, like all spiritual growth, it is done on a day-by-day basis, involving thousands of decisions. Strong's #6381 BDB #810.

There are actually three different words for separation in this verse.

Nazarite is a transliteration. The Hebrew word is *nâzîyr* (נָזִיר) [pronounced *naw-ZEER*] and we have seen this word thrice previously in Scripture: Genesis 49:26 Leviticus 25:5, 11. In Genesis 49:26, we are given the renderings *distinguished* (NASB), *the Separated One (The Emphasized Bible)*, *him that was separate* (KJV), *who was set apart from* (NRSV), and *separate* (Young's); and it is almost ignored, but footnoted as *the one separated from* in the NIV. Whereas most translations transliterate this word, the Septuagint translated it *to separate* (obviously, that is the English translation of the Greek). In Leviticus 25:5, 11, this word is translated *untrimmed vines* (NASB), *separated thing* (Young's) *undressed vine* (KJV), *untended vines* (NIV), and *unpruned vine* (NRSV). The connection here is that this is like a Nazarite with unshorn hair. Strong's #5139 BDB #634.

The corresponding verb is *nâzar* (נָזַר) [pronounced *naw-ZAHR*] and it is translated *to take the vows of a Nazarite, to live as a Nazarite; and more simply to separate, to consecrate* (Leviticus 15:31 22:2 Numbers 6:2–3, 5–6, 12 Ezekiel 14:7 Hosea 9:10 Zech. 7:3). Strong's #5144 BDB #634.

A related masculine noun is *nêzer* (נֵזֶר) [pronounced *nay-ZER*], which means *crown, consecration, Nazariteship*. Strong's #5145 BDB #634. There is actually a connection between these various renderings. It is a crown which separates one man entirely from every other man; the crown is on the head and the Nazarites crown is his hair, which is untrimmed, like the vines during the Sabbath Year. These are words which began with a common meanings and Yahweh coined them to mean *Nazarite, to become a Nazarite*.

It is possible that the vows made herein were similar to vows made by the Jews prior to Mount Sinai, but here they are regulated and made a part of God's Law. Making a vow to separate oneself to God is not to be entered into lightly, nor is this to be an exercise in creativity. God was very specific in what He expected of the Nazarite. This separation to God did not mean that these men or women separated themselves from society, per se. That is, they did not go off into the mountains and live off lettuce and bird seed, as Thieme was wont to say. They remained in the camp of Israel. Famous people who have taken the vows of a Nazarite include Samson (Judges 13:5–7 16:17), Samuel (1Samuel 1:11, 28) and possibly John the Baptist (Luke 1:15) and possibly even Paul (Acts 21:23–26), although it would have been a mistake on the part of Paul to enter into a vow like that during the church age.

The end of this verse is a paronomasia: *lîn^errôr nâzîyr nerer l^ehazzîyr* (לִּנְרוֹר נֵזֶר נֵזֶר לְהַזְזִיר) [pronounced *leen'r-roar naw-zeer neh-zer l'hahz-zeer*], emphasizing the solemn character of this vow.

We have occasionally made reference to the Charismatics; I would guess that there must be a group of them somewhere where of those who, instead of doing incredible miracles or speaking in tongues, they might be taking Nazarite vows.

"From wine and strong drink, he will keep separate; vinegar of wine, and vinegar of strong drink, he will not drink; and any juice of grapes he will not drink; and grapes moist or dry, he will not eat; [Numbers 6:3]

The grapes speak of blessing here on earth. Grapes are a personal favorite of mine and I often have them with breakfast, lunch or dinner. To me, they have the most marvelous taste—not too sweet, but wondrously flavorful. As is pointed out here, the Jews were adept at a great deal of food processing. They used grapes to make both vinegar and wine; they ate grapes raw and as raisins. However, the Nazarite would not eat any of the products associated with grapes, as grapes speak of that which is tied to the earth. They are marvelous blessings from God, but they are a part of this fallen earth.

"All the days of his separation, of anything which is made of the wine-vine, from seeds even to skin, he will not eat. [Numbers 6:4]

There is a complete abstinence from all that which is associated with sinful earthly pleasures. As mentioned, the Nazarite is a type of Jesus Christ, Who is *holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners* (Hebrews 7:26b).

"All days of the vow of his separation, a razor will not pass over his head until the fulness of the days which he had separated to Yahweh—he is separated—the upper part of the hair of his head has grown up. [Numbers 6:5]

Men grow hair on their heads and on their beards. This vow clearly related to the hair of one's head. *And she made a vow and said, "O, Yahweh of the armies, if You will indeed look upon the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me and not forget Your maidservant, but You will give Your maidservant a son, then I will give him to Yahweh all the days of his life, and a razor will never come on his head (1Samuel 1:11).* We have all of these goofy pictures of the patriarchs with this long flowing hair. This was an unusual vow, not taken by any of the patriarchs and not taken by Moses, Aaron, or any of the prophets that we know much about. The point here is

that these men did not all have long, flowing hair. They were not Nazarites. This is a vow of separation. How can you be all that separate if you look exactly like everyone else? Paul made it very clear that **if a man has long hair, it is a shame unto him** (1Corinthians 11:14). Taking the vows of a Nazarite was an exception to this. Obviously, long hair would not be a primary distinguishing mark between Nazarites and everyone else if every other male had long, hippie hair. Also see Ezekiel 44:20.

"All days of his keeping separate to Yahweh, concerning a dying soul he will not go; [Numbers 6:6]

As we have seen, a person who has died represents the ultimate of what this earth has to offer—death. A person's death, although it is a promotion to God, is viewed as tragic and sad—often the result of many accumulated sins and often a result of the natural decay of the body. In any case, from the human standpoint, death is everything which is wrong with this world. We have laws passed which attempt to keep people from dying. The Nazarite is to be separated from all that is related to the earth. Even a priest was allowed contact with close relatives who had died (Leviticus 21:1–3). See also Numbers 19:11–22.

It might seem logical to you to examine the **Doctrine of the Nazarite** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)) at this point in time; although, that may be better suited for our first case history, which is Samson in the book of the Judges (Judges 13:5).

"In regard to his father or in regard to his mother or in regard to his brother or in regard to his sister—he is not to cause himself to become unclean for them at their death, for the separation of his God [is] on his head. [Numbers 6:7]

The end portion of this verse could have been rendered, ...for the [badge] of separation of his God[—his hair]—[is] on his head. The vow of a Nazarite is not necessarily a lifetime, as is implied by *all the days of his vow* (vv. 4a, 5a, 6a); however, in order for his hair to grow long and to stand out because it has not been cut, indicates that this vow must last at least several months, if not longer. Even if any of his close family members die during this time period, he is not to defile himself by their deaths. The separation of the Nazarite to God was absolutely complete and total. Even his family ties were not a hindrance to his vows. **While He was still speaking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and His brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him. And someone said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers a standing outside seeking to speak to you." but He answered to the one was telling Him and said, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" And, stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold, My mother and My brothers! For whoever will do the will of My Father Who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.**" (Matthew 12:46–50). Read also Luke 9:59–62.

"All the days of his separation, he is set apart to Yahweh. [Numbers 6:8]

The sign of his separation is his unshorn hair and he is to have no contact with worldly pleasures (the grapes) and no contact whatsoever with the dead. He is a man set solely apart to Y^ehowah —obviously a type of Jesus Christ, Who came not to do His Own will, but the will of His Father. Our Lord had no interests of His Own which He followed, but He did that which God the Father directed Him to do.

Offerings of a Nazarite Who Has Become Ceremonially Unclean

"And when the dead die beside him in an instant, suddenly, and he has defiled the head of his separation, the he will shave his head in the day of his cleansing—on the seventh day, he will shave it. [Numbers 6:9]

The Nazarite, particularly one who took his vows during these next 30+ years of wandering, would see a lot of people die; in fact, the Jews would be dying just like flies in the desert during this time period. The Nazarite must then go through a period of cleansing, which involved shaving his head. The cutting of the hair due to uncleanness was also a part of the ritual of one who had been cured from leprosy (Leviticus 14:8–9).

"And on the eighth day, he will bring in two turtle doves or two young pigeons to the priest to the opening of the tent of meeting; [Numbers 6:10]

Recall that these are the two least expensive offerings. The land was plentiful at that time with these birds.

"And the priest will prepare one for a sin [-offering] and one for a burnt-offering, and he will make atonement [or, a covering] for him because of that which he had missed the mark [or, sinned] in respect to the soul and he had set apart his head on that day; [Numbers 6:11]

Recall that the sin offering is the sins are transferred to the animal and the burnt-offering speaks of judgement.

"And he is separated to Yahweh the days of his separation and he will bring in a lamb, a son of a year, for a guilt-offering; and the former days have fallen, for his separation has been defiled [Numbers 6:12]

The second to the last verb is the Qal imperfect of *nâphal* (נָפַל) [pronounced *naw-FAHL*] and it simply means *to fall* and is often used for the death of someone. Just as our Lord was made sin for us, his association with a dead person makes him unclean and therefore dead to Yahweh. We are not speaking of being out of fellowship or doing anything wrong; he is dead by virtue of association with the dead—just as we, as being born human, are born out of fellowship and spiritually, as well as positionally, are born dead. Our association with the human race, as being descended from Adam places us dead with regard to God. The former days refer to the time of his Nazarite vows and these days have fallen, as he has had contact with the dead.

"And this is the law of the Nazarite; in the day of the completion [lit., fulness or fulfillment] of the days of his separation, he brings it in unto the opening of the tent of meeting; [Numbers 6:13]

The Nazarite brings the lamb to the opening of the tent of meeting; note that only the priests were allowed to go inside. It is possible that Paul, in a move which compromised doctrine, was sponsoring those involved in the Nazarite vows in Acts 21:17–26.

"And he has approached with his offering to Yahweh, one he-lamb, a son of a year; a perfect one, for a burnt-offering, and one she-lamb, a daughter of a year, a perfect one, for a sin-offering; and one ram, a perfect one, for peace-offerings. [Numbers 6:14]

The peace offering is peace with God, not peace with mankind. As a result of the sin and the burnt-offerings, we have peace with God—we are no longer at enmity with Him. Notice that these animals make for a rather expensive offering.

"And a basket of unleavened breads of fine flour of cakes mixed with oil, and thin cakes of unleavened breads anointed with oil, and their tribute-offering, and their libations. [Numbers 6:15]

Unleavened bread speaks of several things: it is the body—uncorrupted by sin—of our Lord given for us, filled with the Holy Spirit (oil). Bread also speaks of fellowship with God through God the Holy Spirit; the unleavened bread being that which is uncorrupted by false doctrine. The drink offering was not consumed by the priests, but poured out in its entirety in the sanctuary (Numbers 28:7). A drink represents the life or the soul of a person which is poured out into a body. Just as a drink completely fills whatever container it is poured into, similarly your soul fills your entire body. The drink offering speaks of our Lord pouring out his life for us. **In the same way, the cup, after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant by means of My blood."** (Luke 22:20). It also speaks of the Holy Spirit which is poured out over our Lord's church. **"But this is [similar to] that which was spoken of through the prophet Joel: 'And it will be in the last days,' God says, 'That I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters will prophesy and your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams; even upon My slaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour fourth of My Spirit, and they will prophesy.' "** (Acts 2:16–18 Joel 2:28–29).

"And the priest will approach before the face of Yahweh and will make his sin [-offering] and his burnt offering. [Numbers 6:16]

Notice that the one who brings the offering to the priest, does not bring this offering to Yahweh nor does he sacrifice this offering himself, but the priest actually brings the offering before God and kills it. The double meaning of this is that our Lord brings before God the Father His body and offers it upon the cross—we stand upon His finished work, but He brought it before God. Also, it was the result of the priests and the high priest that our Lord was brought before Pilate and Herod and was eventually executed (Luke 22:49–54, 22:66–8:10).

"And the ram he made a sacrifice of peace-offerings to Yahweh, besides the basket of unleavened bread; and the priest will make its present and libation. [Numbers 6:17]

Notice again that the priest does all of the work; even though the Nazarite brings these things before the priest, it is the priest who does the sacrificing of the animals and the burning of the unleavened bread and the pouring out of the drink.

"And the Nazarite will shave (at the opening of the tent of meeting the head of his separation and will take the hair of the head of his separation and he will place it on the fire which [is] under the sacrifices of the peace-offerings. [Numbers 6:18]

It is the hair of the Nazarite which distinguishes him physically from the other Israelites—or separates him from his brothers and separates him to God.

"And the priest will take the boiled shoulder of the ram and one unleavened cake of the basket and one thin unleavened cake, and he will put on the palms of the Nazarite after his shaving his [badge of] separation; [Numbers 6:19]

These things which are sacrificed to Yahweh are placed into the hands of the Nazarite; he takes a hold of them as we take a hold of Jesus Christ for our salvation.

"And the priest will wave them—a wave offering before Yahweh. It [is] holy to the priest, upon the breast of the wave-offering and upon the leg of the contribution; and afterward, the Nazarite will drink wine. [Numbers 6:20]

"For I say to you that I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes." (Luke 22:18). At the end, drinking of wine no longer is a reference to legitimate human pleasures on earth, but fellowship with God. Although I tend to spice up the conjunctions once and awhile, as *and* in the Hebrew does not just mean *and*, the prepositions are a different thing. The one used here twice is 'al (אֶל) [pronounced *gahl*], and it sounds the same in the English, but it should not be mistaken for the preposition 'al (אֶל) [pronounced *gahl*]. The first preposition basically means *upon*; it is upon this definition that all its other shades of meaning are discerned. It is variously rendered as *on the ground of*, *according to*, *on account of*, *on the basis of*, *on behalf of*, *concerning*, *besides*, *in addition to*, *together with*, *beyond*, *above*, *over*, *by on to*, *towards*, *to*, *against*. When rendering this, we do not get to just go and blindly pick out a preposition from above, but what should be on our minds is the relationship between the words in context and the idea of *upon*. The bread is generally placed upon the sacrifices and burned, therefore I favor this meaning over *besides* (Young's Translation, *The Emphasized Bible*) *with* (KJV), and *together with* (NASB, Owen's translation, NRSV, NIV).

"This [is] the law of the Nazarite, who vows his offering to Yahweh for his separation, apart from that which his hand attains; according to his vow which he vows so he does on the basis of [lit., upon] the law of his separation." [Numbers 6:21]

The portion which reads *apart from that which his hand attains*; is a reference to any other freewill offering that the Nazarite might bring to Yahweh. This is the concluding statement, the period at the end of the giving of God's laws on a particular topic.

We will examine the **Doctrine of the Nazarite**. in Judges 13:5.

The Priestly Benediction

And Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 6:22]

This will be a concluding general statement—a doxology, if you will—as we will spend some time in narrative.

"Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, 'Thus you will bless the sons of Israel, saying to them:
[Numbers 6:23]

The Bible is legend for its quotes within quotes within quotes. The priests will apparently say this during or after a sacrifice is offered.

" ' "Yahweh bless you and keep you; [Numbers 6:24]

Aaron and his sons will call for the provision and blessing of the Israelites and Gods guarding them, as a shepherd guards his sheep. Moses, in speaking to the next generation, said, "Now if will be, if you diligently listen to the voice of Yahweh your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, Yahweh, your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings will come upon you and overtake you, if you will obey Yahweh your god. Blessed you will be in the city and blessed you will be in the field. Blessed will be the offspring of your body [lit., the fruit of your womb] and the fruit of your ground and the fruit of your beasts, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock. Blessed will be your basket and your kneading bowl. Blessed will be when you come in and blessed you are when you go out." (Deuteronomy 28:1–6). Hannah, the mother of Samuel, prayed, "He [Yahweh] keeps the feet of His godly ones, but the wicked ones are silenced in darkness, for not by might will a man prevail." (1Samuel 2:9). A similar prayer is made by Jabez in 1Chronicles 4:10.

" ' "Yahweh to cause His face to shine upon you and to favor you; [Numbers 6:25]

A reference to Yahweh's face first signifies His presence, and, secondly, signifies His blessing and protection. The face of anyone in the direction of someone else was a blessing or a show of favor; often associated with deliverance and/or salvation. **Make Your face to shine upon Your slave; deliver me in Your graciousness** (Psalm 31:16). **O God, restore us, and cause Your face to shine on us and we will be delivered** (Psalm 80:3). **"O, Yahweh, let your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary."** (Dan. 9:17b). **For God Who said, "Light will shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ** (2Corinthians 4:6 Genesis 1:3). It is our reflected light, ideally, which attracts the unbeliever, although we know in practice, many of us are disdained by unbelievers—not for our faith, but for self-righteous, obnoxious behavior. This is not God's plan, however. His plan is for His glory to be reflected from our souls, which does occur on an occasional basis. **"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father Who is in heaven."** (Matthew 5:16). Unfortunately, some of us will not reflect God's glory until eternity: **"Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."** (Matthew 13:43a Dan. 12:3). See also Exodus 33:20, 23 Psalm 51:11 89:15 1Chronicles 29:12 Jonah 1:3 1Corinthians 13:12.

" ' "Yahweh lift up His face upon you and appoint for you peace." ' [Numbers 6:26]

Those of Israel who are in fellowship and who are functioning correctly in God's plan are ambassadors for peace—they help to bring the message of the faraway king of the peace that He offers them. In the Hebrew, v. 24 has 3 words, v. 25 has 5 and v. 26 has 7. **"The steadfast mind You will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in You; Trust in Yahweh forever, for in God, Yahweh, the everlasting Rock."** (Isaiah 26:3–4). **Yahweh, you will establish peace for us, since You have also performed for us all our works** (Isaiah 26:12). This is obviously not world peace, but peace with God; which, in turn, means all forms of earthly good and blessing.

"And they have placed My name upon the sons of Israel, and I—even I—bless them." [Numbers 6:27]

God's reputation is tied to His name. There are no national gods, all pointing toward the same God; the national deities are demons, and not the true God. There is but one God, Yahweh, Who chose to reveal Himself primarily to the Israelites during the second period of man's history. God is tied to His name Yahweh—not that we need to call Him by that name, as we know Him now by Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. However, just as there is one mediator between God and man—the man Christ Jesus, there is one revealed member of the Godhead in Old Testament times, and that is specifically Yahweh. And He has chosen to associate Himself and His name with Israel and through this association, bless them. [A prayer of David to Yahweh]: "For what one nation on the earth is like Your people, Israel, whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people and to make a name for Himself, and to do a great thing for You and awesome things for Your land, before Your people whom You have redeemed for Yourself from Egypt [and from other] nations and their gods." (2Samuel 7:23). [God speaking to Moses that which is to be said to Israel]: "You will make an altar of earth for Me and you will sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen; in every place where I cause My name to be remembered, I will come to you and bless you." (Exodus 20:24).

Numbers 7

Numbers 7:1–89

Outline of Chapter 7:

- Vv. 1–11 **The tabernacle is reassembled; preparations are made for the sacrifices**
- Vv. 12–83 **The offerings of the leaders of Israel**
- Vv. 84–89 **A summary of the offerings brought before Yahweh**

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

Introduction: We will be reintroduced to the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel in Numbers 7. They will all bring offerings before Yahweh. This is a chapter that, if you decided to read the entire Bible, and you got this far, you either went on fast forward or you fell asleep to this chapter. We will have the same six verses repeated almost verbatim twelve times. This is the longest and the most repetitive chapter of the entire Pentateuch. The challenge to a teacher or the challenge to a writer is just what the heck do you say about the exact same verse the tenth or eleventh time that you come across it? How can you even make a comment? If you will open your NASB—the Study Edition, you will notice that between vv. 16 and 83 there is not a single Scriptural reference. I don't know if this is true of any other portion of the Bible which is this extensive. This is God's Word and every part of it is important. However, this was so difficult, I had to resort to using God's Word in order to expand upon what is found here.

The Tabernacle Is Reassembled; Preparations Are Made for the Sacrifices

And it came to pass on the day Moses finished setting up the tabernacle, that he anointed it and sanctified it, and all of its furnishings [lit., vessels] and the altar, and all of its furnishings [lit., vessels], and he anointed them and sanctified them; [Numbers 7:1]

Anointing with oil means that Moses recognized the power of the Holy Spirit in evangelism and in spiritual growth, with things the tabernacle and its furnishings facilitated, as they revealed Yahweh, the God of Israel, and the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Setting these things apart meant that they had the exclusive use for spiritual things.

Obviously, Moses did not himself, personally, set up the entire tabernacle, any more than Bob Builder, the builder of Bob Builder Homes, builds the homes. The builder of any given house may not pick up the hammer even one time to build a particular home. He oversees the work and sub-contracts out the work. Moses saw that everything was organized and set up correctly.

And the princes of Israel—heads of the house of their fathers—they [are] the princes of the tribes, they who are standing over those numbered—[were caused to] approach; [Numbers 7:2]

Approach is in the Hiphil (causative) stem; Moses ordered them, by God's Word, to approach, after he had set up the Tabernacle. The word which I have consistently rendered *approach*, is in the 3rd masculine plural. That is, the princes of Israel were caused to approach. They were not caused *to offer* anything in this sentence. They will approach Yahweh with their offerings.

And they caused their offerings to be brought before Yahweh, six wagons covered, and twelve oxen—a wagon for two of the princes and an ox for one—and they approached [or, were caused to approach] with them before the tabernacle. [Numbers 7:3]

What we have here are a great many sacrifices to God. It is not that God is overjoyed to see hundreds of innocent animals offered to Him—however, this communicated the gospel to all of Israel and God the Holy spirit spoke to the next generation of Jews through these sacrifices.

And Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 7:4]

We don't know if these leaders of the tribes of Israel had been instructed to bring these offerings to Yahweh or if they just chose to do so.

"Receive from them, and they are to do the service [or, they are to serve] of the tent of meeting; and you will give them to the Levites each according to his service." [Numbers 7:5]

The plural *they* refers to the animals. Moses is to receive the animals and then they are to be given to the Levites to be used in the service of the tent of meeting.

And Moses took the wagons and the oxen and gave them to the Levites. [Numbers 7:6]

Moses receives the wagons and oxen as gifts from the leaders of Israel. These wagons and oxen were used to bring the offerings of the twelve leaders of the tribes of Israel, but the wagons and oxen themselves were received as gifts.

He gave two wagons and four oxen to the sons of Gershon, according to their service. [Numbers 7:7]

There are three sub-tribes of the Levites and one would expect, from this verse, that each tribe would handle an equal share. The Gershonites handled the hangings and the curtains—that was their service.

And he gave four wagons and eight oxen to the sons of Merari according to their service under the direction of Ithamar, the son of Aaron the priest. [Numbers 7:8]

However, the second tribe received twice as much to be responsible for. The Merarites handled the heavy framework and the pillars, so they required most of the wagons.

But to the sons of Kohath, he gave none because the care of the holy thing [was] upon them; on the shoulder they bore [it]. [Numbers 7:9]

The word found here is the masculine singular of *qôdesh* (קֹדֶשׁ) [pronounced *koh-DESH*], which is a noun meaning *sacredness, apartness, that which is holy, holy things*. Strong's #6944 BDB #871. We are not referring to the furniture of the tabernacle here or the utensils of the various pieces of furniture because this is in the masculine singular. Some Bible render this *holy things, holy objects* and some *sanctuary*; however, they were not in charge of the sanctuary, per se, but they were in charge of the most holy item of all, the ark, and that is what this passage references. Recall that through the rings of the ark were placed the poles and the sons of Kohath were to carry this ark with the poles on their shoulders. This is what this verse refers to and I am not aware of any translation which got this right.

Now, the Kohathites were in charge of most of the sacred furniture (the ark, the lampstand, the altar, the table of showbread—Numbers 4:5–15) and all of these holy pieces of furniture were designed with rings and poles that they might be carried without having direct contact with the furniture itself (Exodus 37:13–15, for instance). These pieces of furniture all representing Christ's work upon the cross and they were to be borne on shoulders as our Lord bore our sins. There was not an easy way out and what our Lord did was not without work—in fact, what He did in terms of sacrifice is totally beyond our comprehension. We would have to suffer through the Lake of Fire for a time just to imagine the weight which He bore.

Then the leaders approached the dedication [or, consecration] of the altar in the day of its being anointed; in fact, the princes will approach with their offering before the altar. [Numbers 7:10]

When everything was set up again and dedicated to Yahweh, then these leaders were to approach with their offering (the singular means what they brought was seen as a whole).

And Yahweh said to Moses, "One prince to a day—one prince to a day—they will approach with their offering for the dedication of the altar." [Numbers 7:11]

Here we know that if these men took the initiative to come before Yahweh with their offerings, that this would be organized by God. Each leader, or prince, would approach Yahweh with his offering on each day. We have a similar dedication of Solomon's temple in 2Chronicles 7:8–10: **So Solomon observed the feast at that time for seven days, and all Israel with him, a very great assembly from the entrance of Hamath to the brook of Egypt. And on the eighth day, they held a solemn assembly, for the dedication of the altar they observed seven days, and the feast seven days. Then on the twenty-third day of the seventh month, he sent the people to their tents, rejoicing and happy of heart, because of the goodness that Yahweh had shown to David and to Solomon and to His people, Israel.**

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The Offerings of the Leaders of Israel

Then the one approaching on the first day [with] his offering is Nahshon ben Amminadab of the tribe of Judah. [Numbers 7:12]

I have changed the word order somewhat to accurately render the Hebrew. The status quo verb *to be* is the first word of this sentence—it is in the Qal imperfect, indicating a long list of leaders to come before Yahweh. *Approach*, a word that we have looked at several times, poorly translated throughout most Bible translations, is in the Hiphil participle—they are caused to approach and the participle makes this verb act as a noun—the subject of this sentence, in fact. Many of the translations use the words *he who* at this juncture, which is accurate since both verbs are in the masculine singular; however, there is no relative pronoun.

And his offering: one silver plate, its weight a hundred and thirty [shekels]; one silver bowl, seventy shekels (according to the shekel of the sanctuary)—both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a tribute-offering; [Numbers 7:13]

When you read a repetitive shopping list such as this, you might wonder as to its purpose. It is good in terms of practicing one's Hebrew and it helps us with the meanings of certain words.

One golden spoon of ten [shekels], full of incense; [Numbers 7:14]

The word translated spoon is actually kaph (כף) [pronounced *kaf*] and it is generally translated *palm, hollow or flat of the hand, sole of the foot* and even *bowl*. Strong's #3709 BDB #496. The reason that this is translated *spoon* is because of its weight—it only weighs four ounces (110 grains). Because of that, we can conclude this should be translated *spoon* in such passages as Exodus 37:16 Numbers 4:7 1Kings 7:50. These various renderings are tied together by the concept of *the hollow*. Strong's #3709 BDB #496.

One young bull, a son of the herd, one ram, one lamb, a son of a year; for a burnt-offering; [Numbers 7:15]

The young bull, of course, speaks of Jesus Christ. He was taken out of the herd, just as our Lord was a Jew taken out of the Jewish race. We have several examples in the New Testament where our Lord, when persecuted, was able to elude his persecutors merely by melting into the crowd. Even at the very end, Judas had to identify our

Lord Jesus Christ, the God of the Universe, to the priests who came for him the night before the cross—because they knew not Who He was.

One kid of the goats [lit., A male-goat of the female goats—one] for a sin [-offering]; [Numbers 7:16]

This first portion of this verse literally reads: A male-goat of the female goats—one. Why are we that concerned? We are just speaking of one male goat when we just come down to it, right? Wrong—the male goat is born out from the female goats, just as it is the seed of the woman from which would come the Savior. It is the uncorrupted 46 chromosomes of the woman from which came our Lord Jesus Christ, holy and undefiled, not polluted by the sin nature of Adam. Every word in God's Word is important—we need to have more than just the gist of what is being said.

And for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, five lambs, sons of a year—this was the offering of Nashon ben Amminadab. [Numbers 7:17]

Once a burnt-offering and a sin-offering had been placed before Yahweh, there was an even greater offering for peace. What follows is an additional 66 verses which state substantially the same thing for each of the other eleven leaders of the remaining nine tribes plus two half-tribes. Matthew Henry expressed the view that each tribal leader had a separate day for his gift and the reports were all given equal space, regardless of the individual tribe's strengths, weaknesses, size, etc. Each tribe was fully recognized and each leader was fully recognized for their particular offering and approach to Yahweh. This tells us that each tribe had an equal share in the land and an equal standing before Yahweh that would only change as their dedication changed. However, God took note of everything that each tribe brought before Him and recorded it perfectly in His Word, telling us that our spiritual service is not unnoticed or disregarded even though our lives at times seem rather unspectacular. We will find that there are many unknown heroes from the church age whose prayer, whose personal integrity in their day to day life, whose unfailing witness sometimes before only one person will not pass unnoticed. We all have a specific plan for our lives on this earth and our fulfillment of those plans are what God wants to see. There is no way that we can assign relative merit to individual lives. The quality of our service is not dependent upon our means or its visual impact upon other believers and unbelievers. The widow with two mites gave a great deal more than rich people with great sums of money (Mark 12:41–44). Our all is worth much more than any billionaire's 10%³⁹.

In the second day, Nathanel ben Zuar, leader of the tribe of Issachar, was caused to approach [Yahweh]. [Numbers 7:18]

The sentence structure here is somewhat different; *approach* is in the Hiphil perfect, rather than the Hiphil participle, and there is no *is*.

And his offering: one silver plate, its weight a hundred and thirty [shekels]; one silver bowl, seventy shekels (according to the shekel of the sanctuary)—both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a tribute-offering; [Numbers 7:19]

130 shekels is approximately 3¼ pounds, or 1.5 kg.

One golden spoon of ten [shekels], full of incense; [Numbers 7:20]

In the Hebrew, the first portion of this verse reads, literally, *one spoon (small, bowl, palm) ten gold*.

One young bull, a son of the herd, one ram, one lamb, a son of a year; for a burnt-offering; [Numbers 7:21]

³⁹ Much of this paragraph came from a footnote in *The Amplified Bible*, p. 169.

The ram also represents Jesus Christ. See **the Doctrine of the Ram—not finished yet!!**

A male-goat of the female goats—one for a sin [-offering]; [Numbers 7:22]

And for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, five lambs, sons of a year—this was the offering of Nathanel ben Zuar. [Numbers 7:23]

Those who love Your law have great peace and nothing causes them to stumble (Psalm 119:165).

In the first day the leader of the sons of Zebulun, Eliab ben Helon. [Numbers 7:24]

We have no verb whatsoever here. We know they are all approaching the altar.

And his offering: one silver plate, its weight a hundred and thirty [shekels]; one silver bowl, seventy shekels (according to the shekel of the sanctuary)—both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a tribute-offering; [Numbers 7:25]

A silver bowl of seventy shekels weighs about 1¾ pounds, or 0.8 kg.

One golden spoon of ten [shekels], full of incense; [Numbers 7:26]

When weight is referred to, it was understood that the weight was in shekels if not otherwise noted.

One young bull, a son of the herd, one ram, one lamb, a son of a year; for a burnt-offering; [Numbers 7:27]

The lamb is probably the most widely used and recognized of the animals which represent our Lord. John the Baptizer said, *Behold, the lamb of God comes*. Being a year old is pretty much after the lamb has entered into adulthood. Our Lord began His public ministry at age 30, equivalent to the lamb's age.

A male-goat of the female goats—one for a sin [-offering]; [Numbers 7:28]

Recall that there is no particular word for sin-offering in the Hebrew. It is not a combination of *sin* and *offering* but it is simply the word *sin*. It is the context which tells us that we are speaking of a *sin-offering* rather than just *sin*. This is because the sin-bearing became completely identified with the sin which He bore.

And for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, five lambs, sons of a year—this was the offering of Eliab ben Helon. [Numbers 7:29]

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us and the government will rest upon His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).

On the fourth day, the leader of the sons of Rueben, Elizur ben Shedeur. [Numbers 7:30]

Now the sentence structure is exactly the same as v. 24.

And his offering: one silver plate, its weight a hundred and thirty [shekels]; one silver bowl, seventy shekels (according to the shekel of the sanctuary)—both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a tribute-offering; [Numbers 7:31]

Silver is one of the precious metals, white in color, and malleable enough to be beaten into leaves 0.00025 mm thin. Its melting temperature is 961°C, and it can be alloyed with gold, copper, nickel and zinc. In fact, there is generally about 10–15% silver found in mined gold. According to ZPEB, *the celle dimensions of the basic cubic*

units of four atoms of silver and of gold are almost identical and because of this silver substitutes for gold, and vice versa, right up to 100%⁴⁰.

One golden spoon of ten [shekels], full of incense; [Numbers 7:32]

This spoon—which could also be a very small incense bowl (?)—contained q^{et}ôreth (קִרְטָה) [pronounced *k^eht-OH-reth*] and should not be rendered *perfume*, but *incense*. Strong's 7004 BDB #882.

One young bull, a son of the herd, one ram, one lamb, a son of a year; for a burnt-offering;
[Numbers 7:33]

See **the Doctrine of the Bull—not finished yet!**

A male-goat of the female goats—one for a sin [-offering]; [Numbers 7:34]

So a male goat is taken from the female goats, just as Jesus Christ was the seed of the woman.

And for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, five lambs, sons of a year—this was the offering of Elizur ben Shedeur. [Numbers 7:35]

[Our Lord speaking to His disciples]: "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father and a daughter against her mother; and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law." (Matthew 10:34–35 Micah 7:6).

On the fifth day, the leader of the sons of Simeon, Shelumeil ben Zurishaddai. [Numbers 7:36]

Like the rest of the chapter, this is now fallen into a pattern.

And his offering: one silver plate, its weight a hundred and thirty [shekels]; one silver bowl, seventy shekels (according to the shekel of the sanctuary)—both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a tribute-offering; [Numbers 7:37]

Continuing with the information found in ZPEB, Vol. 5, p. 438: from the earliest times, silver was manufactured into articles of value, such as ornaments, jewelry; and, it was of course used as a precursor of money (Leviticus 5:15 1Chronicles 18:10 Matthew 26:15 Acts 19:24). Silver was certainly known in Egypt as far back as 4000 B.C., and it was given the specific value as one-fourth that of gold in 3100 B.C. by the founder of the 1st dynasty of ancient Egypt. A portion of Abraham's wealth was silver (Genesis 13:2) and it is likely that silver and gold became fairly standard mediums of exchange (i.e., they were money) around 800 B.C. for all of the countries which were between the Nile and the Indus.

One golden spoon of ten [shekels], full of incense; [Numbers 7:38]

Gold is considered to be probably the precious metal, although it is by no means the rarest or the most expensive. Because of its beauty, it represents the deity of Jesus Christ.

One young bull, a son of the herd, one ram, one lamb, a son of a year; for a burnt-offering;
[Numbers 7:39]

See **the Doctrine of the lamb—not finished yet!!**

A male-goat of the female goats—one for a sin [-offering]; [Numbers 7:40]

⁴⁰ P. 438–9, Vol. 5.

See the doctrine of goats—not finished yet!!

And for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, five lambs, sons of a year—this was the offering of Shelumeil ben Zurishaddai. [Numbers 7:41]

The father of John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit and he said (or, possibly wrote) the following: **Because of the tender mercy of our God, with which the Sunrise from on high will visit us, to shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.**" (Luke 1:78–79).

On the sixth day, the leader of the sons of Gad, Eliazaph ben Deuel. [Numbers 7:42]

It is unfortunate that these were the men of God's choosing, meaning that they had the greatest potential of all in their tribe, and, while they are mentioned several times, it is always as part of a large group whose accomplishments were minimal.

And his offering: one silver plate, its weight a hundred and thirty [shekels]; one silver bowl, seventy shekels (according to the shekel of the sanctuary)—both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a tribute-offering; [Numbers 7:43]

Continuing with the information found in ZPEB, Vol. 5, p. 438: native silver is much more of a rare occurrence than native gold, but it *is widely distributed in small amounts and would have been the earliest source of the metal*. Silver can be extracted from it many ores by a number of relatively simple processes, one of which was used by the Babylonians, cupellation with lead, is still used today. ZPEB describes the process. However, the melting of the resultant lead-silver alloy, produces lead oxide, which is skimmed away—I mention this, because this lead oxide is called *dross* in Ezekiel 22:18. The tarnish which forms on silver is not an oxidation of silver, but a combination of sulphur or sulphur compounds in the air reacting with the silver to form a thin layer of silver sulphide on the surface of the silver. We see this commonly today in any area adjacent to an industrialized city; however, in the ancient world, such tarnishing was rare, and silver remained the most lustrous of the metals almost indefinitely in the ancient world.

One golden spoon of ten [shekels], full of incense; [Numbers 7:44]

Taken from ZPEB, vol. 2, p. 771: Gold's melting point is above that of silver (1063°C), which surprised me. Although it is used to plate a great many things, and can be beaten into leaves with a thickness less than 0.0001 mm, that is not as thin as silver.

One young bull, a son of the herd, one ram, one lamb, a son of a year; for a burnt-offering; [Numbers 7:45]

When these animals were burnt, this spoke of the sacrifice and judgement of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross.

A male-goat of the female goats—one for a sin [-offering]; [Numbers 7:46]

Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and who never sins (Eccles. 7:20).

And for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, five lambs, sons of a year—this was the offering of Eliazaph ben Deuel. [Numbers 7:47]

"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world give, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful." (John 14:27).

In the seventh day, the leader of the sons of Ephraim, Elishama ben Ammihud. [Numbers 7:48]

Ephraim is the half-tribe of Joseph.

And his offering: one silver plate, its weight a hundred and thirty [shekels]; one silver bowl, seventy shekels (according to the shekel of the sanctuary)—both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a tribute-offering; [Numbers 7:49]

The failure of the refining process of lead and silver in the ancient world became a parable to illustrate the refusal of the sons of Israel to become obedient to Yahweh, the God Who bought them (Jeremiah 6:29–30).

One golden spoon of ten [shekels], full of incense; [Numbers 7:50]

Taken from ZPEB, vol. 2, p. 771: another item of interest, of which most of you are aware, is that gold is the most malleable and ductile of the metals, meaning that its shape and size can be changed tremendously without breaking. What a marvelous picture of the deity of our Lord! His perfection and essence are faced with billions upon billions of situations and it can be applied perfectly without tearing it or compromising it. There is a right way to do a thing; there is a correct way to approach every situation. God's character can be applied to every situation in life without compromise.

One young bull, a son of the herd, one ram, one lamb, a son of a year; for a burnt-offering; [Numbers 7:51]

In this, the first sacrifices of the tabernacle after it was reassembled, went on for twelve days. Each day there would be parade of animal sacrifices. God was communicating His gospel to the next generation as they became of age.

A male-goat of the female goats—one for a sin [-offering]; [Numbers 7:52]

David wrote the following after having taken Bathsheba, another man's wife, and then had her husband killed: **Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your grace, according to the greatness of Your compassion, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I recognize [lit., know] my transgressions and my sin is always before me. Against You and You only I have sinned (Psalm 51:1–4a).**

And for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, five lambs, sons of a year—this was the offering of Elishama ben Ammihud. [Numbers 7:53]

Paul, writing to Gentiles: **But now in Christ Jesus, you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, the Law of commandments in ordinances that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by having put to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near (Ephesians 2:13–17).** Here, the peace spoken of is that between the Jew and the Gentile, a natural enmity existed, as there would be between believers and unbelievers. God joined the Jews and the Gentiles in the church.

In the eighth day, the leader of the sons of Manasseh, Gamaliel ben Pedahzur. [Numbers 7:54]

Manasseh is the other half tribe of Joseph.

And his offering: one silver plate, its weight a hundred and thirty [shekels]; one silver bowl, seventy shekels (according to the shekel of the sanctuary)—both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a tribute-offering; [Numbers 7:55]

Silver was a mark of wealth and prosperity. When lands were conquered and booty taken, often silver and things made with silver were taken. Silver was used in the construction of the various items of the tabernacle—chiefly

the rings. As was mentioned, silver would last for a very long time without tarnishing; however, we do not find many archeological objects of silver from Palestine and Syria because the limestone soil causes silver to corrode badly⁴¹.

One golden spoon of ten [shekels], full of incense; [Numbers 7:56]

Taken from ZPEB, vol. 2, p. 771: native gold which is mined is usually alloyed with silver; but occasionally it can be found alloyed with copper, iron, platinum, palladium and rhodium. The more silver present, the whiter the gold; copper makes the gold an orange-red.

One young bull, a son of the herd, one ram, one lamb, a son of a year; for a burnt-offering;
[Numbers 7:57]

At the first advent, our Lord did not come out of heaven riding a white steed, but he was a *son of the herd*, a man, just like us.

A male-goat of the female goats—one for a sin [-offering]; [Numbers 7:58]

The wisdom of the prudent is to understand His way, but the folly of fools is deceit. Fools mock at sin, but among the upright there is grace [from God]. The heart knows its own bitterness and a stranger does not share its joy. The house of the wicked will be destroyed; but the tent of the upright will flourish. There is a way [which seems] right to a man, but its end is the way of death (Proverbs 14:8–12).

And for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, five lambs, sons of a year—this was the offering of Gamaliel ben Pedahzur. [Numbers 7:59]

And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7).

In the ninth day, the leader of the sons of Benjamin, Abidan ben Gideoni. [Numbers 7:60]

Recall that Benjamin was the youngest of all of the brothers, Joseph was the second to the youngest. They were particularly important to their father Jacob, as they were children of the woman he loved, Rachel.

And his offering: one silver plate, its weight a hundred and thirty [shekels]; one silver bowl, seventy shekels (according to the shekel of the sanctuary)—both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a tribute-offering; [Numbers 7:61]

What is most important is what does silver symbolize in Scripture. I appropriated this list from *Then International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 4, p. 2793: 1. The possession of silver indicates great blessing and abundance (Genesis 13:2 Job 3:15 22:25 27:16 Isaiah 60:17 Zech. 9:3). 2. God's Word is compared to silver refined seven times with regard to its purity (Psalm 12:6). 3. Pursuing and attaining knowledge is superior to the gaining of silver (Proverbs 3:14 8:19 10:20 16:16 22:1 25:11)—or so says one of the rich men in the history of the world (Solomon, the writer of the bulk of Proverbs). 4. The dross from the silver refinement process was used to illustrate the degeneracy of Israel (Isaiah 1:22 Jeremiah 6:30). 5. Daniel interpreted the breast and coat of arms of silver to present an inferior kingdom to that of Nebuchadnezzar's (Dan. 2:32, 39). 6. Men often compromise what is right in order to make a living; the illustration is the silversmith Demetrius, who made gods of silver (Acts 19:24–41). 7. Although there is nothing wrong with making money, a dependence upon silver in the long term is futile (James 5:3). 8. Finally, one of the signs of the fall of Babylon is the sudden drop off in trade of silver and other items of wealth (Revelation 18:9–19).

⁴¹ The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, vol. 4, p. 2793.

One golden spoon of ten [shekels], full of incense; [Numbers 7:62]

Taken from ZPEB, vol. 2, p. 771: gold is distributed widely throughout the earth's crust, but in small amounts. The gold in the earth's crust is approximately one part per thousand million. The proportion of people who are in God's plan and acting appropriately is probably similar. In the population of the Jews, of those two million, there are only three men of note: Moses, Caleb and Joshua. And the Jews made up a small portion of the earth's population. One part per thousand million is not out of line when comparing the number of people fulfilling God's plan for their lives as compared to the number of people that there are.

One young bull, a son of the herd, one ram, one lamb, a son of a year; for a burnt-offering; [Numbers 7:63]

Each and every day, a leader-representative from each of the twelve tribes (excluding the tribe of Levite and the tribe of Joseph being counted twice) brought before Yahweh and before the congregation twenty-one animals to be slaughtered.

A male-goat of the female goats—one for a sin [-offering]; [Numbers 7:64]

"Come now, let us reason together," say Yahweh. "Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; through they are red like crimson, they will be like wool." (Isaiah 1:18).

And for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, five lambs, sons of a year—this was the offering of Abidan ben Gideon. [Numbers 7:65]

Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all! (2Thessalonians 3:16).

In the tenth day, the leader of the sons of Dan, Ahiezer ben Ammishaddai. [Numbers 7:66]

Dan was a son through Rachel's maid.

And his offering: one silver plate, its weight a hundred and thirty [shekels]; one silver bowl, seventy shekels (according to the shekel of the sanctuary)—both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a tribute-offering; [Numbers 7:67]

In the outside world, the value and weight changes. However, Jesus Christ is the same today, yesterday and forever. Therefore, the weight of the silver was measured according to the unchanging standard of the tabernacle. The word for sanctuary is one that we have studied earlier: qôdesh (קֹדֶשׁ) [pronounced *koh-DESH*], which is a noun meaning *sacredness, apartness, that which is holy, holy things, sanctuary*. We could also have rendered this: *according to the holy shekel or the shekel of holiness*. Strong's #6944 BDB #871.

One golden spoon of ten [shekels], full of incense; [Numbers 7:68]

Taken from ZPEB, vol. 2, p. 771: since gold has such a high density, when it is found in sand, water was used to carry off the less-dense particles, leaving the flakes of gold. Having been raised in California, I had the mining techniques used in the gold rush drilled into me.

One young bull, a son of the herd, one ram, one lamb, a son of a year; for a burnt-offering; [Numbers 7:69]

For many, worship of God become perfunctory—the burnt sacrifices often become but a ritual, just as many churches today are filled with a variety of rituals which the congregation blindly goes through without thought, half asleep on a Sunday morning. "For I delight in grace [or, mercy], rather than sacrifice; and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings." (Hosea 6:6).

A male-goat of the female goats—one for a sin [-offering]; [Numbers 7:70]

"And she will bear a Son, and you will call His name Jesus, for it is He who will deliver His people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21).

And for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, five lambs, sons of a year—this was the offering of Ahiezer ben Ammishaddai. [Numbers 7:71]

For God is not of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints (1Corinthians 14:33). Some codices list this person's name as Ahiezer ben Ammi-Shaddai

In the eleventh day [lit., in the day of one, ten day], the leader of the sons of Asher, Pagiel ben Ochran. [Numbers 7:72]

Asher is the last son of Leah's maid.

And his offering: one silver plate, its weight a hundred and thirty [shekels]; one silver bowl, seventy shekels (according to the shekel of the sanctuary)—both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a tribute-offering; [Numbers 7:73]

The flour mixed with oil speaks of the humanity of Jesus Christ filled with the Holy Spirit.

One golden spoon of ten [shekels], full of incense; [Numbers 7:74]

From ZPEB, vol. 2, p. 771: Gold ornaments and utensils go back to at least the Bronze Age, circa 3000 BC. On Egyptian monuments which date back to 2900 BC, to the 1st dynasty of Egypt, we have the washing of gold ores depicted (gold was found between the Nile and the Red Sea).

One young bull, a son of the herd, one ram, one lamb, a son of a year; for a burnt-offering; [Numbers 7:75]

Thus says Yahweh: "Hear, O earth: behold, I am bringing disaster on this people [and on] the fruit of their plans, because they have not listened to My words. And as for My law, they have rejected it also. For what purpose does frankincense come to Me from Sheba, and the sweet can from a distant land? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable and your sacrifices are not pleasing to Me." (Jeremiah 6:16a, 19–20).

A male-goat of the female goats—one for a sin [-offering]; [Numbers 7:76]

Therefore, just as through one man, sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 5:12 6:23).

And for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, five lambs, sons of a year—this was the offering of Pagiel ben Ochran. [Numbers 7:77]

Jesus answered them: "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world, you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." (John 16:31a, 33).

In the twelfth day, the leader of the sons of Naphtali, Ahira ben Enan. [Numbers 7:78]

Naphtali is the youngest son of Rachel's maid. These tribal leaders appear before Yahweh in the order that they are stationed around the tabernacle, which tells me that my chart on this is incorrect and the one in the NIV is more accurate.

And his offering: one silver plate, its weight a hundred and thirty [shekels]; one silver bowl, seventy shekels (according to the shekel of the sanctuary)—both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a tribute-offering; [Numbers 7:79]

Tribute offering is the correct rendition of this word, rather than grain-offering; as I have pointed out in the past, there are several passages where this word is used and animals are sacrificed.

One golden spoon of ten [shekels], full of incense; [Numbers 7:80]

Since gold is pictured in relationship to wealth and abundance (Genesis 13:2 Judges 8:26 1Kings 10:14), it represents that which is the most valuable to man on earth (Psalm 19:10 I Peter 1:7 Revelation 21:18). It is no large leap to see the obvious parallel between gold and our Lord Jesus Christ. The incense, of course, speaks of the sweet savor of our Lord's sacrifice before God the Father; it is that sweet savor which gives us standing before God. Otherwise, we would be totally lost, without any means of reaching out to God.

One young bull, a son of the herd, one ram, one lamb, a son of a year; for a burnt-offering; [Numbers 7:81]

Sacrifice and a tribute offering, You have not desired; my ears You have pierced [a mark of lifetime slavery]; burnt offering and sin-offering You do not require (Psalm 40:6).

A male-goat of the female goats—one for a sin [-offering]; [Numbers 7:82]

Now I make known to you, brothers, the gospel which I proclaimed to you, which you also received, in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I have preached to you, unless you believed in emptiness. For I delivered to you as of first importance, what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures (1Corinthians 15:1–3). He made Him who knew no sin, sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2Corinthians 5:21).

And for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, five lambs, sons of a year—this was the offering of Ahira ben Enan. [Numbers 7:83]

The Word of Yahweh came to Haggai the prophet, saying, "The latter glory of this house [Israel] will be greater than the former," says Yahweh of the armies, "And in this place I will give you peace," declares Yahweh of the armies (Haggai 2:1b, 9).

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A Summary of the Offerings Brought Before Yahweh

This [is] the dedication of the altar, in the day of its being anointed, by the princes of Israel; twelve silver dishes, twelve silvers bowls, twelve golden spoons; [Numbers 7:84]

The silver speaks of God's reflected glory and the gold speaks of His deity.

A hundred and thirty [shekels] each silver dish, and each bowl seventy [shekels]; all the silver of the vessels: 2400 [shekels], by the shekel of the sanctuary. [Numbers 7:85]

The word *shekels* is implied; such would be the case even without the phrase at the end. When I gave word problem tests and tests over units to my students, the units involved, in their mind, were often implied (as was the irony of some of their answers).

Twelve golden spoons, full of incense, ten [shekels] each spoon by the shekel of the sanctuary;
[Numbers 7:86]

God's sanctuary is the measure of all things. When Solomon built a temple, a permanent home for the Shekinah Glory, we had all the cups, snuffers, bowls, spoons, fire pans, etc. We find this in 1Kings 7:48–51 and 2Chronicles 3:3–4:22. However, Israel's disobedience to God and lack of interest in His truth resulted in the Chaldeans overthrowing Jerusalem and carrying these things away (2Kings 25:10–17).

All the oxen for burnt-offering: twelve bullocks; rams twelve; lambs, sons of a year, twelve; and their present; and kids of the goats twelve, for a sin offering; [Numbers 7:87]

I preserved the word order, followings Young's example and translation here.

And all the oxen for the sacrifice of the peace-offerings are twenty-four bullocks; rams sixty; male goats sixty, lambs, sons of a year, sixty; this is the dedication of the altar, in the day of its being anointed. [Numbers 7:88]

I am confused; I am counting only twelve bulls; the other explanation here is that the two oxen (vv. 65, 77) are the twelve bulls here.

And in the going in of Moses to the tent of meeting to speak with Him, he did hear the voice speaking to him from off the mercy-seat which [is] upon the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubs, and He spoke to him. [Numbers 7:89]

This tells us that Yahweh was present in the reassembling of the tabernacle. O Shepherd of Israel, listen, You Who leads like the block [of] Joseph; You Who are enthroned—[between] the cherubim—shine forth! (Psalm 88:1).

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Numbers 8

Numbers 8:1–26

The Levites are Inducted and Cleansed

Outline of Chapter 8:

- Vv. 1–4 Yahweh's orders to reassemble the lampstand
- Vv. 5–22 The cleansing of the Levites for service
- Vv. 23–26 Ages of service of Levites

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

Introduction: Numbers 8 deals with three different topics: (1) The reassembling of the lampstand is important because the function of the Jews on earth is to be the light of the world to the Gentiles. (2) The Levites are also set aside for service to Yahweh and herein cleansed. A ceremony which sets them apart to Yahweh, bought by the death of the first-born in Egypt, occurs in this chapter. (3) Finally, God sets up specific ages at which time the service of the Levites will begin and at what time they will retire from physical labor (although they might remain on the scene in an advisory position).

Y^ehowah's Orders to Reassemble the Lampstand

Exodus 21:31–40

And Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 8:1]

This verse will occur three times in this chapter. Very likely, that represents three different sessions which Y^ehowah had with Moses.

"Speak to Aaron, and you will say to him, 'In your causing the lamps to go up [or, in your raising up of the lamps], upon the front of the face of the lampstand, the seven lamps will [be caused to] give light.' " [Numbers 8:2]

This is a very literal translation; however, many of the Hebrew verbs have been translated by several words to convey their actual meanings. The lamps (or lights, or candlesticks) will be caused to be put up by aaron, although he may not actually do it himself. Therefore, the word 'âlâh (אָלָה) [pronounced *gaw-LAWH*], meaning *to go up, to ascend, to raise up*, is in the Hiphil infinitive. In the infinitive, we do not have a subject, per se, but we can affix a suffix. Here, that suffix was the second masculine singular. When we express our verbs in general form, we use the infinitive of the verb, as in *to go up, to ascend, to raise up*; and I often do that when giving the meaning of a verb. However, in the Hebrew, verbs expressed in the vocabulary form are given in the Qal stem, just as verbs in the Greek in vocabulary form are given in the present active indicative. This accounts for the added word *to*. The Hiphil stem is causative, meaning that the rendering *to raise up* is most apropos. Strong's #5927 BDB #748.

I have not yet seen a picture of a lampstand which would actually jive with this description. The prepositions involved indicate clearly that there is a front (and, by implication, a back) to the lampstand. The first preposition is 'el (עַל) [pronounced *el*], which means *in, into, toward, unto, to, regarding, against*. Strong's #413 BDB #39. This is followed by the preposition mûwl (מִלְּפָנָיו) [pronounced *mool*] and it means *in front of*. Strong's #4136 BDB #557. 'el combined with mûwl mean *towards, to the front of, in the face of, in front of, towards the front of*. This is followed by the word for *face*. These words together mean that there is a front to the lampstand.

The lamp was in the holy place and the ark was in the Holy of Holies. Because of the Shekinah glory, there was no light needed in the Holy of Holies; in the holy place, the lamp itself provided the light. Was this actually the

case in the Holy of Holies once a year when the high priest entered? Did he have light or did he function mostly in the dark?

The lampstand represented the Jews, who were to be the light of the world, just as we as believers have become.

And Aaron did so; upon the front of the face of the lampstand, he caused its lamps to go up [or, he raised up its lamps], as Yahweh commanded Moses. [Numbers 8:3]

God always has a chain of command. God spoke to Moses, Moses spoke to Aaron, and Aaron caused, that is delegated this responsibility, to an unnamed Levite (we know this by the continued use of the Hiphil, or causative, stem in this verse and in the previous verse). It is likely that Aaron went to the head of the partial Levitical tribe and spoke to him and he had one of those under him actually do the placement of the lamps. Notice that God does not go directly to the Levite and tell him what to do. Nor does Moses go directly to that Levite and tell him what to do. There is a clear, specific chain of command which is taught to us in the Hebrew.

And this [was] the craftsmanship [lit., work] of the lampstand: hammered work, gold from its base [lit., thigh] to its flowers,⁴² it [was] a hammered work according to the blueprint [lit., appearance] which Yahweh had shown Moses, so he constructed [or, made] the lampstand. [Numbers 8:4]

Ma'āseh (מַאֲשֵׂה) [pronounced *mah-ǵa-SEH*] means *deed, work*; it is a reference to that which has been constructed or made (it comes from the oft used Hebrew verb 'āsâh). I have translated it *craftsmanship*. Strong's #4639 BDB #795. Its verbal cognate does occur in this verse in the Qal perfect with an unnamed subject here. The *he* does not refer to Moses, Aaron or Yahweh but to the person who actually constructed this lampstand, Bezalel (Exodus 37:1, 17–23).

Mar'eh (מַרְאֵה) [pronounced *mahr-EH*] means *vision, appearance, sight, that which is seen*. In previous translations, I stretched things somewhat here to use the word *blueprint*. Strong's #4758 BDB #909. Y^ehowah obviously revealed this to Moses visually and Moses oversaw the work to be certain this is what was constructed.

The Cleansing of the Levites for Service

And Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 8:5]

This is likely a completely different session.

"Take the Levites out from the midst of the sons of Israel, and you will cleanse them. [Numbers 8:6]

In his attempt to be literal, Young translates perfect tense of a verb and translates it as though it is a completed action. So, if you are following along in his translation, it reads *and thou hast cleansed them*. However, the Hebrew does not have a past, present or future tense; the context determines the timing of the verb. The perfect tense examines this as a completed action, not as a series of actions; however, if God is speaking to Moses, He is not telling Moses what he has done but rather what he will do; therefore, I have used the English future tense. I say this on behalf of anyone who knows that I use *Young's Translation* as a guide (as well as Owen's terrific *Analytical Key to the Old Testament*). The Levites have been set apart for service directly to God, to assist Aaron and his sons, and therefore anyone in service to God must be cleansed. No matter how good, kind and nice a person is, they are not in service to God if (1) they are not saved and (2) they are not in fellowship. **If I give all my possessions and if I deliver my body to be burned, but I do not have love [a reference to the filling of the Spirit in**

⁴² Although the Massoretic text reads *flower*, the Western Samaritan and the Septuagint has *flower* in the plural; a rendering most translations agree with.

this context], [then] it profits me nothing (1Corinthians 13:3). The ceremonial cleansing speaks of the perfection of Jesus Christ in His, the ultimate work; and on a less important level, of our service as Christians⁴³.

"And you will do this to them to cleanse them: sprinkle upon them waters of sin, and they will cause a razor to pass over all their flesh, and they will wash their garments, and clean themselves; [Numbers 8:7]

It is time to look at the translations. If you have a parallel Old Testament, you would read right through this verse and not give it a second thought. If it wasn't for one of my sources, Edersheim, I might have missed this entirely.

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	And thus you shall do to them to cleanse them: sprinkle the water of purification [water to be used in case of sin] upon them...
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	And thus you will do unto them to purify them, sprinkle upon them sin-cleansing water...
KJV	And thus shalt thou do unto them, to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purifying upon them,...
NASB	And thus you shall do to them, for their cleansing: <i>sprinkle</i> purifying water on them...
NIV	To purify them, do this: Sprinkle the water of cleansing on them;
NRSV	Thus you shall do to them, to cleanse them: sprinkle the water of purification on them,...
Owen's Translation	And thus you shall do to them to cleanse them; sprinkle upon them the water of expiation...
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	And thus thou doest to them to cleanse them: sprinkle upon them waters of atonement,...

Except for *The Emphasized Bible's* translation, a footnote in the NASB and *The Amplified Bible's* rendering, you would miss this entirely. What we find here is water of chaṭṭâ'th (חַטָּאת) [pronounced *khat-TAWTH*] and this is the word for *sin* or *sin-offering*. Strong's #2403 BDB #308.

Maybe if you understood how soap works, then this verse would make more sense. The reason soap works is that it attaches itself to the dirt—the dirt that was attached to you or to your dishes or to your carpet; it acts like a magnet; and when you wash the soap away, the dirt it is attached to also is washed away. The waters of sin is the same. The water attached itself to the sin and as the water flows off the skin, it takes the sin with it. Translating this as waters of purification is fine, if you recognize that it is the water which washes away the sin; it is identified with sin or it attaches itself to sin.

There is little significance to the plural of *water*; throughout the bulk of the Old Testament, *water* is in the plural. It is the way the Hebrews spoke, just as we say *pants* or *trousers*.

You may recognize the shaving of the entire body. This had also occurred back in Leviticus 14:8–9 when a leper was cleansed. This simply symbolizes the cleansing of the entire body.

All of this, of course, is ceremonial; this was a way to illustrate spiritual cleanness; cleanliness before God. For the believer, there are two kinds of cleanness here on earth. We are positionally clean when we believe in Jesus Christ; and we are temporally clean whenever we have named our sins to Him. *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin s ever before me. Purify me with hyssop and I will be clean; wash me and I will be whiter than snow* (Psalm 51:2–3, 7). However, this is all

⁴³ Allow me to go off on a tangent here; if you are a new Christian, it is possible that the idea of being involved in Christian service does not appeal to you for any number of reasons. Do not worry about this. Please indulge this analogy; as a 2 year old baby, you might observe a football game in person or on television and it means absolutely nothing to you. As you grown up and join the football team, you would like more than anything to play, instead of sitting the game out. It is similar to our function in the Christian life. We, as young Christians, may have no desire to play any real part in God's plan; or we may want to jump right in without any sort of training or guidance. When we spend time learning His Word, we will eventually have the desire to become involved in His plan for our lives and our involvement will be meaningful.

ceremonial. But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, Who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve to living God (Hebrews 9:11–15). The true cleansing is the blood of Jesus Christ—His spiritual death on the cross, His payment for our sins upon the cross. After that, we are temporally cleansed through rebound, the naming of our sins to God—which is simple and nonmeritorious as the payment for these sins was made on the cross—we merely acknowledge that fact.

"And they will take a young bull, a son of the herd, and its tribute-offering, flour mixed with oil,—and a second bull, a son of the herd you will take for a sin [-offering]; [Numbers 8:8]

We continually see the animal taken out from the herd, just as our Lord Jesus Christ was taken out of the population of the Jews and was made sin for us. The flour mixed with oil speaks of the humanity of our Lord filled with the Holy Spirit.

"And you will cause the Levites to approach before [lit., to the face of] the tent of meeting and you will assemble the entire congregation of the people of Israel. [Numbers 8:9]

Moses is the *you* in this verse. He is the one who will approach the tent of meeting with the Levites and he will be the one to assemble the entire congregation of Israel. The Hiphil stem is causative, so Moses caused the Levites to approach.

"And you will cause the Levites to approach before the face of Yahweh and the people of Israel will lay their hands upon the Levites. [Numbers 8:10]

The laying on of hands has three separate connotations: (1) It is a way of identifying. The Levites are set apart to God and the Israelites are identified with the Levites. (2) The laying on of hands often is a means of conferring, and the spiritual vocation of the Levites is recognized by the sons of Israel conferred upon them. (3) Finally, the laying on of hands indicates a substitution has taken place. The sinner often was instructed to lay his hands on the animal sacrifice before it was slaughtered; here, the Levites are substituted for the first-born of Israel.

"And Aaron will present [lit., wave] the Levites—a wave-offering before the face of Yahweh, from among the sons of Israel; they are to serve the service [or, to work the work] of Yahweh. [Numbers 8:11]

This is the first portion of this verse:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	And Aaron shall present the Levites before the LORD...
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	and Aaron shall offer the Levites as a wave-offering before Yahweh...
KJV	And Aaron shall offer the Levites before the LORD...
NIV	Aaron is to present the Levites before the LORD as a wave offering...
NRSV	And Aaron shall present the Levites before the LORD as an elevation offering...
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	and Aaron hath waved the Levites—a wave-offering before Jehovah,...

This verse does begin with a conjunction and the subject is Aaron. The verb is the Hiphil perfect of *nûwph* (נוף) [pronounced *noof*]. According to BDB, the technical use of this word is that priest would take an offering and lift it up toward the altar and then move it away, back to himself, as it were, to represent that this is being offered to Yahweh and Yahweh has given it back to them. Strong's #5130 BDB #631. So, in this verse, Aaron presents the Levites to Yahweh, but then receives them back as a present to himself and his sons.

T^enûwphâh (תָּנוּפְהָא) [pronounced *t'noo-PHAWH*] is obviously closely related to *nûwph*. Strong's #8573 BDB #632. Often, in the Hebrew, a noun is formed from the verb by adding an *âh* ending. Here, it is preceded by a *t* as well.

This is a *wave-offering* for want of a better term. This is the offering which the priest brings toward the altar and then takes it away, signifying that the offering is given to God and then received back to them. The Levites are offered to Yahweh, given wholly over to Him; and God the presents them to Aaron and his sons for their service to Him.

The second portion of this verse appears to be generally as poorly dealt with as the first. Owen's reads: *from the people of Israel that it may be theirs to do the service of Yahweh*; the NASB: *from the sons of Israel, that they may qualify [footnoted as lit., be able] to perform the service of the LORD*; and *Young's Translation* is equally abstruse: *from the sons of Israel, and they have been—for doing the service of Jehovah*. This is not difficult. There are two prepositions, *mîn* (separation is implied) and *'êth* (אֶת) [pronounced *ayth*] and it simply means *with, among*. This is a little tricky as this same word is often untranslated and used to designate a direct object. The context here tells us how this is to be used. Strong's #854 BDB #85.

The we have the simple verb *to be* in the Qal perfect with a masculine plural subject, mysteriously rendered by Owen (and the RSV) as *that it may be theirs*. Hello! This is simply *they are*. This is followed by the preposition *to* (the prefixed *lâmed*) and the Qal infinitive construct of *to serve, to work*; that is, the verb *'âbad* (עָבַד) [pronounced *gaw^p-VAHD*]; from this verb is built the words for *servant, service (work), and labor*. Strong's #5647 BDB #712. The noun cognate is found immediately afterward. The meaning is simple; they Levites are dedicated to God, set apart to Yahweh, offered to their Lord; and then Yahweh returned them to Aaron for service to Aaron and his sons to do the work of Yahweh. Why this was not simply literally rendered by these translations, I do not know.

We have a similar situation back in Leviticus 7:30–34: the breast of the wave offering was brought before God. It was likely brought toward the altar, but not burned, and then taken away. When it is *brought* before Yahweh, *brought* is in the imperfect and not perfect tense, as though we have a process and not a completed action. Therefore, it is possible that this was brought to the altar and taken away and then this may have been repeated several times. In any case, this portion of the peace-offering—the breast and the thigh—was given to Aaron and his sons (Leviticus 8:31–32).

"And the Levites will lay their hands on the head of the bulls and you will make [lit., do] the one a sin-offering and the one a burnt-offering to Yahweh, to cover [or, atone] for the Levites; [Numbers 8:12]

In this verse we have a clear case of epanadiplosis [pronounced *EP-an-a-di-PLO-sis*] where a sentence begins and ends with the same word. A complete circle or completeness is implied in a verse like this; there has been a statement of complete truth and its beginning and end are both marked. The identification with the bulls and their sacrifice as a sin-offering and as a burnt-offering is a complete offering, just as what our Lord did on the cross was completely efficacious on our behalf; that is, His work, His death, completely blotted out the list of sins and ordinances against us.

The laying on of hands is identification and the Levites identified themselves with the bulls. The bulls stood for Jesus Christ being judged (burnt) for our sins (the sin-offering). How this was done, whether a few did this as representing the Levite tribe, it is not revealed to us here. There could have been a procession, but that is not implied here either.

"And you will cause the Levites to stand before Aaron, and before his sons, and you have presented [lit., waved] them [as] a wave-offering to⁴⁴ Yahweh; [Numbers 8:13]

Furthermore, it is not revealed whether the Levites moved forward toward the altar and back again; with the use of these verbs and the fact that the Jews were very demonstrative, it would seem as though these movements were done.

⁴⁴ Possibly *before the face of Yahweh* as per the codices: the Western Onkolos, the targums of Jonathan and the Septuagint.

"And you will separate the Levites from the midst of the sons of Israel, and the Levites are [or, will be] Mine; [Numbers 8:14]

It is in the book of Numbers that we have the specific duties of the Levites and their calling out, as opposed to the book having their name, Leviticus.

"And afterwards the Levites will go in to serve⁴⁵ the tent of meeting and you will have cleansed them, and you have presented [lit., waved] them—a wave-offering. [Numbers 8:15]

As before, the tenses given these verbs are reasonable, given the context. Not recalling my English, it sounds as though I have used a perfective future here (or something like that) to refer to a completed action in future time. When they go in to serve the tent of meeting (an event future from Yahweh speaking to Moses), this will follow Moses having presented them to God, an action future from the time of speaking, but past with regards to their dedicated service.

"For they are completely given [lit., they are the given, they are the given] to Me from the midst of the sons of Israel, instead of him who opens any womb—the first-born of all—from among⁴⁶ the sons of Israel, I have taken them to Myself; [Numbers 8:16]

God had purchased the first-born of Israel with the first-born of Egypt; "Set apart to Me every first-born, the first offspring of every womb from among the sons of Israel, both of man and beast; it belongs to Me." (Exodus 13:2). Here, He has exchanged or substituted the Levites for the first-born. This fits in with the great themes of the Old Testament: atonement (or, covering) of sin, sacrifice, redemption, slavery, cleansing, substitution, the first-born. Every major theme in the Old Testament is a shadow of the good things to come.

"For every first-born from among the sons of Israel, among man and among beast[is] Mine; in the day of My striking every first-born in the land of Egypt, I sanctified them for Myself; [Numbers 8:17]

Sanctified, recall, is the verb *qâdash* (קָדַשׁ) [pronounced *kaw-DAHSH*] and it means *consecrate, sanctify, dedicate, hallow*. Strong's #6942 BDB #872. There are a whole set of words which we have examined which mean *holy, sacred, apart from, set apart to*, etc. The entire concept is that God purchased these in Israel through the death of the first-born, through the sacrifice of the first-born when God judged and struck down the first-born. Similarly, he would purchase all of us through the judgment and striking down of His first-born and we would be thereby set apart to Him. *You were bought with a price; do not become the slaves of men* (1Corinthians 7:23).

"And I take the Levites instead of every first-born among the sons of Israel; [Numbers 8:18]

Again, we have the great theme of substitution. Just as God's Son will be our substitute for judgement, so the Levites were substituted for the first-born.

"And I give the Levites gifts [lit., given ones] to Aaron and to his sons, from the midst of the sons of Israel, to serve the service [or, work the work] of the sons of Israel in the tent of meeting, and to make atonement for the sons of Israel, and there is not a plague among the sons of Israel in the sons of Israel's approaching the sanctuary." [Numbers 8:19]

This gives us a better idea of what a wave offering is. The Levites are presented before God for His service and God gives them to Aaron for service to Aaron and his sons. Giving is a process of receiving blessings from God and returned some of those blessings to Him and having Him return these blessings to you. Our service to God is similar—God has given His Son for our salvation and we give ourselves to Him in service and He gives to us

⁴⁵ Possibly *to serve the service* as per several of the codices.

⁴⁶ The western Samaritan, the Onkolos, Syriac and Vulgate have just *among* rather than *from among*.

great spiritual and material blessings. The idea of a *wave* offering is not so much like *waving your hand* but more like the *waves of the ocean*, which move backward and forward.

God has a plan for every believer in every dispensation. No one is unimportant. In the church age, this is even more true, as everyone has been baptized with the Spirit and everyone has received at least one spiritual gift. Now concerning spiritual [gifts], brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant...there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another, faith by the same Spirit, and to another, gifts of healing by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of works of power [i.e., miracles]⁴⁷ and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits and to another [the ability to speak] various foreign languages, and to another the interpretation of [these] languages. But one and the same Spirit work all these things, distributing to each one individually, just as He wills. For even as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," it is not for this reason any the less of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," it is not for this reason any the less of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body just as He desired. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now, there are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again, the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, it is much truer that members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary (1 Corinthians 12:1, 3–21). In fact, if anything, there is a much greater importance placed upon the believer who is inconspicuous. The older widow who prays two hours a day, the wealthy benefactor who quietly gives to a church without strings, the person who might spend three or four hours a day studying. As I have mentioned, there are believers whose shoulders I stand upon that you have never heard of who faithfully did work in the original languages, an absolutely necessary but thankless job that some Christians actually denigrate because it is complicated and does not always support their own viewpoints.

The Levites also act as a protective barrier, a hedge against attack from God. They are to be the salt of the land—those in service to God, those whose presence in Israel will keep Israel safe from God's wrath and His plagues. Believers today in a nation also protect that nation from God's wrath. The United States is a decadent nation, but it has prospered and blessed due to a small pivot of mature believers. Because I know how some of you think, you mind is thinking, I'll just make the best use of the great blessing given by God and I will allow someone else to be the mature pivot. We are all sons of God, and as such are subject to discipline. So even though we live in a nation of great material wealth and blessing, we who try God's patience will be severely disciplined. **Have you forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons?** "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him. for those whom the Lord loves, He disciplines and He scourges every son whom He receives." **It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits and live? for they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for good, that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet, to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness (Hebrews 12:5–11 Proverbs 3:11–12).**

And Moses did [this]—and Aaron— and all the congregation of the sons of Israel in regard to the Levites according to all that Yahweh had commanded Moses concerning the Levites; so have the sons of Israel done to them. [Numbers 8:20]

⁴⁷ Recall that this passage is from the first portion of the church age when there were healings, miracles and people spoke in foreign languages that they did not know in order to evangelize the Jews as a fulfillment of Isaiah 28:10–13.

For a long time, a lot of things ran smoothly for the Israelites—God gave a set of directives and Moses saw to it that these directives were followed to the letter. For those who know what is coming, you keep waiting for the ax to fall. It will fall in Numbers 11. Thus far, since many of the degenerate idolaters were eliminated back in the incident of the golden calf, Moses and the people have been very obedient to all of Yahweh's commands. However, coming up in Numbers 11, they will murmur against His great provisions for them here on earth and that will be the beginning of the end. Our relationship to God requires more than legalistic obedience.

And the Levites were purifying themselves [from sin]⁴⁸, and they were washing their garments, and Aaron was presenting [lit., waving] them—a wave-offering before the face of Yahweh, and Aaron was making a covering [or, atonement] for them to cleanse them; [Numbers 8:21]

The beginning of v. 21 is interesting:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	And the Levites cleansed and purified themselves...
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	And the Levites accepted the cleansing from sin,...
KJV	And the Levites were purified...
NASB	The Levites, too, purified themselves from sin...
NIV	The Levites purified themselves...
NRSV	The Levites purified themselves from sin...
Owen's Translation	And purified themselves from sin the Levites...
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	And the Levites cleanse themselves...

The beginning verb is not what you would expect to find here. We would expect the third person masculine plural, Hithpael imperfect of *ṭâhêr* (טָהַר) [pronounced *taw-HAIR*] which simply means *to be cleansed*. Strong's #2891 BDB #372. We have a different verb here.

The Hithpael is the intensive reflexive; they act upon themselves and the verb is intensified.⁴⁹ Our morphology would be correct but the verb would be wrong. The verb here, surprisingly enough, is *châṭâ'* (נָחַץ) [pronounced *khaw-TAW*], the verb for *sin, deviate, subvert [the Law]*. Strong's #2398 BDB #306. However, when this verb is found in the Piel, it appears to mean *unsin, purify* (Piel perfect: Exodus 29:36 Leviticus 14:52 Numbers 19:19 Ezekiel 43:20, 22 45:18; Piel Infinitive: Leviticus 14:49 Ezekiel 43:23; Piel imperfect: Genesis 31:39 Leviticus 8:15 9:15 2Chronicles 29:24 Psalm 51:9; Piel participle: Leviticus 6:26; and the Hithpael future: Numbers 8:21 19:12, 13, 20 31:19, 20, 23 Job 41:25).⁵⁰ I wonder if there might be just a complete identification with sin here? This will take some more study; however, for right now, I will take the easy way out and go with the scholarship to date. The Brown Drive Briggs goes into detail with this verb in the Qal stems and their variations, but only devotes a paragraph to the Piel and related stems. Alfred Edersheim suggests the translation *unsinned*⁵¹.

The actual activities involved in this cleansing process are seen here as a process and not as a completed action. From God's standpoint, from the standpoint of His directives, these things were mandated and the action was seen as completed; however, from the viewpoint of the Israelites, this was a process which took time in order to fulfill the demands of Yahweh.

And afterward, the Levites have gone in to do [lit., serve] their service at the tent of meeting, before the face of Aaron and before the face of his sons; as Yahweh had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so they have done to them. [Numbers 8:22]

⁴⁸ Or, possibly, the Levites were identifying themselves with sin and washed their clothes.

⁴⁹ We actually don't have a universally recognized reflexive form of the Qal stem; the passive of the Qal—the Niphal stem—can be reflexive.

⁵⁰ This is a definitive listing of verses.

⁵¹ *Bible History Old Testament*, by Alfred Edersheim, ©1995, p. 236.

Once the Levites had been ceremonially cleansed, they were fit to serve Yahweh at His holy tent of meeting. I do not believe that they actually went inside as a general rule; that seems to be reserved for the sons of Aaron, just as only the high priest could go into the Holy of Holies.

This is analogous to Paul, who offered to God the Gentiles. **But I have written very boldly to you on some points, so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God; to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, that [my] offering of the Gentiles might become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit** (Romans 16:15–16). If you have never studied the Old Testament, you have no appreciation for the analogy which Paul was drawing. He brings the Gentiles to God as a wave offering, bringing them to God and then God gives them back to the population for serviced to Him. Paul is just like Aaron or his sons, the priests, offering the Levites to God after having cleansed them.

There are some similarities and several significant differences between the ordination of the priests and the cleansing of the Levites:⁵²

The Priests		The Levites	
The priests were made holy.	Leviticus 8:30	The Levites were made clean.	Numbers 8:6–7, 15
The priests were anointed and washed.	Leviticus 8:6, 10, 12	The Levites were sprinkled.	Numbers 8:7
The priests received new garments.	Leviticus 8:7–9	The Levites washed their clothing.	Numbers 8:7, 21
A bull and two rams were sacrificed; blood was applied to the priests.	Leviticus 8:15, 24	Two bulls were sacrificed, but nothing was said of their blood.	Numbers 8:8
The priests were essentially given to the Israelites; God had them perform all of the sacrifices.	Leviticus 6:9, 20	The Levites were a gift to the priests; they were a wave offering	Numbers 8:11, 19, 21

Ages of Service of Levites

And Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 8:23]

Now that the Levites are cleansed and set aside for God's purpose, we turn to another topic:

"This [is] that which [is] the Levites: from a son of twenty-five years and upward, he will go in to serve the host [lit., army] in the service of the tent of meeting; [Numbers 8:24]

This appears to contradict the information given us in Numbers 4:3 where it appears as though the time of service would fall between the ages of thirty and fifty. However, that was a census taken for a particular responsibility. It is likely that between the ages of twenty-five and thirty, a Levite would go through a period of training and observation, an apprenticeship. We have a similar census taken by David in 1Chronicles 23:3. In 1Chronicles 23:24, where David apparently lowered the age of service of the Levites to twenty.

"And from a son of fifty years he will retire from service [lit., return from the army of the service] and he will not serve any more; [Numbers 8:25]

⁵² This is taken from a footnote in the NIV Study Bible, p. 200.

God does set up a specific retirement age, that being age fifty for those serving as Levites. This does not mean that all servants of God should retire from Christian service at age fifty. There are some who should retire, perhaps, or pursue other areas of service and fifty strikes me as being quite young. However, the responsibilities of the Levites primarily was that of moving the things of the tabernacle and the walls and around age forty is when I lost the romanticism of moving. It is important to be matched with a proper position and this definitely implies that age fifty is a good cut off for strenuous physical labor.

"And he will minister with his brothers in the tent of meeting, to keep the charge [or, responsibility] yet [lit., and] not to do the service; thus you do to the Levites concerning their charge [or, responsibility]." [Numbers 8:26]

Recall that *mish^emârôwth* (תּוֹמָשׁוֹת) [pronounced *mish^e-MAHR-oath*] (plural form) refers to a charge, a responsibility or commission. Strong's #4931 BDB #1038. The Levites did a lot of grunt work; that is, a lot of physical labor. When they moved from camp to camp, the Levites took down the tabernacle and its perimeter and carried it from place to place. However, by age fifty, they were relieved of this work, although they were allowed to assist or advise the younger Levites in their service.

Numbers 9

Numbers 9:1–23

Outline of Chapter 9:

- Vv. 1–14 God's directives for the second Passover
- Vv. 15–23 A summary of God's geographical will for the children of Israel

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

Introduction: Numbers 9 is a summary passage, written long after it occurred, just as Exodus 40 was written long after it occurred (I don't know why I believe this to be true). The first half of this chapter focuses in on the first Passover and God's commandments pertaining thereto. The second portion deals with God's directive will in the lives of the Israelites, leading them through the desert. A pattern had been established by this time, indicating that Moses wrote this long after it actually occurred. Furthermore, the time given in Numbers 9:1 is prior to the time of Numbers 1:1, indicating that Moses wrote this from memory or from notes and arranged this information topically. This indicates to me that from somewhere near the end of Exodus to at least this far in Numbers, Moses wrote that portion long after it all occurred.

What is quite helpful to us in Numbers 9 (and 10) is a time frame is given to us by implication. We, as Westerners, tend to think linearly and chronologically, and the end of Exodus (from Exodus 33 on), all of Leviticus and the first nine chapters of Numbers are not exactly in chronological order, but in a topical order as this information was brought to the hand of Moses when he recorded it. Most of the incidents recorded were in a chronological order and they would be interspersed with information received from God. Moses spent eighty days on top of the Mount of Sinai, God speaking to him. Do you think that he got the Ten Commandments and then God said, "Cool your heels, boy and let's wait till the Jews get themselves in trouble." God taught Moses the Law and everything that was expected by the Law. During the passages which read, *and God spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai* (Leviticus 25:1), this came from one of these two times upon Mount Sinai. When God spoke to Moses from the tent of meeting, this would have occurred after the completion of the tabernacle at the foot of Mount Sinai (Leviticus 1:1) or in the tent pitched outside the camp (Exodus 33:7–11). When God spoke to Moses in the desert of Mount Sinai, this would have been either after they set out on a journey or outside the camp prior to the building of the tabernacle (I haven't decided which yet). Now, how do we know that Exodus 33–Numbers 9 was not recorded as given by God in a day-by-day fashion? Two reasons: (1) Exodus 40:34–38 and Numbers 9:15–23 both are summary verses of the travels of Israel through the desert. That is, both look at the encampments of Israel and the travels of Israel from a perspective of several years of movement—a pattern was observed and recorded. This indicates to us that the information contained in these two passages, and, therefore, everything in between, was written **after** such a pattern was established. Furthermore, Exodus 33 contains the orders to set out and Numbers 10 is the fulfillment of these orders. In between, we have the construction of the tabernacle, tabernacle worship, etc.

It is claimed by some commentators that Numbers 9 covers the only observance of the Passover in the desert, but we really do not know that for certain. We know that it is observed here; we do not know whether or not it is observed 39 more times or not. After all, even though the Bible requires the Passover to be observed each year (Deuteronomy 16), this does not mean that it was not observed when there was no history of it.

God's Directives for the Second Passover

Exodus 12:1–20, 47–49

And Yahweh spoke to Moses, in the desert of Sinai, in the second year of their going out of the land of Egypt, in the first month, saying, [Numbers 9:1]

This verse tells us a couple of things. First of all, Numbers 1–9 was all written after the move from the foot of the mountains of Sinai. Thus far, the Jews camped at Mount Sinai when Moses went up to receive the Law; they camped along the foot of the mountains of Sinai, and now they have left the mountains for the desert. During the move and immediately after the move, Moses received divine revelation from God and he either kept it in his mind or he took notes. However, this is the final version or his final revision and it is obvious that if Numbers 9:1 occurred prior to Numbers 1:1 that Moses is not recording this as it occurs, in chronological order, but in a topical order. This takes some getting used to as my personal preference is chronological order and I will likely teach most of the Old and New Testaments in chronological order. It is likely that this chapter is logically inserted here, somewhat out of order.

"Also, the sons of Israel are to prepare [lit., will do] the Passover in its appointed season;
[Numbers 9:2]

There is a specific reason that this chapter is presented out of chronological order. When God spoke to Moses, it was to let Moses know that first and foremost what must be done in the very near future is the Passover. This is not a ceremony which can be skipped for any reason. Therefore, the Jews were first to erect the tabernacle as per Exodus 40:2 and 17, on the first day of the first month. Then they were to observe the Passover. Then they would be on the move, first cleansing the Levites and then dismantling the tabernacle. The orders to perform the Passover took place prior to the orders concerning the Levites and the dismantling and the moving of the tabernacle. And the fulfillment of God's directives would take place in the following order: first the observance of the second Passover, then the Levites would be cleansed for service (as it would make sense for them to be cleansed prior to rendering their services in the moving of the tabernacle); then they would move the tabernacle and a march would begin, with encampment taking place as per the picture given in Numbers 2; finally, the tabernacle would be set up once again.

"In the fourteenth day of this month between the evenings, you all will prepare it in its appointed season according to all its statutes and according to all its ordinances you will prepare it."
[Numbers 9:3]

Between the evenings has traditionally been at the end of one day, and the beginning of another which is sunset, when calculated by Jewish time.

In Numbers 9:1, it is the first month of the second year, probably at the first of the month. This directive is for the fourteenth of this same month (Numbers 9:3). After the Passover, Yahweh speaks to Moses again on the first day of the second month in the second year (Numbers 1:1). It is likely that the bulk of the material written between Exodus 40:17 and Numbers 9:3 was written quite a bit after the fact, as Moses brought this information to mind.

And Moses spoke to the sons of Israel to prepare [lit., do] the Passover; [Numbers 9:4]

The tabernacle has just been erected for the first time not but a day or a week previous and Moses speaks to the people. The cleansing of the Levites and the moving of the tabernacle take place subsequent to this verse.

And they prepared the Passover in the first [month] on the fourteenth day of the month, between the evening, in the desert of Sinai, according to all that Yahweh had commanded Moses, so the sons of Israel did. [Numbers 9:5]

What we have between Exodus 40:2 and this point in time is the honeymoon. God commands the Israelites and they obey. They are happy and they aren't complaining. When it is time to celebrate the Passover, they do. In the past several verses, we have had the same verb, 'āsâh (אָסָה) [pronounced *gaw-SAWH*], meaning *to do, to construct*, in several different forms. In v. 3, it occurs twice in the 2nd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect—all the sons of Israel performed the action of the verb and it was looked upon as a process. In v. 4, the same verb is in the Qal infinitive construct, correctly translated *to do*. Finally in v. 5, 'āsâh (אָסָה) [pronounced *gaw-SAWH*] occurs twice again, first in the 3rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect—the sons of Israel begin to go through the process fulfilling God's commands; and finally, at the end of v. 5, 'āsâh (אָסָה) [pronounced *gaw-SAWH*] is

found in the 3rd person plural, Qal perfect, meaning the action of the verb is seen as completed. Strong's #6213 BDB #793

Then there men were were unclean by a human soul, and they have not been able to prepare [lit., to do] the Passover on that day, and they approached before the faces of Moses and before Aaron on that day; [Numbers 9:6]

Now we get a better idea as to the reason for the order of these chapters. Moses recorded things as they went well. Here is the first hint of trouble. Yahwe's directives were clear. Anyone who was ceremonially unclean for any reason could not take part in spiritual activity. It did not matter if they meant it to happen or not. Sincerity is not the issue. You can be as sincere as possible and if you are unclean—that is, if you are out of fellowship—then your service to God is meaningless. The money you give, the amount of time you spend praying, all the witnessing that you do is all worthless. And their spiritual worship would be meaningless because they are unclean.

And those men said to him, "We are defiled by a soul of a man; why are we prevented so as not to approach with the offering of Yahweh in its appointed season in the midst of the sons of Israel?" [Numbers 9:7]

Moses' Father-in-law suggested: "Furthermore, you will select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you will place [these men] over them—leaders of thousands, of hundreds of fifties and of tens. And let them judge the people at all times; and let it be that every major dispute they will bring to you, but every minor dispute, they themselves will judge." (Exodus 18:21–22a). The logical extension of this is that if Moses could not decide, then he took the matter before Yahweh.

If you are stupid, you are thinking, *bully for them; they are demanding to worship God!* Sorry, but you are 100% wrong. Those who worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in doctrine. You cannot come to God unclean and expect anything to come of it other than discipline. You cannot do a right thing in a wrong way and expect God to bless you or to take notice of you. These men are sincere and they are wrong. This reveals an undercurrent of disobedience to God that we have not seen heretofore. Moses included this here as a foreshadowing of what was to come. This logically had to occur at the time Yahweh had mandated the second observance of the Passover. So from Exodus 40 until now, we have just heard what occurred that was good and how Moses and the sons of Israel obeyed the mandates of God. Now we will observe a change.

And Moses said to them, "Wait a minute, boys [lit., all of you, stand], that I may hear what Yahweh will command concerning you." [Numbers 9:8]

We already know—or think we know—God's response here. Hell no! However, prepare to be surprised.

And Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 9:9]

This will give us the divine viewpoint regarding this:

"Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'Even though a man is unclean by a soul or in a distant journey (or you [specifically] or of your generations), yet he has prepared a Passover to Yahweh; [Numbers 9:10]

Here is the *if* portion of this: a person is unclean due to contact with a dead person or they happen to be away from the camp during a Passover; this means that this ordinance shall stand forever. Now one thing which I would hate for you to miss in this document is the uncleanness associated with death. This is mentioned in vv. 6, 7 and 10—a contemporary to these events would certainly write about this because so many of those in the Exodus generation are dying; however, it would make no sense to include this kind of material if this book were written, say, a hundred years after these events occurred, and even less sense for this material to be included in a book written hundreds of years after these events (as some have asserted).

"In the second month on the fourteenth day between the evenings, they will do it; they will eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. [Numbers 9:11]

Time must still pass and they might have to go through a ceremonial cleansing similar to that found in Leviticus 21:1–2, 11, which applies to priests. The NIV Study Bible provided a good observation here: *The Lord thus demonstrates the reality of the distance that uncleanness brings between a believer and his (or her) participation in the worship of the community, but he also provides a merciful alternative.*⁵³ Out of fellowship, we have no relationship to God's plan. We are far off. We must become clean, enter into fellowship again, and then we may participate in His plan.

"They will leave none of it until the morning and they will not break a bone of it—according to all the statute for the Passover, they will keep it. [Numbers 9:12]

The Passover lamb is Jesus Christ and on the cross, not a bone of his body was to be broken. "It is to be eaten in a single house; you will not bring forth any of the flesh outside of the house, nor are you to break any bone of it" (Exodus 12:46). Yahweh is near to the brokenhearted and delivers those who are grace-oriented. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but Yahweh delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken. Evil will slay the wicked; and those who hate the righteous will be concerned. Yahweh redeems the soul of His servants and none of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned (Psalm 34:19–22). I feel sorry for the exegete in Old Testament times who had to explain this bit about the no broken bones. In the midst of saving the grace-oriented and the redeeming of the souls of his servants, suddenly the Psalmist points out that that **He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken**. That would be tough to explain except in the light of what has transpired. Only John was there at the crucifixion, so he observed more details than is found in the other of the gospels. His Greek is deceptively simple, meaning that either Greek was not his original language or he was not exceptionally bright. Nevertheless, his gospel is packed with information not found in the others: **The Jews, therefore, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and they might be taken away. The soldiers therefore came, and broke the legs of the first man, and of the other man who was crucified with Him; about coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs; but one of the soldiers pierce His chest with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and serum [lit., blood and water]. And he who has seen has borne witness, and his witness is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe. For these things came to pass, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, "Not of bone of Him shall be broken."** (John 19:–36).

"And the man who is clean, and has not been on a journey and has ceased to prepare [lit., to do] the Passover, even that person has been cut off from his people; because he has not approached with the offering of Yahweh in its appointed season, that man will bear his sin. [Numbers 9:13]

The Passover is the sacrifice which most closely parallels the death of Jesus Christ for our sins. The innocent lamb, without spot and without blemish; the entire congregation shall slay it; the death of the first-born; the blood on the door posts; the delivery out of the land of slavery into the promised land—all of this obviously points toward our Lord's death for our sins.

We have a similar warning concerning the communion table: **But let a man examine himself and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup; for he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge to body correctly. For this reason, many among you are weak and sick and many sleep. But if we have judged ourselves, we will not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world (1Corinthians 11:28–32).**

⁵³ p. 201.

"And when a visitor visits with you, then he will prepare [lit., do] a Passover to Yahweh, according to the statute of the Passover, and according to its ordinance, so he will do. One statute is to [all of] you, both to a visitor and to a native of the land." [Numbers 9:14]

People will come from all over the world to the Jews and to their God, a God of a small but exceedingly prosperous and powerful nation; a nation of slaves which walked away from the Egyptian empire and their God brought that empire to its knees. God will see to it that other people come through Israel for other reasons and they will all be evangelized through the Passover and the other sacrifices. Recall that God the Holy Spirit can take spiritual truth and make it real to the soul of the unbeliever, allowing the unbeliever the chance to believe. This parallels Exodus 12:47–49, which reads: "All the congregation of Israel are to celebrate this. But if a visitor stays with you and does the Passover to Yahweh, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him approach to do it; and he will like like a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person may eat of it. One law will be to the native as to the visitor who stays among you." Notice, this is just like being born into a new family, which is the whole point of regeneration.

The Passover ceremony, as we have covered before, speaks clearly of Jesus Christ dying for our sins on the cross. It is one of the clearest pictures of His sacrifice on our behalf. **For Christ, our Passover, also has been sacrificed**(1Corinthians 5:7b). This most solemn of ceremonies was the only one carried into the New Testament. Our Lord and the disciples celebrated Passover together the night before the cross, **and, while they were eating, He took bread and after a blessing, He broke [it] and gave [it] to them and said, "Take—this is My body, which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me." And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave [it] to them and they all drank from it. And He said to them, "This cup—which is poured out for you—this is the My blood of the covenant, which is shed on behalf of many for forgiveness of sins. This cup is the new covenant by means of My blood. Do this as often as you drink [it] in remembrance of Me."**(Mark 14:22–24 Luke 22:20b Matthew 26:28b 1Corinthians 11:25b).

According to the NIV Study Bible, this is the last time the Israelites will observe the Passover until Joshua 5:10. This is not necessarily true. The only **recorded** instance of the observance of the Passover in all of the Pentateuch is in Exodus 12; here, it has mandated and the mandate being carried out was implied by the questions of the unclean men. The mandate to keep the Passover will be found again in Numbers 28:16–33:3 and in Deuteronomy 16:1–6. Just because we do not find specific references to keeping the Passover does not mean that they did not keep the Passover. The Israelites did not observe their Sabbatical years and that is well attested to. However, there is nothing said in the Bible about them not observing the Passover.

A Summary of God's Geographical Will for the Children of Israel

Exodus 13:21–22 40:1, 34–38

And in the day of the raising up of the tabernacle the cloud covered the tabernacle, even the tent of the testimony; and it the evening it was over the tabernacle, as an appearance of fire till morning; [Numbers 9:15]

Recall the time frame that we are in right now. The tabernacle has just been completed (although this is also true for the first time that it was moved) and the glory of Y^ehowah is upon the tabernacle. This, just as the end of Exodus, describes what happened the first time the tabernacle was erected, just as what happened every time it was reassembled. **And he erected the court all around the tabernacle and the altar and put the screen for the entryway of the court. Thus Moses finished the work. Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of Yahweh filled the tabernacle, and throughout all their journeys whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the sons of Israel would mobilize; but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not mobilize until the day when it was taken up. For throughout all their journeys, the cloud of Yahweh was on the tabernacle by day, and there was a fire in it by night, in the sight of all of house of Israel (Exodus 40:33–38).** Notice that the end of the book of Exodus does not sound like something written immediately after the first raising of the tabernacle, but it sounds like something written afterwards, after the tabernacle had been dismantled and moved several times, as per the direction of Y^ehowah.

Even at the very beginning of the journey of Israel away from Egypt, God provided for them this kind of direction. And Yahweh was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might journey by day and by night. And He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night from before the people (Exodus 13:21–22).

So it has been continually; the cloud covered it and the appearance of fire by night. [Numbers 9:16]

Fire is the Hebrew word *ʿesh* (אֵשׁ) [pronounced *aysh*] and one of its many uses is the supernatural fire, the presence of Yahweh or the attendance of a theophany. This passage parallels Exodus 40:33–38. It was written later, but refers to simultaneous events. Recall that this is in the desert of southern Egypt and it is highly unlikely that there are any clouds in the sky at all except for this, the visual image of the accompaniment of Jesus Christ. Strong's #784 BDB #77

And according to the going up of the cloud from off the tent and afterwards the sons of Israel journey; and in the place where the cloud settles [lit., tabernacles], there the sons of Israel would settle [lit., would tabernacle]; [Numbers 9:17]

The verb used twice in this verse is the Qal imperfect of *shâkan* (שָׁכַן) [pronounced *shaw-KAHN*] and it means *to settle, to settle down, to dwell, to encamp, to tabernacle*. Strong's #7931 BDB #1014. Its noun cognate is *mîsh^okân* (מִשְׁכָּן) [pronounced *mish^o-KAWN*], which means *dwelling place, tent, tabernacle*. Strong's #4908 BDB #1015.

By the command [lit., mouth] of Yahweh, the sons of Israel journey, and by the command [lit., mouth] of Yahweh, they encamp; all the days that the cloud encamped over the sacred tent, they encamped [or, more lit, the cloud tabernacled over the tabernacle they tabernacled]. [Numbers 9:18]

This is a summary verse describing what would happen in general following the first and the subsequent raisings of the tabernacle. The command of Yahweh was the encampment or the tabernacling of the cloud by day, fire by night. The command or the mouth of Yahweh was the movement of the cloud, which guided them. This cloud is supernatural. It is almost supernatural to see a cloud there in the first place and to have one which hovers, rises and falls and moves slowly enough to be followed, is supernatural. The Jews in the Exodus generation were privy to a great many miracles, although it did not really affect them spiritually. They were a degenerate, rebellious generation and God loathed that generation. Since the cloud represented God's presence and His guidance, it was only natural to follow it, even without being given the directive to do so.

And in the cloud prolonging itself over the tabernacle many days, then have the sons of Israel kept the responsibility [or, charge] of Yahweh, and they would not set out; [Numbers 9:19]

Whenever the cloud stopped moving, then the sons of Israel remained in the one place. There is a geographical will of God and we are to remain in that geographical will. Ours is not quite as clearly prescribed as it was to the Exodus generation; however, it is not a situation where we must determine do we go right on the 610 Loop to get to the Galleria, or do we stay on 45 until we get to interstate 10 and cut over on 10? If we stay with doctrine, God will take care of our geographical location. No matter what, it will not be determined by how we feel at any given time.

And so when the cloud is a number of days over the tabernacle; by the command of Yahweh, they encamp (lit., tabernacle); all the days that the cloud tabernalces over the tabernacle, they encamp (or, tabernacle). [Numbers 9:20]

The cloud remaining in one place is God's visual directive to them to remain in that one place.

And so when the cloud is from evening till morning, when the cloud has gone up in the morning, then they will journey; whether by day or by night, when the cloud goes up, then they journey.
[Numbers 9:21]

Apparently, the cloud would settle further down, much closer to the tabernacle. This was an easy task to determine for the sons of Israel. In this desert, they would be staring into an almost cloudless sky, save one. When the cloud would ascend, then would pack up and head out; when it would begin to hover, they would stop, camp and set up the tabernacle. Then the cloud would descend upon the tabernacle.

Whether two days or a month or a year [lit., days], in the cloud prolonging itself over the tabernacle, to tabernacle over it, the sons of Israel tabernacled and did not journey; and in its being lifted up, they journeyed; [Numbers 9:22]

There was no set amount of time that the Israelites journeyed. It might be for two days, a month, or for many days (this usually indicates a year, as per Leviticus 25:29). It was an indeterminable amount of time, just as our knowledge of our lives here on earth is an indeterminable amount of time. This is written from a perspective of previous observation. There have been enough travelings and encampments that Moses has seen the pattern and that the pattern is unrelated to a time factor but to the leading of Jesus Christ in the desert.

By the command [lit., mouth] of Yahweh, they encamp; and by the command [lit., mouth] of Yahweh, they set out; the responsibility of Yahweh, they have kept, by the command [lit., mouth] of Yahweh with the hand of Moses. [Numbers 9:23]

This previous passage describes divine guidance to the children of Israel.

Numbers 10

Numbers 10:1–36

Outline of Chapter 10:

- Vv. 1–10 The Use of trumpets
- Vv. 11–28 The first march away from Mount Sinai
- Vv. 29–32 Moses and his brother-in-law
- Vv. 33–36 The ark of the covenant leads the advance

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

Introduction: Up until this time, the Israelites have prepared to travel. Everyone had their assigned duties and the Levites had been cleansed for service. In Numbers 10, as God ordered in Exodus 33, the Jews will finally set out from Mount Sinai. In retrospect, from the end of Exodus until about this time, this information was recorded not in chronological order, but in a topical order, as Moses brought these things back to mind. Some were received on Mount Sinai during his two times up there and some were received in the desert of Sinai (when he was outside the camp) and some things were spoken to him in the tabernacle. At this point, we are actually breaking camp and moving away from Mount Sinai and toward the promised land. Numbers 10 is the end of the honeymoon. It has appeared that since the golden calf incident that the cutting out of the cancerous element of Israel possibly did the trick. However, the implication of the Numbers 9 incident and one of the first things which will occur when the Jews come into the desert away from the mountain, will indicate that these are a hard-hearted, rebellious generation that God will have to strike dead in the desert.

The Use of Trumpets

And Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 10:1]

Prior to moving out, there will have to be some way for Moses to keep order. We will have two million people wandering across the desert and there will be times when Moses will have to get their attention.

"Make for yourself two trumpets of silver; beaten work you will make them, and they have been to you for the convocation of the company, and for the journeying of the camps; [Numbers 10:2]

Trumpets, insofar as we know, were long metal tubes which were straight and thin and the ends, like all brass instruments, were flared. God states the purpose of the two trumpets—they are to convene the companies of Israel and to assist them on their journey.

"And they sound the trumpets [lit., blow with them], then [lit., and] the entire congregation will assemble themselves with you, in the direction of the opening of the tent of meeting. [Numbers 10:3]

Some of the translation here are difficult to follow. Simply, the horns will be blown and that will be the sign for the sons of Israel to gather themselves to the tent of meeting. We are talking such a large group that there would only be a small percentage of men who would actually be right at the tent of meeting and everyone would have fallen in behind them.

"And if one sounds the trumpet [lit., and if with one they blow], then the princes, the heads of the divisions [lit., thousands] of Israel, will meet together with you; [Numbers 10:4]

Two trumpets blowing at the same time means the entire congregation will assemble themselves and one trumpet means that only the princes of Israel need assemble themselves.

"And [if] you blow [the trumpet]—a shout, then those on the east side of the tabernacle will advance [lit., and the camps which are encamping eastward will journey]; [Numbers 10:5]

This is not a trumpet sound and then a shout, but rather a description of a type of trumpet sound. The troupes camped on the east side of the tabernacle, at this sound, would march. Rotherham renders this *but when ye blow an alarm* and footnotes it, explaining that it likely means *a protracted or repeated blowing*.⁵⁴ We find such an alarm alluded to in Joel 2:1: *Blow a trumpet in Zion an dsound and alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble for the day of Yahweh is coming; surely it is near.*

"And you [all] have blown—a second shout, then [lit., and] the camps which are camping on the south will advance [or, journey]; a shout they blow for their journeys. [Numbers 10:6]

Here, two shouts of the trumpet causes the southern troops to advance; I don't quite follow the last sentence here.

"And in the assembling of the assembly you blow and you do not shout; [Numbers 10:7]

There is apparently a different kind of trumpet sound to assemble all of Israel.

"And sons of Aaron, the priests, blow [with] the trumpets; and they will be to you a perpetual statute throughout your generations [or, more literally, and they have been to you for a statute age-during to your generations]. [Numbers 10:8]

Our language is somewhat different than the Hebrew language. We would *blow the trumpets* and they would *blow with the trumpets*. We are saying essentially the same thing. The *they* here may not necessarily refer to the priests but rather to the instructions with regards to blowing the trumpets. We find the priests blowing these trumpets hundreds of years later in 1Chronicles 15:15:24 and 2Chronicles 13:12.

"And when you [all] go into battle in your land against an adversary who is distressing you, then you will shout with the trumpets and you will be remembered before the face of Yahweh your God, and you [all] will be delivered from your enemies. [Numbers 10:9]

The key here is that during the battle, they concentrate upon their God and Savior, Jesus Christ and call upon Him when things begin going bad, and Jesus Christ would deliver them in battle. We will see a miraculous illustration of this in Joshua 6.

"And in the day of your gladness and in your appointed seasons, and in the beginnings of your months, you will blow also with the trumpets over your burnt-offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace-offerings, and they will be to you a memorial before the face of your God; I, Yahweh, [am] your God." [Numbers 10:10]

The trumpets can be blown to express joy and gladness and when offerings are made to God. God is obviously saying that He will hear them. The Psalmist wrote: *Blow the trumpet at the new moon, at the full moon on our feast day. For it is a statute for Israel, an ordinance of the God of Jacob (Psalm 81:3–4).* So far, we see that trumpets are to be used for (1) the assembling of the congregation (v. 3); (2) the assembling of the leaders (v. 4); (3) advancing (vv. 5–6); (4) going into battle (v. 9); and, (5) feastedays (v. 10). See the **Doctrine of Trumpets—not finished yet!!**

⁵⁴ *The Emphasized Bible*, p. 168.

David, possibly during his retirement, set up a full orchestra of 288 musicians (1Chronicles 25). I believe that there is one sect (and probably more) which does not believe in musical instruments in the church. And when the priest came forth from the holy place (for all the priests who were present had sanctified themselves, without regard to divisions), and all the Levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, and their sons and relatives, clothed in fine linen, with cymbals, harps and lyres, standing east of the altar, and with them 120 priest blowing trumpets in unison when the trumpets and the singers were to make themselves heard with one voice of praise and to glorify Yahweh, and when they lifted up their voice accompanied by trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and when they praised Yahweh: "He indeed good for His graciousness is everlasting" then the house, the house of Yahweh, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of Yahweh filled the house of God (1Chronicles 5:11–14). If Yahweh was totally against musical instruments, He would have not have blessed this group by filling the temple with His Presence.

The First March Away from Mount Sinai

And it came to pass, in the second year in the second month, in the twentieth of the month, that the cloud went up from off the tabernacle of the testimony; [Numbers 10:11]

This is actually the first time that the Jews would set out. Prior to this, they had spent eleven months at the foot of Mount Sinai. During these eleven months, Moses had received doctrine directly from God on Mount Sinai, at the foot of Mount Sinai in the tabernacle; and out in the desert of Sinai at the tent of meeting pitched outside the camp. Ideally, this should have been the march of the Jews into the land of Canaan, into the promised land. These former slaves were to march against and defeat the various degenerate Canaanite tribes. This should have taken another couple years to establish themselves in the land given them by God.

And the sons of Israel journey in their journeyings from the wilderness of Sinai, and the cloud dwelt [lit., tabernacled] in the desert of Paran. [Numbers 10:12]

The Jews broke camp and began to follow the cloud which moved into the desert of Paran. Recall that when Hagar left with Abraham's son, Ishmael, they went to the desert of Paran (Genesis 21:21). They are heading north toward the land of Canaan and their first major stop will be Kadesh, which is approximately 150 miles away.

And they advanced [or, journeyed] at first by the command [lit., mouth] of Yahweh, at the direction of [lit., in the hand of] Moses. [Numbers 10:13]

The Israelites moved forward following the cloud in obedience to the command of Yahweh. Now even though this is a miraculous occurrence, it will seem to them much less spectacular than the things which they have seen and heard about. A cloud is a cloud is a cloud. Even though clouds were rare in an Egyptian or desert sky, particularly one which moved with intelligence, it nevertheless is a less than spectacular miracle and the Jews, once they had traveled somewhat, will begin to complain of God's provision.

And the standard of the camp of the sons of Judah advance in the first, by their hosts, and over its host is Nahshon, son of Amminadab. [Numbers 10:14]

Judah's tribe is pre-eminent throughout, even though Moses and Aaron came from the tribe of Levi and the last great person in the Jewish line was Joseph, fathering the two half-tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim. Each company of three tribes will have a standard or a banner which would lead them and which they would rally around.

And over the army of the tribe of the sons of Issachar: Nathaniel ben Zuar. [Numbers 10:15]

Obviously, this will be another list of the leaders.

And over the army of the tribe of the sons of Zebulun: Eliab ben Helon; [Numbers 10:16]

These tribes are probably assembling and falling in line behind one another according to where they had camped about the tabernacle.

And the tabernacle has been taken down and the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari have advanced, bearing the tabernacle. [Numbers 10:17]

As was pointed out, this was their duty. Only the Levites could take the tabernacle down, as per Numbers 1:51—any unauthorized person would die the sin unto death. Notice that their place in the procession is interesting. You would think that they would be in the middle or in the middle-back, for maximum protection. Nope—they are fourth in line. The sons of Merari are performing their duties as per Numbers 4:21–32 and 7:7–9.

And the standard of the camp of Reuben will advance, by their armies; and over its army: Elizur ben Shedeur. [Numbers 10:18]

The tribe Reuben should lead by virtue of Reuben being the first-born of Jacob, however he will lead the second brigade (or third, if you include the two companies of Levites) (Numbers 2:10–16).

And over the army of the tribe of the sons of Simeon: Shelumiel ben Zurishaddai. [Numbers 10:19]

Simeon was the second born and should be second in line; however, as a group, they were not faithful to God's Word.

And over the army of the tribe of the sons of Gad: Eliasaph ben Deuel; [Numbers 10:20]

Here we have the repetition of a sentence finally.

And the Kohathites will advance, bearing the tabernacle and the others have raised up the tabnacle until their coming in. [Numbers 10:21]

It's interesting that the Levites were split up with the tribes of Gad, Simeon and Reuben falling between them. We covered the duties of the Kohathites in Numbers 4:4–20.

And the standard of the camp of the sons of Ephraim has advanced, by their armies, and over its army: Elishama ben Ammihud. [Numbers 10:22]

The two half-tribes of Joseph come next. See Numbers 2:18–24.

And over the army of the tribe of the sons of Manasseh: Gamalial ben Pedshzur. [Numbers 10:23]

These chosen twelve men are somewhat of a mystery. They are named several times in the Bible, always together in a group where they are essentially indistinguishable, and not one is ever alluded to apart from the others nor is something said to distinguish them from the others. It is as though these are the best the Israel has to offer (with the exception of Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Caleb, Aaron and Aaron's sons) and they will all die with their troops and with their generation.

And over the army of the tribe of the sons of Benjamin: Abidan ben Gideoni. [Numbers 10:24]

The two youngest sons of Jacob are generally placed together. Notice that right man/right woman does not necessarily insure that your children or their children will be great. Joseph was without a doubt one of the greatest spiritual heroes of the Old Testament, but there have been very few if any others who were distinguished from these tribes.

And the standard of the camp of the sons of Dan has advanced (rearward to all the camps) by their armies, and over its army: Ahiezer ben Ammishaddai. [Numbers 10:25]

This is the last three companies led by the tribe of Dan (Numbers 2:25–31). The rear army is of great importance and they are mentioned twice more in Joshua 6:6, 9.

And over the army of the tribe of the sons of Asher: Pagiel ben Ocran. [Numbers 10:26]

These troops come in from the north.

And over the army of the tribe of Naphtali: Ahira ben Enan. [Numbers 10:27]

Naphtali is the final tribe to move out. This was the fourth and final time that these leaders of Israel were to be named (see also Numbers 1:5–15 2:3–31 and 7:12–83). We will never hear from them again because God intends to send them into battle and they, like the rest of the congregation, will whine and complain and refuse to go into battle with the Canaanites and God will kill them in the desert.

There advances of the sons of Israel by their armies—and they advanced. [Numbers 10:28]

This is our summary statement—the entire two million of Israel advanced into the desert.

Moses and His Brother-in-law

And Moses said to Hobab ben Reguel (the Midianite, father-in-law of Moses), "We are advancing to the place of which Yahweh has said, 'I give it to you'; go with us and we will do good to you; for Yahweh has spoken good concerning Israel." [Numbers 10:29]

Obviously one of the things which attracted Moses to his first wife was her father, whom he loved and admired. His father-in-law, a Midianite, is mentioned more often and given more personality and is a greater person than any of the twelve leaders of the tribes of Israel. Hobab would be the brother-in-law of Moses and it is obvious that Moses developed a much better relationship with his in-laws than he did with his wife. Moses and Hobab will be actually going near where they originally met, to where his in-laws had their roots. We will hear about the sons of Hobab in Judges 4:11. We ought to examine Jethro: Exodus 2:16, Exodus 2:21, Exodus 3:1, Exodus 4:18, Numbers 10:29, Judges 4:11 Exodus 18:1

God would promise to bless Israel if Israel obeyed His Word. "So you will keep His statutes and His commandments which I am giving you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may live long on the land which the Lord your God is giving you for all time." (Deuteronomy 4:40). As we will see, the generation following the Exodus generation was a much greater population; Moses told this second generation: "And Yahweh your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you will possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers." (Deuteronomy 30:5).

And he said to him, "I will not go, but to my land and to my relatives I will go." [Numbers 10:30]

Hobab certainly would prefer to return to his family, most of which has remained in the Midianite desert area, how Moses would prefer for his brother-in-law to remain for several reasons. (1) Moses genuinely likes his in-laws; (2) Moses has spent more time with his in-laws (forty years) and has a greater relationship with them than he does with most individual Jews, whom he has only spent less than two years with; and, finally, (3) his brother-in-law, Hobab, would be invaluable as a guide throughout this desert area. Both he and Moses would have a vast knowledge of the desert area, although Hobab's knowledge would have had approximately an additional forty years of familiarity with the desert area.

And he said, "I [respectfully] implore you, do not forsake us, because you have known our encamping in the desert and you have been to us for eyes; [Numbers 10:31]

Don't misunderstand, Moses was not calling his brother-in-law four eyes, but his father-in-law knew the desert area and he would have been quite helpful. However, God wants Moses to depend upon Him and not upon his father-in-law in these travels.

We have this word in the Hebrew *nâ'* (נָא) [pronounced *naw*] and it is part of an exhortation or part of an entreaty. It is equivalent to our word *please*, although it often does not sound right when translated that way. I cannot come up with a good one word translation, so I will do what the KJV does, but update it from *I pray thee* to *I respectfully implore [or ask or request] you*. Strong's #4994 BDB #609.

Moses also genuinely likes his father-in-law, much more than his first wife, who will never be heard from again.

For the next verse, let me give you the smooth and the unsmooth versions:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	"And if you will go with us, it shall be that whatever good the Lord does to us, the same we will do to you."
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	"And it shall be if thou wilt go with us,—yea it shall be that with the very good wherewith Yahweh shall do us good will we do good unto thee."
KJV	"And it shall be, if thou go with us, yea, it shall be, that what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee."
NASB	"So it will be, if you go with us, it will come about that whatever good the Lord does for us, we will do for you"
NIV	If you come with us, we will share with you whatever good things the Lord gives us."
NRSV	"Moreover, if you go with us, whatever good the Lord does for us, the same we will do for you."
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	And it hath come to pass when thou goest with us, yeah, it hath come to pass—that good which Jehovah doth kindly with us—it we have done kindly to thee."

From these verses, the general meaning of this verse can be ascertained. However, let's look at the Hebrew a bit to see what is here, as our two most literal translations are somewhat abstruse and the freer translations sound great and are easy to understand, but they seem to more of a translation of the general impact of the verse as opposed to a word--by-word translation. This verse begins with the verb *hâyâh* (הָיָה) [pronounced *haw-YAW*] which simply means *to be*. Without a specific subject and object, it often means *and it will come to pass*. Strong's #1961 BDB #224.

This is followed by the conjunction *kîy* (כִּי) [pronounced *kee*] which means *when, that, for*. Strong's #3588 BDB #471. Then *hâyâh* (הָיָה) [pronounced *haw-YAW*] is repeated with the same morphology. Placing the same word twice in the same verse gives it great emphasis, which I have achieved in my translation below by inserting the words *in fact* which are not a part of the translation, but an interpretation of the syntactical meaning. Since the Hebrew has no past, present or future tense, I have personally given this a past tense to contrast the future tense which I began the verse with. In the Hebrew, both time this verb is in the Qal perfect, which is the simple stem and completed action.

Here is where things begin to become tricky (the previous stuff was fairly easy by comparison). We have a definite article and the masculine singular of the 3rd person personal pronoun *hûw'* (הוּא) [pronounced *hoo*] and this can be translated *he* or *it*. Strong's #1931 BDB #214. It is preceded by a definite article and often this personal pronoun is translated *it [is]*. However, it could also be the subject of the verb *hâyâh*. However, it can also be translated as a demonstrative pronoun, as *this* or *that*. The reason for connecting this pronoun or demonstrative adjective with the next noun is that the next noun, meaning *good, benefit, welfare* is also in the masculine singular. This is followed by a verb, again used twice, which means *to do good to, to deal well with*. The first time the subject is Yahweh and the second time the subject is *we*.

"And it will come to pass when you go with us, in fact, is has come to pass—that the [lit., the that] good [or, benefit] which Yahweh does graciously with [possibly, in spite of] us, and we will deal graciously with respect to you." [Numbers 10:32]

God graces out all of Israel and Moses will grace out his father-in-law; as it has been in the past, so it will continue to be in the future. This is not the first instance of blessing by association being observed by one of Moses' in-laws. **And Jethro rejoiced over all the goodness which Yahweh had done to Israel, in delivering him from the hand of the Egyptians** (Exodus 18:9). He certainly taught this great truth to his sons. Furthermore, the Jews had been carefully instructed not to defraud those who are not Jews by birth. **"When a stranger resides with you in your land, you will not defraud him. The stranger who resides with you will be to you as a native among you and you will love him as yourself; for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am Yahweh, your God. You will do no wrong in judgement, in measurement of weight or capacity. You will have just balances, just weights, a just ephah and a just hin; I am Yahweh your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt"** (Leviticus 19:33–36). They were not to show favoritism in the courts nor were they to lower their standards of business when dealing with a foreigner.

In Judges 1:16 we have the descendants of Moses' father-in-law traveling with the sons of Judah, indicating that Hobab chose to stay with Moses and the Israelites (see also Judges 4:11 and 1Samuel 15:6).

The Ark of the Covenant Leads the Advance

And they advanced from the mount of Yahweh, a journey of three days; and the ark of the covenant of Yahweh advanced before their faces. The journey of three days [was] to seek for them a resting-place. [Numbers 10:33]

If the ark were a mere religious artifact, then it certainly would not lead the march. We are talking about something which required a great deal of gold to make. An enemy would certainly desire to destroy and plunder the front line with the ark in the lead. However, the ark is the very Presence of Jesus Christ, Yahweh Who would lead the Israelites into battle for the next thousand years. This generation needed only to focus their attention upon Jesus Christ, as Moses essentially symbolized by placing the ark before them.

One of the things we search for is eternal rest. Life is difficult and filled with hard labor. **Then it will come to pass in that day that the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, who will stand as a rallying point for the peoples; and His resting place will be glorious** (Isaiah 11:10). **"Come to Me, all of you who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."** (Matthew 11:28). **Rest in Yahweh and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of whom prospers in his way because of the man who carries out evil schemes** (Psalm 37:7). **Therefore, let us be diligent to enter into that rest, so that no one will fall through the same example of disobedience** (Hebrews 4:9).

The mount of Yahweh is Mount Sinai. This is the honeymoon period of this march. Recall that we have two million Jews on the march with children, women and animals, no easy feat. We are looking for a new place to put down camp. The three days of marching has no significance yet. It will be in Numbers 11 that we will hear these people begin to whine and complain, which will be after the three day march. It should be obvious that with two million people on their first organized march that they did not really get too far.

And the cloud of Yahweh on them by day, in their advance from the camp. [Numbers 10:34]

They advanced as the cloud advanced.

And it came to pass in the advancing of the ark, that Moses said, "Rise, O Yahweh, and Your enemies are scattered, and those hating You flee from Your presence." [Numbers 10:35]

This was essentially a prayer of protection; Moses called upon God to protect them and scatter their enemies as they marched for the first time in about a year. He called for Yahweh to scatter their enemies from all around. King David wrote a Psalm celebrating this: **Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered and let those who hate Him flee before Him. As smoke is driven away, so drive [them] away; as wax melts before the fire, so let the wicked perish before God** (Psalm 68:1–2). We will later hear Moses speak to the congregation: **"But He repays those who hate Him to his face, to destroy him; He will not delay with respect to him who hates Him; He will repay him to his face."** (Deuteronomy 7:10).

And in its resting, he said, "Return, O Yahweh, the myriads, the thousands of Israel." [Numbers 10:36]

And in the evening, when they stopped, Moses called for Yahweh to return to their camp and to rest upon them, as it were, as their protection.

It is possible that these verses are slightly out of order from the original; it is possible that the correct verse order should be vv. 33, 35, 36, 34; or, **And they advanced from the mount of Yahweh, a journey of three days; and the ark of the covenant of Yahweh advanced before their faces. The journey of three days [was] to seek for them a resting-place. And it came to pass in the advancing of the ark, that Moses said, "Rise, O Yahweh, and Your enemies are scattered, and those hating You flee from Your presence." And in its resting, he said, "Return, O Yahweh, the myriads, the thousands of Israel." And the cloud of Yahweh on them by day, in their advance from the camp.** The verses seem to flow more logically when rearranged like this. However, that is not the reason that scholars suspect that they were miss-ordered. The earliest Massoretic authorities bracketed vv. 35–36, which likely indicated that they had probably been dislocated. The rearrangement is the thought of Hebrew scholar Ginsburg.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ *The Emphasized Bible*, p. 169.

Numbers 11

Numbers 11:1–35

Israel Complains and God Gives Them Quail to Eat

Outline of Chapter 11:

- vv. 1–5 **The sons of Israel desire meat in their diet**
- vv. 6–9 **The people are tired of eating manna**
- vv. 10–15 **Moses himself complains about his great responsibilities**
- vv. 16–20 **God promises Moses that He will send the Israelites an overabundance of meat**
- vv. 21–23 **Moses becomes sarcastic; Yahweh gently upbraids him**
- vv. 24–30 **Moses chooses his seventy helpers and God sends them the Holy Spirit**
- vv. 31–35 **God sends the Israelites an over abundance of quail**

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

- v. 15 **The Early Life of Moses**
- v. 15 **The Parallelism Found in vv. 10, 11 and 15**
- v. 25 **The Abbreviated Doctrine of the Ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament**

Introduction: In Numbers 11, we return to narrative once again. Prior to this, throughout Leviticus and Numbers, we have had ordinances and laws given by Yahweh to Moses, interspersed with a portion of their daily life. Now the Israelites are moving away from Mount Sinai, north toward the land of Canaan, and after three days travel, we will begin to see them for what they really are and we will begin to understand why God loathed this generation.

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The Sons of Israel Desire Meat in Their Diet

Already in the first verse, we have quite a difference in translations:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	And the people grumbled <i>and</i> deplored their hardships, which was evil in the ears of the Lord; and when the Lord heard it, His anger was kindled;
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	And it came to pass that when the people were giving themselves up to murmuring it was grievous in the ears of Yahweh, so Yahweh hearkened and kindled was his anger,...
KJV	And <i>when</i> the people complained, it displeased the Lord; and the Lord heard <i>it</i> ; and his anger was kindled;
NASB	Now the people became like those who complain of adversity in the hearing of the Lord; and when the Lord heard <i>it</i> , His anger was kindled,...
NIV	Now the people complained about their hardships in the hearing of the Lord, and when he heard them his anger was aroused.
NRSV	Now when the people complained in the hearing of the Lord about their misfortunes, the Lord heard it and his anger was kindled.
Owen's Translation	And the people complained about distress in the hearing of Yahweh and when Yahweh heard his anger was kindled...
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	And the people is evil, as those sighing habitually in the ears of Jehovah, and Jehovah heareth, and His anger burneth,...

The idea of the first half of the verse is basically the same; the people grumble and complain, Yahweh hears and He becomes greatly angered (obviously an anthropopathism). However, it would be nice to know just exactly what

God's Word really says. This verse begins with the wâw consecutive and the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect of hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced *haw-YAW*], which means, *to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass*. Strong's #1961 BDB #224. This is followed by the definite article and the masculine singular for the word *people*. Without the appropriate noun, this verse would begin, *then it came to pass, the people...*; however, the people are likely the subject of this verb. Young, being as literal as can be, translated the verb in the singular, which makes it sound goofy in the English; it is an accurate translation, albeit a bit goofy. This is followed by the prefixed preposition kaph or k^e (כ) [pronounced *k^e*], meaning *like, as*; and the masculine plural, Hithpael participle of 'ânan (אָנַן) [pronounced *aw-NAHN*], a word occurring but twice in the OT (here and Lam. 3:39) and it means *complain* (insofar as we know). The Hithpael is the intensive, reflexive stem, so this complaining was like a person you have upset, and he wanders off muttering caustic things, almost out of your hearing. A participle is a verb which can act as a noun, emphasizing the action of the verb. An English example: *the hearing impaired*. So this should be translated, *then the people became like those complaining [to themselves]...* Unfortunately, every major translation ignored the reflexive in this participle. These people are like those who are muttering to themselves. God is right there; they can communicate directly to Moses, through the chain of command, and they can pray to Yahweh, Whose very presence they are in constantly. Instead, they mutter to themselves, just loud enough so that those around them hear their dissatisfaction, causing them to mutter to themselves.

This is followed by the noun for *evil, distress, misery*; ra' (עַר) [pronounced *rahg'*]. Prior to this, we have a complete thought—this cannot be appended to what we have just had. Prior to this noun, we do not have a construct, nor do we have a preposition, nor can this be attached to the previous verbs as a subject, as they are already attached to subjects. This begins a new thought. It is immediately followed by the preposition meaning *in* and the rest of the phrase, *ear of Yahweh*.

Then the people became like those complaining [to themselves]—evil in the ear⁵⁶ of Yahweh.
[Numbers 11:1a]

It is all well and good to translate the rough meaning, but it is even more reasonable to translate this literally, as the meaning is clear, even though a literal simile is used (when it reads *the people became as those complaining*, they actually were people who were complaining. The first portion of this verse tells us what the people did and what this was to God. God had freed them from slavery and had provided for them miraculously in the desert. Their complaints and mumblings to themselves showed a distinct lack of faith in a God Who had shown them greater miracles and signs than He has ever shown to any previous generation. Psalm 106:10–13 describes their problem: *So He delivered them from the hand of the one who hated [them], and He redeemed them from the hand of the enemy; and the waters covered their adversaries; not one of them was left. Then they believed His words; they sang His praise. They quickly forgot His works; they did not wait for His counsel.*

Recall that these very same people cried out to Yahweh to deliver them from the Egyptians. Exodus 2:23: *Now it came about in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel sighed because of the slavery, and they called out [to God]; and their cry for help because of slavery rose up to God. So God heard their groaning and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And God saw the sons of Israel and God knew them.*

From the first ten chapters of Numbers, we have made a dramatic change. For ten chapters, over and over we saw the obedience of Moses and the obedience of the people. All of a sudden, in this chapter and the subsequent ones (see Numbers 14:2 16:41), once Israel was uprooted and put on a force march to the promised land, their evil nature is brought out. Some people's evil nature cannot be observe until you put them under a little pressure and then you see them for exactly what they are. Certainly you have seen a husband or a wife who seems perfect; however, when you ask their spouse, who has observed them up close under pressure, the report is not necessarily so favorable. What we really are is clearly revealed when pressure and trials are added to our lives. Almost anyone can behave decently when things are going their way.

⁵⁶ The western Onkelos, Targums of Jonathan, the Septuagint and the Syriac codices have eyes here instead.

So Yahweh kept hearing then his anger was kindled then it burned against them—the fire of Yahweh [or, the fire of Yahweh burned against them]—and it consumed the extremity of the camp.

[Numbers 11:1b]

The second portion of this verse gives Yahweh's reaction to their degenerate, faithless thinking. We have three words for fire or burning in this verse, and one word for the consumption by fire. The first phrase, *his anger was kindled*, cannot be improved upon in the English. The verb is *chârâh* (חָרָה) [pronounced *khaw-RAWH*] and it means *to kindle, to become angry*. This is obviously an anthropopathism—God does not get angry; but the picture here is God sees this, and he gets a little mad; He thinks about it, and He gets a little more angry; He thinks about it some more, and He begins to seethe and burn with anger. Just as I learned in the cub scouts, you begin a fire with some paper, which ignites some small twigs, which ignites some larger branches, which ignites the logs. This verb obviously must be in the imperfect, as this is a continued action of one's anger building up. But again, let me emphasize, this is an anthropopathism; God's character does not allow for Him to seethe with anger; this is language of accommodation so that we can have a human understanding of God's actions. We have all been upset over a situation that, when given time to reflect upon it, have become more and more angry. Every time we think about it some more, we get angrier. That is the meaning of this verb—it is just like kindling a fire.

The next verb for *burn* is in the 3rd person feminine singular, Qal imperfect of *bâ'ar* (רָעַב) [pronounced *baw-ĠAHR*]. This tells us what the subject of the verb is; it is *fire* (also in the feminine singular) and not *Y^ehowah*, a proper noun which takes a masculine singular verb. I placed *the fire of Yahweh* where it occurs in the Hebrew, but it is the subject of that verb. It is normal for the Hebrew subject to follow the Hebrew verb, rather than vice versa, as in English. Let's take a look at this word for *fire*. The word is *'esh* (אֵשׁ) [pronounced *aysh*] and it means *fire* (Leviticus 1:7); *lightning* (Genesis 19:24 Exodus 9:23–24); and it is often used to mean *a supernatural fire, the presence of Yahweh or the attendance of a theophany*. (Exodus 3:2 13:21). Here, all three meanings are combined; it is lightning from above, revealed the presence of God, resulting in fire on the earth. This is in the imperfect tense and it mirrors the meaning of *kindle*. Just as *kindling* is a series of actions, so was this lightning—it is the Divine Presence, which resulted in lightning from the sky, which resulted in fire on the ground. We will see lightning from above strike an altar on behalf of Elijah in 1Kings 18:38. A logical progression God's presence and of His actions, none of which can be isolated from the others.

Throughout this verse there are five *waw* consecutives. This is generally a *w* with a patah. The *waw* consecutive was once called a *waw* conversative; it received the latter name because, it was thought, it would change an imperfect verb into the perfect tense and vice versa; it converted them.⁵⁷ My chief comment at this point is *why bother?* Why not make the verb the way you wanted it in the first place; why bother with a conversative? Luckily, those well-versed in the Hebrew have come to the same conclusion and the name and the meaning of the *waw* conversative changed. It is now called a *waw* consecutive, meaning consecutive action is being given.⁵⁸ Here, the continued use of the *waw* consecutive also draws great attention to these two sentences. Recall that everything has been going so well, and suddenly Moses, through God the Holy Spirit, grabs us by the shirt collar and yells at us. There weren't even five *waw* consecutives in the preceding five verses and here we have five all at once. They should be translated *and so, and then, then, so*. Now read v. 1 with the following emphasis: **Then the people became like those complaining [to themselves]—evil in the ear of Yahweh. Then Yahweh kept hearing; then his anger was kindled; then it burned against them—the fire of Yahweh—then it consumed the extremity of the camp.** Not only do we have consecutive action, but it is consecutive action with great emphasis. The similar words for *fire* and *burning* also give great emphasis to what is being said here. This is a complete change of pace from the Pentateuch all the way from the golden calf incident back in Exodus until now. I am certain that some of you do not like to delve into the Hebrew, but it is the Hebrew of this verse which tells us exactly what is being said. There are a series of events, one which follows another, a logical progression of events—from our standpoint, not from God's—a series of events which tells us that certain actions have logical consequences.

⁵⁷ *Biblical Hebrew*, Menahem Mansoor, Vol. 1, p. 184.

⁵⁸ *Davidson's Introductory Hebrew Grammar~Syntax*, J.C.L. Gibson, pp. 83–84; *Biblical Hebrew, an Introductory Grammar*, Page H. Kelley, pp. 145–146.

We might be a trifle concerned at this point, thinking that the Jews have had a pretty good track record up until this time and all that is occurring here is a little mumbling and complaining, and most of them are keeping it to themselves. **And Peter said, "Lord, are You addressing this parable to us or to everyone as well?" And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and sensible servant, whom his master will place in charge of his slaves, to give them their rations at the proper time. Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. In fact, I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But, if that slave says in his heart, 'My master will be a long time in coming,' and begins to beat the slaves, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk; the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect, and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and assign him a place with the unbelievers. And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes. However, the one who did not know, and committed deeds worth of a flogging, will receive but few. And from everyone who has been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more. I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I desire that it already be kindled."** (Luke 12:41–49). These Jews, at that time, had been given much more and they had seen much more, than any other people on the earth. However, as recipients of God's grace, God expects much more from them. Their advantage is a double-edged sword—one the one hand, they saw daily the animals being sacrificed to Yahweh and they saw the might hand of God through many great miracles and incredible feats and this gave them a jump start on salvation and a relationship with Jesus Christ (as a majority of the great believers in the Old Testament are Jewish). As Paul wrote: **Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? [It is] great in every respect. First of all, they were entrusted with the oracles of God** (Romans 3:1–2). For those who are ignorant of God's Word, there is limited discipline and limited blessing. For the unbeliever, God pretty much allows them to do what they want (God does not chastise those who are not His children) and only applies pressure when they have positive volition and just need encouragement (if we could have wondrously perfect lives and still be positive toward a relationship with God and to God's Word, it would be highly unlikely that God would ever apply pressure which hurt). However, on the other hand, for a person to be exposed to the gospel and to God's Word and to disobey, there is hell to pay.

Then the people cried to Moses so Moses prayed to Yahweh and so the fire was quenched [lit., sunk down or drowned]. [Numbers 11:2]

Again we have several waw consecutives, three of them to be exact, which I have translated differently, *then*, *so*, and *so*. A more literal translation might stick with one rendering only. These eight waw consecutives in one verse grab us and tell us that we are in an historical narrative now which is chronological. The thrust of such a connective is essentially chronological or logical progression.

The final verb is the Qal imperfect of *shâqa'* (שָׁקַע) [pronounced *shaw-KAHG*] and it means *to sink down*, *to drown* although it is a relatively rare word in the Old Testament (Job 41:1 Jeremiah 51:64 Ezekiel 32:15 Amos 8:8 9:5). Strong's #8257 BDB #1054.

Notice here that we have our levels of authority and now the people are going through the correct channels. They go to Moses, who represents God to them, and he goes to God. The stop mumbling to themselves and they talk to Moses (possibly after going through their own immediate leaders). They are not as concerned about the things that they were mumbling about, but about the fires of Yahweh which have been started near the outside of the camp. God listens to this and withdraws the lightning and the fires.

Then he called the name of that place Taberah, for [lit., and] the fire of Jehovah burned among them. [Numbers 11:3]

Taberah is obviously a transliteration (we will only see it once more in Deuteronomy 9:22) and it is the word for *burning* to the letter, with the exception that it is preceded by a *ta*. The fires which burned among them came directly from Yahweh. Naming this place serves two purposes: (1) as a reminder to them of what had transpired; and, (2) as a teaching aide to their children; the children would ask why this area had the name Taberah, and the adults would explain why.

And the rabble who [are] in its midst had great cravings [lit., lusted a lust], then the sons of Israel reminisced [lit., turned back] then wept, then said, "Who will give us meat? [Numbers 11:4]

One of the things which we do not see in the English is the use of the verb and its noun cognate to draw attention to the intensity of this verse. The verb is the 3rd person masculine plural, Hithpael perfect of *ʾāvâh* (אָוַה) [pronounced *aw-WAWH*] and it means *to desire, to crave, to lust*. It is followed by the feminine singular noun *taʾāvâh* (תָּאֻוַה) [pronounced *tah-uh-VAW*], which is *a desire, a craving, a lust, a wish, that which is desired*. The literal translation is *to lust a lust*. This expression, known technically as a polyptoton [pronounced *po-LYP-to-ton*] obviously intensifies the meaning of the words; this was an overpowering lust or desire. Several translations insert the word *again* near the word *wept*; it is actually the Qal imperfect of *shûwb* (שׁוּב) [pronounced *shoo^bv*]; which means *return*; we saw it several times in Leviticus (Leviticus 25 is where we studied this word), where that which was stolen or destroyed or broken was *returned* or *restored* to the original owner. Here, the Israelites are returning in their minds to Egypt; that is, they are reminiscing. There are times that we have rosy notions of the way things use to be; there are people, like myself, who rarely remember things in a negative way, but recall the past quite favorably. Some people who do this find themselves longing for the good old days. Here, it was complete and total removal from reality. They were so abused as slaves that they called out to their God for help, as we have recently quoted. They were under great stress and pain. And suddenly, one year later, they are reminiscing about the good old days and their idyllic life as slaves and they are homesick! They weep—the imperfect tense for both verbs indicates that they think back a little, they weep a little, they think back some more and weep some more. Insert into this action that they call out for some actual meat, which they have not had for awhile. Some people have a very tough time with personal inconvenience; where some things are just never the same. I personally recall having apricot trees and eating fresh apricots right off the tree and having apricot pie—the yellowish orange fruit sold in the stores is practically a different fruit; and that which is sold in cans does not even resemble the taste or texture of apricots even remotely. This does not mean that was the greatest time of my life and I spend my life wishing to return to those days. When your life moves ahead, there are things in this world which you will leave behind and some things which you will miss. That is a part of this life. However, these Jews were being melodramatic and their horrible past was blurred by some of the delicacies that they were able to enjoy then. It was not wrong to desire some of the tremendous food which they left behind in Egypt. However, these people are taking this too far; they fail to recognize that (1) their lives were horrible under Egyptian slavery; (2) that they had called to Yahweh for help and deliverance from slavery to the Egyptians; (3) that God was taking them to a land of milk and honey; (4) that the God of the Universe, the One capable of anything, was leading them through the desert and He could provide for them whatever they needed and often gave them things which they desired. There was a way to approach this and a way not to approach this. They could speak to Moses and ask him to ask God for some variation in their diet.

This is actually kind of fascinating because, originally, God provided the sons of Israel with both manna and quail meat, back in Exodus 16 (see Exodus 16:8–13). We do not know what happened between then and now. Did God suddenly stop providing quail? Did God gradually wean the Jews from quail? We are never told that. However, the Jews are being tested here—they are being tested to trust God's provisions. They are about to face the real test, and this is an intermediate test to get them ready. This is the practice test. God has provided them with meat and manna in the past; God continues to provide the Jews with manna at this time; so, the test question is, *can God provide them meat if they ask for it?* These Jews did not need to complain. They did not need to bellyache. This did not need to approach Moses like Moses has ruined their lives, taking them out of their Shangri-la Egypt and making them to wander in this desert. Back in Egypt, they got roasts and fish and leeks and garlic; and their life was so good. This is a bad move on their part. This band of elders who have come to Moses simply have to say, "We are all tired of just manna; could God provide us with quail again or even with fish?" God is God. God can do anything. With the proper mental attitude, not only could these Jews have eaten well, and probably have gotten anything that they asked for, but they chose to approach God (actually, Moses, their mediator) in a hostile manner. The fact that these people will fail big time in the next couple chapters is what we ought to expect.

What they wanted in their diet is *bâsâr* (בָּשָׂר) [pronounced *baw-SAWR*] which is properly translated *flesh*; however, it can be used as a euphemism for the male organ (Genesis 17:11, 414, 23), *flesh* in terms of being related (Genesis 29:14 Judges 9:2), for man as different from God (Genesis 6:3 Psalm 56:5); for animals (Genesis

7:15–16 Isaiah 31:3); for living things (Genesis 6:17, 19 Leviticus 17:14). However, we will translate this *meat* because that is the proper meaning of this word in this context relative to our culture.

Perhaps if we looked at this a different way, so that you can understand what was so lousy about their attitude. Haven't you ever known or worked with or been related to someone who does nothing but complain about life, their boss, their co-workers, their family, their husband, their wives, their children? It is if every other sentence from their mouths is a complaint about someone or something. If you are a fellow commiserator, you might enjoy what they have to say because when they stop and take a breath, you will have your chance to complain about someone—or to agree with them. However, for most people, listening to someone moan, bitch, whine and complain is the most distressing. Have you as a husband come home from working ten hours a day and your wife starts bitching at you the moment you come in the door that you don't make enough money? Haven't you as a wife, come home from a hard day at work and the first thing you hear from the husband is why haven't you straightened this up, or why isn't dinner ready yet? Haven't you spent two hours preparing an incredible meal—perhaps several hours preparing a Thanksgiving dinner, and your kid whines about how he would rather have a hamburger; don't you want to just pop him in the head? You foolishly bought your sixteen year old daughter a new red corvette to reward her because she is (1) not pregnant and (2) still in school; and she whines because she likes teal? It is absolutely irritating and frustrating to be around people who are so self-centered, so insensitive and so negative. This is what God faced. Instead of appreciation for what He had done and anticipation for what lay ahead—He had promised them a land flowing with milk and honey—these Jews are whining, bitching, complaining about the good old days which weren't all that good. **Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave wrong things, as they [those of the Exodus generation] also craved** (1Corinthians 10:6).

Application: God gives us a variety of tests; some are practice tests and some are mid-terms. This is the practice test for Gen X. Coming up, in Numbers 13–14, will be their final exam. They fail the practice test and they will fail the final exam. When God tests you, then it is a good idea to make some kind of attempt, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to pass that test. It is the prudent thing to do. Had this generation of Jews passed this test, it is possible that they would have walked right into the Land of Promise and taken it away from the heathen in the land. However, what will happen instead is, God will let their carcasses die in the desert (preview of coming events). Simple question for you when you face a test: *do you want to pass the test and enjoy all that God can provide for you or do you want your dried up carcass to drop dead in a miserable desert?*

Application: So there is no misunderstanding, the Christian life is not all about you want to do one thing and God wants you to do something different, and now you have to do this something different that you absolutely hate doing. God is not going to send you off to the African jungles to be a missionary if you (1) hate Africa, (2) hate languages, (3) hate bugs and wildlife, and (4) hate difficult surroundings. God has a plan for your life which you will enjoy. I can attest to that. God's plan for everyone is different. Now, God is going to disrupt your life now and again, and God is going to pick you up and move you from point A to point B; but don't think that a life of Christian service means, God is going to pick out the thing you hate the most and make you do that. The basic key is this: you regularly name your sins to God, you get under a pastor-teacher who carefully teaches the Word of God regularly (I would say that 4x a week is a bare minimum; and that minimum should be supplemented), and then let come what may. You start there, and then God is going to both bless you and test you. Of course, if you want to just whine and complain to God about how lousy your life is and how mean He is, try that, and see how far that gets you.

If you are carrying Zodiates *The Complete Word Study Old Testament*, or the NIV Study Bible, and you read the commentary note which associates this rabble with the Egyptians who came out with the Jews, put a large "X" through that footnote and next to it write *wrong wrong wrong*. Too many Bible commentaries try to associate the rabble with the non-Jews who came out of Egypt with the Jews. Don't be misled by your translation if it reads *mixed-multitude*. Those who came with the Jews who were not born Jews were not the problem here or anywhere else. This is a condition of the heart. This is not a racial issue. Certainly, some former Egyptians were whining and complaining; but so were some Jews. The Bible never lists the mixed-multitude as the culprits. Psalm 78, a marvelous psalm written about this generation, reads: **Then He led them with a cloud by day and all the night with a light of fire. He split the rocks in the wilderness, and gave abundant drink, like the depths of the oceans. Yet they still continued to sin against Him, to rebel against the Most High in the desert; and in their heart, they put**

God to the test, by asking for food according to their lust. Then they spoke against God; they said, "Can God set [or, prepare] a table in the desert? Sure [lit., behold], He struck the rock, so that waters gushed out and streams were overflowing; [but] can He give bread also? Will He provide meat for His people?" Therefore, Yahweh heard and was full of wrath, and a fire was kindled against **Jacob** and anger also mounted against **Israel**, because they did not believe in God and they did not trust in His deliverance (Psalm 78:14–24). This is God's Word and it tells us that the culprits were Jacob and Israel (God's designation for the Israelites). **For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh, but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God** (Romans 2:28–29). It was that entire generation which God loathed, not just a few scattered Egyptians who left with the Jews. **Do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me as in the day of trial in the desert—where your fathers tried Me by testing. And they saw My works for forty years. Therefore, I was disgusted with this generation, and said, "They always go astray in their heart; and they did not know My ways." As I swore in My wrath, "They will not enter into My rest."** (Hebrews 3:8–11 Psalm 95:8–11).

Don't you recall all these consecutives that we just examined. **Then the people cried out to Moses; then Moses prayed to Yahweh, then the fire was quenched** (v. 2). These Jews are related to the God of the Universe. If they want something, they can ask for it. This principle is illustrated in the gospel of Luke: **"And I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened. Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? Or he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"** (Luke 11:11–13).

"We remember the fish which we ate in Egypt for nothing; the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic; [Numbers 11:5]

This is all well and good. Egypt would have had some food stuffs unobtainable while crossing the desert. They have been eating manna all this time and certainly their meals had become monotonous. So what? There was some self-sacrifice involved for a few years. The Israelites had a difficult time separating themselves from Egypt. There were several times that they viewed their slavery in Egypt through rose-colored glasses, as though it were a stroll through the country. **And the sons of Israel said to them [Moses and Aaron], "We wish that we would have died by Yahweh's hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this desert to kill this entire assembly with hunger."** (Exodus 16:3).

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The People Are Tired of Eating Manna

"And now our appetite is bored [lit., our soul is dry]; there is not anything, except the manna [lit., what is it?] before our eyes." [Numbers 11:6]

Now here is a thought. Leading them through the desert is the God of the Universe Who created the Universe. All they needed to do was to go to Moses and ask Moses to ask God for some variation in their diet. They don't need to whine, bitch, moan and complain. The problem here is attitude and faith. God should have just popped them in the heads.

And the manna is a coriander seed, and its appearance is like the appearance of bdellium [lit., the eye of it as the eye of bdellium]. [Numbers 11:7]

In this verse, the word eye stands in for the word *color*. This is because it is with the eye that we distinguish color, a meaningless concept to smell, taste and touch. What we have here is an aside by Moses, as guided by the Holy Spirit. Let's just examine this manna thing for a moment:

The people have turned aside and gathered [it], and they have ground [it] with mill-stones, or beat [it] in a mortar, and boiled [it] in a pot, and made it cakes, and the taste is similar to the taste of the moisture of oil. [Numbers 11:8]

So what is the point of all this? The point is that when they were hungry, God fed them and brought to them a food unlike any other which was exceptionally versatile and could be prepared in a very large number of ways. I think of wheat, which can be made into cereal, hot or cold, a vast multitude of breads, croutons, stuffing, pastry and other deserts. This is merely one food, just as manna was merely one food. Don't these Jews realize that they can ask God for what they need? Don't you know that you should not spend your life bitching, whining and moaning? If you need something, you can ask God. Obviously, there is a right way and a wrong way to go about this. There is protocol. I recall one friend who, whenever she wanted some material thing, she would ask me to pray to God to get it for her. Now she had no interest in God, or Who he really is, or what her relationship to Him should be—she simply wanted that material thing and I was a rabbit's foot to help her get it. I am certain that she also appealed to her Catholic or Buddhist friends in the same way, to cover all bases.

And in the descending of the dew on the camp by night, the manna descended with [lit., on] it. [Numbers 11:9]

Moses reminds us that the Jews are still receiving manna here from God. The emphasis here is that manna was miraculous; God gave that to them. Can you imagine what other things God would have given them had they asked correctly? This is simple. Your eighteen-year-old comes to you and says "Gimme the car keys." What's your reaction? Or, he says, "May I borrow the car; I'll be going over to Marcia's to study Algebra for an hour then I would be back here before 10:00 pm." Which kid has the better chance of getting the car? **You lust and you do not have...you do not have because you do not ask. [or] You ask and you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motivation, so that you may squander [it] on your lusts** (James 4:2a, 2c, 3). Don't misunderstand what is being taught here. Neither James nor I are teaching you how to *play* God. You cannot out-psyche God and there is no particular set of prayers which work better than any others. The key is what is in your soul. You cannot manipulate God; however, there is still a right way and a wrong way of approaching Him. You will note that a great many of the principles taught in the New Testament are merely carried over from the Old Testament. We are certainly in a new dispensation and there have been great changes in what has been given us; however, a vast majority of that which is right and wrong is found in both testaments. You may want to review your notes on manna at this time.

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Moses Himself Complains about His Great Responsibilities

Then Moses heard the people weeping by its families, each at the opening of his tent, and the anger of Yahweh burned exceedingly, and in the eyes of Moses they were evil. [Numbers 11:10]

A minor grammatical point here: the subject of *were evil* is *people*; both are in the masculine singular. However, our use of the word demands the plural, which is the way I translated it. We use the word *crowd* in the singular; however, this is not a synonymous term for the Hebrew word translated *people*.

There is a verb found here and in v. 11 (and its noun cognate is found in v. 15). Here we find the Qal perfect of $\text{רָאָה}^{\text{ע}} (\text{רָאָה})$ [pronounced *raw-GAHG*] and it means *to be evil, bad, displeasing*. To Moses, the behavior of this people was evil.

The people have been out for three days; they are a little tired of manna and they are being melodramatic about the lack of variety in their diet. Their poor attitude, their sloppy approach to God, and their intent to incite others to their own level of dissatisfaction is deplorable; they are nothing more than a bunch of damn crybabies. Here they are, related uniquely to the God of the Universe, and they are whining and complaining. Don't miss the application to your life. You personally are related to the God of the Universe. You are indwelt by God the Father,

God the Son and God the Holy Spirit; you have the greatest power on earth operational inside of you. Do you whine and complain, cry about your lot in life? Are you sniveling about your lack of opportunity, the lack of material wealth that you have, a broken heart? Let me let you in on a little secret: God deplores you! You are wretched in His sight.⁵⁹ And if Moses were on earth, you would be evil in his sight also. You can solve every problem that life has given you. Jesus Christ, on earth, operated His human life entirely by means of the Holy Spirit. I know you don't even have a clue as to what I just said. Whenever it came to His personal needs, to His emotions and mental state, to His hunger and thirst; He could have, in His own power, satisfied His every need. When He was tempted by Satan and had not eaten for forty days, He had the innate power not to just turn the rocks at His feet into bread, but into fillet mignon with baked potatoes, sour cream, cheese and chives. When the soldiers slapped him prior to the cross, He could have instantly vaporized them. Every miracle He performed was not in His own power or from His own diety, but from the power of the Holy Spirit—the exact same Holy Spirit which indwells us. Does that mean that we can turn the stones in our backyard into a barbecue right before the crowd shows up? Certainly not! We are not to function outside of God's plan and we cannot use the power of the Holy Spirit outside of God's plan. However, there is no difficulty, no heart ache, no circumstance, no problem which God did not foresee—He has made full provision for every trouble in our life and has given us the Holy Spirit and His written Word to guide us.

Now brace yourselves: there is another way to see this verse. In this case both interpretations are valid. The unnamed subject for *is evil* can also be God. In the eyes of Moses, after hearing all this tremendous whining and complaining, God is evil in his eyes because Y^ehowah has saddled him with this tremendous responsibility and Moses does not know how to make it stop hurting. A mother whose child is in terrible pain, looking to her for comfort, clearly understands the feelings of Moses. She desires above all else to quell the pain and suffering of her child and could find herself angry with God for giving her a child in great pain that she can seemingly do nothing about.

And Moses said to Yahweh, "Why have You caused evil to be done to Your servant? And why have I not found grace in Your eyes—to place of all this people upon me?" [Numbers 11:11]

Recall how you did not like one of the interpretations that *Yahweh* had been evil in the sight of Moses. Notice that we have the same verb, *rā'a'* (רָאָה) [pronounced *raw-GAHG*] and this unquestionably is Moses referring to God, as it is in the second person singular. However, Moses has couched this is what would be considered more polite language. The verb this time is in the Hiphil perfect, meaning that God as not done evil to Moses but that God has caused evil to be done to Moses. Because of the Hiphil stem, I have translated this single verb by the phrase *caused evil to be done to*. God was not the doer of the action of the verb, but God set up a series of events which resulted in a situation which was evil to Moses.

And notice who is complaining now; Moses is complaining to God. His people the Jews, are hurting and he does not know how to make it stop. Their discontent and unhappiness is catching. It is difficult for anyone, regardless of their spiritual strength, to be around people who are whining, complaining, blaming and to maintain an even attitude. Moses is a great man beyond what any of us have ever seen, and the whining and complaining of his generation has even impacted him.

"Have I—even I—conceived all this people? Have I—even I—begotten them,⁶⁰ that You say to me 'Carry them⁶¹ in your bosom as the nursing father bears the suckling? [Carry them] to the land, which You have sworn to their fathers?' [Numbers 11:12]

So Moses asks God if he, Moses, is the person who fathered this people, because the person who fathered these people should be the one to carry them into the land. Moses is approaching God gingerly, mostly with inference. He does not come right out and say, "These are Your people, God, You take care of them." Instead, Moses implies that. After all, God is the Father of Israel. "Then you will say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says Yahweh, "Israel is

⁵⁹ Now don't fly into a tizzy; I am speaking anthropopathically here, just as Moses is in writing this verse.

⁶⁰ Lit., it—remember, this is in the singular to match the Hebrew singular of the word *people*.

⁶¹ Lit., *it*.

My son, My first-born. ' ' ' (Exodus 4:22; also see Isaiah 63:16). The picture drawn is that of Moses carrying a suckling baby next to his bosom—a baby actually conceived by Yahweh. And Moses will do this for forty years **And for a period of about forty years, He [God] put up with them in the desert** (Acts 13:18). God has made promises to the sons of Israel, so why is Moses doing all the work and acting as though he made all these promises? As is footnoted, *them* should be translated *it* but it could also be translated *him*. There is no distinction in the Hebrew between the masculine and the neuter as there is in the Greek.

Moses is the great mediator between God and God's people Israel; and for him the pressure was becoming too great. Moses represents our Mediator, Who faced an even greater pressure. **And He took with Him Peter and James and Joh, and began to be very distressed and troubled. And He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch." And He went a little beyond and fell to the ground and began praying that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. And He was saying, "Abba! Father! All thing are possible for You; remove this cup from Me, yet not what I will but what You will."** (Mark 14:33–36). We have our salvation because our great Mediator did not buckle under the pressure of bearing our sins, even though we were born of the devil and not of Him, having an indwelling old sin nature and a deep desire to oppose Him.

"From where do I have meat to give to all this people? For they weep to me, saying, 'Give to us meat, and we will eat.' [Numbers 11:13]

Moses lists their number one complaint: they are tired of manna and want some actual meat in their diet. He doesn't have any meat and he has no idea where to get the meat necessary for this many people out in the middle of the desert. However, God is able. This is the same God, Who, several centuries in the future, will feed 5000 with five barley loaves and two fish (Matthew 14:13–21 Mark 6:32–44 Luke 9:10–17 John 6:7–13). He is more than able.

"I am not able—I alone—to bear all this people. For, [this burden is] too heavy for me. [Numbers 11:14]

This is a fascinating figure of speech—an implied polyptoton (implied through ellipsis). Normally, this would read: **I am not able—I alone—to bear the burden of all this people; for this burden is too heavy for me.** The polyptoton is the combining of the verb for *to bear* with its noun cognate, which would be understood. Hence an implied polyptoton. You expect to see the polyptoton, but you do not; this, along with the abbreviation (ellipsis) of it all shows great emotion in Moses' speech. This is an intense plea for help.

God is incredibly gracious. Moses has begun to sound like the whiny Jews he is leading around. He is acting as if he is all alone, as if God is not there to help him. Rather than strike Moses down for his ignorance, God allows him to speak. Moses, even though this makes him look bad, recorded this conversation of over 3000 years ago for our benefit. Perhaps we may recognize ourselves as going to God, whining about this or that little insignificant problem, as though the world were falling in upon us.

"And if You are doing me [this way], [then] kill me, I implore You [lit., please]; kill [me]—if I have found grace in your eyes, and let me not look on [or, at] Your evil."⁶² [Numbers 11:15]

You may perhaps think that I am being far too free with this translation. Moses begins with a conjunction and the hypothetical particle *if*. This is followed by the second person pronoun⁶³ followed by the Qal active participle of ʾāsâh (אָשָׂה) [pronounced *gaw-SAWH*] which means *to do, to make, to construct*. This is followed by the lamed preposition (*to*) with a first person suffix. Literally, so far, we have **and if you are doing to me**. The verb *to kill* is found twice in this verse, once in the Qal imperative and once in the Qal infinitive absolute. The second occurrence of this verb tends to intensify the first usage. In between is a particle of entreaty which should be translated *please* but that sounds too lame. Occasionally, we have believers in Jesus Christ who get under so

⁶² This could possibly read: *my evil or misery*; the reason for the change of person to be covered in text.

⁶³ For those who are checking up on me, the second person pronoun is in the feminine gender, but that appears to be a reading problem (Owen's *Analytical Key to the Old Testament*, Vol. I, p. 624).

much pressure that they cry out to be killed by God. Elijah, when on the run, and feeling quite alone in the world with his stand, wrote: *But he himself went a day's journey into the desert, and came and sat down under a juniper tree; and he requested for himself that he might die, and said, "It is enough, now. O Lord, take my life., for I am not better than my fathers."* (1Kings 18:4). There can be times when you have a serious interest in God's Word and you will be all alone, insofar as you know, when it comes to this interest. The Christians that you know might be interested in a thousand other things other than the Word. Don't be surprised. In fact, don't be surprised if once and awhile, if not all the time, you feel as though you are the only believer left on this planet who is interested in God's Word.

You are no doubt wondering about the end of the verse. *My evil* (or, misery) is the reading of the Massoretic text. However, vv. 10–11 lend themselves more readily to this reading *Your evil*. Furthermore, context does not lend itself to Moses being so insightful here to recognizing that his personal viewpoint and stand here is evil. His accusation is against God, not himself. It has been asserted that the Sopherim (the editorial scribes), made this alteration, not wanting to associate *evil* with God, and left a margin note to indicate this. Such a marginal note is called an emendation and this will be covered in greater detail in 1Samuel 3:13 From the Jerusalem Targum, it has been shown that this was read *the evil of the people or their evil*.⁶⁴

This verse is a small, personal pity party being thrown by Moses. Life is too tough, people are complaining—just kill me, God, and get me out of this. Some of us are foolish enough to desire positions of great authority, not because we can handle it or because we have any leadership capabilities at all, but because we like to boss people around. We like to tell people what to do, but we don't want to be told what to do. This gives us a much better idea as to what leadership is all about. Moses has a tremendous responsibility and all complaints inevitably—even when they are just spoken to oneself on a hot desert afternoon to no one in particular—wind up on his desk and he, being in authority, is to both take the blame for what has happened and then fix the problem. This is too much for Moses who has never had delusions of grandeur and never had any great desire to lead anything (although, as we have seen, was raised to become the leader of one of the greatest nations on earth at the time). In fact, it might be a good time to re-examine Moses' early life:

The Early Life of Moses

1. Moses was born a Jew; a Levite (Exodus 2:1–2).
2. At the time of his birth, the Jews were slaves in Egypt and experiencing a tremendous population explosion (Exodus 1:8–12).
3. The Pharaoh first instructed the two supervisors of the midwives to kill all male Hebrew babies as they were born, and, when that failed, commanded all of the people to cast male Hebrew babies into the Nile (Exodus 1:15–22).
4. Like all male Hebrew babies, Moses had been circumcised on the seventh day (Genesis 17:11–12), and therefore when the Pharaoh's daughter found him in the Nile, she knew that he was an Hebrew (Exodus 2:5–6).
5. Moses was brought up in the castle of Pharaoh (Exodus 2:10 Acts 7:21–22).
6. Whereas Moses could have been brought up as a prince to one day become king (he would have been in line as a crown prince), he chose instead to lead his people (Acts 7:21–22 Hebrews 11:24–27).
7. The decision to stay with his people and lead them was no one-shot decision; the totality of this decision took over forty years (Acts 7:23–30). Even here we see his reticence.
8. Moses was so concern about his natural speaking ability that he requested God to give him some alternative to speaking directly to Pharaoh, which was Aaron—for awhile, Aaron spoke for God to Pharaoh (Exodus 4:10–16 6:29–7:2).
9. However, Moses did eventually assume his position of authority and speak directly to Pharaoh (Exodus 8:8–10 25–30)

⁶⁴ Taken from *The Emphasized Bible*, p. 169; See Dr. Ginsburg's *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical* edition of the Hebrew Bible (1897), p. 353.

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You will certainly recall back in Exodus 32 the golden calf incident when Moses went up on Mount Sinai to speak with Yahweh and the people fell into idolatry. At that time, when he confessed the sin of the people to God, he asked God to remove their sin or blot him from the book of life (Exodus 32:32). In this case, we have Moses, unhappy in his position of authority, unable to make it stop hurting ofr his people the Jews; upset because they certainly blamed him for all of their hardships and he knows that he was the mouth which led them out of Egypt into the desert (it was God's command, but it was Moses spoke to the people). Moses asks God to kill him so that he, Moses, will not have to look upon his own affliction—that is, he will not have to deal with his problems and the inevitable crises which come to a person in a leadership position. Your personal application? If you greatly desire a leadership position, rethink this craving. If all it is a lust for power—a desire to boss others around—don't bother to even pursue such a notion. Be honest with yourself, if this is your motivation, then you will make a horrible leader. The one who leads is a servant of all, not vice versa (Matthew 20:25–28 23:11–12 John 13:3–8 1Corinthians 9:19). If you think any differently, you are all mixed up. One of the many problems with out government to day is that it has assumed a position of authority but not a position of servitude and responsibility. Again, the book of Numbers is filled with applications to your life today. When it comes to pointing out these applications, I am only scratching the surface.

We also have a parallelism running between verses 10, 11 and 15, which is even noticeable in the English:

The Parallelism Found in vv. 10, 11 and 15	
v. 10	And it [or He] was evil in the sight of Moses.
v. 11	Why have you caused evil to your servant and why have I not found grace in Your sight?
v. 15	[Kill me] if I find grace in Your sight and I may not look at my misery (or, evil, or affliction).

Notice that we have a repeating of the theme *in the sight of*; and the verb evil occurs in vv. 10–11 and its feminine noun cognate occurs in v. 15. Furthermore, the verb for see is quite similar to the verb for *doing evil*. See is *râ'âh* (רָאָה) [pronounced *raw-AWH*] and *doing evil* is *râ'a'* (רָעָה) [pronounced *raw-GAHG*].

We all tend to focus in on God's wrath directed towards Israel and Moses' weakness here; but what we often do not see is God's graciousness toward Moses. Moses has been sarcastic, insolent, self-pitying, and weak. God does not upbraid Moses even once. Moses is so great that God overlooks some of his faults which are occasionally expressed, and God focuses in on what will be done. He does not have to chew Moses out; God needs only to refocus Moses and the greatness that is Moses, being filled by the Holy Spirit, will take over. We will see the same thing when David sins with Bathsheba. God will discipline David and the pain will be almost unbearable, but David will regain his position and power and the line of Christ will actually proceed through David and Bathsheba (who was David's right woman, whom David should have waited for).

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God Promises Moses That He Will Send the Israelites an Overabundance of Meat

And Yahweh said, to Moses, "Gather to Me seventy men from the elders of Israel, whom you have known that they are elders of the people, and its authorities; and you will take them to the tent of meeting, and they will station themselves there with you. [Numbers 11:16]

Unlike most people, Moses does not desire to have absolute authority. He would like some help. There are two million people to rule over and God also recognizes that it is an impossible task for one man to handle. Moses has set up some judges, as per his father-in-law's advice (Exodus 18:17–26); so you may be wondering, where

are these men? they were from the older generation, many of whom have died the sin unto death. In addition, the size and complexity of his mobile country requires more administration than just some additional judges. The rulership over two million people by principally one man is an administrative nightmare. Some people foolishly lust after such power. Finally although the suggestion of the father-in-law of Moses was an excellent idea, those who were appointed over groups of fifty and a hundred and a thousand were not filled with the Spirit, so they were likely ineffectual as leaders. Moses, in his working with these people, has gotten to know a great many people well and recognizes the leadership potential in others. God places upon him the task of putting together a government of about seventy men to rule over these two million wandering Jews. As we will find out by the end of the Pentateuch, there are only two men in all of Israel, other than Moses, Aaron and Aaron's two sons, who have any real true leadership potential.

I should point out that from this passage comes the Sanhedrin, the most authoritative Jewish assembly during the time of our Lord. Unfortunately, they conformed in form, but not in reality. The Sanhedrin during our Lord's time contained very few men, if any, who were guided by the Spirit of God.

"And I will come down and speak with you there, and I had kept back my Spirit, which is upon you, however [lit., and] I will place [it] upon them, and they will bear with you some of the burden of the people, and you will not bear [it] yourself alone. [Numbers 11:17]

Now note how easy that was. Moses had a problem, he went to God, and God solved it. Moses prayer was for God to kill him or in some way remove the great responsibility with which he had been saddled. God did not answer this prayer in the way that Moses expected, but God did answer the prayer, immediately, and God solved the problem. The Israelites could have learned something here. Rather than their bitching, whining and complaining, they just needed to go to God (through Moses—they had to approach God through an intermediary)—and requested an expansion of their menu. God is easy. They have believed in Him and up until now had trusted and obey Him. They just needed to approach their God. **Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to god. And the peace of God, which surpasses all [human] comprehension shall garrison your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:6–7).** **"They will not labor in vain or bear [children] in calamity; for they are the seed of those blessed by Yahweh, and their descendants with them. It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear."** (Isaiah 65:23–24).

Don't become nonplussed over the *keeping back* of the Holy Spirit here. God has poured the Holy Spirit upon Moses; God will keep back some of that power which He has been giving to Moses and pour it upon the seventy. This does not mean that Moses will now be operating with 32 megs of RAM as opposed to 64; Moses will not operate now on four cylinders instead of eight; God is simply reserving some of the Spirit's power for the assistants to Moses. Filled with the Spirit, these men will be a help to Moses; apart from the Holy Spirit, these seventy elders were just be another seventy people who are a pain in the neck to Moses with more power and authority than they had before. If those immediately under you are working against you, then their influence is much more destructive than that of the hoi polloi.

Note here, as I have pointed out time and time again, their service is worthless outside of the power of the Holy Spirit, just as our service is worthless without God's indwelling power. Our giving, our self-sacrifice, our prayers, our church attendance, our witnessing—you name it—whatever you view as Christian service or Christian activity is absolutely vain and useless apart from the filling of the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament, they had not the choice that we have. God sovereignly chose who received the Holy Spirit and who did not. Today, we need only name our sins to God and we are filled again with the Holy Spirit.⁶⁵

"And to these [lit., the] people you will say, 'Sanctify [or, set yourselves apart to God] yourselves for tomorrow, and you [all] will eat meat, for you [all] have wept in the ears of Yahweh, saying, 'Who will give us meat? For it was good [or, pleasant] to us in Egypt.' Yahweh will give you meat and you will eat [meat]. [Numbers 11:18]

⁶⁵ We have all been filled once with the Holy Spirit—when we first believed in Jesus Christ.

The problem was not with God's desire or ability to provide the Israelites with meat. That was a given. He could do that without any difficulty. The problem was their attitude and their approach. We can approach God in a lot of different ways. However, when we come to him with mental attitude sins, in bitterness, blaming Moses, scapegoating others, in anger, in frustration—we have a problem. God is not going to answer our prayers, or, when He does, He will be quite unpleasant about it. He knows the pressures that we are under and He is a forbearing, understanding God. However, the attitude of the Exodus generation was sorry, and God loathed that generation.

"You [all] will not eat for one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days;
[Numbers 11:19]

God will not just answer their prayers, He will give them an overabundance of meat. We have an expression in the next verse about having so much meat that it comes out their nostrils. *The Amplified Bible* interprets this as them becoming so full that they violently vomit this food back up and it comes out of their nostrils. This is not what God will say below. You recall that, as a child, when describing a marvelous Thanksgiving meal, that you exclaimed that you were full up to here, and you used your hand to illustrate how full you were (usually, you held it over your head). This is the same kind of expression. While not exactly a genteel metaphor, it clearly indicates an overabundance of and overindulgence in meat. Freeman concurs with this explanation of *being filled to the nostrils* in his book *Manner's and Customs of the Bible* (p. 99), where he points out the a similar phrase is still used in India.

"As far as a month of days, till that it comes out from your nostrils, and it becomes to you an abomination; because you [all] have loathed Yahweh, Who is in your midst, and you weep before Him, saying "Why this? We have come out of Egypt!" ' " [Numbers 11:20]

The very words of these Jews shows how disoriented they are to God's plan. For the ways of a man are before the eyes of Yahweh and He watches all his paths; his own iniquities will capture the wicked and he will be held with the cord of his sin. He will die for lack of instruction and in the greatness of his folly, he will go astray (Proverbs 5:21–23). **"And I say to you that every careless word that men speak, they will render an account for it is the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."** (Matthew 5:36–37).

The problem is not that the sons of Israel desire a change of diet or some more variety in their diet. It is their sorry attitude. Their attitude and their approach to God shows a loathing for God's character, a misapprehension of God's character. With the right attitude, they could have gone to Moses, their great mediator, and asked Moses to ask God for meat. God would have immediately granted this request. However, instead, they stood around and bitched and moaned to themselves, then to each other, so God gave them too much for the period of a month.

We find this kind of attitude and perception of God is found today. How many people are trapped in what it is they believe because they have made God into their image and they have an idea as to how God should act and be toward them, and where God should show some slack, and how God's morality should change and become updated. To these people, God is loathed because they do not like Him for Who He is.

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Moses Becomes Sarcastic; Yahweh Gently Upbraids Him

And Moses said, "Six hundred thousand footmen—your people—in whose midst I [am]; and You—You have said, 'I will give meat to them and they will eat [it for] a month of days!'" [Numbers 11:21]

Moses reminds God of how many people there are. He has just recently taken the census, so the numbers are in his head. They are in the middle of the desert and there are 600,000 men fit for service in their army—and God

is telling Moses that they will eat meat until it comes out their nostrils—for a month of days? Moses is just making sure that he has got his facts right. As far as Moses is concerned, this is quite a miracle—he is just making sure that he got it right and there may have been a bit of a tone of disbelief and/or mocking in his voice.

"And is [the entire] flock and herd slaughtered for them, that [lit., and] one has found for them? If all the fishes of the sea gathered for them, that [lit., and] one has found for them?" [Numbers 11:22]

Even in a translation made over three thousand years after the act, you can hear the incredulousness in Moses' voice. You can hear him half-mocking this notion that God will feed this many people meat. Why has Moses taken this tact, and, if he is in disbelief, what about the rest of Israel? When one's faith is held by miracles, then one needs more miracles and greater miracles to sustain this faith. It has been over a month since the Jews have seen anything which was extraordinary. What about the cloud and the fire? this was old hat. They had seen that for over a year; they had begun to take that for granted. Let me give you an illustration. Let's say that God has decided to give you your own personal, private miracle...that every time you were alone and thirsty and had an empty glass in your hand, that God would miraculously fill it with water or the beverage of your choice. Well, the first time that this happened, you would be amazed. You would drink it down and hold it up for a refill. By the end of the day, you'd be retaining an ocean of fluid. And for a month or so afterwards, this would be the most incredible thing that you could imagine. However, once several months go by, even though you recognize that this is quite unusual, it would not be that big of a deal. And, once a year has passed, it would be nothing, and certainly such a miracle would not sustain your faith. The key is that real faith comes from the inside. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. This is where our faith is developed—not by seeing miracles. Those miracles were Moses' credit card. He was to lead Israel, he was to withstand the Pharaoh of Egypt and the miracles confirmed this. To base your faith upon these great miracles is a mistake. Your sustaining faith will come from your volition. You will choose to take God at His Word. **"And if it is disagreeable in your estimation [lit., sight] to serve Yahweh, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve Yahweh."** (Joshua 24:15). Let's change this passage slightly: And if it is disagreeable in your estimation to believe Yahweh, then choose for yourselves today whom you will believe; whether the whether the gods which your fathers believed in which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will believe Yahweh. Service to God begins by faith in God, just as the Christian life begins with nothing but faith, faith the size of a mustard seed.

And Yahweh said to Moses, "Is the hand of Yahweh shortened? Now you will see whether My Word will meet your expectations or not [lit., will meet you or not]." [Numbers 11:23]

Here is the key: *My Word*. God spoke to Moses and told Moses what was going to happen. That is all God had to do. Moses only needed to believe at that point. When God said, *"Is the hand of Yahweh shortened?"*, what He was saying is did He not have the power to effect this miracle? This is an idiomatic phrase, rendered in the NASB and the NRSV: **"Is the LORD's power limited?"** *The Amplified Bible: Has the Lord's hand [His ability and power] become short [thwarted and inadequate]?* It makes me grimace to quote the Living Bible, but: **Then the Lord said to Moses, "When did I become weak?"** As He said in Isaiah 59:1: **Behold, Yahweh's hand is not so short that it cannot save; neither is His ear so dull that it cannot hear.** Finding meat for a population of 2,000,000+ is obviously a human impossibility in this desert. However, for God, is His arm too short? God created the entire universe in an instant. Providing a little meat is not such a difficult thing. In fact, as we will see, God had obviously been tending a huge flock of quail and will bring them to the Jews without even performing some incredible miracle. He will provide for them from His great power; however, instead of create the quail immediately, God had already had the quail in waiting and he will simply gather them up and bring them to the sons of Israel.

The final verb in this verse is the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect, 2nd person masculine singular suffix of qârâh (הָרַק) [pronounced *kaw-RAWH*] and it means *encounter, meet, befall*. However, in this word is just the slight hint of *chance*; something just *might* happen. There is that tinge of probability which is implied, as we see in its noun cognate, mîq^ereh (הִרְקַח) [pronounced *mihk^e-REH*], its meaning, by BDB, is *accident, chance, fortune*. The response of God is missed entirely in all the English translations. Moses is half-mocking, half unbelieving

telling God—now let me get this straight—there are 600,000 foot soldiers and you are going to feed them meat until it comes out their nostrils? We're going to slaughter all of the herds and flocks, right? You're going to suddenly provide us with all of the fish in the sea—do I have my facts right, here?" And God replies, "Am I too weak? Let's just see—maybe it will come to pass; it could happen." The attitude of Moses is given right back to him by God. I don't mean to imply informality between Yahweh and Moses as much as I want to convey to you God replies to Moses almost tongue in cheek; sarcastically, if you will.

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Moses Chooses His Seventy Helpers and God Sends Them the Holy Spirit

And then Moses went out and spoke to the people the words of Yahweh, and so he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people⁶⁶ then⁶⁷ caused them to stand round about the tent.
[Numbers 11:24]

Moses is a bit uncertain that these things will really occur, so he has quizzed God to make certain these things would occur, thought to himself, *what the hell*, and presented God's Word to the people. When a pastor runs into a passage of the Bible where the meaning of the passage causes him to be uncomfortable or he thinks that it might not go over well; then just take Moses' attitude. What the hell, I'll just present God's Word and we'll see what happens.

The next verse is rather difficult in translation and some words are generally mistranslated; others have acquired a meaning or an emphasis apart from its true usage in the original languages.

Then Yahweh came down in the cloud and then He spoke to him, and then He set aside out from the [power of the] Spirit which [is] on Him and then He placed [it] on the seventy men of the elders; [Numbers 11:25a]

The first phrase of this verse is easy; but there is some difficulty with the latter portion:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	...and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and put it upon the seventy elders;
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	...and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave unto the seventy men—the elders.
NASB	...And He took of the Spirit who was upon him and placed <i>Him</i> upon the seventy elders.
NRSV	...and took some of the spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders;
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	...and keepeth back of the Spirit which <i>is</i> on him, and putteth on the seventy men of the elders;

As usual, Young's translation does not quite agree with the others. The key word is 3rd person, masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect of 'âtsal (אָצַל) [pronounced *aw-TSAHL*], a word found only in Genesis 27:36 Numbers 11:17, 25 Ecclesiastes 2:10 and Ezekiel 42:6 (the most interesting use of this word). It's meaning in BDB is given as *lay aside, reserve, withdraw, withhold*. It would be reasonable, because of its use in Genesis 27:36b⁶⁸ to translate this word *set aside, reserve*. Strong's #680 BDB #69.

Recall that Moses went to God with two problems: the people were complaining about not having any meat in their diet and the responsibility was too great for him. First we deal with Moses being over-extended. He needs some assistance. So seventy men are chosen, as per God's instructions. These may or may not have been the same seventy elders mentioned in Exodus 24:9. There was very likely some overlapping. Then God places His Spirit upon these men. This is an unusual event, and, as such, is given some unusual accompaniment. This does not

⁶⁶ The western targum of Jonathan and the Vulgate both read *elders of Israel* here.

⁶⁷ *And then, and so, and then* are all the same word, the wâw consecutive in the Hebrew.

⁶⁸ Isaac has just given the blessing that he was saving for Esau to Jacob; and Esau whines, "He took away my birthright and now look, he has taken away my blessing. Have you not *reserved* [or, *set aside*] a blessing for me?"

sound too unlike, "And it will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy; your old men will dream dreams and your young men will see visions." (Joel 2:28). When God gives His Holy Spirit, in some cases, this occurs with unusual signs and activity—like at the beginning of the church age and at this point in time before the Spirit is given in general to all believers.

Now that was easy enough; however, notice the last portion of this verse:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	...and when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied [sounding forth the praises of God and declaring His will]. Then they did so no more.
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	And it came to pass that when the spirit rested upon them they prophesied, and then did so no more.
KJV	...and it came to pass, <i>that</i> , when the spirit rest upon them, the prophesied, and did not cease.
Owen's translation	...and it was when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied but they did so no more.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>and it cometh to pass at the resting of the Spirit on them, that they prophesy, and do not cease.

Prophesy is in the Hithpael imperfect of *nâbâ'* (נָבֵא) [pronounced *naw^b-VAW*] and this is one of the rare instances where the Hithpael (the reflexive of the Piel) acts more as a passive voice;⁶⁹ that is, their speaking prophecy is a result of receiving this directly from God. Furthermore, this is the first occurrence of this verb in the Old Testament (it is found in Numbers 11:26–27, scattered parsimoniously in some of the historical books, such as in 1Samuel 10:11, 13 1Kings 22:10 2Chronicles 18:7, 9; however, this word occurs most frequently in Jeremiah and Ezekiel—almost 75 times). The upshot of this is we do not have a precedence in terms of the use of this verb. However, its noun cognate, *nâbîy'* (נָבִיא) [pronounced *naw^b-VEE*] has already when found in Genesis 20:7 and Exodus 7:1. In Genesis, God tells Abimelech that Abram is a prophet, although Abram had not, up until that time, cited any future events which were to come to pass; and in Exodus 7:1, there was an analogy set up. God's plan was for Him to speak to Moses and for Moses to communicate God's will to Pharaoh, as God's prophet. However, since Moses was suffering from a terrific case of shyness, God said, "I will make you God to Pharaoh and your brother Aaron will be your prophet." In these two instances, even though there would be some prophecy involved in what Aaron would tell Pharaoh, the thrust of what is being said is divine viewpoint. A prophet is a person who is speaking to man from God; a prophet is a man who speaks from God and communicates divine viewpoint to man; a prophet represents God to man (just as a priest primarily represents man before God). People get carried away and overemphasize the prophetic nature of what is being said. Prophecy is involved because God is omniscient—He knows the end from the beginning—so obviously anything spoken directly from God will contain elements of what we consider prophesy, simply because the future to God is no different than the past. Time applies to us, because we are in time; God is not confined by time. Furthermore, BDB translates *nâbîy'* as *spokesman, speaker, prophet*. In other words, what we view as *prophesy* is incidental to the meaning of both the verb and the noun.

Another mistake which is made when interpreting this verse is claiming that the seventy elders fell into ecstatic utterances. There is no evidence and nothing by way of inference, either in context or in the previous usage of the noun cognate that which indicates that these men are speaking in tongues or in some sort of ecstatic state with verbal accompaniment. The ghastly tongues movement has sadly distorted some Scriptures, including this one. From one end of the Bible to the other there is not one mention of men who are filled with the Holy Spirit, who babble like a bunch of possessed idiots—not one! There is a likelihood that such behavior took place in 1Kings 18:28–29, but these were prophets of Baal influenced by demons. Without going into a long dissertation on tongues, in Acts 2, what is occurred is the Apostles spoke in foreign languages which were clearly understood by those who spoke the same languages. The tongues movement rests upon a sadly out-of- context interpretation of 1Corinthians 13:1⁷⁰ combined with the psychotic babbling which occurs inside their churches.

⁶⁹ See Zodhiates *The Complete Word Study Old Testament*, p. 2275.

⁷⁰ This will be covered in greater detail when I get to 1Corinthians 13; but notice the context; men know ALL mysteries and have ALL knowledge and have enough faith to move mountains. How many Christians do you know who fall into even one of those categories? Roughly zero? That is also how many Christians that you know who also speak with the languages of angels.

At the end of this verse we have a conjunction, a negative and the 3rd person plural, Qal perfect of *yâçaph* (יָצַח) [pronounced *yaw-SAHPH*] and it is a primitive verb which means *to add, to augment*; and as an adverb it means *to continue to do a thing*. There is no problem finding additional references to this particular word—it is found over 300 times in the Old Testament. The problem is coming up with a consistent meaning. However, if we stick with the Qal stem (which is appropriate with so many references), we might be able to ascertain the correct meaning. In Genesis 8:12, we have the exact same morphology (except that it is in the feminine singular), along with the negative and the conjunction: *Then he waited another seven days and sent forth the dove and she did not continue to return to him any more*. We have the same morphology in Genesis 38:26: *Then Judah recognized and said, "She is more righteous than I, inasmuch as I did not give her to Shelah, my son;" and he did not continue again to know her*. From these two verses, the meaning would seem clear; however, we see that this verb can be clearly used to mean *to add, to append*. Leviticus 22:14: *But if a man eats that which is holy unintentionally, the he will add to it a fifth of it and he will give the holy to the priest (also examine Leviticus 26:18, 21 27:13, 15, 27)*. What has occurred in Numbers 11:25 is that, although for the past couple days everyone has been mumbling negative human viewpoint, expressing their general dissatisfaction with their lot in life and with God's guidance, those upon whom God placed His Spirit not only expressed God's viewpoint, but they did not add to it their own personal views and misconceptions.

And so it came to pass at the resting of the Spirit on them so then they prophesied and they did not add [their human viewpoint]. [Numbers 11:25b]

The problem with the other versions (i.e., they stop or they don't stop prophesying) of this verse is neither interpretation jives with the context. For the translations which sound as though they stopped, the *wāw* consecutive begins the next verse, which means *and then*, and the rest of the chapter deals with prophesying. Other versions which indicate that they did not stop are contextually accurate, to an extent, but do not match at all the meanings of the Hebrew words. With the negative, it would be *did not continue*. However, the entire thrust of this chapter is the disgruntled mumbling of human viewpoint. Everyone, including Moses, is operating on human viewpoint, and bitching and mumbling and complaining, first to themselves, and this general air of dissatisfaction has spread throughout the camp. The emphasis here is not only do these seventy men express divine viewpoint, but they do not add anything to it. God's Word is not appended with the typical dissatisfaction found throughout the camp.

Now that we know what this verse actually says, it would be a good idea to examine **the Doctrine of the Ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament**.

The Abbreviated Doctrine of the Ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

1. The Holy Spirit is presented as an independent, sovereign entity in the Old Testament. Isaiah 40:13–14 *Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD, or what man shows Him his counsel? Whom did he consult, and who made Him understand? Who taught Him the path of justice.* Isaiah 48:16 [The revealed God of the Old Testament is speaking]: *"Draw near to Me, hear this: from the beginning I have not spoken in secret, from the time it came to be I have been there."* And now the Lord GOD has sent Me, and His Spirit."
2. The Holy Spirit was involved in the restoration of the earth so that life could survive on it. It appears as if the Holy Spirit provided the energy to warm planet earth, which was encased in ice. Genesis 1:2 Psalm 104:30
3. God the Holy Spirit gives all men life and sustains that life. Genesis 2:7 Job 27:3 33:4 Ecclesiastes 12:7 *...and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.* Isaiah 42:5
4. The Holy Spirit interacted with mankind—even with corrupted mankind—presumably to give them the gospel. Genesis 6:3

Paul, at first, gives examples which are beyond extraordinary, to emphasize the importance of love (the filling of the Spirit). Then he gives the ultimate in personal, human sacrifice, which certainly does occur, and among our own personal acquaintances, we probably know of no one, but we might have heard of one such person. In any holy roller, practically the whole doggone congregation supposedly speaks in angelic tongues. That does not fit in with the other examples given.

The Abbreviated Doctrine of the Ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

5. The Holy Spirit and the truth in the Old Testament:
 - 1) The Holy Spirit makes spiritual information understandable to Old Testament saints. Job 32:8
 - 2) The Holy Spirit empowered those who wrote the Old Testament. Psalm 23:1–3 Matthew 22:43 Mark 12:36 2Peter 1:21
 - 3) God the Holy Spirit empowered those prophets in the Old Testament to speak the truth. Neh. 9:30 Ezekiel 2:1–3 *And He said to me, "Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak with you." And as He spoke to me, the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and I heard him speaking to me. And He said to me, "Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel, to nations of rebels, who have rebelled against me. They and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day."* This is both prophetic, speaking of Jesus Christ; and for the time it was given, speaking of Ezekiel. See also Ezekiel 3:12 Luke 1:67 2:25
6. The Holy Spirit and prophecy in the Old Testament:
 - 1) The people of Israel were to look to fulfilled prophecy in order to realize that this is the Spirit of God telling them of these things. Isaiah 34:16
 - 2) Isaiah prophesied the ministry of God the Holy Spirit to the Messiah. Isaiah 11:2 *And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.* See also Isaiah 42:1 Isaiah 61:1–2
 - 3) Isaiah, Ezekiel and Joel prophesied that the Spirit would be poured out upon mankind during the Millennium. Isaiah 32:15 Ezekiel 36:26–28 37:14 39:29 Joel 2:28–29
7. The Holy Spirit and empowerment in the Old Testament:
 - 1) The key to empowerment, even in the Old Testament, was the Holy Spirit. Zech. 4:6
 - 2) Some of the artisans involved in the building of the Tabernacle of God were empowered by God the Holy Spirit. Exodus 31:3 35:31
 - 3) God allowed Moses to delegate his authority, and God would give these men the Holy Spirit. Numbers 11:16–17, 24–25
 - 4) God gave the Holy Spirit to some early prophets when Moses and the people of God were in the desert. Numbers 11:26–29
 - 5) Specific people in the Old Testament had been given the Holy Spirit in order to empower them. Numbers 27:18 Judges 3:10 6:34 11:29 14:6, 19 15:14 1Samuel 10:6, 10 11:6 16:13 2Chronicles 20:14 24:20 Daniel 4:18 Micah 3:8
 - 6) One could ask for empowerment by the Holy Spirit. 2Kings 2:9 Luke 11:13
 - 7) Jesus Christ, in His humanity, in the Age of the Hypostatic Union (which was, in many respects, a continuation of the Age of Israel) was empowered by the Holy Spirit. Isaiah 61:1 Luke 4:1 4:14, 18
8. The Holy Spirit and Israel:
 - 1) God's Spirit remained with Israel from the exodus. Haggai 2:5
 - 2) God promises an eternal relationship with the Jews; a relationship which is based upon truth. Isaiah 59:20–21 *"And a Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression," declares the LORD. "And as for Me, this is My covenant with them," says the LORD: "My Spirit that is upon you, and My words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children's offspring," says the LORD, "from this time forth and forevermore."*
 - 3) The Holy Spirit was given to Israel as a nation. Isaiah 63:11–13a *Then he remembered the days of old, of Moses and His people. Where is He Who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock? Where is He Who put in the midst of them his Holy Spirit, who caused His glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, Who divided the waters before them to make for Himself an everlasting name, Who led them through the depths?*
 - 4) Israel continued to be in opposition to the Holy Spirit. For this reason, God subjected them to the 5th stage of national discipline (the fifth cycle of discipline). Zech. 7:12–14
9. The Holy Spirit could be taken from a person previously endowed with the Holy Spirit. 1Samuel 16:14 Psalm 51:11

The entire Doctrine of the Ministry of God the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

And then two of the men remained in the camp, the name of the one: Eldad, and the name of the second Medad, and the Spirit rested upon them—and they are among those written and have not gone out to the tent—and they prophesied in the camp. [Numbers 11:26]

Moses picked out seventy men to assist him in governing these people. He obviously made a list of their names, considering their strengths and weaknesses, eliminating some, and adding others. Moses did not just rattle off the first seventy names which came to his mind. That is why Eldad and Medad's names were *among those written*. They were all called out to the tent of meeting, but, apparently, some could not attend. This does not imply any shortcomings on their part; there could have been a myriad of valid or invalid reasons for their nonattendance. However, these were men chosen by Moses and all those chosen by Moses were lit upon by the Holy Spirit. This is a picture of what would happen in the book of Acts when God called into the body of believers, without differentiation, Jew and Gentile alike. Even those who were believers from far away were given the Spirit. This is another shadow of the good things to come.

Then a particular [lit., the] young man ran, then declared to Moses, and said, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." [Numbers 11:27]

Moses had a particular young man who was his aide or servant, Joshua. Moses calls him the young man in this verse and identifies him in the next. When Joshua names Eldad and Medad, Moses knows these men by name and recognized them as a part of the seventy that he had placed on his list. He knew that God had placed His Spirit upon the other sixty-eight, because Moses was there to observe it. Therefore, it would be obvious that God placed His Holy Spirit, as He promised, also on those who were unable to attend the first meeting of the board of executives.

And then, Joshua, son of Nun, minister of Moses, out from his young men, answered and said, "My lord, Moses, restrain them." [Numbers 11:28]

Restrain is the second person masculine singular, Qal imperative, 3rd person masculine plural suffix of *kâlâ'* (כָּלָא) [pronounced *kaw-LAW*] and it simply means to *shut up, restrain, withhold*. It is an imperative delivered from Joshua to Moses and the action of the verb is to be applied to the 3rd person plural, rendered *them*. Joshua is one of the great men of his generation, but this does not mean that everything that he says and does will be correct. Moses is in charge because Moses has the big picture and Joshua does not (we have only seen Joshua briefly prior to this in Exodus 33:11. You may recall a similar incident from the New Testament: **John said to Him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to hinder him because he was not following us." But Jesus said, "Do not hinder him, for there is no one who shall perform a miracle in My name and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is for us."** (Mark 9:38–40). Perhaps you want some application to today? Certainly; there are a lot of cults which claim to have the only truth and that only those who belong to these cults really have any line to God's truth and that only members of these cults can really have a relationship with God. This is untrue. There are Christians in every major Christian religion, including even a few in Catholicism, who have effective, dynamic Christian lives. There is no one church or denomination which has a monopoly on the truth. God's Word is the Truth and any pastor of any denomination who attempts to teach God's Word as it stands will bear fruit. Any believer who allows God's Spirit and God's Word to work in his life will lead a meaningful life.

Furthermore, there are numerous examples, in contemporary history and in Scripture where the spiritually accurate fell far outside mainstream *Christianity*. The most obvious examples are John the Baptizer, Jesus Christ and the Apostles (particularly Paul). John the Baptizer was a herald for the King, announcing the arrival of Jesus Christ. He did not do this in the synagogues, where Scripture was read daily which spoke of Him. He spoke out in the desert. He didn't send out flyers or advertisements of his ministry either; God brought the hearers to him. Our

Lord Jesus Christ, even though He taught in the synagogues, as well as in the streets and in the fields, was accursed by organized religion. In fact it was organized religion which brought Him to the cross. And, of course, much of Paul's letters deal with the correction of confused thought as espoused by the organized religion of his day.

In this century, one of the most enlightening churches was the one I was spiritually raised in, Berachah Church, which was not associated with any particular denomination. Often criticized and maligned, its pastor, R.B. Thieme, Jr., faithfully studied and taught God's Word as often as nine times per week on his regular schedule, and occasionally 12-13 times per week during certain conferences.

Going further back, the history books are filled with men, whose primary intention was to get God's Word out to the general population; men who were persecuted by the Catholic church. One of my personal heroes was a man named Tregelles, someone that most of you have never even heard about. Codex Vaticanus, which dated back to circa 340 AD, was a manuscript containing the majority of the Old and New Testaments. This manuscript had been brought back East around 1448 by Pope Nicolas, and its existence had been kept secret from the public until 1800's. When it became known that such a manuscript was at the Vatican library, Tregelles applied to the Pope to examine the manuscript. He was summarily refused. He explained that he was a professor of New Testament literature at Leipzig University, so the Pope allowed him, in 1843, to examine it for six hours. In 1845, Tregelles was again given the opportunity to study the manuscript for six hours a day for several days. However, there were certain requirements. He was searched upon entering and exiting the library. He was not allowed to bring his own writing materials nor were any provided, so he could not take notes. The manuscript was laid out on a large table and guards stood over him watching him as he studied it. So, every day, Tregelles went into the library, was searched, sat down before the manuscript under the scrutiny of the guards, and memorized a portion of the original text. Once he got home, he sat down and wrote out that portion of Scripture which he memorized. In three months, during his summer vacation, he had memorized the entire Codex Vaticanus (which was in Hebrew, Aramaic and in Greek), an incredible feat of memory and a testament to the power of the Holy Spirit. He then published his results. The Vatican, realizing that the cat was out of the bag, had the manuscript photographed, thus making it public property for the world at large. The point is that those who are in God's service are not necessarily recognized by the general *Christian* populace nor are they necessarily connected in any way to any denomination.

And Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? O that all Yahweh's people were prophets [and] that Yahweh would place His Spirit upon them!" [Numbers 11:29]

Moses is the prophet to his generation. However, he is not power-hungry nor is he concerned about his position. He did not want to lead all of these people in the first place; his last concern is to censor someone whom God is also guiding. Moses was the meekest man on the earth. He was not threatened in his position of leadership, as God gave it to him, he did not aspire and work towards it (although God did see to it that he was prepared for such a position of power).

Then Moses gathered [and removed] himself and the elders of Israel to the camp. [Numbers 11:30]

Some translations read that Moses *returned* to the camp, but the word here is 'âçaph (אָצַף) [pronounced *aw-SAHF*], and this word means *to gather, remove*. He gathered up and removed himself and the elders of Israel from the tent of meeting and went back to the camp. *Got* is a good one-word description.

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God Sends the Israelites an over Abundance of Quail

This is a difficult section of Numbers, which is why we have spent so long in just this one chapter. We need to look at the translations of this next verse:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	And there went forth a wind from the Lord and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall [so they flew low] beside the camp, about a day's journey on this side and on the other side, around the camp, about two cubits above the ground.
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Now a wind had sprung up from Yahweh and cut off quails from the sea, and let them lie over the camp—as it were a day's journey here and a day's journey there, round about the camp—and as it were two cubits on the face of the land.
NIV	Now a wind went out from the LORD and drove quail in from the sea. It brought them down all around the camp to about three feet above the ground, as far as a day's walk in any direction.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	And a spirit hath journeyed from Jehovah, and cutteth off quails from the sea, and leaveth by the camp, as a day's journey here, and as a day's journey there, round about the camp, and about two cubits, on the face of the land.

And He set out a wind [or, spirit] from Yahweh and He [Yahweh] cut off quails from the sea, and left [them] by the camp, a day's journey in all directions [lit., as a day's journey here, and as a day's journey there], round about the camp, and about two cubits above the face of the land.⁷¹
[Numbers 11:31]

Yahweh is the subject of all three verbs, as they are both in the 3rd person masculine singular and the *wind* (or, spirit) is in the feminine singular. The wind is acting under God's specific direction. Gathering the meat for the Israelites to eat is not a big deal to God.

Most of us, having driven on the freeway, know what it is like to be *cut off*. We are driving in a particular direction at a particular speed, and suddenly we are cut off and this changes our speed and sometimes our direction. Here we have a bunch of quail flying about with their own inbred ideas about where they were going to go and how high they would fly, and God suddenly cuts them off and re-routes them.

Without going into all the explicit details, God brought a huge number of quail into their area. The quails stretched out in a radius around the camp of a day's journey in all directions. God brought these quail low to the ground; they were flying, and not lying, three feet off the ground. God had promised that they would have their fill of meat, and they would.

And the people rose up all that day and all the night and all the day after, and they gathered the quails—he who had the least gathered ten homers—and they spread them out for themselves round about the camp. [Numbers 11:32]

These people were ravenous and greedy. Surrounding them were millions upon millions of quail flying low enough to the ground to just walk over and grab. They went out and grabbed these quail to eat as if there were no tomorrow. Food lust controlled them. God had provided them day after day the miraculous manna from the sky that they had only to get up and go out and gather. Now God has given them meat to eat and they have gathered far more than they really need. The great Psalm 78 makes mention of this incident: **He caused the east wind to blow in the heavens and by His power He directed the south wind. When He rained meat upon them like the dust, even winged fowl like the sand of the seas. The He let them fall in the midst of their camp, round about their dwellings. so they ate and were well filled and their desire He gave to them** (Psalm 78:26–29).

Now you may have caught what is going on. They Jews never went to Moses to request meat. They are in the desert and this is just something which could not be done. So, instead, they wail and cry to themselves. God asks Moses, when dealing with this problem, if His arm is too short. You mean God cannot provide meat for these people. God had the quail in waiting. He knew of their needs in eternity past. God did not just suddenly decided, "Omigosh, they need some meat in their diet"; and then created several million quail. God had a huge flock of quail in waiting. They had fed off of the locusts or the frogs or something in Egypt and had become probably the larges flock of quail in human history. Or, this was an incredibly large number of quails migrating north from the

⁷¹ Early printed editions of the Hebrew Bible read *the face of all the land*.

interior of Africa, derailed by God's power. This particular flight of a group of quails and the fact that they were low to the ground is not an unheard of thing in this area. However, this was beyond anything which had ever been seen before or since. But notice the naturalistic explanation. God simply caused a wind to pull this flock over to the Israelites. Certainly, God could have created all of those quail in an instant. He did not. He chose to raise these quail far in advance of their need, to reveal that he knew what Israel needed in the desert and made provision for it—long before they asked for it. Our needs do not catch God unawares. However, when God provides, we are going to be a lot happier if our heart was right in the first place.

[While] the meat is yet between their teeth—it is not yet cut off—and the anger of Yahweh burned among the people, and Yahweh struck down among the people—a great striking down [or, mauling or slaughter]. [Numbers 11:33]

The KJV translates the verb makkâh (מַכָּה) [pronounced *mahk-KAWH*] as *plague, slaughter, stroke, or wounds*. However, this is not the word found in the book of Exodus; in fact, its first use is in Leviticus 26:21. The only English words which I can find which seem to be apt are *mauling, beating, striking, striking down*. However, I cannot seem to lay hold of a word which would consistently work for Leviticus 26:21 Numbers 11:33 Deuteronomy 25:3 Joshua 10:10 and Esther 9:5. The word slaughter works great in this passage and many others—it just does not work consistently. The verbal cognate of makkâh is fairly consistently translated *smite* in the Authorized version, although I have usually translated it *strike*, updating the word ever so slightly.

God is so irritated with the people's attitude and their greed, as if He would forget to provide them with food tomorrow, that he strikes down a larger number of the Israelites. Although not ever incident in the desert will be covered in this book, God will strike down this entire generation, with a handful of exceptions. **Before they had satisfied their desire while their food was in their mouths, the anger of God rose against them and killed some of their stoutest ones and subdued the choice men of Israel** (Psalm 78:30–31).

And one called the name of that place Kibroth-Hattaavah, for there they have buried the people who lust. [Numbers 11:34]

Kibroth-Hattaavah [pronounced *kib-RŌTH haht-tah-äv-WAWH*] meaning *Graves of Desire*. These people are just about out of control when given meat from God. When your Quiet, loving cat is hungry, throw him a raw piece of round steak and see how he reacts if you try to take it away. His disposition changes slightly, does it not? This is how the Israelites were behaving. God will remind the next generation of this incident in Deuteronomy 9:22. Obviously, God despises gluttony as He does any other sin. Gluttony is simply the unbridled satiating of food lust. It is okay to like food, to desire it and to eat it. It is not okay to berate God if you cannot get the kinds of food that you desire, nor is it okay to behave greedily, like a dog or cat who is given a piece of steak. We are not animals, we are created in God's image and we degrade ourselves when we behave as an animal does with meat.

From Kibroth-Hattaavah have the people journeyed to Hazeroth, and they are in Hazeroth. [Numbers 11:35]

The Israelites first camped at the foot of Mount Sinai, then at Kibroth-Hattaavah, and now at Hazeroth [pronounced *khats-ay-ROTH*] (Numbers 33:16–17).

Numbers 12

Numbers 12:1–16

Outline of Chapter 12:

- vv. 1–3 **Miriam criticizes Moses**
- vv. 4–8 **Yahweh straightens Miriam and Aaron out**
- vv. 9–10 **God judges Miriam**
- vv. 11–16 **The judgement is removed and the trip is resumed**

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

- v. 8 **Numbers 12:6b–8 in Verse**

Introduction: Numbers 12 contains an incident that we might think is just there for historical filler. Aaron and Miriam both criticize Moses, God disciplines them, striking Miriam with leprosy, then she and Aaron ask God's forgiveness. The reason this is so aptly placed is that the Jews in Numbers 11 had the same options. They could have come to God and begged His forgiveness for their sins. Moses would have interceded and the march would have gone on to the land of milk and honey. However, in all of Numbers 11, in the several hours we spent there, not once do the gluttonous, complaining Jews go to God asking His forgiveness. There is a parallel here; Miriam herself will not ask forgiveness. The Exodus generation is corrupt from the foot soldier to those in the leadership positions, with but a handful of exceptions.

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Miriam Criticizes Moses

Later [lit., and then] Miriam spoke, and Aaron, against Moses concerning the circumstance of the Cushite woman whom he had taken; for he had taken a Cushite woman. [Numbers 12:1]

First of all, this is not the same woman as Moses' Midianite wife of his youth, Zipporah. Miriam and Aaron are not going to suddenly object to this marriage forty years after the fact. If it was bad, they don't have to say a thing, because that would be obvious. This is a second marriage for Moses which had just taken place. There are two million people in this camp and a large number of them are single, Jewish women.

Cush is the Hebrew word for *Ethiopia*, south of Egypt. This is a woman who is a part of the much maligned *mixed-multitude* whom Moses married. We do not know where his first wife is. When he was under God's direction to lead the Jews out of Egypt, she deserted him because circumcising her sons was too yucky for her or Moses told her to return to her father, as she was going to stand in his way (Exodus 4:24–26 18:2). Her father brought her back, hearing of the great deliverance of Israel by Moses, but nothing is said of her; the true fellowship is between Moses and her father (Exodus 18). At this point in time, we have no idea as to where Zipporah is. She returned to her family before and it is possible that she went back with her father. Her father recognized the greatness of Moses and certainly, when joining Moses in Exodus 18, had thoughts of reuniting his daughter to this great man (as well as the enjoyment of his personal friendship with Moses). We do know that Moses' sons are probably with him, as they have been mentioned prior to this (Exodus 18:2) and will be mentioned later on (1Chronicles 23:15–16).

One of the issues which is occasionally brought into focus here is the race of this Cushite woman. It is very possible that she was black. Moses was raised with the Egyptians until age forty. Egyptians back to 2700 BC were brown-skinned with stiff, dark hair, according to a wall painting from the fourth dynasty. However, as we have noted, there is some confusion as to who exactly ruled Egypt during the time of Moses, so we do not know

precisely what the Egyptians were racially during that time. I mention this, because this is what Moses would have become accustomed to. His adopted mother was also probably dark-skinned and what a mother looks like can have a great affect upon what a man will later find attractive. Furthermore, the Jewish people themselves, having been under forced labor for several hundred years, and because they are Semitic, would also have been darker skinned. We all certainly envision Moses as looking like Charlton Heston, but this is cultural conditioning. If you were to examine a photograph of some moderately dark, middle eastern men, say from Pakistan or Afghanistan, that would be much closer to the actual appearance of Moses than what we see. So there is no misunderstanding, even cleaned up and in a suit, Moses would have been denied entrance into the average white church in the 1950's or earlier. He was not Caucasian. Now, some have said that this woman that Moses marries here is a white Egyptian just does not have any foundation in fact. No matter who is in power in Egypt, it is likely that the people of Egypt are going to be darker-skinned, and in Ethiopia, even more so. In other words, there is no reason why we would think that this woman is not African; or, in the very least, dark-skinned. Furthermore, it is also possible that the New Testament Greek word for *Ethiopian* means *dark-faced*. All of this suggests that Moses' second wife was black. However, this is not the objection of Miriam and Aaron. Their problem is with her not being a Jew. They might have a problem with his being married to Zipporah. Now, Moses is not going to marry an unbeliever. There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of the mixed multitude. They may have been no better than Gen X of the Jews, but they were certainly no worse.

Also, there is another reason for believing that this woman is black. The term Cush or Cushite seems to differentiate this group from all others. We see such a usage of the word in Amos 9:7a, where God says to Israel: "[Are you not as the sons of Cush \[or, Ethiopia\] to Me?](#)" In a similar vein, it is possible that *Cush* in the inscription of Psalm 7:1 is a veiled reference to King Saul. The name *Cush* sets him apart from everyone else.⁷² In all of these references, *Cush* sets the person apart from everyone else. This would be an indication that this woman was black, set apart from all other women as Moses' wife. No matter what the reason is that Miriam (and Aaron) criticize Moses, it is none of their damn business who Moses wants to marry; nor does it matter how far outside his culture or race he is marrying. You will note that throughout this chapter, it will be Miriam who is disciplined for her foolish interference and not Moses. Moses can marry any woman that he wants, and it does not matter whether his family has approved of her or not. Moses was an adult a long time ago. His former wife is probably dead and he appears to have been separated from her for most of their marriage (we really don't know whether she remained with Moses after her father returned her to Moses in Exodus 18—her track record would suggest that she did not).

Now, I realize that there is automatically the 1% who read this and read things which aren't there. I am not saying that you *should* marry into another race nor am I saying that it is good when you can piss off members of your family with the person that you choose to marry. Those things are generally non-issues. However, if you are a believer, and you are considering marriage to an unbeliever, and your believing family protests, then you ought to listen to your family.

And they said, "Yahweh has spoken only by Moses? Has He not spoken also by us?" And Yahweh heard. [Numbers 12:2]

It has been clear, but not a law, up until this time, that the Jews were to intermarry. This did not forbid marriages with other nationalities. Joseph, after all, married an Egyptian woman (Genesis 41:45). The primary prohibition was against marrying Canaanites, who were too degenerate. Moses had made the mistake of marrying a woman who was not very supportive of his spiritual destiny (although her father was; and this would have indicated to Moses that she would have been). Moses accurately sized up her father and determined that she had come from good stock. However, he misjudged Zipporah—possibly confused by her beauty. Now he had made another decision to marry, which may or may not have been a good decision (this is over forty years later and Moses had become more people-smart since then). However, this was probably not what set Miriam off. She saw their family as being a triumvirate [pronounced *try-UM-ver-ity*] over Israel, and her position of authority was challenged by the seventy elders chosen by Moses and ratified by God with the giving of the Holy Spirit. All of a sudden, she did

⁷² A similar abstruse reference of peculiarity may possibly also be found in Jeremiah 38:7.

not have official standing, and Moses was getting married to someone who could assume the power that she thought that she had. The Bible was never clear as to her position of authority (although Micah 6:4 indicates that she did have some and Exodus 15:20 indicates that she was a prophetess). Since that is an historical fact and not a precedent, we don't need to know what it was exactly. However, if God demoted Moses, he would have accepted it immediately. Here it appears that Miriam might be being demoted and she throws a hissy fit. As for Aaron, he is easily influenced and would go along with whoever convinces him.

Recall last chapter when other men were speaking as inspired by the Holy Spirit where Moses had not prepared them first, that this did not concern Moses. He saw no reason to censor them. Moses had no problems with his position of authority. He did not have to assert, defend or maintain it. God handled all of that. All he had to do was go along for the ride. However Miriam, and also Aaron, obviously influenced by Miriam (*said* in v. 1 is in the feminine singular), are concerned about their place in God's plan. They have to defend their status and Miriam wants to be on equal footing with Moses. Moses often had his authority challenged, as great men always face. We will see another challenge to his authority in Numbers 16:3 by Korah and the popular leaders chosen by the congregation of Israel.

There is quite a contrast between Moses and Miriam. Miriam cannot go to Y^ehowah directly. She has no direct contact to God. So she goes to Moses to complain that she does not have the spiritual authority that he does. She is not asking God to give her more authority in this regard, she is asking Moses to. She deserves it because God speaks through her just as He speaks through Moses. This is absurd and her argument is absurd. God will not even grant Miriam a private audience, so obviously, her spiritual authority is inferior to that of Moses. This would be found in the book of the Bible entitled *Duh!* Moses, on the other hand, would prefer to have less authority. Recall that just one chapter ago, in Numbers 11:10–15, that Moses desires less authority. He would prefer to delegate all of his responsibilities. He would prefer that Miriam and Aaron had authority equal to his in order to relieve some of the burden that God had placed upon him.

What we have here is a great contrast in motivation. Miriam is motivated by power lust, by jealousy and by arrogance—this is why she believes that she should be on an equal footing with Moses. Moses is, on the other hand, the most grace-oriented person in the world. He did not want the authority over the children of Israel in the first place and took this upon himself only because God so required this of him. His reason for wanting less authority is because he cannot give these people what they desire. Moses feels responsible for them (as any person in authority should feel) and asks for his position of authority to be removed because he cannot provide these people with what they want.

And the man Moses [is] very grace-oriented [or, humble]—more than any of the men on the face of the earth. [Numbers 12:3]

The word for *humble* is 'ânâv (אָנָו) [pronounced *gaw-NAVV*] and it means *humble, meek, grace-oriented* and possibly *poor or afflicted*. We have studied the corresponding verb back in Leviticus 23:29. Strong's #6035 BDB #776.

This is an incredible statement. This is Moses, who could stand up to two million rebellious Jews and put them in their place. This is the man who, when many Jews fell into idol worship with the golden calf, grabbed them by the scruff of the neck and made them drink the ground-up gold in water. This is the man who writes repeated, *thus said Yahweh*. This is the man who, when the second generation will cry for water, he will yell, "**Listen, now, you rebels, shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?**" (Numbers 20:10b). We think of humble as someone who is always looking down at his own feet, mumbling self-depreciatory things in a holy voice, shuffling, holding his head at half-mast, as Thieme used to say. When complimented, we think the humble person should shuffle his feet and look down and say "It wasn't nothing." That is phoney and meaningless. So is humility, improperly understood. Humility is grace-orientation. This means that you know just exactly who and what you are and Who and What God is. You are oriented to God's plan for your life. This might involve a leadership position and you might spend your life cleaning toilets. It doesn't matter. God has a plan and we are going to be happiest when in this plan. Grace-orientation is realizing that where God want you to be is what is perfect for you. Moses had no desire to lead, to have power, to exert his authority. He left Egypt, although he could have become

the King of Egypt. When God wanted him to assume a position equal to that of Pharaoh, he asked for assistance from Aaron—not because he wanted to share the glory, but such a position was more than he was ready to take right off the bat. He had to warm up to it. If any one of you were offered the position of presidency tomorrow, you would snap it up in a second. Or if you were chosen to head a multi-million dollar industry, you would take it in a heartbeat, thinking that if they can do it, you can do it. We are arrogant fools. However, Moses was the most grace-oriented man on the face of planet earth in his day. In his grace-orientation lies his quiet greatness and nobility.

Our Lord said of Himself: **"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My load is light."** (Matthew 11:29–30 Jeremiah 6:16). This passage speak of the humility of the humanity of Jesus Christ. In His humanity, our Lord was also grace-oriented, allowing His strength to be in the Holy Spirit rather than depending upon His Own inherent diety. Our Lord also said, **"Blessed [or, happy] are the gentle [the grace-oriented ones], for they will inherit the earth."**(Matthew 5:5). Those of you who are grace-oriented like Moses, regardless of your IQ, your attractiveness, your social position—regardless of any other human factor—you will inherit the earth; you will assume a leadership position in this universe. And those of you here who are rich and attractive and successful—yet you lack grace-orientation—you will be working in their cotton fields (and you will like it). And no matter what human status you have now, you will spend your eternity in constant pain and suffering in the Lake of Fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

I should point out that some scholars believe that this statement was inserted by Joshua several decades later.

In fact, Gleason Archer writes: *Apart from Deuteronomy 34 (which must have been an obituary written after Moses' death), no passage in the Pentateuch has been more frequently cited as an evidence of non-Mosaic authorship than this verse.*⁷³

Although that it is possible that someone else wrote this, is it not necessary. The reasoning is that Moses would not be *meek* if he wrote a statement claiming *meekness*. Poppycok. Now that we understand what *meekness* is, we should have no reason to take this stance.

J.W. Haley wrote: *The objectionable words were inserted to explain why it was that Moses took no steps to vindicate himself, and why, consequently, the Lord had so promptly intervened.*⁷⁴

Moses was guided by the power of the Holy Spirit, which allowed him to record his greatness as well as his weaknesses—which he did with perfect accuracy and objectivity. This is no different than the Apostle Paul, in defense of his own Apostolic authority, writing: **For I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent Apostles** (2Corinthians 11:5; see also 12:11–12). It is a simple matter of God the Holy Spirit causing both men to record the objective truth.

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Yahweh Straightens Miriam and Aaron out

Then Yahweh said suddenly to Moses and to Aaron and unto Miriam, "Come out you three to the tent of meeting;" and the three went out. [Numbers 12:4]

Miriam and Aaron have no business trying to run Moses' life. Nor does God speak to them as He does to Moses. They need to be straightened out immediately. The structure of authority and who is in charge is at stake here, and God immediately deal with the problem of Aaron and Miriam. Now, Aaron will go along with whatever, but

⁷³ *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*; p.136.

⁷⁴ *Alleged Discrepancies*; p. 248.

Miriam needs to have her head screwed on right. If Moses tells Aaron that he must verbally present God's message to Pharaoh, he'll do it. If the Jews tell Aaron that Moses has been up on the mountain for too long and Aaron needs to build a gold calf idol, he'll do it. If Miriam tells Aaron that Moses just should not be marrying this Ethiopian woman, he'll go along with her. Aaron likes everyone and wants to get along with everyone and wants everyone to be happy. He is not so much concerned with compromising his position on doctrine as he is with getting along with everyone. Aaron is spineless and easily influenced, which is why God did not choose Aaron to run the show. Aaron got dominated early in life by Miriam, and he was unable to function apart from someone telling him what to do. God removed Moses from the household so that his older sister would not have an undue amount of influence over his life.

And Yahweh came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood at the opening of the tent and called Aaron and Miriam and they came out, both of them. [Numbers 12:5]

Moses does not need to be upbraided here—Miriam and Aaron need it. Moses is strictly there to observe. God may come down to judge (Genesis 11:5) or he may come down to bless (Numbers 11:25). The NIV Study Bible has a marvelous quote here: *In a sense, every theophany (appearance of God) is a picture and promise of the grand theophany, the incarnation of Jesus, both in grace and in judgement.*⁷⁵

And He said, "Listen, if you would, My Words: [Numbers 12:6a]

This statement is dripping with sarcasm. What did Miriam say in v. 2? "Yahweh has spoken only by Moses? Has He not spoken also by us?" Miriam is saying that God spoke to her and Aaron and they also relayed God's Word to the people. So God speaks to Miriam directly and asks her to listen. She can stop speaking God's Word for a few moments and listen to His Word. Furthermore, he asks her to listen using the particle of entreaty, *please, if you will, I respectfully ask you.*

There are times like this when God is sarcastic, and other times when He is forceful, such as on the Mount of Transfiguration when Peter started shooting off his mouth. *Now Peter and his companions had been overcome with sleep; but when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men [Moses and Elijah] standing with Him [Jesus Christ]. And it came to pass, as they were parting from Him, Peter said, to Jesus, "Master, it [is] good for us to be here; so let us make three tents: one for You and one for Moses and one for Elijah" (not realizing what he was saying); and when he was saying this, a cloud formed and overshadowed them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My Son—Chosen One—listen to Him!" (Luke 9:32–36).* In both of these instances, we are speaking of the same person Who is to be listened to: Jesus Christ.

"If your prophet is [of] Yahweh—in a vision to him will I make Myself known; in a dream I will speak with him. [Numbers 12:6b]

The beginning of this verse is a little difficult. It begins with an hypothetical particle (*if*) and the Qal imperfect of *hâyâh* (הָיָה) [pronounced *haw-YAW*], which is the absolute status quo verb *to be*. In the masculine singular suffix. So far, we could translate this *if it comes to pass* or *if there is*. Then we have the word for prophet with a masculine plural suffix. Often, the Hebrew language places the subject of the verb after the verb; and since this agrees with the verb (they are both in the third person, masculine singular), we would place *prophet* first, as we do in the English. This is followed by the proper noun *Yahweh*. So, although a case could be made for translating this *if there is your prophet [of] Yahweh*; it is better translated: *if your prophet is [of] Yahweh*. We have an example of this in God speaking to Jacob in a vision, back in Genesis 46:2; and communicating to him in a dream in Genesis 31:11. Jacob, as you will recall, was not exactly a spiritual giant, but he was in the chosen line and he did mature to some degree. However, God did not speak to him *mouth to mouth* (also see 1Samuel 3:15 1Kings 3:5, 15).

⁷⁵ P. 206.

Miriam has just told Moses that what they said came from God. Therefore, God speaks to her for the first time and explains how His communication works. God might make an appear in a vision to the prophet. This means that the person would go into a trance-like state and God would speak to him, holding him in rapt attention. Method #2 is that God comes to the prophet in a dream. As has been discussed, these revelations no longer take place, except with psychotics. People may be influenced by demons that way, but God no longer needs to speak with anyone because He has finished speaking to man with the canon of Scripture. We do not require anything more. God does not suddenly say, "Oh hell, I forgot to tell Charlie Brown when to buy and when to sell; I'll just have to speak to him in a dream." Those people who think God is speaking to them in dreams or in an audible voice or in visions are bordering on psychosis or they are having a true communion with demons. Those who think they need to do not even have a clue as to the power of God's Word. The Bible is more than some happy sayings scratched down by some old people a long time ago—it is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piecing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, the joints and the marrow, and it is able to judge of the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). Some of you think that if you could have only been alive when Jesus walked the earth, that you would have listened intently to His every word and obey everything that He said. You fool! Don't you know what the Bible is? It is the mind of Jesus Christ (1Corinthians 2:16); it is the very words of our Lord. Jesus Christ did not stay on earth for a speaking engagement of twenty years. His public ministry was but three years, and most of the disciples, although they were believers, after spending much of these three years with Him, barely understood a portion of the gospel. You are carrying around with you the written Word of God, as our Lord was the living Word of God. You have God's Word and you have someone who is willing to teach it to you.

"[It is] not so [with] My servant Moses; in all of My house, he [remains] steadfast [reliable, faithful]. [Numbers 12:7]

This verse actually begins with *Not so My servant Moses*. It is very elliptical, meaning that this is being stressed to Miriam. She actually thinks that she is on some sort of equal footing with Moses, speaking the Word of God. Suddenly, God is speaking to her for the first time, and He yells at her. **Not so My servant Moses!** God begins with great sarcasm, to catch her attention, and then yells at her. We do not know if He raised His voice, but grammatically he yelled at Miriam. This is followed by the preposition phrase *in all of My house* and the Niphal participle of 'aman (אמן) [pronounced *aw-MAHN*] and this is a word that some of you actually recognize. You're thinking, *is that...?* and it is. We transliterate this word *amen*. Most Christians think that this is the word that you just affix to the end of a prayer; but it is equivalent to ending a prayer with the phrase *I believe it or I believe You or I am entrusting this to You*. Actually, it is not quite the same as ending a prayer with any of those three phrases, because when you end a prayer with any of those three phrases, that indicates that you have some cognizance of what you just did, as opposed to the person who just says *amen* at the end of a prayer because that's just the way he's always ended a prayer. The Niphal is generally the passive of the Qal, but it also indicates a state of being, progress or development. To indicate a continuous action, I have insert the verb *remains* rather than the verb *is*. The word itself can mean several things: *confirmed, faithful, steadfast, dependable, trustworthy, entrusted, reliable*; note that I am giving the English equivalents as adjectives, and not as verbs—the participle behaves like an adjective here, or a predicate nominative. I did not use the passive translation here (such as *entrusted*) because the use of the Niphal more describes a state of being rather than the passive voice. God sets up a contrast between the way that He speaks to a prophet and the way that He speaks to Moses—and this contrast is because Moses remains steadfast, faithful and reliable.

Jews point to Moses as one of the very greatest in their line, and they are correct in this. However, the writer of Hebrews takes this one step further. **Therefore, brothers set apart, partakers of a heavenly vocation, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. He was faithful to Him who Appointed Him, as Moses was also in all His house. For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house. For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later, but Christ was as a Son over His house whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope stablized until the end** (Hebrews 3:1–5). At this point, we should examine the **Doctrine of Moses as a Type of Christ—not finished yet!!**

"Mouth to mouth, I speak with him. And an appearance and not in enigmatic sayings [or, riddles or dark speech]; and the form [or, likeness] of Yahweh he beholds attentively; [Numbers 12:8a]

We need to carefully plow our way through the first part of v. 8. It sounds, particularly when mistranslated, as if there is no contrast. God speaks to the prophet in a vision (v. 6) and He speaks to Moses in a vision (v. 8). There are two words found in v. 6 and v. 8 which are simply the masculine and the feminine of the same word. This is an incredible play on words and on gender. Miriam is saying how she is just as privy to the Lord's counseling as was Moses so God contrasts the inferior word, found in the feminine gender (visions) with the masculine word (appearance or form). Whereas God will come to prophets in visions and by dreams, He speaks directly to Moses just as one would hold a normal conversation. It is mouth to mouth, speaking to Moses just as Miriam was speaking to Moses and to Aaron. In v. 1, Miriam (and Aaron) spoke *against* Moses. It is the same *bêyth* prefixed preposition, and it can mean *in, into, against, with*. The implication is opposition in v. 1, where here it is communion. Let's put this into English: you're the mom and your son has done something wrong. You say to your husband, "You need to speak **to** him!" And your husband goes into your son's room and says, "I need to speak **to** you." Even though we are dealing with the same word *to*, the emphasis is slightly different. In the first phrase, we are dealing with something which is more confrontational and in the second, it is more communal (even though the kid is about to get his butt chewed).

The word *vision* in v. 6 was preceded by the *bêyth* preposition, which, as we have said, can mean *with, in*. Here, it is a very slightly different word and it stands without the preposition with the simple conjunction *and*. In v. 6, we used the word *mar^{eh}* (מַרְאֵה) [pronounced *mahr-EH*] and it strictly⁷⁶ means *vision, the act of seeing, a vision, an appearance, or a sight*. Strong's #4758 BDB #909 See Genesis 46:2 Ezekiel 1:1 8:3 40:2 Dan. 10:7–8. This is more of a true image of God as opposed to looking into a shiny brass sheet which may distort our images somewhat.

The word translated *enigmatic sayings* can also mean *dark speech*, contrasting it with the word for *appearance*, but corresponding to the word *vision*. The word for *behold attentively* is different from the often used word *to see*. We will examine it in the future. We might translate this **and he looks [carefully] at the form [or, likeness] of Yahweh**.

God's revelation to mankind is not equal by any means. This is obvious with Christians that you know. Some things that they do, in the name of Christianity is downright scary. When they start praying for the Holy Ghost or they describe to you how they know to turn left instead of right because they can feel it in their shoulders, you know right then that revelation is not equal to all (although it is now equally available to all—positive volition is the determining factor today). However, in regard to the prophets and the Apostles, their understanding varied greatly. With Peter and Matthew, their understanding of what was taking place during our Lord's ministry here on earth was very limited, as seen in the gospels of Matthew and Mark. Matthew recognized that Jesus was the Messiah, come from God and they were both able to record a great many historical events; however, both seemed to be nonplussed by the cross, its meaning not clear to them until years later. However, the Apostle John, whose vocabulary in the New Testament is the most simplistic, seemed to have the most firm grasp of what it all meant and he was able to isolate what was important from the events of our Lord's ministry. This helps us to understand why our Lord spoke in parables; it brought truth down to the level that the disciples could grasp, yet gave us information which could be dissected for even greater meaning than they were able to take in at the time.

This means that Moses is different from those who received the Holy Spirit; he is different from other prophets from the past. He speaks with God as a man speaks to another man face to face; whereas some receive enigmatic sayings or see God in a vision, God speaks clearly to Moses and God's appearance, as it were, is more real or closer to the truth. Bear in mind Exodus 33:20: **But He (Yahweh) said, "You cannot see My face and live; for no man can see Me and live."** and John 1:18a: **No man has seen God at any time** (see also I John 4:12). There is none who could behold the full deity of our Lord and live, as His perfection is just too great for us to bear.

⁷⁶ A slightly different usage is found in Exodus 38:8. This verse gives us an idea as to its meaning. The women did not have the accurate mirrors as we have, but they had metals which were shined to a high gloss and would give them a rough idea as to what they looked like.

My educated guess is that, on occasion, Moses spoke with Jesus Christ in his glorified human form—in His glorified incarnation, a privilege not given to anyone else until the Mount of Transfiguration. I wouldn't stake my life on it, but this seems to imply that. In any case, I am certain that Paul had this passage in mind when he wrote to the Corinthians: **For now we see in a mirror dimly; but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know completely just as I have been fully known** (1Corinthians 13:12).

Now follow this logic: the conversation between Moses and God was unlike that between anyone else in their generation. No one had that close of a relationship with God. However, Miriam took it upon herself to upbraid Moses. Now God will lead her to a logical conclusion. **Thus, Yahweh used to speak to Moses, face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend** (Exodus 33:11a). **Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom Yahweh knew face to face** (Deuteronomy 34:10). Anyone with any sense would fall to the ground in fear before God. Miriam, however, has decided to take it upon herself to criticize Moses, God's representative here on earth.

"And why are you [both] not afraid to speak against my servant—against Moses?" [Numbers 12:8b]

It is not Miriam's business to run the life of Moses. She is his older sister, but into their eighties and above, her rank as being a few years older no longer is meaningful. With such a direct representative from God in their midst, a prophet as has never been before, isn't she just a little afraid to criticize his life? After all, **to his own master he stands or falls**; God can take care of Moses, if there is a problem; God does not require Miriam's assistance or even her advice. We are not called upon by God to be busybodies, to interfere with the lives of others. God can handle his own servants here on earth. We do not need to meddle with the affairs of others; we do not need to gossip or upbraid others; nor do we need to run anyone else's life. Furthermore, God has set up the authority structure in the traveling nation; not Moses—and definitely not Miriam or Aaron. Questioning the authority of Moses is questioning God's authority.

There is more to this than just keep your nose out of Moses' business; God asks Miriam if she isn't afraid. If you were about to jump out of a four story building, wouldn't you have enough sense to be afraid. Miriam has just attacked the most personal servant of Yahweh. **"Do not touch My anointed ones, and do My prophets no harm."** (Psalm 105:15). God asks her, "Don't you have enough sense to be afraid?" Aaron is included in this, although he'll go along with whatever.

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What we miss in this exegesis is the poetic nature of the answer (which is lost, to a certain degree since it is translated into a different language. However, it may be helpful to see these last few verses presented in poetic form:

Numbers 12:6b–8 in Verse

If your prophet is [of] Yahweh—in a vision to him will I make Myself known;
 In a dream I will speak with him.
 Not so My servant Moses; in all of My house,
 he [is] faithful.
 Mouth to mouth, I speak with him.
 And an appearance and not in enigmatic sayings
 and the form of Yahweh he beholds attentively;
 And why are you not afraid to speak against my servant—against Moses?

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God Judges Miriam

Then the anger of Yahweh was kindled against them and then He departed. [Numbers 12:9]

There is a simple lesson to be learned here—you do not attack the Lord's anointed. Moses belongs to God, he was chosen to accomplish a particular series of tasks, and Miriam and Aaron were there to assist, if even that. The next time you decide to run down a pastor or a missionary or any Christian that you barely know, bear in mind that you will carry their punishment if they've done anything wrong and, if they haven't, you will bear the punishment they would have deserved had they done anything wrong. You will receive that along with punishment for your mental attitude sins and for your gossip and slander and maligning. **"Do not touch My anointed ones and do no harm to My prophets."** (1Chronicles 16:22 Psalm 105:15). **"Do not judge or you will be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured out to you."** (Matthew 7:1–2). If someone has done wrong, and you know it, just stand at a distance and allow God to take care of it. I have personally seen God judge others and for all intents and purposes, bring them to their knees. Just stand far enough away so that the lightning does not strike you too.

But when [lit., And] the cloud had departed [lit., turned aside] from over the tent, they took notice that [lit., and, lo], Miriam [was] leprous as snow; and Aaron turned to Miriam and, check it out [lit., lo], leprous! [Numbers 12:10]

With my translation, what is lost is the elliptical nature of the verse, indicating the immediate and shocking effect. *The Emphasized Bible* reads: **And when the cloud removed from off the tent—lo! Miriam leprous, like snow! And Aaron turned unto Miriam, and lo! Leprous!** Moses was taken aback and Aaron was totally shocked. Aaron was likely quite afraid, not knowing if he personally had been struck with leprosy. It doesn't say, but you can be sure that Aaron quickly lifted his hands to examine them for any change.

As a woman, even one with pseudo power, Miriam is going to be concern about her appearance and suddenly she finds herself to be struck with leprosy. One of the things which is most pronounced in the Old Testament is that God was more demonstrative, as the Jews themselves were more demonstrative. So you might criticize a pastor today and not be struck with leprosy; however, you will be disciplined and God knows what hurts you the most. And if you don't believe me, test God. We all know how much God likes for us to test Him,⁷⁷ so try Him and His patience and see what happens. Having faced divine discipline on many occasions I would just as soon take Him on His Word, myself.

As we have noted before in the book of Leviticus, this is not necessarily leprosy, but some sort of skin disease which may or may not still be extent. This will be the last time we will hear about Miriam, other than a reference to her death (Numbers 20:1), several family line references, and God will use her mistake here to teach others (Deuteronomy 24:9). See **the Doctrine of Miriam—not finished yet!!**

You may wonder why the Bible stops to deal with the failings of Miriam and the far-too-easily-swayed Aaron, but there is a reason for this—God is going to wipe out an entire generation of Israelites, and we might wonder, *why does God kill Aaron and Miriam as well?* God is going to let three men of Gen X live: Moses (who is older than most in Gen X), Joshua and Caleb. We find out in this chapter why God did not preserve Aaron and Miriam; and we will find out in Numbers 14–15 why God preserved Joshua and Caleb.

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⁷⁷ I am writing tongue-in-cheek here, in case you did not know.

The Judgement Is Removed and the Trip Is Resumed

And Aaron said to Moses, "O my lord, I respectfully ask you, do not lay upon us [this] sin [in] which we have been foolish, and in which we have sinned; [Numbers 12:11]

Aaron is easily led astray, but when God clobbers someone nearby, he suddenly straightens up. There is nothing wrong with Aaron's action here. He is not to go directly to God, he is to go directly to Moses, which he did. He does not go directly to God because he cannot go directly to God. In the Old Testament in almost any generation, there was one person to go to who stood between man and God. At this time it was Moses. Aaron immediately recognizes the authority of Moses and pleads with him. God knew that he didn't have to do too much to get Aaron's attention. King David made a similar confession to God: Now David's heart troubled him after he had numbered the people. **So David said to Yahweh, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, O Yahweh, please cause the removal the iniquity of Your servant, for I have acted very foolishly."** (2Samuel 24:10). Aaron knew what was right and he could have straightened out Miriam, or at least, refused to stand with her in her silliness, and since he did not, his sister has been struck with leprosy. She may have done nothing, had he not stood with her. Aaron made a lot of mistakes and was too spineless to be a solo spiritual leader. However, it didn't take too much from God to straighten him up. His realization of his mistake is complete and his true concern for his sister is touching.

In our dispensation, we do not approach God directly for salvation. It does not matter how many times we say please or how nice we are or how many sins that we eliminate from our lives. This does not mean a thing to God. We all go to God the same way: through his intermediary, Jesus Christ, the God-man. We believe in Jesus Christ and that gains us salvation.

"Please do not let her be as dead [or, still-born], whose flesh is half eaten away when he comes from our mother's womb [lit., when in his coming out from the womb of our mother—the half of our flesh is consumed]." [Numbers 12:12]

First we must deal with the use of the word *our* in my translation as opposed to *his* in your translation. It was considered derogatory for mother of the great lawgiver to be depicted in this way, so the simile was softened so as to be more general. It was changed from the personal to the very impersonal.⁷⁸

Miriam's body had been eaten away with leprosy and Aaron felt terrible about the part that he played. He should have had enough backbone to stand up against her before she let things go this far, but the one thing that Aaron lacks, as we have seen again and again, is backbone and conviction. He only realizes what is right after doing what is wrong. Everyone is different. Some people do that which is wrong because they are bull-headed and some people do wrong because they are led to do wrong by others. Aaron was obviously of the latter group.

And Moses creid to Yahweh, saying, "O God, I respectfully ask you, give, I respectfully request, healing to her." [Numbers 12:13]

Moses is the person who is wronged here, but he loves his family and cannot bear to see them hurt. He acts as an intermediary, as Jesus Christ does. We are lucky, because in believing in Jesus Christ, we have an advocate before the Father. We are related to one who loves us, because of your position in Christ.

This passage tells us that sometimes illnesses of various sorts are a result of divine discipline. We do not go to divine healers for their removal, but to God (Psalm 30:2 41:4 Isaiah 30:26 Jeremiah 17:14). **Bless Yahweh, O my soul, and do not disregard His benefits; Who pardons all your iniquities; Who heals all your diseases** (Psalm 103:3).

⁷⁸ Ginsburg's *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical edition of the Hebrew Bible*, pp. 353–354 and *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E.W. Bullinger; p. 1019.

And Yahweh said to Moses, "And her father had but spat [lit., in spitting, had spit] in her face—is she not ashamed seven days? She is shut out seven days at the outside of the camp, and afterwards she is gathered [to the camp]." [Numbers 12:14]

I do not know the significance of spittle. Our Lord once cured a blind person when He rubbed spittle in his eyes. There is nothing curative in the spittle that I am aware of; nor do I follow the symbology in the latter case. Here, it is certainly a symbol of derision and shame to Miriam (see Job 7:6 30:10 Isaiah 50:6), which is what God would expect. She had no right putting her nose into Moses' business. In the seven days, she is isolated from the camp and she is given time to think about her position and how wrong she is. The simple application to today is that you do not butt into other people's business. God can take care of them. The exceptions, of course, are your children and those involved in felony criminal activity. What your children do and with whom they associate is your business. The seven days of quarantine is a standard period of public shame and cleansing.

And Miriam was shut out at the outside of the camp seven days, and the people did not journey until Miriam had been gathered [to them]; [Numbers 12:15]

This is, of course, in accordance with previously given revelation (Numbers 5:1–4). The people of Israel were also given time to think about this; whatever they might know. They do know that their journey has been halted and that it is because of Miriam, one that they had associated with leadership.

And afterwards the people journeyed from Hazeroth and the encamped in the desert of Paran. [Numbers 12:16]

I don't believe that we have any dates in this section of Numbers between Numbers 9:1 and 33:38 (a span of 38 years). This was a major move, not covering years, but probably months. The Jews made their mistake concerning the mumbling to themselves about not getting meat; God killed several of them; Miriam was punished; and then they traveled for quite a distance. Since we are moving two million people, my guess is that this journey took between a month and a year. We are now in the southern most portion of the promised land. The entry into the promised land to take it is placed before this generation of Jews. They have seen God's tremendous power against their opposition. Now they need only call upon their own faith.

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Numbers 13

Numbers 13:1–33

Outline of Chapter 13:

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- vv. 17–20 **Moses' orders to his spies**
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- v. 20 **What Information Needed to be Gathered on the Reconnaissance Mission**

Introduction: In this Exodus generation that Yahweh loathed, there were only a couple of men who had any character. One of these men was Caleb, whom we will meet in Numbers 13. The Israelites will go right up to the southern portion of the promised land. All they need to do is to go in and take it. They have seen signs and wonders as we can only imagine from the examination of Scripture—they have seen a great force of Egyptians destroyed by Yahweh on their behalf. Now they have a chance to stand on their faith in Yahweh—and it is here, they will fail miserably as a nation. This is their last chance to redeem themselves. The reaction of the Jews in this chapter will doom them to spending the next thirty-eight years wandering in the desert as God wipes out this loathed generation.

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Twelve Men Are Chosen for a Reconnaissance Mission

Numbers 13 needs to be prefaced so that we can understand Deuteronomy 1. The Jews traveled to the promised land relatively quickly. They stopped in order to build the tabernacle and to celebrate certain days of worship, but they have moved right into the land. They are about to take the land, and Moses apparently has a conference with the seventy, and they (or they and their constituents) have suggested that a reconnaissance team be sent out first. This makes good sense to Moses. He goes to Y^ehowah concerning this plan and God tells Moses to send one man for each tribe.

And Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 13:1]

Although I haven't checked every passage, it is likely that Numbers 12 was the last time that God would speak to Aaron and Miriam personally. From here on out, God will speak only to Moses.

"Send for yourself men, and they will spy the land of Canaan, which I give to the sons of Israel; one man, one man for the tribe of his fathers will you send; every one [of them] a prince [or, leader] among them." [Numbers 13:2]

The Jews have seen the greatest signs that any generation of mankind has every witnessed before. Up until that point in time, and not until the generation of the incarnation of our Lord, will such signs be given. They have seen God's power and provision; they need only believe that God has to power to do what He has shown them that He can do.

Once we have got to here, you may be wondering where in the heck did I get this conference between Moses and the seventy? Deuteronomy 1:19b–24 reads: ...and as we came to Kadesh-barnea, and I said to you, "You have come to the hill country of the Amorites which Y^ehowah our God is about to give us. See, Y^ehowah your God has placed the land before you; go up, take possession, as Y^ehowah, the God of your fathers, has spoken to you. Do not fear or be dismayed. Then all of you approached me and said, 'Let us send men before us, that they may search out the land for us, and bring back to us word of the way by which we should go up, and the cities which we will enter.' And the thing pleased me and I took twelve of your men, one man for each tribe, and they turned and went up into the hill country, and came to the valley of Eshcol and spied it out." You see, once we get to Deuteronomy, we have the next generation, and much of Deuteronomy is a recap of what had already occurred. However, there are often two or more ways to view an event. In Numbers, we are seeing the Godward side, and, in the first few verses, the manward side is not recorded. However, in Deuteronomy 1:19–26, we see what occurred almost from strictly the human viewpoint.

And Moses sent them from the desert of Paran by the command [lit., mouth] of Yahweh—all of them men, heads of the sons of Israel, they [are]. [Numbers 13:3]

Moses had chosen seventy of the greatest men of Israel of that generation to assist him in leading the nation. Now he will choose twelve men from them to go into the land of Canaan and spy out the land. The word *men* here is the simple word for man: *ʾānāshîym* (אָנָשִׁים) [pronounced *uh-NAW-sheem*], and is not merely a designation of gender, but more a designation of prominence and strength (a similar usage can be found in Isaiah 5:15). Strong's #376 BDB #35. And you would think that out of two million people, there would have been twelve men who were both brave and who trusted in Yahweh. Now, from a human standpoint, all twelve of these men were brave—there is no doubt about that. However, they did not believe Yahweh.

And these are their names: for the tribe Reuben, Shammua ben Zaccur. [Numbers 13:4]

Shammûwāʿ (שַׁמּוּעַ) [pronounced *shahm-MOO-ahg*] means *renown*. Strong's #8051 BDB #1035. His father's name is Zakkûwr (זַכּוּר) [pronounced *zak-KOOR*] means *mindful*. Strong's #2139 BDB #271.

For the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat ben Chori. [Numbers 13:5]

Shâphât (שַׁפַּט) [pronounced *shaw-FAWT*], which means judge. Strong's #8202 BDB #1048. His father's name is Chôrîy/Chôwrîy (חֹרִי/חֹרִי) [pronounced *kho-REE*] means either *cave-dweller* or *white*. Obviously a very pale boy when born and his father named him. Strong's #2753 BDB #362.

For the tribe of Judah, Caleb ben Jephunneh. [Numbers 13:6]

Caleb means *dog* and Jephunneh is Y^ephunneh (יֶפְחֻנֵּה) [pronounced *yef-oon-NEH*]. His name means *he will be prepared*. Strong's #3312 BDB #819.

Now you will notice by now that these are not the same men who were named earlier as tribal leaders in the four previous passages of Numbers where the leaders are named. This would possibly require them to be younger and stronger, possibly versed in other languages. The other heads of the tribes had a different function—to assist Moses in working with these tribes and alleviating the load that he was bearing.

For the tribe of Issachar, Igal ben Joseph. [Numbers 13:7]

Igal is actually Yig^oʾâl (יִגָּל) [pronounced *yihg-AWL*] and the name means *avenger*. Strong's #3008 BDB #145. Joseph is actually Yôwçêph (יוֹסֵף) [pronounced *yoh-SAYF*] and his name means *an addition, the act of adding* as though a family had a large number of children and this was another child. Strong's #3130 BDB #415.

For the tribe of Ephraim, Hosea ben Nun. [Numbers 13:8]

Your Bible may have *Joshua* here or, more likely, *Hosea*. The name is Hôwshêa' (הוֹשֵׁעַ) [pronounced *hoh-SHAY-ahg'*] and it means *deliverer*—it is the Hebrew equivalent of *Jesus*. Strong's #1954 BDB #448. Nun is actually Nûwn (נוֹן) [pronounced *noon*], and it means *to propagate by shoots, to resprout, to be perpetual*. This is not unlike the chip of the old block expression. Strong's #5126 BDB #630.

For the tribe of Benjamin, Palti ben Raphu. [Numbers 13:9]

Palti is actually Pal^etîy (פַּלְתִּי) [pronounced *pahl-TEE*] and it means *delivered*. Strong's #6406 BDB #812. Raphu is Râphûw (רַפּוּ) [pronounced *raw-FOO*], and it means *cured*. Strong's #7505 BDB #951.

For the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel ben Sodi. [Numbers 13:10]

Gaddiel Gaddîyêl (גַּדְיֵאל) [pronounced *gad-dee-ALE*] and it means *fortune of God*. Strong's #1427 BDB #151. and Sodi is Çôwdîy (סוּדִי) [pronounced *so-DEE*] and it means *a confidant*. Strong's #5476 BDB #691.

For the tribe of Joseph—for the tribe of Manasseh—Gaddi ben Susi. [Numbers 13:11]

Gaddi it is Gaddîy (גַּדִּי) [pronounced *gad-DEE*] and it means *very fortunate*. Strong's #1426 BDB #151. Susi is actually Çûwçîy (סוּסִי) [pronounced *soo-SEE*], and it means *horse-like*. Strong's #5485 BDB #692. As you will recall, it was the tribe of Joseph which received the double portion; so it became two half-tribes.

For the tribe of Dan, Ammiel ben Gemalli. [Numbers 13:12]

‘Ammîy’êl (אַמִּיֵּאל) [pronounced *gahm-mee-ALE*] means *people of God*. Strong's #5988 BDB #770. G^emallîy (גַּמְלִי) [pronounced *ghem-al-LEE*] means *camel-driver*. Strong's #1582 BDB #168. Notice how many of their names were related to animals. It must have been a phase people were going through (as, in some contemporary generations, where some name every child with a name that begins with *j*).

For the tribe of Asher, Sethur ben Michael. [Numbers 13:13]

Çethûwr (צֶתוּר) [pronounced *seth-OOR*] means *hidden*. Strong's #5639 BDB #712. Mîykâ’êl (מִיכָאֵל) [pronounced *mee-kaw-ALE*] means *who is like God*. Strong's #4317 BDB #568.

For the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi ben Vophsi. [Numbers 13:14]

Nach^ebîy (נַחֲבִי) [pronounced *nakh-BEE*] means *occult*. Strong's #5147 BDB #286. Voph^esîy (וּפְסִי) [pronounced *vof-SEE*] means *additional*. Strong's #2058 BDB #255.

For the tribe of Gad, Geuel ben Machi. [Numbers 13:15]

G^euw’êl (גְּאוּאֵל) [pronounced *gheh-oo-ALE*] means *majesty of God*. Strong's #1345 BDB #145. Mâkîy (מַכִּי) [pronounced *maw-KEE*] means *pinning*. Strong's #4352 BDB #568.

There [are] the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy the land; and then Moses was calling [or designating] Hosea ben Nun, [as] Joshua. [Numbers 13:16]

Hôwshêa' (הוֹשֵׁעַ) [pronounced *hoh-SHAY-ahg'*] means *deliverer*. Strong's #1954 BDB #448. Y^ehôwshûa' (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ) [pronounced *y^ehoh-SHOO-ahg'*] means *Yahweh delivered*. Strong's #3091 BDB #221.

So, although you do not realize it, in your English Bibles, up until this time, *Joshua* wasn't *Joshua* but *Hosea* (or *Hoshea*) [these are our common English transliterations, which are obviously pretty far off]; and now he is called *Joshua* which still isn't really *Joshua*, but *yeh-ho-SHU-ah*. Now the actual difference is in meaning, of course. *Hosea* means *salvation* or *deliverance*; and *Joshua* means *Yahweh saves [or, delivers]*. *Joshua* has been named earlier in Scripture as *Joshua* rather than as *Hosea* (I have chosen to stay with the Anglicized versions of these

names) in Exodus 17:9 and 24:13. We have the exact same sentence structure as Genesis 1:5, 8, 10. This means either (1) Moses did not write much of this information down in its final form until after Numbers 13, when the Jews spent 38 years wandering in the desert; by then it would have been much more natural to refer to Hosea as Joshua; (2) that he or someone else went back and changed Exodus 17:9 and 24:13 (which I doubt); or (3) this is when Moses began to publically call for Hosea with the name Joshua. I tend to go with the first explanation, allowing Moses notes to write down the laws of God and then, during the 38 years of wandering, to record all this information in its final form, however not necessarily always in chronological order.

This dinking around with the names made me think; there are a lot of disagreements as to the correct pronunciation of God's name in the Old Testament. This verse will actually help us here. See **the Doctrine of the Pronunciation of God's Name**. ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

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Moses' Orders to His Spies

And Moses sent them to spy the land of Canaan, and said to them, "Go up this [or, here] into the south [the Negev], and you [all] will have gone into the mountains. [Numbers 13:17]

It sounds as though Moses has drawn a map and is pointing out on the map their direction and speaking at the same time. It is the word *zeh* (זֶה) [pronounced *zeh*] which means *this* or *here* which suggests that to us. Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063) BDB #260. Either that or they are standing before the mountains and the valley and Moses is pointing toward the Nege^{bv}.

South or Negev is the word Negeb (נֶגֶב) [pronounced *ne-GHE^{BV}*] is a very well defined portion of Israel and, in this case, is best translated *south-country*. The word originally meant *south* (Genesis 13:14) and became the general designation for this portion of the promised land (Genesis 12:9 13:1, 3 20:1). This land extended northward from Kadesh almost to Hebron, with the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean bordering it on the east and west. Strong's #5045 BDB #616.

The word translated mountains is a word which came to refer to a range of hills and mountains in the southern and central portion of Canaan, which area falls within the inheritance of Judah and Ephraim, primarily. These mountains begin south of Hebron and extend northward toward the plain of Jezreel, and looping northwest to the sea at Mount Carmel. Often common terms are used by inhabitants to refer to a specific area. The Jews referred to the land of Canaan as simply *the land*. Some nationalities (I have forgotten which) referred to themselves as simply *the people*. Most of my friends called my Uncle Bill *Uncle Bill*.

The Jews are probably at the foot of the hill country of Judea, at the southernmost portion of Judah, perhaps in Kadesh Barnea. The spies are entering into the southern portion of Judah, through the desert, and then return by way of the mountains, which would provide them cover. There were just twelve of them, so it would be easy to remain surreptitious.

"And you will see the land —what it and the people which dwell in it, whether they [are] [lit., it *is*] strong or feeble; whether they [are] [lit., he *is*] few or many; [Numbers 13:18]

The intention here is to take the land. Moses has been prepared by God to realize that they are not just going to walk into the land, ask for the keys, and ask the people to leave. The Jews will have to go into the land and take it from the degenerate Canaanites. This means actual war, which the Jews have never faced before. Most of them had never been in a skirmish before, let alone a fight. So this weighed heavily on their minds as they entered into the land. Keep in mind, these twelve are the best possible military men that Moses could muster out of 600,000 soldiers.

"And what the land [is like] in which they [lit., he] dwell [s], whether it [is] good or bad; and what the cities [are like] in which they dwell [lit., it dwells], whether in camps or in fortresses; [Numbers 13:19]

So far this reconnaissance team has got two areas of examination, the people and the land.

"And what the land [is like], whether it [is] fat or lean; whether there is wood on it or not; and you will strengthen yourselves, and you will take up the fruit of the land; and the days [are] the days of the first-fruits of grapes." [Numbers 13:20]

To examine the different takes of a portion of this verse:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	And be of good courage and bring some of the fruit of the land.
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Then shall ye pluck up courage and take of the fruit of the land. ⁷⁹
KJV	And be ye of good courage and bring of the fruit of the land.
NASB	Make an effort then to get some of the fruit of the land.
NIV	Do your best to bring back some of the fruit of the land.
NRSV	Be bold, and bring some of the fruit of the land.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	...and ye have strengthened yourselves, and have taken of the fruit of the land;

The verb is the second person masculine plural, Hithpael imperative of *châzaq* (חִזַּק) [pronounced *khaw-ZAHK*] and the root means *to fasten upon, to seize*. This word came to mean *to be strong, firm, to strengthen*. The Hithpael is the reflexive of the Piel (the intensive stem), so they are to do this to themselves. Strong's #2388 BDB #304. Let us examine the immediate context. How this phrase occurred prior to entering the land or prior to the invasion of the land, it would have the connotation of *becoming confident and courageous*; however, notice that they have just looked at the landscape, whether it is heavily forested or not, and they are about to take up some grapes. They are going to *strengthen themselves, nourish themselves* by eating from the fruit of the land. Furthermore, despite the reference noted in the Scofield Bible to Deuteronomy 31:6 and 23, this is not the same word found in those verses, although it is translated as though it is. The next verb is *take* not *bring*, and it is in the Qal perfect, which is not an imperative—it could be better translated *...and you have taken up the fruit of the land*. Now, they will eat of the fruit of the land and they will also bring some back to the encampment. Bringing it back was not necessarily a part of their field orders, but men are allowed to take some initiative. *Then they took of the fruit of the land in their hands and brought it down to us* (Deuteronomy 1:25a).

What Information Needed to be Gathered on the Reconnaissance Mission	
<p>The People:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Their relative strength and might (not a reference here to numbers, but to their conditioning, observed physical strength, their military resources, etc.) 2. The number of people—is the land densely populated, are there a few individualized tribes of people here and there. Recall that during this time that the Jews grew to a population of two million, the Canaanites had also experienced some population growth. 	<p>The Land:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is the land good or bad, as a qualitative estimation of the value of the land for living and farming. 2. What are the living conditions of the natives; do they live in cities which are fortified against attack or are they in spread out camps. 3. What is the land like—is there a lot of agriculture and growth, or is it like Egypt with a lot of worthless desert. 4. What about the foliage? Are there forests?

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⁷⁹ To be fair, so that you see there is another viewpoint, Rotherham's explanation is that taking the fruit of the land would be an act of courage. When you see the morphology of the main verb, you will see that this is not an adequate explanation.

All of the above were important when planning an attack and a mode of attack. Moses understands that there will be actual battles which will be fought and that strategy and tactics will be important. Moses must know his enemy.

At the time of this reconnaissance, it is the springtime and the land should have harvest of fresh grapes. One of the advantages of being on this mission was the men got to enjoy some of the fruits of the land. The actual mission was to cover the entire length of the land, from the southernmost region to the northernmost region, a distance of approximately 250 miles. Twelve men, on a forced march, if necessary, can travel twenty to fifty miles a day. Since they will be on the trail for forty days, this means that they must average 12.5 miles per day, which is a reasonable average for twelve strong men.

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The Actual Mission

And they went up to spy the land, from the desert of Zin to Rehob at the entrance of [or, going in to] Hamath; [Numbers 13:21]

They were to possibly begin in the south, move in a northwest direction, through the desert, perhaps on a particular road which extends to Hamath, take the road north and then come back around through the mountains. Hamath is the most northern portion of Israel. God had told them to take the land, so they will examine it from the bottom to the top, traveling first on the western portion and returning on this eastern mountains. This mission would take forty days, probably from spring through the beginning of summer. This would be a good time to examine the **Doctrine of the Desert of Zin** and the **Doctrine of Hamath—not finished yet!!**

And they went up by the south then one went as far as Hebron, and there [were] Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, children of the Anak (and [they learned] Hebron had been built seven years before Zoan in Egypt); [Numbers 13:22]

Most of your translations read, **And they went up by the Nege^{bv} [or, the southern portion] and went into Hebron.** However, this is not how it reads in the original languages. The second verb is in the third person masculine singular, nor plural. In the many mistranslations we lose a little of what occurred.⁸⁰ They all went into the land through the Nege^{bv} but they sent one man into Hebron, to spy out the city itself, to obtain more explicit information. All twelve of them traveling through Hebron would have seemed to be more of a threat, more noticeable, more suspicious. One lone man traveling through would not be noticed and he would not be a threat. There is another concern here: language. In Egypt, there was a lot of trading which took place. They sent their traders out throughout the world and traders came to them. In order to engage in trade, there had to be a common language. Therefore, some Egyptians knew the languages of other countries and traders from other countries often knew enough Egyptian to get by. The Jew who went into Hebron (I would think it would be Joshua or Caleb) likely knew a smattering of a couple of other languages.

It is likely that this very generation built most of Zoan in Egypt and the newness of the construction of the city of Hebron indicated a similar start date. This is likely pointed out because they were impressed with the construction, probably having had a hand in the construction of Zoan. Having not traveled until now, they would be surprised to see a fortification as sophisticated as that in Egypt done with their slave labor. Furthermore, they knew of Hebron from the information in Genesis, and stories which had been handed down from generation to generation. They were not expecting to see it built up and fortified from what they had been told about it. We will examine at the **Doctrine of Hebron** in Joshua 14:15.

Hebron was the area where the Hebrew patriarchs had been buried (Genesis 23:19 49:31). There is no contradiction in this. Obviously, this Hebron was a recently built city. This is the first time that we have heard of

⁸⁰ Some codices and some versions have this verb in the masculine plural; however, I think that was either an intentional or unintentional smoothing out of the text.

the children of Anak; however, their names will crop up again throughout the rest of the Pentateuch and for a portion of Joshua. Anak means *long-necked* or *giant*. And, yes, it is preceded by a definite article as indicated. later, Caleb will lead the force which will drive them out of the land (Joshua 15:14).

So that you do not worship at the shrine of archeology, it was long asserted that Zoan was associated with the cities Tanis and Avaris, which came later in Egyptian history—that would obviously make this account bogus. However, relatively recent archeology has discovered an ancient city near modern Qantir which has now been identified as Zoan. Zodiates asserts that this is the same city as Rameses, which was mentioned in Exodus 1:11 (or built in the same area).

Zodiates writes: *This would seem to confirm that the Hyksos rulers began the oppression of Israel in Egypt.*⁸¹

See the **Doctrine of Zoan—not finished yet!!**

And they came in unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down a branch and one cluster of grapes, and they bore it on a staff by two; also, of the pomegranates and of the figs. [Numbers 13:23]

One of the complaints of the Israelites was the monotony in their diet. At that time, the land of Israel was quite fertile and it had a great many naturally growing fruits. Furthermore, these were so huge, that it took two men to carry these grapes. This will reveal that this land is flowing with milk and honey. Also, in case the name Eshcol sounds familiar, he was a convert of Abraham's in Genesis 14:13.

That place was called [lit., he called that place] the Valley of Eshcol because of the cluster which the men of Israel cut down from there. [Numbers 13:24]

The word for *cluster of grapes* and *Eshcol* are the same. There is a Canaanite tribe also by that name. My guess would be that the name naturally applies to the cluster of grapes first and was given to the Canaanite people and to the brook at a later time.

And they returned from spying the land at the end of forty days. [Numbers 13:25]

This gives us the tour of duty of this reconnaissance mission. This would help give us an idea as to the amount of ground that they covered. Twelve men could cover up to forty miles in a day, if necessary. Certainly, they broke off into smaller groups and went into the towns, as they knew the names of some of the people who lived there.

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The General Report

And they went and then came into Moses and to Aaron to all the company of the sons of Israel, as far as the desert of Paran, to Kadesh; and they brought them and all the company back word, and showed them the fruit of the land. [Numbers 13:26]

We have heard about Kadesh (also known as Kadesh-Barnea) many times. It was an oasis in the desert, right below the land of Canaan. See the **Doctrine of Kedesh-Barnea—not finished yet**. No one in the land realizes that there are two million people camped right outside the land (or in the southern most region) ready to take possession of their land. When they returned, it sounds as though there was somewhat of a parade. They at least wandered through the camp, showing the fruit of the land and were received by Moses, Aaron and the remainder of the seventy elders.

⁸¹ *The Complete Word Study Old Testament*, p. 396.

As we will see, Israel will remain in Kadesh-barnea for the next 38½ years (or, at least, very close by). This is in the far southern region of Judah and when we next read of where Israel is, it will still be Kadesh, even though it will be 38½ years later (Numbers 20:1).

And they recounted to him and said, "We came in unto the land whither you had sent us and also, it is flowing with milk and honey—and this is the fruit. [Numbers 13:27]

So they first give everyone the good news. {Moses said:] "Then they took of the fruit of the land in their hands and brought it down to us; and they brought us back a report and said, 'It is a good land which Y^ehowah is about to give us.' " (Deuteronomy 1:25). The land was exactly as God had promised them. Great amounts of produce, beautiful and lush; it is obvious by the Biblical descriptions, that Palestine has changed a great deal over the past several millennia.

"Only, surely the people which dwell in the land [are] strong; and the cities are fortified, very great; and also, the children of Anak we have seen there. [Numbers 13:28]

So far, the spies agree upon everything. The land is marvelous and the people are strong who live in the land and their cities are well-fortified. This fact has been attested to by modern archeology. It has been confirmed that there were several walled fortresses throughout the land of Canaan even during the time of 1440 BC. For a long time, it made these cities almost impregnable until the science and techniques of siege warfare became as advanced as that of the fortifications. By what has been said here, the tribe of Anak has quite a reputation even to men who were once slaves. Let's examine the **Doctrine of the Anakim** here.

"Amalek is dwelling in the land of the south, and the Hittite, and the Jebusite, and the Amorite is dwelling in the hill country, and they Canaanite is dwelling by the sea, and by the side of the Jordan." [Numbers 13:29]

These are all very famous ancient peoples. At some time in the future, we will examine each of these groups, both their place in secular history and their relationship to Israel. We will run into them again and again. **Some of them we may have already covered in Genesis—I just hadn't begun the index yet!**

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The Minority and the Majority Report

What we have had so far is the information which Moses had asked for, and these were objective facts to which all twelve would agree. Now we will get the minority report:

Then Caleb quieted the people [or, caused the people to become quiet] and he said to Moses "Let us certainly go up [lit., *in* going up, we will go up] and we will possess it for we are more than able to do it [lit., *in* our ability, we are able]." [Numbers 13:30]

The actual word order is something like this: *Then quieted Caleb the people to Moses and said...* However, in the Hebrew, the direct object often precedes the verb, as the subject of the sentence often comes after the verb. So the phrase *to Moses* is the object of Caleb's speaking, not the object of Caleb quieting down the people.⁸² Otherwise, the preposition *to* doesn't make much sense.

Now Caleb is one of the few men of his generation who recognize the strength and power of God. Most of us do not, so we lie, cut corners, pilfer, gossip and do numerous other things because we do not believe in God's strength. We ignore His Word because we do not believe in its strength. Caleb was different and he will be one of the men who will survive and go into the land. He and Joshua stood in favor of invading the land and taking

⁸² Although we do have a problem with that misplaced *and*.

it (we know that Joshua also stood with Caleb because of Numbers 14:6–7). It is because of their stand that they will live to invade the land and their contemporaries would have their bodies strewn throughout the desert sands. Now for the majority report:

And the men who went up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they [are] [lit., it is] stronger than we." [Numbers 13:31]

This was not the entirety of the majority report. What likely happened is that these twelve came into camp, they either went to their families and friends and told them what they had seen, or, after reporting to Moses, the rumor of what they had seen spread throughout the camp and the sons of Israel cried and moaned that night. [Moses is speaking] "Yet you were not willing to go up, but rebelled against the command of Y^ehowah your God and you grumbled in your tents and said, 'Because Y^ehowah hates us, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us. Where can we go up? Our brothers have made our hearts melt, saying "The people are bigger and taller than we; the cities are large and fortified to heaven. And besides, we saw the sons of Anakim there." ' " (Deuteronomy 1:26–28). The spies recognized that they would be the military leaders and they were frightened. They did not want to die. So, after delivering their report, they went back into the camp amidst their families and friends and incited the people against Moses and Aaron (we will see this in Numbers 14).

The majority report does not believe God. This is constantly seen in real life. God sets up perfect standards in relationships, in marriage, in friendship, in business practices—standards which are the best for us, and we, being filled with evil, reject them. We know that Caleb and Joshua believed God and were ready and willing to go in and take the land. It was their manifest destiny. God had promised to give them the land. They fully recognize God's great power. However, the other ten men thought otherwise. They look at life totally from human viewpoint. From human viewpoint, they are entirely correct. The people in the land have been warriors for many generations. This land is a marvelous land flowing with milk and honey and in order to keep it for themselves, they have certainly had to defend their occupation many times. They are stronger than the Israelites, there is no doubt, with far greater experience in the art of war. Without the leadership of Jesus Christ and the assurance of God the Father, there is no way that the Jews could take the land. However, they have the guidance and strength of Y^ehowah—**with men, this is impossible; with God, all things are possible** (Matthew 19:26b).

And they brought out an evil account [or, a whispering defamation] of the land which they had spied to the sons of Israel, saying, "The land into which we passed over to spy it, is a land devouring its inhabitants [or, those inhabiting it, or those dwelling *in* it] and all the people whom we saw in its midst: men of stature; [Numbers 13:32]

Ten of the men are afraid. They are to lead the sons of Israel in battle if they were the ones chosen to spy out the land. They see themselves as the first to die. Therefore, they pass on an *evil report, a whispering, a defamation, a rumor* that the situation is even more bleak than they presented to Moses the first place. They did not want to go into battle, so they quickly spread the rumor that they would all die if they went to battle against the people of the land. The interpretation of the phrase *devouring its inhabitants* I take to mean that if the Jews went in to possess the land, to occupy it, they would be devoured. The land is personalized here, a metonymy for the peoples of the land, and the land would devour them as those who would like to dwell in it (we find a similar use in Ezekiel 36:13–14). Israel had a great deal more precipitation during that period of time and was lush, green and fertile. Because of its high desirability as a land, many peoples settled in the land and many died trying to settle in the land (that is the meaning of this rumor which was being spread). Then they begin with their description of the people of the land. The men who dwell in the land are huge almost beyond imagination, will be the further assertion of this rumor.

"And there we saw the Nephilim, sons of Anak, of the Nephilim; and we are in our own eyes as grasshoppers, and so we were in their eyes." [Numbers 13:33]

The word *Nephilim* is N^ephīlīm (נפיליִם) [pronounced *n^ef-eel-EEM*] is obviously a transliteration and it means *giants*. We have seen this word only applied to a pre-deluvian half-human, half-angelic race in Genesis 6. Strong's #5303

BDB #658. There is no relation between the two peoples, other than those in the land of Canaan were obviously larger and taller than the sons of Israel. This indicates that there had been some Bible teaching to these men, that they had studied Genesis 6, probably under Moses, but, as all people in reversionism, they misapplied it. And notice how these men went from being tall in stature (the implication of v. 28) to being giants of mythical proportions (v. 33). To further exaggerate the differences, these Jews used a type of figure of speech called *meiosis* [pronounced *mī-ō-sis*], which means the *belittling* of one thing to exaggerate the size of another. Now only were these people giants as was known in the pre-Deluvian period of time, but the spies, the strongest of the Jews, were but grasshoppers in their sight. These ten leaders did not want to go to war against these inhabitants of Canaan and they roused the people against God's plan through exaggeration and scare tactics. Rather than recognize their phenomenal place in history being guided by the only true God, our Savior—they viewed these Canaanites and their fortified cities as impassible barriers. From the sound of their report, a few of the Israelites actually went into some of the cities, as they knew who occupied the land. From afar and from close up, these men were giants. Now we do not know the actual stature, but size is relative. We can assume that those who occupied the land were perhaps a head taller than the Jews. However, do not lose sight of the exaggeration factor. It is possible that these men were slightly taller and larger than the average Jew; however, by the time the party of spies returned to the camp, ten of them saw these men as giants. They did not want to fight against the people of the land, so they exaggerated their size in their own minds (see also Deuteronomy 1:28) God would destroy these giants—with or without this particular generation (Deuteronomy 9:2 Josh. 11:21).

The use of the word *Nephilim* tells us that without a doubt, the contents of Genesis was known to the Jews in general—otherwise, this would be a very obscure reference understood by very few people. The idea here was to use scare tactics to keep the Jews from going to war against the people of Canaan. Scare tactics won't work if no one understands what it is you're talking about. For this word to mean anything to the Jews, they all had to know the contents of Genesis. This means that it was taught to them. However, as we will see more and more, their degenerate spiritual state indicates that there is a better chance that the history recorded in Genesis is not the result of an oral tradition, requiring **accurate** verbal transmission through many generations, but likely the result of the responsibility of a very few (in percentage) who wrote this information down (as I have described to you in our study of Genesis) and the very few who **taught** from the Scriptures (and these Israelites were obviously taught). This is furthermore tied to the ministry of God the Holy Spirit, Who, as we have seen, did not minister to all Old Testament saints, but to also a very small percentage. Then, as today, only those moved by God the Holy Spirit would be entrusted to the preservation, the transmission and the teaching of God's Word. So there is no confusion, God did not trust his Word to the verbal transmission of a race of people not empowered by the Spirit, just as today He only entrusts the teaching of His word to those filled with the Spirit.

The ten spies who came out of the land not only spoke of the inhabitants and their great stature, but how well fortified their cities were. *"Where can we go up? Our brothers have made our hearts melt, saying, 'The people are bigger and tall than we; the cities are large and fortified to heaven. And besides, we saw the sons of the Anakim there.'"* (Deuteronomy 1:28). From the standpoint of human viewpoint, the cities were quite foreboding. In Egypt, in the land of Goshen, the Jews had seen but one fortified city: Raamses.

In the land, due to the warlike nature of its inhabitants, it was filled with fortified cities, described by Keller as *turreted fortresses built of "Cyclops-walls"...the country was plastered with them. Numerous strongpoints stared down from hilltops and mountain peaks, which made them look even more powerful and terrifying.*⁸³ Keller further points out that the Jews were not skilled in the art of making weapons (this is not a skill which the Egyptians thought good to teach them), so they did not have even the skills to prepare for such a war.

This is mentioned in Deuteronomy but not here because the purpose of Numbers 14 is to show how the oral tradition really works and how a small exaggerated piece of information, especially cultivated in an environment of fear, can built quickly to information which is incredibly exaggerated.

⁸³ Werner Keller, *The Bible as History* (second revised edition), p. 146.

Now if you would like to see the result of the real oral tradition, then Numbers 14 will be an illustration of it. This, unfortunately, is one of the worst places to have a chapter break. The majority report needs to lead directly into the response of the people. To fully understand why God loathed this generation, we need to move directly from this chapter into the next.

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Numbers 14

Numbers 14:1–45

Outline of Chapter 14:

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- v. 22 **The Ten Times the Hebrew People Tested God**

Introduction: Numbers 14 has picked up where the exciting 13th chapter left off. Out of complete unbelief and lack of faith, ten of the spies began spreading the evil rumor that they could not win against those who occupied the land of Canaan. They over exaggerated the disparity between the Jews and the people of the land, in order to sway the people over to their way of thinking. The men of Israel, who were a generation of trashy, worthless and faithless crybabies, were easily convinced. After seeing incredible signs of what Y^ehowah was capable, all it took was an evil rumor passionately spread to dissuade them of God's power.

Due to their unbelief, God will speak personally to Moses and threaten to destroy the entire race of Jews and begin anew. Moses intercedes, portraying a wonderful picture of God the Son, standing in the gap between God and man, redeeming worthless man before a perfect God. It is only the intervention of God the Son which delivers us from eternal separation from God, which was the proposal of God concerning the children of Israel. The pictures painted in the Old Testament are marvelous and incredible, all foreshadowing a God Who forgives us our sins—Who forgives those who do not deserve it—on the intervention of a mediator.

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The Sons of Israel Rebel Against Y^ehowah and Moses for the Tenth Time

Deuteronomy 1:26–33

And then all the congregation lifted up and gave [forth] their voice, and then the people were weeping during [or, in] that night; [Numbers 14:1]

You know exactly what is going on here if you have had a child. A young child has learned that when he wants something, crying seems to do the trick. He may stub his toe, fall down, or whatever, but if he has decided that he needs a little sympathy, he will cry. He will lift up his voice and cry. If there is not an immediate response to this personal crisis, his personal crisis management skills demands that he cry louder until there is a response. So the Jews heard the rumors, talk about this in an animated fashion, trading viewpoints, lifting up their voices to God, hoping for a pardon, and after a lot of talking, began to cry and weep in unison.

And all the sons of Israel were caused to murmur against Moses, and against Aaron, and all the assembly said to them, "O, that we had died in the land of Egypt or in this desert; O that we had died! [Numbers 14:2]

Back in Numbers 11:1, the Jews *became like those who complain of adversity*. Here, they are no longer like those who complain, but they have broken into a full blown verbal revolution. Their complaint before was lack of variety in their diets—in fact, they longed to return to Egypt to enjoy once again the foods they remembered (Numbers 11:5). These complaints will continue and escalate throughout Numbers 16, 20 and 21.

The verb *murmur* is in the Niphal, which is the causative stem. The rumors started by the ten dissidents caused them to murmur against Moses. So, what are they afraid of? They are afraid of dying. So what is their solution? That they died earlier.

"And why is Y^ehowah bringing us into this land to fall by the sword? Our wives and our infants are become a prey; is it not good for us to turn back to Egypt?" [Numbers 14:3]

Obviously they are talking to one another. There are certain phrases being said over and over again, or similar things are being said. These three sentences in v. 3 may or may not have been spoken by the same person; it is as though the assembly of Israelites spoke as one. Once mobs get started, their intelligence quotient seems to drop to the lowest level. There is no true reasoning here; they are only rationalizing what they want due to their fear, which was inspired by the ten reversionists⁸⁴.

Back in Exodus 5:21, this same generation complained to Moses: **"May Y^ehowah look upon you and judge you, for you have made us odious in Pharaoh's sight and in the sight of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to kill us."** Now it is two years later, they have seen Y^ehowah's great power, but they are faithless, so, not only do they want to return to Egypt but they have decided that it would be preferable to have died in Egypt as opposed to dying here. You may be thinking to yourself *so what difference does that make?* When people have strayed from God, and they behave according to their emotions, they become quite irrational and illogical. From where we stand, these people don't make sense—however, that is to be expected from reversionists.

They have used their children, heirs to the land, as an excuse. The only way to turn around a curse which falls upon succeeding generations is for the younger generation to reject their parents and to embrace the values as taught by God's Word. Our Lord said, **"Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you [unequivocally] no; instead [I give] division. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother."** (Luke 12:51, 53a). This is not a brief for rebellious teenagers to act like bigger jerks than they already are. This is when clear spiritual lines are drawn between following God's Word or not—this younger generation, observing God's power and the hopeless degeneracy of their parents, will separate them from their parents and they will enter the land. Moses said, **"Moreover, your little ones, who you said would become a prey and your sons, who this day have no knowledge of good or evil, will enter there [into the land of milk and honey], and I will give it to them and they will possess it."** (Deuteronomy 1:39).

And they said to one another, "Let us appoint a head and turn back to Egypt." [Numbers 14:4]

This plan of action is about as foolish as they could be. Y^ehowah just decimated Egypt. The living Egyptians despise them, but no one would pursue them further because of the power of God. However, if they returned, without the direction and power of Y^ehowah, then the Egyptians who remained would slaughter most of them and enslave the rest. Had even a thought gone through their heads, they would have realized this. They did not defeat the Egyptians because they were mighty warriors. They did not lift up a hand against the Egyptians. They did not leave Egypt on good terms either. Every person who remained in Egypt had had sons and male family members killed because of the Jews. The Egyptians are not going to hold open welcome arms to celebrate the return of the Jew. But note the suggested method of government—a democracy. They will all choose a leader and then return under that person's leadership to Egypt. Fear is an irrational emotion.

And Moses fell—and Aaron also—on their faces before all the assembly of the company of the sons of Israel. [Numbers 14:5]

⁸⁴ One of Thieme's words to describe someone who has not only fallen out of fellowship, but has been out of fellowship for a long time.

There are two words here that we ought to take a quick look at. Qâhâl (קָהָל) [pronounced *kaw-HAWL*] means *an organized assembly, a called convocation*; this is not just a crowd of people milling about, but people who were assembled for a reason. Strong's #6951 BDB #874. 'êdâh (עֵדָה) [pronounced *gâ-DAWH*] and this also means a company of people assembled together by appointment or a group of people acting together in concert. Strong's #5712 BDB #417. At this point in time, I do not know the difference between the two words.

What we have is an organized mob standing against Moses and Aaron. They are but two people and they are facing two million who have worked themselves into an irrational froth. You need to understand that mobs cannot think and they cannot reason. They do not behave rationally. All mob violence and mob action is unequivocally wrong. No matter what the circumstance, you should never, as a Christian, be involved in a union, a gang, a paramilitary group, a peace demonstration, a racial gathering or any other group when there is the slightest hint that things could erupt into violence. Union lines where obscenities are shouted and fists are being waved should be avoided. These people are not ready to listen to reason. They are ready to elect a new leader and do violence against Moses and Aaron. Moses and Aaron fall down before them.

And Joshua ben Nun, and Caleb ben Jephunneh, of those spying the land, rent their garments.
[Numbers 14:6]

Caleb and Joshua recognized the authority of Moses and Aaron and recognize the strength and omniscience of God. Notice that none of these four great men begin by engaging in a verbal contest of yelling. Moses and Aaron prostrate themselves before the crowd and Joshua and Caleb tear their clothes to indicate their protest against the mob action and the mob mentality. Their actions quiet the crowd long enough for them to speak:

And they spoke to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, saying, "The land into which we have passed over to spy it—the land is exceedingly [lit., very, very] good. [Numbers 14:7]

When it says *they* spoke to the congregation of Israel, this is obviously Caleb and Joshua, but it also includes Moses. We are dealing with 600,000 sniveling warriors and they are spoken to in groups, in shifts. We know that Moses did some speaking here because of Deuteronomy 1:29–30, where Moses says, "Then I said to you, 'Do not be shocked nor fear them. Y^ehowah your God who goes before you will Himself fight on your behalf just as He did for you in Egypt before your eyes.' "

The Jews have been outside of the land that God gave to their fathers for four hundred years. God had promised them a land flowing with milk and honey and, as eye witnesses, they are pointing out that this was exactly as God had promised them. Another way to translate this would be: *the land was good—exceptionably good*. This is affirmed in Numbers 13:27 and Deuteronomy 1:25.

"If Y^ehowah delights in us, then He will bring us into the land and He will give us a land flowing with milk and honey. [Numbers 14:8]

God has kept his promise with respect to the land which He had promised them. It was prosperous and beautiful. If they attained God's favor, then God would bring them into the land and He would give them the land.

"Only, do not rebel against Y^ehowah and do not fear the people of the land for they [are] our bread; their protection [and preservation] [lit., shadow] has been removed from off them and Y^ehowah [is] with us—do not fear them." [Numbers 14:9]

In this verse, there is a phrase which is generally mistranslated:

The Amplified Bible
The Emphasized Bible
KJV
NASB
NIV

...their defense and shadow is removed from over them, but the Lord is with us;
Their shade hath departed from over them, And Yahweh is with us.
...their defense is departed from over them, and the LORD is with us.
Their protection [lit., shadow] has been removed from them, and the LORD is with us;
Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us.

Young's Lit. Translation ...their defence hath turned aside from off them, and Jehovah is with us;

The word in question is tsêl (צֶל) [pronounced *tzale*] and it means *shadow* (and all the words similar to it are somehow related to the concept of a shadow. Strong's #6738 BDB #853. We find a similar word in Genesis 1:26–27, when God creates us in His shadow-image. However, this particular word is only *previously* found in Genesis 19:8. In that passage, *shadow* was related to protection, preservation and responsibility. As has been so many times pointed out, we can often employ the first usage of a word in Scripture to ascertain its general meaning and implications. The degenerate peoples of Sodom had come to Lot to rape and ravish the male strangers which had come to Lot and were now under the *shadow* of his roof. What is being said here is whatever protection and preservation which was afforded these peoples of the promised land had now been removed. The verb for remove, צָוַר (סור) [pronounced *soor*] generally means *to turn aside*, however, in the Hiphil, it means *to cause to depart, to remove, to take away*. Strong's #5493 (and #5494) BDB #693.

Most of the time when the Bible uses an idiom or a figure of speech, it is not difficult to distinguish this from accurately recorded historical fact. Joshua is not saying that the people in the land of Canaan are literal bread. This is a saying similar to our contemporary *they ate them up*, when referring to two teams in a mismatched sporting event. Today, if speaking to a crowd, Joshua would say, *we will eat them alive*.

You can see how insidious religion is—we had to make educated guesses as to the pronunciation of God's name, yet His name was used in common everyday speaking. Joshua has just used His name three times. If for some reason, man was not to use God's name at all, then we would not find verses like this.

Joshua tells them the key is not to rebel against God; nor are they to fear the people who live in the land. The land does not eat up its inhabitants—the Jews will eat up the inhabitants of the land. Their defenses are worthless because God is with Israel. And Joshua (or Caleb) repeats, "Do not fear them." (see Deuteronomy 1:21, 29). Joshua, Caleb and Moses all spoke, to different groups within the crowd and these few sentences are just a summary of what was said. Deuteronomy 1:31–33 tells us more of the things which Moses said to them: "And in the desert where you saw how Y^ehowah your God carried you, just as a man carried his son, in all the way which you have walked, until you came to this place—but for all this, you did not trust Y^ehowah your God, who goes before you on [the] way, to seek out a place for you to encamp, in fire by night and cloud by day, to show you the way in which you should go."

V. 9 finishes with Y^ehowah is with us; fear them not. Although occasionally trivialized by people who talk to their best friend, Jesus, this concept is applicable to us at all times. Thus Sarah obey Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear (I Peter 3:6). Our Lord said, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled nor let it be fearful." (John 14:27); and He said, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20b). One of the last things that Moses will say to the next generation is: "Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you." (Deuteronomy 31:6).

And all the congregation said to stone them with stones, and the glory of Y^ehowah appeared in the tent of meeting to all the sons of Israel. [Numbers 14:10]

Moses was aware for a long time as to the volatility of this generation of Jews. As far back as the beginning of their journey through the desert, Moses, when the people were complaining about lack of water, said to God: "What will I do to this people? A little more and they will stone me." (Exodus 17:4). The threat here was against Moses, Aaron, Joshua and Caleb.

Early on in this history of the formative nation of Israel, God displayed His glory. The people complained of no food, so prior to providing them with manna, it is written: And it came about as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the sons of Israel, that they looked toward the desert and saw the glory of Y^ehowah appear in the cloud (Exodus 16:10). We do not know exactly what physical apparition was involved here. However, what is important is that the people understood that they were undeniably in the presence of the glory of God. Exactly

what that was in terms of a sensory experience has been left unspecified so that people do not search for that particular sensory experience, thinking that in it is God's glory. All we know is that everyone in the congregation knew unquestionably that it was God's presence. There were no more grumbings or complaints for awhile.

God's glory primarily hovered over the tent of meeting when Moses was there alone writing or praying (and, as we have seen, Joshua would be outside the door). However, things have gotten out of hand. The sons of Israel are about to kill the only great people of their generations. God steps in, just as He would had they gone to battle against the Canaanites. This stops the mob action dead in its tracks.

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Moses Intercedes on Behalf of the People

Deuteronomy 1:34

And Y^ehowah said to Moses, "Until when will this people despise Me? And until when do they not believe in Me, for all the signs which I have done in its midst?" [Numbers 14:11]

God knows the answers to all of these questions. He knew exactly what would occur here in the southern most portion of the land of Canaan back in eternity past. He knew of the rebellious crowd and how Moses and his company would try to reason with them and He knew that would fail. He knows that this people will stand in complete rebellion against him as long as they draw breath. **They despised the pleasant land; they did not believe in His Word, but grumbled in their tents. They did not listen to the voice of Y^ehowah** (Psalm 106:24–25). However, what is being taught must be spoken on man's level so that we can appreciate what has occurred for the next several millennia. God has performed more signs and miracles before these people than every before. Only when our Lord returned in human form did large groups of people ever see such incredible miracles (remember that they were negative also). And even after all of these signs and wonders done in their midst, the Jews still complained and were faithless. And these are regenerate Jews. These are believers. This shows us that, theologically speaking, even after regeneration, man is worthless. Four men out of two million have even a clue as to what is going on (and who knows, there might be another handful of mature believers somewhere in this group). Man would require the Holy Spirit to have any spiritual function whatsoever.

After Satan fell, at his appeals trial, perhaps one of his objections was: "Had I seen a daily demonstration of Your power and might, then I would not have rebelled." It takes more than seeing God's signs and wonders to make an impact on man. God's power is in His Word—in His written Word and in His living Word.

The greatest mistake in life that we can make is not to believe Him. **"O unbelieving and perverted generation, how long will I be with you? How long will I put up with you?"** (Matthew 17:17b). **And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have said! Was it not necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?"** (Luke 24:25–26). **Take care, brothers, so that there is not in you an evil, unbelieving heart by revolting against the living God** (Hebrews 3:12). [And the final testimony of John the Baptist]: **"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides upon him."** (John 3:36).

"I will strike it with pestilence and dispossess it and make you to become a nation greater and mightier than it." [Numbers 14:12]

What we find here is tremendous. I hope you recognize where else this occurred. God has just offered Moses a chance to say the word and God would destroy that generation which stood in opposition to him. Moses' life is in danger and God tells Moses, "Just say the word and these people are history." And then Moses would be the first in a generation set apart to God. It would be strictly from his progeny. This was a bona fide offer to Moses one which he had rejected before in Exodus 32:10–14. **Therefore, He said that He would destroy them, had not Moses, His chosen one, stood in the breach before Him, to turn away His wrath from destroying [them]** (Psalm 106:23). Can you imagine being offered the chance to be known as the father of the greatest nation in the world—that everyone in that great nation would come from you. Our Lord was tempted in a similar fashion. **And**

he [the devil] led Him [Jesus Christ] up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You worship before me, it will all be Yours." And Jesus answered and said to him, "It is written, You will worship the Lord your God and serve Him only." (Luke 4:5–8). Now this is obviously not a perfect parallel, but Moses is faced with a great temptation. He can eliminate all this pressure in an instant. Before him are thousands of men ready to take his life because they are degenerate scum. God would destroy them in a second, and Moses would begin anew, with a lot fewer pressures—and he would be the father of a great nation. Satan offered our Lord a chance to rule the entire world and to remove the pressure of the cross (although I do not believe that Satan realized that there would be a cross). However, in both instances, what was offered was less pressure, less work and an alternative which fell outside the plan of God (even though God has made the first offer, it is still outside His plan).

There is something else afoot here as well. God is speaking to Moses about wiping out everyone except for him (well, God may allow a couple of others to live). Do you realize that God could have looked at the entire human race at any time and say, "To hell with these ungrateful, hard-headed people; they are dead." And in an instant, God could have wiped out the entire human race. We do not deserve more. We as believers in Jesus Christ fail again and again and again and again. As you read this, and understand what a failure you are, you also must recognize the grace of God. This passage tell us that we can get up off the ground, dust ourselves off, and move forward. This passage tells us that God is not going to grind us into the dirt for our failures, despite the fact that we deserve it.

Our great Mediator is Jesus Christ, and Moses is a type of Christ; Moses is acting as mediator for this group of losers. You might be reading through this commentary, thinking, "Yeah, kill 'em, God; they're worthless; they're chumps; stomp them into the ground!" This what Satan does. He is the accuser. He is like a rogue prosecuting attorney. He goes up to heaven day in and day out, asks to speak to God, and brings with him several million files on believers, and tells God what losers they are and how God needs to hand them over to him, so that he can destroy them. In almost every single case, Jesus Christ stands in between our accuser and God the Father and says, "He is under the blood; he has rebounded; he's got a future." Now, once and awhile, Satan comes across someone, and God hands that person over to Satan **for the destruction of the body, so that his soul might be saved**. That is the sin unto death.⁸⁵

At this point in our narrative, that is what is going to happen. God will put Gen X under the sin unto death. They will die in the desert. This is the closest that they will ever come to the Land of Promise. God will put this whole movement forward on hold, and man after man after man from Gen X will drop dead in the desert. Once God has killed them all, the next generation, the Generation of Promise, will pick themselves up, walk into the land, and, under Joshua, they will conquer it.

And Moses said to Y^ehowah, "Then all the Egyptians would hear! For You have brought up with Your power this people out of their midst. [Numbers 14:13]

The phrase *out of their midst* does not necessarily refer to a point equidistant from the extremes, but it simply means *out from among the people of Egypt*.⁸⁶

One of the very best professors that I had in college, my Political Science professor, Dr. Gottlieb Baer, would often bate us with questions and viewpoints—some of which he held and some of which he didn't—just to argue, just to give us an alternative viewpoint and primarily to make us think. He did not have to hold a position to assert it. God is making a valid offer here to Moses, but it is God's second choice. God's first choice is what Moses will choose to do. Moses does give this option some thought. Killing all of the Jews, although they obviously deserve it, would not be what God should do for several reasons, the first being the reaction of the Egyptians. God has just gone through a great deal of trouble to take His people out of Egypt. The Egyptians faced great signs and

⁸⁵ Dying the sin unto death is an incredibly painful process. However, believers who die in this manner are still saved; once they die, they go to be face to face with God.

⁸⁶ Bullinger's *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, p. 411.

wonders and the power of Y^ehowah. This would look silly to them for God to have done all this and then to slaughter his people two years later at the foot of the promised land. What happens to the Jews is a reflection upon God's omniscience and omnipotence—God has gone to a tremendous amount of trouble to remove the Jews from Egypt and for what reason? Could God not see in His grand intelligence that the people He delivered were worthless? (this, incidentally, should let you know why you are still alive after some of the crap you have pulled since you have become a Christian).

"And they have said it to the inhabitant of this land, they have heard that You, Y^ehowah, [are] in the midst of this people, that eye to eye You are seen, O Y^ehowah, and that You are going before them by day in a pillar of cloud and by night in a pillar of fire. [Numbers 14:14]

God has been tied to this people. He leads them as a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire through the desert. Not only do the Egyptians know this, but the inhabitants of the promised land are aware of it. Recall that the Jews have spent almost two full years in the desert while Moses received the Law and while they built the tabernacle and celebrated the various feast days. They did not cut a straight path to the land of Canaan. This gave time for the news to spread concerning the final outcome of the struggle between the God of the Jews and the gods of Egypt. The entire world was aware of this struggle. It was the gospel of the ancient world during this and several more generations. So Moses points out that God is inextricably connected to this people, for better or for worse.

"And You will put to death this people as one man, and the nations who have heard Your fame will speak, saying, [Numbers 14:15]

God will have to cut out some of the Jews as a cancer. However, what is being discussed here is the total eradication of the Jewish race, with a half dozen exceptions. If such a thing occurred, this would be noised abroad just as His deliverance of the Jews was. And they heathen would talk about it and express their own opinions:

" 'From Y^ehowah's want of ability to bring this people into the land which He had sworn to them—He slaughters them in the desert.' [Numbers 14:16]

To the heathen, this will not be a reflection upon the Jewish people and their degeneracy but such an act will reflect upon the Living God, Y^ehowah, and His inability to bring the people into the promised land. It is known that God has given this land to the Jews—if God slaughters them in the desert, it will indicate that there was some sort of inadequacy in Him and not in the Jews themselves. Such action would make God seem unfocused, inadequate, with limited power and limited knowledge. God would appear frivolous and changeable, rather than perfect and omniscient.

"And now, I respectfully ask You, let the power of my Y^ehowah⁸⁷ be great, as You have spoken, saying: [Numbers 14:17]

Moses is now applying all this doctrine which he knows. He may or may not recognize that God is baiting him, but he does know what would be the better witness. The greatness of Y^ehowah's power is foremost; what God has suggested would appear weak in the eyes of the other nations.

" 'Y^ehowah [is] slow to anger, and of great kindness; bearing away iniquity and transgression, and now entirely acquitting, charging iniquity of fathers on sons, on a third and on a fourth [generation];' [Numbers 14:18]

Some codices are slightly different, and we read, instead:

Y^ehowah—slow to anger and great in grace **and faithfulness;**
 Forgiving iniquity and transgressions **and sin;**
 Though He will not leave entirely unpunished

⁸⁷ Manuscripts differ here; some have *Adhonây* and others *Y^ehowah*.

Visiting the iniquity of fathers upon sons, upon a third generation and upon a fourth⁸⁸.

Moses correctly quotes Scripture to God. He is no longer dealing with the Lord's reputation, but now with His character. This is not a matter of how do I, Moses, feel about this but it is a matter of God's Word. Moses quotes God's Word in context, based upon a similar situation. The people had just constructed and worshipped the golden calf and Moses had come down with the ten commandments written on two tablets of stone. God was about to destroy the people and Moses interceded on their behalf. God replaced the tablets of stone which were broken and Y^ehowah proclaimed: "Y^ehowah, Y^ehowah God, compassionate [or, merciful] and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in kindness and truth, keeping kindness for thousands, taking away iniquity, and transgression, and sin and now entirely acquitting, charging iniquity of fathers on children and on children's children, on a third and on a fourth [generation]." In context, this portion of God's Word is applicable—it is exactly applicable. Moses did not lift this out of some foreign context and drop it down into this situation, as did Satan in Luke 4 when he quoted Scripture to our Lord. It is a parallel situation where God has threatened to destroy the Jews and Moses is standing in the gap, as a mediator between God and man, pleading the case for man, not based upon man's character, which is not the issue, but upon God's character. We stand or fall based upon God's character. The iniquity of the Jews is not to be ignored. There will be residual affects upon the Jewish race for several generations because of their iniquity. Now would be the ideal time to examine the **Doctrine of the Third and Fourth Generation Curse—not finished yet!!**

""Forgive, I respectfully request of You, the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of Your grace, and as You have borne with this people from Egypt, even until now." [Numbers 14:19]

Moses appeals to God's grace. His greatness and grace have carried this people to here all the way from Egypt. Moses requests God for this greatness and grace to continue on their behalf. Intercessory prayer is difficult for some to understand. God knows the future as well as He knows the past; although not everything has been predestined, what will occur in the future is already known by God—so why do we pray? God is glorified by our prayers on behalf of others to Him. It reveals our faith to the angelic host about us. It is because of this prayer that Israel was delivered. **Therefore, He said that He would destroy them; had not Moses, His chosen one, stood in the breach before Him, to turn away His wrath from destroying them (Psalm 106:23).** Similarly, we ourselves are not cleansed without our rebound prayer to Him. **Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your grace, according to the greatness of Your compassion, blot out my transgressions; wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin (Psalm 51:1–2).** Our actions, our deeds, our choices, our motivations and our prayers are tied directly to what will occur in the future. God knows all future events, even though these events often depend upon our own actions and volition.

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God Promises to Destroy Only That Generation, Excepting Joshua and Caleb

Deuteronomy 1:34–40

And Y^ehowah said, "I have forgiven, according to your word; [Numbers 14:20]

God has allowed Moses to quote His Word to Him, and this word was in the soul of Moses—so, in speaking to Moses, God calls it *your word*. This is where God's Word needs to be is in our souls. **For who is a God like You, Who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in grace. He will again have compassion on us; He will tread out iniquities underfoot. Yes, You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. You will give truth to Jacob, unchanging love to Abraham, which You did swear to our forefathers from days of old (Micah 7:18–20).**

⁸⁸ I have put in bold the differences between the Massoretic text and some of the codices. The codices in question, the western Samaritan, the targums of Jonathan and the Septuagint are simply quoting more of what is found in Exodus 34:6–7, although it is likely that Moses actually did not.

"And yet, I live—and the whole earth will be filled [with] the honor [or, glory] of Y^ehowah.
[Numbers 14:21]

And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy is Y^ehowah of the armies, the whole earth is full of His glory." (Isaiah 6:3). "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Y^ehowah." (Hab. 2:14). What the earth will be filled with is the *kâbôwd* (כָּבוֹד) [pronounced *kaw^b-VODE*] of Y^ehowah, which is His *glory*, *abundance*, and *honor*. Strong's #3519 BDB #458. Why does God say this? The Jews, with their behavior, have dishonored Him. They themselves are a witness to all the peoples of the earth and they dishonor Him with their lack of faith and their rebellion. However, God is making a future prediction concerning the state of the world—it will be filled with His glory.

"For all the men who see My glory and My signs, which I have done in Egypt, and in the desert, and [who] try Me these ten times, and have not hearkened to My voice; [Numbers 14:22]

This is the worst place for a verse break. He have the apodosis of a conditional phrase. God is referring to all of the Jews who have witnessed His power and His signs, who have seen His glory, who continually test God's patience. Whereas, ten times does not need to refer to the number of times the Jews tested God's patience—that is, this could be a figure of speech—in this case there actually were ten times where the Jews had tested God. Those ten times are as follows:

The Ten Times the Hebrew People Tested God

1. When the people were still in the possession of the Egyptians, Moses had gone to Pharaoh to demand their release and this peeved Pharaoh somewhat. Therefore, he increased their burdens as slaves. They complained to Moses about this (Exodus 5:21).
2. Pharaoh and the other Egyptians had lost their first-born, and had acquiesced to the departure of the Jews. However, in immediate retrospect, Pharaoh was sorry that he did so, so he pursued the exiting Israelites. When they saw the dust of Pharaoh's camels approaching they remarked, "Is it because there were no graves in Egypt tht you have taken us away to die in the desert? Why have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt? Is this not what we said to you in Egypt: 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been bettter for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert." (Exodus 14:11b–12).
3. When the people had no water except for the bitter water at Marah, they grumbled at Moses (Exodus 15:22–26).
4. They bitched again because their diet was not as good in the desert as it was in Egypt; they said, "Would that we had died by Y^ehowah's hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this desert to kill this whole assembly with hunger." (Exodus 16:3).
5. Moses gave the Jews instructions with regard to not keeping too much manna, but some ignored him (Exodus 16:19–20). They also disobeyed God with regard to gathering manna on the Sabbath (Exodus 16:26–29).
6. After covering more miles in the desert, the people again went for several days without water. They have just seen four times that God provided for them. They could have requested water from Y^ehowah. Instead, they said, "Why, now , have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" (Exodus 17:3b). This is where God provided water which gushed out of the rock.
7. The sixth time of testing was the golden calf incident, found in Exodus 32:1–6.
8. The people again complained of adversity in Numbers 11:1. God struck them with lightning (Numbers 11:2–3).
9. The people complained about having no meat in Numbers 11:4, so God provided them with quail (Numbers 11:31–32).
10. The last time the Jews tested Y^ehowah is when Moses had sent the twelve spies to reconnoiter the promises land and the people cried, "Would we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this desert! Why is Y^ehowah bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become plunder; would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?" (Numbers 14:2b–3).

Coincidentally, there were ten spies who spoke against taking the land. Even though these twelve spies were perhaps the best of Israel, notice that the majority is not always right (in fact, the majority is rarely right). Not only was the majority report anti-God, but they were able to also invoke the popular sentiment against God. Similarly, we as Christians should not allow ourselves to be affected by what the majority opinion and the majority morality seems to be. Every decade seems to foster its own standards (or lack thereof); a Christian is to receive his or her standards from God's Word.

"They will not see the land which I have sworn to their fathers—yea, none of those despising Me will see it; [Numbers 14:23]

The generation of Moses (who were mostly dead) and the generation of Joshua and Caleb are those in view here. They are the ones who rebel against God. God will not wipe out the entire Jewish race, but He will perform radical surgery. A large number of Jews will be removed from the earth, so that the younger generation which remains will live and go into the land. We will see this fulfilled in Numbers 26:65 32:11 and referred back to many times (Psalm 45:11 Deuteronomy 1:35 Hebrews 4:3, 5). Hebrews 6:4–6 gives us the New Testament version: **For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the age to come and have drifted of course, it is impossible to renew them against to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to public defamation.** Just as those in Hebrews had tasted the heavenly gift, but had gone back to animal sacrifices, the Jews here have done the same—they have experienced God in His most glorious, in terms of signs and wonders, and they still doubt and question Him.

An analogy would be when we are out of fellowship, we cannot partake in the great blessings which God has provided for us. In rebellion, we cannot enter into the promised land—we cannot enter into His blessings. Now these Jews are saved and will spend eternity in heaven with God and with us, but they will all die the sin unto death. God will slaughter them in the desert for their degeneracy and faithlessness. Here is where the analogy ends and the reality of the comparison begins. We are also subject to dying the sin unto death when we remain too long out of fellowship.

"And My servant Caleb, because there has been another spirit with him, and he is fully after Me—I will bring him into the land where he has entered, and his descendants [lit., seed] will possess it. [Numbers 14:24]

Throughout the Bible, the future is as perspicuous to God as is the past. Here God promises that He will bring Caleb into the land, along with his family, because God knows that Caleb has a different spirit. I believe that Caleb has been empowered by the Holy Spirit, as the great Apostle Paul wrote, **in me dwells no good thing.** It is possible that the Jews in the Old Testament could request God to give them His Holy Spirit and that God would grant them this wish (as he did to Elisha and as He promised to the Apostles). Only Caleb and Joshua, from their generation, remained to enter the land (Numbers 26:65 32:12 15:13–14). Forty-five years later, Caleb testified that God kept His word (Joshua 14:10).

"And the Amalekite and the Canaanites are dwelling in the valley; tomorrow, turn and journey for yourselves into the desert—the way of the Reed Sea." [Numbers 14:25]

No longer will the Jews go right into the land. They have clearly let their faithlessness be known. They are to turn around and go back into the desert, traveling along the road which leads to the Reed Sea. Have you ever felt out of kilter with life and out of kilter with God's plan? Things are off balance—sometimes just a little;— your timing is all wrong, things aren't going as you think they should and your life, while not always a shambles, is just not right. This is the Jews from Caleb's generation. Because of their faithlessness, their life is out of kilter. Because they would not listen and obey God's Word, they were completely off balance. And because they rejected God, God would reject them and strike them down, beginning here and for the next thirty-eight years as they wandered through the desert.

And Y^ehowah spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, [Numbers 14:26]

Moses and Aaron would both have to relay God's message to the people, to their leaders first and their leaders the those under them, and eventually to all the congregation of Israel.

"Until when has this evil congregation that which they are murmuring against Me? The murmurings of the sons of Israel, which they are murmuring against Me, I have heard; [Numbers 14:27]

God is about to make a solemn promise to Moses and to Aaron. He rhetorically asks them (meaning no answer is expected) how long would they murmur against Him. God will then answer this question Himself (as people often do with rhetorical questions):

"Say to them, 'I live—an affirmation of Y^ehowah; [and] I damn well mean this [lit., if not]; as you have spoken in My ears—so I will do to you; [Numbers 14:28]

First, for those who watch carefully, there is a linguistic trick here which should be examined. We have the hypothetical partical *ʾim* (אם) [pronounced *eem*], which means *if* and it is followed by the negative particle *lôʾ* (לא or לאו) [pronounced *low*]. When following an oath, either stated or implied, *ʾim*, by itself, is an emphatic negative. However, when followed by *lôʾ*, it becomes an emphatic affirmative.⁸⁹

This shows great emotion and power; God is telling Moses and Aaron what they should say to the people of Israel, and, as God often does, He tells them word for word what they must say. However, this becomes so intense that God changes person and speaks as though He is speaking directly to the nation Israel. You didn't get that? Instead of God saying this is what you will say to the children of Israel, and then quote exactly what Moses and Aaron should say, word for word, God, in His anger and emotion, speaks suddenly as if He is speaking directly to the congregation of Israel. In writing this, bear in mind that I am speaking in an anthropopathic way, ascribing human emotions to God—emotions which He does not possess—in order to relay to you what is occurring. God of course is not emotional nor is He angry—however, the change of person from this verse to the next indicates that if a person spoke this way, great emotion would be expressed.

As we have seen, the Jews have over and over again said to God, **"Would that we had died in Egypt; would that we had died in the desert."** As they have spoken to Y^ehowah, so Y^ehowah will do to them. Their refusal to take the land which God had given to them was the last straw. As we examined earlier, God gave them ten chances and they failed each of those ten chances. God will now scatter their corpses throughout the desert. People often wonder why it took Moses forty years to travel from Egypt to Israel. It took them two years to receive the law, to set up the tabernacle and to begin their religious ceremonies. It took God an additional thirty-eight years to wipe out the remaining members of this evil generation. **"Now, the time that it took for us to come from Kadesh-barnea, until we crossed over the brook Zered, ws thirty-eight years; until all the generation of the men of war perished from within the camp, as Y^ehowah had sworn to them. Moreover, the hand of Y^ehowah was against them, to destroy them from within the camp, until they all perished. So it came to pass, when all the en of war had finally perished from among the people, that Y^ehowah spoke to me, saying, 'You will cross over Ar, the border of Moab, today.'"** (Deuteronomy 2:14–18). **And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness** (Hebrews 3:17)?

I am hoping that the analogy to the present day is clear. God has offered us that which is analogous to the promised land—eternal fellowship with God. It is offered to us and all we have to do is to believe Him and take it. Salvation is His work and we can trust Him. It is just a matter of taking what has been given to us.

"In this desert your carcasses will fall, even all your numbered ones, to all your number, from a son of twenty years and upward, who have murmured against Me. [Numbers 14:29]

The *Me* in this verse (as it will be even clearer in the next verse) is God, not Moses. God is speaking to Moses, but is so carried away, in human terms, that is as if He is speaking directly to this faithless generation. God is

⁸⁹ BDB, p. 50; Owen's *Analytical Key to the Old Testament*, Vol. I, p. 639.

hereby promising them that He will strike them down and their bodies will fall in the desert. Not just their bodies, but their carcasses, because they are dead right now insofar as God is concerned. They are no longer a part of His plan. This is a direct reference to all those men of war who were numbered in Numbers 1 during Moses' armed forces registration census. This did not necessarily include the Levites.

" 'You—you will not come into the land which I have lifted up My hand to cause you to tabernacle in it, except Caleb ben Jephunneh, and Joshua ben Nun. [Numbers 14:30]

These were the super grace believers of their generation. Every male their age would be struck down by God in the desert, but these two would be spared and brought into the land. Notice that we do not have the names of Moses or Aaron included here. Although it is not recorded here, God even told Moses that he would not enter into the land. "Y^ehowah was angry with me also on your account, saying, 'Not even you will enter there.' " (Deuteronomy 1:37).

" 'As to your infants—concerning whom you have said, A spoil they will become; I have even brought them in and they will know [or, come to know] the land which you have kicked against. [Numbers 14:31]

One of the chief expressed worries of the Israelites was their women and children—they said their women and children would be taken in spoil, as slaves and concubines. However, there is a wall of fire—a wall of protection which God provides—and if God protected the men of Israel, He would protect their women and children. However, in this case, because of their unbelief, God would destroy the men who spoke against Him, having no faith, and their children would take the land, as led by Joshua. You have heard of a person who is carried out kicking and screaming. Well, God was going to carry them in, but they did too much kicking and murmuring.

" 'As to you—your carcasses will fall in this desert, [Numbers 14:32]

Normally, I don't care when a sentence is split up into three different verses, but this portion should stand alone. This describes the sin unto death. They are unhappy with their diet, they are scared, they looked back upon slavery as the good old days, and God would kill them in the desert—they would never enter into His land of milk and honey which He gave to them. These are blessings which they would never attain, although God had made it clear that these were their blessings to take. After several years of war, these men could have retired in a land of milk and honey, out of the desert, in splendor. **Nevertheless, with most of them, God was not well-pleased, for they were laid low in the desert. Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave things [which are] wrong, as they also craved (1Corinthians 10:5–6).**

" 'And you sons will be shepherding in the desert forty years, and have borne [the punishment for] your fornications till your carcasses [are] consumed [lit., finished] in the desert. [Numbers 14:33]

This verse (v. 33) requires a little examination:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	And your children shall be wanderers <i>and</i> shepherd in the wilderness forty years, and shall suffer for your whoredoms [your infidelity to your espoused God], until your corpses are consumed in the wilderness.
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	and your sons shall be shepherds in the desert forty years, and shall bear your unchastities—until your dead bodies are consumed in the desert.
KJV	And you children shall wander in the desert forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness.
NASB	And your sons shall be shepherds for forty years in the wilderness, and they shall suffer [lit., bear] <i>for</i> your unfaithfulness [lit., fornications], until your corpses lie [lit., are finished] in the wilderness.
NIV	Your children will be shepherd here for forty years, suffering for your unfaithfulness, until the last of your bodies lies in the desert.

Young's Lit. Translation And your sons are evil in the wilderness forty years, and have borne your whoredoms till your carcasses are consumed in the wilderness;

You will notice the obvious difference between Young's and the other translations. The general idea is easy to grasp from the first few translations, but what the heck is Robert Young talking about? The translations all seem to agree on: **And your sons [or, children] will [or, are]...** Then we have the verb *râ'âh* (רָעָה) [pronounced *raw-GAWH*], which can mean *to shepherd, to graze*, but it can also mean *to associate with*. It is in the third person, masculine plural, Qal active participle. However, recall that there is a form of *râ'âh* is also the feminine of *evil*; which explains where Young got his translation. Context and interpretation would indicate rather than shepherding their animals in an area of milk and honey, they would be shepherds out in the desert. A generation always passes something along. A degenerate generation never leaves its children unspoiled. Sin has consequences for the person who sins and those who come after him, unto the third and fourth generations. When Adam sinned, this adversely affected all of our lives until even now, thousands upon thousands of generations later.

Tam (תָּמַם) [pronounced *tahm*]; or *tâmam* (תָּמַם) [pronounced *taw-MAHM*] means *to completely use up, to complete, to finish, to consume, to exhaust, to accomplish, to spend, to be (spiritually) mature*. Strong's #8552 BDB #1070. It is in the Qal infinitive construct, which is why I placed the *are* in brackets. Because of what happened, they will bear or carry [the punishment for] the fornications of their fathers. Fornications includes adultery—these are those who have been married to Y^ehowah but reject Him for a false God and fornications includes sex outside of marriage, which is analogous to the unfaithfulness of the Jews. Because of the unfaithfulness of Joshua's generation, their sons will be stuck for forty years out in the desert, waiting for their father's bodies to fall in the desert. As you have seen, I have inserted the phrase *the punishment for* twice. This is called a metonymy of the cause. That is, sin and its synonyms are often put where we would expect to see the effects or the punishment of same. See also Exodus 28:43 Leviticus 20:20 Isaiah 53:4.

Despite the fact that God kept this generation out in the desert for forty years, they did not lack a thing in the realm of physical needs. [Moses is speaking to the next generation] **"For Y^ehowah, your God, has blessed you in all the work of your hand; He has known your wanderings through this great desert. These forty years, Y^ehowah your God has been with you; you have not lacked a thing."** (Deuteronomy 2:7). During these forty years, their sons will suffer for the sins of their fathers—that is, instead of going directly into the promised land, the sons will be stuck out in the desert also. However, the purpose will be for God to test the next generation. [Again, Moses is speaking]: **"And you will remember all the way which Y^ehowah your God has led you in the desert these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. And He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of Y^ehowah. Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. Thus you are to know in your heart that Y^ehowah your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his sons."** (Deuteronomy 8:2–5).

"By the number of the days which you spied the land, forty days—a day for a year, a day for a year—you will bear your iniquities forty years, and you will know my stand in opposition [to you].
[Numbers 14:34]

The last noun in this sentence is difficult—it is the Hebrew word *t^enûw'âh* (תְּנוּוֹ'אָה) [pronounced *t'noo-AH*]. It is only found here and in Job 33:10. Strong's #8569 BDB #626. Obviously, it is hard to determine its meaning based upon the context of two passages. Luckily, we have a verb with the same base: *nûw'* (נָוָה) [pronounced *noo*] and this verb is only found in Numbers 30:5, 8, 11 32:7, 9 Psalm 33:10 141:5. Recall how some verbs could affix a *tâw* (ת) [pronounced *taw*] to the beginning in order to form a related noun. The additional *âh* at the end of a word was the feminine gender. The verb means *to stand in opposition to, to take a stand against (such that the aims, position, desire, etc. of the other person is hindered, nullified, or restrained)*. This is merely the corresponding noun. For every day that these twelve men spied out the promised land, God will put the Jews in a holding pattern for a year, so that the next generation, after spending that much time in a desert, will believe God and will not fail as did their fathers.

" 'I [am] Y^ehowah—I have spoken; if I do not this to all this evil company who are meeting against me; in this desert they are consumed, and there they will die.' " [Numbers 14:35]

Even God uses common figures of speech. There are times when one uses the protasis of a conditional clause but does not use the apodosis because it is understood. Here it is, *if I do not do this to all this evil congregation the ones gathered against Me—then I am not Y^ehowah*. This is how they know that He is God, that the older generation will die in the desert and their children will be stuck wandering the desert for another forty years because of the iniquities of their fathers. We have seen the iniquities of the fathers fall upon the iniquities of the sons. I came from a very selfish, self-serving, hedonistic generation. The free love and peace in our time generation was a generation which desired sex outside of marriage, without commitments or limits, and wanted no commitment to their own country which involved hardship in their lives. As a result, we have rampant deadly sexual diseases, children being born with deadly sexually transmitted diseases; homosexuality spreading like a disease (at some point in time we will psychologically tie the free love of the sixties to male homosexuality and male brutality, the latter resulting in rampant female homosexuality), we have the abuse of drugs almost unparalleled in other countries, which has resulted in a crime wave beyond what our grandparents would think imaginable and also resulting in such tragedies as crack babies. In order to get the attention of a generation which may be salvageable, God must take some steps which we may view as unduly harsh. In our country, God has not done that. He has simply allowed our behavior—the behavior of my generation—to reap its natural results. As a nation, we have still been blessed and protected by God far beyond what we deserve.

What is recorded in these past several verses is not the entirety of what God said to Moses. In Numbers 14:41–43 and Deuteronomy 1:42 we have more of what Y^ehowah said to Moses.

Let me give you another very common generational curse: there are people who get married nowadays for all of the wrong reasons. Once they are married, they have children and then they divorce, often to pursue an affair or to get out of the mistake that they make. The amount of suffering and disorientation to life that children experience in a divorce has been greatly underestimated. This is their entire basis for trust, love and comfort. Now, I am not speaking of a marriage where spousal abuse has occurred (let me be more specific: where the husband has repeatedly struck the wife) or where there is serious drug or alcohol abuse on the part of one of the parents. However, many people divorce because they have grown apart, have fallen out of love, have found someone else who looks like a better deal—and they are willing to sacrifice the security and stability of their children in order to pursue this other avenue. Here the mistakes of the parental generation seriously affect the lives of their children. We have, in the past couple of generations, raised very confused and disoriented groups of children, whose lack of family stability has caused them to pursue drugs, gangs, crime, hedonism. It was the selfishness of their parents which impacted directly on their lives. A child isn't some hamster that you keep for a few weeks and you let it die once you're tired of it. When you chose to have children and to sire children (which is a possible choice you make every time you have sexual relations), then you are making a lifetime commitment to that person. Again, the subject matter in Numbers, as well as the rest of the Pentateuch, when rightly applied, is as up to date as tomorrow's newspaper.

A question which may come to mind is *where are all the gravesites?* 600,000 men (and some of their wives) will be struck down in the desert between Egypt and the southern border of Egypt. It is fair to inquire as to where the graves are. These men are loathed by Y^ehowah, and even though they are the parents of the children who will go into the land, there was not indication that they should receive any honor or glory. Therefore, elaborate burials and gravestones were out of the question. Furthermore, with that many deaths, as predicted by Y^ehowah, they died at a rate of perhaps as high as 20 per day, when one includes the women from that generation. When people are dying in disgrace in these numbers, that does not leave much time or motivation for elaborate burials and ceremonies. The bodies were likely put into shallow graves, if at all. It would not be out of the question for the bodies to be stacked outside the boundaries of the camp. The wandering that Israel did would not just be at the guidance of Y^ehowah but at the need to move away from the rotting and decaying bodies as well. Bodies buried in shallow graves, or just thrown outside the camp, or merely left upon battle grounds would decay rapidly, subject to the forces of nature, including carrion-eating wild animals. This is implied by Deuteronomy 28:26: **"And your carcasses will be food to all birds of the sky and to all the beasts of the earth; and there will be no one to frighten [them] away."** Not even the bones of the skeletons would be preserved for longer than a few centuries.

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An *Inserted* Postscript

And the men whom Moses had sent to spy the land, and returned and caused all the congregation to murmur against Him for bringing up an evil report against the land; [Numbers 14:36]

Again, this is a verse where the sentence has been split; this is basically half of the subject of a sentence—we are making a reference to the ten men who went on a reconnaissance mission.

And so they died, the men who brought up an evil report of the land, by the plague before the face of Y^ehowah; [Numbers 14:37]

The plague mentioned here wiped out almost 15,000 men from this generation (Numbers 16:49). *And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? And to whom did He swear that they should not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? And so we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief (Hebrews 3:17–19). Now I desire to remind you thought you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe (Jude 5).*

The way this is written tells us that Moses either edited his manuscripts or actually wrote this portion of Scripture sometime after the events of this chapter took place. What we find here is a parenthetical insert concerning the end of that generation. My educated guess is that the bulk of the Pentateuch was written while Israel was in the desert for the next thirty-eight years. God always turns cursing into blessing and since the tabernacle had been constructed and since Israel had no battles to fight and since God took care of their basic needs by providing manna—this gave Moses the time to record, thousands of years ago, God's permanent record of those times, for our instruction and spiritual growth. There must have been a few dozen of the younger generation who, after fifteen years in the desert of watching their parents die, who thought, okay, I get the picture—opposition to God is not the prudent position to take. However, not only did this lesson have to be burned into their psyches, but Moses needed time to record God's Word and edit the historical documents provided him into the history of our world from its inception.

You may be wondering why does the Bible continually say *forty years* and I keep saying *thirty-eight years*; obviously, if there is a difference of opinion, I am wrong and the Bible is correct. We will be given some dates of the returning to the land in Deuteronomy 1:3. There are two ways to look at this: (1) God gave the Jews credit for time already served, much as our penal system does. When a criminal has been locked away in prison without bail awaiting trial and is given a specific sentence; a portion of his sentence has already been served prior to the actual sentencing. (2) Or, even easier, *forty years* is just the rounding off of thirty-eight years. If you have had any training in mathematics, you realize that all precision is relative, and, although we operate on the postulate that there is an exact distance between two points (whether this be two points on a plane or two points in time), our actual physical measurement of such is always an approximation. I realize that I just left 99% of you in the dust. So to at least pick up another 40%, you often say, "But that was forty years ago" when it was actually closer to thirty-eight years ago.

And, of the men who went to spy out the land, Joshua ben Nun and Caleb ben Jephunneh remained alive [lit., lived]. [Numbers 14:38]

I have altered the word order in this verse so that it corresponds more closely to western thinking. A verse like these past couple could have only been written after the fact. Their purpose was to indicate that what God had promised, God brought to pass. Moses either left a few lines blank here and filled them in, or, in rewriting this at the end of his life, inserted these couple verses which showed the God brought to pass what He had promised. Or, the bulk of this portion of God's Word was written long after the fact, during the final few years prior to their re-entry into the promised land (I personally stand with the latter view).

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Moses Relays God's Word to the People

Deuteronomy 1:41–42

And Moses spoke these words to all the sons of Israel, and so the people mourned [or, were caused to mourn] a great deal. [Numbers 14:39]

The words that Moses spoke to the congregation were those concerning what would happen to them—that is, vv. 27–34; what followed was a postscript written by Moses, or an insertion out of chronological sequence, indicating that God did in fact bring these things to pass. As I mentioned above, what likely happened is that Moses wrote this years later (which accounts for all of this information not falling into a strict chronological order); after the ten had died and many of their contemporaries had fallen in the desert as corpses.

When Moses spoke to the people, telling them what God had said, after God descended upon them as a pillar of cloud, the appearance of God was sobering enough for the crowd to back down, to stop its murmuring, and, for a few hours, to listen to Moses. However, they did not listen as they should have. You know that there are people who do not hear what you tell them but they hear what they want to hear. These sons of Israel did not hear what God told them would happen. Moses, to impress upon us, the readers, what Y^ehowah promised, recorded the fulfillment right here in vv. 36–38. The Jews realized that they were wrong, but they chose only to hear a portion of God's Word. God already solemnly promised that if He did not bring these things to pass, then He was not God. Let me give you an illustration, so that you understand their mentality. A properly brought up child, when faced with a spanking, will say and do almost anything to get out of being spanked. The correct parent may listen to his appeal, but will still spank him if that was the promised punishment for the child's crime. A criminal, when on trial, will often say anything and promise to do anything to get out of the sentencing; however, what he says should mean little or nothing when it comes to the sentencing portion of his trial, once his guilt has been undeniably determined.

God has already passed judgement; He has already spoken. They are not going to go into the land; they are not going to take the land. They don't get to go back as though God did not speak and now take the land. There is not another chance given here. God did not say, "Okay, you have one more opportunity—either take that mountain now, or you will spend the next thirty-eight years in the desert." God did not say that. Therefore they are acting presumptuously. Their choice to ascend the mountain in battle was another wrong move which God would judge.

And they arose early in the morning and went to the top of the mountain, saying, "Here we [stand]—and we have come up to the place which Y^ehowah has spoken of, for we have sinned." [Numbers 14:40]

The children of Israel have entered the land. They kicked against this and now they have stepped into the land, advancing up the mountains before them. They have heard their sentencing and they have decided that God was merely warning them. They heard what they wanted to hear, not what God said to them.

And Moses said, "Just what the hell do you think you're doing [lit., Why this]? You are transgressing the command of Y^ehowah and that will not succeed [lit., prosper]. [Numbers 14:41]

The final verb is the 3rd person feminine singular, Qal imperfect of *tsâlach* (צָלַח) [pronounced *tsaw-LAHCH*] and it means *advance, prosper* Strong's #6743 BDB #852. The two words are related because when some people advance in life, they are prospering. This is given with the third person singular personal pronoun, which is not related to anything else in this verse or the previous verse. This could read *it will not advance [or, prosper]*.

"Do not go up, for Y^ehowah is not in your midst, and you will not be struck down by your enemies. [Numbers 14:42]

If God is not with the Jews, then they have no chance against any of the Canaanite people. If we are not filled with the Spirit, if God is not in our midst, we cannot advance—we cannot succeed. We will be struck down by our enemies. We will be struck down by Satan. "If only you had paid attention to My commandments! Then your well-being would have been like the sand and your offspring like its grains; their name would never be cut off or destroyed from My presence." (Isaiah 48:18).

"For the Amalekite and the Canaanite [are] there before your face, and you will fall by the sword, because you have turned back from following Y^ehowah and Y^ehowah is not with you." [Numbers 14:43]

It is simple: Y^ehowah is no longer with these people. He has promised that He will waste them in the desert. This doesn't change because they get this sudden rush of adrenaline. Just because they are excited, it doesn't mean that they are acting according to God's laws. Their desire to make up for their having sinned is not admirable in any way. This is a degenerate generation that no matter what God says, they will listen to their own emotions. Their declaration of having sinned, back in v. 40, is a step in the right direction; however, they are just replacing one sin with another.

For those who know a little more about Scripture, you realize that there is a potential problem here. In Deuteronomy 1, these people are called Amorites; here they are consistently referred to as Canaanites and Amalekites. The short explanation is that *Amorite* is sometimes used as a general term for diverse groups of peoples living in the west. A longer explanation will be given in Deuteronomy 1.

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The People Storm the Hill Against God's Commandment

Deuteronomy 1:43–46

And they [been caused to become] swelled up [with empty emotion] to go up into the top of the mountain, and the ark of the covenant of Y^ehowah and Moses have not departed out of the midst of the camp. [Numbers 14:44]

They did not go into battle with the ark of the covenant, they did not go into battle with Moses and they did not go into battle with Y^ehowah. The first verb in this verse is the Hiphil imperfect of 'âphal (נִפְּלָ) [pronounced *gaw-FAHL*], a word found only in this passage and Habak. 2:4. It is actually given two different meanings in BDB and treated as two separate words, but that is unnecessary. It comes from the word which means *tumour* (see Deuteronomy 28:27 1Samuel 5:6), which is a swelling up of a diseased portion of the body, an undisciplined, unregulated mass of cells—a cancerous growth. I have rendered this verb *swelled up [with empty emotion]*. Strong's #6076 BDB #779. However, for your edification, allow me to include several other renderings:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	But they presumed to go up to the heights of the hill country;
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	But they presumptuously ascended into the top of the mountain [lit., "were presumptuous to ascend"]
KJV	But they presumed to go up unto the hilltop:
NASB	But they went up heedlessly to the ridge of the hill country;

However, although they advance up the mountain toward the inhabited cities, Moses and the ark of the covenant remained in the camp of Israel. Y^ehowah did not advance with them, except to waste their corpses on the battlefield.

And the Amalekites and the Canaanites who are dwelling in the mountains came down and struck them and beat them down unto Hormah. [Numbers 14:45]

We have a possible problem with this passage. The city of Hormah was so named some time later, very likely after Moses wrote this passage. It's original name was Zephath, which is mentioned only one time in Judges 1:17. In that passage, it was conquered and renamed Hormah, possibly as a result of Numbers 21:3. Even had it been conquered during the time of Moses, after the 38 silent years in the desert, Moses would not have made this change (he likely wrote the Pentateuch while cooling his heels for 38 years). This indicates that someone early on made this change, contrary to the will of God. Because of this and several other changes which had been made, it is obvious that God's Word was tampered with very early on in its existence. It was because of this tampering which gave many *scholars* the excuse to claim that the books of Moses were written after his death. A passage like this would give them cause to think that. There is a slight chance that the Israelites were unaware of the name of this city, and that some vowed to name it *destruction* (something which did occur 38 years later), and that name was used. However, since nothing like that is mentioned here, I would still hold with this as a change made by a later copyist.

What happened was that many of the men totally ignored God's Word—they were emotionally inflated by God's visible presence and they charged up the mountain, and, after perhaps a forced march of a day or so, they took aggressive action against the Amalekites and the Canaanites. As Y^ehowah said, "[Then you rebelled against the mouth of Y^ehowah your God; you neither believed Him nor listened to His voice. You have been rebellious against Y^ehowah from the day I knew you.](#)" (Deuteronomy 9:23b–24). Since God was not with them, they could not prosper. God did protect their children, however—and, it is even possible that they did themselves. When they retreated, they could have led the Amalekites and the Canaanites directly to their camp, endangering the rest of the camp and alerted the peoples of the promised land to the massive presence of the Jews in the land. However, rather than be pushed back to Kadesh, they retreated to and then defeated at Hormah, a distance of roughly twenty miles from Kadesh.

[With most of them, God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the desert. Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave wrong things as they also craved](#) (1Corinthians 10:5–6). However, things will change. [So Israel made a vow to Y^ehowah, and said, "If You will indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities." And Y^ehowah heard the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites, and they utterly destroyed them and their cities. Thus the name of the place was called Hormah](#) (Numbers 21:2–3). This tells us that the next generation will turn things around and this passage further indicates that Moses either wrote or appended Numbers 14 after the battles described in Numbers 21 (which is after the additional thirty-eight years wandering in the desert).

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Numbers 15

Numbers 15:1–41

Introduction: In Numbers 15, we begin with the thirty-eight years in the desert. This will continue until the end of the book of Numbers (see Deuteronomy 1:3). Moses will begin to deal with the next generation and God will deal with their fathers. The generation of Joshua and Caleb are lost. God has promised to destroy them in the desert, so they are just marking time until their day has come. As we have seen, Israel will lose about 20 people every day. However, their birth rate will be just about equivalent to this huge death rate.

However, we will see in this chapter God's marvelous grace. This generation of Israel has failed miserably before God, yet, immediately after their failure, God is giving a list of laws to be followed upon entering into the land of Canaan.

Outline of Chapter 15:

- Vv. 1–13 Sacrifices and offerings to be done upon entering into the land of Canaan
- Vv. 14–16 God's laws apply to the alien as well as to the Jew
- Vv. 17–21 Offerings to be made upon eating the first food in the land of Canaan
- Vv. 22–29 Unintentional errors
- Vv. 30–36 Intentional sinning and one example
- Vv. 37–41 Remembering God's commandments—the tassel method

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

Sacrifices and Offerings to Be Done upon Entering into the Land of Canaan

Then Y^ehowah spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 15:1]

Numbers, like Leviticus, is rarely taught in the Christian church. It was ruined in translation like Leviticus because most of these books are direct quotes from God to Moses.

"Speak to the sons of Israel and you will say to them, "When you [all] come into the land of your dwellings, which [land] I am giving you; [Numbers 15:2]

This is a marvelous statement. The Jews have just been pushed back out of the land due to their unbelief and God has told them, **"Your carcasses will fall in this desert and your children will wander in the desert forty years and bear [the results of] your fornications until your carcasses are wasted in the desert...You will bear your iniquities [for] forty years."** (Numbers 14:32b–33, 34b). Yet God even at this point in time prepares them for the entering of the land. **For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable** (Romans 11:29).

We are now speaking to the next generation of Israelites. God will not need to deal in any detail with their parents. God knows that they will enter into the land and that they will take it. This second generation has just seen their parents beaten down and thrown out of the land. This verse gives them hope and tells them that they will enter into the land. More than giving them hope, God must also be certain that this next generation will follow the rituals and obey His commandments, which actions glorify Him.

" Then you [all] will prepare a fire-offering to Y^ehowah, a burnt offering, or a sacrifice, to perform a [wonderful] vow or free-will offering, or in your appointed things, to make a tranquilizing scent [or, sweet fragrance] to Y^ehowah, out of the herd or out of the flock.
[Numbers 15:3]

The first thing they are to do upon entering the land is to sacrifice to Y^ehowah. There are a number of different sacrifices, each signifying something slightly different, as we have studied in the book of Leviticus. We have studied the vow offerings in Leviticus 22:17–23.

" 'And he who is approaching with his offering to Y^ehowah will approach with a present of flour, a tenth part, mixed with a fourth of the hin of oil; [Numbers 15:4]

Those who brought an offering—or, as it says here, approached or came near with an offering—were to also bring an offering of flour mixed with oil. To remind you, the flour is the humanity of Jesus Christ and the oil is the filling of the Holy Spirit. Recall a hin is approximately a gallon, so the amount of oil here is roughly a quart (or a liter).

" 'And wine for a libation [a drink offering], a fourth of the hin you will prepare for the burnt-offering or for a sacrifice, for the one lamb; [Numbers 15:5]

This wine can be intoxicating, as the same word is found in Genesis 9:21, 24 and is forbidden to the Nazarites (Numbers 6:3). This is the first verse where wine is a part of the sacrifice to God.

" 'Or for a ram you will prepare a present of flour—two-tenths [of an ephah]—mixed with oil, a third of a the hin; [Numbers 15:6]

Still, the meal offering speaks of Jesus Christ, His humanity as mixed with the Holy Spirit. As you may or may not notice, the size of the grain offering increases as the size of the sacrifice increases.

" 'And wine for a libation [a drink-offering], a third part of the hin; you will bring [this] near—a tranquilizing scent [or, sweet fragrance] to Y^ehowah. [Numbers 15:7]

That which is burnt is more than pleasing to God—it is a tranquilizing scent—the scent which stays His hand of execution of the punishment that we all deserve.

" 'And when you make a son of the herd a burnt-offering [or, an ascending--offering] or a sacrifice, to perform a [wonderful] vow or a peace-offerings to Y^ehowah; [Numbers 15:8]

Above, I have given a very literal and consistent rendering of the original; below, you will get an idea as to how poorly some of Numbers is translated:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	And when you prepare a bull for a burnt offering, or for a sacrifice in fulfilling a special vow, or peace offerings to the Lord,
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	And when thou wouldst offer a choice young bullock, as an ascending-offering or sacrifice,—for celebrating a vow or as a peace offering unto Yaweh...
KJV	And when thou preparest a bullock for a burnt offering, or for a sacrifice in performing a vow, or peace offerings unto the Lord;
<i>The Living Bible</i>	If the sacrifice is a young bull,
NASB	And when you prepare a bull as a burnt offering or a sacrifice, to fulfil a special vow [or, make a special votive offering], or for peace offerings to the Lord,

As you see, many liberties are taken with the rendering of this verse and these several words. An improvement is seen in the NIV where a peace--offering is rendered a fellowship offering. Too many people are confused and continually see the word *peace* and associate it with world peace; there is no world peace in the Bible except in the millenium—*peace* always refers to peace between God and man, as we are by nature at enmity with one another.

One of the difficult words is the Piel infinitive construct of *pâlâ'* (פָּלֵא) [pronounced *paw-LAW*] which is usually used in the Niphal⁹⁰ in conjunction with God performing or doing marvelous and miraculous things (e.g., Exodus 3:20 34:10). In the Hiphil (the causative stem) the KJV usually translates as something occurring *wondrously, marvelously* but here we have the Piel stem (also found in Leviticus 22:21 Numbers 15:3). Since these two instances are accomplished by man and not God and since there does not appear to be anything miraculous occurring, we will translate this *to perform [a wonderful]*.

" 'Then he will bring near for the son of the herd a present of flour, three-tenths [of an ephah], mixed with oil, a half of the hin; [Numbers 15:9]

For each of these sacrifices, there is to be an accompanying meal offering.

" 'And wine you will bring near for a drink offering, a half of the hin—a fire-offering of tranquilizing scent to Y^ehowah; [Numbers 15:10]

When these sacrifices are offered so that they recognize the humanity of Jesus Christ, His power on earth given and guided by the Holy Spirit, they act as a tranquilizing scent to God.

" 'Thus it is done for the one ox, or for the one ram, or for a lamb of the sheep or of the goats. [Numbers 15:11]

The meal offering herein described was to be given with any of the sacrifices at the entry of the land.

" 'According to the number that you [all] prepare, so you [all] will do to each, according to their number; [Numbers 15:12]

This just means for ten burnt offerings, there will be ten meal offerings.

" 'Every native will do thus with these, at bringing near a fire-offering of a tranquilizing scent to Y^ehowah. [Numbers 15:13]

This is how the Jews who inhabit the land will offer to Y^ehowah.

God's Laws Apply to the Alien as Well as to the Jew

" 'And when a stranger is residing with you [or, when a visitor is visiting], or whoever is in your midst, throughout your generations and he makes a fire-offering, a tranquilizing scent to Y^ehowah, as you do thus he will do. [Numbers 15:14]

When this is rendered as a *visitor visting* it is similar to the Hebrew where both the verb and its noun construct; however, it gives the impression that these are out-of-town relatives come to visit. The idea is that this is a stranger who is traveling through the land—someone who is not a Jew. When they bring this person into their homes and sacrifices are offered, the stranger is not given the opportunity to *share* his own particular brand of religion but is to follow their lead in worshipping the one true God.

The purpose of the Jewish nation was to witness to the one true God. **"And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse and in you all the races of the earth will be blessed."** (Genesis 12:3). God would bring people to Israel for the purpose of witnessing to them and to give them the gospel and spiritual information. This baton has been handed to the church. We, as believers in Jesus Christ, are the church. God brings people into our path to witness to also. Unless moved by God, you don't have to go out and witness to twenty people a day. That is a gift which some people have been given. However, there will be

⁹⁰ The Niphal is usually the passive stem; however, it can stress the effect of the action of the verb on each individual.

times in our life when God calls upon us to witness. Sometimes it comes to a point where we lose a loved one whose salvation is in question—a loved one who could spend all of eternity in hell—a loved one whom we will never see again, not even in eternity—in order to make us realize how important our witness is.

" 'One statute is for you of the congregation and for the stranger who is residing—a perpetual statute throughout your generations as you [are] so the stranger will be before Y^ehowah.

[Numbers 15:15]

The Jews are not to stray from this. In generations to come, those who God brings to them are to be exposed to the undiluted gospel; this is more than participating politely in another's religious ritual—this is being exposed to the gospel of the Almighty God.

" 'One law and one ordinance is to you and to the strangers who is residing with you.' "

[Numbers 15:16]

We have seen when observing the Passover, the Jew and the stranger are to observe it in the same way (Numbers 9:14). There is only one way of salvation. God does not allow for other religions, no matter how sincere they appear to be. All other religions **worship the creature rather than the creator**⁹¹—that is, all other religions worship Satan rather than Jesus Christ.

Offerings to Be Made upon Eating the First Food in the Land of Canaan

And Y^ehowah spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 15:17]

There is no other book like the bible throughout all the world. In no other book do we have direct quotation after direct quotation from God.

"Speak to the sons of Israel, and you will say to them, 'In your coming into the land where I am bringing you [to] there; [Numbers 15:18]

Again, God is not speaking to the generation of Joshua and Caleb but to the younger generation, because they will come into the land.

" 'Then it will come to pass, in your eating of the bread of the land, you [all] will raise a contribution to Y^ehowah; [Numbers 15:19]

The word translated *raise* is the Hiphil imperfect of *rûwm* (רומ) [pronounced *room*] and it means *to exalt, to raise, to lift up* and even *to offer up*. Strong's #7311 BDB #926. Its substantive construct is rendered *contribution*. The Jews, once they have settled into the land and are eating of the bread produced in the land, then they will lift up and offering to Y^ehowah in appreciation.

When the Jews finally enter into the land, they will offer of the first fruits of their bread as well as of their produce. Also, manna will cease being brought to them. **And on the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. And the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten some of the produce of the land, so that the sons of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate some of the yield of the land of Canaan during that year** (Josh. 5:11–12).

" 'The beginning of your dough [or, possibly, coarse meal] a cake you raise up a contribution as an offering from the threshing floor—so shall you present it. [Numbers 15:20]

⁹¹ Romans 1:23b.

The first part of the grain that they make into dough or into cakes is to be offered to God. This is very similar to the offering of the firstfruits. God has always asked to receive from the *first* or the *beginning* of our possessions (Exodus 34:26 Leviticus 23:10, 14, 17 1Corinthians 16:2).

" 'Of the beginning of your dough [or, possibly, coarse meal] you [all] will give to Y^ehowah a contribution—throughout your generations. [Numbers 15:21]

To remind this next generation and all succeeding generations that God brought them into this land flowing with milk and honey, they are to offer the first part of the bread that they make.

Unintentional Errors

" 'And when you [all] err and do not all these commandments which Y^ehowah has spoken to Moses; [Numbers 15:22]

God's plan always includes an authority heirarchy. His plan always includes an intermediary. The *if* portion of this conditional sets up a situation where those hearers do not obey all of Y^ehowah's commandments.

" 'The whole that Y^ehowah has charged regarding you by the hand of Moses, from the day that Y^ehowah had commanded and henceforth to your generations; [Numbers 15:23]

We are still in the protosis of this conditional clause. This is a promise concerning those who do not do all of the commandments given by Y^ehowah through Moses; commandments given by God throughout all of their generations. The transgression of the commandments here will be unintentional transgressions. A sin is a sin is a sin, whether intentional or not, and must be dealt with. All sins must be forgiven for one to proceed in fellowship. Today, the naming of our sins to God frees us from the penalty of known sins and unknown sins (1 John 1:9). Vv. 22–26 deal with the unintentional sins committed by Israel as a congregation (compare Leviticus 4:13) and vv. 27–29 are the unintentional sins of an individual.

" 'Then it will come to pass, if from the eyes of the company it had been done in ignorance, that all the company will prepare one bullock, a son of the herd, for a burnt-offering, for a tranquilizing scent to Y^ehowah, and its present, and its libation [or, drink offering], according to the ordinance, and one kid of the goats for a sin-offering. [Numbers 15:24]

This is what must transpire when such a transgression has taken place. If the transgression was unintentional, as this indicates, then there must be an offering to Y^ehowah (we also examined such offerings in Leviticus 4). Along with the burnt offering, there would be the meal offering and the drink offering and one goat would be offered.

" 'And the priest will make atonement for all the company of the sons of Israel and it has been forgiven them, for it [was] ignorance, and they—they have brought their offering, a fire-offering to Y^ehowah, even their sin-offering before Y^ehowah for their ignorance. [Numbers 15:25]

God has differentiated between sins of ignorance and sins of cognizance. Those committed in ignorance still required a sacrifice to God.

" 'And it will be forgiven to all the company of the sons of Israel, and to the stranger who is temporarily residing in their midst; for to all the company [acted] in ignorance. [Numbers 15:26]

This forgiveness is available to the entire company of Israel and to even the stranger who is in their midst.

" 'And if one person sins in ignorance, then he will bring ner a she-goat, daughter of a year, for a sin [-offering]; [Numbers 15:27]

As we have no doubt noticed, the phrase *son of a year* and *daughter of a year* are both simple phrases just to indicate the age of the animals.

" 'And the priest will make a covering [or, an atonement] for the person who is in err, in his sinning in ignorance before Y^ehowah, by making a covering [or, an atonement] for him, and it has been forgiven him. [Numbers 15:28]

The covreing or atonement that the priest makes on behalf of the person who has sinned in ignorance is the animal sacrifice and the sprinkling of the blood.

" 'For the native among the sons of Israel, and for the stranger who is temporarily residing in their midst—there is one law for you to the one making an error. [Numbers 15:29]

These sacrificices are the only ones presribed under these circumstances. God's planis much more exclusive than some really care for—that is because God is perfect and His plan is perfect. There is only one way of doing a thing. **There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one confidence of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and throught all and in all** (Eph. 4:4–6). As Thieme used to put it, you can only do a right thing in a right way. Those from other lands were not allowed to engage in any of their own religious rituals because God spoke directly to the Israelites and not to humankind in general. The Israelites were God's light to the world. God revealed the gospel through His presribed rituals, through their contact with the outside world. The world was filled with many religions then, as it is now. However, their has always been just one true path to God, faith in Jesus Christ, and many false roads which all lead to the Lake of Fire. It is only faith in Jesus Christ which acknowledges God as perfect, which recognizes His true essence and does not compromise that essence. Every other religion compromises God's character and asks God, Who is perfect, to accept man who is not on the basis of man's failure of a lifestyle. Now you might be the most perfect person in the world. Personally, I am glad that will not have to stand upon my personal works before God in order to gain salvation. I have done one or two things right in my life, through the power of the Holy Spirit, but, as Garrison Keillor used to put it, *I also have the backstage view*. God has that same view and I cannot stand before a holy God outside of Jesus Christ. His perfection and my complete imperfection and inadequacy would preclude that. Everyone who intends to stand before God based upon being a good person who does good things is either a thousand times better than I am, or an absolute fool (or both). You cannot stand before God an dreceive praise and acceptance outside of being in Christ. **"I am the way, and the truth and the life; no one** comes to the Father but through Me." (John 14:6b). There is one law for the sons of Israel as well as for the nonresident temporarily residing in Israel.

Intentional Sinning and One Example

" 'And the person who does by a raised hand—of the native or of the stranger—he is reviling [or blaspheming] Y^ehowah, and that person will be cut off from the midst of his people; [Numbers 15:30]

This is the literal translation and what we have here is an idiom. In the NASB it is recorded as *acting defiantly*; in the NIV it reads: *sins defiantly*; in the *The Amplified Bible*, this is a person *who does anything [wrong] willfully and openly*; and in the NRSV is is one who acts *highhandedly*. A raised hand can signify many things in differnt cultures—in a classroom, it is a sign of a question or a comment; when a raised fist in the sixties, it was often a symbol of black power and defiance of the law of the land; however, in Israel, during this time period, it meant to act in accordance with one's own works, to stand upon one's own accomplishments, rather than upon what God has done. Of course you are wondering, where did I get this. It was obviously a commonly understood phrase during that time, otherwise God would not have used it when communicating this information to Moses. We find it in Deuteronomy 32:27: **So they should not say, "Our hand is raised and**

Y^ehowah has not done all this. It is man's actions as opposed to God's. In context, it is a person not conforming to this one law. It is also a symbol of defiance, as we find in Exodus 14:8 Numbers 33:3.

We have several examples of this defiant sinning, the chief of which is the reaction of Israel to the report of the spys. They spys were wrong to be afraid; they were wrong to incite the crowd against Moses and Aaron; and the sons of Israel were wrong to take their lead (Numbers 14:40–44 Deuteronomy 1:43 17:2–3).

" 'Because of the word of Y^ehowah he has despised and His command he has broken, that person is certainly cut off; his iniquity [or guilt] [is] on him.' " [Numbers 15:31]

This is the person who acts outside the Law. This is the person who either has his own personal ritual, acts in accordance with some religious ritual of some pagan religion, or does not think that he requires forgiveness. When we do not go to God for forgiveness, our iniquity is upon us. Furthermore, this is a person who is acting with full knowledge of right and wrong; not in ignorance. Such a person is cut off from his people. This will be illustrated below.

And then sons of Israel were in the desert and they found a man gathering wood on the sabbath-day; [Numbers 15:32]

The Jews had received a principle in this previous passage and now was the time for application. God spoke to Moses, Moses taught the principle and, sometime later, this incident took place. However, we have already received the general principle back in Exodus 31:14: **Therefore you are to observe the sabbath, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person will be cut off from among his people. For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, holy to Y^ehowah; whoever does any work on the sabbath day will sure be put to death** (see also Exodus 35:1–3). So what is actually occurring here is the people are going back to Moses and asking him to go back to God and ask, "Now are you certain about this?" They want to know whether God means what He says or whether this is allegorical.

And those finding him gathering wood brought him near to Moses and to Aaron and to all the company; [Numbers 15:33]

This is not as clear-cut of a case as you might suppose. There are people, who for relaxation, chop wood, run several miles, practice martial arts. What is being done is against the Law of Moses; however, it is possible, due to this context and due to the uncertainty of the Jews, that this man was acting in ignorance.

And they placed him in ward, for it [is] not explained [or, declared distinctly] what [should be] done to him. [Numbers 15:34]

We have quite a point of interest here. *In ward* means that the Jews did have some sort of holding cell or prison to temporarily house criminals. Another point of interest; we have already seen that there were two places in the Law which required the death penalty for the infraction of breaking the sabbath. These Jews did not know god's Law. We will now apply the Law. However, even Moses takes this matter to God. Again, this seems like such a minor infraction, and the Law prescribes capital punishment.

And Y^ehowah said to Moses, "The man in dying will be put to death—all the company will stone him with stones at the outside of the camp." [Numbers 15:35]

God knew the heart of this man. God knew that that this man acted defiantly before Him, not in ignorance. One of the great proofs of the six day creation is that throughout the world, we function on a seven-day week. There are generally five or six days of work and one or two days of rest, the confusion being in the change from the sabbath as a holy day to God to Sunday, the first day of the week, being set apart to God. It is only natural that when such a momentous change occurred, that there would be those who would not change, and those who kept both just in case. However, from the very beginning, God had set apart the seventh day as a

day of rest. When the various calendars were set up, it would have made a lot more sense to operate on 5 or 6 day weeks. Our months could have been better balanced with the same number of weeks and the *holy day* could always fall on the same days; and there could be a *holy week*. The S.A.E measurement system is based upon numbers which are divisible by many other numbers (12 inches in a foot, 36 inches in a yard, 5280 feet in a mile, 16 ounces in a pound, etc.). Yet, when it comes to one of the most fundamental aspects of our lives and the lives of almost every country in the world, we have the very illogical seven-day work week—illogical, except that such a week was prescribed by God from the foundation of the world, in Genesis 2:2 and reiterated in the Law in Exodus 20:8–11. However, we are not under the Sabbath today, as has already been covered in the **Doctrine of the Sabbath—not finished**. This seven day week is a great sign of God's creation of the earth and the recognition of that by man for the past 6-10,000 years.

Also, we should examine the **Doctrine of Capital Punishment—not finished yet!**

Then all the company brought him out to the outside of the camp and they stoned him with stones and he died, as Y^ehowah had commanded Moses. [Numbers 15:36]

Again, notice the chain of command. The people brought the man to Moses, Moses went to God, God told Moses what to do, and Moses told the people what to do. These people did not just look up into heaven and ask God, *what should be do with this guy?* And God, when asked, did not speak to the entire congregation of Israel. God always has a chain of authority and He always has in intermediary between Himself and man.

Centuries later, the keeping of the Sabbath was distorted beyond recognition. The Jews went from one extreme in their questioning of God's clear commands to the other of adding to the law of the sabbath. The Jewish Talmud is filled with hundreds of commands dealing with the observance of the sabbath; commands which go far beyond what God had intended. A person was only allowed to walk 2000 paces on a sabbath day. If a house fell upon an individual, it was just too damn bad and there would be no excavation until the next day. A scribe was not allowed to carry a pen in his belt (no doubt, it was thought he was carrying a burden).⁹² I recall from my Jewish history class that when mud had been splashed upon one's garment on the sabbath, that person could wait until the mud dried, squeeze it once with the hand, and let go. This obviously has nothing whatsoever to do with God's Word—it is simply man adding to God's Word. It is these types of distortions which caused the Pharisees to seek the life of Jesus Christ when they alledged that He broke the sabbath (Matthew 12:1–14, as a for instance).

As a literary aside, vv. 35–36 are set up as a parallelism. When we study these verses phrase by phrase, we sometimes miss the overall poetry of the passage. Therefore, I have retyped vv. 35–36 below.

And Y^ehowah said to Moses,
 "The man in dying will be put to death;
 they will stone him with stones
 all the company at the outside of the camp."
 Then all the company brought him out to the outside of the camp
 and they stoned him with stones
 and he died,
 as Y^ehowah had commanded Moses.

Remembering God's Commandments—the Tassel Method

And so Y^ehowah spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 15:37]

⁹² These illustrations came from Gower's *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times*; p. 354.

The consecutive wâw, while generally denoting an advance in chronological time can just refer to a different time and place, as it does here. The commands of the first portion of Numbers 15 did not necessarily precede this commands; they just took place at different times and Moses is recalling these things many years later.

"Speak to the sons of Israel, and you will say to them (and they will make for themselves fringes [or, tassels] on the extremities [or, wings] of the garments, to their generations, and they will put on the fringe [or, tassels] of the extremities [or, wings] a ribbon of blue);
[Numbers 15:38]

The parenthetical portion of this verse is not what God has said to Moses, but not exactly what Moses will say to the people. The word translated *fringe* is found only in vv. 38–39 and in Ezekiel 8:3, where it refers to a *lock* of hair.⁹³ The context for remembering refers right to this previous incident and others like it where God's commands have been clearly stated, yet they go to Moses who goes to God to double-check on the commandment and the consequences for breaking it.

Hundreds of years later, the scribes and Pharisees, rather than looking upon these tassels to help them recall the commandments of God, they merely lengthened theirs so that their religious stature was more obvious to those around them. Society gives its approbation to many different kinds of people—ours today seems to have an enormous amount of approbation for movie stars, athletes and successful musicians. The Jewish society at the time of the incarnation had great admiration for those who were religious—this was a way of pointing out to the general public that they were religious (Matthew 23:5).

In order to better grasp this passage and the context to which Moses alludes, we will examine other translations of v. 39.

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	And it shall be to you a fringe <i>or</i> tassel that you may look upon and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them, that you may not spy out <i>and</i> follow after [the desires of] your own heart and your own eyes, after which you used to follow <i>and</i> play the harlot [spiritually, if not physically];
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	...so shall they serve you as fringes, and when ye see them, them shall ye call to mind all the commandments of Yahweh, and shall do them,—and shall not spy out, after your own hearts and after your own eyes for things after which ye are ready to go unchastely away;
KJV	And it shall be unto you for a frngce, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them; and thta ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye used to go a whoring;
NASB	And it shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the Lord, so as to do them and not follow after your own heart and your own eyes, wafter which you played the harlot,
NIV	And 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 going after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	...and it hath been to you for a fringe, and ye have seen it, and have remembered all the commands of Jehovah, and have done them, and ye search not after your heart, and after your eyes, after which ye are going a-whoring;

" 'And it is to you for a fringe, and you have will see it and you will remember all the commands of Y^ehowah, and you will do them and you [all] will not search after your heart, and after your eyes, after which you [all] go fornicating [lit., which you go fornicating after them];
[Numbers 15:39]

We have an interesting use of words here. Tûwr (תוּר) [pronounced *toor*] means *to spy, to search out, to explore*. The same word was used when the spies went into the land. One of the things which confuses

⁹³ The word found in Deuteronomy 22:12 is a different word altogether.

unbelievers is that it is our natural tendency to do wrong. A homosexual, a child molester, a liar or a cheat may all claim they were born that way and should be excused. We are all born that way, with various inclinations to do various sins. Some of us have had this further developed through our environment. We have the choice to follow what God has told us or we can search out our own hearts, we can search out the desires of our own eyes and act according to what we think we should do. The latter will inevitably anti-God. When we delve into the book of the Judges, we will find time after time where every man did what was right in his own eyes, and the book of Judges is a book of great degeneracy and spiritual darkness.

The use of the word *fornicating* refers to whenever the right woman (Israel) chases after the wrong man (any thing or anyone except for God). Even when the Jews pursued that which was right in their own eyes, that was fornication against God, their right man.

The fringe was a command from God for the Jews to look upon and examine as they would the blue of the tabernacle, and it would bring to mind the commands of God, so that they would not do what is in their hearts; so that they would not follow after their own lusts (a reference to the eyes—we all develop desires from that which we can see). The result of this is activity which is spiritually immoral. It certainly could result in sexual deviance, which is the first thing to come to mind when seeing the words *a-whoring, prostituting*—however, that, as we have examined in the past, is forsaking one's right God and embracing that which is false. The blue fringe was to remind them of God's commands and that they should embrace their God as the true God of the Universe. We will go into more detail about these tassels in either Deuteronomy 4 or 1Samuel 24.

In summary, there are two directions in which the sons of Israel can go—they can choose to obey God and His commandments, which included stoning a man for breaking the Sabbath, or they can choose to follow their own instincts and their own lust pattern. Following their heart is doing what they think to be right and following their eyes is choosing to pursue their lust pattern (everyone has a different lust pattern). Following that which one sees means the homosexual may see someone of the same sex that they find attractive and they sexually pursue that person; just as a Lothario (or a tramp) sees a person of the opposite sex and they sexually pursue them; just as a person observes the power and authority held by another and desires that power and authority; just as another sees the great wealth and possessions of another and desires those things. We all have different things for which we lust and we can choose to pursue that lust pattern or to believe God. God, under logistical grace, will provide us whatever it is that we need. Under the grace we are given while advancing in the spiritual life, He gives us blessings far beyond what we need.

As a personal testimony, I recall hearing these things very early in my Christian life, as well as hearing that we are tested with prosperity as well as with adversity and I thought to myself that I would rather like being tested by prosperity. In fact, I probably even prayed something to that effect in my spiritual youth, if I recall correctly. About fifteen or twenty years later, I looked around me and noticed that I had, relatively speaking,⁹⁴ great material wealth and great prosperity. Luckily, I have remained faithful in the pursuit of the understanding of God's Word and He has allowed me to retain this wealth (and, again, this is relatively speaking—wealth compared to what I am used to; there are many people who are much wealthier and some who are not).

"So that you [all] will remember and will do all My commands, and you all will be holy [set apart] to your God; [Numbers 15:40]

The Jews will be given several ways to recall the commandments of God; we have been given the Holy Spirit. Note that the verbs in the verse are in the Qal perfect and not the Qal imperative. That is, these are promises, not commands.

"I [am] Y^ehowah your God, who has brought you out from the land of Egypt to become your God; I, Y^ehowah, [am] your God.'" [Numbers 15:41]

⁹⁴ This is relative to a wealth status to which I was accustomed.

There is an exclusivity between God and the Jews. In the Old Testament, God was specifically the God of one nation, Israel, just as He is exclusively the God of the church in this dispensation.

Numbers 16

Numbers 16:1–50

Outline of Chapter 16:

- Vv. 1–3 **Korah stands up against Moses and Aaron**
- Vv. 4–11 **Moses reasons with Korah and sets up a test for the next day**
- Vv. 12–17 **Moses speaks with Dathan and Abiram, then to God and then to Korah**
- Vv. 18–27 **Moses opposes Korah, Dathan and Abiram before the congregation of Israel**
- Vv. 28–34 **An earthquake envelops Korah, Dathan, Abiram and their respective households**
- Vv. 35–40 **A lightning storm destroys their intended royal administration**
- Vv. 41–50 **A large contingent of followers still oppose Moses and Aaron**

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

- v. 13 **Dathan and Abiram's Logic**
- v. 13 **The Flawed Logic of Dathan and Abiram**
- v. 13 **The Application to You**
- v. 13 **Actual Examples of the Above**

Introduction: Numbers 16 deals with the rebellion of Korah and the careful separation between the Aaronic priesthood and the Levitical responsibilities (which did not include the priesthood). In other words, the *Levitical priesthood* is a misnomer.

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Korah Stands up Against Moses and Aaron

One of the uncertainties of the previous chapters is whether God would wipe out the generation of Levites as well as the generation of the other eleven tribes. This chapter gives a Levitical rebellion ending in the sin unto death of several hundred Levites. We are not exposed to every rebellion or God's judgement of same for the next thirty-eight years. We will have to take this as a typical example which was repeated several times.

And then Korah ben Izhar, son of Kobath, son of Levi, took both Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and On ben Peleth, sons⁹⁵ of Reuben; [Numbers 16:1]

Levi had three sons, Gershon, Kohath and Merari (Exodus 6:16 Numbers 3:17). Kohath had at least four notable descendants: Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel (Exodus 6:18 Numbers 3:19, 27). Izhar had three notable descendants: one of which was Korah (Exodus 6:21). The fact that Korah is mentioned as early on as Exodus 6 indicates that he headed a prominent family in Israel. Because of the ages given for Levi and Kohath (137 and 133 respectively; Exodus 6:16–17), we know that there must have been some intermediate generations (at least Aminadab, who fell between Kohath and Korah; 1Chronicles 6:22).

Dathan and Abiram (as well as Nemuel) were the descendants of Eliab, who was a descendant of Pallu, who was a descendant of Reuben (Numbers 26:7–9). On was a descendant of Peleth who was a descendant of Reuben (our passage). This is why all of them are called sons of Reuben. So we have one Levite and three Reubenites who are displeased with the leadership situation. Moses was a Levite and Korah will demand to know why he has such a position of power whereas, he, Korah, does not. The other three are from the first-born of Jacob and therefore should have leadership positions, but they do not. God promotes and demotes and they had not been promoted.

⁹⁵ The western Samaritan and Septuagint has *son* here; although that is probably erroneous.

And they rose up before Moses and men of the sons of Israel—two hundred and fifty—leaders of the company, summoned [by popular demand] of the convention, men of name; [Numbers 16:2]

In their grumbling, much of the congregation of Israel met and chose men to represent them. This was a democratic form of a republic. The men of Israel chose their leaders, two hundred and fifty men, probably from all the tribes. Korah, Dathan, Abiram and On were likely leaders from the beginning. This kind of discontent must be fomented. Someone must stand before the crowd and begin talking. A mob will not act unless there is a leader to ignite them. Remove the leadership of the mob *before* it has a specific purpose and it will defuse itself. The choice of these four was likely an organic process—they stood up before the sons of Israel as leaders and incited the discontent which was already there. By virtue of their standing before Israel and inciting them to revolt, they were given popular support and chosen. Then Israel chose another two hundred and fifty men to accompany them and to represent the general congregation, since all two million could not go before Moses and Aaron.

What we are dealing with here is human celebrityship. These are the people that their tribe would have elected to represent them⁹⁶. They were personable and understanding, they had the right look; they were handsome and reasonably intelligent, but not too far above those they represented. They wouldn't have made the idolaters drink gold mixed with water. They were the people's choice. However, since they were not God's choice and since they opposed God's authority, they will die the sin unto death (Numbers 16:35). We would personally save ourselves a great deal of trouble if we did not oppose those placed in authority over us. We suffer discipline, lost time, pain and the continual pounding of our heads against walls because we oppose those that God set up in authority over us. Some even die the sin unto death for such opposition.

And then they assembled against Moses and against Aaron, and they said to them, "Enough of you! For all the company—all of them [are] holy [set apart to God] and in their midst [is] Y^ehowah! And why then do you exalt yourselves up above the assembly of Y^ehowah?" [Numbers 16:3]

Thieme paraphrased the sentiments of this mob several decades ago: "We're all equal, brother and you're no better than us. We all have a spark of divinity." The first thing that they say is *ra^{bv} lakem!* It is idiomatic—it was a popular colloquialism. *Ra^{bv}* (רב) [pronounced *rah^{bv}*] means *many, much, great* (in the sense of large, not acclaimed; Genesis 6:5 7:11 21:34 50:20 Exodus 19:21). This is followed by the prefixed preposition *lamed* (*to, for, in regard to*) with the second person masculine plural. Literally, we have *much for you [all]*. We might interpret this as *we have had too much of you, we have had enough of you, you have gone on long enough, you have gone too far, you are too much* (spoken ironically). We have a similar idiomatic usage in Genesis 45:28 Exodus 9:28 Numbers 16:7. The second use of this phrase indicates that it may have been a rallying call; a slogan for this campaign). "Too much of you! Too much of you!" the crowd screams. This idiom expresses great dissatisfaction with Moses and Aaron as leaders. There are many great leaders in the past who faced a lot of negative public sentiment—Churchill, MacArthur, Cæsar. Insofar as these people are concerned, the reign of Moses and Aaron has gone on long enough. They have the greatest leaders in all of history standing before them and they want a recall. That is pure degeneracy.

What we have here is Satan's favorite trick; it is a mixture of truth and lies. It is true that Y^ehowah is in the congregation of Israel. It is true that Israel is set apart from all the other nations of the earth. However, Moses did not exalt himself above all the congregation—this is a position which God has assigned him. Furthermore, it is God's purpose to have a system of authority in place, and that authority begins with Moses. The person who opposes this authority opposes God.

Do you think that Communism is something new? Do you think a republican form of government is new? We are 1400 years prior to the birth of our Lord and we have both the seed of Communism and the seed of a republic. Moses and Aaron were in authority over two million people. Those in rebellion reasoned that they were all equal in God's sight. God was with them as well as with Moses and Aaron; so there was no reason for Moses and Aaron to hold positions of authority over them. They reasoned that they were all brothers under the skin, they all had the same God, and they all had the same authority. The chief difference was these men were the people's choice.

⁹⁶ We have examined the word *called* back in Numbers 1:16.

Korah is the actual ring leader of this rebellion. He is the primary leader. He is rebelling against God's elect, against the man chosen specifically by God to lead the Jews. He is rebelling against the man who has stood in the gap between God and Israel and has delivered Israel from God's wrath several times. **But these men revile the things which they do not understand and [they revile] the things which they know by instinct—like unreasoning animals. By these things they are destroyed. Woe to them, for they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and they have perished in the rebellion of Korah** (Jude 10–11).

Korah's motives are clearly delineated in what he has said. He desires the power and authority exercised by Moses and Aaron. Although the Kohathites, Korah's family, were in charge of the tabernacle, there was no place of leadership for him—in fact, the leadership of the four families of the Kohathites was entrusted to the youngest of the family heads, Uzziel and his family. This had certainly burned in Korah's craw for a long time. He had been seething with mental attitude sins and evil thoughts and now, since the Jews were back in the desert, he had his opportunity to complain and to grab a position of leadership. No doubt, he would just as soon turn the Israelites around and head back into the land. Korah was not able to entice many Levites to follow him (and perhaps he did not want to) so he appealed to the tribe contiguous to his tribe, the Reubenites. Now they belonged to the tribe of the first born of Jacob, and they also had a reason to be disaffected. They should be rulers over Israel. If they were running the show, as well they should be, then they would be back in the land enjoying its milk and honey. In their minds, they were less than enthralled by the desert wandering, and it seemed unjust to them to take a back seat with regards to leadership to the family of Moses and Aaron.

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Moses Reasons with Korah and Sets up a Test for the next Day

And Moses heard and fell on his face; [Numbers 16:4]

Moses has a tendency before an angry mob to take a submissive position, and yield over to God. There is nothing he can do before this mob. He can't shout them down. In this position of grace-orientation, revealing the grace-orientation in his soul, he makes a calm proposal to the men of Korah.

And Moses spoke to Korah, and to all his company, saying, "[In the] morning—and Y^ehowah will cause to know those who are his, and him who is holy, and He has brought [or, caused to bring] near to Himself, even him whom He chooses, He brings near [or, causes to come near] to Himself.

[Numbers 16:5]

Know is in the Hiphil (causative) stem, which is why it is translated *cause to know*. *Brought near* is also in the Hiphil stem. This is the very word which is continually mistranslated *offer*, *sacrifice* but it means *to bring near*; in the Hiphil, it again speaks of being caused to bring near. At the end of this verse, we even see a little divine choice. **How blessed [happy] is the one whom You have chosen and [whom] you bring near to You to dwell in Your courts** (Psalm 65:4a). God chooses those who choose Him. Those He has known since eternity past. **Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, giving this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His."** (II Tim. 2:19a). However, they can only choose Him if given the Holy Spirit (which allows them a free will choice and makes the gospel real to them).

"This [you must] do—take to yourselves censers—Korah, and all his company; [Numbers 16:6]

Moses does not even consult God. He tells Korah and his followers to all take their own censers (these are things which will allow for the burning of incense). To establish his own authority, Moses had to resort to this. Such a thing is necessary and important, particularly in a degenerate group of Jews like that. After all, his authority when it comes to writing Scriptures would be called into question here if his simple ruling authority did not stand.

"And put in them fire, and put on them perfume, before Y^ehowah tomorrow, and it will come to pass, the man who Y^ehowah chooses—he is the only one; enough of you, sons of Levi." [Numbers 16:7]

Moses does not specify, at least in this recorded portion of God's Word, exactly how God will identify who is of God and who is not; however, the men of Korah, who see themselves as having Y^ehowah in their midst even as Moses, are to place their incense burners in fire and to scent them. Recall how these men said to Moses, "Ra^bv lâkem"; or, "Too much of you!" Moses throws the same thing back at them: "Ra^bv lâkem, you sons of Levi!"

Something which is often ignored in exegeting this passage is that this is short-term prophecy. We have a taste of short-term prophecy in the Bible (certainly not all that occurred). Moses has told them that tomorrow, God would reveal whom He will draw near to Himself. Prophets were judged with regards to two criteria: (1) if they adhered to Bible doctrine; and, (2) if their prophecies came to pass; the former qualification being more important than the latter. "You may say in your heart, 'How do we know the word which Y^ehowah has not spoken?' When a prophet speaks in the name of Y^ehowah and if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which Y^ehowah has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you will not be afraid of him." (Deuteronomy 18:21–22). "If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other Gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them.' You will not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for Y^ehowah your God is testing you to find out if you love Y^ehowah your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You will follow Y^ehowah your God and fear Him; and you will keep His commandments, listen to his voice, serve Him and cling to Him." (Deuteronomy 13:1–3). What Moses prophesied came to pass, which gave credence to his words and to his leadership position. Numbers 16:30 is also a short-termed prophecy which came to pass almost immediately.

And Moses said to Korah, "Listen [up] you, I respectfully ask you, sons of Levi; [Numbers 16:8]

Moses treats his opposition with respect. Moses did not desire his position of authority. A lot of people placed into authority who are great are men who did not desire this position in the first place and they discharge their duties not out of some lust for authority and control, but out of respect for God's choice, which is them. For those in authority as well as those under authority, it is a lot easier to go along with God's plan than it is to oppose it.

"Is it a small thing to you that the God of Israel has separated you from the company of Israel to bring you near to Himself, to do the service of the tabernacle of Y^ehowah, and to stand before the company to serve them? [Numbers 16:9]

You probably missed the wonderful play on words here. These followers have already told Moses, "Too much of you!" and Moses gave the exact same phrase back to them; however, here, he inquires of them, "Is it a small thing...to do the service of the tabernacle of Y^ehowah?" They've had too much of Moses; Moses tells them that they are too much; and then he asks if the service assigned them by Y^ehowah is just too little. That was their God-given service, according to Numbers 3:6, 9.

Moses now has them of balance; they are thinking about their incense burners and meeting Moses tomorrow and God choosing His Own men, and then Moses begins to reason with them. God has given the Levites a place of great importance—the assistance of the duties of the tabernacle. God has the ideal place for us all to function in His plan and sometimes these are places of great recognition and sometimes our work goes totally unnoticed by the hoi polloi.⁹⁷ There are people who are poor, have few or no friends, and spend much of their time in prayer. Their prayer life is richer and more meaningful than the entire ministry of some pastor-teachers. These men had a tremendous ministry, tied directly to the evangelism of all of Israel and those that God brought into Israel.

"In fact [lit., yea], He brings you near, and all your brothers—the sons of Levi with you—and you also seek after the priesthood? [Numbers 16:10]

⁹⁷ Okay, for those of you who know, I realize that I should not preface *hoi polloi* with *the*.

So that this is ultra-clear to you, Korah is a Levite who thinks that he ought to be a priest. There is no Levitical priesthood—that is a misnomer; it is an Aaronic priesthood—the sons of Aaron, specifically, are priests, not the sons of Levi (Aaron is a Levite, but he is the particular chosen branch of the Levites). Moses reasons with Korah: God brings you near to Him—but you think that you ought to be priests as well? **Y^ehowah spoke to Moses, saying, "So you will appoint Aaron and his sons that they may keep their priesthood, but the outsider who comes near will be put to death."** (Leviticus 3:5, 10). God's stance here is unmistakable—anyone outside the family of Aaron who tries to bring themselves near to God will die the sin unto death. To think that just anyone can come into contact with God either ignores our own imperfection or God's perfection. Furthermore, they ignore God's mandate just stated. This clearly illustrates that there is an exclusivity of those who can come near to God. Perfection and righteousness cannot exist apart from judgement and condemnation of that which is imperfect and unrighteous.

In the one sense, this is no one other than our Lord Jesus Christ—other than Him, there is no one who can come near the holy presence of God without being annihilated by His righteousness. Imperfection cannot come into contact with perfection; unrighteousness cannot come into contact with righteousness. **For what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness** (2Corinthians 6:14b)? There is a continued emphasis in the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, between that which is clean and that which is unclean.

In a second sense, only believers have access to God because they are holy and righteous in Christ (those last two words cannot be overemphasized). Our source of perfection positionally is Jesus Christ. **Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing is able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord** (Romans 8:1, 38–39). It is only because Jesus Christ is true perfection and the fact that we are in Him which allows us access to God.

Now, just exactly how does the Old Testament illustrate the difference here? Simple: just as there are many sons in the family of God but there is just one Son, there are many priests, but only one High Priest. At this point in time, Aaron was the high priest and his two remaining sons were the priests. However, that would change as men grew old and died—but there would always be but one high priest and the progeny of Aaron, the first high priest, were the only priests. All the priest were begotten of the one high priest. The New Testament is careful to carry this analogy into our dispensation. Today, we are a kingdom of priests, but our High Priest is Jesus Christ. **And coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God; you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ** (1 Peter 2:5). **And He has made us a kingdom of priests, to Him the glory and the doinion forever and ever—Amen** (Revelation 1:6). **Therefore, holy family of God, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession** (Hebrews 3:1). **Since then we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession** (Hebrews 4:14).

Furthermore, to continue the analogy, the priests basically with all of their duties, were evangelists. Satan did not understand the gospel because in all his great genius, he is not even a fraction as intelligent as God is; however, every saved person in the Old Testament understood enough of the gospel to believe and to be saved because the Holy Spirit made the gospel real to him. We also act as evangelists in our own sphere, as the Aaronic priesthood did in theirs. The high priest dealt directly with God in the holy of holies once a year on that Great Day of Atonement, representing all of Israel before God. Similarly, our High Priest represented us before God on that great day of atonement when He bore our sins in his own body on the wood.

"That being so, you and all your company—the ones gathered against Y^ehowah; and Aaron, what [is] he, that you [all] murmur against him?" [Numbers 16:11]

This begins with the prefixed lâmed preposition and the adverb kên (כֵּן) [pronounced *kane*]; together, they mean *according to such conditions, that being so, therefore*. L^e = Strong's #none BDB #510. Kên = Strong's #3651 BDB #485. It is an accepted fact that these Levites desire to be priests. The first verb is actually the Niphal participle of yâ'ad (אָדַד) [pronounced *yaw-GAHD*] and, although BDB gives its meaning as *appoint*, it is akin to the

its noun cognate ʿêdâh (עֵדָה) [pronounced *gā-DAWH*], translated *company, congregation, assembly*. Strong's #5712 BDB #417. So all of these who are gathered—gathered, incidentally, against God—if they desire to be priests and God is in their midst as well as anyone else, why do they bother to murmur against Aaron? **You are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men** (1Corinthians 3:3)? Moses, like Paul, has a great logical mind. The ability to think and to reason is not a detriment to the Christian life but rather, these abilities are assets and will be developed in the mature Christian. If God has not only allowed Aaron to approach Him but has mandated it, and if Y^ehowah is in the midst of the Levites, then isn't it illogical for the Levites to murmur against Aaron? However, those who murmur against Aaron are murmuring against Y^ehowah, as they have been told before (Exodus 16:8).

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Moses Speaks with Dathan and Abiram, Then to God and Then to Korah

And Moses sent to call for Dathan and for Abiram, sons of Eliab, and they said, "We will not come up." [Numbers 16:12]

There is a group of two hundred and fifty men before Moses, and then much of the congregation of Israel is standing behind them. Moses calls for Dathan and Abiram to come forward, as he has finished speaking to Korah. They are apparently in their tents and they will not come out to speak with Moses, and thereby validate his authority. Instead, the apparently sent a well-thought out, incendiary message.

"Is is a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey to put us to death [or, to allow us to die] in a desert that you make yourself a ruler over us—moreover making yourself a ruler [or, you have moreover made yourself an ruler over us—indeed!]?" [Numbers 16:13]

Moses has just used the phrase, *is it a small thing*, and they are throwing this phrase back at him in an insulting way. They are in the crowd, they just heard him dress down Korah, and they don't feel as though they have to go forward. It is not a matter of fear, but a matter of Moses has just ordered them to do something and they are refusing to do it. They instead bring up the old complaint painted in a new way—they blame Moses that they have left this land flowing with milk and honey (remember, they just got their butts kicked by the Canaanites),⁹⁸ and that they are out in the desert again. Not only has Moses hauled them out of the land flowing with milk and honey, but then he also has made himself a ruler over them. In a more modern vernacular, we would say, **"Oh, so it's not enough that you have taken us out of a land flowing with milk and honey to put us to death in the desert, but you have also made yourself a ruler over us?"** I should add that *put to death* is in the permissive Hiphil, so it could be rendered: **"Is is a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey to all us to die in a desert..."**⁹⁹

This verse ends with a verb being used twice—first the Hithpael imperfect and then the Hithpael infinitive absolute of *sârar* (שָׂרַר) [pronounced *saw-RAHR*], which means (in the Hithpael, or reflexive, stem) *to make oneself a ruler or a prince*. Between the repetition of the verb is the words *over us, moreover*. The repetition of the infinitive absolute of a verb often emphasizes, intensifies or acts as the complement of improbability and condition of the verb. Here the additional occurrence of the verb is the complement of improbability—the person speaking is amazed that even failing as a leader, that Moses has made himself a ruler over them. What they are saying is that, not only has Moses been a total failure in the realm of bringing the people into the land, but **you have made yourself a ruler? Preposterous!** They are totally amazed that Moses could be this much of a failure and then arrogant enough to make himself ruler. Obviously, these men do not understand God's plan, God's grace and God's Word. They have been told unequivocally that God would scatter their corpses in the desert. However,

⁹⁸ The NIV Study Bible claims that they are referring to Egypt as a land of milk and honey, thus transforming what was a prison to a paradise (p. 212).

⁹⁹ Rotherham's *The Emphasized Bible*, p. 175.

since they have not seen a manifestation of God recently (other than the daily manna, which they now take for granted), they have returned to operating in human viewpoint. You may ask, what about Numbers 13? We do not know how far apart in time these two chapters are. Numbers 14 is a representative incident of many rebellions. Since twenty people every day will die in the desert, this serve to help us understand how this many could die. This incident took place sometime during the thirty-eight years of wandering. Knowing the apostasy of these Jews, this could have occurred as recently as a month or two after Numbers 13 and it would not have been out of character.

The grumblings of the recalcitrants,¹⁰⁰ accusing Moses of making himself a prince over them, almost brings us to a full circle in Moses life. He is near the end his ministry here. We do not know when during the thrity-eight years this occurred. Moses spent forty years in the palace of Pharaoh and one day, he ventured out into the company of the Jews and killed an Egyptian task master who was beating a fellow Hebrew. When he returned the next day to try to resolve a dispute between two Jews, one said, "[Who made you a leader or a judge over us? Are you intending to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?](#)" (Exodus 2:14b). How prophetic this incident was, setting the mold of the relationship between Moses and this generation.

There are two figures of speech here. First of all, they denigrate what Moses has done thus far in taking them to a land flowing with milk and honey because he will put them to death in the desert. The end result nullifies any credit that Moses should receive for getting them to that point. This is the flip side of the end justifies the means; here, the end devalues and depreciates the means. Furthermore not only is the first item named deplorable by itself, but the Moses has further committed an even greater offense by making himself ruler over them.

We had better take this in points.

Dathan and Abiram are also schooled in logic:

1. The first figure of speech—the end depreciates the means:
 - a. The small thing that Moses has done:
 - i. Moses has led the Jews out of Egypt through great signs and wonders.
 - ii. Moses has received the Law from God at Mount Sinai.
 - iii. Moses has led the Jews through the desert.
 - iv. Moses has led the people right up to the promised land—a land flowing with milk and honey.
 - b. The result of what Moses has done:
 - i. The Jews were pushed out of the promised land in their first battle to take it.
 - ii. The Jews are now dropping like flies in the desert. They are dying in large numbers.
 - c. The essence of the first figure of speech is that it is meaningless (a small thing) what Moses did initially because of the end result.
 - d. The end result tinges or soils what came before.
 - e. Therefore, what Moses has done up to this point in time is an offense which should be condemned.
2. The second figure of speech—the second offense is even greater than the first:
 - a. The first offense: Moses has slaughtered these Jews by bringing them out to the desert.
 - b. The second offense: Moses has made himself ruler over the Jews.
 - c. So not only does Moses bring these people out into the desert to kill them, but he furthermore makes himself out to be a ruler over them. This demonstrates, in their eyes, incredible nerve on the part of Moses

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The Flawed Logic of Dathan and Abiram

So, how is their logic flawed? We will take this in points:

¹⁰⁰ An excellent name for a rock band, by the way.

The Flawed Logic of Dathan and Abiram

1. The flaw in the end depreciates the means:
 - a. Moses rightfully deserves praise for leading the Jews out of Egypt up to the promised land.
 - b. The Jews did not enter the promised land due to their own unbelief, not due to any deficiency on the part of Moses.
 - c. The deaths of all the Jews in the desert are a result of their personal volition.
 - d. They only reason that the Jews are even still alive is because Moses twice stood in the gap on their behalf, reasoning with God to spare their lives.
 - e. Therefore, the first few acts of Moses are not flawed because the results were due to unbelief on the part of the Jews; not because of any deficiency of Moses.
2. The flaw in the second offense is greater than the first offense:
 - a. As we have just seen, there has been no first offense. Moses has done nothing wrong. These Jews have failed to take responsibility for their actions and they have failed to believe God.
 - b. Furthermore, Moses did not make himself leader over them; God made Moses leader over them. God practically had to take Moses kicking a scratching into this leadership role

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The Application to You

Now for application (when you were half asleep and you read this verse in your read the Bible through in one year program, did you notice any of this?):

1. You are responsible for the choices you make in life.
2. When God clearly states a mandate, and we disobey that mandate, there are both natural results and disciplinary results, although the two are often intertwined.
3. The Jews were unable to enter into the land flowing with milk and honey—this is basically a natural result of their unbelief.
4. The Jews were slaughtered by the Canaanites in battle and are dying en masse in the desert—these are the results of being disciplined by God. They are dying the sin unto death.
5. You cannot blame someone else for the natural results or the disciplinary results of your choices and actions.
6. When you blame someone else for your choices and actions, you compound the problem. When you have gone against the will of God, you must rebound—name your sins to God. If you don't take the responsibility for your own sins, then you will not rebound, meaning you will not be restored to fellowship and you will remain under God's discipline which will intensify to the sin unto death

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Now for some actual examples of the above:

1. It is clear in God's word that you are not to engage in premarital sex (1Corinthians 7:1 Hebrews 13:4).
2. The natural results will range from:
 - a. Missing out on your right man or woman because:
 - i. You cannot identify that person;
 - ii. That person gets married while you are fooling around;
 - iii. That person has no interest in you because of your moral standards;
 - iv. You have met that person, but you are too involved in premarital sex to notice them.
 - b. Venereal disease, which could result in:
 - i. A temporary or permanent medical condition;

Now for some actual examples of the above:

- ii. A temporary or permanent disfigurement;
 - iii. An awful disease, such as AIDES, leading to death;
 - iv. That passing on of years of suffering to your future children who inherit the disease from birth from you.
3. The disciplinary results can be:
- a. Any of the above, as well as:
 - b. Unrelated illness;
 - c. Financial setbacks;
 - d. Problems in the workplace;
 - e. Or, in general, anything which hurts.
4. Your reactions to the above:
- a. If you are disciplined and/or suffering natural results, you can rebound and all resultant suffering will be for your blessing, or;
 - b. You can blame society, the other person, God, or anyone else, meaning that your discipline continues to be compounded until you name another sin, or;
 - c. You can rationalize your behavior in any way that you choose, meaning that you don't rebound and that discipline continues until you name another sin to God.

Addendum: This example could have been on any sin whatsoever, everything from rebelling against God's authority to drug usage, to spreading rumors (it doesn't matter if it is true or not), to ruminating on various mental attitude sins (whether they involve hatred, bitterness, self-pity, lust, etc.), to operating with an unrestrained temper. I have certainly left out your pet area of sin—however, the principle remains the same: when you blame someone else for your shortcomings, you will fail to rebound and your discipline and the natural results of your sins will continue to grow.

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"In fact [lit., yea], to a land flowing with milk and honey you have not brought us in, nor do you give to us an inheritance of field and vineyard; do you pick out the eyes of these men? We have not come up [into the land]." [Numbers 16:14]

V. 14 contains a continuation of their skills of logic. Bringing them to the land flowing with milk and honey was such a small thing because, on top of what was said in v. 13, Moses did not even bring them into that land, nor did he give any of these people their field or their vineyard (remember the slogan *a chicken in every pot?*—these recalcitrant Jews expected not only to enter the land unhindered, but to be given beyond what they had earned). Dathan and Abiram, when sending this message to Moses, were excoriating. It is obvious to see why people followed them as leaders; their logic was exceptional—other, than the fact that it was built up the false. When you build a system of logic upon something which is true, the results are true (assuming that the logic itself is not flawed); however, no matter how correct the logic—if it is built upon a foundation of lies and half-truths, then the conclusions are also false.

In v. 14, they begin to pick apart his leadership skills. God promised to bring them into a land flowing with milk and honey and Moses has not accomplished this. They assert here that every man should have been given his own field and vineyard, yet they are wandering around in the desert. In the first place, God has not promised them their own vineyard and field; God has given them instructions as to how to deal with their own property when they go into the land (Exodus 22:5 23:11). Secondly, they are wandering around in the desert because they would not take the land as God had commanded to; and, then when God told them they would not be allowed to take the land, they attacked the Canaanites and tried to take the land without God's help or guidance and failed. These men are not blind—they can see what Moses has failed to do. He hasn't brought them into the land. They do not recognize that God placed Moses as leader over them and that Moses had no desire to become their ruler, even

balking at the thought of it early on (Exodus 3:11). Furthermore, they have rejected God's explicit Word that He would scatter their bodies in the desert.

And Moses anger began to seethe [lit., then Moses began to burn exceedingly], and so he said to Y^ehowah, "Turn not to their present; not one ass from them have I taken, nor have I afflicted one of them." [Numbers 16:15]

Moses has become as angry as Y^ehowah had expressed to him earlier. Not only has he led this worthless bunch of crap who sobbed and cried the night before they were to enter the land, but Moses stood in the gap and saved their sons and daughters, mediating between God's anger and their deserved punishment of death. Recall that God twice was ready to wipe out the entire Jewish race and begin anew with Moses. He may even be wondering to himself right now, why didn't he just go ahead and tell God, "Go ahead, kill them all now—I am sick of playing nursemaid to a bunch of whining, titty babies." Moses is praying to God to ignore their offerings and pointing out that he has not taken advantage of his leadership position for material gain, nor has been an cruel, unjust, tyrannical ruler. You can see in this verse that, although Moses was an extremely strong man, their accusations cut to his humanity and hurt him.

The prophet Samuel was a great student of the Law. He read the books of Moses carefully and said essentially the same thing to the Israelites of his day (1Samuel 12:3). The similarity between what he said and what Moses said was not a coincidence, as he soon thereafter spoke about Moses and Aaron (1Samuel 12:6).

And Moses said to Korah, "You and all your company, be before the face of Y^ehowah, you and them, and Aaron tomorrow; [Numbers 16:16]

Moses is giving orders to them. Even though Dathan and Abiram have defied him, Moses still takes his position of leadership and tells Korah what he will do.

"And you will [all] take your [lit., his] incense burner and you will have placed upon them perfume and you will bring [them] near before the face of Y^ehowah, each [man] his incense burner, two hundred and fifty incense burners; and you and Aaron, each his incense burner." [Numbers 16:17]

In terms of who is God's choice, this has not been an issue to Korah—he is the people's choice. He not only has the support of a large portion of the people, but he has a cabinet of two hundred and fifty dedicated followers to help him administrate his leadership position over the people. Moses will make this a spiritual issue.

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Moses Opposes Korah, Dathan and Abiram Before the Congregation of Israel

So each took his incense burner and placed them on a fire and laid on them perfume and so they stood at the opening of the tent of meeting with [lit. and] Moses and Aaron [or, and so Moses and Aaron took their stand at the opening of the tent of meeting]. [Numbers 16:18]

Notice, even in rebellion against Moses, they have still obeyed him. Moses has set up the rules of competition to show whom God has chosen and they tacitly agreed to this. In the western Septuagint, the Syriac and the Vulgate codices, we have **So each took his incense burner and placed them on a fire and laid on them perfume and so Moses and Aaron took their stand at the opening of the tent of meeting**, which appears to be a better rendering. It makes more sense for Moses and Aaron to take a stand in opposition to the followers of Korah, as opposed to them taking a stand with Moses and Aaron.

And Korah assembled against them all the company at the opening of the tent of meeting, and the glory of Y^ehowah was seen by all the company. [Numbers 16:19]

Korah stood out from his men. The sentence structure belies the fact that Korah is not only standing against Moses and Aaron, but he is standing against the two hundred and fifty men that he dragged into this confrontation. Neither he nor they realize that, and they are acting on their own volition—but Korah has not acted in their best interest and it is his personal lust which has caused him to stand against Moses and Aaron—his own personal lust for power and dominion over the Jewish people. Korah has rejected God's revealed will and expects to prosper. From what we have covered, you are probably wondering *how could Korah be so stupid? God has clearly revealed His will and the future to the entire congregation of Israel—is it possible to be that stupid?*

So let's take this from a different angle: how much of God's Word have you personally ignored? Television and movies notwithstanding, does your sexual morality line up with God's Word? Have you fallen for the lie that you (1) meet someone; (2) sleep with them; (3) become emotionally involved; (4) live together; and, (5) finally get married? And you wonder why your relationships are not working out? You are wondering why you find yourself with a family and life that you do not want? Do you think that you can ignore God's Word and prosper?

There is only one order to marriage: (1) you meet someone; (2) you get to know one another and fall in love; (3) you get married; (4) then you live together and sleep together. There is no other order in God's plan. You try anything else, placing the last step anywhere prior to marriage, and you have just insured yourself years of misery. This book of Numbers and the incidents therein have great application to our lives. The application may not be just what you would expect, but it is simple—God has revealed His will to you. How much of His authority have you rejected? How much of God's clearly revealed will have you ignored? Having rejected His plan and His will, don't be surprised when things don't work out and don't be unnerved when you are severely disciplined.

And Y^ehowah spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, [Numbers 16:20]

Nothing is said about Korah, or the other two hundred and fifty; it is likely that they did not hear God's voice.

"Separate yourselves from the midst of this company, and I will consume them in a moment."
[Numbers 16:21]

Now here is a clear-cut command of God's; Moses and Aaron have a choice—they can stand with this company, as they are God's leaders, or they can separate themselves from this group. God's command is for immediate separation. So what do they do?

And they fell on their faces, and they said, "God, God of the spirits with regard to all flesh, this one man sins, and against all the company You burn in anger!" [Numbers 16:22]

Their lives are in danger due to these two hundred and fifty men who have come to support Korah. Certainly it is Korah who has gotten them all stirred up. That is obvious. However, they of their own volition have joined Korah's rebellion and they have shown their support for Korah by coming out this next day with their incense burners. Any one of them could have stayed at home. Anyone of them could have obeyed God's Word. They chose not to. Even though they are sheep being led to the slaughter, they are going their of their own volition. Being led by a charismatic leader does not excuse anyone. It is typical of certain cults to have very charismatic leaders—that those close to them attempt to emulate them and to support them. Korah is obviously a very dynamic, personable leader and these two hundred and fifty men have fallen in right behind him. You do not have to lead or to organize to be under discipline.

Moses is familiar with the book of Genesis. He has read it in its unedited form or in its several source forms (we do not know exactly how he came to be in possession of it—whether it was through his father-in-law or through the congregation of Israel). He knows what happened in Genesis 18:23–33. Abraham *argued* with God, determined to preserve the city of Sodom if there were ten righteous men therein (recall that he had reasoned that his relatives and their spouses would add up to ten). God promised Abraham that He would not destroy the city of Sodom if there was a pivot¹⁰¹ of ten in the city. So Moses seeks to preserve through a related argument: you

¹⁰¹ *Pivot* is a term original with Thieme referring to those who are regenerate and experiencing spiritual growth in a particular geographical area.

can't destroy all of Israel because there are a few revolutionists. In this case, it is more specifically, You cannot destroy all of these two hundred fifty men because they were stirred up by Korah (see also Genesis 20:1–11).

Now note the actions of Moses and Aaron; Moses knows that without the leadership of Korah that these men would not be there in opposition to him and he prays for their forgiveness. Korah is the principle person in rebellion here; they are but sheep. Moses was so much greater than I would have been under the same circumstances. My personal reaction would have been, *can I look up while you massacre these reversionists?* This is because Moses was great and compassionate; he took great responsibility for his people, even when they opposed him. If you have children—particularly teenagers—you may understand Moses even more. Now what amazes me is the third person masculine **plural** of the verb *said*. Although just what Moses and Aaron said is not differentiated, it is gracious for Moses to include Aaron in this quick prayer to God. My guess is that Aaron said, "O God" and Moses said the rest. However, we can find that out in eternity.

We have an interesting vocative here: It is 'el 'ĕlohêy, which is "**God (singular) God (plural) of the spirits in regards to all flesh.**" It could be "**God, God of the spirits to [or, for] all flesh.**" We find almost the same vocative in Numbers 27:16. God has always been tied to the spirit of man, which is the portion of man which allows fellowship with God, just as the soul of man allows him to have fellowship with other men. When the soul has degenerated to a certain degree, man is no longer a man, but borders on the animalistic—that is, a man with a worthless soul is more likely to rape and kill and have no regard for the lives of other men. Some criminals in prison have reached this sort of animal state—those responsible for homosexual rapes and the deaths of other criminals due to vengeance of some sort. But, I digress.

And Y^ehowah spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 16:23]

Aaron may have heard what God said to Moses, but I suspect that this was in response to Moses' prayer for the deliverance of the two hundred and fifty men.

"Speak to the company, saying, 'Go all of you from round about the tabernacle [or, tent] of Korah; Dathan and Abiram.' " [Numbers 16:24]

God is about to, in just seconds, destroy these men. Moses quickly prays for their deliverance and God answers his prayer. This was a quickly-delivered, last minute prayer and God just as quickly answers it. Moses is to tell these people to separate themselves from this apostate leadership. We have had religious cults where people have been trapped. However, God has allowed them to leave. They can pray for their deliverance and God will deliver them. Or you can pray for their deliverance, and God will provide for them a way out. But the keys to their deliverance is both your prayer and their choice to separate from the apostate leadership.

The tabernacle, or tent, of Korah; Dathan and Abiram, has nothing to do with the tabernacle of God. This is merely the dwelling place of Korah. They do not all dwell in the same tent either. Often, in the Hebrew, a singular subject will be tied to a singular verb, yet there is a plural subject which is tied immediately afterward (see Numbers 21:1, for instance, where Miriam is the primary person who is speaking, but Aaron is likely backing her up by saying a few things of his own; so the verb for *speak* is in the feminine singular, although most translations translate it as a plural).

And Moses arose and went to Dathan and Abiram and the elders of Israel followed him; [Numbers 16:25]

There is a sudden, temporary stay of execution. God is about to destroy all of these men, and Moses calls *time-out*. There is a large gathering here of those supporting both sides.

Some of you who are reading critically may be lost in the actual logistics of what is going on. Moses has set up a time when Korah, Dathan, Abiram and their two hundred and fifty member cabinet would meet at the tent of meeting to see who God would choose (vv. 5–11). Dathan and Abiram did not attend the first confrontation between Korah, the two hundred and fifty and Moses. When Moses had them summoned to the test the next day,

they declined (vv. 12–14). Moses is angry at their reply and repeats his orders to Korah and his cabinet (vv. 15–17). Korah and the two hundred and fifty met Moses at the tent of meeting (vv. 18–19). God threatens to destroy this two hundred fifty the next day at their assembly against Moses; Moses and Aaron stand in the gap on behalf of these two hundred and fifty (vv. 20–24). Moses and Aaron, in this verse, get up from the ground, and walk to the tents of Dathan and Abiram, which are adjacent to the tent of Korah. Korah follows them, along with the elders of Israel (v. 25). While moving toward their tents, perhaps a mile away, Moses says the following:

And he spoke to the company, saying, "Turn aside, I urge you, from the tents of these evil men, and do not touch anything which [is] theirs, so that you will not [all] be swept away in all their sins." [Numbers 16:26]

We have examined the word *nâ'* (נָא) [pronounced *naw*] before; it is part of an exhortation or part of an entreaty. It is equivalent to our word *please*, although it often does not sound right when translated that way. A reasonable-sounding, one-word translation does not come to mind, so I will update the KJV version *I pray thee* to *I urge you*. God allows Moses time to deliver these last few men. Recall during the time of the cross, the soldier who said, "Truly, this was the Son of God." Recall the thief who asked for Jesus to remember him when He came into His kingdom. Even at the last moment, God is willing to deliver.

Note that Moses has given these people a very clear warning. They are to separate themselves completely from Korah, Dathan and Abiram (On is only mentioned once, back in Numbers 16:1). This is the Moses who has done many signs and wonders before their eyes in the power of the Spirit; this is the Moses who returned from the top of Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments etched in stone; this is the Moses whom God has spoken to time and time again. These other men have no credentials of God; only of men. They haven't performed any miracles; they have not led their people out of the desert; they have not entered into the promised land; God does not speak to them. So their choice is either with God's man or with the people's choice. They will act on their own volition and they will have to take the natural and divine consequences of their actions.

We have seen a similar situation in the past. Messengers (or, angels) from God came to Lot to remove him and his family from Sodom before it was destroyed by God. Immediately after the men of Sodom came to Lot's house with the intention of raping Lot's visitors [the angels] and were then struck blind, the angels said to Lot: "**Whom else do you have here? A son-in-law, and your sons, and your daughters and whomever you have in the city—bring [them] out of the place for we are about to destroy this place, because their outcry has become so great before Y^ehowah that Y^ehowah has sent us to destroy it.**" And Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were taking his daughters, and said, "Up, get out of this place, for Y^ehowah will destroy the city." But he appeared to his sons-in-law like one who was jesting. And when the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Up, take your wife and your two daughters, who are here, so that you are not swept away in the sin of the city." But he hesitated, so the men seized his hand and the hand of his wife and the hands of his daughters, for the compassion of Y^ehowah [was] upon him; and they brought them out, and put him outside the city (Genesis 19:12b–16). This indicates that if God is about to destroy an area that He will deliver those who are His, if they so choose. There are times when we as believers are called to heaven through a disaster, often to witness to one person before we are taken, but the two situations here are incidents of direct judgement by God.

And they went up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, from round about, and Dathan and Abiram came out, standing at the opening of their tents, and their wives and their sons and their infants. [Numbers 16:27]

Recall that Dathan and Abiram would not even stand in front of this crowd and face Moses man to man. They would not obey his orders to stand in front of him. However, their human shield has melted away. These two hundred and fifty have stayed nearby. They have not fully rejected Dathan and Abiram's leadership—they are merely wavering between Moses and apostasy. "**How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If Y^ehowah is God, [then] follow Him.**" (1Kings 18:21b). However, they have moved aside. So now Dathan and Abiram have emerged from their tents, holding their children, standing with their families. You may be wondering just what is going on. Certainly you have seen picture after picture of a politician and his family? That is all it is—PR. There is the slight possibility in their minds that God might destroy them, so, since their shield has melted away, they

stand with their families and infants. They are family men; how could God destroy them? However, God will destroy all of those who remain with these three, including their families. They have been clearly warned and some of the sons of Dathan and Abiram will heed this warning (Numbers 26:11).

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An Earthquake Envelops Korah, Dathan, Abiram and Their Respective Households

And Moses said, "By this you [all] will know that Y^ehowah has sent me to do all these works, for [my authority is] not from my own heart. [Numbers 16:28]

The two hundred and fifty have stepped aside, but they are not out of the picture. They have not fully removed themselves from Korah, Dathan and Abiram. However, now Korah and Dathan and Abiram are standing out in the open, Dathan and Abiram are with their families. Much of the congregation of Israel is probably out to observe this. God had to continually prove Himself to this congregation. He would perform some incredible work before their eyes, and the sons of Israel would be faithful for a short time. However, they would continually go astray, forgetting entirely God's great power. Moses tells them that his own authority will be vindicated by what is about to occur. Moses did not choose this position of leadership; he took it reluctantly. God will vindicate Moses' authority.

The last portion of this verse appears to be (but is not) a matter of interpretation. Several translations (NIV, *Young's Translation* and the KJV) indicate that it is these works which do not come from Moses' own heart. However, this interpretation misses the gist of the entire passage. What has been questioned by Korah is the authority of Moses and Aaron. The reason they are facing two hundred and fifty men is that these men are the replacements for Moses and Aaron; they are the people's choice. Korah has accused Moses of *making himself* a leader over all the sons of Israel. What will occur will show that the position which Moses has was not one from his own heart, but that he was chosen by God. So certainly, the works are not of Moses' heart; however, the intent of this verse is that it is his authority which is not of his heart (i.e., his authority was not something which he purposed to have). The end of v. 29 vindicates this interpretation—"If these men die naturally and what happens to them is what happens to all men, then Y^ehowah has not sent me." (Numbers 16:29). The translations which properly interpret this are the NASB, Owen's translation, *The Emphasized Bible* and the NRSV.

The next verse is a little difficult, so let's examine the various translations:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	If these men die the common death of all men, or if [only] what happens to everyone happens to them, then the Lord has not sent me.
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	If as all human beings die these do die, and the visitation of all human beings be visited upon them Yahweh hath not sent me.
KJV	If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; <i>then</i> the LORD hath not sent me.
NASB	If these men die the death of all men, or if they suffer the fate of all men, <i>then</i> the LORD has not sent me.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	If according to the death of all men these die—or the charge of all men is charged upon them—Jehovah hath not sent me;

"If according to the death of all of these [lit., the] men these die—or the visitation [or, personal contact] of all of these [lit., the] men is visited upon them—Y^ehowah has not sent me; [Numbers 16:29]

What Moses is saying is that if these men just die like all other men die; even if it is a bit premature, yet in the desert, then God did not send Moses. However, the second part of this verse is a bit more difficult. Notice that we have five different ways of translating the last portion of this verse. The verb is *pâqad* (פָּקַד) [pronounced *paw-KAHD*], which we have studied twice before. It is in the Niphal (the passive stem) imperfect here and in the Niphal

it is translated *lacking, missing, wanting, appointed, visited*. The basic definition given by BDB is *attend to, visit, muster*. The latter word is also translated *number*. The sub-definitions are (in the Qal): *pay attention to, observe, attend to, seek (with interest or desire), to seek in vain (therefore, to need to miss, to lack), to visit (for different purposes), to appoint*; (in the Niphal): *to be sought, missed, to be lacking, visited, to be visited upon, to be appointed*. The key to all of these definitions is **personal contact** of some sort. Person A is in contact with person B in order *to bless them, to discipline them, to number them, to appoint them, to look for them (and therefore, find them lacking or missing)*; in the Niphal, the passive stem, this is to be on the receiving end of such visitations. The British have a very similar colloquialism which may help some of you to grasp the meaning: *sort*; as in, *I need to sort him out*. Here, personal contact is required in order to achieve a desired result. The final given definition can be words which seem to be entirely unrelated. To give you some examples (and we will look at only the Niphal): Numbers 31:49b reads, **"You servants have taken a sum of the men of war who are in charge and no man of us is missing."** This means that there was no man who was not in personal contact with the census taker. A similar usage is found in Judges 21:3 1Samuel 20:18 2Kings 10:19. In Neh. 7:1, it reads **Now it came to pass when the wall was rebuilt and I had set up the doors, and the gatekeepers and the singers and the Levites were appointed.** What is occurring is that Nehemiah (or his servants) have come into personal contact with the gatekeepers, singers and Levites in order to get a head count and get them appropriately assigned to their duties. Nehemiah is not the subject of the verb here, but those he got into contact with are; therefore, it is in the passive voice. But notice how the key is *personal contact*.¹⁰² So Moses has set up a visual for the congregation and, although he has not come right out and said, these men will die, he has said if they die a normal death by and by, and if the visitation upon them (the implication of the verse is that this visitation is by God) is the visitation is the same as done to any other man, then Y^ehowah did not send Moses.

"And if a creation Y^ehowah creates, and the ground opens her mouth and swallows them and all that they have, and they have gone down alive into Sheol—then you [all] will know that these men despise Y^ehowah." [Numbers 16:30]

Moses has been waxing somewhat poetic, but this gets lost in the exegesis sometimes. He has made use of a figure of speech which is classified as a polyptoton [pronounced *po-LIP-tō-ton*]. We see the used in the Hebrew quite often where a verb is repeated or a verb and its noun cognate are placed together. If we dream a dream, build a building, design a design, we are employing these same figure of speech. A polyptoton *is a kind of a superlative, declaring the magnitude and gravity of an action or the greatness and importance of its results*.¹⁰³ It is done twice in v. 29 and once in v. 30. What is going to happen is that God will create something out of nothing. The verb here is the same one used in Genesis 1:1, 21, 27. There are those who teach that this word means to create out of nothing; however, the usage of the same verb here does not indicate that this earthquake was made out of nothing. Rotherham says it can simply mean *to make a new thing, realize a new idea*.¹⁰⁴ What has been *created* here is an earthquake. Prior to the flood, the earth was much flatter, with fewer and less dramatic mountains, where the land was not a great deal above sea level. During the flood, there was a great shifting of the earth's crust, forming great mountains, valleys, and great sea cavities; and allowing for earthquakes in centuries to come. This is possibly the first of the many great earthquakes that have occurred on this earth. We are given no clue as to how Moses had decided upon this type of judgement. Certainly, he wanted judgement to be quick and final, yet directly clearly at Korah, Dathan and Abiram. There is no indication that God suggested this to Moses, making it likely that this was Moses' idea, and God respected and responded to his prayer with an earthquake.

There are two things which could happen at this confrontation. These men could die normal deaths when their time comes; the things which happen to anyone else observing this event happens to them; or, in the alternative,

¹⁰² One of the several reasons that I have spent time putting together a lexicon of sorts is that, although the BDB is invaluable in learning the definitions of words, it generally has the several meanings without having some point of commonality given so that, when one looks up a word, three or four seemingly completely renders are found, allowing the reader to insert any of these definitions willy nilly into any verse. When one sees the common thread of these definitions, the context then helps to select the most appropriate meaning.

¹⁰³ Bullinger's *Figures of Speech*, p. 275.

¹⁰⁴ Rotherham's *The Emphasized Bible*, p. 176.

God could create something that these people had never seen before, where the earth opens up and swallows them whole. What Moses is alluding to is an earthquake, but he is predicting that Y^ehowah will cause the earth to open up beneath them and to swallow up these rebels. And notice how Moses delicately phrases this, being the master of tact. Here are men who claim to have Y^ehowah in their midst, just as Moses does, and therefore should have his power and authority. So they are paying lip service to God; and who knows, perhaps some of them are sincere. Moses tells the congregation that when the earth opens up and swallows these men, that all will know that they despise God. King David, a great student of the Law of Moses, wrote: **Let death come deceitfully upon them; let them go down alive to Sheol, for evil is in their dwelling, in their midst** (Psalm 55:15).

We do not know whether Moses decided that this would be the outcome or whether God revealed this to him. No specific contact with God is given when God promises to do this, so that could indicate that Moses came up with this test entirely on his own. In any case, notice that he has great confidence in God, that He will bring it to pass; and, although who thought this test up is a matter of interest, what is important is Moses' unweilding faith in God's power and his complete understanding of his place in God's plan. So many people who are Christians and profess to have some sort of interest in God are totally perplexed when it comes to their place in God's plan—as if this were some deep, dark secret. In my own personal psychotic state as an unbeliever, I just knew that there was this groove that I could fall into where everything would be alright, but I could never quite fall into that groove. That is, I was always just out of sync with life or my place in life; that just a little movement this way or that would place me in sync with life and my place here on earth. It was as though there was a shadow existence that if I could fit right into the shadow, right into that place, that everything would be okay. These feelings while in a psychotic state were not entirely unrelated to reality. There was even a movie called *Groundhog Day* wherein the lead character eventually, after innumerable attempts, lived one day correctly (in terms of human viewpoint). That is, he was in sync with life. There is that groove; there is a life designed for us that we can fall into sync with. There is a place where we can be where, even in the devil's world, everything is alright, relatively speaking (it cannot be overemphasized that we are in the devil's world). This place is the place of rest, the place of fellowship. All we have to do is to get into fellowship, stay there, and learn God's Word. Everything else will fall into place. For those who want to be in sync with their life as related to God; who want to find their niche in the world, who want to be in a life which is balanced—God has that for you. As long as you have the ability make moral choices—that is, you know right from wrong, or your left hand from your right—then you can fall into that groove; your life can be in sync in the devil's world. I say this with a great deal of thought behind it: it does not matter if you have been a drug addict, a psychotic, an alcoholic, a homosexual, even a witch with relatively close contact to demons—there is this groove, this place of synchronization, that you can fall into. However, you must be saved, get into fellowship, stay in fellowship, and take in God's Word. Once you are there, you practice what Thieme terms as *faith-rest*; you do not allow your lusts to run away with you, and all the details of your life will be taken care of as you apply what you have learned from God's Word. Furthermore, this is all free—if you want it, God will give it to you and much more than you could ever imagine.

And it came to pass at his finishing speaking of all these words, that the ground which [was] under them was caused to break open; [Numbers 16:31]

God has given Moses enough time to deliver this message; those who are in opposition to his God-given authority have made their choice in life. Therefore, there is no more need to talk about anything. God is going to wipe out this degenerate generation, and this is how some of them will go. We can find parallel passages for this incident in Deuteronomy 11:6 and Psalm 106:17.

And the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them, and their houses and all the men who [were] for Korah, and all the goods; [Numbers 16:32]

The word translated *houses* does not mean *house* exactly as we picture it. This is their *household*; it includes their women and children and tents and relatives. You may be thinking to yourselves that this is totally unfair—their innocent families are trapped by their sins. First of all, there are no innocent families. This generation is filled with degenerates who kicked at the land God brought them to. Secondly, yes, when a woman marries a man, and places herself under his authority, there are decisions that he will make which will impact her life and the life of their children. Duh! When it comes to getting married, the woman has the easiest choice in the world—can I

place my life and soul under this man's authority. Do I have the respect and trust in his judgement that whatever he says, whatever orders he delivers, I know that I can obey them? And if this man just turns you on and he is the cutest thing on this earth and you want to spend every minute with him, just so long as he doesn't ever think about telling you what to do, then you obviously have the wrong man. Now, without going off into a totally other tangent, all men express their authority differently, and this does not mean that a man is going to become (or even should become) some sort of a drill sergeant. However, all final decisions rest with the man; and if, as a woman, you cannot trust his final judgement, then leave this man find yourself a man whose judgement you can trust.

So, these women chose these men. Therefore, they have chosen their authority. However, they had an option. Moses told them, "**Depart now from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing that belongs to them, so that you will not be swept away in all their sin.**" (Numbers 16:26). You know the horror movie where someone screams "Get out of the house!" Moses is giving them the *get out of the house* scream. Moses makes it simple. These men are way out of God's will, they are about to die the sin unto death, and anyone who has a lick of sense should put miles between themselves and these men. Now, their wives have day in and day out observed their husbands and they have observed Moses and the power given Moses by God. Moses laid it all out on the table just as clearly as he could. So they can choose—stand with their husband, or leave, don't look back, and don't take anything with you. The same decision was given to anyone who was in their household. So when the earth opened up and swallowed these reversionists and their families and their possessions, God was not being unfair. And we will see that some listened to his warning.

Now, more application (did you ever—when you read this passage in your reading through the Bible in one year—ever dream that it had any application to you?): we are commanded certain kinds of separation. For a drug addict, there is an environment, there are associations that you need to avoid. For one who is a homosexual or who thinks himself or herself to be sexually addicted: there are people and places from which you must separate yourself. If you are a thief, there are associations from which you need to be separate. I don't have to be specific—you know yourself the kind of separation that must take place. Now this is different than separating yourself from unbelievers. You will come into contact every day with unbelievers and you should. However, there are certain places, people and things from which you need to be separated—and that takes a choice, a freewill choice. These people had that choice, and those who would not separate were swallowed up by the earth and lost all that they thought they had, as those without doctrine do at death. If you do not separate from certain people, places, activities, you will find yourself swallowed up the Satan's world to where you also loose everything that you thought you had. Remember, if you are a child of God, then you are also subject to God's discipline. It is absolutely true that all you have to do to be saved is to believe in Jesus Christ and then you can tell God, "I am going to do whatever I want; I will see You in eternity, God." You can do that. But, you are subject to God's discipline and some of you will be hit so hard that you don't know what hit you—so I will tell you right now—it is discipline from God, which will proceed from warning discipline, to intensive discipline to dying discipline, the sin which leads to death. These people who were swallowed up have a choice and it was clear cut and they were given time to make it. You also have similar choices in life. If you can understand what I am saying, then you are 100% fully responsible for the decisions that you make in your life, even if you are only eight years old. And some of these decisions will not just impact your life for a few months or a few years, but some decisions that you will make will impact your life for all of eternity.

And they went down, they and all that they had, alive into Sheol, and the earth closed up over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly; [Numbers 16:33]

Sheol, as you have probably surmised, is a transliteration; it comes from the word *sh^eol* (שְׁאוֹל) [pronounced *sh^eOLE*] and it is a reference to the *underworld* for both believers and unbelievers. Another common translation would be *the grave*. We will cover the **Doctrine of Sheol** in Job 7:9 and 1Samuel

This was likely the first and only earthquake witnessed by these people, and it must have been a rather dramatic experience. Those swallowed here were Korah, Dathan, Abiram¹⁰⁵ and possibly On¹⁰⁶—and their households. However, **God did preserve a remnant according to the election of grace** (Romans 11:5b). **And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them [Dathan and Abiram] up along with Korah, when that company died, when the fire devoured two hundred fifty men, so that they became a warning. The sons of Korah, however, did not die** (Numbers 26:10–11). This is grace. Korah was a degenerate, power-hungry revolutionist; however, his sons had the sense to step away from their father and their father's tent when they were so warned by Moses. From them was descended Samuel (1Samuel 1:1 1Chronicles 6:33–38).¹⁰⁷ From them was also descended the sons of Korah who wrote many of the Psalms (mistranslated in the KJV as *for* the sons of Korah; it should read *of* the sons of Korah). This is God's tremendous grace. Se the **Doctrine of the sons of Korah—not finished yet!!**

And all Israel who [were] round about them fled at their voice, for they said, "So that the earth does not swallow us." [Numbers 16:34]

The *voice* here are the screams of those who are taken underground by the opening of the earth's crust in the earthquake. The would have sounded a scream as one man. Others ran from the sound of the screams to avoid falling into the great cavities.

It's interesting that On was only mentioned in Numbers 16:1, even though he was one of the leaders of the rebellion along with Korah, Dathan and Abiram. The other three are mentioned in several places—Numbers 26:9–11 indicating clearly that they died in this earthquake. However, in the case of On, his name occurs only at the beginning of Numbers 16, but his death is neither confirmed nor denied either here or in Numbers 26. He was deemed so unimportant as to not warrant being mentioned again. There are several outcomes for On that we can speculate upon. Since his children and genealogy are not mentioned, it is fair to say that his line possibly ended with him. His entire family and children stood with him and they all perished in the earthquake. Or, since he is not named as being specifically an earthquake victim, he may have avoided the earthquake, but died immediately after in the plague. Here is a man who has great leadership ability, who is a popular choice of the people, who can muster a personal support group of two hundred and fifty men, and have a large popular backing besides. Yet, for all of that, even Moses does not seem to recall what happened to him in retrospect. Human celebrityship means absolutely nothing. There are millions of people who are renown for their ability to entertain in some way or another—they are great athletes, they are popular musicians, they are well-known actors—yet at their death **their names will be taken out of the book of life**¹⁰⁸ and they will spend eternity in hell, an unimportant and long-forgotten minor footnote in history, their lives of wealth, success and recognition being but a drop in the bucket for all the eternity that they suffer, **rejecting the Lord who bought them** (2Peter 2:1b).

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A Lightning Storm Destroys Their Intended Royal Administration

And fire came out from Y^ehowah and consumed the two hundred and fifty men [who were] bringing near the perfume. [Numbers 16:35]

Moses and Aaron were just at the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. The earthquake enveloped them and their households. There is no indication that they returned to the tent of meeting, although there is no indication that they did not. In either case, this fire from Y^ehowah is lightning, so there was a great earthquake accompanied by a thunder and lightning storm. Recall that we have two million people scattered all around the tabernacle. God

¹⁰⁵ Numbers 16:32 Deuteronomy 11:6.

¹⁰⁶ We actually don't know what happened to On in relationship to this incident. It would be reasonable to assume that he backed off from the revolution; however, he certainly died prior to the end of Israel's wanderings in the desert.

¹⁰⁷ Zuph would have been born from the marriage of an Ephraimite and a Kohathite; that will be covered in more detail when we get to 1Samuel 1:1.

¹⁰⁸ Exodus 32:33 Psalm 69:28.

caused an earthquake in one place, taking down into the ground the three; then lightning struck every one of the two hundred and fifty. Moses did return to the tabernacle (as we will see in the next couple of verses)—we just don't know if it was before, after or during the lightning storm.

We have seen a similar incident in Numbers 11:1–3. The saying "May God strike me with lightning if...", although it borders on a cheap and superficial use of the name of God, does find some support in the Bible. However, it is God's great patience and forbearance which saves some people from being struck by lightning from Him. However, these men had reached a point of negative volition toward Him to where their hearts would never be toward God again. Therefore, God took them out of this life in a spectacular manner. Even though this spectacle seemed to have no affect whatsoever upon their contemporaries, their children observed these incidents with great reverence.

And Y^ehowah spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 17:1 (16:36 in the English versions)]

Again notice how many times this phrase reoccurs in this book.

"Speak to Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, so that [lit., and] he will take up the incense burners from the midst of the burning and scattered the fire offering beyond, for they are holy; [Numbers 17:2 (16:37 in English)]

Hâl^oâh (הלֹאֵה) [pronounced *HAWL^e-aw*] has been translated *back, beyond, henceforward, hitherto, and forward* in its fifteen occurrences in the Old Testament. I believe the intention here is for it to either be outside the tabernacle courtyard or outside the camp. From examining the other passages where this occurs (Genesis 19:9 35:21 1Samuel 10:3 18:9 20:22, for instance), *beyond* is a reasonable, but not perfect, translation. Strong's #1973 BDB #229.

It is the incense burners which are holy; the incense from the fire offerings was probably also considered holy, even though it was offered by these two hundred and fifty rebels. However, in this use by these men, these things have become defiled and were no longer to function as originally designed.

"And they will construct the incense burners of the men who have sinned against their souls [into] hammered plates a covering for the altar for they brought them near before the face of Y^ehowah—therefore [lit., and so] they are holy and they will be a sign to the sons of Israel." [Numbers 17:3 (16:38 in English)]

Because these incense burners were brought before God, they are holy. However, since they were brought before Him in sin and rebellion, they will be hammered into flat sheets to cover the altar and the constant offering of sacrifices upon these altars will be a sign to Israel.

And Eleazar the priest took up the brazen incense burners which they who are burnt had brought near, and they spread them out, a covering for the altar; [Numbers 17:4 (16:39 in the English)]

Once God has demonstrated His great power, then there is always quick obedience on the part of Israel. Eleazar is a part of the next generation; part of the generation who will enter into the land and take it as God foreordained. We are not told which altar was overlaid with the metal from these incense burners. My guess would be the altar of incense.

A memorial to the sons of Israel, so that an outsider [or, a stranger] who is not a descendant [lit., of the seed] of Aaron will not approach to make a perfumed offering before the face of Y^ehowah, and will not be like Korah and like his company—as Y^ehowah had spoken by the hand of Moses to him [Eleazar]. [Numbers 17:5 (16:40 in the English)]

God, in His Law, previously brought before all of Israel, gave specific duties to priests and chose certain men (the sons of Aaron) to be priests to Him. An *outsider* in this context is not a non-Jew; but an outsider with respect to

the Aaronic priesthood. This was not a vocation to be taken lightly, as we saw with the execution by God of Aaron's first two sons (Leviticus 10). Nor was this a vocation which anyone could decide they were going to do, no more than anyone could decide that they are going to become the savior of man. That is Jesus Christ, chosen by God the Father in eternity past. Our spiritual gifts of the church age are much the same. You cannot just decide that you will be a pastor-teacher or that you have some other specific gift (like those in apostate churches who all alledge to speak in tongues). What gift or gifts given you by the Holy Spirit are irrevocable¹⁰⁹—He chooses, we do not. We just choose whether to go along with His perfect plan. Thieme occasionally the story of Billy Graham who began by pastoring a church and left because that was not his gift; God gave him the gift of evangelism and God worked through Billy Graham in a marvelous way over the past several decades. God would not have worked through him in such a way had he chose to remain a pastor-teacher.

The Levites had a very important spiritual function. "So when the tabernacle is to set out, the Levites will take it down; and when the tabernacle encamps, the Levites will set it up. However, the outsider who approached [it] will be put to death. And the Levites will camp around the tabernacle of the testimony, that there may be no wrath on the congregation of the sons of Israel. So the Levites will keep charge of the tabernacle of the testimony." (Numbers 1:51). Their desire to have a different spiritual function is no different than that of a Christian who rejects the spiritual gift bestowed upon him in favor of a different gift. Paul discusses spiritual gifts in 1Corinthians 12. You can all relate to right man/right woman, even if it is only in theory. Can you image a man throwing aside his right woman—designed for him in eternity by God—and taking up with some trollop? Certainly you can imagine it because it occurs time and time again; however, it is a stupid mistake on his part, just as the Levites deciding that they would like a more prominent spiritual position is a mistake on their part.

I have to insert a thought. There are several branches of Christianity which have a specialized priesthood. I hope that you have noticed in this study of Leviticus and Numbers that God chose a specific branch of the Levites, the descendants of Aaron, to be priests to him. God has just destroyed hundreds of men who thought they should be allowed to be priests as well. Priesthood is not something that anyone in the Old Testament chose to do—they were born into it and those who insisted that they could be priests as well died the sin unto death. So if you are a member of a specialized priesthood or if you attend a church where there is some kind of specialized priesthood, keep in mind that the kind of priesthood to which you adhere is not that which is found in our Bible. If you cannot point to several passages in the Bible where there is such thing as a specialized priesthood where one elects, of his own volition to become a part of (this is other than the universal priesthood of the believer), then your religion is apostate. You don't get to make up the way God's plan is going to be run. It is the study of the Old Testament by which you get a firmer grasp of what has come before, what it all means, and how it is related to the New Testament. If you have learned anything from our study in the Old Testament, it is that there is a specific way to do something and God expects us to do it that way. There is nothing free-form or made up or sloppy about God's plan. He is perfect and His plan is perfect and it is very specific. *The Bible History Old Testament reads: The moment Israel deviated in any detail, however small, they not only rebelled against God's appointment, but destroyed the meaning of the whole by substituting the human and natural for the Devine. The types were, so to speak, mirrors of God's own fitting, which, exhibited, as already present, future spiritual realities with all their blessings.*¹¹⁰ Pay close attention to this passage: several hundred people are dying the sin unto death because they have decided that they are going to become a part of God's specialized priesthood. God has a precise way of doing things, and that precludes just choosing to become a priest. Yes, in case you weren't certain, some of these people were probably very sincere.

Israel, at that time, was the light of the world, even as the church is today. The gospel was revealed to the world through the nation Israel. God brought nations and individuals into contact with the Jews in order to evangelize the non-Jew. Aaron was to light up the lights about the tabernacle, as these lights were the light of the world; and he was to burn fragrant incense upon the altar, as the incense represented the propitiatory fragrance of the sacrifice of our Lord.

¹⁰⁹ Romans 11:29.

¹¹⁰ P. 253.

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A Large Contingent of Followers Still Oppose Moses and Aaron

And off the company of the sons of Israel murmured the next day against Moses and against Aaron, saying, "You—you have killed the people of Israel." [Numbers 17:6 (16:41 in the English)]

Can you imagine anything more preposterous than having seen God's judgement upon Korah and the malcontents which he led, to then blame Moses for this? Well, actually there is an explanation for this. There are two million Israelites scattered for several miles on all sides of the tabernacle. Some were able to observe the earthquake which swallowed Korah, Dathan, Abiram and those who stood with them. Some were able to observe the lightning strike their two hundred and fifty cabinet members. Most just knew that these people had all died and you know that the rumors would be flying throughout the camp. These people are clearly unable to think straight and they may not have all of the facts. Some did witness lightning which struck down the two hundred and fifty followers; and some observed the tremendous earthquake which swallowed the three ring leaders, but, due to the size of the congregation the majority did not. They knew that Moses and Aaron did have something to do with it, although they did not all completely understand what. So without all of facts, they blame Moses and Aaron for the deaths of these degenerates. They chose of their own free will to stand in opposition to Moses and Aaron and they were therefore in opposition to God. When you stand in opposition to God's anointed, then you are in opposition to God. Their predisposition to blame Moses and Aaron explains to us why this entire generation had to die. Some of the signs of an incredibly degenerate society are failing to take responsibility for one's choices and actions and acting in mobs on the basis of only a portion of the facts. God would also judge these, the many sympathizers of the Korah rebellion.

And it came to pass, in the company which was assembled [or, had been called together] against Moses and against Aaron that they turned towards the tent of meeting, and saw [lit, lo] the cloud had covered it and the glory of Y^ehowah was seen; [Numbers 17:7 (16:42 in the English)]

Recall that these people are in the desert. Clouds are a rare occurrence. A cloud so low that it covered the tabernacle was an incredible sight. The cloud seemed to come out of nowhere—the cloud just formed and hung low over the tabernacle, covering the tabernacle.

And Moses came—Aaron also—to the front of the tent of meeting. [Numbers 17:8 (16:43 in the English)]

The dispute brought on by the mob of recalcitrants was put on hold. The cloud over the tent was Y^ehowah summoning Moses and Aaron to the tent.

And Y^ehowah spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 17:9 (16:44 in the English)]

As Moses approached or went into the tent of meeting, God spoke to him.

"Get up out from the midst of this company and I will consume them in a moment;" and they fell on their faces. [Numbers 17:10 (16:45 in the English)]

It is not clear whether the sudden cloud falling over the tabernacle or whether God's voice was audible. In either case, it gave the people quite a start. A great doctrine which is implied here is divine preservation due to a pivot. The pivot is Moses. God wants Moses to remove himself from the Jews so that He can slaughter them. As long as God's faithful servant, Moses, remains in with the midst of the Jews, they are safe. There are so many businesses, and families and cities and nations which would be summarily destroyed but for a few Christians who are geographically involved with them.

And Moses said to Aaron, "Take the incense burner and put fire on it from off the altar and place [on it] perfume, and go; hasten to the company and make a covering [or, atonement] for them, for the wrath has gone out from the face of Y^ehowah—the plague has begun." [Numbers 17:11 (16:46 in the English)]

Moses recognizes the gravity of the situation. God has told Moses several times that He loathes this generation of Jews and wants to destroy them all. What they have said reveals terribly negative volition which is pretty much out of control. Moses, as the super-grace hero—as the spiritual atlas upon whose shoulders rests the well-being of this people—can, with Aaron, make a covering for this people. Their grievous sins need to be covered. You will notice that Moses is no longer calling for God to spare this generation, but he is acting quickly so that some might be saved. After all that has happened, there are few arguments that Moses could bring to God to withdraw His wrath.

Notice the way God is judging these people. There are the sons of this evil generation—they will enter into the land at the end of this thirty-eight years. There are Moses and Aaron. So God has to cut out the cancerous cells and leave the good cells. He begins to destroy many of the remaining recalcitrants with disease. In this nation, we have a pivot which has prevented God from destroying us in a great war. However, our last several generations have become so degenerate and so hedonistic that God has had to destroy us with disease. People hate to hear this, but the disease AIDS acts as a destroyer of a cancer. If a homosexual chose not to have sex or if a drug addict chose not to inject drugs, they would be safe from this horrible disease. However, those who chose to lead those lifestyles had to be removed by God, as our laws make no provision for their removal. Certainly, *innocent* people (and notice that *innocent* is in italics) people have been affected, but that is part of God's plan and His grace, working within the boundaries of the natural results of sin. Many people have been saved because of this awful disease, just as many are saved due to war, due to the disease cancer, and due to time spent in prison¹¹¹.

And Aaron took [it] as Moses had said, and ran into the midst of the assembly, and observe [lit., lo], the plague had begun among the people; and he have the perfume and made atonement for the people; [Numbers 17:12 (16:47 in the English)]

Apparently the people were struck with some sort of a disease which began to weaken and debilitate them and Aaron, function as a type of Christ, made atonement for them from the midst of them, just as our Lord was in the midst of the Jews as He made atonement for us on the cross.

And he stood between the dead and the living and the plague was restrained; [Numbers 17:13 (16:48 in the English)]

Obviously, this sickness began to kill a few of those in the crowd who were upset over the fact that Korah, Dathan, Abiram and possibly On were now dead and that their leadership into a full-blown rebellion was therefore stifled. Moses was not the most popular person in the camp and the people desired for him to be supplanted by any other ruler who was more appealing to them.

Moses again stood in the gap between God and the people, his presence and influence preserving some. Pual, many centuries later, wrote: **For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is qualified for these things? For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from discernment, but as from God, we speak in Christ, in the sight of God (2Corinthians 2:15–17)..**

And those who died by the plague are fourteen thousand and seven hundred, apart from those who died for the matter of Korah; [Numbers 17:14 (16:49 in the English)]

¹¹¹ Certainly, many prison conversions are phoney; however, many of them are real, because in prison, men have nowhere else to turn but to God and the gift of His Son Jesus Christ. There are some who are saved who fall back into their old ways. We need not just evangelism but doctrine to be taught in the prisons.

This reveals to us that Korah and his cohorts were immensely popular men. Not only was there support from the two hundred and fifty, but over fourteen thousand others supported them (which is only a portion of those in the crowd). It would have been physically impossible for Israel to do anything but pick up camp and move elsewhere. Even taking the bodies outside the camp would have been an ordeal. Fashioning headstones and burying this many people would have been unthinkable.

Since the impression is given that Aaron's standing in the gap was of some benefit to these people, some of the congregation who were in opposition to Moses and Aaron looked at things once again. Certainly, some others thought better of their position and God spared them. By the way, this will not be the greatest slaughter of this apostate generation. 24,000 will die in Numbers 25. Not every rebellion is covered in this portion of Numbers. We only have some representative incidents which resulted in the deaths of many recalcitrants. We have flashes of history taken out of thirty-eight years where God slaughtered 600,000 men, along with some of their wives. As was mentioned early on in the book of Numbers, there have been questions as to the correct number of people. The Bible seems to unequivocally state there were originally 600,000 men prepared for war, and their wives and children. Large numbers like these given in v. 49 make sense only if the 600,000 census is also correct. What I am saying is that these figures are consistent. Some people may not like them, but they are the numbers given by God's Word.

And Aaron turned back to Moses, to the opening of the tent of meeting, and the plague had been restrained. [Numbers 17:15 (16:50 in the English)]

Although people died at the rate of twenty per day, there were some days when there was a wholesale slaughter of men, as was this day. Almost fifteen thousand men died that particular day due to their rebellion. They rebelled not only against Moses and Aaron, but against God when God made it clear that Moses was His chosen one. As I said before, when you chose to revolt against God's anointed you are revolting against God. There is a great application here that none of you see. When a person is religious yet follows Buddha or Krishna or Joseph Smith, he has rejected God's anointed—he has rejected Jesus Christ, and when you reject Jesus Christ, you reject God. When you do not accept Jesus Christ for Who He is—Who He claims to be, then you have rejected the Lord of Glory, the God of the Universe, and **there is none other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved** (Acts 4:12). No matter how religious you are, you reject Jesus Christ and you are in full rebellion against God.

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Numbers 17

Numbers 17:1–13

Outline of Chapter 17:

- vv. 1–8 **God instructs Moses for a test and Moses obeys**
- vv. 8–13 **Aaron's rod buds**

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

Introduction: Not only are Numbers 16 and 17 quite different in terms of size in the English chapter division, but the way they were divided makes more sense in the Hebrew version. The complaint of the people and the plague of Numbers 16:41–50 are tied more directly to Numbers 17:11–13 than these incidents are tied to the previous portion of Numbers 16. It actually might have been better to present as one huge combined chapter. However, this chapter is different from the previous thematically. Here is the first place that we have some hope for the nation Israel. It is in this chapter that we will see the famous Aaron's rod that budded, which will be placed into the ark of the covenant as a witness against the people.

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God Instructs Moses for a Test and Moses Obeys

Then Y^{ehowah} spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 17:16 (17:1 in the English)]

In the English, Numbers 16 got so long, that they arbitrarily stopped it here, using this famous dividing line.

"Speak to the sons of Israel and take from them each a rod, for a father's house, from all their princes, for the house of their fathers, twelve rods; the name of each you will write on his rod; [Numbers 17:17 (17:2 in the English)]

The Israelites came out of Egypt and in the pictures which we have found on the walls of Egyptian tombs, a person of rank, one who owned land and was a head of a family, carried a rod or a staff which indicated as much. Certainly, in their trudging through the desert, those of rank would have had a rod to indicate their position of leadership.

God will illustrate something here. We have a lot of very impressionable under twenty young men and women observing the wrath of Y^{ehowah} and wondering if they are all going to die at God's hand for the sins of their apostate fathers. God often explains something by way of an illustration or an act, as these things tend to stay in the mind longer. For most people, if you paint a picture, it is easier to recall than recalling some words. So each of the twelve tribes would take a rod and the name of one of the heads of that tribe would be written on that rod.

"And Aaron's name you will write on the tribe of Levi; for one rod [is] for the head of their father's house; [Numbers 17:18 (17:3 in the English)]

On the rod of Levi, Aaron's name will be written (even though Moses is more prominent, he is the national leader).

"And you will place them in the tent of meeting, before the face of the testimony, where I meet with you."¹¹² [Numbers 17:19 (17:4 in the English)]

Moses is to bring the rods into the tent of meeting and place them before God. The *testimony* is the ark of the covenant, the ark of testimony against them (Exodus 25:16, 21–22 Numbers 17:7). Before the face of the testimony would be, most likely, right outside the Holy of Holies, by the altar of incense, in front of the curtain which hides the ark of the testimony.

What occurs next is easy to understand; however, the literal translation of Young, upon which I heavily depend, leaves much to be desired.

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	And the rod of the man whom I choose shall bud; and I will make to cease from Me the murmurings of the Israelites, which they murmur against you.
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	So shall it come to pass that the man whom I shall choose his staff shall bud, so will I cause to cease from against me the murmurings of the sons of Israel, wherewith they are murmuring agianst you.
KJV	And it shall come to pass, <i>that</i> the man's rod, whom I shall choose, shall blossom; and I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel, whereby they murmur against you.
NASB	"And it shall come about that the rod of the man whom I choose will sprout. Thus I shall lessen from upon Myself the grumblings of the sons of Israel, who are grumbling against you."
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	'And it hath come to pass, the man's rod on whom I fix doth flourish, and I have cause to cease from off me the murmurings of the sons of Israel, which they are murmuring aginst you.'

"And it will come to pass, the man whom I choose, his rod will sprout, and I have caused to cease from against Me the murmurings of the sons of Israel, which they are murmuring against you."
[Numbers 17:20 (17:5 in the English)]

Each man represents a tribe. He brings his rod to Moses. Moses places these rods before God. Y^ehowah does not choose the rods, He chooses the men and the men whom He chooses, those men's rods will sprout. Now the rods are dead. It is just like carrying around a cane. For most of these thirty-eight years, God has killed off large sections of all twelve tribes. His displeasure with Israel has been clearly stated on a number of occasions, even to the point of threatening twice to annihilate all twelve tribes and to begin anew with Moses. Their biggest complaint in this past rebellion was that Moses and Aaron held leadership positions, and that God was in the midst of the rest of the congregation, specifically in the midst of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, meaning that they had just as much right to leadership positions as did Moses and Aaron. And now with Korah, Dathan and Abiram having died the sin unto death, there was still a sizable portion of the congregation which came forth to complain against Moses and Aaron and their positions of leadership. So this was to be a visual sign to show whom God favored and whom would lead Israel spiritually.

On the previous day, God had already shown to Korah and the other rebels whom He had chosen. This was covered in Numbers 16:5, which reads: **And he spoke to Korah and all his company, saying, "Tomorrow morning Y^ehowah will show who are His and who is holy and [whom He] will cause to bring near to Himself; even the one whom He will choose, He will bring near to Himself."**

¹¹² This is plural in the Massoretic text; singular in the Samaritan, the Septuagint and the Vulgate. The singular seems to make the most sense, as God primarily met with Moses in the tent of meeting; however, it is a rule of textual criticism to choose, in most instances, the reading which makes the least sense. That is, if there is not overwhelming evidence as to why a reading may have changed or what sort of scribal error may have occurred, then it would make more sense for an intentional change to reflect what makes more sense, rather than less sense, which is why the reading which makes the least sense is often chosen as the accurate rendition.

There is another side to this. There is only one Messiah. God would, from what seemed dead, cause to sprout His Son. Israel, during the time of our Lord, was very religious and very apostate. For centuries, even most of the high priests of Israel were not saved (in fact, two conspired in the death of our Lord). From Israel, who seemed dead in trespasses and sins, would sprout forth the Messiah, the Lord of Glory, Jesus Christ. There will be only one tribe from which will come Messiah, just as only one rod will sprout. [Then a root--shoot will spring from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit](#) (Isaiah 11:1)

And Moses spoke to the sons of Israel, and all their princes [or, leaders] give to him one rod for each prince [or, one rod for a leader], for their fathers' house, twelve rods, and the rod of Aaron in the midst of their rods; [Numbers 17:21 (17:6 in the English)]

God will perform a sign to indicate whom He favors. God has chosen in His Word one branch of a tribe to handle the priestly functions, and God has chosen on leader. It is through this that God will show which branch of which tribe that is. You may e asking, did God specifically tell Israel in His Word who would handle the priestly functions? Certainly, but Israel has rejected His Word, thinking it to be no more than the word of Moses. They sought a sign and this would be their sign.

And Moses placed the rods before Y^ehowah, in the tent of the testimony. [Numbers 17:22 (17:7 in the English)]

The tent of testimony is the tabernacle, which speaks of Who and What God is and His mercy shed upon us, despite our inherent sinfulness. It is called the tent of testimony because it contains the ark of testimony—testimony against us.

What will occur will be a miracle, but a miracle on a small scale. God has performed many incredible miracles before these people, including bringing water from the rock, the destruction of Pharaoh's forces, etc. This will be a quiet miracle to cause them to cease from their murmurings. From their apostasy and complaining, nothing living would sprout.

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Aaron's Rod Buds

And it came to pass, on the next day, that Moses went into the tent of the testimony, and saw [lit., and lo], the rod of Aaron had sprouted for the house of Levi, then was caused to put forth buds and was caused to blossom blossoms then it bore ripe almonds. [Numbers 17:23 (17:8 in the English)]

Not only had this rod sprouted, but it shot forth leaves, blossoms and fully ripened almonds. This needed to be a sign which would clearly be miraculous. It had to be a dead cane or rod which, in one overnight period of time, actually brought forth ripe almonds. They all knew their own rods and Aaron's had been clearly marked with his name on it (Numbers 17:3).

And Moses brought out all the rods from before Y^ehowah, to all the sons of Israel, and they looked and each took his rod. [Numbers 17:24 (17:9 in the English)]

They were allowed to examine the rods carefully, to take out the one which belonged to them. Naturally, eleven of the rods had not changed whatsoever. This is a sign of the vibrancy of the office and authority of Aaron and or the worthlessness and deadness of the complaints of the people. Also, this is a sign of resurrection. We all will die, but those who have believed in Jesus Christ will sprout forth—we will come to life at the call of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And Y^ehowah said to Moses, "Put back the rod of Aaron, before the face of the testimony, to be preserved [lit., for a charge], for a sign to the sons of rebellion, and you will remove their murmurings from against Me, and they will not die." [Numbers 17:25 (17:10 in the English)]

Israel needed something as a continual sign of their rebelliousness before God. Therefore, God ordered that the ark of the testimony be placed in front of the ark of the covenant, the ark of testimony. Later, this rod was placed inside the ark, as our sin and our rebellion comes from within ourselves. The ark would contain the tablets of the Law—God's ordinances against us; the pot of manna—the provision of God which we reject; and Aaron's rod that budded and bore fruit—our rebellion against God and God's chosen authority. **And behind the second eil there was a tent, which is called the Holy of Holies, having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden jar holding manna, and Aaron's rod which budded, and the tables of the covenant** (Hebrews 9:3–4).

The Jews to this day do not recognize that they are in constant rebellion against Him, even though, as you will recall, back in Leviticus 26, prior to entering the land, God told them that they would be scattered throughout all the nations of the earth for their rebellion against Him. Many Jews read that chapter again and again and they don't recognize that God is speaking to them.

It is their constant speaking against God which reveals the rebellion in their soul. They were to recognize this sign of the spiritual leadership of the tribe of Aaron, to back off as a mob, otherwise God would take them out in the sin unto death as He had done to so many other recalcitrants.

And Moses did as Y^ehowah had commanded him; so he had done. [Numbers 17:26 (17:11 in the English)]

Moses had no problem with obedience to God, which is why it was him of all his fellow Jews who was chosen by God to lead Israel. You cannot expect to lead a life of disobedience to God and expect that you will get anywhere.

And the sons of Israel spoke to Moses, saying, "Oh no [lit., lo], we have died; will have perished; we—all of us—have perished!" [Numbers 17:27 (17:12 in the English)]

The sons of Israel, noting the sprouting and the fruit on Aaron's cane, and none upon their own, looked upon this as meaning they were to die. They were the walking dead.

Everyone in coming near, comes near to the tabernacle of Y^ehowah—he will die; have we not come to completion to perish?" [Numbers 17:28 (17:13 in the English)]

For a short time, they recognize their own spiritual condition. Now note carefully here that this is analogous to our spiritual condition. How many people do you know who consider themselves spiritual beings? How many people do you know who believe that there is a little spark of God and God's goodness inside of them? Yet these people do not know Jesus Christ—they do not know God. The god they know and possibly worship is a cheap replica of themselves. Here the Jews recognize that when they come to the tabernacle of God—when they come into contact with God, they die. It is their inherent rebellious nature, just as we should recognize that due to our rebellious nature, we have no fellowship with God apart from Him choosing us—apart from our being in His Son. Otherwise, contact with God causes nothing more than death for us.

Numbers 18

Numbers 18:1–32

Outline of Chapter 18:

- Vv. 1–7 God gives the Levites as a gift to the sons of Aaron
- Vv. 8–19 The remuneration of the sons of Aaron
- Vv. 20–24 Levite duties and their remuneration
- Vv. 25–32 The contribution of the Levites and some final words

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

- v. 25 [To Say...](#)

Introduction: Because of the insidious revolt of Korah, which no doubt included some other Levites, God had to again define clearly what responsibilities were Aaron's and his sons. This chapter does not necessarily have to follow chapter 17 in time. Numbers 18 could have logically come immediately before or after Numbers 17. However, we have already learned what Aaron's duties were, as well as what the Levites were to do. This has been made clear in the past. God is, so there is not confusion whatsoever, reiterating some of the responsibilities. Recall that the duties of the priesthood cover several chapters and that some tend to get lost in that many chapters. Numbers 18 basically sums up those duties and differentiates, again, between the Levites and Aaron's familial branch of the Levites.

Numbers 18 also covers the remuneration which is received by the priests and by the Levites for their service to God. These gifts are tied both to the eating of same and to the bearing of the sins of the people. These may seem to be two incongruous concepts; however, they will be tied together in v. 1.

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God Gives the Levites as a Gift to the Sons of Aaron

And then Y^ehowah said to Aaron, "You and your sons and the house of your father with you bear the iniquity [or, guilt] of the sanctuary; and you and your sons with you will bear the iniquity [or, guilt] of your priesthood; [Numbers 18:1]

This is one of the very few times where God speaks directly to Aaron alone. This has occurred only in Exodus 4:27 and 16:9 (and one might argue that God was not speaking only to Aaron in the second citation, but to Moses and Aaron together, giving them separate tasks). Furthermore, God will speak to Aaron alone only one more time in Numbers 18:20. In other verses, God speaks primarily to Moses and occasionally to Moses and Aaron. It is possible that God spoke to Moses and Moses relayed the information to Aaron; however, considering that had been done before and God communicated either to Moses or to Moses and Aaron, that would indicate that He spoke directly to Aaron. Also, the author of the Pentateuch (at last Exodus through Numbers), who is Moses, seemed to be almost anal in preserving when God spoke, exactly what God said, and the circumstances under which God spoke. I am not sure there is any instance in the Pentateuch where one could say, "Now, I am not sure if this is Moses or God speaking right here." For these reasons, I believe that God is speaking to Aaron directly, as the Scripture says.

This should give any one of us hope—not that God will directly speak to us, but that we might attain some modicum of spiritual growth, despite numerous and alarming failures. Can you imagine doing anything worse than what Aaron did—being manipulated by the people of Israel to lead them to cast a golden calf to worship? This is after seeing God perform many incredible signs. Yet, despite this and other failures, God speaks directly to Aaron and God honors Aaron with the priesthood.

A sinful person cannot personally bear the sins of another sinful person. Aaron and his sons, as priests, were given the monumental task of bearing the sins of the people, who were almost out of control, bitter and upset. The sons of Aaron had to stand in the gap between God and these people so that God did not destroy all of Israel. This priesthood was a gracious gift from God. The priests offered sacrifices and offerings on behalf of the people and, because of their faithful service, a remnant of the people would be delivered and would go into the land (in this particular case, it would be only the children of those who sinned in their rebellion against God). **And it will be on Aaron's forehead, and Aaron will bear the iniquity [or, guilt] of the holy things which the sons of Israel consecrate, with regard to all their holy gifts; and it will always be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before Y^ehowah** (Exodus 28:38). What this means is, Aaron and his sons bore the immense responsibility of the priesthood and all that pertains to it—they would be responsible for every offense and every act of neglect related to the priesthood, the holy things and the Tabernacle of God.

Barnes gives this a slightly different interpretation: *The Hebrew expression "to bera iniquity" is applied either to one who suffers the penalty of sin (Ex 28:43 Leviticus 5:1, 17 17:16 26:41, etc.), or to one who takes away the sin of others (Genesis 1:17 Leviticus 10:17 16:22 Numbers 20:15 1Samuel 15:25, etc.). In several of these passages the verb is rightly rendered "to forgive." The iniquity which is spoken of in this place does not mean particular sins actually committed, but that condition of alienation from God in every earthly thing which makes reconciliation and consecration needful. Compare Numbers 18:1. It belonged to the high priest, as the chief atoning mediator between Yahweh and His people (see the note at Exodus 28:36), to atone for the holy things that they might be "accepted before the Lord" (compare Leviticus 8:15, note; Leviticus 16:20, Leviticus 16:33, note): but the common priests also, in their proper functions, had to take their part in making atonement (Leviticus 4:20 5:10 10:17 22:16 Numbers 18:23, etc.).*¹¹³

Moses, in speaking to Eleazar and Ithamar (Aaron's remaining sons), said, "Why did you not eat the sin offering at the holy place? For it is most holy, and it was given to you to bear away the guilt of the congregation, to make atonement for them before Y^ehowah." (Leviticus 10:17). "And they will not profane the holy [gifts] of the sons of Israel which they offer to Y^ehowah. And so cause them to bear the iniquity for guilt by eating their holy [gifts]; for I am Y^ehowah Who sanctifies them." (Leviticus 22:15–16). It is the eating of these gifts by the sons of Aaron which bears the sins of the congregation, so to speak. Eating is analogous to faith ("**He who eats my flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life; and I will raise him up on the last day.**" John 6:54) and to our reasonable spiritual service ("**But He said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." The disciples, therefore, were saying to one another, "No one brought Him [something] to eat, did he?" Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him Who sent Me, and to accomplish His work."**" John 4:32–34). Once someone is a believer, then there is the matter of their reasonable service to God (which, obviously some never become involved with). Jesus Christ bears our sins, not the animal sacrifices and not the contributions which are brought. It is in the general tabernacle service of the sons of Aaron by which the sins of the congregation are borne. This tabernacle service, which involves a complete Christology, placates God¹¹⁴, as a tranquilizing smell from an offering.

"And also you brothers, the tribe of Levi, the tribe of your father, cause them to approach with you, and they will be joined to you and serve you, even you and yours sons with you, before the tent of the testimony. [Numbers 18:2]

Aaron is from the tribe of Levi, as is Moses. God, however, chose for Aaron, who, save for one or two lapses in judgement (i.e., the golden calf incident and his quiet support of Miriam's bitch fest) has been quite faithful in service to Him, to act as a high priest and his sons to act as priest below him. However, his brothers, the Levites, will participate in the service to God under the priests doing various tasks as assigned by Aaron and his sons. The Levites had already had their reasonable service delineated in Numbers 3; however, as evidenced by Korah's rebellion, they did not believe God's Word but some followed Korah. These assignments of responsibility were

¹¹³ Barnes' Notes; *Exodus to Ruth*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 79. I did not begin to use Barnes regularly until later. This citation was done in 2004.

¹¹⁴ I am speaking anthropologically, of course.

not to be taken lightly, as we have seen when Aaron's two oldest sons were executed by God and when God killed Korah who rebelled against his position in this life.

"And they have kept your responsibility and the responsibility of all the tent; only, to the vessels of the sanctuary and to the altar they are not to approach, that [lit., and] they die not, either they or you. [Numbers 18:3]

God had very specific duties which He had assigned to the sons of Israel and to the various sub-tribes. "And when Aaron and his sons have finished covering the holy [things] and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is to set out, so that when the sons of Kohath will come to carry [these things], they will not [directly] touch the holy [things] and die. These are the items in the tent of meeting which the sons of Kohath are to carry...they will not go in to see the holy [things] even for a moment, or they will die" (Numbers 4:15, 20). God made it very clear what the sons of Kohath could and could not do. Some of these duties God assigned as He knows the future and how much He could trust the Levites in general and how much He could trust the Aaronites in general. Aaron and his sons seemed to recognize the solemnity of their responsibility. Korah and his rabble following obviously did not.

These restrictions guard the running analogy here. The priest represents man to God. Our High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, paid for our wrongdoing and bore our sins and guilt by His death on the cross. We have no part in this sacrifice except to believe and trust Him for what He did on our behalf. However, afterwards, we have become children of God and we have a spiritual service to render. This is like the Levites. We don't have a part in the actual sacrifice of our Lord—that is, there is nothing that we do which in some way is efficacious or helps God to forgive us for our monumental sins. This was accomplished completely on the cross and we cannot add to it. We can only believe. The priests, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites are separated in the same way. The priests represent our Lord Jesus Christ and the Levites represent us in service to Him. There cannot be a commingling of their responsibilities without confusing the analogy. It would be like me telling you that some pain or suffering that I have experienced somehow atoned for your sins. That is completely fallacious. These shadow images are the key to the entire Old Testament, and a deliberate fouling of the carefully drawn Old Testament analogies resulted in the sin unto death of the offender. The unclean was not to have any contact with the clean. "Her priest have done violence to My Law and have profaned My holy things; they have made no distinction between the holy and the profane, and they have not taught the difference between the unclean and the clean; and they hide their eyes from My Sabbaths, and I am profaned among them." (Ezekiel 22:26). Sincerity and what would appear to be reasonable motives were never an excuse: But when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out toward the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen nearly upset it. And the anger of Y^ehovah burned against Uzzah and God struck him down there for the irreverence; and he died there by the ark of God (2Samuel 6:6–7).

"And they have been joined to you and have kept the responsibility of the tent of meeting, for all the service of the tent; and an outsider [or, a stranger] will not approach you; [Numbers 18:4]

This is important because the lead instigator in this rebellion was a Levite; furthermore, there were, no doubt, several Levites involved in the two hundred and fifty. Therefore, it might give Aaron the impression that the Levites no longer had a place in God's service. Quite the contrary, there were some faithful Levites, particularly in the generation coming up, and God did not want this rebellion to hinder the relationship between Aaron and the Levites. The outsider here is not a non-Jew but a non-Levite. This term translated *stranger* appears to apply to one who is not a member or a part of a particular group given in context.

"And you have kept the responsibility of the sanctuary and the responsibility of the altar and there is no more wrath against the sons of Israel. [Numbers 18:5]

"And I have given to the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the sons of Israel, to perform the service of the sons of Israel at the tent of meeting, and to make atonement on behalf of the sons of Israel, that there may be no plague among the sons of Israel by their coming near to the sanctuary." (Numbers 8:19). This does not mean that there will never be a problem again between God and the Levites; it means that the last

rebellion has been completely dealt with and now Aaron can get back to the business of being a priest. The Levites also have their assigned place of service which they are to return to. In the establishing of the Law and tabernacle worship, God's judgement upon those who brought unauthorized gifts to Him was swift and severe (Leviticus 10:2 Numbers 16:35).

"And I, even I,¹¹⁵ have taken your brothers, the Levites, from the midst of the sons of Israel; to you a gift they are given by Y^ehowah, to do the service of the tent of meeting; [Numbers 18:6]

We are a present from God to Jesus Christ, to do service on His behalf. Similarly, our Old Testament shadow image, the Levites, are a present from God to the High Priest. "You will thus give the Levites to Aaron and to his sons; they are wholly given to him from among the sons of Israel." (Numbers 3:9). They are also involved in the ministry of the tabernacle, which revealed Jesus Christ and the cross to the congregation of Israel. Just as we are not involved in any priestly functions on behalf of anyone else (that is, we do not represent man to God in any way); they were similarly separate from that aspect to the ministry.

"And you, and your sons with you, will keep [or, take responsibility for, guard and preserve] your priesthood, with respect to everything [lit., all of [the] doctrine {lit, a word}] of the altar—from the habitation to the veil [or, curtain]; and you [all] have served. A service of gift [or, offering] I give [or, set] your priesthood; [Numbers 18:7a]

I have come across a combination of prepositions. We have the lâmed preposition plus min, a noun, and then the prefixed lâmed again. I think it should be rendered *from....to....* I couldn't get this completely substantiated by BDB. The sense here is to mean all that is within the tabernacle, the earthly habitation of our Lord.

However, as you can see by all the added brackets that I have been getting bogged down in this translation. To help with your understanding, allow me to include some other renderings of the first three-quarters of this verse:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	Therefore, you and your sons with you shall attend to your priesthood for everythig of the altar [of burnt offering and the altar of incense], and [of the holy of holies] within the veil; and you shall serve. I give you your priesthood as a service of gift;
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	But thou and thy sons with thee shall keep the charge of your priesthood as to every matter of the altar, and, as to the interior of the veil, and shall do the laborious work—as a laborious service of gifts do I give your priesthood,...
KJV	Therefore, thou and thy sons with thee shall keep your preist's office for every thing of the altar, and within the veil; an dye shall serve: I have given your priest's office unto you as a service of gift:
NASB	But you and your sons with you shall attend to your priesthood for everything concerning the altar and inside the veil, and you are to perform service. I am giving you the priesthood as a bestowed service,...
NIV	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.
NRSV	But you and your sons with you shall diligently perform your priestly duties in all that concerns the altar and the area behind the curtain. I give your priesthood as a gift;
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	...and thou, and thy sons with thee, do keep your priesthood, for everything of the altar, and within the veil, and ye have served; a service of gift I make your priesthood;

A glaring difference that you may have noticed between the way I have rendered this verse and the other translations is the inclusion of the word *habitation*. There is the combination of prepositions, lâmed and min, and then we find the word bayîth (בַּיִת) [pronounced *BAH-yith*]¹¹⁶, which means *house, household, habitation* as well as *inward*. It is so translated throughout the Bible (Genesis 6:14 7:1 12:1, 15, 17 14:14 Numbers 18:1, 11, 13,

¹¹⁵ Lit., I, behold, I... or I, lo, I...

¹¹⁶ Why not BAH-yeeth?

31). Why we do not find it here clearly in one of the more literal translations, I have no idea, but it is there in the original. Then it is followed by the lamed preposition once again and the word for *veil*.

One of the things which I have noticed when Y^ehowah is quoted directly is that He did not, in a grammatical sense, speak down to Moses or to Aaron. The most difficult and complex sentence structure tends to be found when God is quoted directly. I do like the NASB's rendering with regard to the priesthood being given as a *bestowed service*. I think that best captures, in modern language, the meaning of the words there.

Despite the complex structure of this verse, it is clear that Y^ehowah has given them particular duties with respect to the interior of the tabernacle and outsiders (or, unauthorized personnel) are not to attend to those functions whatsoever. The Aaronites were made priests as a statute forever from the very beginning (Exodus 29:9). The sin unto death is promised for the outsider who attempts to service inside the tabernacle. However, just as the Levites are a gift to them, their own service is also a gift.

And the outsider [or, stranger] who is coming near is put to death." [Numbers 18:7b]

The outsider is unauthorized personnel. God has set up a careful analogy. The Old Testament is filled with the imagery of what our Lord would do on our behalf. God's commands were simple, clearly stated, and easy to follow. For those who deliberately and consistently rejected His Word, He rejected them.

The Remuneration of the Sons of Aaron

Deuteronomy 18:1–5

And then Y^ehowah said to Aaron, "And I, even I, have given to you the responsibility of My contributions, of all the separated things of the sons of Israel—to you, I have given them for the anointing, and to your sons, by a perpetual decree [or, a statute forever]." [Numbers 18:8]

There are two words in the Hebrew which are translated interchangeably and I know that they are not interchangeable. Chôq (חֹק) [pronounced *khoke*] is the masculine noun whose meanings are given as *something prescribed, a statute, due*; (BDB) and is translated also *portion* (Genesis 47:22), *law* (Genesis 47:26), *task* (Exodus 5:14), *ordinance* (Exodus 12:24), *statute* (Exodus 15:25)—those were just the first six occurrences in Scripture. From thereon in, it is almost consistently translated *statutes* with an occasional rendering of *decree, law, ordinance, custom, commandment* and even *ordinary* (Ezekiel 16:27) and *measure* (Isaiah 5:14). There is also the feminine form of this noun, chuqqâh (חֻקָּה) [pronounced *khook-KAWH*]. BDB gives its meanings as *something prescribed, enactment, statute*. The KJV gives the renderings *statutes, ordinances, manners* (Leviticus 20:23). With rare exceptions (like Genesis 47:22 Ezekiel 46:14 and this passage), both words are generally found in the plural. My instinct is to translate the masculine by the words *decrees, that which is decreed* and the feminine as the softer *ordinances*. I may change this opinion later.

"This is yours of the most holy things from the fire: every their offering of theirs to every present of theirs and to every sin[-offering] of theirs, and to every guilt-offering of theirs, which they cause to be returned to Me, it [is] most holy [lit., holy of holies] to you and to your sons." [Numbers 18:9]

These offerings offered by the priests were not to be taken lightly. This was not a responsibility given to just anyone, regardless of their level of sincerity. One had to be **born** into this responsibility (as our Lord was born sinless in this responsibility)—and only the Aaronic branch of the Levites, the priests, were to be offering animal sacrifices, just as our Lord's sacrifice is the only one which is efficacious for us all.

Those in the priesthood and those who served the priests (the Levites) had no other means of support. Their lives were given totally over to God. They had no land to farm on the side, they carried no side jobs. They did not have a retirement fund paying them. Therefore, they had to be remunerated by the sons of Israel for their spiritual

service performed on their behalf. They received tithes of produce and money and they received the best portions (see also Leviticus 6:14–7:36).

"Against [or, In] the holy of holies, You will eat it; every male will eat it; holy it is to you. [Numbers 18:10]

That which is offered, in many cases, was given to the priests to eat. This was to be continued even after Korah's rebellion. However, they did not use the Holy of Holies as a lunchroom; they ate in the tent, but not in the Holy of Holies itself. Only the High Priest could go inside the Holy of Holies and that but once a year.

"And this [is] yours: the contribution of their gift, to all the wave-offerings of the sons of Israel—to you, I have given them to your sons and to your daughters with you, by an everlasting ordinance—every clean one in your house will eat it. [Numbers 18:11]

The priests and high priest sacrificed a large number of animals and were in full-time service to Y^ehowah. They had no means of support other than through donations. This allowed them food to eat. This food and these tithes supported not only the priests, but their families as well (priests were not celibate as a rule). Being clean is analogous to being without sin, in fellowship. The ceremonial functions associated with becoming unclean and with being cleansed are found in Leviticus 22.

In this chapter, as well as throughout most of the books of Leviticus and Numbers we have the word offering. However, there are several kinds of offerings and several different words which are so translated. Therefore, we need to study the **Doctrine of the Hebrew Words for Offering—not finished yet!**

"All the best [lit., fat] of the oil, and the best [lit., fat] of the new wine, and wheat—their first which they give to Y^ehowah—to you I have given them. [Numbers 18:12]

This means that the priests got the first and the best of all produce of Israel (Psalm 81:16 147:14). Deuteronomy 18:1–4 is a parallel passage: "The Levitical priests, the whole tribe of Levi, will have no portion or inheritance with Israel; they will eat Y^ehowah's offerings by fire and His portion. and they will have no inheritance among their countrymen; Y^ehowah is their inheritance, as He promised them. Now this will be the priest' due from the people, from those who offer a sacrifice, either an ox or a sheep, of which they will give to the priest the shoulder and the two cheeks and the stomach. You will give him the first fruits of your grain, your new wine and your oil; and the first shearing of your sheep." Your pastor should be treated the same way. A pastor should not be paid with what is left over, living a life scraping by. His devotion to you in the Word of God is your life. He should receive the best that you have, not your leftovers. **For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You will not muzzle the ox while he is threshing." God is not concerned about oxen, is He? Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher in hope of sharing [in the harvest]. If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we should reap material things from you? If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things, that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ. Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat of the [food] of the temple? Those who attend regularly to the altar have their share with the altar? So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel** (1Corinthians 9:9–13 Deuteronomy 25:4).

"The first-fruits of all that is in their land, which they bring in to Y^ehowah, are yours; every clean one in your house will eat it; [Numbers 18:13]

Much of God's Word has application to today as well as to the past. The interpretation of the past is fairly simple. God provided the best for the priests—for those most closely connected to the service to Him. Similarly, God has given us great blessing as believers in the church age. We do not have to be evangelists, pastor-teachers, nor do we need to be Sunday School teachers or kick around the church in some area of responsibility or another. We are in full-time Christian service by virtue of our intake of God's Word and our functioning in the Spirit. God has provided for us and for our families great blessings in many realms. Not everyone receives great financial

rewards, although many do. God provides many with great family blessings, with their niche in life, with great promotion, with right man or right woman, with great inner happiness, etc. Some even receive great suffering, as God can only bless us through suffering in this world. There are some people whose spiritual operation on earth we never see because they pray quietly for hours on our behalf and on the behalf of others. God honors those prayers and there are some people who we look down on or feel sorry for who have been praying on our behalf for years and much of our blessing is a result of the tremendous prayers. Those people also receive great rewards, here and in heaven. The growing believer receives the best which God can provide.

"Every devoted thing in Israel is yours; [Numbers 18:14]

"I am God—your God; every beat of the forest is Mine; the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird of the mountains and everything that moves in the field is Mine." (Psalm 50:7b, 10–11a). Leviticus 27 goes into great detail as to what belongs to the priest.

"Everyone opening a womb of all flesh which they approach with to Y^ehowah, among man and among beast, is yours; only, you will certainly redeem [or, in redemption, you will redeem] the first-born of man, and you will redeem the firstling of the unclean beast. [Numbers 18:15]

Much of the Old Testament looks forward to our day in shadow images. We, as having an old sin nature, are unclean and there must be a redemption price paid on our behalf as unclean. The redemption of the unclean beast is analogous to our situation. This also looks backward to the death of the firstborn in Egypt redeeming the Israelites (Exodus 13:13–15).

"And their redeemed ones from a son of a month, you will redeem with your valuation—of silver, five shekels, by the shekel of the sanctuary, [or] it [is] twenty gerahs. [Numbers 18:16]

As noted previously, all that is valuable is determined by the sanctuary; the value of everything is determined by the tabernacle of God. A shekel is approximately half an ounce so a gerah would be an eighth of an ounce.

"Only, the firstling of a cow, or the firstling of a sheep, or the firstling of a goat, [those] you will not redeem—they [are] holy; their blood you will sprinkle on the altar, and of their fat, you make perfume, a fire-offering of sweet fragrance to Y^ehowah; [Numbers 18:17]

That which is holy does not need to be redeemed. Our Lord Jesus Christ does not require redemption. You do not purchase someone who is not a slave from the slave market. Only those which are unclean must be redeemed.

"And their flesh is yours, as the breast of that held up [or, waved]; [Numbers 18:18]

Against, these blessings belong to the sons of Aaron.

"All the holy contributions which the sons of Israel raise up to Y^ehowah I have given to you and to your sons, and to your daughters with you, by a perpetual decree, a covenant of salt, forever it [is] before Y^ehowah, to you and to your seed with you." [Numbers 18:19]

God takes care of his own in both time and in eternity. We should examine the very short **Doctrine of the Covenant of Salt** right here (**not finished**).

Levite Duties and Their Remuneration

And then Y^ehowah said to Aaron, "In their land, you will not inherit, and a portion you will not have in their midst; I [am] your portion, and your inheritance in the midst of the sons of Israel; [Numbers 18:20]

Every tribe of Israel will be given a specific portion of land which to farm and dwell upon. However, the sons of Aaron (and the sons of Levi) will not receive this grant of land. This fact is continually stated throughout the Old Testament. **But to the tribe of Levi, Moses did not give an inheritance; Y^ehowah, the God of Israel, is their inheritance, as he had promised to them (Joshua 13:33). "And it will be with regard to an inheritance for them: I am their inheritance; and you will give them no possession in Israel—I am their possession." (Ezekiel 44:28).** See also: Deuteronomy 10:9 12:12 14:27–29 18:2. This is because their kingdom is not of this world. Their kingdom is other-worldly; their kingdom is in the New Jerusalem, in the new heavens and the new earth.

This is a shadow image of the believer in the church age. **Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not out from this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would fight, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but, as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."** (John 18:36). Therefore, those who represent our Lord on earth do not have a permanent place in this fallen earth.

"And to the sons of Levi, note [lit., lo] I have given all the tenth in Israel for inheritance in exchange for their service which they are serving—the service of the tent of meeting. [Numbers 18:21]

Even though the Levites were involved in the previous uprising, they still have a part in God's plan—particularly those who are coming up in the next generation. God will specify in their duties. They are in service to the tabernacle as God had previously prescribed. However, they will not enter into the tent of meeting.

"And the sons of Israel will no longer approach near to the tent of meeting, to bear sin, to die; [Numbers 18:22]

When Korah and the others stood against Moses and Aaron, they desired greater power and more say in government. Part of what they expected to do was to be leaders in the spiritual realm. God is specifically prohibiting anyone, other than those which He has commissioned, to perform sacrifices and to deal with the articles of furniture in the tabernacle.

"And the Levites will serve [lit., and Levi will serve] the service of the tent of meeting, and they—they bear their iniquity—[this is] a perpetual decree to your generations. And in the midst of the sons of Israel, they will have no inheritance; [Numbers 18:23]

The sons of Levi, just as the sons of Aaron, represent God on earth and represent man to God. They are the shadow-image of Jesus Christ—therefore, they do not have an earthly inheritance. In the service to the tabernacle, those devoted to God *bear* the iniquity (or, the guilt) of the other Israelites. It is through the animal sacrifices and the rituals which foretell the sacrifice of the death of our Lord on our behalf that the Levites (and the priests) bear the iniquity of the other Israelites.

This verse could be misinterpreted—out of context, it would sound as though the Levitical desire for power caused them to be without an inheritance. However, this is not the case. So that we are not misled, God clears that up in the next verse:

"But the tithe of the sons of Israel which they lift up to Y^ehowah, a contribution, I have give to the Levites for an inheritance; therefore, I have said of them, in the midst of the sons of Israel, they have no inheritance." [Numbers 18:24]

The inheritance of the sons of Levi is the special tithe which is picked up. There is a tithe specifically for them, to financially support the sons of Levi so that they can serve the sons of Aaron who serve in the tabernacle.

The Contribution of the Levites and Some Final Words

And then Y^ehowah spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 18:25]

Notice that there is a different formula when God spoke to Moses and when God spoke to Aaron. With Aaron, it is **and then Y^ehowah said to Aaron**; and with Moses, it is **and then Y^ehowah spoke to Moses, saying**. There are also two different words used here, which I do not know how to differentiate between. It is possible that they are used just to spice up the language and it is possible one means *to communicate* and the other means *to say*.

To Say...			
Verse	Word	Morphology	Spoken to...
v. 1	'âmar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw--MAR]	Qal imperfect	Aaron
v. 8	dâ ^b var (דַּבַּר) [pronounced daw ^b -VAR]	Piel imperfect	Aaron
v. 20	'âmar	Qal imperfect	Aaron
v. 25	dâ ^b var; 'âmar	Piel imperfect; Qal infinitive construct	Moses
v. 26	dâ ^b var; 'âmar	Piel imperfect; Qal perfect	The Levites
v. 30	'âmar	Qal perfect	The Levites

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"And to the Levites you will speak; and you will say to them, 'When you [all] take from the sons of Israel the tithe which I have given to you from the, for you inheritance, the you [all] will raise up from it the contribution of Y^ehowah, a tithe of the tithe; [Numbers 18:26]

Even though the Levites are state supported, if you will, they still must contribute from their income to Y^ehowah. **And the priest, the son of Aaron, will be with the Levites when the Levites receive tithes, and the Levites will bring up the tenth of the tithes to the house of our God to the chambers of the storehouse (Neh. 10:38)**. We are given material benefits from God and we are all to give of what we have. It is not necessarily a tenth anymore, as we are not under the Law. In some cases, it is everything we have (as in the widow's mite); sometimes it is not the amount but the motivation which removes the spiritual benefit of giving (as in the gift of Ananias and Saphira).

" 'And your contribution will be computed to you as corn from the threshing-floor, and as fulness from the wine-vat; [Numbers 18:27]

The other sons of Israel offered up grain, wine and oil from their produce. However, whatever the Levites receive, they will give a tenth of that, and that will be equivalent to what is given by the other Israelites.

" 'So you—even you—will also raise up the contribution to Y^ehowah to Aaron the priest; [Numbers 18:28]

The Levites, despite the fact that some of them had rebelled against Aaron's authority, they will tithe from their own possessions to Aaron and to his line (the proper noun is often used for a tribe or sub-tribe). The Levites were men. They were analogous to the believer in his service to our Lord, but they were still men. Therefore, they were not exempt from believing in Jesus Christ, from animal sacrifices, from discipline or from tithing. The priests themselves, although representing Jesus Christ, were also men. They also participated in the things of man which were necessary due to their fallen state.

" 'Out of all your gifts you [all] will raise up the entire contribution of Y^ehowah; out of all its fat—its hallowed [set apart] portion—out of it.' [Numbers 18:29]

What they received in contributions was their wealth, or their fat. From this would be a contribution to Y^ehowah given to the sons of Aaron.

"And you will say to them, 'In your raising up its fat out of it, then it will be computed to the Levites, as an increase of a threshing floor-floor, and as increase of a wine-vat. [Numbers 18:30]

This gift from the Levites will be equivalent to the gift of any other tribe when giving from their own produce. God will honor it as though they had grown or produced it themselves.

" 'And you [all] will eat it in every place, you [all] and your households, for it [is] your remuneration in exchange for your service in the tent of meeting; [Numbers 18:31]

The food from others produce and from that which they process will belong to the Levites to eat as if they had produced it themselves. They had to be paid for their spiritual service. They had families which depended upon them.

" 'And you [all] will bear no sin for it, in your raising up its fat out of it. Furthermore [lit., and] the holy things of the sons of Israel, you [all] will not pollute so that [lit., and] you [all] will not die.'
" [Numbers 18:32]

They must, out of their own wealth, raise up a contribution to God (called fat here; the word represents the excess portion—that is, it represents excess wealth). Furthermore, they are not to pollute the holy things of Israel—which, in this case, are their gifts and tithes. The Levites are to give a tenth of the best of this. The remainder is to be eaten in fellowship and not in rebellion.

Numbers 19

Numbers 19:1–22

Outline of Chapter 19:

- Vv. 1–6 The red heifer sacrifice
- Vv. 7–10 The cleansing of those in the ceremony of the sacrifice
- Vv. 11–22 The cleansing of those associated with death

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

Introduction **Sanitary Practices** (Bible Evidences)

- v. 13 **Germs, Labor Fever, and Biblical Sanitation** (by Karl Butt)
- v. 19 **The Water of Purification** (by Karl Butt)

Introduction: the first ten verses of Numbers 19 deal with the red heifer sacrifice, which appears to be a one-time sacrifice. It is not entirely clear to me the purpose of this sacrifice. It is performed primarily by Aaron and his son Eleazar, and Eleazar will assume the duties of the High Priest in the next chapter. Whether this is the connection, I don't know for certain. In the second half of Numbers 19, we find the reintroduction of laws concerning what is clean and what is not. As we have seen, it is of monumental importance to differentiate between the clean and the unclean. Religion does not do that today—they gloss over the perfection and righteousness of God to where God is a namby-pamby God Who will take anyone who exerts some effort to be good once and awhile.

Sanitary Practices (Bible Evidences)

For centuries doctors denied the possibility that disease could be transmitted by invisible agents. However, in the late 19th century Louis Pasteur demonstrated in his Germ Theory of Disease that most infectious diseases were caused by microorganisms originating from outside the body. This new understanding of germs and their means of transmission led to improved sanitary standards that resulted in an enormous drop in the mortality rate. Yet these core principles of sanitation were being practiced by the Israelites thousands of years earlier.

The Israelites were instructed to wash themselves and their clothes in running water if they had a bodily discharge, if they came in contact with another person's discharge, or if they had touched a dead human or animal carcass. They were also instructed to wash any uncovered vessels that were in the vicinity of a dead body, and if a dead carcass touched a vessel it was to be destroyed. Items recovered during war were also to be purified through either fire or running water. In addition, the Israelites were instructed to bury their human waste outside of camp, and to burn the waste of their animals (See Numbers 19:3-22, Leviticus 11:1-47; 15:1-33, Deuteronomy 23:12).

These sanitary practices without question saved countless lives in the Israelite camps by protecting them against infection caused by unseen germs. Meanwhile, their Egyptian peers were dying by the thousands due to "remedies" that almost always consisted of some amount of human or animal dung¹. As mentioned earlier, the sound sanitary practices that we take for granted today only began to flourish about a 100 years ago.

¹Lise Manniche, An Ancient Egyptian Herbal, 1989, pgs 92, 136, 146

From <https://bibleevidences.com/medical-evidence/> accessed December 19, 2020.

The Red Heifer Sacrifice

And Y^ehowah spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, [Numbers 19:1]

The laws given in this chapter will be primarily Levitical in nature; which is why God spoke to Aaron and Moses.

"This [is] a statute of the Law which Y^ehowah has commanded, saying, speak to the sons of Israel, and they will bring to you a red heifer, a perfect one, in which there is no blemish, on which no yoke has gone up; [Numbers 19:2]

We are in those thirty-eight silent years. In Numbers 18 we were given a relatively representative incident of rebellion and God's suppression of same. Here, interestingly enough, we suddenly stop dealing with the judgement and thousands dying the sin unto death and look at a particular animal sacrifice.

It has been clearly shown that the perfection of these animals relates to the perfection of the humanity of Jesus Christ. This is further amplified in Leviticus 22:20–25 where having *no blemish* is further defined. A yoke is a burden and our Lord was unburdened by an old sin nature.¹¹⁷ In these passages in the Law which require certain sacrifices to be of animals which have not been yoked sacrifice an animal which is set apart to God—an animal which has not had a profane (or common) use. Any animal which had been used to pull a cart or a farming implement would have been profaned, and therefore not a suitable sacrifice to God. The representation is of Jesus Christ, Who had no old sin nature, Who had committed no sin, Who had not been profaned before God the Father, and therefore was suitable for a sacrifice to Him.

A heifer sacrifice—where the heifer, incidentally, had never been yoked—was used later for the expiation of a crime in Deuteronomy 21. Similarly, we stand as criminals before God. It is the sacrifice of our Lord which expiates our criminal behavior, insofar as we have disobeyed His Laws.

"And you [all] will give it to Eleazar the priest, and he will bring it out to the outside of the camp, and he will slaughter it before him. [Numbers 19:3]

You well understand that every sacrifice is a symbol for Jesus Christ, so why is this heifer taken outside the camp? Jesus was seized by his own countrymen, the Scribes and priests as led by Judas, but he was not executed by the Jews, as this was a capital offense—but taken *outside the camp* to be tried and executed by the Romans. There would be so much pressure from the Jews for His execution that it becomes politically the expedient thing to do. The bull of the sin offering of Leviticus 4 was also taken outside the camp (Leviticus 4:12, 21).

"And Eleazar the priest will take of its blood with his fingers and he will sprinkle [it] over [and] against the front of the tent of meeting out of her blood seven times; [Numbers 19:4]

The tent of meeting represents Jesus Christ and His dwelling in the midst of the Jews—the blood identifies Him with the death of the red heifer. Seven always represents divine perfection. A similar ceremony occurred with the bull of the sin offering in Leviticus 4:6, 17.

"And one will burn the cow before his eyes; her skin and her flesh and her blood, besides her dung, he will burn; [Numbers 19:5]

¹¹⁷ One rather unintentionally humorous suggestion (I won't quote the source because their work has generally been helpful in this endeavor) was that unyoked oxen were taken because a bull which had been yoked had been first castrated, making him unfit for sacrifice. However, being a bull in the first place, capable of being castrated, pretty well removes him from the arena of heifers.

The subject of the verbs and the *his* modifying eyes are all nonspecific as to who is performing the action of the verb. In this context, it is an helper burning the cow before the eyes of Aaron (see v. 8 below); however, in the future, it will be God the Father burning the cow before the eyes of Israel. Giving this mandate in a nonspecific person allows for its future reference to be specific. Burning always speaks of judgement and our Lord was judged on our behalf.

"And the priest will take cedar wood and hyssop, and scarlet, and he will cast [them] into the midst of the burning of the cow; [Numbers 19:6]

The cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet must all stand for something here!?!? They are also all found back in Leviticus 14:4 when a leper was cleansed and we have studied the doctrine of the hyssop back in Exodus 12:22.

The following chart was partially adopted from a footnote in the NIV Study Bible:

The Red Heifer	Most other sacrifices
Without spot and without blemish	Without spot and without blemish
The animal is an heifer (a cow)	Usually an ox or a bull
Color specifically was red	No specification concerning its color
Had never been yoked	Nothing is said concerning the previous labors of a sacrifice
Blood was not drained and entrails were not removed and cleaned	Blood is drained and entrails removed and cleansed
Slaughtered outside the camp	Sacrificed in front of the tent of meeting
Burnt whole outside the camp	Burnt upon the altar
Priest was not specifically identified with the sacrifice of the animal	Priest identified himself or a member of the congregation with the animal
Primary focus: the ashes	Primary focus: the sacrificial act

The Cleansing of Those in the Ceremony of the Sacrifice

"And the priest will wash his garments, and he will bathe his flesh with water, and afterwards, he will come into the camp, and the priest will be unclean until the evening; [Numbers 19:7]

It is the death of Jesus Christ cleanses us; so, after the sacrifice of the red heifer, Aaron is cleansed. However, why is he not immediately clean? The same way we are not immediately cleaned. We are positionally clean and temporally clean when filled with the Holy Spirit. However, we are still carry the old sin nature within our flesh and not until we die (when evening comes) are we separated from it. Again, we have similarities between the priests here and the ones handling the scapegoat in Leviticus 16:21–28.

"And he who is burning it will wash his garments with water¹¹⁸ and will bath his flesh with water and is unclean until the evening. [Numbers 19:8]

The same applies to the other person involved in this ceremony.

¹¹⁸ Some codices leave out *in water* as in Leviticus 16:28.

"And a clean man will gather the ashes [lit., ash] of the heifer, and he will cause [them] to be placed at the outside of the camp, in a clean place, and it [the ash] will be to the company of the sons of Israel for a responsibility for waters of impurity—it [is for] a sin [-offering]; [Numbers 19:9]

Part of the problem of understanding this verse is the *ash* is in the feminine singular, not the plural. Most translations place it in the plural, thus confusing what *it* stands for at the end of the verse. *It* is the ash of the heifer.

To continue, the ashes of the cow are the body of our Lord, buried in the grave of Joseph of Arimathea. We have had the word *nîddâh* (נִדְדָּה) [pronounced *nid-DAWH*] back in Leviticus 12 and it means *impurity*, as in *abhorrent*, *shunned*¹¹⁹ and this is a word associated with menstruation (see Leviticus 15:19–20, 24–26 Ezekiel 18:6) and we could translate it *menstruation*, but not everywhere (e.g., here) and we would translate it *menstruation only* by implication. **I think** the waters of impurity refer to the waters which cleansed Aaron. In any case, the ashes were to be kept in a clean place outside the camp and they were used when cleansing those associated with death, just as the death of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. It is kept for us when we ask for cleansing.

The Cleansing of Those Associated with Death

"And the one who is gathering the ashes of the heifer will wash his garments, and is unclean until the evening; and it will come to pass to the sons of Israel and to the visitor who is visiting in their midst, for a perpetual ordinance. [Numbers 19:10]

This red heifer sacrifice was apparently done during the time of the thirty-eight years of wandering, when Israel was in a parched desert, not unlike Israel under Roman rule during the time of Christ. Politically they were in a parched desert. Note in this verse that one visiting the Israelites—evangelism did take place during those thirty-eight years of wandering—also participates in this ceremony.

"The one touching against a dead [body] of any soul of man: [he is] unclean for seven days; [Numbers 19:11]

Death, in some ways, is the ultimate state of uncleanness. The body no longer has processes functioning to cleanse itself. It immediately begins to rot and decay and return to the dust from whence it was formed. For those who are unregenerated, they will never have another chance to be saved. It is from that point on that they will spend the rest of eternity in separation from God, a continuation of their choice of separation from God on earth. We have similar laws against the touching of one who is dead in Leviticus 21:1, 11 Numbers 5:2 6:6. It is our indwelling sin, our personal sin and the imputed sin of Adam which have caused us to be in a world of death. Since sin is so closely associated with death, it will require this as a sin offering to cleanse one from contact with the dead.

"He will cleanse himself against it [i.e., for contact with the dead body] on the third day, then on the seventh he is clean; and if he does not cleanse himself on the third day, then on the seventh day he is not clean; [Numbers 19:12]

It, here, does not refer to the water back in Numbers 19:9 (as implied by the NASB). *It* is the 3rd masculine singular suffix of the *vêyth* preposition (*in, into, with, by, against, at*—proximity is emphasized) and *waters* is in the masculine plural. *It* refers to the contact with the dead body, the former abode of someone's soul.

Our Lord was raised from the dead three days after the crucifixion. Therefore, death here is associated with cleansing on the third day. His cleansing was being raised bodily from the dead in a resurrection body, which was far superior to his own uncorrupted body.

¹¹⁹ From whence we get the often used KJV rendering *separation*

"Any one who is coming against the dead, against the body of the one who died, and cleanses not himself—[then] he has defiled the tabernacle of Y^ehowah and that person will be cut off from Israel, for the water of impurity had not been thrown upon him; he is unclean; his uncleanness [is] still upon him. [Numbers 19:13]

The *water of impurity* is the water which removed impurity. When one is cleansed, the dirt from our bodies is absorbed by the water and carried away by the water. The water, which was clean, becomes dirty, and through it becoming dirty, we become clean. Obviously, an analogy to the death of our Lord, **who became sin for us that we might become righteousness of God in Him** (2Corinthians 5:21b). Since Israel belonged to Y^ehowah and Y^ehowah was holy, Israel must be holy. When they became unclean, they were to cleanse themselves according to the Law—otherwise, they defiled the very Presence of Y^ehowah in their midst (as indwelling the tabernacle). It was expected that this shadow image would be carefully maintained throughout the history of Israel. That would allow those who observed the life and crucifixion of our Lord to associate it with the so-called Levitical sacrifices (which should be termed the Aaronical sacrifices).

Germs, Labor Fever, and Biblical Sanitation (by Karl Butt)

In their book, *None of These Diseases*, physicians S.I. McMillen and David Stern discussed how many of the hygienic rules established by God for the children of Israel still are applicable today. To illustrate their point, they recounted the story of Ignaz Semmelweis.

In 1847, an obstetrician named Ignaz Semmelweis was the director of a hospital ward in Vienna, Austria. Many pregnant women checked into his ward, but 18% of them never checked out. One out of every six that received treatment in Semmelweis' ward died of labor fever (Nuland, 2003, p. 31). Autopsies revealed pus under their skin, in their chest cavities, in their eye sockets, etc. Semmelweis was distraught over the mortality rate in his ward, and other hospital wards like it all over Europe. Nuland noted that Australia, the Americas, Britain, Ireland, and practically every other nation that had established a hospital suffered a similar mortality rate (2003, pp. 41-43). If a woman delivered a baby using a midwife, then the death fell to only about 3%. Yet if she chose to use the most advanced medical knowledge and facilities of the day, her chance of dying skyrocketed immensely!

Semmelweis tried everything to curb the carnage. He turned all the women on their sides in hopes that the death rate would drop, but with no results. He thought maybe the bell that the priest rang late in the evenings scared the women, so he made the priest enter silently, yet without any drop in death rates.

As he contemplated his dilemma, he watched young medical students perform their routine tasks. Each day the students would perform autopsies on the dead mothers. Then they would rinse their hands in a bowl of bloody water, wipe them off on a common, shared towel, and immediately begin internal examinations of the still-living women. Nuland commented concerning the practice: "Because there seemed no reason for them to wash their hands, except superficially, or change their clothing before coming to the First Division, they did neither" (2003, p. 100). As a twenty-first-century observer, one is appalled to think that such practices actually took place in institutes of what was at the time "modern technology." What doctor in his right mind would touch a dead person and then perform examinations on living patients—without first employing some sort of minimal hygienic practices intended to kill germs? But to Europeans in the middle-nineteenth-century, germs were virtually a foreign concept. They never had seen a germ, much less been able to predict its destructive potential. According to many of their most prevalent theories, disease was caused by "atmospheric conditions" or "cosmic telluric influences."

Semmelweis ordered everyone in his ward to wash his or her hands thoroughly in a chlorine solution after every examination. In three months, the death rate fell from 18% to 1%. Semmelweis had made an amazing discovery. On the inside cover-flap of the book about Semmelweis, written by medical doctor and historian Sherwin Nuland, the text reads:

Germs, Labor Fever, and Biblical Sanitation (by Karl Butt)

Ignác Semmelweis is remembered for the now-commonplace notion that doctors must wash their hands before examining patients. In mid-nineteenth-century Vienna, this was a subversive idea. With deaths from childbed fever exploding, Semmelweis discovered that doctors themselves were spreading the disease (2003, inside cover flap).

Had Semmelweis made a groundbreaking discovery, or is it possible that he simply “rediscovered” what had been known in some circles for many years? Almost 3,300 years before Semmelweis lived, Moses had written: “He who touches the dead body of anyone shall be unclean seven days. He shall purify himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day; then he will be clean. But if he does not purify himself on the third day and on the seventh day, he will not be clean.” Germs were no new discovery in 1847; the biblical text recorded measures to check their spread as far back as approximately 1500 B.C.

From [Apologetics Press](#); accessed December 20, 2020.

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Now would be a good time to examine the **Doctrine of Uncleanness—not finished yet!!**

"This [is] the protocol: when a man dies in a tent; everyone who is coming in unto the tent and all that [are] in the tent become unclean seven days; [Numbers 19:14]

Certainly, there are some sanitation features in this ordinance, but this primarily represents the uncleanness of this life and our death. This is also unintentional uncleanness. Just as when a person sins out of ignorance, he is placed out of fellowship—an Israelite who has become unclean unintentionally, is still separated from Y^ehowah.

"And every open vessel which has no cord of binding upon it is unclean. [Numbers 19:15]

Apparently the containers in the ancient world had lids which were bound to them using a cord. The death of this life permeates everything.

"And everyone who comes on the face of the field against one slain with a sword [lit., the pierced of the sword] or against the dead or against a bone of a man or against a grave—he is unclean seven days. [Numbers 19:16]

Any contact with the dead makes one unclean. When we sin, regardless of how minor and unimportant a sin, we become unclean due to the sin.

This contact with the bones of a dead man making one unclean helps to explain 2Kings 23:13–20. Josiah was tearing down and destroying all the altars dedicated to Asherah, Topheth and Molech, Ashtoreth, Chemosh, and Milcom¹²⁰—demon gods. He tore their altars down, set them on fire, and burned the bones of dead men upon them. He was associating that which was terribly unclean with the altars to these demons, as they are all unclean.

"And they will take for the unclean person of the ashes [lit., ash or dust] of the burning of the sin [-offering], and he will place upon it running [lit., living] water into a vessel; [Numbers 19:17]

These are the ashes (or, dust) of the red heifer. The one who is unclean must have applied to him the ashes of the red heifer, which represents the death of Jesus Christ. These ashes were store outside the camp, in a clean place, to be used when they were needed. This is a picture of the efficacious work of our Lord being available to us to cleanse us from sin as we need it. It also pictures His work outside the camp of Israel, when Israel rejected her King and Messiah. It is the church—outside the camp of Israel—which spread the gospel of the crucifixion.

¹²⁰ 2Kings 23:7, 10, 13.

"And a clean person will take hyssop and will dip [it] in water, and he will sprinkle [it] on the tent, and on all the vessels,¹²¹ and on the person who have been there, and on him who is coming against a bone, or against one pierced, or against the dead, or against a grave. [Numbers 19:18]

We have the cleansing which takes place by the contact with the ashes of the red heifer and then we have cleansing from the water of the hyssop which is sprinkled on that person.

Evidences of the Bible (on the first antiseptic): *Hyssop oil was charged by God to Moses to be used as a purifying agent. Hyssop oil has been shown to contain 50% antifungal and antibacterial agents (Numbers 19:18, Psalm 51:7).*¹²²

"And the clean [person] will sprinkle [it] upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day; and he will cleanse himself on the seventh day, and he will wash his garments and will bathe with water and he will be clean in the evening. [Numbers 19:19]

The number seven represents divine perfection; when he has reached the point of divine perfection, he is sprinkled and he washes himself. This is the end of a person's life, which, ideally, was productive.

The Water of Purification (by Karl Butt)

Also germane to this discussion is the composition of the "water of purification" listed in Numbers 19. When Old Testament instructions are compared to the New Testament explanations for those actions, it becomes clear that some of the ancient injunctions were primarily symbolic in nature. For instance, when the Passover Lamb was eaten, none of its bones was to be broken. This symbolized the sacrifice of Christ, Whose side was pierced, yet even in death escaped the usual practice of having His legs broken (John 19:31-37).

With the presence of such symbolism in the Old Testament, it is important that we do not overlook the Old Testament instructions that were pragmatic in value and that testify to a Master Mind behind the writing of the Law. One such directive is found in Numbers 19, where the Israelites were instructed to prepare the "water of purification" that was to be used to wash any person who had touched a dead body.

At first glance, the water of purification sounds like a hodge-podge of superstitious potion-making that included the ashes of a red heifer, hyssop, cedar wood, and scarlet. But this formula was the farthest thing from a symbolic potion intended to "ward off evil spirits." On the contrary, the recipe for the water of purification stands today as a wonderful example of the Bible's brilliance, since the recipe is nothing less than a procedure to produce an antibacterial soap.

When we look at the ingredients individually, we begin to see the value of each. First, consider the ashes of a red heifer and cedar. As most school children know, the pioneers in this country could not go to the nearest supermarket and buy their favorite personal hygiene products. If they needed soap or shampoo, they made it themselves. Under such situations, they concocted various recipes for soap. One of the most oft'-produced types of soap was lye soap. Practically anyone today can easily obtain a recipe for lye soap via a quick search of the Internet (see "Soapmaking," n.d.). The various lye-soap recipes reveal that, to obtain lye, water often is poured through ashes. The water retrieved from pouring it through the ashes contains a concentration of lye. Lye, in high concentrations, is very caustic and irritating to the skin. It is, in fact, one of the main ingredients in many modern chemical mixtures used to unclog drains. In more diluted concentrations, it can be used as an excellent exfoliant and cleansing agent. Many companies today still produce lye soaps. Amazingly, Moses instructed the Israelites to prepare a mixture that would have included lye mixed in a diluted solution.

¹²¹ The western Samaritan, Septuagint and the Syriac omit the word *all*; *vessels* is the same word translated *articles of furniture*.

¹²² From <https://bibleevidences.com/medical-evidence/> accessed December 19, 2020.

The Water of Purification (by Karl Butt)

Furthermore, consider that hyssop was also added to the “water of purification.” Hyssop contains the antiseptic thymol, the same ingredient that we find today in some brands of mouthwash (McMillen and Stern, 2000, p. 24). Hyssop oil continues to be a popular “healing oil,” and actually is quite expensive. In listing the benefits of hyssop, one Web site noted: “Once used for purifying temples and cleansing lepers, the leaves contain an antiseptic, antiviral oil. A mold that produces penicillin grows on the leaves. An infusion is taken as a sedative expectorant for flue, bronchitis, and phlegm” (see “Hyssop”).

Other ingredients in the “water of purification” also stand out as having beneficial properties. The oil from the cedar wood in the mixture most likely maintained numerous salutary properties. A Web site dealing with various essential oils noted: “Cedar wood has long been used for storage cabinets because of its ability to repel insects and prevent decay. In oil form, applied to humans, it is an antiseptic, astringent, expectorant (removes mucus from respiratory system), anti-fungal, sedative and insecticide” (“Spa Essential Oils,” 2005). Another site, more specifically dealing with the beneficial properties of cedar, explained:

Cedar leaves and twigs are in fact rich in vitamin C, and it was their effectiveness in preventing or treating scurvy that led to the tree’s being called arbor vitae or tree of life. In addition, recent research has shown that extracts prepared from either *Thuja occidentalis* or *Thuja plicata* [types of oriental cedar—KB] do in fact have antiviral, anti-inflammatory, and antibacterial properties. A group of German researchers reported in 2002 that an extract prepared from cedar leaf, alcohol, and water inhibits the reproduction of influenza virus type A, while a team of researchers in Japan found that an extract of Western red cedar was effective in treating eczema (Frey, n.d).

It is interesting to note that this information about the beneficial properties of the ingredients such as cedar, hyssop, and lye in the water of purification is not coming from Bible-based sources. Most of it is simply coming from studies that have been done through cosmetic and therapeutic research.

Finally, the Israelites were instructed to toss into the mix “scarlet,” which most likely was scarlet wool (see Hebrews 9:19). Adding wool fibers to the concoction would have made the mixture the “ancient equivalent of Lava® soap” (McMillen and Stern, 2000, p. 25).

Thousands of years before any formal studies were done to see what type of cleaning methods were the most effective; millennia before American pioneers concocted their lye solutions; and ages before our most advanced medical students knew a thing about germ theory, Moses instructed the Israelites to concoct an amazingly effective recipe for soap, that, if used properly in medical facilities like hospitals in Vienna, would literally have saved thousands of lives.

From [Apologetics Press](#); accessed December 20, 2020.

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"And the man who is unclean and does not cleanse himself, even that person will be cut off from the midst of the assembly; for he has defiled the sanctuary of Y^ehowah; water of impurity was not sprinkled upon him; he [is] unclean. [Numbers 19:20]

The Jews are a witness of our Lord Jesus Christ and when they do not keep the type, then unbelievers are not evangelized. It is through these various ceremonies that one is brought to Jesus Christ (in the Old Testament).

Water, in the Bible, is often used as a symbol for cleaning away sin. **"Then I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols."** (Ezekiel 36:25). **Let us draw near with a singular heart in complete confidence in doctrine, having had our hearts sprinkled [clean] from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water** (Hebrews 10:22).

"And it will be to them¹²³ for a perpetual decree, that he who is sprinkling the water of impurity will wash his garments, and he who is coming against the water of impurity is unclean till the evening. [Numbers 19:21]

These laws were to remain on the books forever so that the Jews would be remain a witness to all. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of heifer ashes on those who have been defiled, sanctify for the [ceremonially] cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, Who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God (Hebrews 9:13–14)?

"And all against which the unclean person comes [into contact with] is unclean; and the person who is coming against [him] is unclean till the evening." [Numbers 19:22]

As mentioned before, it is interesting that God the Holy Spirit chose to insert this chapter into the midst of the thirty-eight years of wandering, when the older generation of Jews had been definitely removed from taking possession of the land.

In retrospect, it is possible that on a non-spiritual level, the mixing of the ashes with running water perhaps was a sort of lye solution which was used to clean those things associated with death. Although this is first and foremost ceremonial, it also indicates a certain cleanliness and fastidiousness possibly unparalleled by contemporary civilizations of Moses. A similar cleansing can be found in Leviticus 15.

What happened during this next thirty-eight years? If Moses did any writing during this time, it concerned that which had already occurred. We only have one short piece of writing which dealt with this specific time period, where the Israelites were left in Kadesh Barnea to die the sin unto death. The pain and suffering was great and it pained Moses to write about it. He wrote one psalm during this time and did not even include it in his writings. There is actually a reason for that, which I have never seen properly explained in *any* commentary. It is likely that Joshua discovered this psalm among his writings and properly titled it and kept it with the sacred literature. That is **Psalm 90**, located in the **Pentateuch-Psalm addendum**, where we will go next.

¹²³ Many codices—the western Onkolos manuscript, the Jonathan targums, the Septuagint and the Syriac—read *to you*.

Numbers 20

Numbers 20:1–29

38 Years Later

Outline of Chapter 20:

- v. 1 **The death of Miriam**
- vv. 2–5 **The sons of Israel complain about the lack of water**
- vv. 6–8 **Moses and Aaron go before God concerning the contentiousness of the people**
- vv. 9–13 **Moses errs in following God's command**
- vv. 14–23 **Messengers are sent to Edom to ask for safe passage through Edom and Edom refuses**
- vv. 24–29 **The death of Aaron**

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

- Introduction **Generation X Foreshadows the Failure of the Jewish Nation**
- Introduction **God Bringing Israel into the Land of Promise Foreshadows the Regathering of Israel**
- Introduction **Various Routes from Egypt to Kadesh-barnea** (a map)
- v. 11 **The Mistake of Moses and What the Water of Meribah was Supposed to Represent**
- v. 12 **What Did Moses Do Wrong?**

Introduction: Before we actually get started in the examination of Numbers 20, we need to take a moment and attempt to integrate some extra-Biblical history into this time frame. The earliest mention of *Israel* (either as a nation or as a people) is found on what is known the *Israel Stele*, a stone slab which commemorates the events of the time of Pharaoh Merneptah. The biggest problem here is determining at what point in the Biblical narrative do we place the events of this stone. Therefore, now would be a good time to examine **Historical Parallel: the Israel Stele**.

Although we are not entirely assured of these several chapters of Numbers falling into strict chronological sequence, it is likely that thirty-eight years have passed between Numbers 17 and Numbers 20. Numbers 33:5–38 helps us here. The entire travels of the Jews are outlined in Numbers 33, as carefully as some genealogies are given, and this would place us near the end of the thirty-eight years of wandering. In comparing this to Numbers 33:36–38, we are probably in the fortieth year of their wanderings (as the Jews will next travel [to Mount Hor, at the edge of the land of Edom](#) and Aaron will die on Mount Hor [on the first day of the fifth month in the fortieth year](#)¹²⁴).

I should get specific at this point: the Jews are often said to have wandered in the desert for 40 years. I don't believe that this is the case. They were in the desert for 40 years; they wandered for about 1½ of those years; but they did not wander the entire time. After being beaten by the Canaanites and the Amalekites back in Numbers 14, the Jews really had no place to go. They could not proceed north, because that is where the Canaanites and the Amalekites were. They possibly had to retreat as a group somewhat, so as to not be so close to them. However, there is no reason to think that, for 38½ years, they wandered about aimlessly. Moses, when recounting the events of Numbers 14 and their faithlessness, adds, [“So you remained in Kadesh many days, the days that you spent there.”](#) (Deuteronomy 1:46). Kadesh is maybe 100 miles southwest of Hormah. These Jews were beat down; they were despondent; God was going to remove one generation of Jews from their population. There is no need for them to go wandering—they have no place to wander to. They no longer have a direction. They no longer have a reason for wandering. Moses is not going to say, “Hey, let's just get up and move from here to there while we wait for God to kill off the first generation.” So they cool their heels in one place for most of the 40 years that they are in the desert. At this point in our narrative, they are going to pick up and move out.

¹²⁴ Numbers 33:37b, 38b.

You may wonder how can this many years pass and we hear nothing about it? Well, we do hear something about this time period. We find that in our previous study of Psalm 90. Believers have a totally warped understanding of Scripture and God's dealings with mankind. We look back in the times of our Lord and back to the time of Moses and think that every single day was this roller coaster of miracles—however, that is completely wrong. There were intense periods of time, usually lasting a few years at the most, where God directly intervened in history (or, more correctly, made it clear that He was intervening in history). We look back on the exodus of the Israelites out of Egypt and their wanderings in the desert and their final destination, east of the Jordan River, prior to entering the land, as a time period filled with miracles and direct divine intervention. Not so. In fact, that is totally wrong. God, immediately prior to and during the exodus from Egypt, performed incredible miracles and great acts in Egypt—what was being done was unprecedented, so more than just a strong leader was required—God had to give Moses the credit card to indicate that he was a divinely-sent messenger. And for several months, there were a dozen or so incredible acts of God. At Mount Sinai, when God gave the Law to Moses, another extremely important time in the history of man, Moses was, as always, excruciatingly clear as to when God was speaking. And then there are 38½ years of silence. Why? Because God was silent, dammit! Don't you get it? The period of time when God makes it unerringly clear that He is taking a part in human history is really a very small percentage of human history. Moses wrote nothing down for 38½ years because, as far as he was concerned, he had nothing to write about. He wrote one psalm that we are aware of, Psalm 90, which we just studied, and probably finished putting together the events of the exodus, committing them to paper. But he wrote nothing of the 38½ years, which is by far the majority of the time that he was in command over Israel, because there was nothing to write about. God did not speak; God did not perform any great miracles. They just sat in the middle of the damn desert and Gen X died off. Now, if the greatest Israelite of the Old Testament spent most of his time not witnessing great and powerful miracles, during the formation of the nation Israel, then how the hell do you think you are going to walk into church every week and see God perform healings and miracles and have the Holy Spirit speak through you with tongues of angels? You err because you do not know the Scriptures. You do not have any real true perspective of our spiritual history, which is Israel. It is not that the Bible conceals it from us; it is because you have no real interest in God's Word, and therefore you think every day is a day of miracles and dramatic events—and when it isn't, you manufacture them in your mind—some of you even whip yourselves up into this state of mass frenzy and hysteria and you think that you are being spiritual. That is not spirituality—that is holy roller, jack ass time.

What is coming up is that, despite what has happened in the past, Moses will, for a week or a month's time, enter into the greatest period of his spiritual life, and that will be recorded in the book of Deuteronomy. And, during this period of intense greatness, how many miracles will occur? Not a single damn one. Why? Because when you have God's Word filling your soul, you do not need to have stunts and miracles and amazing things to bolster your faith. Moses and this new generation of Israelites needed nothing but what Moses had to say. They didn't witness the miracles in the land of Egypt—not most of them. And for those that did, it occurred a long, long time ago, in their youth. What was important was the doctrine that Moses teaches them in the book of Deuteronomy, one of the greatest of all books in the Old Testament. There is no miracle, no sign, no healing, no gift which is as important as the Word of God. The only thing that you will carry with you from this world to the next is God's Word, Bible doctrine. And that is what you should focus upon for the rest of your life.

Numbers 20 is an unusual chapter of the Bible. Israel is about to enter the land—they are spending their last year in the desert—an event which should cause great rejoicing. However, in this great chapter of Numbers, we will see the sad deaths of Miriam and Aaron, both occurring within a few months of each other and the tragic sin of Moses, which barred him from entering the promised land with his brothers. The king of Edom will make a bad decision concerning the Jews. It would have been an ideal time to strike an alliance or, at the very least, a non-aggression pact between the Edomites and the Jews. However, the king of Edom was too short-sighted to commit to such an treaty.

There is also a fantastic analogy here, which I cannot recall being mentioned by any other commentator which I have read. The original movement of Israel to the promised land, their repulsion, and their thirty-eight years of cooling their heels is all literal. When Joshua took the generation of promise into the land, it took him seven years to conquer it. I hope that you can see the foreshadowing now. God gave the Jews the responsibility to evangelize the world and they failed. As a nation, they are now cooling their heels. Their history, from the divine viewpoint,

is unimportant, just as the thirty-eight years of generation X cooling its heels at Kadesh-barnea were unimportant. During this time, after the great failure of the Jews to accomplish what God had set up for them to do, we have the silent years for the Jews, which is analogous to the church age. However, God has not forgotten His people nor has He placed them aside forever because they failed. When we, the church, are taken out of the way, God will return to His people and they will return to the Land of Promise, and, in seven years, they will take the land. Let me do this by a chart:

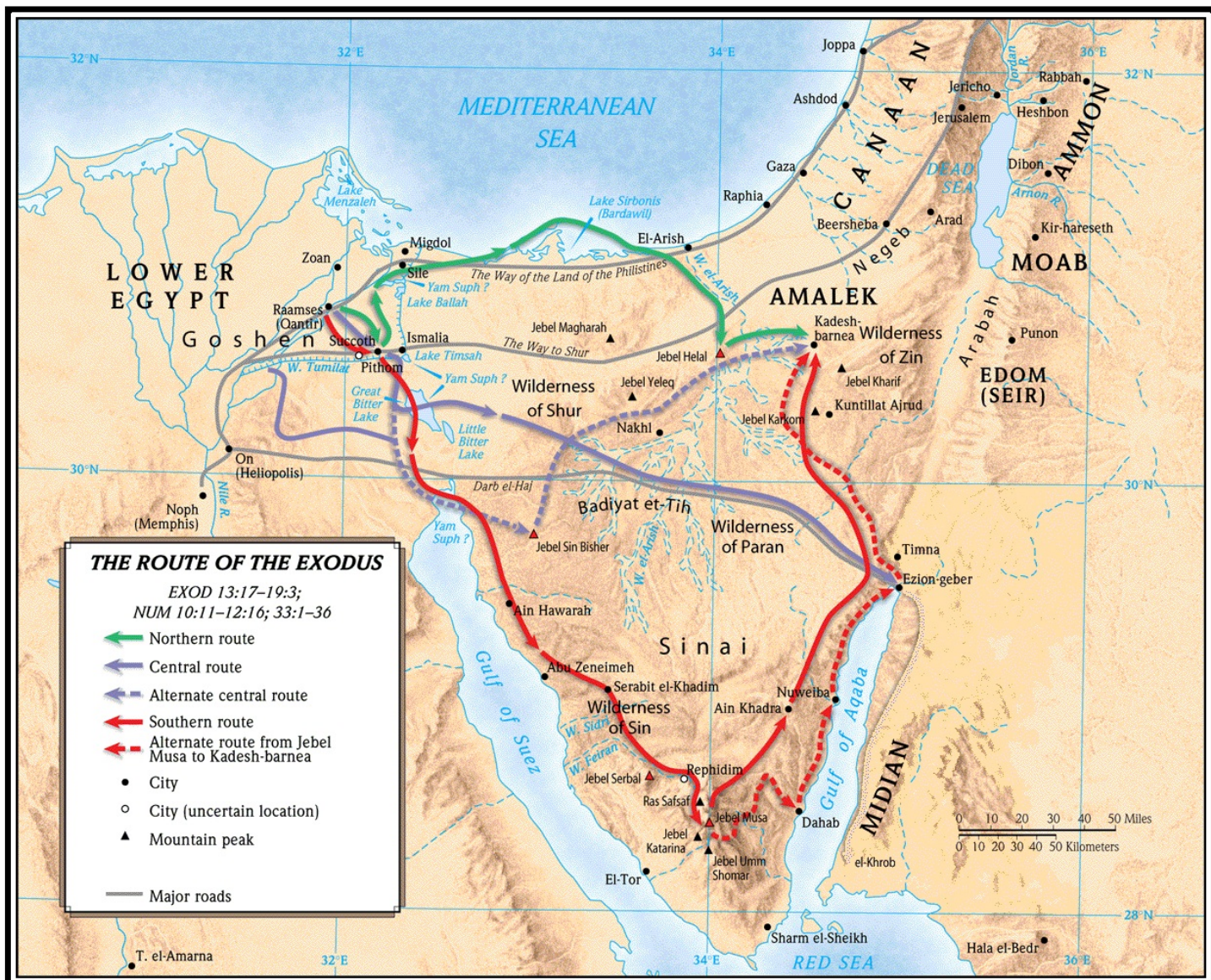
Scripture	Historic Incident	Scripture	Foreshadowed Incident
Failure of Generation X		Failure of the Jewish Nation	
Exodus 15:22–27 16:8–15	The Israelites do not believe that God can provide for them.	M a t t h e w 9:23–25	The public doubted the power of our Lord.
Exodus 16:16–21	The people do not follow God's explicit directions.	M a t t h e w 14:1–12 15:3–9 19:1–9	Herod has John the Baptist killed, as John told him it was not right to be married to his brother's wife. The Phrisees followed the teachings of man instead of God. Men do not follow God's teachings about divorce.
Exodus 17:1–7	The people doubt that the Lord is among them.	Matthew 12:1–8 13:53–58	Many do not believe that He is Lord of the Sabbath. Many do not recognize His deity.
Exodus 32:1–8 Numbers 25:1–5	The people become corrupted with false religion and idolatry and turn away from Y ^e howah, the one Who brought them out of Egypt.	M a t t h e w 9:32–34 12:1–8 15:3–9	The religious leaders rejected our Lord. They followed the teachings of man.
Exodus 14:27–30 16:11–15 17:12 34:10	God produced many miracles before the children of Israel.	M a t t h e w 11:20–24	Despite the miracles done in several areas, people did not believe in Jesus Christ.
Exodus 32:1–8 Leviticus 10:1–7 Numbers 12:1–15	Some of the spiritual leaders of Israel fail.	M a t t h e w 12:13–16 23:1–37	The religious leaders sought to destroy our Lord. Our Lord speaks of the failures of the religious leaders of His day.
Numbers 11:1–10	The people complain about God's provisions.	Mark 2:5–10	The Pharisees complain about our Lord forgiving the sins of the paralytic.
Leviticus 31:31–14:10	The people will not follow God.	Mark 6:2–6 Luke 23:13–25 Acts 13:48–51	The people do not believe in Jesus Christ. The people ask for the release of a murderer instead of the release of Jesus Christ. The Jews drive Paul and Barnabas out of their area.

Scripture	Historic Incident	Scripture	Foreshadowed Incident
Numbers 16:1–49	Israel rejects its true leaders; the authorities established by God.	Matthew 23:33–37 Mark 11:27–28 Acts 7:1–60	Those in spiritual authority and the people both reject the prophets sent to them by God. Our Lord's authority is questioned. Stephen is stoned when the people reject his message.
Numbers 11:33 14:11 Hebrews 3:8–11, 15–19	God loathes this generation.	Matthew 21:18–20 23:1–39 Luke 13:6–9	Our Lord curses the fig tree, symbolic of Israel, because it produces no fruit. Pharisees are castigated.
Numbers 14:26–38	Those who oppose God will die and never enter into his Land of Promise; they will never enter into His rest.	Mark 10:17–23	The rich young ruler stands in opposition to God and cannot be saved.
Numbers 14:39–45	Without the True God of Israel, the people cannot defeat their enemies.	Luke 21:10–24 Josephus; <i>The Jewish War</i> ; VII viii.-ix.	The battle and fall of Massada when Israel was removed as a nation in 70–73 AD.
God Places Generation X Aside		Israel is Temporarily Set Aside	
Between Numbers 19 and Numbers 20	Scripture is silent on these thirty-eight years as generation X die the sin unto death outside of the land.	Isaiah 61:2a–2b Dan. 2:40–41 7:23–24 8:22–23 Hos. 3:4–5 5:15–6:1	Prophecy <i>skips over</i> the church age; this is known as the doctrine of intercalation. Between these verses fits the church age. This does not mean church age events are ignored completely. The sign of the rejection of Israel (Isaiah 14) and predictions of the fall of Jerusalem occur (Matthew 24).
Numbers 14:20–35	This generation of Jews is placed under discipline (in this case, they will not enter into the land and they will die the sin unto death).	Leviticus 26:27–39 Ezekiel 6:8 36:19 Luke 21:24	The sons of Israel will be dispossessed from the land and scattered throughout the nations; the land will become desolate;
God Brings Israel Into the Land		God Re-gathers Israel	
The book of Joshua	Joshua leads Israel into the land and dispossess the degenerate inhabitants.	Isaiah 49:1–26 58:12 61:2–7 Jeremiah 16:15 Ezekiel 36:24 37:21–25 39:25–29 Hos. 3:5 6:1	God re-gathers Israel into the land and gives it to them.

Scripture	Historic Incident	Scripture	Foreshadowed Incident
Joshua 14:7–10 Numbers 9:1 10:11 13:1–30 14:34–39 33:38	This period of time is seven years. It was forty-five years from the time God told Moses that Joshua would enter into the land. The Israelites cooled their heels in Kadesh-barnea for 38 years during that time; that's seven years.	Ezekiel 43:24–27 Dan. 9:24–27 Revelation 6:1 8:1 16:1	This period of time is seven years.

One more thing should be mentioned. There is also very likely a close correspondence between the thirty-eight silent years, the church age and the first time that Israel was removed from the land. At some time in the future, I would like to pursue that analogous situation as well.

Various Routes from Egypt to Kadesh-barnea (a map); from [All Faith.com](http://AllFaith.com); accessed June 19, 2016.



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The Death of Miriam

And the sons of Israel came in—all the company—to the desert of Zin in the first month, and the people abode in Kadesh, and Miriam died there, and was buried there. [Numbers 20:1]

Miriam is older than Moses by several years. She watch afar off as he was discovered in the ark in the Nile river. This would make her between six and sixteen years older than him. Since she rebelled against his authority, she has not been mentioned in Scripture. She led a full-scale personal rebellion and Aaron seemed to go along because he was too easily influenced by her (he was her younger brother also and possibly was used to her running the show; which is one of the reasons Moses had to be removed from their immediate family). *Die* is in the imperfect tense, meaning that this was a process. For the believer, dying can be a blessing or a cursing. We don't realize that Miriam is a part of Israel that God will destroy before entering into the Land of Promise. She was one of the last to go, due to her relationship to Moses.

The desert of Zin stretches from near the coast of the Mediterranean (the Great Sea) around to the border of Edom to roughly a hundred miles south of the borders of Palestine and Edom. On the west it is bordered by the Mediterranean on the southwest by the desert of Shur, and on the south by the desert of Paran. In Numbers 13:21, the sons of Israel had just come out of Egypt, had received the Law, and the desert of Zin was their last stop before sending spies into the land. In this chapter, the sons of Israel will transverse the northern portion of the desert of Zin, traveling along the southern borders of Palestine and Edom. Kadesh is a stop along the way through the desert of Zin.

With their location given, they are not too far south of Palestine, the promised land. No year is given here and, in the immediate context, we have no clue as to how much they have wandered. We know that they were directly south of Palestine when they were rebuffed. It might seem as though they were perhaps dwelling in the desert immediately afterward for the rebellion of Korah. However, as we have seen in the introduction, thirty-eight years suddenly passed by since Numbers 17.

In Numbers 13–14, we have two cities mentioned: Hormah and Kadesh. In Numbers 13:26, Israel camped out in Kadesh during Israel's great failure. God had told Israel to take the land and they refused to. When Moses told them what the consequences would be, they stormed the Land of Promise in a fit of passion, being driven back to Hormah (which is about 50 miles north of Kadesh). Either in this verse or the next, it is 38½ years later, and Israel is in Kadesh, indicating that Israel spend much of their time in Kadesh, if not all of it during these almost silent 38½ years.

What I believe that we are given are two bookends, Numbers 16 and Numbers 25—both give tragic stories of a large number of men losing their lives. One occurs near the beginning (probably) of the wanderings of the children of Israel and the other occurs near the end of the wanderings. In between these times, another 560,000+ men are killed and their bones were scattered throughout the desert area in which they wandered.

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The Sons of Israel Complain about the Lack of Water

And there was no water for the company, and they were assembled against Moses and against Aaron; [Numbers 20:2]

We are to the point where most of the adult Exodus generation have passed away. The few that remain have seen almost 600,000 of their contemporaries die in the desert at the hand of God due to their rebelliousness. However, they have not learned. All these deaths have made them bitter and they have never come to a point

of believing and trusting God in their daily walk with Him. This is a continuation of one of the many grievances which they filed with Moses, threatening his life and position every time that they filed a grievance.

There were a large number of Israelites who had faced no water before and all of those who were twenty and older recalled that God had provided them water through the striking of a rock before (Exodus 17:1–7). These find it easier to complain and bitch whereas all they had to do is to make their requests known to God and He would bring them to pass. They required water in order to survive and God was aware of that. God chose to have them request this water of Him. Daily, they received provisions from Him in the form of manna, so it wasn't as though God forgot what they required. God was looking for the request of the child to the Father.

And the people contended with Moses, and spoke, saying, "And if only we had expired [or, breathed our last] when our brothers expired before Y^ehowah! [Numbers 20:3]

Note carefully who the complainers are. "If only we had expired when our brothers expired." This is the remnant of the Exodus generation, the last of them. Had they said *our fathers*, we would know that this is the younger group who have learned how to complain from their parents. However, this is the last of the reversionists whom God would strike down before entering into the land. Here they are, right where they rebelled against God almost forty years ago. They should have entered into the land but ten of the spies spread rumors throughout the congregation that they would be unable to take the land due to the size of its occupants. Here, where they rebelled before, we have come to a full circle and they rebel once again.

This was not spoken to Moses and Aaron, but they said this to work each other up. It was their theme song when under stress. We heard exactly the same thing back in Numbers 14:2–3. They felt sorry for themselves, they were thirsty—they had spent forty years of their lives wandering in the desert. They were old, it did not appear as though they were ever going to enter into the land. All they have left in their lives is to bitch about their present circumstances. You certainly know older people who gripe and complain constantly. These are them. They are lamenting that they just didn't die a long time ago. At least they would have gotten it out of the way. Now this is not the entire congregation, mind you—it is those who are over forty, whom God swore in His wrath that He would kill in the desert. These kind of people are a cancer.

I taught a class once where this moderately attractive and very spoiled young lady made it her business to complain about everything she could think of. It ruined the class and I made the mistake of putting up with her griping. The other souls in the class, easily led astray in their youth, turned callous toward the course content and got little or nothing out of it. I should have wasted her soul in the desert. I was in a department where there was one woman who constantly complained and griped about everyone but her two or three friends and it was gloomy just to be in the same room with her. Out choice, when dealing with believers with soul kinks like that is we separate. We are advised very little in the realm of separating from unbelievers, except for perhaps the fast crowd of unbelievers when our souls are weak. However, with believers, there are a lot of reasons to separate. I realize that this does not sound like unity of the faith, but there are some believers that you don't need to see again except in eternity. And if you are forced to be near a believer like this, you pray every way you can for God to discipline them, remove them or deliver you through the stress of your one-on-one relationship (however, you do not get the opportunity to discipline them).

"And why have you brought in the assembly of Y^ehowah into this desert to die there, we and our beasts? [Numbers 20:4]

People who constantly whine and complain are generally irrational. They are implacable. There is nothing that you can do to change their minds or their attitudes. Here they were wishing they were dead because they might die in the desert. That just does not make a whole heck of a lot of sense, does it? People don't have to be logical when they have a complaint and when they scapegoat their problems. They blame Moses for their problems and it has been shown to them clearly, again and again, that it is their negative volition toward the plan of God which is their problem.

"And why did you bring us up out of Egypt to bring us into this evil place? [There is] no place of seed or fig or vine or pomegranate; and there is no water to drink! [Numbers 20:5]

The problem is that they remember Egypt in a romantic way, having had all of these things, even though they slaved fourteen to eighteen hours a day for the Egyptians. They were given some things to eat and they missed these things. Furthermore, they have come to a place in the desert where there is no water. We have thousands of young people who have grown up and they recall when they were very young seeing Moses (or, more likely, hearing about Moses) bringing water from a large stone. Those doing the gumbling, the elders of Israel, the remaining degenerates of the Exodus generation, the vocal minority, saw this with their own eyes, but that was almost forty years ago and they were thirsty right then and there.

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Moses and Aaron Go Before God Concerning the Contentiousness of the People

And Moses and Aaron went in from the presence of the assembly into the opening of the tent of meeting, and fell on their faces and they beheld the glory of Y^ehowah. [Numbers 20:6]

Moses and Aaron had this down pat. They had given up on the people. They used to make a show out of falling to a submissive position before the people during a crisis like this; however, they had gotten used to just walking away from the people, going into the tabernacle, and getting immediate and direct instructions from Y^ehowah. The grumbling Jews, although not great believers, knew that they could not just follow Moses and Aaron into the tent of meeting, as they would be struck dead for entering into the tabernacle.

And Y^ehowah spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 20:7]

Moses does not even bother to record what he and Aaron said—and it is possible that they said nothing, but just waited for guidance from God.

"Take the rod and [cause to] assemble the company, you and Aaron your brother; and you [all] have spoken to the rock before their eyes, and it will give its water. And you will [cause to] bring forth water from the rock, and you will [cause to] water the company and their beasts." [Numbers 20:8]

Recall that before, Moses struck the rock under God's command and out from the rock sprung living waters. Then Y^ehowah said to Moses, "Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. Furthermore, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you will strike the rock, and water will gush out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel (Exodus 17:5–6). He split the rocks in the wilderness, and gave abundant drink like the ocean depths. He brought forth streams also from the rock and caused waters to run down like rivers...Observe, he struck the rock, so that waters gushed out (Psalm 78:15–16, 20a). He opened the rock and water flowed out (Psalm 105:41a). And they did not thirst when He led them through the deserts. He made the water flow out of the rock for them; He split the rock and the waters gushed forth (Isaiah 48:21). This is the staff that when Moses struck the Nile, it spoke of judgement against Pharaoh and the people of Egypt. When Y^ehowah stood before the face of Moses, upon the rock and Moses struck the rock, Moses was striking Y^ehowah—Jesus Christ, with the rod of judgement. Out from Him, the rock would flow living waters. Jesus Christ is the rock (Isaiah 44:8 Matthew 16:18 Romans 9:33 1Corinthians 10:4 I Peter 2:8), the fountain of living waters (Jeremiah 2:13) and when speaking to the Samaritan woman at the well, he said, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water." (John 4:10b). Now on the feast day, the great [day] of the feast, Jesus stood and called out, saying, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, "From His innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'" (John 7:37–38 Isaiah 58:11 Jeremiah 2:13). And all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was the Christ (1Corinthians

10:4). The simple point is that Jesus Christ was the rock which Moses struck with the rod of judgement, just as Jesus Christ was struck by the rod of judgement by God the Father when He was on the cross. How many times was He struck? One time. Ever since then, we can go to the Living Rock and out of Him will flow living waters. All Moses has to do to maintain this type is the speak to the rock—it has already been struck indicating that it has already been judged. Moses had been specifically ordered by God, in no uncertain terms, to speak to the rock, not to strike it. To obtain salvation, it is no longer necessary for our Lord to be judged once again; it is no longer necessary to offer up animal sacrifices. To obtain water from the rock, it was necessary only to speak to it. To obtain eternal salvation, the water given us that we will never thirst, we need only speak to our Lord.

Striking the rock and having water gush forth—this was not just some lucky analogy that happened to occur. God in eternity past, knowing the hard-heartedness of the Exodus generation, allowed them to come to a place of no-water. It was God Who made certain that the revealed member of the trinity, Jesus Christ, Y^ehowah Elohim, would be upon the rock struck by Moses. As you have seen above, this incident or its anti-type are quoted in almost a dozen places throughout the Old and New Testaments. This large number of occurrences should indicate how important it is to get the type just right. God's plan is not some sloppy, do your best, cross your fingers and hope it comes out okay because you are sincere. God's plan, to paraphrase Thieme, is precisely correct procedure. Empowerment by the Holy Spirit—and this is no reference to speaking uncontrolled, emotional gibberish in a church—empowerment of the Holy Spirit is far more than your best—it is the power of God. This is what God's plan requires. As a public speaker I heard once said, ***Sometimes you have to do more than your best—sometimes you have to do what is required.***

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Moses Errs in Following God's Command

And Moses took the rod from before Y^ehowah, as He had commanded him; [Numbers 20:9]

The water would give from its innermost being living waters because it was judged—this is why Moses had the staff.

And Moses and Aaron assembled the assembly before the face of the rock, and he said to them, "Here, I pray you, [you] rebels, from this rock do we bring out to you water?" [Numbers 20:10]

Now Moses speaks to the crowd. This is optional. He was not commanded to do that, but it does not ruin the type. However, it is obvious that Moses is pissed. He is out of fellowship. He is angry at this lame bunch of believers. He would like to take the staff and go out into the crowd and crack a few skulls. He has done everything possible to preserve this smarmy, surly, ungrateful and constantly-gripping mob and he has just about reached his limit. You can tell that he is out of fellowship, not just because of his anger, but because of what he says: "Will **we** bring out to you water?" Like he and Aaron have anything to do with it. His being out of fellowship and his understandable loss of patience unfortunately make Moses less than the best choice to lead the sons of Israel hereon. He will now make a grave error, even worse than most realize.

And Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his rod twice, and much water came out, and the company drank, also their beasts. [Numbers 20:11]

Here is the problem. Our Lord Jesus Christ was judged one time for the sins of all. In order to retain this analogy, this rock must be hit only one time, and that occurred forty years ago. Moses was not to strike the rock with his staff again—not even once. That would imply that our Lord's death on the cross was not entirely efficacious—that something must be added to His gracious sacrifice in order to procure our salvation. God gave MOses very specific instructions and Moses improvised, going for drama over and against truth; allowing his emotions to overrun his common sense.

Pastor-teachers and evangelists do this all the time. They often will teach things which they know are false in order to make a dramatic point or to shake the emotions of one of those in the audience. This is wrong. We are ministers of truth and we are not to take dramatic license with the truth. It may seem to be better advised to make people think that if they sin too often, they could lose their salvation or that they were not saved in the first place. This may or may not reduce the amount of sin in the world; however, it is not the truth and it should not be taught.

Let's look at this entire passage, and make a few comments: Numbers 20:2–13: **There was no water for the community, so they assembled against Moses and Aaron. The people quarreled with Moses and said, "If only we had perished when our brothers perished before the LORD. Why have you brought the LORD's assembly into this wilderness for us and our livestock to die here? Why have you led us up from Egypt to bring us to this evil place? It's not a place of grain, figs, vines, and pomegranates, and there is no water to drink!"** Then Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the doorway of the tent of meeting. They fell down with their faces to the ground, and the glory of the LORD appeared to them. The LORD spoke to Moses, "Take the staff and assemble the community. You and your brother Aaron are to speak to the rock while they watch, and it will yield its water. You will bring out water for them from the rock and provide drink for the community and their livestock." So Moses took the staff from the LORD's presence just as He had commanded him. Moses and Aaron summoned the assembly in front of the rock, and Moses said to them, "Listen, you rebels! Must we bring water out of this rock for you?" Then Moses raised his hand and struck the rock twice with his staff, so that a great amount of water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank. But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust Me to show My holiness in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this assembly into the land I have given them." These are the waters of Meribah, where the Israelites quarreled with the LORD, and He showed His holiness to them.

What we find in this passage is another incident which was supposed to be a shadow of Jesus Christ; however, Moses, in his anger, messed it up. This is more than a simple matter of disobedience; Moses engaged in actions which God did not tell him to do, and the result was, an inaccurate **shadow of the good things to come**:

The Mistake of Moses and What the Water of Meribah was Supposed to Represent

1. Jesus Christ dies on the cross one time; He pays for our sins one time only. Hebrews 9:26: **Otherwise, He would have had to suffer many times since the foundation of the world. But now He has appeared one time, at the end of the ages, for the removal of sin by the sacrifice of Himself.** Romans 6:10: **For in that He died, He died to sin once for all; but in that He lives, He lives to God.** Hebrews 7:27: **He doesn't need to offer sacrifices every day, as high priests do--first for their own sins, then for those of the people. He did this once for all when He offered Himself.** See Hebrews 9:12 10:10 Peter 3:18 (this point is made six times in the New Testament—do you see how important it is?).
2. Even the New Testament tells us that this Rock, from which flows waters of life, is a representation of Jesus Christ: **And all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ** (1Corinthians 10:4).
3. Therefore, when Moses faces the rock, the rock being Jesus Christ, he is not supposed to strike it, because Jesus does not die twice for our sins. Moses already struck the Rock back in Exodus 17:6, and from the Rock came waters of life. God the Father strikes Jesus one time on Golgotha. Therefore, Moses is supposed to strike the rock just one time (it is probably a different rock, but they both refer to Jesus Christ).
4. What happens after that point? By analogy, we speak to the Rock, Jesus Christ. We believe in Jesus Christ; He does not die a second time—we do **not crucify Jesus a second time, putting Him to an open shame** (Hebrews 6:6b).
5. Therefore, Moses is to speak to the rock; he is not supposed to strike the rock. When he speaks to the rock, from it will flow living waters. John 4:10: **Jesus answered, "If you knew the gift of God, and who is saying to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would ask Him, and He would give you living water."** See also John 4:11 7:38 Revelation 7:17 21:6 22:1, 17.
6. Because Moses did not do as God told him, Paul cannot look back on the two *meribah* incidents and refer to them as an analogy to Jesus Christ, the Rock of Ages.

What Moses did wrong was not a simple act of disobedience, but an act which kept this and Exodus 17 from being used as an illustration in the epistles as an example of another shadow of Jesus Christ and His work on the cross on our behalf.

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And Y^ehowah said to Moses, and to Aaron, "Because you [all] did not believe in Me to sanctify Me before the eyes of the sons of Israel, therefore, you [all] will not bring in this assembly into the land which I have given to them." [Numbers 20:12]

Some people have a very hard time grasping this. Moses, for forty years, has been faithful to this congregation; he has stood up on their behalf to deliver them when God would destroy them. He has been faithful in the big things and in the little things. He has obeyed God almost instantly when given a specific command. Here, he slips up just one time and because of that one time, Moses will never be allowed to enter into the land. Notice Numbers 27:12–14: **Then Y^ehowah said to Moses, "Go up to this mountain of Abarim and see the land which I have given to the sons of Israel. And when you have seen it, you too will be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother was. For in the desert of Zin, during the strife of the congregation, you rebelled against My mouth to for My sanctity before their eyes at the water." (these are the waters of Meribah of Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin).** It may seem harsh, but the gospel is the most important bit of information to the unbeliever. If you are going to witness to someone, you must get it right. Otherwise, you might as well not even do it at all. Do you want a mechanic working on your car who is going to give it a good try, but not do it correctly? Do you want a sincere surgeon performing an operation which he will do incorrectly? There are areas of life where we don't want someone to make a mistake. When it comes to the most important piece of information of God's Word, an incident quoted again and again throughout the Old and New Testaments—God wants it to be done right in the first place. Moses' response was that of a great man—he asked God to place over the children of Israel a man of great leadership ability (Numbers 27:15–20). He did not say, "Kill me and to hell with those whining sons of Israel." He respected God's decisions, even if he did not fully understand them. Moses could have only completely understood the disobedience portion of his punishment—it is unlikely that he understood why God specifically commanded him to speak to the rock rather than to strike the rock. The difference was, to him, so insignificant that he likely did not even give it a thought.

What Did Moses Do Wrong?

It might be helpful to have a complete rundown of all that Moses did wrong in this action:

1. Moses got out of fellowship due to mental attitude sins. He was angry, frustrated, he had hatred in his soul for the leaders of this conspiracy and he allowed the pressures of life to become stress on the inside. The way he spoke to the congregation in v. 10 and the fact that he ignored God's Word and struck the rock, indicates that he began with these sins. You underestimate the importance and devastation of mental attitude sins. It is the initial anger of Moses which put him out of fellowship and led him to commit the other sins in this context. It is this little sin of anger and a little time out of fellowship because of it that will keep Moses from entering into the land.
2. The fact that he had even one mental attitude sin put Moses out of fellowship. He did not confess this sin to God. Moses had a specific spiritual duty to perform. He attempted to do God's work while out of fellowship. You are wasting your time to give, pray, go to church, witness, study God's Word or any other spiritual activity while you are out of fellowship.
3. When Moses was out of fellowship, he yelled at the congregation (which may or may not have been a sin), but, in any case, it indicated his anger and frustration—and then he said, **"Shall we fetch you water out of this rock?"** As if Moses had anything to do with God's power? We cannot take credit to ourselves for what God does. Ministers who meet in groups to have braga-meetings about how many came forward in their congregation are taking credit to themselves, regardless of the phoney, pious phrasing that they throw in with it. Today, in the dispensation of the invisible hero, most of what God does in a congregation is never

What Did Moses Do Wrong?

seen. As I have pointed out many times before, you have no idea as to how important prayer is and there are members of your congregation whose spiritual effectiveness is a hundred times yours due to their correct prayer life—and these might be people that you look down upon, or would not associate with or perhaps you feel sorry for them. And they are often the unseen backbone of your church.

- a. By the way, as an aside, the size of a church means nothing. A person might pastor a church of 20 people over a period of several years. That pastor might be clearly teaching the Word of God and the correct mechanics found in the Word of God. These 20 may be the only truly positive people in their entire city. Therefore, the other several hundred thousand or several million do not need to be there. Just because a church is large, that does not mean anything.
4. Moses gave God no credit when speaking to the congregation. Recall, in the previous no-water incident, Moses said to the people, "**Why do you test Y^ehowah?**" (Exodus 17:2b). God was not glorified in what Moses did. He made it sound as though he and Aaron were doing the work. God does all of the work on our behalf. Salvation is 100% God's work. We cannot add a thing to it. Leading a good spiritual life, being baptized, giving money to the church, attending church—no matter what you can think of, these are works which will not gain us salvation. When we believe and add these works to help God choose us, we are not saved. Our trust must be in Christ alone for what He did for us on the cross. The Jews were to trust in Y^ehowah alone for their survival and blessing. Moses obscured this issue.
5. God gave Moses a specific set of instructions and Moses disobeyed those instructions. He was to speak to the rock—instead, he struck the rock twice.
6. Finally, as has been pointed out before, much of what was done in the Old Testament was **a shadow of what is to come; but the reality belongs to Christ** (Colossians 2:17b). This was a marvelous analogy to Jesus Christ on the cross, over 1400 years prior to the cross. Y^ehowah identified Himself with the rock in Scripture and by standing upon the rock when Moses first struck it with the rod of judgement. From this rock sprung forth a huge amount of water, which formed a pool and all who were thirsty could come to the water from the rock and drink. Moses needed to only complete this analogy by now speaking to the rock, as we speak to the Rock, asking for and taking our salvation from Him

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How does God indicate that we have a problem here so that no one thinks that our Lord will be judged again or so that no one confuses the analogy here? God does something so dramatic, that it stays with you—God bars Moses and Aaron from entering into the promised land. There are few things which could convey His displeasure as much as that. **He causes all things to work together for good—even to those who love him** (Romans 8:28a)—even this mistake will show that there is just one gospel and even when presented in type-form in the Old Testament, it must be as accurate as its presentation in the New.

Let's go with a quick application. Moses most certainly did not understand exactly how and why he had sinned. He knew exactly what God's commands were and he disobeyed them—this is all that he was completely cognizant of. What this symbolize, although reasonably clear to most believers, was not perspicuous to Moses. Now here is the application: there are laws and mandates in God's Word for us that we may not completely understand or see the reasons for. This does not make them optional. We are arrogant to think that we can break God's laws when it comes to marriage and divorce, pre-marital sex, dishonest business dealings, drug usage, gossiping, maligning, and other sins that some of us commit routinely. I am certain that I missed your area of weakness. However, all it takes it for God to forbid it and it is forbidden. When it comes to His mandates to name our sins, to walk in the light, to learn His Word—we do not grasp the full importance of obedience—nobody does; however, obedience is still required.

There [are the] waters of Meribah, because the sons of Israel have opposed Y^ehowah, and He is sanctified upon them. [Numbers 20:13]

Meribah means *contention*. It would have been easy for these men to have gone to Moses and Aaron and to tell them that they were short of water and needed water to drink. Many of them had witnessed the previous occurrence almost forty years ago when Moses brought water forth from the rock.

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Messengers Are Sent to Edom to Ask for Safe Passage/Edom Refuses

And Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom, "Thus spoke your brother, Israel: You have known all the travail which has found us; [Numbers 20:14]

Edom are those who have descended from Esau (Genesis 36) and, at one time, they considered one another brothers. Even though Israel and Esau had their differences due to Israel's spiritual immaturity, near the end, they apparently patched up their differences, and from the information contained in Genesis 36, it appears as though Israel and/or Joseph took a genuine interest in his brother Esau and kept track of his family line and included it in God's Word. The interest was mutual and Moses expected that the king of Edom had kept track of his brothers, the Israelites. Through God's Word, Moses knew that the sons of Israel took notice of the family line of Esau and assumed that the Edomites did likewise concerning the Jews.

Although it is not stated here, Moses apparently sent out two sets of messengers—or, he sent out one set of messengers to two different destinations.¹²⁵ Moses contacted both Edom and Moab about passing through their respective countries (see Judges 11:17–18). God had made it clear to Moses (as we will read later in Deuteronomy 2:9,19 Judges 11:15) that he was not to invade Moab or Ammon; nor was he to provoke them to war.

Furthermore, great events of the ancient world were broadcast throughout the world by travelers and traders. We may think that only today with live coverage of daily events can we possibly know what is occurring in other countries. However, in Joshua 2:9–10, Rahab the harlot knew that God had promised Israel the land of Palestine. Others living in the land knew of what God had done on behalf of Israel (Joshua 9:9–11). **"It was told to your servants that Y^ehowah your God had commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land before you; therefore, we feared greatly for our lives because of you."** (Joshua 9:24). God is able to disseminate pertinent information throughout the world to those who need it, just as He is able to get His Word out today to those who need it. There has never been nor will there ever be a heathen on positive signals who will not hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"That our fathers went down to Egypt and that we dwelt in Egypt many days, and the Egyptians did evil to us and to our fathers; [Numbers 20:15]

Moses summarizes four hundred years of hardship with just a few sentences. As we have seen, the Egyptians not only enslaved the sons of Israel, but they poured the work on until it was beyond what they could bear.

"And we cried to Y^ehowah and He heard our voice and sent an angel [lit., a messenger] and caused us to be brought out of Egypt—and, note, we are in Kadesh, a city in the extremity of your border. [Numbers 20:16]

There has been no command from Y^ehowah for the Jews to attack and destroy the Edomites; however, their country is in the way of the sons of Israel in their march into the land from the south east portion (they had entered from the southwest before). Moses is asking permission to travel through their country without this breaking out into a small scale war. Why doesn't Moses just invade Edom and take it? We will see in Deuteronomy 2:2–8 that God had ordered Moses not to.

¹²⁵ The text allows in Judges 11:17–18 for the sending of messengers to Moab to have been a parenthetical statement, so that said messengers did not have to have been sent from Kadesh. That just tends to be the more likely scenario.

The angel mentioned (throughout the entire Old Testament, the words for *angel* and *messenger* are the same) is the Lord Jesus Christ in his pre-incarnate form. **And the Angel of God, who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them (Exodus 14:19).**

"Let us pass over, we respectfully ask you, through your land; we will not pass over through a field or through a vineyard nor will we drink waters of a well; the way of the king, we go, we turn not aside—right or left—till we pass over your border." [Numbers 20:17]

Moses and the sons of Israel would be traveling up the famous king's highway, which ran north and south near the eastern border of the promised land. The Jews are two million people strong and a group that large, no matter how careful they would try to be, would destroy a vineyard, a field, or anywhere they passed over. They have given their word to travel only along the King's highway.

The King's highway is a long road, running north and south from Damascus to the Gulf of Aqabah and this highway is also mentioned in Numbers 21:22 and Deuteronomy 2:27. This was a well-traveled caravan route, essential for traders, moving through Bashan, Gilead, Ammon, Moab and Edom. Just south of Edom, it connect to at least one major route across the desert to Egypt. This road existed prior to 2000 BC, being found in Scripture possibly as early as Genesis 14 as a route of the attack of Chedorlaomer and his allies. ZPEB hypothesizes that control of the King's highway was the motivation of this action.

And Edom said to him, "You will not pass over through me, or else [lit., lest] I will come out to meet you with the sword." [Numbers 20:18]

In the Hebrew, there is this conjunctive particle *pên* (פֶּן) [pronounced *pane*]¹²⁶ which means *lest, peradventure*. Unfortunately, *lest* is so dated that most people are uncomfortable with it. It can be rendered *that...not, or else*. It is obvious that Moses' estimation of the relationship between Israel and Edom was incorrect. The king of Edom was not about to allow Israel in to her borders—she might have feared a surprise attack while Israel was in her borders.

God was longsuffering toward Esau and his progeny. Throughout this international dispute between Israel and Edom, God could at any time have told Moses to take out the Edomites—whichever ones stood in his way. However, God had given that area to Esau (Numbers 24:18 Deuteronomy 2:4–5).

And the sons of Israel said to him, "In the highway we will go, and if from your waters we drink—and my cattle—then I will give [you] their price; only it [is] nothing—on my feet that I pass over." [Numbers 20:19]

Let's examine some very ancient Hebrew. The adverb *raq* (רַק) [pronounced *rahk*] means *only, altogether, surly*—it carries with it restrictive force. This is followed by the negative construct and then the word for word: *dâbâr* (דָּבָר) [pronounced *daw-BAWR*]; literally, what we have is: *only no word*. This is an idiom; a few years prior to my writing these words, the young idiom would have been *certainly this is no biggie*.

So, as Israel approaches from that direction, Moses possibly sends the messengers back. On the other hand (and this would be the stance which I would take), it is more likely that Moses has given these messengers bargaining power and has given them several options—that is, if Edom says this, then they are authorized to say that. Or, he may have sent someone like Caleb and Joshua, whose judgemetn could be trusted. However, no one is named here, so I would eliminate Caleb and Joshua as the ones who went (furthermore, they are traveling quickly for some distance and Moses would probably have used younger men). The last statement is that Moses did not want to have to pay just for the privilege of walking through Edom.

¹²⁶ BDB: *pen* (פֶּן) [pronounced *pen*].

And he said, "You will not pass over;" and Edom came out to meet him with many people and with a strong hand; [Numbers 20:20]

When the messengers returned to Moses, they Jews looked just north of Mount Seir, near the southern border of Edom, to see an army of Edomites ready to make war with Israel. Through some of the passages already quoted, we find that the Edomites are afraid of Israel and, while this is not a bluff on the part of the Edomites—they certainly do not want to go to war with Israel—they obviously were ready to if necessary. Furthermore, God has given that area to the Edomites and does not want Moses to take it from them (Deuteronomy 2:4–5). This is fascinating to me. The Edomites are wrong to say no to the Israelites; however, God will allow them to say no. It is their land, given to them by Him. How should I put this? Just because it appears as though God let you get away with something doesn't mean that it was okay to do. The king of Edom made a bad decision here and the people of Edom backed him up. This was not the best choice to make and it reveals their negative volition toward God and the Israelites. They would pay for this in the future. **Remember, O Y^ehowah, against the sons of Edom, the day of Jerusalem, who said, "Raze it, raze it to its very foundation." (Psalm 137:7). "Because of the violence to your brother Jacob, you will be covered [with] shame, and you will be cut off forever. On the day that you stood aloof; on the day that strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gate and cast lots for Jerusalem—you were also as one of them. Do not gloat over your brotehr's day—the day of his misforutne. And do not rejjoice over the sons of Judah in the day of their destruction. Yes, do not boards in the day of their distress. Do not enter the gate of My people in the day of their disaster. Yes, you do not gloat over their calamity in the day of their disaster. And do not loot their wealth in the day of their diaster. And do not stand at the fork of the road to cut down their fugitives. And do not imprison their survivors in the day of their distress." (Obad. 10–15). Thus says Y^ehowah Elohim, "Because Edom has acted against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and has incurred grievous guilt and avenged themselves upon them." Therefore, thus says Y^ehowah Elohim, "I will also stretch out My hand aganst Edom and cut off man and beast from it. And I will lay it waste; from Teman even to Demdan, they will fall by the sword. And I will lay My vengeance on Edom by the hand of My people Israel. Therefore, they will act in Edom according to My anger and according to My wrath; thus they will know My vengeance," declares Y^ehowah Elohim (Ezekiel 25:12–14).**

And Edom refused to allow Israel to pass over through his border, and Israel turned aside from against him. [Numbers 20:21]

God had given Israel no sign that they should march against Edom, so Israel deflected off the border of Edom and walked along it. This incident is later mentioned in Deuteronomy 2:8 and Judges 11:17. Notice that the two countries are spoken of as just one man—as though it were simply Israel and Esau (however, the Hebrew words for *Esau* and *Edom* are different).

God's plan is incredibly intricate to a degree that is beyond our imagination. From this point on, Israel will either move forward or march, but they are finished with wandering. However, in their move toward the land under Moses, they will have to go to war against some of those outside the land. God has told Moses that he will not enter into the land. This confrontation with Edom will put Israel on a detour which will keep them out of the land until Moses breathes his last. **"For you will see the land at a distance, but you will not go there into the land which I am giving to the sons of Israel." (Deuteronomy 32:52).**

And the sons of Israel, the entire company, journeyed from Kadesh, and came in into Mount Hor [lit., a spectacular mountain or mountain of the mountain]; [Numbers 20:22]

This is a straight eastern shot along the Edomite border from Kadesh to Mount Hor and the sons of Israel covered that in a little less than four months (compare Numbers 20:1 with 33:37–38). In fact, they probably traveled it in about two weeks, and were in a holding pattern around Mount Seir (see Deuteronomy 2:3–4). The rest of the four months would include the time that the messengers spent relaying these messages back and forth.

It is interesting that Mount Hor's exact location is unknown today. The New Bible Dictionary guesses its location to be not far from Kadesh somewhere near the western border of Edom, I personally picture it as being further to the east, as a mountain they walked around to stay outside the borders of Edom. Then, later on in the book

of Numbers, the physical boundaries for the land of Israel given in Numbers 34:3–12 place Mount Hor in the northern portion of Israel. For some people, this would be pointed out as a Biblical error or a contradiction. That bothered me a great deal when I first read these two passages together. It is reasonable that now and then there will be two or three people with the same name, and even, occasionally, two cities with the same name; however, it is less likely to have two mountains with the same name—particularly in the same region. What could be asserted by the casual Biblical critic at this point is that the author, Moses (and a critic would certainly assign the writing to someone other than Moses), is just making up names of mountains as he writes. But this is God's Word, so there must be a logical reason for this apparent discrepancy.

It is the Hebrew which will explain this disparity (what a surprise). Mount Sinai, in the Hebrew, is *har cînay* (הַר סִנַּי) [pronounced *har see-NAH-ee*] which is, literally, mountain of Sinai. However, what is generally translated *Mount Hor* is *hôr hâhâr* (הַר הָאֵהָרָה) [pronounced *hore-haw-hawr*] and this literally means *mountain of the mountain*. Because of where we find the word *hâr* in these two designations, the first is a proper designation and it is properly rendered *Mount Sinai*. However, if *Mount Hor* was the proper rendering, it would read not *hôr hâhâr* but *hâr hâr*. This is not a proper noun here and it does not matter that the KJV, the NASB, *Young's Translation*, the NIV, *The Emphasized Bible*, or that any other translation translates it that way—that is incorrect. It would be better rendered *the incredible mountain, the spectacular mountain, THE mountain* or even, most literally, *mountain of the mountain* but not *Mount Hor*. This is why we have the same name of two different mountains (here and in Numbers 34:7) because this is **not** a proper name. It is a mountain that just stands out so this is why we have two different mountains with the same designation. The readers understood which mountains were being spoken of.

Ironically, scholars disagree as to where this particular mountain is (see also Deuteronomy 32:50). Alfred Edersheim, who wrote *Bible History Old Testament*, identifies this *Mount Hor* with Moderah, the traditional site being Jebel Harun, near Petra the capital of Edom (the identification of this site goes back to Josephus). Jebel Harun is the highest and most conspicuous of the whole range of the sandstone mountains in Edom. This mountain has a double top, and is 1700 feet above the city of Petra. However, Jebel Harun is in the middle of Edom, and ZPEB rejects this location their reasoning being the Israelites had not been given passage into Edom. It is also asserted that Jebel Harun is too high up to observe what is occurring below (4800 feet high) and it is too rugged for three men to ascend it in a couple of days. ZPEB suggest, instead, Jebel Madurah (the same as Moderah?), as it is on the NW border of Edom. However, this would not make much sense for the children of Israel to tromp along the northern border of Edom, intending to head north, and request to travel through Edom (which, from that location, would send them heading due south, directly away from the promised land). They should be moving south east, or due east along what would have been **at that time** near the southern border of Edom. Furthermore, Deuteronomy 2:1–5 indicates that Israel was actually **in** Edom at this time, not on its border. In other words, the traditional site is not unreasonable.

We also must deal with an alleged contradiction. This passage has Israel being barred from taking the King's Highway through Edom but Deuteronomy 2:4–6 reads: "**And command the people, saying, 'You will pass through the territory of your brothers, the sons of Esau, who live in Seir; and they will be afraid of you. So be very careful. Do not provoke them, for I will not give you any of their land, even a footstep, because I have given Mount Serir to Esau as a possession. You will buy food from the with money so that you may eat and you will also purchase water from them with money so that you may drink.'**" At the time of Numbers 20, the Jews were actually within the borders of Edom. They were already **in** the southern portion of Edom, traveling from west to east. Their desire is to head northward up the king's highway, through the greater portion of Edom. When the Edomite army came, the Jews moved toward the eastern border of Edom, along the mountains of Seir (*Mount Hor* was a mountain of this mountain).

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The Death of Aaron

And Y^ehowah spoke to Moses and to Aaron in mount Hor, on the border of the land of Edom, saying, [Numbers 20:23]

This was apparently God's will for them to travel in this direction, as God appeared to them at mount Hor to speak.

"Aaron will be gathered to his people, for he will not go in into the land which I have given to the sons of Israel, because you [all] rebelled [against] My command [or, contended against My mouth] at the waters of Meribah. [Numbers 20:24]

Being gathered to one's people meant was an euphemism meaning that it was time for Aaron to die (see Genesis 25:8 25:17 35:29 49:29, 33). The word translated *rebell against [content against]* here is *mârâh* (מָרָה) [pronounced *maw-RAWH*] and there is indication that Aaron had the ability to straighten out Moses before Moses struck the rock twice. Aaron, although a great man, was somewhat of a Milquetoast, and was easily influenced by others, even when it ran counter to his own judgement. Therefore, he was easily caused to support the rebellion of Miriam, he became involved in the fashioning of the golden calf idol when Moses was receiving the ten commandments, and here, in this context, he saw Moses start on over to the rock with his staff and saw Moses raise the staff. He could have called for a quick sidebar at that time and the responsibility is placed in his lap right here. It is equally possible that he didn't think. In either case, he heard God's Word and did not act accordingly—and he was therefore responsible. Easy application: there are times you have heard God's Word and you chose to do just the opposite; with many of you, you have chosen to have pre-marital sex and not to wait for your right person in marriage. It doesn't matter whether you have chosen to believe that or not; in any case, you are responsible for your choice—and even more so because you have heard God's Word. We lose out on a lot of blessing because of our disobedience. After all that has occurred, Aaron will never personally set foot in the land. He has at best seen it from afar off when the first spies were sent in.

"Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and cause them to go up Mount Hor [lit., a spectacular mountain or mountain of the mountain]; [Numbers 20:25]

Even though God is said to speak to Moses and Aaron, Moses took the orders and carried them out.

"And strip Aaron of his garments, and you will clothe Eleazar, his son, with them, and Aaron will be gathered and he will die there." [Numbers 20:26]

Although it is not specifically stated, it is likely that Aaron wore his priestly garments, the garments of the high priest, which were more ornate than those of the priests, and that Eleazar went up with him in his street clothes. The high priest was not going to die in his designated outfit. The high priest would be perpetual. There would not be a funeral for the high priest, per se.

This is also a prophetic passage. There are passages of Scripture which look hundreds and thousands of years into the future; and there are passages such as this where God's prophecy to Moses looked only several days into the future. In fact, this particular bit of prophecy was not even recorded, probably, until after the prophecy and after the fulfillment.

And Moses did as Y^ehowah had commanded, and they went up into mount Hor before the eyes of all the company; [Numbers 20:27]

Although the sons of Israel did not necessarily know what was going on, they watched solemnly as Moses, Aaron and Eleazar traveled up into mount Hor.

And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments and clothed Eleazar, his son, with them, and Aaron died there on the top of the mount; and Moses came down—Eleazar also—from the mount; [Numbers 20:28]

When it was time for Aaron to die, there was no disagreement. God just took him through physical death. **I should cover the life of Eleazar right here!!**

And all the company saw that Aaron had breathed his last so they mourned Aaron thirty days—all the house of Israel. [Numbers 20:29]

Those of the sons of Israel who remain are primarily the sons of the Exodus generation. The Exodus generation has been wiped out by God. We saw the first great rebellions against God's Word in Numbers 14 and in Numbers 16 and we will observe possibly the last great rebellion in Numbers 25.

This would take the Jews into the beginning of the sixth month of probably the fortieth year.

Numbers 21

Numbers 21:1–35

Outline of Chapter 21:

- Vv. 1–3 **Israel's first battle against the Canaanite king of Arad**
- Vv. 4–9 **Israel complains and God disciplines them**
- Vv. 10–20 **Israel moves north around and through Moab**
- Vv. 21–32 **Israel defeats the Amorites**
- Vv. 33–35 **Israel defeats the army of Bashan**

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

- v. 33 **Fausset on Bashan**

Introduction: Numbers 21 is a rather disjoint and a very unusual chapter. We begin with a war, move into some grumbling by the Israelites, God executes judgement upon the people but allows them a way out; we check into the book of the wars of the Lord to read a passage or two; examine the movement of the Jews; and enter into two more battles.

On a personal note, up until this point in time, this was perhaps the most difficult chapter for me to exegete. The symbology threw me off, the battles with Moses still leading Israel, the journey they took, as it is given in much more detail than we find in Numbers 33. By the time I finished this chapter, I had several of my most nagging questions answered but I was still not as comfortable with this chapter as I have been with any of those in the past.

It is also in this book that I began to question the Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy. I know this is going to cause some grimacing, but let me continue. In this book, it became clear to me that Moses probably did not write Numbers during the thirty-eight years of wandering, but afterwards. He was quite advanced in his age by that time, worn tired by the constant pressure of leading the sons of Israel. By the time they were about to enter into the land *proper*, Moses was not necessarily one who would write as much as he did in his younger days (twenty years before, even). For this reason, and because of the way that Deuteronomy is structured, it sounds as though Moses gave several days of very intense teaching to this younger generation, so that they could learn from the mistakes of their fathers. I believe that it is possible that Joshua, acting as a secretary, recorded these words, as Deuteronomy has more of the feel of a public speaker with his words being duly noted as he speaks. Or, if you would rather: these are Joshua's notes taken during the Bible classes of Moses. Therefore, the words are those of Moses probably as recorded by Joshua rather than by Moses. This does not mean that Moses was not the author of Deuteronomy, but rather that he dictated it and Joshua possibly filled in a few holes with narrative (and there is precious little narrative in Deuteronomy).

The older generation had exerted an unfortunate influence over the Jews of Deuteronomy so what Moses needed to do was to recap what had happened to them and give them the divine interpretation of history. It is difficult to remove oneself from the influence of one's parents, no matter what our age. Some of us were fortunate to have excellent parents, however, most have had parents whose old sin nature governed their lives, making their parental influence quite detrimental at times (parents who are alcoholics tend to have children who are alcoholic; parents who abuse children physically or sexually tend to raise children who abuse their own children; etc.). The Exodus generation was a generation of complaining, whining, unbelieving reversionists. They were all believers, but the worst set of believers almost in the history of mankind. In Deuteronomy, we come to deal with their sons, who Moses has to straighten out and remove from them the influence of their parents.

Israel's First Battle Against the Canaanite King of Arad

Then the Canaanite—a king [or chieftain] of Arad—dwelling in the south, heard that Israel had come the way of Atharim, and he fought against Israel and took [some of] them captive. [Numbers 21:1]

The Authorized Version mistakenly calls this man King Arad. *King* is in the construct, meaning it should be translated *king of*. We sometimes translate the construct using the possessive, e.g., Arad's king. Furthermore, it was not generally Moses' policy to name particular kings by name—this is why throughout the entire book of the Exodus, we never find out the name of the Pharaoh of Egypt—whose identify has been a matter of discussion for several millennia since then.

According to ZPEB, Arad is a city in the northeast Negev—not far from Hebron. This puts us to the west of the Salt Sea, rather than to the east, which was the direction I originally thought that Israel was traveling. So, apparently, when Edom sent Israel out of their land, Israel went due west, and then came up on the north side of Edom's border. We would now be about twenty miles north of where Israel was in the previous chapter, not too far from where they had been repulsed from the land some thirty-eight years before. They are eventually going to be heading northward on the other side of the Salt Sea. The other alternative here is that Israel will move due south, go around Edom, and then come up north on the eastern border of Edom—and that the king of Arad (or, even, a *chieftain of Arad*) will strike the tail end of company of Israel as they move south. This latter view would have the Israelites to turn around then go north to do battle with this chieftain, and then do another about face and go south again.

This is the first battle which will signify a turning point for the sons of Israel. Now, there is the possibility that this does not neatly fit chronologically between the death of Aaron and their movement toward the east side of the Salt Sea (this is primarily because there are a lot of things which will occur in a very short time, from this point on). Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, when Moses wrote Scripture, he did not lose his vocabulary, personality, or personal train of thought. I personally tend to think very linearly and very chronologically and that may be a western mindset. In studying God's Word thoroughly, I have taken basically a chronological approach, even though the books of the Bible are not arranged chronologically in the Old or New Testaments, nor are they arranged chronologically in the Hebrew Bible. Moses has just spent several chapters outlining what was wrong with Israel and now he, as the Jews are about to enter the land, will cover some areas where they shined, so to speak. Now why would he do that? God has been quickly decimating the Exodus generation and keeping Israel out of the land until they have been wiped out, all save Joshua and Caleb. However, during this time, you have their sons and daughters who have been growing spiritually, who have been listening to Moses. God will bring them into the land and there will be some spiritual victories on their side. Since the older generation and the newer generation co-existed, there would be spiritual victories and spiritual defeats. Listing them chronologically would make Israel seem extremely schizophrenic, whereas, the primary difference is those who have the primary influence in that particular incident—the older or the newer generation. Therefore, I would not be surprised if this incident took place nearer to the time of the beginning of the thirty-eight years of wandering rather than here at the end. On the other hand, we do have the *wâw* consecutive here rather than the simple *wâw* conjunction.

Another possibility is, that as the Jews moved around the country of Edom and north, this company of Arad pursued them. We are dealing with two million Jews and they are going to be rather scattered no matter where they are. This could have taken place while they were circling the Mount Seir mountain range and we could be dealing with a portion of Israel, a detachment.

Let's deal with what the verse actually says: It begins with the *waw* consecutive, which is usually translated *and then, so, and so, then*. However, that is a simplistic view and there has been considerable disagreement as to how it should be translated. For the longest time, it was called a *waw* conversative and there was the school of thought that it changed an imperfect into a perfect tense or vice versa, a silly notion. I wonder if it could not be rendered, *also* (as in, *by the way*)?

The king of Arad is called a Canaanite, meaning that he likely did dwell in the promised land—and, it is stated that he lived in the Negeb^v, which is southern Palestine (*Negeb^v* can mean either *south* or it can refer to a specific area, as it does here) which extends into the desert a ways. Judges 1:16 helps us to put a fix on the location of Arad: the desert land of Judah is located south of Arad (it is marvelous how some portions of Scripture, although, in their own contexts, seem rather innocuous, help put geographical and chronological fixes on the rest of Scripture).

This Canaanite king hears (often a country is spoken of in the singular, being anthropologically identified with either its leader or founder) that Israel had come *by the way of Atharim* (this is the general translation found in most Bibles). There is no preposition; just the masculine singular construct of derek^e (דֶּרֶךְ) [pronounced *DEH-rek^e*] and it means *way, distance, road, journey, manner*. It could even mean *toward, to* (we must get our word *direction* from this). This is followed by a definite article and the word *Atharim*, which is guessed to be a trade route. From whence some translations (like NASB) come up with *way of the spies*, I don't know. BDB calls that improbable. We don't really have any similar Hebrew words from which to gain a clue here, either. For that reason, I would tend to go along with translating this word as a proper noun, referring to a particular route or area known at that time and lost to us (at thirty-four centuries later, that is not unlikely). However, we can hypothesize that the trade route ran along the western border of Edom, toward the Salt Sea (at which point, the Israelites will head east).

In this fight against Israel, this does not mean that we have a full scale war occurring. This was a detachments of Israel that the king of Arad opposed and then took away captive. When he came down like that, he heard of Israel coming, needed some slave labor, and hit them quickly and carried away a number of Israelites as slaves. This battle, although a turning point, in retrospect is mentioned only briefly—as a footnote, if you will—in Numbers 33:40 and Joshua 12:14.

An interesting point is that Israel came up between the Mediterranean and the Salt Sea heading north before and was repulsed. With this, their first encounter since then (of which we are aware; and I am assuming that it is found in the correct place chronologically-speaking), it is surprising that they do not continue due north into the land. The route described will send them on the east side of the Salt Sea. However, it has been pointed out several times in the Scriptures that Y^ehowah led them as a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, so it is not unreasonable to assume that God is still leading them.

Then Israel vowed a vow to Y^ehowah, and said, "If in giving You give this people into my hand, then I will devote [or, completely destroy] their cities." [Numbers 21:2]

We are nowhere in the Bible encouraged to take on vows. This is something which occurs periodically. However, God tends to take a dim view of those who make some sort of a vow to Him and then don't keep it. When you give your word to anyone, particularly to God, then you should endeavor to keep it. The original instructions were for Israel to go into the land and to take it, destroying the Canaanites in their path. Here, Israel makes a vow to God—if God delivers the people into their hand (this is because many of their population had been taken away), then Israel promised to *châram* (חָרַם) [pronounced *khaw-RAM*] their cities. We studied this word back in Leviticus 21:18 and 21. Something was completely dedicated to God, meaning that the Jews could not even use it for themselves. Realize, if you will, when a sacrifice was given totally to God, it was burned and removed from this earth. So *châram*, while it means *completely devoted to, devoted to*, the results of this devotion is *to be completely destroyed*. So Israel is vowing here to do what it was supposed to have done from the very beginning.

See the complete **Doctrine of Devoting to God** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

And Y^ehowah listened to the voice of Israel, and gave up the Canaanite into his hand,¹²⁷ and he [Israel] devoted [or, destroyed] them and their cities and called the name of the place Hormah. [Numbers 21:3]

¹²⁷ *Into his hand* comes from the western Samaritan and Septuagint codices.

So here, Israel obeyed, went to war and defeated these Canaanites. Hormah, in the Hebrew, is actually Chormâh, obviously related to the Hebrew word châram. They had vowed to completely give these cities and people over to God and they did. You will note that we have a strong influence of a new generation. This generation will complain (as we will see) when unduly influenced by their remaining parents; however, their inclination is to believe God and to turn to Him for guidance.

This verse here helps us to put a date upon the writing of the earlier portion of Numbers. *Hormah* is mentioned in Numbers 14:45. This means that Numbers 14:45 was written after this particular incident took place, as this incident is from whence Hormah got its name. Since Numbers 14:45 marks the beginning of their generational discipline, it occurred quite a bit before this war here. I would have personally thought that during the thirty-eight years of wandering in the desert, Moses would have completed most of the Pentateuch. However, this passage indicates that he did not get as far as Numbers 14 while during the wandering phase.¹²⁸

Another possibility is that we have two different places named *Hormah*, the first for where the exodus generation were totally defeated and the second where the sons of the exodus generation totally defeated the enemy. It was the same area, roughly, and naming it again by *Hormah* shows a certain tongue-in-cheek quality.

Now here is a question for you: most of generation X has been destroyed, having died the sin unto death; the Israelites have just defeated a Canaanite king; and yet they are moving east or south east—why is God leading them that way? With such a great victory under their wings and being so close to the southern border of the Land of Promise, why doesn't God just lead them due north right into the land? I will allow you to ponder that question for sometime, as it will not be answered us directly in the book of Numbers. However, Deuteronomy 2 will explain why the Jews did not just move due north into the land from Kadesh-barnea. By the way, 95% of you when you read Deuteronomy 2 in advance, you still won't know why. However, we will get there!

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Israel Complains and God Disciplines Them

And so they journeyed from Mount Hor [lit., *mountain of mountain*], the way of the Reed Sea, to compass the land of Edom, and the soul of the people was short in the way. [Numbers 21:4]

Jephthah also helps us out with this route. He writes: “Then they went through the wilderness and around the land of Edom and the land of Moab, and came to the east side of the land of Moab, and they camped beyond the Arnon; however, they did not enter the territory of Moab, for the Arnon was the border of Moab.” (Judges 11:18). This gives us two possible routes from Kadesh to the Arnon River.

The toughest part of this chapter is the geography. I am wondering if, since the Jews probably entered Edom from the west side, if they were not asked to leave the way they came in, even though the border on the east side was much closer. This would explain the altercation above because they would have come back out of the west side of Edom, into the desert, travel north to the Nege^bv, do battle here, and then travel along the shore of the Salt Sea. This particular route would remove a lot of confusion of this first portion of this chapter. It would give us chronological order and a route which is consistent with Scripture. This means that they would be traveling west, run into the waters which come from the Salt Sea, and follow those tributaries northward. It would not be unlikely that these rivers would be, perhaps at that time, a natural boundary for Edom, which later expanded to take these waters in. The problem with this first route is that it contradicts Deuteronomy 2:8, which reads: “So we passed beyond our brothers, the sons of Esau, who live in Seir, away from the Arabah road, away from Elath and from Ezion-geber. And we turned and passed through by the way of the wilderness of Moab.” Ezion-geber is at the northern tip of the Gulf of Aqaba, which is one of the arms of the Red Sea. This gives Israel a decidedly southern route.

¹²⁸ Another possibility is that Moses (or Joshua), under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, added this designation onto to Numbers 14:45, noting the familiar landscape. However, I don't think that is the case, as usually the author will write the name by which an area was known at that time, and then add, *which is also known as...* when giving a more contemporary reference.

Elath is also to be found in that area, as per Barnes: *Elath (Akaba) is at the northern extremity of the eastern arm of the Red Sea, and gives to that arm the name of the Elanitic Gulf. The name means "Trees;" and is still justified by the grove of palm-trees at Akaba*¹²⁹.

A second route, which was a great deal more circuitous, would have been heading almost directly toward Egypt, and then circling around the Sea of Aqaba, so that they were east of Edom. Then they would move northeast, remaining outside the border of Moab. They moved up along the eastern border of Moab, to the Arnon River, which separated Moab from the Amorites. At that point, they moved west, toward the Dead Sea. The second route is by far the most circuitous and would have taken several months or more (the journey would be possibly in excess of 300 miles). You know that Israel would not be happy about this.

Fausset describes what he believes to be their route: *For as Israel moved from Mount Hor by way of that plain towards the Red Sea at Elath they "compassed Mount Seir" (Numbers 21:4 Deuteronomy 2:1, 8). When Israel was refused leave to go the direct route to Moab through Edom's valleys (Numbers 20:20–21) they marched circuitously round the mountains down the Arabah between the limestone cliffs of the Tih on the west and the granite range of Mount Seir on the east until a few hours north of Akabah the wady Ithm opened a gap in the mountains, so that turning to their left they could march north toward Moab (Deuteronomy 2:3).*¹³⁰

We have not yet entered into the land of Palestine, at least, not all two million Jews to settle. Some, perhaps, in the battle described in the first three verses of this chapter, but no others.

They Jews have experienced a great victory—the new generation knows that God is with them—and going around Edom takes a lot of extra time and exhausts some of their resources. The people are less than happy about this arrangement, and, although they are not calling for an attack on Edom, they are disappointed in the extra time which is used to go all the way around Edom. Moses, as has been mentioned, has been given specific instructions not to attack Edom. Furthermore, they are directly south of the promised land and Moses is leading them in what would appear to be almost the opposite direction, around the Salt Sea. Moses is certainly guided by Y^ehowah, so around the Salt Sea is the way that they will go.

It is linguistically a kick to find an idiom which was remained with the human race for over three millennia.¹³¹ Sometimes, in a confrontation with someone, you find yourself getting short with them. This does not mean that you both crouch down so that you don't seem so tall any more, but it means that you become short of patience, short-tempered and your speech tends to be expressive in its conservation, as it is shorter and more to the point (e.g., *damn you!*). This is exactly the use of this verb here. This means that the people's tempers and patience had become short. They are doubling back—they have transversed the desert and traipsed around the mountain area of Edom, and they are—some of them—just sick and tired of the desert, the heat, their wandering, the manna. There are just not a lot of things that these Jews (the older generation) are happy about. Being the older generation, they are the ones in charge and they will tend to be much more vocal than the younger people. So don't get the idea that every single Jew is bitching and complaining. We have a significant vocal minority, which makes it sound as though the entire congregation is complaining.

So the people began to speak against God and against Moses: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? For there is no bread and there is no water and our soul has become weary of this contemptible [or, cursed] bread." [Numbers 21:5]

The first complaint is one that we have heard several times. The older generation, those who are still alive, continue to blame Moses for taking them out of their *shangri la* and depositing them in the desert where they will die. A person who has been out of fellowship for a long time tends to blame others for his failures and short-

¹²⁹ Barnes' Notes, Volume 2, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 273.

¹³⁰ Andrew Robert Fausset, *Fausset's Bible Dictionary*; from e-Sword, topic: Seir.

¹³¹ Which is also properly written *milleniums*, by the way.

comings. These Jews are in the desert dying like flies because of their negative volition toward God and His plan. Had they believed God, they would have been in their new land conquering it as God had promised them.

These complaints are similar to what they have had before (Numbers 11:5–6 14:2–3 16:13 20:3–4). They tired of the manna, even though it could be prepared in a great many ways and it was the ultimate in health food, having come from God. The manna is what they called contemptible bread. The adjective is found only here in the Bible, but it comes from the word *curse* (I believe) and related to the word for *scoff, mock*. I mention it because it is an onomatopoeic word: קֶלֶקֶל (קֶלֶקֶל) [pronounced *k'lo-KALE*]. The practically spit as they said this word. God was angry with that generation and, although He could have provided them with a wealth of different foods, even in the desert, He chose not to because of their sorry attitudes.

How can people reject God's perfect food? It is easy—many Christians reject the bread of our spiritual life; God's Word, even though they are born--again and often give lip-service to His Word. It is our daily sustenance and our spiritual life is just about worthless without a steady diet of His Word. Yet how many Christians feed upon His Word? Darn few—probably less than 5% are the recipients of any real Bible teaching.

The Jews did not have even a clue as to what the *bread* was all about. Our Lord stated: **"I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the desert and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live foredver; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh."** (John 6:48–51). However, even the Jews in our Lord's day did not understand. **The Jews therefore began to argue with one another, saying, "How can this man give us flesh to eat?"** (John 6:52). To apply, there is an awful lot which occurs in our life that we do not understand the full repercussions of—most of it, in eernity we will understand, just as the exodus generation understands now what was going on.

They have also moved away from that rock where it gushed water and are feeling the pinch again for water to drink. This older generation should have caught on by now that all they need to do is to go to Moses and ask for what it is that they need and Moses would obtain the same from God. This constant complaining makes for the absolute worst testimony to those who are around you. When you are the sort of person who complains and whines about everything and everyone around you, no one wants to know what motivates you; no one wants to know your God. You are a public embarrassment to Jesus Christ. If you are a whiner and a complainer, you should **not** witness.

And Y^ehowah sent among the people the snakes—the s^râphiym [or, burning serpents]—and they bit the people and many people of Israel died; [Numbers 21:6]

Throughout the time that older generation of Israel were on negative volition, God continued to kill large numbers of them by the sin unto death. Quite a number of other reversionists were taken out by the sin unto death in this way.

Some of the translations read *fiery serpents*, however, the *fire* or *burning* belongs to the bite of the serpent. The words are nâchâsh (נָחָשׁ) [pronounced *naw-KHAWSH*]¹³²—it is an onomatopoeic word—the sound of the word is an imitation of the sound of the snake. *Snake* is **not** in the construct—so it is **not burning snakes** or *snakes of burning*. This is followed by the definite article and the masculine¹³² plural of the word sârâph (סָרָפִים) [pronounced *saw-RAWF*] and this has two or three different meanings. The corresponding verb means *to burn*—sârâph (סָרַף) [pronounced *saw-RAHF*]. The noun, sârâph, is found only in Numbers 21:6, 8 Deuteronomy 8:15 Isaiah 6:2, 6 14:29 and 30:6. It appears to have two partially divergent meanings: BDB relates it to beings *mythically conceived with serpents' bodies (serpent-deities); a personification of lightning*.¹³³ In Isaiah 6:2, 6, these would be majestic angelic beings with six wings and human hands and voices. I had hoped that having two different meanings would not be necessary—however, in trying to cause the uses to coincide, they diverged instead. This word unquestionably refers to some kind of animal in Isaiah 14:29 30:6 and probably in Deuteronomy 8:15 (it is in the

¹³² The feminine form means *burning* and is found in Numbers 19:6, 17.

¹³³ p. 977.

singular in all three verses; and it could be representative of something else in the first passage). In the plural, in Isaiah 6:2, 6, we are definitely dealing with angelic beings. A reasonable hypothesis would be that we are referring to some kind of reptile when found in the singular, and some kind of angel in the plural; however, sârâph is in the singular in Deuteronomy 8:15 and that passage refers right back to this passage where it is in the plural—meaning the animal found in Deuteronomy 8:15 and in our passage are the same animal and singular or plural is not the issue. What I would have originally liked to have done is shown that these are demon-possessed snakes; however, the use of the word elsewhere precludes such an interpretation. Serpent = Strong's #5175 Practice divination = Strong's #5172 BDB #638. What we have here instead is two words for roughly the same thing—one referring to snakes in general and the other to venomous snakes, sort of a clarification. Now would be an excellent time to examine the **Doctrine of Snakes in Scripture—not Finished Yet!!**

So what are we dealing with here? These are literal snakes in large numbers who are filled with venom, striking and killing these people. It is not entirely out of the question that these snakes were given over to fallen angels to attack Israel. However, much of what occurs in the time of Moses, has some sort of meaning to them and to us. The venom was the influence of their old sin natures, the snake being a symbol of Satan from the beginning (Genesis 3:1–15); the venom enters their system and influences everything that they do. And, in our daily lives, all it takes is one sin, and their entire insides become eaten up with evil, just as a small amount of venom infects the entire human body, causing death. James wrote: **So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and it boasts of great things. Behold, how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, the world of iniquity. The tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of life, and is set on fire by hell** (James 3:5–6).

And the people came to Moses and they said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against Y^ehowah, and against you; pray to Y^ehowah so He will [cause to] remove the serpents from us." And so Moses prayed for the people. [Numbers 21:7]

Now here we are showing some promise. This is the first time, after all of these rebellions, that the Jews have come to Moses, confessed their sin before him, and asked him to ask God to remove the discipline. **"But you will perish among the nations, and your enemies land will consume you. So those of you who may be left will rot away because of their inequity in the lands of your enemies; and also, because of the iniquities of their forefathers they will rot away with them. If they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their forefathers in their unfaithfulness which they committed against Me, and also in their acting with hostility against Me...then I will remember My covenant with Jacob and I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and My covenant with Abraham as well, and I will remember the land."** (Leviticus 26:38–40, 42). This is that younger generation. They were brought into the sins of their fathers by the undue influence of their parents, but they realized, after seeing so many rebellions and seeing God's tremendous grace, that they were totally out of line. They recognize what they were doing was not just a misunderstanding, but they were sinning against God and against Moses. They knew God's Word—they had listened to Moses. And here is how the people could have dealt with any one of their problems or complaints—all they had to do was ask Moses to pray to Y^ehowah. God is glorified by our prayers to Him, when we ask Him to do things on our behalf and to do things on behalf of those we pray for.

And Y^ehowah said to Moses, "Make for you a sârâph [a venomous snake], and set it on a pole; and it will come to pass, every one who is bitten and has seen it—he will live." [Numbers 21:8]

The word for *pole* is also translated *standard, ensign, signal, sign*. It is generally a rallying point. This, as all of the events which are described in the Old Testament, was a real event that occurred. However, it was orchestrated by God to be symbolic of salvation. Notice that there was no work on the part of those infected by the snakes' venom. At first, the effects of the venom might not be that noticeable, just as the presence of an old sin nature in a baby may not immediately stand out. However, the long-term effects of possessing an old sin nature will soon come out and cause death, just like the venom. Our Lord took upon Himself, the venom, the sins of our old sin nature, and paid for these sins. We look to Him for our salvation. There is no work involved on our part. We need only look to Him for healing.

And Moses made a snake of bronze and set it upon the pole and it came to pass if the snake had bitten any man, and he looked [expectantly] to the snake of brass [or bronze]—and he lived. [Numbers 21:9]

I must admit that, at first reading, I wondered about the authenticity of this portion of God's Word. I found it, along with most of this chapter, the most difficult to cover, leaving me with several unanswered questions. However, God fully realized that there are some who would read this chapter critically and question its contents as being inspired by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, this particular incident is alluded to in Scripture no less than four more times. Moses, when lecturing this younger generation, said, "He [God] led you through the great and terrible desert—[through] fiery snakes and scorpions and thirty ground where there was no water (Deuteronomy 8:15a). This bronze snake fashioned by Moses remained with Israel for several hundred years, being alluded to specifically in 2Kings 18:4. In the New Testament, Paul wrote: **Nor let us test the Lord, as some of them did and were destroyed by the snakes** (1Corinthians 10:9). Finally, this passage must certainly be a part of His Word, as even our Lord testified to its authenticity when speaking to Nicodemus: **"And, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever believe may in Him have eternal life."** (John 3:14–15). This final quotation helps to explain what all of this meant. That is, we have real Israelites being bitten by real snakes, being injected by deadly venom; and Moses holds up this snake of bronze on a pole, and those who look upon it are saved. Just as we have found elsewhere, these real occurrences should have some sort of meaning.

Jesus Christ took upon Himself the punishment for our sins, the venom associated with our old sin nature—and we need only look upon Him for salvation. The brass snake represents sin which has been judged, as the brass (or bronze or copper) must be fired in order to work—and fire represents judgement; it also represents Satan, who has been judged. Bronze speaks of judgement, as in the brazen [or, bronze] altar; and the snake is associated with original sin and with Satan, the original tempter. The bronze snake is a type of Jesus Christ, who was lifted up before God, hanging between heaven and hell; Who became sin for us. **And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed** (1 Peter 2:24). **He [God] made Him [Jesus Christ] Who knew no sin, sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him** (2Corinthians 5:21). Becoming sin for us is the close identification of Jesus Christ with our sins; similarly, the snake is closely identified with the bronze.

The word for *look* here is *nâbaṭ* (נָבַט) [pronounced *naw^b-VAHT*] and it means *to look intently at, to examine carefully*. When God asked Abraham to look into the sky to count the stars, the word used was *nâbaṭ*. When Lot's wife looked behind to see Sodom, it was not a quick glance, but a look of longing—*nâbaṭ*. This is not way implies that works are a part of salvation. However, it takes more than just a casual glance at our Lord on the cross to obtain salvation. Almost everyone knows about Jesus on the cross and that is an image carried by almost every person in the world. That visual image does not save. When one looks to our Lord for salvation and deliverance because He was lifted up and identified with our sins, that is the look which saves us.

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Israel Moves North Around and Through Moab

And then the sons of Israel traveled and camped in Oboth. [Numbers 21:10]

Oboth occurs only as a reference to the traveling done by Israel in Numbers 21:10–11 33:43–44. ZPEB associates it with the modern 'Ain el-Weiba, which is south of the Dead Sea.

And they traveled from Oboth and camped in Ije-Abarim, in the desert that [is] on the front of Moab, at the rising of the sun. [Numbers 21:11]

Scofield's Reference Bible has the Jews turning westward from Mount Seir, traveling along one of the rivers coming from (or going to) the Salt Sea in a northwesterly direction. Oboth is placed near the fork of the river, from

whence they travel due north toward the Salt Sea, cutting off to their right along the Zered River. This would place them near Arad (the site of the battle at the beginning of this chapter) and not too far from where they attempted to enter into the land before. The NIV Study Bible, on the other hand, has them moving due south out of Edom, to the gulf of Aqaba and skirting up the eastern border of Edom. This would place them a great deal of distance away from Arad. Also, the NIV places Ije-Abarim perhaps a bit more east than does Scofield. However, in this verse, they are on the south or southeast border of Moab (which is directly north of Edom); again making that jog described in the NIV Study Bible as untenable.

Scofield gives the alternate reading of Ije-Abarim as *the ruins of Abarim*; however, I was unable to confirm that with my BDB, although it does bear some looking at (check BDB #720, Strong's #5682; BDB #743, Strong's #5863). Ije-Abarim is also spelled Iye-Abarim (which is a better transliteration) and it is abbreviated Iyim in Numbers 33:45.

From there they traveled and camped in the valley of Zered [lit., Wadi Zered]. [Numbers 21:12]

As you have probably picked up, *wadi* is a stream, or a river—it has to do with water. This is a river which probably feeds into the Salt Sea and it runs east west from the tip of the Salt Sea forming a natural border between Edom and Moab. This particular river is a dry ravine, except during the rainy season.

From there, they traveled and camped beyond Arnon, which [is] in the desert which is coming out of the border of the Amorite, for Arnon [is] the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorite; [Numbers 21:13]

The Jews are making some real progress. They are on the east side of the Salt Sea moving at a pretty good clip, around and through the various hostile countries, remaining on the borders of these countries whenever possible. Now they are between Ammon and Moab, traveling possibly west the Arnon river, between Ammon, the Amorites and Moab.

Therefore, it is said in a book, *The Wars of Yehowah*: "Waheb in Suphah and the brooks of Arnon; [Numbers 21:14]

The Jews are known today as very literate people and this indicates that they had somewhat of a library even during the time of Moses. We do not know how extensive their collection was, beyond the Law, written by Moses, along with the source material for Genesis (which I believe was in basic finished form when Moses received it). This particular book is mentioned only here in Scripture and it appears to contain poems or psalms dealing with the wars of the God of Israel.

I was rather confused by what we have here, and the majority of the sources I employ made no comment. However, let me quote from Barnes' Notes:¹³⁴ *The words which follow to the end of the next verse are a reference rather than a quotation. Contemporaries who had "the Book" at hand, could supply the context. We can only conjecture the sense of the words; which in the original are grammatically incomplete. The marg. is adopted by man, and suggests a better sense: supplying some such verbs as "conquered," the words would run "He" (i.e., the Lord) "conquered Vaheb in Suphali, and the brooks, &c." Suphali would thus be the name of a district remarkable for its reeds and water-flags in which Vaheb was situated.* The NIV Study Bible's wisdom at this point: *The meaning of the Hebrew for this phrase is uncertain.*¹³⁵ Someone somewhere may have more information than this on this particular verse; this is simply one of the most difficult chapters of the Bible.

"And the spring of the brooks which turned aside to the dwelling of Ar and has leaned toward the border of Moab." [Numbers 21:15]

¹³⁴ Vol. 2, p. 229.

¹³⁵ P. 218.

The tribe of Ar camped along the banks of the Arnon, as most ancient peoples camped near some source of water. This would be further downstream from where the sons of Israel crossed over. There are ruins of an ancient city on a hill near a meadow where the Arnon River receives the tributary Nahaliel.

And from there [they traveled] to Beer [lit., to a well]; it [is] the well which Y^ehowah said to Moses, "Gather the people, and I give to them water." [Numbers 21:16]

God was well aware of the needs of the sons of Israel and provided them with water throughout their wanderings in the desert. "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture says, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" (John 7:37b–38 Isaiah 58:11, paraphrased). In the desert, even when they lacked water for a short time, it became a serious situation which required immediate help from God. The word *beer* means *well*. In order to be helpful, this would have had to been an area of several wells.

Then Israel sang this song, "O well, gush [lit., go up]; sing to it: [Numbers 21:17]

Sometimes, when we read Scripture, we wonder just what does it mean. The Israelites are singing to the well and they call for it *to ascend, to go up*; this is because they are used to receiving their water from gushing sources. There is no way that they would be watered, they and their animals, without great sources of water.

"A well—the princes have dug it, the nobles of the people have dug it, with the digging in [or, with the decreeing], with their staves." And from the desert [they traveled] to Mattanah; [Numbers 21:18]

The first word for *dig* means *to dig, to search for*; this is the act of trying to locate water. The second word for *dig* means to do the final digging of the well.

Châqaq (חָקַק) [pronounced *khaw-KAK*], which means *to cut in, to decree, to inscribe*. It is found here in the Poel participle, which does not seem to be any different in meaning than the Piel stem (in fact, Zodhiates does not even mention the Poel stem and identifies this as a Piel; and two Hebrew language books do not even mention the Poel stem. This verb is listed in my Hebrew concordance as occurring in the Poel, but not in the Piel. In any case, this would be the intensive active use of this verb. This verb is clearly related to making an official decree, as it could mean to *engrave [in stone]*; however, it is never used that way in Scripture. We have seen the masculine and feminine noun forms of this verb, translating the masculine as *decree, that which is decreed* and the feminine as *ordinances*. We find this word in the Poel participle consistently translated in the KJV as *lawgiver* (Genesis 49:10 Deuteronomy 33:21 Judges 5:14 Psalm 60:7 108:8 Isaiah 33:22). The NASB renders this *ruler's staff* in Genesis, *scepter* in Numbers, *ruler* in Deuteronomy. I am going to cautiously suggest that in the Poel participle, this be rendered *the act of decreeing* or *the one making a decree*. Strong's #2710 BDB #349.

Everything about this chapter is unusual. The cities they traveled to are not always included in the Numbers 33 travelogue. The camping place or city called Mattanah is mentioned only here and in the next verse. The Jews are traveling from the Arnon river into the land of the Amorites and this was a stopping ground on the way to the stream Nahaliel.

And from Mattanah [they traveled] to Nahaliel, and from Nahaliel to Bamoth; [Numbers 21:19]

Again, these places are not mentioned in Numbers 33. It is guessed by some that the Nahaliel is a tributary of the Arnon river. ZPEB claims that Bamoth is probably shortened for Bamoth--Baal (the high places of Baal) found in Numbers 22:41. This would be reasonable, as would just *high place*.

And from Bamoth [to] the valley which [is] in the land [or, field] of Moab [to] the top of Pisgah, which overlooks on the face of the Jeshimon [or, wasteland]. [Numbers 21:20]

The supplied prepositions may distort the meaning of this verse. It is possible that the Israelites traveled from the high place to the valley, but this valley is described here as being in the land of Moab and they pass by Pisgah, which overlooks both this valley and the desert, acting perhaps as a buffer between the two. Again, none of this is mentioned in Numbers 33, although Pisgah will be mentioned again several times. Pisgah, incidentally, means *cleft* or *division*, and Jeshimon means *wasteland* or *desert*. Some place Jebel en-Neba as Mount Nebo and Ras es-Siyaghah as Pisgah. There is a saddle between these two mountains (which could also be Pisgah). From Pisgah, one has a magnificent view (according to ZPEB—I haven't been there) of the Jordan Valley, even to Mount Hermon, on the one side and (according to Numbers 21:20) the desert on the other. Also, according to ZPEB, Pisgah is a very high, but easily scaled mountain.

You may wonder what this means? Why do we have much greater detail here, than in Numbers 33, where we essentially have a travelogue of all the places the sons of Israel traveled to and through? This is simple. Although we have a time where Israel has a lot occurring, Moses began at this time to write these things down. Therefore, we have great detail, particularly here. That would indicate that it is very likely that right at this time, Moss picked up a pen and began recording the events of Numbers (or continuing in his writing of the book of Numbers). He likely went back to at least Numbers 14 when he began writing again. By the time we get to Numbers 33, they have essentially done all the wandering that they were going to do and they were about to enter into the land—into Israel proper, and Numbers 33 is a summation of everywhere that they had been. Since this is covered in great detail here, Moses did not feel it necessary to again mention every brook and farmhouse that they stopped at, but gives us the major cities that they traveled through.

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Israel Defeats the Amorites

Deuteronomy 2:26–37 Psalm 136:19

And Israel sent forth messengers to Sihon, king of the Amorite, saying, [Numbers 21:21]

God has not told the Israelites to attack any of these peoples so they are behaving like guests in the foreign land, and not as aggressors.

"Let me pass through your land. We will not turn aside into a field, or into a vineyard. We will not drink waters of a well; in the King's Highway we will go, until we pass over your border."
[Numbers 21:22]

The Jews have gone around Moab on the east side, have come up the Arnon river between Moab and Ammon, and are about to loop back onto the King's Highway, picking it up on the north border of Moab and southern border of the Amorite. They have begun to move north on the King's Highway, in an area which is a buffer zone between the Amorites and the Moabites. As they had promised the king of Edom, the sons of Israel promise the king of the Amorites that they would not leave the King's Highway, but travel due north through their land, not disturbing the vineyards, fields or wells.

And Sihon did not allow Israel to pass through his border. In fact [and], Sihon gathered all his people and came out to meet Israel in the desert and came in to Jahaz and fought against Israel.
[Numbers 21:23]

An interesting figure of speech found here (which I have brought out by the emphasis *in fact*) is what is known as tapeinosis [pronounced *ta-peí-NO-sis*], which occurs when a negative is used to emphasize the positive (or the positive is used as an emphatic negation). For instance (using Bullinger's example) when you say "he is no fool" we are doing more than indicating that this person is a little more intelligent than a retarded person. This indicates that, in contrast, he is very bright. Here, when Sihon kept Israel from entering the land, it was more than the simple English translation we see here: *Sihon did not allow Israel to pass through his border*. The true sense is that Sihon **prohibited** Israel from passing through his border.

Israel had a reputation for leaving Egypt and causing great destruction to the land of Egypt; however, that was forty years ago, and Israel does not pose such an imminent threat to the people's of the land. Had they marched right into the land, they could have won several battles on reputation alone. However, after forty years, nations which would have thought twice about doing battle with Israel have forgotten the details of their deliverance from Egypt.

I guess that it is time for some application (I know that you did not expect to hear any application from this verse). Back in Numbers 20, Israel was also purposing to transverse Edom. The king of Edom, negative toward God, refused to allow them passage. He also brought a brought many men out with him as a threat. However, with Edom, the sons of Israel just turned about and headed out west, directly out of the country of Edom. However, here, they stopped and fought. Life is filled with a myriad of similar circumstances and we should not always react the same way to similar circumstances. We allow God's Word to lead us through opposition. There are times that you face down your opposition, there are times you fight and there are times that you back down. You cannot be a one-trick pony in this life. God has given us a mind and has given us tremendous leading and guidance in His Word (although few spend enough time in God's Word to gain any true guidance). We must take a hold of what God has given us and allow His Word to lead us through life. **For, there is an appointed time for everything, and there is a time for every pleasure under heaven; a time for war and a time for peace** (Eccl.. 3:1, 8b).

And Israel struck him [down] by the mouth of the sword and possessed his land from Arnon to Jabbok—to the sons of Ammon, for the border of the sons of Ammon [was] secure [or, strong].
[Numbers 21:24]

In the Septuagint, the end of this verse possibly reads: for the border of the sons of Ammon [was] Jazer. Our translation is based upon the Massoretic text. The Matthew seems to make more sense, as Deuteronomy 2:37 reads: **"Only you did not go near to the land of the sons of Ammon, all along the river Jabbok and the cities of the hill country, and wherever Y^ehowah our God had commanded us."** The Ammonite border was secure and it was the wrong direction for Israel. Israel would be heading west and Ammon was directly to the East.

The Israelites avoided going through most of Moab and traveled only on the southern border of Ammon. However, when faced with a quick skirmish against the Amorite, Israel was up to the task and Israel defeated the Amorite. Israel perhaps spent a month in this country, occupying it and perhaps leaving some men behind, taking a foothold in this portion of the land as a buffer state.

Scofield observed something in this chapter which completely eluded me: there is an order to these events which is analogous to our spiritual life: (1) We find atonement for our sins in vv. 8–9, when the bronze snake is lifted up and those who looked upon it intently were saved; (2) from salvation, we are led to water in v. 16, which is symbolic of the filling of the Holy Spirit and of Bible doctrine; (3) joy, the result of the filling of the Spirit and the intake of doctrine—herein, represented by singing (vv. 17–18); and (4) power (vv. 21–24), represented by Israel's two great victories¹³⁶.

And Israel took all these cities, and Israel occupied all the cities of the Amorite, in Heshbon, and in all its villages [lit., daughters]; [Numbers 21:25]

The Hebrew word used here is bath (בַּת) [pronounced *bahth*] and it means *daughters*; however, in the plural, it might refer to villages, as in Numbers 32:42 Joshua 15:45, 47 Judges 1:27, 11:26 Jeremiah 49:2. I am not totally convinced of this myself, although the Judges 1:27 passage by itself seems to indicate this alternative rendering. However, the passage below seems to indicate a double meaning of *villages* and *daughters*.

For Heshbon is a city of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and he had fought against the former king of Moab, and took all his land out of his hand, [all the way] to Arnon; [Numbers 21:26]

¹³⁶ Taken from *Scofield Reference Bible*, pp. 196–197.

You may wonder just what did Moses do during these thirty-eight years of wandering, other than kick the butts of the Jews who got out of line. He did a lot of reading, apparently, as this particular chapter has quotes from three different sources (although the NIV Study Bible does suggest that perhaps all three of these came from the *Book of the Wars of the Lord*; however, this piece was unlikely a war originated from God, as God was not behind the Amorites, as we have seen. The Jews, when they took over this land, got a little bit of the local history behind it, which Moses herein records. This song would have been engraved on a prominent wall or pole in the city, if not in several places, and was probably playing on all of the radio stations and, of course, on the Amorite equivalent of MTV.

Therefore, those singing ballads sing [lit., say], "Enter, you [all] [into] Heshbon; let the city of Sihon be built and ready; [Numbers 21:27]

Because of the stance against Israel that Sihon took, his land was wrested from him and his people. It was a bad move on his part. I don't doubt that in the last two skirmishes, the Israelites both outnumbered those they opposed and their army was of much younger stock, causing them to face battle with less fear. Furthermore, the younger generation trusted Y^ehowah much more than their predecessors did.

This song was pretty much a slight against Sihon. Sihon, as the great king of the Amorites, basically prepared a marvelous city for the Jews to come in and to occupy.

"For fire has gone out from Heshbon, a flame from the city of Sihon; it has consumed Ar of Moab, [and it has consumed] the lords [lit., Baalim] of the high places of Arnon [lit., of the heights of the Arnon]. [Numbers 21:28]

There are several theories as to the whereabouts of the city of Ar. Placing it on the Arnon river is reasonable; however, it has the same principle letters are the Hebrew word for city, meaning that this could have been a principal city of Moab (even referring to Heshbon, rather than to a separate city) which Sihon took over. This is a braggamony song by the people of the Amorites, possibly written by Sihon himself, to brag upon this conquest. This was the number one seller of that day—primarily in the land of the Amorites, who had recently taken over much of the Moabite land. The fire which went out of Heshbon was Sihon and his army. This fire consumed much of the area belonging to the Moabites.

The high places [or heights] are simultaneously the areas where demon worship was practiced and a designation for the dwelling place, as it were, for this portion of Satan's demon army. They were related to the demon god whose name was Chemosh. However, although Chemosh, as we will see, failed those who did obeisance to him, he continued to live on and the Amorites would do homage to him. Although it says in this song that they consumed the Baalim of the high places (a reference to the demon entourage ruling this area), this is but human viewpoint. The true facts of the matter are that these same gods still rule over this area. We will see that in Israel's history there will be areas which are conquered and that Israel would become unduly influenced by the gods of the lands that they conquered. You would think that if a god was not strong enough to defend the land of his own people, then why worship that god? However, these gods are real—they are a part of Satan's demon army and they are the ultimate winners in war and conflict. And it did not matter to the demon behind Chemosh who was in the land. It was his territory, and he would rule it. Furthermore, to the unbeliever, it really does not make a great deal of difference whether he is ruled by one demon or another.

"Woe to you, Moab, you have perished, O people of Chemosh; He has give his sons who escape—also his daughters—into captivity, to a king of the Amorite—Sihon! [Numbers 21:29]

It is interesting that, although it was Edom who refused the Israelites entry, that Moab is the subject of this song. This is not a song written by Moses or by any of the Israelites; it just happened to be one which was a bit of the local color which Moses picked up on their way through. Because they stood against Moses and the Israelites,

in conquering them, Moses picked up on a bit of their culture. The NIV calls this an *Amorite taunt song*.¹³⁷ Moses quotes this song in irony.

Chemosh is the name of the Moabite god, associated in Judges 11:24 with the Amorites. Because of their close proximity, when the Amorites took over this land belonging to the Moabites, it is likely that they took upon themselves their god as well. We will see several instances of Israel intermingling with the women of other nations and bringing into their homes the foreign gods of these women. Now might be a good time to examine the **Doctrine of Chemosh—not finished yet!!**

Chemosh, the god of the Moabites, gave those who escaped the sword into slavery to the Amorites, so apparently during this time, there was a great deal of unrest between the Moabites and the Amorites.

V. 30 is a bit difficult, so we will examine a few renderings of it:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	We have shot them down; Heshbon has perished as far as Dibon, and we have laid them waste as far as Nophah, which reaches to Mediba.
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Then we shot them—Heshbon is destroyed as far as Debon, then laid we a waste as far as Nophah, a fire reacheth unto Medeba.
Dr. C.D. Ginsburg NASB	...The women also even unto Nopha And the men even unto Medeba. But we have cast them down, Heshbon is ruined as far as Dibon, Then we have laid waste even to Nophah, which reaches to Mediba.
NIV	But we have overthrown them; Heshbon is destroyed all the way to Dibon. We have demolished them as far as Nophah, which extends to Medeba.
NRSV	So their posterity perished from Heshbon to Dibon and we laid waste until fire spread to Medeba.
Septuagint (English)	And their seed shall perish from Esebon to Dæbon; and their women have yet farther kindled a fire against Moab.

Obviously we have quite a difference of opinion on this verse. Furthermore, you will notice that I have included two translations which I usually do not include, as they are important at this point. We begin with a verb which seems to stand on its own: We have the Qal imperfect of *yârâh* (יָרָה) [pronounced *yaw-RAWH*], which means *to throw, to shoot*. I would think that *to throw down* (Genesis 31:51 Joshua 18:6) or *to throw out* (Exodus 15:4) would better suit this verb. This was a word which was in existence before the concept of the bow and arrow, and was applied to the use of an arrow, as in *to throw out*, however, better translated, when dealing with an arrow: *to shoot* (Exodus 19:13 1Samuel 20:36–37). In the Hiphil, this is almost a different word. The subject is *we* and the verb has a 3rd person plural masculine suffix. Therefore, it should read *we threw them [down]* or *we threw them [out]*.

Then, some translations ignore the noun for *seed, descendants* or *posterity*. This has a 3rd person plural suffix, but it is in the masculine singular, which is appropriate to the verb *perished* (which is in the Qal perfect). This is followed by the proper noun *Heshbon* then the preposition *ʿad* (עַד) [pronounced *gad*] which means *as far as* (its meaning is far more complex than that).

In the next sentence (we know it is the next sentence because the verb is preceded by the *wâw* consecutive), we have the verb *shâmêm* (שָׁמַם) [pronounced *shaw--MAME*] which means *to devastate, to be devastated, to stupefy* (usually used in the passive sense). Here is where we run into some problems. At this point, it reads *The literal rendering of this is And so we have caused to lay waste as far as Nophah which as far as Medeba*. However, besides this meaning being somewhat stilted and obscure (which might be acceptable, as it is a Hebrew translation of a popular song), there is a problem. Above the letter *rêysh* (ר) there is a dot, one of the fifteen places in the Massoretic text where this occurs. This means that the letter was there and they copied it down but they do not believe that the letter was there in the original text. This would mean the word *which* would actually be the word *man*. The word for *we caused devastation* becomes the plural *women*, giving us the alternate

¹³⁷ P. 219.

reading: "And we threw them [down]; their descendants [lit., seed] have perished—Heshbon as far as Dibon. Furthermore [lit., and so] the women as far as Nophah, the man as far as Medeba." I don't know that I personally want to make a call on this one (particularly since it is basically a quote of a heathen song), but I thought you should know how carefully the Hebrew text has been examined and why we have such a variant reading as this.

"And we threw them [down]; their descendants [lit., seed] have perished—Heshbon as far as Dibon. Furthermore [lit., and so] we cause desolation as far as Nophah, which [is] as far as Medeba." [Numbers 21:30]

We is a reference to the Amorite army and *them* to the Moabites. This is the conclusion to their song and how much they did to the Moabites. It is given here because, apparently, they were so giddy about their recent victories over the Moabites, that they were still celebrating and singing songs about the event. However, rather than turn to the God of Israel, they took on the god of the Moabites (as we will see later on); and it was they who were pushed back and out of their recently taken territory.

The irony of this verse is that it is quoted by the Israelites and penned here by Moses. After the great victories that the Amorites had over the Moabites, Moses, using the word *we* ironically (referring to Israel), states that Israel overthrew the Amorites.

And Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorite. [Numbers 21:31]

Here we have a relatively simple statement. The Amorites went to all the trouble of writing a hit song which they sang in all the bars and in the streets, bragging about their victory. And here is the simple post script to this song: *and Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorite*. This was the first territory seized by the Jews in their bid to take the land given them by God. What would be considered Israel primarily would be on the other side of the Salt Sea, to be captured later. This was not even an intentional taking of territory. The Amorites attacked them and left Israel with no alternative but to fight them and occupy their land. I am not sure where the Amorites were pushed to, or whether they dwelt with Israel side by side in this land. Now would be a good time to examine the **Doctrine of the Amorites—not finished yet!!** It would also be a good time to examine the **Doctrine of the Moabites—not finished yet!!**

Heshbon was originally in Moabite territory and they lost it to the Amorites under Sihon. However, their hold over this city was short-lived, ending at this point in time. Heshbon would later be rebuilt by the tribe of Reuben after the conquest of Canaan (Numbers 32:37) and this would be situated almost on the border between Gad and Reuben. Jeremiah recorded the words of Y^ehowah concerning this many years later: "In the shadow of Heshbon, the fugitives stand without strength; for a fire has gone forth from Heshbon and a flame from the midst of Sihon; and it has devoured the forehead of Moab and the scalps of the sons of tumult. Woe to you, Moab! The people of Chemosh have perished for your sons have been taken away captive and your daughters into captivity. However, I will restore the fortunes of Moab in the latter days," declares Y^ehowah (Jeremiah 48:45–47a).

And so Moses had sent to spy out Jazer, and they captured its villages [lit., daughters] and they dispossessed the Amorite who [was] there. [Numbers 21:32]

In the midst of singing their stupid song about victory over the Moabites, Moses calmly went into the territory and took it from the Amorites. Jazer was three-quarters of the way into the land of the Amorites, and Moses carefully scoped out the land and then took it. Again, the word found in this verse is literally *daughters* and I am not completely convinced that *villages* is the correct rendering. This could have been the toned down, traditional rendering, as it sounds more genteel than the literal rendering of Israel defeating the Amorites and taking their women.

Jazer in this verse is the Hebrew word Ya ʿzêr (יָזֵר) [pronounced *yah-ZARE*] and the word translated *Jazer* in v. 24 is ʿaz (עַז) [pronounced *az*]; the point being that they are similar, but still quite different words (I mention that for those who have Bibles where we find *Jazer* in both verses).

Reuben will be pleased with this area and will remain here, as will Gad (Numbers 32:1).

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Israel Defeats the Army of Bashan

Deuteronomy 3:1–7 Psalm 136:20

And then they turned and went up by way of Bashan and Og, king of the Bashan, came out to meet them—he and all of his people to battle at Edrei. [Numbers 21:33]

These skirmishes here were quick and decisive. Israel defeated each of these armies in perhaps a week's time to maybe a month. There is no indication that they impeded their progress at all. Edrei was about fifty or sixty miles north from where they were. All of these countries had G-2 systems in place. Israel, when moving north through hostile territory, sent out men to spy out the land. Og had men positioned in the land of the Amorites to see what was going on south of him. The Amorites had their people in Moab, which is why they were partially mobilized and almost waiting for Israel on the border between Moab and their land.

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *Edrei--now Edhra, the ruins of which are fourteen miles in circumference [BURCKHARDT]; its general breadth is about two leagues.*¹³⁸

Bashan means *plain, large open area, campaign*; and this is just as descriptive as it is the name of a country or a region. In fact, it may be the Jewish rendering of the name of this area; as there is no reason that they would necessarily be the inhabitants' own designation of their country. Bashan was quite a reasonable distance from where Israel was and, although they didn't realize it, not really in danger of attack. The Israelites are heading for the northern portion of the Salt Sea, quite a ways south of the Sea of Galilee, and they will cut across to the west and enter the land of Palestine from a central point between the two seas. Bashan is nearly 100 miles north of where the Jews are at this time, although his G-2 force is carefully watching, recording and reporting the progress and activities of the Israelites. They did not know which way the Jews were heading, but the Jews would not have appeared to be a formidable force in terms of personal physical size, although their numbers would have been overwhelming. Recall that the Jews were quite concerned thirty-eight years ago about the physical size of those who dwelt in the promised land—those they would have to face in war. It was the sheer individual physical size of these men that frightened Israel (Numbers 14). Bashan's G-2 force would not be all that concerned in this regard. Like the rest of the land, these armies had heard of what occurred between Israel and Egypt and how God had led them out of Egypt with a mighty hand, but that was forty years ago, and who knows, they would reason to one another, how much of it is legend and how much really happened. And if they were such a formidable force, why were they defeated by the much smaller army of Amalekites and the Canaanites thirty-eight years ago? Those of Bashan would also want their own shot at these Jews, just to show the world that the men of Og were a force to be reckoned with.

Fausset on Bashan

Bashan means "rich soil". The tract beyond Jordan (Deuteronomy 3:3; Deuteronomy 3:10; Deuteronomy 3:14; Joshua 12:5; 1Chronicles 5:23), between mount Hermon on the N., and Gilead on the S., the Arabah or Jordan valley on the W., and Salkah and the Geshurites and Maacathites on the E. Fitted for pasture; so assigned with half Gilead from Mahanaim to the half tribe of Manasseh, as the rest of Gilead was to Reuben and Gad, as those tribes abounded in flocks and herds (Joshua 13:29–32; Numbers 32:1–33). Famed for its forests of oaks (Isaiah 2:13). It was taken by Israel after conquering Sihon's land from Arnon to Jabbok. They "turned and went up by the way of Bashan," the route to Edrei on the W. border of the Lejah. Og, the giant king of Bashan,

¹³⁸ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Deuteronomy 1:4.

Fausset on Bashen

"came out" from the rugged strongholds of Argob to encounter them, and perished with all his people (Numbers 21:33–35; Deuteronomy 3:1–5; Deuteronomy 3:12–13).

Argob and its 60 "fenced cities" formed the principal part of Bashan, which had "beside unwalled towns a great many." Ashtaroth (Beeshterah, Joshua 21:27, compare 1Chronicles 6:71), Golan (a city of refuge, assigned with Ashtaroth to the Gershomite Levites), Edrei, Salkah, were the chief cities. Argob in Bashan (See BASHAN–HAVOTH–JAIR), with its 60 walled and barred cities still standing, was one of Solomon's commissariat districts (1Kings 4:13). Hazael devastated it subsequently (2Kings 10:33). The wild cattle of its pastures, "strong bulls of Bashan," were proverbially famed (Psalm 22:12; Amo. 4:1); also its oaks (Eze. 27:6); and hills (Psalm 68:15); and pastures (Jeremiah 1.19; Mic. 7:14).

The name "Gilead," connected with the history of the patriarch Jacob (Genesis 31:47–48), supplanted "Bashan," including Bashan as well as the region originally called "Gilead,"

Andrew Robert Fausset, *Fausset's Bible Dictionary*; from e-Sword, topic: Bashan (slightly edited).

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

And Y^ehowah said to Moses, "Do not fear him, for into your hand I have given him, and all his people, and his land, and you will do to him as you have done to Sihon, king of the Amorite, who was dwelling in Heshbon." [Numbers 21:34]

The Amorite was a new formed army, with imprecise boundaries and a recent victory. Og, king of Bashon, had a more professional army, have acquired a more stable land area, and was ready to attack Israel before Israel even came near his border (Israel was fifty miles away when the decision to attack was made up in Bashan). These people were a tougher people than Israel had faced, which is why God gave Moses personal assurance that they would overcome them. This particular campaign probably lasted the longest period of time—possibly two months or more. In these campaigns, those of the Israelites who were of the previous generation were being culled out by god in battle. The strength of the new generation was being developed, along with their great faith in Y^ehowah. We will save the doctrine of the people of Heshbon for Deuteronomy.

And they struck him down and his sons and all his people until he did not have left to him [even] a remnant; and they possessed his land. [Numbers 21:35]

The most decisive battle of all was against the strongest people that Israel faced. These were huge people with a well-trained, disciplined army. We are not given the details of their defeat here; just that God assured Moses that they would be defeated and they were.

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Numbers 22

Numbers 22:1–41

Outline of Chapter 22:

- Vv. 1–7 **Balak sends his embassy to speak to Balaam**
- Vv. 8–14 **God's directive will is made clear: Balaam is not to go to Balak**
- Vv. 15–21 **Balak sends higher ranking officials who convince Balaam to come**
- Vv. 22–27 **The Angel of Y^ehowah stands three times in the way of Balaam**
- Vv. 28–30 **Balaam's donkey reasons with Balaam**
- Vv. 31–35 **The Angel of Y^ehowah speaks directly to Balaam**
- Vv. 36–41 **Balaam meets Balak**

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

Introduction: Numbers 22 begins one of the most unusual of the three chapters of the books of the Law. This and the next two chapters all deal with the prophet, Balaam, who is a Gentile believer, who does speak to God. This is unusual as it is in great detail and the author, Moses, is not an eyewitness. The Law would stand just as well with these three chapters completely missing. They are not tied to anything else except in terms of timing and location of the context of Numbers 21 and 25. One of the things which interests me is authorship. I personally believe that all Scripture is God-breathed and I believe that an author very close to the historical events recorded the information found in Scripture (in other words, I do not believe that some priest in 600 BC suddenly got the inspiration to add several chapters to the various portions of the Law). However, the next three chapters are written in such explicit detail that, while certainly it is possible that Moses wrote it under the leading of God the Holy Spirit, it is more likely that Balaam, who is a prophet of God, albeit one whose values are easily corrupted, wrote this portion of God's Word. This reads like the recording of a man who was there. And one of the most important portions of these three chapters is left out—a verse which explains why Balaam is so universally condemned by other writers of Scripture (we will see that at the end of Numbers 24). How Moses or Joshua came to have this, whether Balaam stopped by and spoke to the Jews, spoke to Moses directly, whether he wrote it and gave it to the Jews, or whether God the Holy Spirit revealed all of this information directly to Moses, saying, "You don't know everything that is going on; for instance, just over that mountain..."

My personal opinion, due to the way it is written, is this is a first-hand account of what transpired, by a prophet of God, possibly Balaam. Better yet, it could be a scribe, assigned to record this information by King Balak. The scribe would have gone to get Balaam and would have sat in on the prophecies and would have written down every word, along with his observations. Furthermore, I would assume that this scribe became a believer early on in his transcription of what took place. Now, in placing this theory before you, I want to make it absolutely clear that no such scribe is ever alluded to in Scripture—this is a theory. However, the succession of events is recorded with such a personal touch, that I cannot see how anyone apart from an eyewitness would have recorded this. And once these prophecies were recorded, it would make sense that this new believer would leave Balak and Moab and take it to the Jews—specifically to Moses, as God's Word. Now, I have not read any other theories on this and do not know if I am the first or the thousandth person to assert that this passage, while it is certainly God's Word (we find the story of Balaam referenced in Deuteronomy 23:4 Joshua 24:9–10 Neh. 13:11–3 Micah 6:5 2Peter 2:15 and Jude 11)—was probably not originally written by Moses. However, by its correct placement in the Law, I would say that he had almost immediate access to it. Furthermore, the knowledge of Balaam expressed later on in Numbers 31 indicates that Moses knew who Balaam was. Having this information in his hand would lend credence to that.

These 3 chapters might be easier to understand and appreciate if you first study **Genesis 27** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). In that chapter, Isaac will give Jacob his (Isaac's) end-of-life blessing, thinking Jacob to be Esau. Understanding that chapter is very helpful when it comes to understanding Numbers 22–24.

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Balak Sends His Embassy to Speak to Balaam

And the sons of Israel traveled and camped in the plains of Moab—on the opposite side of the Jordan, Jericho. [Numbers 22:1]

The Amorite victory over Moab was a very recent event, as this verse points out. The land which they had begun to occupy, having defeated the Amorites, was still called the *plains of Moab*, indicating not that Moab now has it back, but that it was still known by that name. This does not mean that anything has since transpired between the Amorites and the Moabites. They are now situated directly north of the Dead Sea, across the Jordan river from Jericho, from which point they would launch their attack against the land of Canaan. In this verse, we have reached the end of the recorded itinerary of the Jewish people listed Numbers 33:48–49.

The *plains of Moab* is actually the *Arabah of Moab*, which, essentially refers to the uninhabited portions of Moab which have traditionally belonged to Moab. By itself, *Arabah* can refer to this area, but it actually takes in a much larger geographical area (the Jordan valley beginning at the southern end of the Sea of Galilee going southward to include the region around the Dead Sea, and continuing southward to include the area between the Dead Sea and the Red Sea).

In case you are wondering why my translation is somewhat different than others here: Moab is followed by the *mêm* prefixed preposition and the word *‘êber* (עֵבֶר) [pronounced *GAY^B-ver*], and it means *region across, beyond, side*. With *mêm*, it means *on the opposite side, on the other side*. Strong's #5676 BDB #719. In the construct, with add the English preposition *of*. The word *Jericho* is not preceded by any prepositions (you will note the prepositions used in the KJV and the NASB are in italics because they are not there). However, we do not need a preposition artificially inserted there in order to understand the meaning of this verse. The Israelites are camped across the Jordan River from Jericho. From their vantage point, across the Jordan river: Jericho.

And Balak, son of Zippor, saw all that Israel had done to the Amorite; [Numbers 22:2]

Balak is the king of Moab. Israel has just traveled either through or around Moab without incident, but they just totally defeated the Amorites, who defeated the Moabites and took much of their land, and now the Israelites occupied that land. Moab was quite uncomfortable with Israel in its former territory, directly north of them, recently involved in two battles that they would know about. This would cause Balak and the people of Moab to become quite alarmed. Balak knows nothing about God's plan. It was not God's plan to invade or to attack Moab, or the sons of Israel would have already done so. "**And Y^ehowah had said to me [Moses], 'Do not harass Moab, nor provoke them to war, for I will not give you any of their land as a possession, because I have given Ar to the sons of Lot as a possession.'**" (Deuteronomy 2:9). Moab would have been far better off not worrying about God's people living side-by-side to them; or, in at the very most, should have quietly built up their defensive forces (I am speaking from human viewpoint here). Moab had just fought and been partially defeated by the Amorites; had Balak had any divine viewpoint at all, he would have recognized that Israel has just destroyed his enemies and is acting as a northern buffer of protection for Moab. For all intents and purposes, Balak couldn't ask for anything more by way of divine preservation. However, Balak is negative toward God, has no interest in Him, except to use God. He will use the prophet Balaam, not because Balak is a Christian and wants Balaam's blessing, but Balaam's success rate has impressed Balak and Balak wants to employ that. How can I put this on a level that you would fully grasp? Perhaps you have an unbelieving friend who is religious and occasionally asks you to pray for them. I personally had a friend who was, for all intents and purposes, not a Christian and not even very religious—however, when she wanted a job promotion or some material benefit to come through for her, she would often ask me to pray for her to get these things. This is very similar to what Balak is doing.

And that Moab became exceedingly afraid of the presence of the people, for they [lit., it] [were] numerous; and Moab loathed [because they dreaded] the face of the sons of Israel; [Numbers 22:3]

An interesting verb in the Hebrew is *qûwts* (קוּטַס) [pronounced *koots*] and it is translated by the KJV *weary* (Genesis 27:46 Proverbs 3:11), *loathed* (Numbers 21:5—recall the Israelites feeling about the manna?), *abhorred* (Leviticus 20:23 Isaiah 7:16), *vex* (Isaiah 7:6¹³⁹) and *distressed* (here). Since this word only appears nine times in Scripture, we certainly should be able to find fewer than five words by which to translate it. In examining the contexts of these various passages, the idea here is that you *loathe* or *abhor* whatever it is which is the object of the verb. However, there is a little more to it than that. Behind the *loathing* and *abhorrence* there is a feeling of dread. That is, the sons of Israel *loathed* the manna so much that they *dreaded* eating it with their meals. Here, Moab *loathes* Israel, but part of that is because they are in fear of Israel. Rebekah *loathed* her life so much that she *dreaded* each day. The idea here is there is a feeling of *loathing* and *abhorrence* because there is an undercurrent of *dread* or *weariness*. We do not have a one-word translation for this. The Moabites have seen two million Jews walk around their land, and this sight was protracted and continual. They are tired of seeing these Jews and they have an inner fear of the Jews. Therefore, they loathe these Jews. There was no reason for the Moabites to fear or to loathe the Jews. God had given Israel no agenda as of that time against Moab.

And Moab said to the elders of Midian, "Now the assembly will lick up all that is around us, as the ox licks up the green thing of the field." And so Balak ben Zippor [was] king of Moab at that time; [Numbers 22:4]

This verse indicates that Moab, freshly defeated, quickly made an alliance with the rulers of Midian. The Midianites are a loose band of nomads living in the desert between Mesopotamia and Moab. They appear to be scattered and unfocused, not the sort of nation one would naturally ally oneself with. However, Balak is operating under human viewpoint. It has also been suggested that Balak is Midian in origin, although this strikes me more as a reasonable theory as opposed to something which can be Biblically proven. It is more likely that the Midianites were the only people in Balak's periphery that he could turn to. It is after this initial contact that Balak sends men to Balaam. It is likely with their far-reaching areas of inhabitation that the Midianites were more familiar with Balaam than was Balak. In fact, it is not unreasonable to assume that the Midianites suggested that they send for Balaam, an idea receiving Balak's complete support. At the end of Numbers 24, I will also give you evidence that Balaam was not from Mesopotamia, but that he was a Midianite.

It is ironic that the person concerned with losing this piece of real estate, Balak—the very person who initiated all of this—is preserved by God. God had told Moses not to engage in warfare with Moab nor to take any of Moab's land (Deuteronomy 2:9)—however, the Midianites, who do not actually own a piece of real estate and who aligned themselves against the Jews only after being prompted to do so by Balak, they will be cursed by God and consequently engage in war with Israel (Numbers 25:15–18 31:1–10). Such is the strength and power of the promises of God.

Balak explained that, now that the Jews had settled in the land, they would eat up everything in sight, just as an ox would. If you tied an ox to a rope, confining him to a certain area, he would eat up all of the grass in that area. The Jews have just been set down in the middle of the field and now they will eat up everything around them. It is possible that they have just begun their campaign against Bashan and Balak could point to that as an example of them moving north (the implication being is that they would move in all directions of the compass from these *plains of Moab*).

We know to insert a verb here because the *wâw* consecutive which begins v. 5 indicates a new thought. This verse is an afterthought on the part of Moses. It's, oh, by the way, this guy that I have mentioned, Balak—he's the king of Moab—just so you know for a point of reference.

And so he sent messengers to Balaam ben Beor, to Pethor, which [is] by the [Euphrates] River of the land of the sons of his [Balaam's] people,¹⁴⁰ to call for him, saying, "Look, a people have

¹³⁹ It is in the Hiphil in this verse, so its meaning is somewhat different.

¹⁴⁰ It should be pointed out that the Samaritan, the Syrian and the Vulgate all incorrectly read: *sons of Ammon*.

come out of Egypt; and¹⁴¹ notice, they [lit., it] have covered the eye of the land, and they [lit., it] are dwelling over-against me. [Numbers 22:5]

People is in the singular, so, in the Hebrew, all the references to people and the pertinent verbs are also in the singular. Balak has just seen two million Jews travel around his land and they have just defeated the Amorites. This sending for Balaam probably occurred immediately after the defeat of the Amorites and before the defeat of Bashan. Balak didn't know what the plans of the Jews were and it appeared as though they might just settle there and spread out throughout the land, taking over what was left of Moab.

According to ZPEB, Pethor is located on the western banks of the upper Euphrates River, just south of Carchemish, where the river Sagura (today known as Sajur) runs into the Euphrates. This city had been captured by the Hittites while Israel was in Egypt and they held onto it until the 9th century BC, when the Assyrians, under Shalmaneser III, captured it. Shalmaneser III recorded this: "I crossed the Euphrates and took the city Ana-Ashur-utir-aşbat¹⁴² on the other side of the Euphrates on the Sajur which the Hittites called Pitru."¹⁴³

Balaam is a prophet for hire. He is a believer in Jesus Christ and he is an honest-to-goodness prophet to the Gentiles. In the reading that I have done, I can see that this puts me in opposition with a number of great believers. The primary reason that theologians do not like to perceive of Balaam as a man of God is that he is not just imperfect—he is out of fellowship and flat out of God's will. However, God's interest in him and his speaking with God seems to indicate that there is a relationship there. Just because Balaam is tempted by money doesn't make him an unbeliever. There are a lot of believers in leadership positions who find themselves tempted by money, power and sexual lust. Some give in and some do not. This does not make them unbelievers—it means, simply, that they are out of fellowship (and, admittedly, some are not believers). Another argument made in favor of Balaam being a heathen is that he, as a man of God, would not align himself against Israel. We, in retrospect, recognize that Israel is God's beloved (most believers do, anyway) because this is declared in the entire Old Testament. However, during the time of Balaam, there was a dearth of Scripture available to the common man. Moses was in the process of organizing and writing Scripture, some of which (the Laws and the ordinances) were given to the common man. However, Balaam did not have access to all of this. God has not explicitly told Balaam yet that Israel is his, although such a relationship is implied by His deliverance of Israel from the bondage of Egypt. However, that was forty years ago and theologians at the time of Balaam would certainly been able to argue against God's exclusive relationship with Israel (recall how the theologians of Job's day argued against his relationship with God from experience). Balaam's problem is that (1) he is man of God; (2) he will be told by God what is allowed and what is not; (3) he questions this under the influence of lust for money. This does not make Balaam an unbeliever—it makes him a believer who is out of fellowship. We will cover the believer vs. unbeliever status of Balaam at the end of this chapter.

Apparently, Balaam's fame is known far and wide as a prophet for hire. In fact, his fame was so enduring that there is archaeological evidence from Deir Alla which indicates that Balaam was still highly regarded by pagans five centuries following his death. We have one of his prophecies in an Aramaic text from Deir Alla, which is in the Jordan Valley, that dates back to 700 B.C.¹⁴⁴

God's plan was for Israel to leave Egypt and march right into the land with the Law of God in their hand. At that time, Israel had some clout throughout the world. Recall the song of Moses: **Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed; the leaders of Moab, trembling grips them; all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away. Terror and dread fall upon them; by the greatness of Your arm, they are motionless as stone; until You people pass over, O Y^ehowah; until the people pass over whom You have purchased** (Exodus 15:15–16). The Israelites would have had an immediate impact upon the Gentile world had they just followed God's Word and had gone directly into the land under Y^ehowah's leading. Israel, however, was not quite organized as a nation, and, although their time

¹⁴¹ The *and* is found in certain versions of the Samaritan, Onkelos, the Targum of Jonathan, the Septuagint and the Syriac.

¹⁴² This means *I settled it against for Asshur*.

¹⁴³ ZPEB, Vol. 4, p. 740.

¹⁴⁴ The NIV Study Bible, p. 220.

in Egypt was a great witness to the Gentile nations everywhere, they have just spent forty years in the desert as God wasted the older generation, and forty years is a long time. It would have been better as their witness was to Y^ehowah, to have gone directly into the land and conquered it. This would have been a testimony observed and understood by all.

So let's go with some real application now. When we become believers, sometimes there is a certain amount of drama involved, a change of lifestyle, a sudden regular attendance of church—yet, what most people notice is that you have become self-righteous, arrogant and religious. Your personal life is cleaned up in some ways, but those who are close to you see a tremendous number of flaws. They are not impressed. Your witness is compromised by all of these flaws which you, in your self-righteous arrogance, are blind to. You pastor or his wife speak with a certain inflection of the voice, using a specific holy vocabulary, and you copy it. That's phoney and everyone knows it. Any unbeliever with an I.Q. over 90 recognizes that you are a phoney and wants no part of it. You are an embarrassment to Jesus Christ. You belong to Campus Crusade and all the people there have a certain look, a certain personality and you copy it. You are a phoney and every unbeliever around you knows it. You have not just eliminated some of the sinful areas of your personality, but you have eliminated your personality. Your family is looking to find the phone numbers of some de-programmers. They have no interest in what you have become because you are phoney.

In many cases, there is not a lot of reason to tell everyone around you that you have become a believer in Jesus Christ because they will only think: *so that is why he is behaving like such an ass—he's a member of some cult.* Our Lord did not send every healed person out into the world to tell what happened to them; many of them He specifically told to shut up about what happened. For many Christians at salvation, that is what they ought to do. Maybe a year later, under excellent teaching, it might be time to witness. There are exceptions to this, of course, and some people become believers, don't go through some sort of a psychotic personality change, and yet do recognize areas of their life which are corrupt. Under some circumstances, those people might be able to witness as to what God has done for them within a month or so.

This was the problem with Israel. They had been redeemed, they exited Egypt, they received the Law, and the whole world was watching. Then, at their first entry into the land, they were defeated and they disappeared from history for thirty-eight years. Gentiles talked about what happened in Egypt for years to come, but most of them, after three or four years, found other topics to discuss. Israel was nowhere to be heard from; at last inventory, they were wandering through the desert for some reason, dying in incredible numbers. If God is leading them, aren't they smart enough to get out of the desert? My point being is that Israel faced tremendous direct guidance and leading from God—it would have been easy to listen to God—the God Who delivered them over and over again—and to believe Him. They chose not to and the momentum of their deliverance was lost. Just like the average Christian, they rejected the Word of God and their Christian life did not get off the ground.

Back to Balaam: God knew that His people, the Jews, would fail, and would not be a witness for almost forty years, and He had to reach the Gentile world; therefore, He, God, continued to have Gentile prophets who possibly even recorded Scripture (which I believe that Balaam did). We will see that God spoke one on one with Balaam and that Balaam recognized Who God was, although he did not always go by God's Word (which is not atypical of the Christian community). Balaam's fame was known far and wide; even the unbeliever, Balak, the ruler of Moab, had heard of Balaam, and Balaam's reputation was more noteworthy and relevant to him than the testimony of the Jews at that time.

"And now, come, I respectfully ask you—curse for me this people, for they [lit., it] [are] mightier than I; it may be that I could prevail if I strike them and cast them out of the land; for I have known that which you have blessed is blessed and that which you curse is cursed." [Numbers 22:6]

Everything in this verse is in the first person singular. A ruler was identified totally with his country and we have seen several instances when the people of a country were spoken of in the singular. Obviously, Balak was not intending to personally invade the camp of Israel—this is a personification, where his country is identified with

him.¹⁴⁵ Whereas this passage speaks of Balak striking Israel and casting them out of the land, he obviously means his army.

Balak is realistic—the Jews outnumber him and they have just defeated someone who defeated Moab, so Balak recognizes that they are stronger than he is. As of this point, we know very little about Balaam, except that his reputation precedes him. He is recognized as being successful in his field.

And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian went—and [the money for] divination [was] in their hand—and they went in to Balaam, and spoke to him the words of Balak. [Numbers 22:7]

The word divination is *qeçem* (קֶּֽעֶם) [pronounced *KEH-sem*] and it is a word usually associated with an apostate prophet foretelling the future, as well as (in this context) bringing curses and blessings upon other entities. We see this word used in a negative sense in Deuteronomy 19:10 1Samuel 15:23 2Kings 17:17 and in a neutral or positive sense in this passage and in Proverbs 16:10. In this passage, it is more named from the standpoint of Balak, the heathen king. Balaam is a prophet of God, not some guy who just hung out his prophecy shingle for a buck. Balak doesn't really recognize any sort of difference between Balaam and any other religious guy (it is like confusing Billy Graham with the Pope). For some, such a confusion is preposterous; and to others, they are both big religious guys or something. If the informed unbeliever off the street were asked to name ten *Christians*, it is likely that his list would include several people who were not even saved and would spend eternity in hell. Balak means no disrespect by calling Balaam a *diviner*; he just doesn't know.

As an aside, I should mention that this tells us a little about God's plan in the Age of the Gentiles. God apparently did work through Gentile prophets as well as Gentile priests during the time of transition between the Age of the Gentiles to the Age of the Israel (recall that Moses' father-in-law was a Midianite priest and that their subsequent relationship was warm and Christ-centered). This would imply that God operated in a similar fashion prior to this age of transition. Although most dispensation treatises mention a family priesthood during the age of the Gentiles, basing this primarily upon the experiences of the patriarchs, this passage and the passages dealing with Moses' father-in-law and Melchizedek, indicate that there existed a priesthood and a prophetic office which extended outside the family for Gentiles.

They did not carry *divination* with them—they carried money or tribute with which to purchase the divination services of Balaam. This is a metonymy where divination stands for the tribute brought to purchase it.¹⁴⁶ Midian was south of Edom, which was south of Moab. Apparently, they had some sort of alliance, possibly just recently formed because of the Jews. The Midianites, since the Jews did not travel up the King's Highway, and since they had spies out, observed these Jews and also recognized that the Jews could kick their butt in war. It is possible that a counsel between the elders of Midian and Moab presided over by Balak, precipitated this course of action.

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God's Directive Will Is Made Clear: Balaam Is Not to Go to Balak

And he said to them, "Lodge here tonight and I will bring you back word, as Y^ehowah speaks to me." And the princes of Moab stayed with Balaam. [Numbers 22:8]

The greater number came from Moab, although there was some representation from Midian. This is interesting, as we do not know how God dealt with other nations during this time. God certainly has been acting in the lives of the Israelites for the past several hundred years, but this does not mean that He did not have involvement with the rest of the world. The book of Job is an example of a time probably coterminous with Abraham or one of the

¹⁴⁵ Bullinger calls this a heterosis, the singular being substituted for the plural. I believe that distorts the meaning, rather than clarifies it. The end result of the two interpretations is basically the same. Balak is not speaking of individually attacking Israel.

¹⁴⁶ Ever the student, I recognized this before reading it in Bullinger. I must be learning something!

other patriarchs of something which took place in a Gentile nation. As of right now, we do not know how legitimate Balaam is. Thus far, it sounds as though he has some sort of a relationship with Y^ehowah, God of the Jews—note, we have the specific name for God here, not the more generic Elohim. This would indicate that God was active throughout the world. As we study Balaam, we may lose our respect for him—however, not every believer leads an exemplary life.

And God came in to Balaam and said, "Who [are] these men with you?" [Numbers 22:9]

God obviously knows who these men are, as He is omniscient. By asking this question, God wants Balaam to examine their motives and purposes and how he personally is involved with them. It is said that a good teacher already knows the response of the student that he asks (not that I buy that)—God initiates conversation to get Balaam to think. Note also that this is the God of the Universe speaking to Balaam. This indicates that Balaam did have a relationship with Him, albeit somewhat strained when money was an issue.

A minor point that I should deal with. The NIV Study Bible points out that, although Balaam uses the name Y^ehowah several times, when God deals with him, we find the less personal title Elohim. This subtly distances the Balaam from the personal God of Israel. This would be a valid point, however, it only indicates here, at best, that Balaam is operating out of fellowship. It does not indicate that he is an unbeliever. Furthermore, the fact that Balaam is spoken of in a negative way throughout Scripture does not indicate that he was an unbeliever. The entire Exodus generation was saved, yet spoken of in very negative terms throughout the entire Old and New Testaments (see Hebrews 3:10–11, as an example). Finally, Balaam will come face to face with Jesus Christ in Numbers 22:31–35, where Jesus Christ will speak to Balaam directly as the Angel of Y^ehowah.

And Balaam said to God, "Balak ben Zippor, king of Moab, has sent [them] to me. [Numbers 22:10]

So the first thing that Balaam mentions is who sent these men. This gives him time to consider their purpose and their motivation.

The next verse is a bit difficult to grasp, so examining some other renderings will help:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	"Behold, the people who came out of Egypt cover the face of the earth; come now, curse them for me; perhaps I shall be able to fight against them and drive them out."
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	"Lo! The people that hath come forth out of Egypt—he covereth the eye of the land. Now, do come, do revile me him, Peradventure I shall prevail in making war with him, And shall drive him out."
NIV	"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."
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	"Lo, the people that is coming out from Egypt and covereth the eye of the land,—now come, pierce it for me; it may be I am able to fight against it, and have cast it out;"

"[And] see [lit., lo], the people that are coming out from Egypt and cover the eye of the land. Now, therefore,¹⁴⁷ come, curse it for me [and] perhaps I may be able to fight against them [lit., it], and [consequently] drive them [lit., it] out." [Numbers 22:11]

The Jews are so numerous, that they cover the area where they are traveling. The idiom here is to *cover the eye of the land*. Balaam then uses two Qal imperatives: *Come* and the next word is qā^bva^bv (קָבַב) [pronounced kaw^p-VA^BV] and it simply means *curse*. This particular word is found only in Numbers 22–25 and nowhere else in the Bible. The word translated *curse* in v. 6 is 'ārār (אַרַר) [pronounced aw-RAHR] is the word commonly used for *curse*

¹⁴⁷ We find the word *therefore* in the Samaritan, the Targums of Jonathan and the Septuagint.

as far back as Genesis 3:14, 17 4:11 12:3 and all the way to Malachi 3:9. My educated guess is that qâ^bva^bv is perhaps the Hebrew equivalent of the Balaam's word for *curse*.

Balaam has already seen the money and he is all for this. He has certainly heard of the Jews and how God delivered them out of Egypt, as that information was broadcast far and wide. He dismisses that as something which occurred in the past and immediately investigates the possibility of cursing them. Even though God, the very Y^ehowah to Whom he was speaking, had brought the Jews out of Egypt with a mighty hand, Balaam wanted to explore this cursing option, as there was a fair amount of money involved.

And God said to Balaam, "You will not go with them; neither will you curse the people, for they [are] blessed." [Numbers 22:12]

The Massoretic text reads "You will not go with them; you will not curse the people, for they are blessed." However, it is found as above in the most versions of the western Samaritan, the Targum of Jonathan, the Septuagint, the Syriac and the Vulgate. These early translations seem to have a better flow and possibly reflect the original better. In any case, the meaning is essentially the same.

One of the reasons for these three chapters in the Bible is to see God's various choices when it comes to our volition. We have His directive will, which is expressed here. God has expressly forbidden Balaam to go with these men. We will also see His permissive will and His overriding will.

And so Balaam arose in the morning and said to the princes of Balak, "Go to your land, for Y^ehowah refuses to allow me to go with you." [Numbers 22:13]

At first, Balaam seems like he is okay. Certainly, he could stand to make a little cash on the side, but God has expressly forbidden him to join these men to curse Israel, so Balaam sends them on their way back to Balak.

And the princes of Moab arose and returned [lit., went] to Balak, and said, "Balaam refuses to come with us." [Numbers 22:14]

We have quite a little trip here covered in a verse. To go from Balaam back to Moab was a distance of perhaps 300 miles. They were apparently instructed to move quickly and given the transportation which allowed them to do so. To put this into perspective, one of the silly thing originated by president Kennedy were these fifty mile walks that he encouraged many people to participate in. People spent the better part of a day walking fifty miles. This would indicate to me that one foot, we are talking a maximum of 75 miles per day, although they likely had some form of quadruped transport.

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Balak Sends Higher Ranking Officials Who Convince Balaam to Come

And Balak added yet to send princes, more numerous and honored than these; [Numbers 22:15]

The first set of men sent to Balaam were trustworthy men with a mission. However, they failed to accomplish this mission. Balak was not interested in a *no* for an answer. So he sent some men closer to the top of realm, those who would better understand the crisis at hand.

And they came in to Balaam, and said to him, "Thus proclaims Balak ben Zippor, 'Be not, I respectfully ask you, withheld from coming to me." [Numbers 22:16]

These men will be wearing more formal clothing, they will have more money, and they are perhaps carrying an official proclamation of the king with his seal. This is not just a friendly visit; they are in the midst of a crisis.

"For very greatly do I honor you, and all that you will say to me I will do; and come, I respectfully ask you—curse this people for me." [Numbers 22:17]

Balak is even more persistent, leaving the commission for one cursing to be at Balaam's own discretion. Balak has, for all intents and purposes, delivered a blank check to Balaam. This is far more temptation that Balak can imagine.

And Balaam answered and said to the servants of Balak, "If Balak gives to me the fulness of his house of silver and gold, I am not able to pass over the command of Y^ehowah my God, to do a little or a great thing; [Numbers 22:18]

Balaam sounds quite holy here. Even if Balak offers to give him everything that he owns in the way of gold and silver, Balaam is still unable to bypass God's commands, whether it be an insignificant matter or a matter of national importance.

"And, now, remain, I pray you, in this [house] tonight, and I will know what Y^ehowah might continue to speak with me." [Numbers 22:19]

Here we now see the chink in Balaam's armor. God has already unequivocally told him that he is not to go with these men. The people of Israel are God's and they are blessed of him. It does not make any difference how important this is to Balak nor how much money Balaam has been offered, it is strictly a matter the Jews are God's people, blessed by Him. Nothing can change that. Returning to God in prayer is not going to change that. Here is the error of Balaam: **But these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed. Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain [offering to God their works rather than the works prescribed by Him; the works of Jesus Christ]; and for pay, they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam; and perished in the rebellion of Korah [recall that Korah wanted a place in God's plan different than that given him by God—he rejected divine revelation concerning the position of Moses] (Jude 10–11). God has told Balaam what His will is. Balaam's decision is impaired because he is attracted to the great amount of money which is being offered to him. Forsaking the right way, they have been deluded, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness (2Peter 2:15).**

So you are thinking "I don't have the gift of prophecy, and no one has offered me money to curse the Jews; therefore, I am not following the way of Baal." This is because I quoted only one portion of 2Peter and left out the context. Balaam's error is almost universal among Christians. He has been exposed to God's directive will and he is, out of lust for something, is looking for a loophole. Are you married or married with a family and are you looking for that loophole? Are you dating someone and you find them physically irresistible and you are looking for a loophole? Are you engaged in a business and you could make a great deal of money if you acted with just some slight impropriety and you are looking for a loophole? Is there something that you have been taught out of God's Word and you are just not that happy with it and you are looking for the loophole? **This is the error of Balaam. The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment; and especially those who indulge the flesh in corrupt desires and despise authority. Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties, whereas, angels, who are greater in might and power, do not bring a reviling judgement against them before the Lord. But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed, suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong. They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you; having eyes full of adultery and that never cease from sin; enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children, forsaking the right way, they have been deluded, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, but received rebuke for his own transgression; a dumb donkey, speaking by means of a voice in the sphere of man, restrained the madness of the prophet. These [men] are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved (2Peter 2:9–17).**

There is a more specific *way of Balaam*, which is accursed of God. There are men who are saved with the spiritual gift of evangelism or of pastor-teacher (or, they happen to be outstanding public speakers). There are believers who have turned this gift into money. Through their ministry, they have concentrated on and have become wealthy. This wealth has been accumulated at the expense of God's Word. If it is any consolation, they will be doing the gardening for you at your mansion in heaven.

And God came in to Balaam, by night, and said to him, "If these men have come to call for you, arise, go with them, and only the word which I speak to you—that [lit., it] you will do." [Numbers 22:20]

This verse has to be examined carefully. *Arise, go* are verbs which are both in the imperative. However, this is God's permissive will. Balaam has already received a definitive *no* from God, so returning in prayer to God will not accomplish anything. However, God now shifts gears and allows Balaam to go with the men. We often take what is God's second choice in our lives—however, God has plan B in backup for this inferior choice. So there is no confusion, God has already told Balaam not to go. Here, He is permitting it, but it will not be without some discipline and redirection. Now would be an outstanding time to examine the **Doctrine of the Will of God—not finished yet!!**

And so Balaam arose in the morning and saddled his ass, and went with the princes to Moab; [Numbers 22:21]

We do not know how the princes of Moab traveled, whether on camel, horse or ass, but Balaam traveled by his favorite donkey. He has left God's geographical will for his life and is outside of God's directive will for his life.

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The Angel of Y^ehowah Stands Three Times in the Way of Balaam

Consequently, the anger of God burned because he was going, and an angel [lit., messenger] of Y^ehowah stationed Himself in the way as [lit., for] an adversary to him. Now he was riding on his ass and two of his servants [were] with him. [Numbers 22:22]

We have examined the angel from God. This is usually Jesus Christ and once and awhile it is just an angel. So, as he is riding on his ass accompanied by his servants, suddenly, right before him is Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Universe, standing in his way.

And the ass saw the Angel of Y^ehowah standing in the way, and his drawn sword in his hand, and the ass turned aside out of the way and went into a field, and Balaam struck the ass to turn it aside into the way. [Numbers 22:23]

Balaam is out of fellowship. He has chosen to go against God's directive and geographical will, so only his mode of transportation is able to recognize the Lord of Glory standing before them. He, Balaam, is in temporary spiritual darkness, as we all are when out of fellowship. The ass, to protect his long-time master, turns aside, leaving the road, and walks deliberately into a field to avoid the sword of God which would have struck Balaam down in the sin unto death. Balaam is so full of himself, that he never stops to think that there may have been a reason for his trusted donkey to swerve and walk out of the road. He simply strikes the beast of out anger.

And so the angel of Y^ehowah stood in a narrow path of the vineyards—a wall on this side and a wall on that; [Numbers 22:24]

We don't know if this occurred immediately afterward, or several hours later or the next day. However, when traveling through a vineyard, the vineyard had walls on both sides of where Balaam was traveling.

And the ass saw the angel of Y^ehowah and was pressed into the wall, and pressed Balaam's foot to the wall, and he struck her again [lit., added to strike her]. [Numbers 22:25]

Balaam is a bit frustrated—this has been his ass for a long time and she has never behaved like this—veering off the road they were on, or veering into a wall, crushing Balaam's foot between herself and the wall. This did not make any sense to Balaam, so he dealt with the situation by striking the animal.

And the angel of Y^ehowah kept continuing to pass over, and stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn aside, right or left; [Numbers 22:26]

Yâçaph (יָצַח) [pronounced yaw-SAHPH] means *to add, to augment*; and as an adverb it means *to continue to do a thing, again*. We have seen this verb before and we often translate it as an adverb *again* and as a verb *continue*. In the Qal imperfect, I have translated it to denote continuous action. This is followed by the Qal infinitive of *ʿâḇar* (עָבַר) [pronounced *gaw^B-VAHR*], which means *to pass over, to pass through, to pass, to go over*. It is found well over 500 times in the Bible. Strong's #5674 BDB #716. As Balaam and company continued to move forward, the angel of the Lord continued to move forward. Balaam cannot see the angel of the Lord; however, He has made Himself visible to the donkey. The donkey has, so far, seen this angel twice. Now the angel stands before them in a narrow pathway where the donkey cannot go forward.

And the ass saw the Angel of Y^ehowah, and crouched down under Balaam, and the anger of Balaam burned, and he kept striking the ass with a staff. [Numbers 22:27]

Balaam hasn't a clue that he is out of God's geographical will and out of His directive will. This is typical of the Christian today. They might be gossiping, harboring mental attitude sins of anger, hatred, fear, worry or sexual lust; they might be involved sexually with whom they believe to be the love of their lives—and they think nothing of it. They do not realize how far out of fellowship they are or how long they have been out of fellowship. Other believers just never think to rebound. During emotional services of re-dedication, they might quietly confess their sins to God, and the emotional upheaval of the meeting along with their confession, makes them think they are on the road the Christian greatness. They last until their next sin twenty seconds later and they are out of fellowship again. Balaam is frustrated. He has rationalized this trip as being God's will and he is less than happy with the behavior of his donkey.

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Balaam's Donkey Reasons with Balaam

And so Y^ehowah opened the mouth of the ass, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you that you have stricken me these three times?" [Numbers 22:28]

Balaam is out of fellowship so his relationship with God has been broken. God chooses many different and unusual means to communicate with us. This is completely out of the ordinary—however, it is fully within God's power to speak through the donkey, or allow the donkey to, for a period of time, be able to communicate with his master, giving him a vocabulary, apparent—but not necessarily real—intelligence and vocal apparatus. Outside of the serpent in the Garden of Eden, this is the only recorded instance of an animal speaking in Scripture. Obviously, this is a miracle designed to reach Balaam and to teach us about His will. Need I remind you that God is capable of anything. Furthermore, Peter testified as to the accuracy of this passage when he wrote: **But he [Balaam] received a rebuke for his own transgression; a dumb ass [i.e., a donkey which could not speak], speaking by means of a voice in the sphere of man, restrained the madness of the prophet** (2Peter 2:16).

And Balaam said to the ass, "Because you have rolled yourself against me. Oh, that there were a sword in my hand, for now I would have killed you." [Numbers 22:29]

Everyone rises to an occasion in a different way. Balaam is frustrated and, had he the ability to talk to his donkey, he would give it a piece of his mind. This is his chance and he tears into the donkey. If there was any surprise in Balaam's voice or confusion, we are not privy to it. Balaam just begins speaking to the donkey as if it were routine. We have all had a variety of conversations with people who were not there—people who frustrate us, make us angry, people with whom we're in love—basically people that we have strong feelings about. For some of us, this ends up being, once and awhile, a two-way conversation, even though the person may be miles away. Balaam is thinking these things—mental attitude sins toward his own donkey—and, upon hearing the donkey's voice, Balaam blurts out with the first thing on his mind. Had he a sword, he would have already killed this donkey.

And the ass said to Balaam, "Am I not your ass, upon which you have ridden since [I was] yours until this day? Have I at all been accustomed to do this to you?" And he said, "No." [Numbers 22:30]

We don't know whether the two servants of Balaam are privy to this conversation, whether Balaam is in some sort of a semi-trance mentally speaking to his own donkey, or whether this is a verbal exchange heard by all who accompanied Balaam. Who knows if their donkeys are thinking, "Yeah, tell it like it is!" V. 28 seems to indicate that this was a verbal exchange between Balaam and his ass, one which his servants may or may not be close enough to hear. This does give us a marvelous foreshadowing of an ass who is advising an ass (Balaam), who himself will be advising another ass (Balak).

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The Angel of Y^ehowah Speaks Directly to Balaam

Then Y^ehowah uncovered the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of Y^ehowah standing in the way, and his drawn sword in his hand, and he bowed and did obeisance, to his face. [Numbers 22:31]

There of those of you who read a great deal and one author I read mentioned the exact parallel between the beginning of v. 28 and v. 31. In some English translations, they might be the same, or sound as though they might be the same in the Hebrew. They both begin with the wâw consecutive and the subject of the sentence is Y^ehowah; however, the verbs are different and the first is a Qal imperfect while the second is a Piel imperfect. What we find in the English can often be deceptive. The concept of the two verses is entirely different. In v. 28, I don't know that the donkey suddenly became able to speak its inner feelings and thoughts, personally doubting the existence of such thoughts. However, what Balaam heard was the expression of the feelings the donkey had, if it possessed the thoughts and vocabulary with which to express them. In this verse, the prophet's eyes are being opened to what is real. The apt analogy here would be to awaken from a sleep—when your eyes are opened, you see the reality that surrounds you. That is what happened to Balaam. He was out of fellowship to a point that he was about to die the sin unto death. He had compromised the integrity of God. His eyes were opened to but a small portion of the spiritual reality which surrounded him.

Much more incredible than the donkey speaking to him, was the vision of God the Son standing before him with a sword drawn, ready to kill him. It would have been the sin unto death. The conversation with the donkey was now a moot point. Balaam recognizes that he is dealing with God and he falls upon his face before Him. This act of worship, which is not rebuked (as in Colossians 2:18 Revelation 19:10 22:8–9), indicates that this is God the Son, the revealed member of the Godhead.

One of the things to which most Christians seem to be totally oblivious to is that we are in the midst of the angelic conflict—that, while God may not be standing in front of your chevy causing it to swerve, we are surrounded by hundreds of angels and demons, observing everything that we do. The elect angels learn from what we do and Satan's demon legions gather information by which to slander us before God in the court of heaven (as in Job 1). There is a much greater reality in what we don't see than in what we do. **Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles**

us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us (Hebrews 12:1). Balaam's eyes were opened to see a small portion of the unseen reality around him.

And the angel of Y^ehowah said to him, "Why have you stricken your ass these three times? Look, I [even] I have come out as [lit., for] an adversary, for [your] way has been perverse before me; [Numbers 22:32]

Balaam did not think or try to put things into perspective when his donkey spoke to him, so now God the Son speaks to him, asking him the exact same questions. God opposed Balaam and his way.

"And the ass saw me and turned aside at My Presence these three times; unless she had turned aside from My Presence, surely now also, I would have killed you and kept her alive." [Numbers 22:33]

God points out to Balaam that had his donkey not turned aside, He, God the Son, would have killed Balaam. Balaam was delivered by his own donkey.

And Balaam said to the Angel of Y^ehowah, "I have sinned, for I did not know that you [were] standing to meet me in the way; and now, if [I am] evil in you eyes, I turn back by myself." [Numbers 22:34]

Balaam does recognize his sin, that Y^ehowah had forbidden him to go and is willing to return.

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Balaam Meets Balak

And the Angel of Y^ehowah said to Balaam, "Go with the men; and only the word which I speak to you—if you do speak." And Balaam went with the princes of Balak. [Numbers 22:35]

Now Balaam is back in the geographical and the directive will of God. God has made provision for every choice that we make. We often make bad choices—the result of which last us an entire lifetime. These choices might involve drugs, marriage, divorce, desertion of children and spouse, and a number of other things which are irrevocable—God has made provision for that and we can take up right where we have left off. Originally, it was not in God's plan for Balaam to accompany these men. Now, God has made provision for that. He made provision for all of this in eternity past, although it may appear to us that God has changed his mind or shifted His plan ever so slightly.

And Balak heard that Balaam had come and he went out to meet him, to a city of Moab which is on the border of Arnon, which [is] in the extremity of the border; [Numbers 22:36]

Balak has not a clue that all of this has occurred. All he knows is that he sent for Balaam, and, after a little persuasion, Balaam had arrived. He did not wait for Balaam to come to him—he went right out to meet Balaam as soon as he arrived within the borders of Moab. This was likely the capital city Ir, which is near the northern border of Moab.

And Balak said to Balaam, "Did I not [urgently] send for you [lit., in sending, did I not send to you] to call for you? Why didn't you come to me? Am I not truly able to honor you?" [Numbers 22:37]

Politically incorrect translation: "Where the hell have you been? Didn't I send you enough money?" The doubling of the verb adds great emphasis to its meaning. In this case, urgency and emergency are emphasized. God has a sense of humor. He has seen to it that we could visualize Balaam riding into walls and them striking his donkey.

Balak, meanwhile, is pacing back and forth at the palace, in a total tizzy. The sons of Israel do not even have a clue as to what is occurring because this will have absolutely no effect upon them.

Application: there are believers out of fellowship and unbelievers who plan and scheme and worry—and it is all for naught. Balak is not concerned with Who God is—if he were, he would have sent an ambassador to the Israelites, desiring information about their God and proposing an alliance. His mind is too corrupted by politics and his position. It doesn't matter what he does—after all of this worry and work, he will accomplish a little less than he would have without all of the worry and work. We cannot plan without God's guidance, nor can will worry add even an inch to our stature. If you are a believer out of fellowship, worried about your life and your future, you might as well take a hammer and beat yourself on the head. That will accomplish just as much as a lot of human viewpoint action.

And Balaam said to Balak, "Look, I have come to you; now, am I at all able to say anything? The word which God set in my mouth—that [lit., it] I will speak." [Numbers 22:38]

Now that Balaam is there, he asks about his freedom of speech. He will speak that which God has spoken to him.

And Balaam went with Balak, and they came to Kiriath-Huzoth; [Numbers 22:39]

This city is mentioned only in this verse. We do not know its exact location nor do we necessarily know its name (this is Hebrew for *city of streets*; the Greek is *city of courtyards*). This is certainly near Bamoth-baal, the capital of Moab, not far from the Arnon River.

And Balak sacrificed oxen and sheep; and he sent to Balaam and to the princes who [were] with him; [Numbers 22:40]

This all sounds well and good that Balak is sacrificing sheep and oxen to Y^ehowah, but that is not what it says. He is simply making sacrificial offerings. Just as it is today, Satan is a counterfeiter and the religions of those days all offered animal sacrifices. Those offering sacrifices then were no better off than those who go into the church of a cult today. There is a bit of truth mixed in with enough lies to hide what the truth is. The sacrifices are those made to Baal, a front for a demon.

And he took Balaam, and caused him to go up to the high places of Baal and he saw from there the extremity of the people. [Numbers 22:41]

We have a dangerous mix here. Allegedly, they have gone up to a high place in order to be able to see a portion of the Jews from there, but, not by a coincidence, it turns out to be an area where Baal is worshipped. Let's examine the **Doctrine of Baal—not finished yet!!**

With this first chapter of a trilogy under our belt, we need to examine whether Balaam is a believer or an unbeliever in greater detail:

Is Balaam a Believer or an Unbeliever?

1. There are two basic reasons that Balaam is seen as an unbeliever by many theologians: (1) he disobeyed God and was almost killed by God; (2) he placed something (in this case, money) ahead of God's will, and, (3) the Scripture speaks disparagingly of him. Many believers are guilty of #1 and #2—and several believers (Samuel, Annanias and Saphira) are guilty of #3 (as well as #'s 1 and 2). These are not sufficient reasons to call Balaam an unbeliever.
2. Unbelievers did not argue with Y^ehowah being the God of Israel. They accepted Him as a God, much the way heathen today liberally accept Buddha or Vishnu as god. What they objected to is: that Y^ehowah, the God of Israel, is the **ONLY** God, the God of the Universe, the Creator of the earth and all that is in it.

Is Balaam a Believer or an Unbeliever?

3. Heathen today object to the same thing. They don't see that Jesus is the ONLY God, the God of the Universe, the Creator of the earth and all that is in it.
4. Edersheim, on p. 278 of *Bible History Old Testament*, draws analogies between Balaam and Simon Magus of Acts 8, who beheld the miracles and signs which were done. However, to see a miracle performed and not to believe is a lot different from Balaam's role in this series of events. Edersheim's best argument against Balaam being a believer is the fact that the Hebrew word for prophet is never applied to him. However, this can be explained easily: That word, although in existence, was not widely used, and the recording of this incident was likely by a scribe who, although he knew several languages, did not have an extensive vocabulary in all languages. Furthermore, the word associated with Balaam, *diviner*, while generally used in a negative sense (1Samuel 15:23 Jeremiah 14:14), is found in a neutral or positive sense in Isaiah 3:2 Micah 3:6. This word would be used primarily for Gentile prophesying, which, during the age of Israel, would be false.
5. Balaam refers to Y^ehowah as **his** God (Numbers 22:18).
6. God repeatedly spoke to Balaam, directly and through his ass (Numbers 22:9–12, 32–35).
7. Balaam is known for his cursing and blessing as accurate (Numbers 22:6).
8. God is not in the business of warning, guiding, disciplining or blessing unbelievers. God disciplines those who are in His family. God speaks to unbelievers only to give them the gospel and, at times, He has to crush them to the point where they can reach only for His gospel of grace.
9. Balaam gives five extensive, accurate prophecies in Numbers 23–24 and they are recorded in God's Word. Although it is true that the Bible does contain the odd quote from an unbeliever, it never gives this much space to the speaking of an unbeliever. This is more than God speaking through an ass—although the analogy is not far from being on target—it is God speaking through one of His last Gentile prophets, however corrupted that prophet may have been.
10. The harsh treatment of Balaam, the threatening him with death for what he did, is rather extreme for a believer and even more extreme for an unbeliever. People curse God all of the time and curse His people, the Jews. God's forbearance allows for that (it certainly does not condone it). However, what Balaam is doing is much worse than all of that and the harsh punishment threatened only makes sense if Balaam is not just a believer, but a valid prophet of God. Balaam is one responsible to God to relay God's message to the Gentiles among whom he dwells and he is willing to take money to do that which God has told him not to (God specifically told Balaam to not go to Balak). However, that means no money.
11. One theologian from Dallas Theological Seminary, in a 400 page plus doctoral dissertation, deals with Balaam and the theology of Balaam. I believe that his stance, like most theologians, is that Balaam was an unbeliever. These theologians overlook the obvious: why does God work through Balaam? What didn't God just stand in Balak's way? Why didn't God threaten to kill Balak? Why doesn't Balak go to curse the Jews, but out instead comes blessing? Why did not Jesus Christ go directly to Balak and tell him what's up? God worked through Balaam because Balaam is a believer and did not work through Balak because Balak is an unbeliever.
12. Balaam, in Numbers 23:1, recognizes the divine perfection of the number seven.
13. God places His Word in Balaam's mouth (Numbers 23:5, 12).
14. Y^ehowah continually speaks directly to Balaam and not to Balak (Numbers 23:15–17).
15. Y^ehowah reveals his will to Balaam in a vision—a modus operandi followed only for believers (Genesis 15:1 Numbers 12:6 24:3).
16. The Spirit of God comes upon Balaam (Numbers 24:2).
17. One could form an argument, from the immediate context, that Balaam began as an unbeliever and was regenerated when he met God. Although a scenario like that would explain the later references to speaking the Word of God and having the Spirit of God come upon him, this does not square with all the commentary on Balaam and later books, nor with his death at the hands of Israel. Balaam is never presented, outside of this context, with any redeeming qualities (and within the confines of Numbers 23–25, one would have to infer redeeming qualities).
18. Balaam knows the knowledge of God (Numbers 24:16).

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Numbers 23

Numbers 23:1–30

Outline of Chapter 23:

- Vv. 1–6 **Preparation for the first prophecy of Balaam**
- Vv. 7–10 **The first prophecy of Balaam**
- Vv. 11–12 **Balak and Balaam discuss this first prophecy**
- Vv. 13–17 **Preparation for the second prophecy from Mount Pisgah**
- Vv. 18–24 **Balaam's second prophecy**
- Vv. 25–30 **Balak and Balaam discuss and then prepare for the third prophecy on Mount Peor**

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

Introduction: Numbers 23 and 24 should be one long chapter. They contain the five cursings and blessings of Balaam. This is tremendous prophecy. This is God speaking to the middle east for centuries to come, speaking through His prophet, Balaam.

Preparation for the First Prophecy of Balaam

Then Balaam said to Balak, "Build for me in this [place] seven altars and make ready for me in this [place] seven bulls and seven rams." [Numbers 23:1]

Balaam is in the midst of a lot of Baal worship; we're pretty much looking at a sort of a religious festival here. Whereas these sacrifices sound pretty darn holy, they are offered as much as an honoring of all national deities as they are offered to God. Paul warned the Corinthians: **Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership has righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God. Just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God and they will be My people. Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord. "And do not touch what is unclean and I will embrace you. And I will be a father to you, and you will be like sons and daughters to Me," says the Lord Almighty** (2Corinthians 6:14–18 Exodus 29:45 Leviticus 26:12 Isaiah 52:11 Exodus 4:22 2Samuel 7:14 Isaiah 43:6). Under certain circumstances, this would be appropriate as a sacrifice to Y^ehowah. However, not here or at this time. As a Christian, you would not participate in a religious festival, celebrating the variety of the ways men approach God. This is simply because there is but one way to approach God and all other religions are paying homage to Satan and his demon cadre.

And Balak did as Balaam had spoken and Balak offered a bull and a ram on the altar—Balaam also. [Numbers 23:2]

Balak doesn't really care what rigamaroll he becomes involved in—offer up a bull and a ram? Certainly, no problem. It is amazing what fear will do to a man. Balak, the ruler of one of the great nations of the world at that time, has placed himself under the authority of the prophet Balaam.

And Balaam said to Balak, "Station yourself by your burnt offering and I will go on; perhaps Y^ehowah will come to me and whatever He shows me, I will declare [that] to you." And so he went to a high place. [Numbers 23:3]

God often met with prophets in high places (recall Moses on Mount Sinai). The counterfeit religions do likewise; everything occurs in a *high place*. Balaam acts as though he intends to do all that which is good and proper. Money is hardly mentioned and he has already told Balak's ambassadors that all the money in the world could not

buy them a good blessing or cursing. However, he was willing to double check with God (as though God was not sure of what He had told Balaam the first time).

Let's look at v. 4 from strictly a linguistic point of view: the translations are generally sloppy with the final two verbs when there is no reason for it.

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	God met Balaam, who said to Him, I have prepared seven altars, and I have offered on each altar a bull and a ram.
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	And God came unto Balaam,—so he said unto him—The seven altars have I guilt in a row, and have caused to ascend a bullock and a ram on each altar.
KJV	And God met Balaam: and he said unto him, I have prepared seven altars, and I have offered upon every altar a bullock and a ram.
NASB	Now God met Balaam, and he said to Him, "I have set up the seven altars, and I have offered up a bull and a ram on each altar."
NIV	God met with him, and Balaam said, "I have prepared seven altars, and on each altar I have offered a bull and a ram."
NRSV	Then God met Balaam; and Balaam said to him, "I have arranged the seven altars, and have offered a bull and a ram on each altar."
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	And God cometh unto Balaam, and he saith unto Him, 'The seven altars I have arranged, and I offer a bullock and a ram on the altar;'

This verse contains three wâw consecutives and one conjunction. Not one translation addressed this fact. The first verb is the Niphal imperfect of qârâh (קָרָה) [pronounced *kaw-RAW*] and means *to encounter*, *to meet* and not *to come*. Sometimes there is the implication of a *chance* or *accidental meeting*. The Niphal, which is generally the passive stem, and sometimes a stem referring to a continuous sense of action (*being*)¹⁴⁸ refers here to a meeting which was not prearranged.¹⁴⁹ The preposition *to* goes with this verb, but we do not have a reasonably good corresponding English verb which allows for that preposition. Colloquially, we could translate this, **And so God happened to run into Balaam** or **God ran into Balaam**. and such a rendering would allow for the preposition and the implication of a meeting which was not prearranged (by Balaam). To interpret this in the passive stem, God was brought to Balaam inadvertently through Balaam's sacrifices.

Balaam did not expect this meeting, so he quickly tells God that he has done what he is supposed to do. He set up altars and offered sacrifices, etc. What we lose here is the humor of this verse. Balaam is doing these things which are designed to contact God; however, their subsequent meeting is a bit of a surprise to Balaam, so he immediately tells God what he's been doing. Haven't you as a parent surprised your son or daughter doing something that they were not supposed to be doing, and they suddenly became very talkative, explaining quickly the things they were doing which were okay. Balaam is trying to strap it on God. He's not supposed to be involved in any sort of religious affiliation with any other pagan god, yet here he is offering sacrifices in the high places of Baal (Numbers 22:41).

When Balaam set he *prepared* the seven altars, the verb means *to arrange in order*, *to arrange in a row*. Nothing is gained by obscurring this meaning. Finally, in the sacrifice, Balaam has offered these as burnt offerings, as the verb means *cause to ascend*. It is in the Qal imperfect, however, and now the Hiphil, but having the verb in the first person singular with the objects the bull and the ram, it means that Balaam is right now in the midst of sending these sacrifices up to God. The implication here of the perfect tense of *arrange* and the imperfect tense of *ascend* is that God happened to come to Balaam after he arranged the altars and before he was finished offering the sacrifices. Now Balaam is not saying that he is offering a bull and a ram on each altar (although he is); but he is right in the middle of sending up a bull and a ram on a specific altar.

Now it is obvious that all of these versions say roughly the same thing and the actual translation is not too far from theirs. However, when a literal translation would suffice and give a clear understanding as to what is here, why give any other sort of translation? The point is that there are times when one point of doctrine depends upon

¹⁴⁸ Zodhiates *The Complete Word Study Old Testament*, p. 2278.

¹⁴⁹ BDB, p. 899.

where a particular word is found in Scripture and what its meaning is. Very few pastors are fluent in the Hebrew language, and therefore they depend upon those who have gone before them and have translated the Holy Scriptures. Furthermore, a more literal translation here gives us a much richer understanding of what is going on. You may have read this verse a dozen times in your one year program to read the Bible, and you didn't really know what was here.

I guess this is a plea for someone or some group to give a consistent and literal translation of the Bible, and perhaps include, side by side, or as footnotes, the more idiomatic sense of some of the verses. This would free up the pastor to teach from this translation without having to be a language scholar (which is preferable, but it doesn't occur very often).

And then God encountered [to] [or, ran into] Balaam [or, and then God was brought to Balaam] and so he said to Him, "The seven altars I arranged [in a row]; and now I am sending up [or, causing to ascend] a bull and a ram on that [lit., the] altar." [Numbers 23:4]

Before Balaam has even finished offering these sacrifices, God comes to him—a bit sooner than Balaam expected. Balaam quickly explains to God that he has been good and has obeyed all the formalities of the rituals called for by God, and, in fact, he is, at this moment, right in the middle of sending up a sacrifice to God (as in, "What a coincidence!"). Have you ever lied when someone calls you on the phone (someone who has left three or four messages) and you said, "I was just trying to call you." That's what Balaam is saying. God is keeping close tabs on Balaam, as he could, at any time, say the wrong thing. God has to remind Balaam that He is always there.

And Y^ehowah put a word in the mouth of Balaam and said, "Turn back to Balak and thus you will say: [Numbers 23:5]

Recall that God has allowed Balaam to accompany Balak on the condition that he speak only that which God tells him. "If the men have come to call you, rise up—go with them; but only the word which I speak to you it you will do." (Numbers 22:20b). This doesn't sound too awfully different from **I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to the God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book** (Revelation 22:18–19). God will allow Balaam to speak only the truth concerning Israel.

We do not know the exact mechanics of putting a word into the mouth of Balaam, except that this was how God would work with prophets during the Age of Israel [this is Moses speaking to Israel, relaying what God had said to him]: "I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will place My words in his mouth and he will speak to them all as I command him." (Deuteronomy 18:18).

And he [Balaam] turned back to him [Balak] and observe [lit., lo], he is standing by his burnt-offering—he and all the princes of Moab. [Numbers 23:6]

So Balaam has gone further up the mountain, God spoke to him and sent him immediately downhill. We don't know if God gave Balaam a written speech, impregnated the information on Balaam's mind, or what. However, we hear it quoted only once.

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The First Prophecy of Balaam

Balaam will give seven prophetic discourses: I (Numbers 23:7–10); II (Numbers 23:18–24); III (Numbers 24:3–9); IV (Numbers 24:15–19); V (Numbers 24:20); VI (Numbers 24:21–22); and VII (Numbers 24:23–24), the latter, shorter three being the more difficult to interpret.

Balaam is the last of the Gentile prophets to the Gentiles. There is a colossal failure at the end of every dispensation and Balaam is representative of his. The Jews would fail as a nation to evangelize the world just as Balaam has failed to stand as a pure witness for Jesus Christ. In a way, Balaam almost hands the baton to Israel; however, his hands are soiled with a desire to make money from his position as a prophet. He can no more hand the baton to the sons of Israel than could Caiaphas the high priest hand the baton to Saint Paul. Please note that Balaam's prophecies are from one Gentile to another Gentile about Israel. Israel herself will become corrupt during the time of our Lord's incarnation, when those who are priests will be unbelievers and those who claim to uphold the Law of Moses cannot even recognize the Lord Who gave these laws to Moses.

And he took up his discourse [or, memorable recitation] and said, "From Aram He leads me, Balak king of Moab; from mountains of the east—come, curse for me Jacob, and come, be indignant [to] Israel. [Numbers 23:7]

Mâshâl (משל) [pronounced *maw-SHAWL*] means *parable, proverb, oracle, discourse, memorable recitation*. This is the same name of the book of Solomon called *Proverbs*. From its use in 1 Samuel 10:12 1 Kings 4:32 Psalm 44:14, I don't think that *parable* is quite its meaning. The Webster definition of oracle is *any utterance made or received as authoritative, extremely wise, or infallible*. In this respect, *oracle* is a good translation of this word. Mâshâl refers more to a short, often poetic, easily-remembered point of doctrine. I think one of the more important aspects of this word, which is often overlooked, is its quality of being remembered. Balaam begins his discourse with a preface: Balak, king of Moab, has led him from Aram and from the mountains in the east, to come to curse Israel (recall that Jacob and Israel are the same person).

"What—do I curse? God has not cursed! And what—do I denounce [in indignation]? Y^ehowah has not denounced! [Numbers 23:8]

Recall, we have examined the two different words for *curse* which we find in v. 7 and v. 8—the first is a Hebrew word commonly translated *curse*; and the second is a word found only in these three chapters of Numbers. Then we have this word which occurs twelve times in the Old Testament, yet is translated five ways (not altogether differently, however). Zâ'am (זאם) [pronounced *zaw--GAHM*] is translated *indignant, defy, angry, abhor, abominable*. Its noun cognate, za'am (זאם) [pronounced *zah-GAHM*] is translated *indignant* except for Psalm 38:3. The key is that this word is used of those who do not measure up to God's perfect character; in fact, they fall so short of it, they are *denounced in indignation, denounced as an affront to God's perfect character, to denigrate or disparage out of indignation*. Balaam immediately relates his quandary—he has been asked to speak authoritatively, as from God, to curse a people that God has not cursed; to denounce a people whom God has not denounced.

These are animated, expressive questions which he poses, but they are not questions presented in order to obtain information. This is called erotesis [pronounced *ER-ō-TEE-sis*] where a question is asked, but an answer is not sought. This is a question stated in order to refuse to perform this action.

"For, from the top of rocks I see it [the people of Israel]; and from heights I observe it. See, a people! Alone [or, apart] they are encamped, and among nations they do not reckon themselves [lit., it does not reckon itself]. [Numbers 23:9]

Balaam has been taken to a high mountain from whence he can observe Israel. He can see them and recognizes that they are not allied with any other nation—in fact, they do not even see themselves as a nation. **When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance; when He separated the sons of man, he set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel (Deuteronomy 32:8). So, Israel dwells in security, the**

fountain of Jacob secluded, in a land of grain and new wine; his heavens also drop down dew. Blessed are you, O Israel. Who is like you, a people delivered by Y^ehowah. Who is the shield of you help and the sword of your majesty? So your enemies will cringe before you and you will tread upon their high places (Deuteronomy 33:24). The fact that Israel is separated from all other nations has held true from that time until today. There have been many nations which have attempted to conquer Israel and several which have succeeded. The Jews been scattered throughout all of the nations of the earth. However, they have never been thoroughly absorbed into any national entity nor has any conquering nation ever fully assimilated them. In the United States, where they have received great acceptance as a people, there is still an undercurrent of anti-semitism, even though the difference in physical characteristics between Jews in the United States and non-Jews is minimal, if even existent. The same holds true for many countries where they sojourn.

"Who has counted the dust of Jacob and [who has] numbered the fourth of Israel? Let me [lit. my soul] die the death of upright ones, and let my last end be like his!" [Numbers 23:10]

Balaam is expressing amazement at the large numbers that he is observing—two million people in one spot is a lot of people. He can only see a portion of them and the portion that he sees is quite large—and the number of Israelites that he sees is a small portion of the total population of Israel. Recall God's promise to Jacob, which he received in a dream: "Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east to and the north and to the south; and in you an din your descendants will all the families of the earth be blessed." (Genesis 28:14). Rather than these Israelites being cursed by God and dying before God as accursed; they are blessed by God and their deaths are victories—God has called them home.

A synecdoche [pronounced *syn-EK-do-kee*] is when part of a thing stands for the entirety. This is done quite often with the soul. The *soul* stands in for the entire person. Balaam expresses his desire to die a death like Israel—absolved of guilt and blessed of God. **Observe the blameless man, and note the one with integrity; for the man of peace [relationship with God] will have a future** (Psalm 37:37). Our death is victory, not a loss. **"Blessed [or, happy] are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them."** (Revelation 14:13b). This verse shows an earnest desire to die in such a way that would glorify God. However, this earnest desire coupled with the fact that he was in Moab under to auspices of Balak to curse Israel, is only a *desire* but not a prophecy which must be fulfilled. Balaam's death will be that of an enemy of God: **The sons of Israel also killed Balaam, the son of Beor, the diviner, with the sword among their slain** (Joshua 13:22 Numbers 31:8).

It might be good to see this first prophecy as a cohesive whole, without the notes, so that it flows:

And he took up his memorable discourse and said,
 "From Aram He leads me, Balak king of Moab; from mountains of the east.
 Come, curse for me Jacob, and come, denounce Israel.
 What—do I curse? God has not cursed!
 And what—do I denounce [in indignation]? Y^ehowah has not denounced!
 For, from the top of rocks I see them [the people of Israel]; and from heights I observe them.
 See, a people! Apart they are encamped, and among nations they do not estimate themselves.
 [Yet] who has counted the dust of Jacob and [who has] numbered the fourth of Israel?
 Let me [lit. my soul] die the death of [these] upright ones, and let my last end be like his!"

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Balak and Balaam Discuss this First Prophecy

And Balak said to Balaam, "What have you done to me? I have brought you to curse my enemies; and, look, in having blessed [them] [greatly] you continued to blessed [them]!" [Numbers 23:11]

Rotherham's *The Emphasized Bible* translates this as **To revile mine enemies I summoned thee, and lo! thou has kept on blessing.** When the infinitive follows its finite version, often continuous action is denoted.¹⁵⁰ Balak is a bit disturbed. The game plan was to bring Balaam all the way from Mesopotamia to curse the Jews and he has done quite the opposite. Balaam is confused about the program and his participation in it.

And he answered and said, "If that which Y^ehowah has placed in my mouth, that should I not take responsibility [or, take heed] to speak?" [Numbers 23:12]

Balaam has not originated these words. God is speaking through him. This is his responsibility as a prophet—to speak that which God wants spoken. Balaam is caught between a rock and a hard place. He so much wants to take the money and run, but he is constrained by God. Now, we don't always see this in our translations, but the Bible is careful to interpret this for us.

This may seem quite unusual, for a man like Balaam, who apparently is a prophet of God, who apparently has some sort of relationship to God, to also be willing to associate with a man who desires the destruction of the people of Israel. Arthur W. Pink makes the following observations:

Arthur W. Pink: That Laban harbored in his home these "teraphim" shows that the idolatry of Babylonia still clung to his family, notwithstanding he had some knowledge of the true God. (See Genesis 31:53). Laban appears to have been a man much after the order of those of whom it is written: "They swore by the Lord and by Malehom" (a heathen god). (Zeph. 1:5).

Pink then goes on a very interesting tangent: This strange contradiction in Laban's religious life appears to throw light upon a passage and person that has long puzzled Bible students. We refer to Balaam. This mysterious prophet seems to have been a heathen soothsayer, and yet it is evident he also had some dealings with Jehovah. If Balaam was a descendant of Laban this would account for this religious anomaly. Now in Numbers 23:7 we learn that Balaam came from "Aram," which may possibly be identical with Padan-Aram where Laban dwelt. Balaam prophesied only some 280 years after Jacob's departure from Laban's home, and may then have been an old man, at any rate in those days 280 years covered only about two generations. The Targum of Jonathan on Numbers 27:5, and the Targum on 1Chronicles 1:44 make Balaam to be Laban himself; and others say he was the son of Boor, the son of Laban. Bearing in mind that Laban employed the "teraphim" as his "gods," if Balaam were one of his descendants then it would explain why he did not utterly disown Jehovah while yet practicing the abominations of the heathen.¹⁵¹

Although I doubt that we necessarily can tie Balaam to Laban's family; Laban reveals that he himself enjoyed a mixture of the true faith (as revealed in Genesis 24), but that he also was seduced by false gods (Genesis 31).

Bobby Thieme refers to this as *syncretism*.

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Preparation for the Second Prophecy from Mount Pisgah

And so, Balak said to him, "Come, I respectfully request of you—[come] with me to another place [from] which [place] you will see them.¹⁵² You see only their extremity and all of them that you don't see. Then [lit., and] curse them for me there." [Numbers 23:13]

¹⁵⁰ *The Emphasized Bible*, p. 16.

¹⁵¹ From http://www.biblebelievers.com/Pink/Gleanings_Genesis/genesis_32.htm accessed October 28, 2017.

¹⁵² Lit., it (and so on throughout).

Balak's thinking here is that—okay, Balaam has more or less blessed these people, but he has only seen a small portion of some of them. All of Israel was not blessed here—just this portion. So they will go to another place from whence they can see the rest of Israel, and, now that Balaam understands the game plan, he can at least curse them.

And he took him [to] the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars and offered a bull and a ram on each [lit., the] altar. [Numbers 23:14]

Apparently, the definite article can be translated *each* in a situation like this. Obviously, they are not going to build seven altars and then only offer two animals. They cannot use any of the existing altars, as those altars have been set aside for Baal worship.

And he said to Balak, "Station yourself here, by your burnt-offering, and I—even I will meet [with God]." [Numbers 23:15]

Balaam understands the game plan. He is going to God just in case there may have been a slight alteration in God's plans of cursing and blessing. Balaam wouldn't mind picking up several thousand dollars for this trip, so it just can't hurt to check in with the boss and see if there are any changes that he can make use of. Balaam does not fully grasp the immutability of God.

And Y^ehowah came to Balaam and placed a word in his mouth and said, "Return to Balak and thus you will speak." [Numbers 23:16]

I have alluded to this several times and the mechanics I would find interesting. We have found several places where *God has placed a word in Balaam's mouth*—I would be interested in the mechanics of this. My guess is that God has told him what to say, has filled him with the Holy Spirit and then sent him back to Balak.

And he came to him and observe, he was standing by his burnt-offering and the princes of Moab [were] with him. So Balak said to him, "What has Y^ehowah spoken?" [Numbers 23:17]

Progress is being made with Balak here. He recognizes who it is that Balaam speaks to. Note that God speaks to Balaam and not to Balak directly—further evidence that Balaam is a believer and that Balak is not. What is true of the ancient gods of various nations is that each nation had their own set of gods and the recognized that other nations had their own set of gods. This is not unlike the liberal today who recognizes one religion has this kind of god and another religion has that kind of god—and, of course, those who think themselves really deep thinkers, say, "It is the same god—the God of man." However, the Bible makes it clear that is not the case. Various nations at that time and various religions today do have their own specific gods—these are demons and certainly, demons recognize that there are other demons. However, there is but one true God—Y^ehowah—Jesus Christ—Who created the universe. Balak is simply being a liberal, if not indulging Balaam.

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Balaam's Second Prophecy

And he took up his discourse [or, memorable recitation] and said, "Arise, Balak, and hear: give ear to me, son of Zippor! [Numbers 23:18]

Now God, through Balaam, is speaking to Balak. He is saying, "Listen carefully to this."

"God [is] not a man that he should lie. And [He is not] a son of man and changes His mind. Has He said? Will He not do it? And [has He not] spoken? And will He not confirm it? [Numbers 23:19]

God has already considered this matter. "Blessed is Y^ehowah, Who has given rest to His peope Israel, according to all that He promised; not one word has failed of all His good promise, which He promised through Moses His servant." (1Kings 8:56). "For also the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind." (1Samuel 15:29). God is immutable. He does not change His mind ever. Once He has given us a divine pronouncement, He will bring it to pass. "My Word will fo forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me void without doing My will and without accomplishing that for which I sent it." (Isaiah 55:11). *The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God stand forever* (Isaiah 40:8). And since He has already spoken—another session with Y^ehowah will bring only confirmation to what He said before. God does not even denigrate Himself to be compared to demon deities—He compares Himself to man. Will He change His mind like some man would? The rhetorical question cries out for the answer "Hell no!"

As an aside, because there is always that person who just began listening and has heard the passages where God repents or where Moses talks Him out of destroying all of Israel. God had the intention all along of accomplishing His purpose in those matters. When the Bible speaks of God repenting (changing His mind), that is simply an anthropopathism—it explains the actions of God in a language of accommodation. There are times when we have to spank our children, and it is very difficult—the child might tell someone else that his mom and dad were angry with him whereas, it was quite the opposite. They spanked him because they love him and felt no anger. However, the language of accommodation for the child was mom and dad are *mad* at him.

In saturations where God spares Israel (or anyone else) after Moses (or some other believer) argues for a different tact—it is not that God is kind of slow on the uptake and suddenly says, "Well, I guess I didn't look at it that way" or "I hadn't really thought of that." This reveals the tremendous power of intercessory prayer (as well as imprecatory prayer). God knew that Moses would argue on behalf of Israel and had already determined in eternity past to acquiesce to the arguments of Moses. However, had Moses not argued on behalf of Israel, then God would have destroyed all of Israel in the desert and begun anew with Moses. Even though we don't always fully understand why, our prayers on behalf of others are extremely important. The simple explanation is that God is glorified by answering our prayers.

"Look, to bless him [Israel], I have received. In fact, He blesses and I [can] not reverse it.
[Numbers 23:20]

It is possible the this verse reads: "Observe, to bless I have received; and I will bless and I cannot take it back (this is according to the western Samaritan and the Septuagint). Although this does change the immediate meaning considerably, the overall meaning is the same. When God blesses someone, they are blessed. That is not something an individual can reverse. Similarly, when God has informed Balaam that someone is to be blessed (or prospered) by God, he conveys the information. It is more along the lines of *don't shoot the messenger*. "Even from eternity, I am He; and there is none who can deliver out of My hand. I act and who can reverse it?" (Isaiah 43:13). In either case, Balaam expresses his powerlessness to do anything but report what God has said.

The next verse requires us to look at some other translations:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	[God] has not beheld iniquity in Jacob [for he is forgiven], neither has He seen mischief or perverseness in Israel. The Lord his God is with Israel and the shout of praise to their King is among the people.
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	He hath not discovered trouble in Jacob, Neither hath he seen wretchedness in Israel—Yahweh, his God is with him, And the acclaim of a king in his midst;
KJV	He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, either hath he seen perverseness in Israel; the LORD his God <i>is</i> with him, and the shout of a king <i>is</i> among them.
NASB	He has not observed misfortune ¹⁵³ in Jacob; Nor has He seen trouble in Israel; The LORD his God is with him, And the shout of a king is among them.
NIV	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.

¹⁵³ Footnoted *iniquity* in the NASB.

NRSV	He has not beheld misfortune in Jacob, nor has he seen trouble in Israel. The LORD their God is with them, acclaimed as a king among them.
Young's Lit. Translation	He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, Nor hath He seen perverseness in Israel; Jehovah his God <i>is</i> with him, And a shout of a king <i>is</i> with them.

Like we have seen in several verses, there are some words in this verse that you would never suspect are here. There are two words used for the sense of sight in the Hebrew; which means *to see* and one which means *to look carefully, to examine, to scrutinize, to observe carefully*. It is the second word that we find here. ^ʾĀwen (אָוֵן) [pronounced *AW-wen*], although given in BDB as *trouble, sorrow, wickedness*, seems to be translated *iniquity* more often than anything else. The second verb is the word often used for *see*. This sets up a parallelism, using the two words for *see* and using the two names of Jacob, Jacob and Israel. The next word is a tough one. There is the verb which is ^ʿâmal (עָמַל) [pronounced *aw-MAHL*], which means *to labor, to toil*. It is a verb found primarily in the poetry of the Bible (Psalms, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes). It occurs one time in Jonah 4:1 (and just once in Psalm 127:1 and Proverbs 16:26) but most of its occurrences are in Ecclesiastes. Strong's #5998 BDB #765 However, the noun cognate—which is ^ʿâmâl (עָמַל) [pronounced *aw-MAWL*—is found sparingly in the Law (Genesis 41:51 Numbers 23:21 Deuteronomy 26:7 Judges 10:16) and in the prophetic books (Isaiah 10:1 53:11 59:4 Jeremiah 20:18 Hab. 1:3, 13) and quite often throughout the poetical books (Job through Ecclesiastes). However, it is translated *perverseness, toil, misery, wickedness, trouble, mischief, sorrow, painful, labor, travail, grievousness, grievances*. I am of two minds here. On the one hand, I want to go with a complete parallelism and translate this word as *wickedness, trouble, mischief*. On the other hand, I want to go with *exhausting labor* because it allows for more consistency. There are two sides to the unregenerate man's life: iniquity and works—man alternates between sinning against God and then trying to work his way back into God's favor. Strong's #5999 (and #5998) BDB #765.

"He has not found [lit., beheld] iniquity in Jacob, nor has He seen [exhausting] labor in Israel.
[Numbers 23:21a]

Now we have just seen chapter after chapter of how Israel had sinned against God and how God scattered their carcasses in the desert. **You have been rebellious against Y^ehowah from the day I knew you** (Deuteronomy 9:24). **They [referring to Israel] have acted corruptly toward Him; [they are] not His children because of their defect, but [they are] a perverse and crooked generation** (Deuteronomy 32:5). The New Testament affirms the loathing by God of the exodus generation. So, here we find no iniquity in Jacob? Even personalized, as you will recall, that Jacob was, of the three patriarchs, one of the sorriest excuses for a Christian one has ever seen. If you understand God's Word—this is a no-brainer. Israel is the elect of God. They have believed in Y^ehowah and have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. Positionally, like us, they are pure. **Happy is he whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Happy is the man to whom the Lord [Lord in the Greek and Y^ehowah in the Hebrew] does not impute iniquity** (Romans 4:7–8, Psalm 32:1–2a). Besides, **"Y^ehowah is slow to anger and abundant in grace, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth [generations]."** (Numbers 14:18). **"In those days and at that time, declares Y^ehowah, "A search will be made for the iniquity of Israel, but there will be none; and for the sins of Judah, but they will not be found; for I shall pardon those whom I leave as a remnant."** (Jeremiah 50:20). **See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and we are. For this reason, the world does not know [or, understand] us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him must as He is** (1 John 3:1–2).

Y^ehowah his God [is] with him and a battle-cry [or, the sound of warring trumpets] of a king [is] in him. [Numbers 23:21b]

Although I like the way that the NRSV has translated the second portion of this verse (**The LORD their God is with them, acclaimed as a king among them**), however I don't think that is the proper interpretation (it should come as no surprise to you that many portions of a translation are nothing more than an interpretation of what is there). The insertion of the definite article prior to *king* in the NIV is also an interpretation—the definite article does not occur here.

God has told Moses and Joshua that He would specifically be with them (Exodus 3:12 Deuteronomy 31:23) and has said the same to Israel as a nation: "And I will dwell among the sons of Israel and I will be their God. And they will know that I am Y^ehowah their Glodwho brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them; I am Y^ehowah their God." (Exodus 29:45–46). It is in this second portion of the verse, that what Balaam says that which should worry Balak. We have the variously translated word *t^erûw'âh* (תִּרְוּעָה) [pronounced *t'rû-AWH*] a word which is generally associated with the very loud sounds of battle, as in Jeremiah 4:19 Amos 1:14 2:2 Zeph. 1:16. Israel is not really a nation yet, as it does not have a territory, nor has it built a city nor does it have a king. However, the battle cry (or the sound of warring trumpets) of a king is in Israel. They are about to go out and conquer the land of Canaan. Y^ehowah is their King and their God, but that is not what is in view here. What is in view is that they will go out and conquer as through they were led by a king. Their king is, in a sense, Y^ehowah, the God of the Universe; and, in a sense, this king is Moses. Due to the late sixties and early seventies, war is seen as the ultimate in evil; however, for Israel, it was the sound of them conquering the land given them by Y^ehowah under His guidance. **How happy are the people who know the battle-sound of military trumpets! O Y^ehowah, they walk in the light of Your countenance. In Your name they rejoice all the day, and by Your righteousness, they are exalted. For You are the glory of their strength, and by You grace our horn [representing leadership and/or domination] is exalted. For our shield belongs to Y^ehowah and our king to the Holy One of Israel (Psalm 89:15–18).**

"God is bringing them out from Egypt as the swiftness [lit., horn] of a water buffalo is to him; [Numbers 23:22]

According to the NIV, the image of a wild ox is that of power to the ancient peoples of the Near East.¹⁵⁴ The image here is that one is being carried so quickly by this beast that they must hold onto its horns to keep from falling off. Again, this image of speed is relative. Israel could have, had they so chosen, gone from slavery in Egypt to conquering the land of Canaan in just a few short years. However, they chose to oppose God.

For no enchantment [is] against Jacob, nor divination against Israel. At the time it is said of Jacob and Israel: what has God brought into existence [or, made or done]? [Numbers 23:23]

The *bêyth* preposition denotes proximity. It can mean *in, into, by*, and it can also mean *against*. There are no words or incantations which can be spoken against Israel. **How great is Your goodness, which You have stored up for those who fear You; which You have done for those who take refuge in You before the sons of men (Psalm 31:19). O God, we have heard with our ears our fathers have told us, the work that You did in their days, in the days of old. You with Your own hand drove out the nations and then You planted them; You afflicted the peoples and then You spread them abroad (Psalm 44:1–2).**

Now we have an unfortunate verse break. A rhetorical question is asked, which Balaam will answer.

Observe, the people as a lioness arises, and as a lion, he lifts himself up. He does not lie down until he eats [his] prey and drinks the blood of those who have been fatally wounded [lit., the pierced ones]." [Numbers 23:24]

A lioness is sleeping off in the brush, unseen. However, once hunger awakens it, it will not go back and rest until it has eaten. Israel is that lion. Israel was brought out of Egypt, hungry for its land. It will not return to a resting position until it has taken the land which God has given it. Israel is about to launch a long and vigorous campaign to take the land given them by God. You just know that Balak is not going to like this.

King David will be from the tribe of Judah and much of the conquering of the land will be under David's hand. Jacob had prophesied many centuries previous: "Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you. Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you will have gone up. He crouches—he lies down as a lion. And, as a lion, who dares to rouse him up?" (Genesis 49:8–9).

¹⁵⁴ NIV Study Bible, p. 222.

As before, we will look at a looser translation of this portion of God's Word taken as a whole:

And he took up his memorable discourse and said,
 "Arise, Balak, and hear: give ear to me, son of Zippor!
 God [is] not a man that he should lie.
 And [He is not] a son of man and changes His mind.
 [What] has He said? Will He not do it? And [what has He] spoken? And will He not confirm it?
 Listen, to bless Israel, I have been commissioned.
 In fact, He blesses and I [can] not reverse it.
 He has not found iniquity in Jacob, nor has He seen a labor in Israel.
 Y^ehowah his God [is] with him and a battle-cry [or, the sound of warring trumpets] of a king [is] in him. God
 is bringing them out from Egypt as the swiftness of a water buffalo is to him;
 For no enchantment [is] against Jacob, nor is there a divination against Israel.
 At the time it is said of Jacob and Israel: what has God brought into existence?
 Observe, the people as a lioness arises, and as a lion, he lifts himself up.
 He does not lie down until he eats [his] prey and drinks the blood of those who have been fatally wounded."

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Balak and Balaam Discuss and Then Prepare for the Third Prophecy on Mount Peor

And Balak said to Balaam, "Neither curse it at all nor bless it at all." And Balaam answered and said to Balak, "Have I not spoken to you saying, 'All that Y^ehowah says—that I will do?'" [Numbers 23:25]

Balak has given up here. It would be better not to hear anything at all as opposed to hearing Balaam bless Israel. He is in worse shape now than when he sent for Balaam. Balaam notes that "I told you so," as Balaam did tell Balak's ambassadors, "Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not do anything, either small or great, contrary to the mouth of Y^ehowah my God." (Numbers 22:18b).

And Balak said to Balaam, "Come, I respectfully ask you, I will take you to another place. It may be right in the eyes of God to curse them for me from there." [Numbers 23:27]

This is an act of desperation on Balak's part. He has sent all the way to the Euphrates River to get these Jews cursed. My guess is that Balak has determined maybe a different and more local god would have some bearing upon the words of Balaam. However, this is a guess on my part as to his motivation.

And Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, which is looking on the front of Jeshimon [or, possibly, the desert] [Numbers 23:28]

Translators are uncertain about the last word of this verse, whether it is a reference to the vast, almost unlivable desert (Isaiah 45:19–20) or to the name of a particular area, perhaps named *desert* (Numbers 21:20–23:28 1Samuel 23:19, 24). ZPEB's rule of thumb: when it is preceded by a definite article, it is a particular area (and two different areas with this name are mentioned in Scripture); and, without the definite article, it is the simple noun *desert*. Peor was an unknown mountain area of ancient Moab and Peor was the name of a deity of Moab—short for Baal-Peor. Peor was a deity of Moab, perhaps one of the most renowned. Balak's thinking here was to allow for the influence of the national god of Peor to influence Balak. After all, if anyone is going to be slanted toward Moab, it would be this deity.

And Balaam said to Balak, "Build for me in this [place] seven altars and make ready for me in this [place] seven bulls and seven rams." [Numbers 23:29]

So we repeat the pattern of Numbers 23:1 and 14 and sacrifices are offered to Y^ehowah. Apart from the rest of the Bible, what Balaam is doing seems to be okay. Balak wants him to curse the Jews so Balaam builds the altars, sacrifices to Y^ehowah and then relates the words of God to Balak. On the surface, this should seem reasonable to you. However, the key is motivation. Balaam was told not to go with Balak; he did. Now he is mixing with the gods of Moab, offering sacrifices right along side of where those sacrifices are offered to demons. Balaam was originally motivated by money. He acted as though he was not; but you have to read past the surface statements which he made (and allow the other writers of Scripture to interpret for us).

And Balak did as Balaam had said and he offered a bull and a ram on an altar. [Numbers 23:30]

Balak, of course, does not personally build these altars. The priests of Baal-Peor or their underlings are ordered by Balak to build these altars. There is just a bit too much intermixing here between the Pure and the impure; between the Clean and the unclean.

This is continued in the next chapter.

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Numbers 24

Numbers 24:1–25

Outline of Chapter 24:

- vv. 1–9 **Balaam's third message**
- vv. 10–14 **Balak's incensed reaction**
- vv. 15–19 **Balaam's fourth message**
- vv. 20–25 **Balaam's final messages concerning the Gentile kingdoms**

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

- v. 2 **The Holy Spirit Functions in the Old Testament**
- v. 20 **Summary of the Doctrine of the Amalekites**

Introduction: Numbers 24 is an incredible chapter of the Bible. Balaam, through God the Holy Spirit, peeks down the corridors of time and gives us an outline of history to come, much to the chagrin of Balak.

Balaam's Third Message

And Balaam saw that [it was] good in the eyes of Y^ehowah to bless Israel, and he did not go as at other times [lit., as time by time] to encounter enchantments [from God]. And so he set his face towards the desert; [Numbers 24:1]

It certainly seems obvious to us, partially because of our own historical perspective, to understand that God was going to bless Israel tremendously. However, this was not obvious to Balaam. At least at the beginning, he chose not to believe God. This indicates some of his motivation. He kept going back to God, not as Abraham or Moses did, but in order to achieve financial gain for himself. Abraham interceded on behalf of the region of Sodom and reasoned with God to spare the land on behalf of the believers residing in Sodom. His motivation was to spare the family of Lot because Lot was a believer and Abraham assumed that his entire family was made up of believers. There was no personal gain in the back of Abraham's mind when he pursued his line of questioning as to the number of believers would be required in order to preserve Sodom (we studied all of this at the end of Genesis 18). His only desire was for the preservation of Lot and his family. Furthermore, this was after he and Lot had a serious falling out in Genesis 13. This is intercessory prayer—Abraham was praying for the preservation of Sodom in order to preserve his nephew Lot. Similarly, Moses prayed on a number of occasions for the preservation of the degenerate Israel, even though God would have made him the father of the new nation Israel. Moses chose to put up with forty years of moaning, bitching and complaining, as well as with revolts and uprisings, in order to preserve the nation of the Jews. And much of his reasoning was based upon what kind of a witness this would be to the people of land who knew about the Jews. He thought that it would not seem wise for God to bring the Jews out of Egypt with such a flourish and then destroy them in the desert (see Numbers 14:11–24). Notice the complete difference of prayer and the motivation. It is acceptable to pray an imprecatory prayer (as David prayer against his enemies). However, Balaam, when he went back to God before, was not asking For God to curse the Jews, it was not based upon their conduct or their lack of spiritual growth. It was based entirely upon the fact that he wanted the money that he would receive when he gave such a cursing.

Our application: there are a few times—but very few—where we may go to God in prayer concerning what appears to be His will. If we approach God with the proper motivation and with His Word, our prayers can actually deliver a nation or destroy a people! But the key is motivation and doctrine. Paul prayed three times to have a physical ailment removed, but God's answer was *no*. It is not that you cannot pray on behalf of yourself. This is certainly allowed and encouraged in God's Word. However, the key to prayer is motivation and doctrine. If your motivation is pure and what you desire lines up with God's Word, you will be amazed at the results of your own prayers. When we go to God in prayer before all the angels, we glorify Him. He vindicates His Word which is in our souls. When we require God, in prayer, to act within his essence, He is glorified.

Qârâ' (קָרָא) [pronounced *kaw-RAW*] which simply means *call, proclaim, read*. However, there is a second meaning of this word: it means *to assemble for the purpose of encountering God for the purpose of exegeting His Word, or learning His will*. Strong's #7122 & 7125 BDB #896 It is this last sense in which it is used in this verse. However, here, what Balaam was looking for was a way to circumvent God's will and get the money promised him by Balak. However, by this point in time he realizes that is fruitless. God is going to bless Israel and there are no two ways about it. So he no longer looks to God for perhaps a change of venue. The word *enchantments* if found only here and in Numbers 23:23, but it is the noun cognate of a verb found all the way from Genesis 30:27 to 2Chronicles 33:6.

And then Balaam lifted up his eyes and saw Israel camping by its tribes and the Spirit of God was upon him; [Numbers 24:2]

As was mentioned at the end of Numbers 22, most theologians classify Balaam as an unbeliever as Scripture speaks so harshly of him. He makes several mistakes and prophecies for money. However, it is quite unusual for the Holy Spirit to light upon any unbeliever, as we see here. At this time, I cannot think of a single instance of the Holy Spirit filling or guiding anyone except for believers. Previous to this time, there have only been a very few instances of the filling, or enduement of the Holy Spirit on anyone. In fact, there are so few recorded instances of the Holy Spirit guiding or moving on anyone that we can easily list them all below:

The Holy Spirit Functions in the Old Testament

1. The Spirit of God melted the ice pack which enclosed planet earth at its restoration (Genesis 1:2).
2. The Holy Spirit in the antediluvian era actively influenced the inhabitants of the earth, attempting to woo them to the gospel (Genesis 6:3).
3. The Pharaoh of Egypt recognized that Joseph was a man within whom dwelt the Spirit of God (Genesis 41:38–39).
4. God gave to those in charge of constructing the tabernacle and its furnishings, along with the priestly garments, His Spirit of Wisdom (Exodus 28:3 31:3 35:30–33).
5. The Holy Spirit is said to be upon Moses and upon the seventy men who served under him (Numbers 11:16–17, 24–25).
6. Caleb was likely filled with the Holy Spirit, as the spirit within him was different than that of the spies who were afraid to enter into the land (Numbers 14:24).
7. These are the only six instances of the involvement of the Holy Spirit with man. This does not mean that there was no other contact between regenerate man and the Spirit of God prior to Numbers 24—these are the only recorded instances. Notice in every case that we are dealing with believers. There is no reason to think that the control by the Holy Spirit of Balaam is any different (Numbers 24:2).
8. Finally, God the Holy Spirit comes upon believers in Scripture (1Samuel 10:10 19:20, 23 2Chronicles 15:1). It may be important to note that in 1Samuel 28, when King Saul inquired of the witch of En-dor, she did not give any sort of prophecy, but Samuel was brought back by God and Samuel—not the woman—spoke divine viewpoint to Saul

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For what fellowship has light with darkness? He fully realizes that God is going to bless Israel—there are no two ways about that. Therefore, he does not need to go to God to see about maybe cursing Israel this time around. And, God comes to him and places a word in his mouth.

And so he took up his memorable recitation and said, "A declaration of Balaam ben Beor: and a declaration of the man whose eye [was shut but now] [is] open: [Numbers 24:3]

What Balaam is about to speak is the word *nâ'am* (נָאָם) [pronounced *naw-AHM*] which is the word for *saying* actually not used too often until now (previously found only in Genesis 22:16 and Numbers 14:28). This word is found almost exclusively in the Qal participle. It means *saying, declaration, revelation*. Strong's #5001 & 5002

BDB #610. Then we have a difference of opinion where Young's Translation says we have *eyes which are shut* and NASB, *The Emphasized Bible* and Owen's mentions the *eye is open*. The word is found only here and in v. 15 and it has no related cognates.¹⁵⁵ The targum of Onkelos renders this as *the man who saw clearly*. BDB says the meaning is dubious, so we will go with the translation above, keeping those facts in mind. However, such a use of the language makes sense. Balaam before figured he could go back to God and eventually get a different answer and then he would be able to collect the cash. However, by this time out, he recognizes—his eye has been opened—that God is immutable and that Israel is destined to be blessed.

"A declaration of him who is hearing [the] sayings [or, words, utterances] of God, who sees a vision of the Almighty—falling [down], yet [lit., and] eyes uncovered. [Numbers 24:4]

It is this verse which gives us an idea as to the meaning of the second to the last word in the previous verse. This verse gives us a clear understanding of Balaam. He has heard the word of God; he has seen a vision of the Almighty God. Because of his motivation, the key to Balaam's degeneracy in this context, his eyes have still been uncovered and he was allowed to see truth. Now ask yourself, even though it is possible that God could work through an unbeliever, why would He? Certainly God could deliver His Word through any unbeliever, however, that does not seem to be His method. It is Balaam himself who has fallen down, going to God to try to receive monetary gain by the use of his spiritual gift. God still allows him to see the vision and receive His Word concerning Israel and the future—God still allows for Balaam's eyes to be uncovered, to reveal to him His Word. There is another sense in which Balaam is fallen—he is in possibly a trance-like state, guided by the Holy Spirit, his eyes uncovered to the truth. We have a similar state entered into by King Saul in 1Samuel 19:23–24. Other prophets prostrate themselves or fall into a similar state when in contact with God's Word (Ezekiel 1:28 Dan. 8:18 10:15 2Corinthians 12:2–4).

"How good have your tents been, O Jacob; and¹⁵⁶ your temporary dwellings [or, tabernacles], O Israel; [Numbers 24:5]

Since we have both words here, we ought to deal with them. The first word is 'ohel (אֹהֶל) [pronounced *Ō-heh*] is translated *tent, tabernacle, house*; and it refers to the temporary dwelling of Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 18), the temporary dwellings of Jacob and his wives when on the road (Genesis 31), to the Tent or Tabernacle of God (Exodus 33). Strong's #168 BDB #13 The second word is *mīsh^hkān* (מִשְׁכָּן) [pronounced *mish^h-KAWN*] is the word used more often for the *tabernacle* of God, as well as for *temporary dwelling place* (2Chronicles 29:6 Job 18:21 Jeremiah 9:19), as found in Exodus 26, 36, 40 Numbers 1, 3, 9 (yet, interestingly enough, rarely in Leviticus). the two words occur together in Exodus 40:2 Numbers 3:25. The latter word seems to be more of a permanent structure, yet still based on the concept of a tent. It is less than a house, but more than a tent. *Semi-permanent structure, semi-permanent tent, temporary dwelling place* all give a sense as to the meaning of *mīsh^hkān*. It is a tent, nonetheless and can be taken up and pitched again (Numbers 1:51). Strong's #4908 BDB #1015.

God finds a beauty in the tents of Jacob and in the temporary dwelling place of Israel. This is not a literal reference to Jacob, but to his progeny, of course. The vision of Israel dwelling temporarily on this earth is not unlike our life on this earth, a temporary place in which we are to dwell, as God prepares that which is permanent for us.

"As valleys,¹⁵⁷ they have been stretched out, as gardens by a river; as aloes Y^ehowah has planted,¹⁵⁸ as cedars by waters; [Numbers 24:6]

¹⁵⁵ The closest word by consonants means *to piss*.

¹⁵⁶ Although not in the Massoretic text, *and* is found in the western Samaritan, the Targums of Jonathan, the Syriac and the Vulgate.

¹⁵⁷ The NASB and *The Emphasized Bible* footnotes *valleys* as possibly meaning *palm-tree*. Although this would fit well with the context and, although BDB concurs that this could be the meaning, this same word is translated *valley* or *brook* everywhere else (this word occurs well over a hundred times in Scripture).

¹⁵⁸ *Like tents Y^ehowah has pitched* is found instead in the Targum of Jonathan, the Septuagint and the Syriac codices.

The Targum of Onkelos is especially poetic here: *As rivers flowing onward, as the watered garden by Euphrates—as aromatic shrubs planted by Y^ehowah; as cedars by the waters.* The beauty to God of seeing Israel's tents is given here. Balaam and Balak are standing on a high hill, unnoticed by the Israelites. Whereas the sight of all these peoples both frightens and revulses Balak, to God it is a vision of beauty, just as a river is made so much more beautiful when there is a garden planted along side it. I have seen the ocean where there is sand and a few rocks and it is so less aesthetically appealing than a portion of the ocean where there are trees, tide pools, and various flora scattered up and down the beach. This land has suddenly become something beautiful and magnificent with Israel dwelling in it. This is not because there is something intrinsically fantastic about the Jews—it is simply that God will broadcast His gospel to the world from Israel, and the world will be evangelized for many centuries because of Israel. We have a similar parallel verse in Psalm 1:3, which discusses the righteous man who meditates in the Law of Y^ehowah: *And he will be like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.*

"He makes water flow from his buckets and his seed [is] by many waters; and higher than Agag [is] his king, and exalted is his kingdom. [Numbers 24:7]

In this desert environment, water is a most precious commodity. The Los Angeles area was a desert which had been watered, which produced a tremendous population influx. Water flowing from the buckets of Israel has a two-fold meaning. On the one hand, this is simply water, absolutely necessary to Israel, and fulfilled in Deuteronomy 8:7: *"For Y^ehowah your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills."* This also means refreshment and sustenance for all the nations around her (Isaiah 2:2–3—to be quoted later). All the nations in Israel would be blessed. Residing by water is also a personal blessing given to Israel by God. A nation which resides where there is a great freshwater supply is greatly blessed by God. Those of the ancient world did not have the complex plumbing system which we enjoy. We don't have to reside near freshwater, as it is piped in from a myriad of sources. However, in the ancient world, this was crucial.

It has been postulated that *Agag* refers to the king in 1Samuel 15, which is ridiculous, as we are dealing with incidents several hundred years apart. It is more likely that *Agag* does not refer to a particular king but is a title of one who is, much like *pharaoh* is the title of the ruler of Egypt or *Cæsar* of Rome. We will hear of a different *Agag* when we reach 1Samuel 15.¹⁵⁹

The Amalekites, over which Agag ruled, were possibly the most powerful of the desert tribes. The second two stanzas have a dual meaning. It will come to pass that the king of Israel will be one of the most famous and renown kings in the history of the ancient world, King David; succeeded by the almost-as-famous King Solomon. *And David realized that Y^ehowah had established him as king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for the sake of His people Israel* (1Samuel 5:2). Secondly, the king of Israel, who is the Lord Jesus Christ, is higher than all kings. And His kingdom is the power and the glory forever.

Speaking of His kingdom, the psalmist writes: *They will speak of the glory of Your kingdom and talk of Your power; to make known to the sons of men Your mighty acts, and the glory of the majesty of Your kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and Your dominion [continues] throughout all generations* (Psalm 145:11–13). *Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and have hated wickedness; therefore, God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of joy above Your fellows* (Psalm 45:7).

"God is bringing him [possibly, them] out of Egypt; as the swiftness of a wild ox [lit., as *it were* the horns of a wild ox] in regards to him. He eats up nations—his adversaries; and their bones he breaks and his arrows—he will pierce through. [Numbers 24:8]

¹⁵⁹ If, however, this is a personal name, it is not unusual for two different rulers to have the same name. Teddy Roosevelt and Franklin Roosevelt; George Washington and George Bush as quickly cited cases in our own history.

When it comes to conquering the land, the only thing that will stand in the way of Israel is Israel herself. God will make it possible for them to conquer groups of people who are much larger than them and men with much greater backgrounds in the art of war. The overpowering by Israel of these peoples will become legendary. **You will break them with a rod of iron; you will shatter them like earthenware** (Psalm 2:9). **Your arrows are sharp; the peoples fall under You; [your arrows are] in the heart of the King's enemies** (Psalm 45:6).

"He has crouched down, he has laid down as a lion, and as a lioness; who will raise him up? He who is blessing you [is] blessed, and he who curses you [is] cursed." [Numbers 24:9]

For hundreds of years, Israel has been a lion, crouching, laying down—not a danger to anyone. This time period extended into forty years of desert wanderings as God wiped out much of Israel. At that time, there is a lull in the desert, just as when the lioness is laying down, there is a lull. However, God will raise Israel up to strike. This is the same symbolism that we saw in Numbers 23:24.

One of the reasons that we have been blessed as a nation is our relationship to the Jew. Although, as Thieme has pointed out many times, anti-Semitism has ruined the conservative movement, still we have not, as a nation, persecuted or discriminated against those of the Jewish race. God has, from early on, promised blessing the those who treated Israel fairly. Y^ehowah told Abraham: **"And I will bless those who bless you and the one who reviles you I will bind under a curse. And, in you, all the families of the earth will be blessed."** (Genesis 12:3). Isaac told Jacob, **"May people serve you, and nations bow down to you; be master of your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be those who curse you and blessed be those who bless you."** (Genesis 27:29). In fact, kind treatment of any believer or any Jew will result in at least earthly blessing, if not eternal blessing. **"Certainly, I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine,—the least [of them]—you did it to Me."** (Matthew 25:40b).

Finally, one of the most important verse for any world leader to examine. There are two things that you can follow throughout the modern history of man: the gospel of Jesus Christ (not to be confused with religion and particularly not to be confused with Catholicism) and the treatment of God's people the Jew. Whenever you see the gospel take root in a country and wherever you see the Jew treated fairly and respectfully by a country (for instance, 19th century England or 20th century United States), you see great prosperity and tremendous freedom along with wealth on a grand scale unlike that found anywhere else in the world. As any history student knows, prosperity and success seem to jump from one place to another on the globe, sometimes without any apparent reason. Africa is one of the wealthiest areas in the world in natural resources, yet one of the most backward regions of the world. The same could be said of South America. However, the gospel has not made great inroads in either region as of late. Similarly, the Middle East has been a hell-hole, with a great natural resource (oil), but continual bloodshed, as the nations there do not respect the Jew. Consequently, life for most in the mid East will remain bleak and dismal¹⁶⁰.

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Balak's Incense Reaction

And the anger of Balak burned against Balaam and he struck his hands [lit., palms]; and Balak said to Balaam, "To piece my enemies I summoned you, and, look, you have certainly blessed [them] these three times." [Numbers 24:10]

Balaam was lost in this prophecy and Balak was tired of listening to it. Balak gained back Balaam's attention by clapping his hands together. This certainly had a different connotation then than it does now. We clap our hands

¹⁶⁰ This is not to say that certain Arabic nations cannot point to specific incidents fomented by specific Jews which were unjust. Similarly, one can point to specific instances of various transgressions by specific Arabs against the Jews. This can be found in any area where there is racial or national strife. You cannot condemn an entire race of people on either side for the actions of a small minority. However, the resulting animosity felt by a large number of the people can be condemned and, as is stated in this context, cursed by God.

in a group to expressed approval, emotional stimulation or agreement. In the ancient world, when one clapped their palms, it was in disapproval, to redirect their attention and to quiet someone down. Balak is less than enthusiastic about what has happened. Israel is a thorn in his side, something which keeps him up at night. He assumed that if he hired this very successful prophet, that he could have Israel cursed. However, Balak did not really count upon God interfering with his plans. Balak is not only an unbeliever, but he likely does not believe in God at all, let alone the God of Israel. The idea that Balaam was anything other than strictly a prophet for hire never occurred to Balak.

"And now, flee for yourself to your place; I have said, I do greatly honor you and, look, Y^ehowah has kept you back from [that] honor." [Numbers 24:11]

This promise of honor was the proper way of saying the Balak had a whole lot of money to lay on Balaam. Balaam would be honored by being given great wealth by a king. However, Balak explains, Y^ehowah cheated you out of this honor. "You coulda and shoulda taken the cash." This is Balak trying to wield some influence here. As far as he is concerned, his good luck charm in Balaam is not panning out. So he explains to Balaam that if he is so intent on this Y^ehowah fellow, that it is Y^ehowah who has kept him from his great wealth.

And Balaam said to Balak, "Did I not also to your messengers whom you had sent to me, speak, saying; [Numbers 24:12]

Balaam doesn't like the idea of walking away without any money. This is less than a satisfactory ending for him. His reaction should have been, "That's fine; God sees to all of my needs. CU later, King B." However, Balaam wants that money. This is what motivated him in the first place. He is hoping that if he explains again that he told Balak's messengers up front that he could only present what information God brought to him, that he has not been guilty of misleading Balak (Numbers 22:18). The implication is, I came and did what I could within the constraints that I have outlined to you from the beginning. Now, give me some money.

" If Balak gives to me the fullness of his house of silver and gold, I am not able to pass over the mouth of Y^ehowah, to do good or evil of mine own heart. That which Y^ehowah speaks, that I must speak." [Numbers 24:13]

This sounds all very holy and reasonable, but Balaam went for the soul purpose of getting some bucks for his service. He had hoped that God would change His mind—but, in the event that didn't occur, that Balak would see that Balaam was doing is doggone best and should therefore get some cash for his trouble.

"And now, look, I am going to my people; come, I will advise you what this people will do to your people in the latter days." [Numbers 24:14]

Balaam's thinking here is that he is stuck with the prophecy which he gave to Balak, but maybe he could cash in by counseling or advising Balak about the Jews. That has to be worth something. This is not obvious in the passage at hand that that way Balaam's thinking—it is commentary inspired by God the Holy Spirit later which tells us that his motivation was not pure. We will later find out that Balaam did not return to his people soon enough and lost his life under attack by the Israelites (Numbers 31:8 Josh. 13:22). However, Balaam will launch into another set of prophecies.

The latter days can have several references. Sometimes, as here, it is a reference to the possible latter days of Moab—that is, the end times of Moab. However, the end times can also refer to the period of time at the end of the tribulation or the beginning of the millennium when: **The mountain of the house of Y^ehowah will be established as the chief of the mountains and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it. And many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of Y^ehowah to the house of the god of Jacob, that He may teach us concerning His ways and that we may walk in His paths."** For the Law will go forth from Zion and the Word of Y^ehowah from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2b–3).

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Balaam's Fourth Message

And he took up his memorable recitation and said, "An declaration of Balaam ben Beor and an affirmation of the man whose eyes [were shut but now] have been opened: [Numbers 24:15]

Note that we have a repeat of v. 3 and that Balaam doesn't go to conference with Y^ehowah as he knows that God is not going to change His mind. He simply speaks as he is led of the Spirit.

"A declaration of him who is hearing sayings [or, words, utterances] of God—and knowing the knowledge of the Most High—who sees a vision of the Almighty—falling [down], yet [lit., and] eyes uncovered. [Numbers 24:16]

V. 16 is a repetition of v. 4 except that we have the added phrase *knowing the knowledge of God*. This is a reference to Balaam. **For whom among men knows about a man except [through] the spirit of man, which is in him? Even so, about God no one knows except [through] the Spirit of God...a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he cannot understand them, because they are spritually discerned** (1Corinthians 2:11, 14). Again, this makes sense that Balaam is a believer. Very few unbelievers have been entrusted with any knowledge of God beyond the gospel—particularly knowledge received by special revelation or by talking when filled with the Spirit. This is not to say that God cannot do that, but this just adds another reason which confirms Balaam is a believer and not an unbeliever.

I see it, but not now; I behold it, but not near; a star has proceeded from Jacob and a sceptre has arisen from Israel, [Numbers 24:17a]

We are going to break down this verse into two parts. The first part of the verse is extremely important and we do not want it to get lost in the examination of the second portion. This is our near and far prophecy. The near prophecy applies to David, who is a type of Jesus Christ, rising out of the tribe of Judah, who grew up before God like a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground; he had no beauty or majesty that we should look to him or appearance that we should treasure him.¹⁶¹ David was the last of the prophet Samuel's pick of Jesse's litter (actually, it was Jesse, David's father, and Samuel both who did the picking). Everyone of his brothers appeared more majestic, impressive than David. However, it was David who was chosen by God. He consolidated the power of Israel and acquired a great deal of real estate on behalf of Israel.

However, it would be Jesus Christ who would be the ultimate fulfillment of this verse. The Jews universally associated the *star* with Messiah. Both the targum of Onkelos and the targum of Jonathan see it that way. And, at His incarnation, our Lord was identified with a star. **"Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east, and have come to worship Him."** (Matthew 2:2). At Armageddon, there will be world domination by the power of Jesus Christ. **And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magdon. And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies, assembled to make war against Him who sat upon the horse, and against His army. And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat upon the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh** (Revelation 16:16 19:19–21).

We have a similar prophecy back in Genesis 49:10: **"The scepter will not depart from Judah nor the ruler's staff from between his feet until Shiloh comes [or, until He comes to Shiloh]."** This refers to the rulership and dominance of the tribe of Judah, which will continue until the time of our Lord.

¹⁶¹ This was taken from Isaiah 53:2, altered somewhat, written after the time of King David and before the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Isaiah is not speaking about King David, this just made an apt analogy.

In the next half of this verse, we apparently have a serious problem with the original text, the Massoretic text not agreeing with the various codices. Let me give you some of the other translations as well as their alternate readings:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	...and shall crush all the corners of Moab, and break down all the sons of Sheth [Moab's sons of tumult].
Edersheim's Version: <i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	And dasheth the two sides of Moab, and overthroweth the sons of tumult. ...That hath dishonoured the beard of Moab, Yea the crown of the head of all the tumultuous;
<i>Alt. Emphasized Bible</i>	...That hath dishonoured the beard of Moab, Yea and hath undermined the sons of tumult.
NASB	...And shall crush through the forehead of Moab, and tear down all the sons of Sheth.
Alternate NASB	...And shall crush through the corners of Moab, And the crown of the head of Tumult.
The New English Bible	...He shall smite the squadrons [or, heads] of Moab, and beat down all the sons of strife.
NIV	He will crush the foreheads of Moab, the skulls of all the sons of Sheth.
Alternate NIV	He will crush the foreheads of Moab, the [uncertain] of Moab [or, all the noisy boasters].
NRSV	...it shall crush the borderlands [or, forehead] of Moab, and the territory [some Mss. read skull] of all the Shethites.
Owen's Translation	...it shall crush the forehead (corners) of Moab and a head of all the sons of Sheth.
The Septuagint	...and shall crush the princes of Moab, and shall spoil all the sons of Seth.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	And hath smitten corners of Moab, and hath destroyed all sons of Sheth.

We have two sets of problems here: the actual original text and the translation of the original text. There are many things which could have happened. A slip of the pen can change a word or two. A slip of the pen can render a word indiscernible, so a transcriber or a translator may make a change, attempting to write what he believed to be true and correct originally.

We have seen the word *smite* or *strike down* before. The first word in question is pē'âh (נפ) [pronounced *pay-AWH*] and it means *corners, sides*; and specifically is related to the boundaries of a something (Exodus 26:18, 20 38:9 Leviticus 19:9); it can also refer to the corners of a non-geographical object (Exodus 25:26 37:13); and even to a portion of one's face (Leviticus 13:41 19:27). *Extremity* might be a good all-purpose word which could fulfill these various contexts. Strong's #6285 & 6311 BDB #802 My educated guess, at this point, is that, because of the occurrence of the word *skull* in some of the codices, this particular word was related to one's face or beard or forehead as the extremity thereof (perhaps to fulfill a sort of poetic parallelism, which is common in Hebrew or any eastern poetry). However, to the best of my knowledge, there is no support for the addition of these words to this verse. We are simply looking at from one side of Moab to the other here.

The meaning of this portion of this verse has immediate repercussions for Balak—now he hears that his country is in danger—his country is threatened. He is probably wetting his pants now because his plan has totally backfired. He does not realize that these things will take place quite a bit in the future; he just hears that his country will be crushed and struck down.

It is our final word which is interesting. Shêth (שׁת) [pronounced *Shayth*] is the son of Adam through whom came Jesus Christ. Had the name of *Cain* been used in this context, we could have taken it metaphorically as the destruction of all unbelievers. However, the only logical metaphorical use of the word Shêth would be for the believer, as through him came Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, King David, Jeremiah and Jesus Christ. Strong's #8351 (& #7582?) BDB #1011 Therefore, context would dictate that we either have a misprinting or another meaning. In the Chaldean, this means *six*; however, we are too early to be using the Chaldean language. Furthermore, that would make little or no sense. I have explored a couple of possibilities; the misplacement of the dot over the shîyn (making it sîyn), and the mistaken replacement of the last letter, thâv, by similarly formed letters hê or chêyth (or a combination of those) as well as examine the possibility of other vowel points. This led me

nowhere. I do not know where the translation *tumult* came from. It is quoted, as you have seen, from several different sources.

I do have a possible solution, however—a solution that you will understand why it had never been posed in the typical Bible translation. *Shêth* also means *buttocks* or *butts* (it is in the singular, although we find it used in the plural in the English). This gives a reasonably graphic description of the unbeliever and the degenerate believer. Strong's #8357 (and 7896?) BDB #1059 The other solution is that this is a form of the verb *shâ'âh* (שָׂאָה) [pronounced *shaw-AWH*] and it means *to waste, to be in ruins, to be desolate*. However, its uses are so varied, that it is hard to pin it down to a particular meaning. Strong's #7582–7583 BDB #980

"And he has struck down the corners [or, the extremities] of Moab and has destroyed all sons of desolation [or, butt; or, Shêth]. [Numbers 24:17b]

Now this is becoming quite personal for Balak and somewhat alarming. Although it would not happen right then and there, Israel, guided by a ruler, would remove the boundaries of Moab. Again, this is prophetic for near (relatively speaking) and far future. We have other prophecies concerning Moab in Isaiah 15 16 Jeremiah 48. However, Moab's future will not always be bleak. Jeremiah wrote: **"Yet, I will restore the fortunes of Moab in the latter days,"** declares Y^ehowah (Jeremiah 48:47a).

"And Edom will be a possession and Seir will be a possession—his enemies. Yet [lit., and] Israel is doing valiantly [or, performing efficiently]; [Numbers 24:18]

Seir refers to a mountain range in Edom and became synonymous with the country of Edom. Here, Edom, for all the plotting and bribery of Balak, will become mere possessions, no longer a sovereign state, but they will belong in pieces to their enemies (mostly Israel). Most translations insert a preposition between *possession* and *his enemies*. However, there is none. *His enemies* means Messiah's enemies in this context (note that v. 17 and v. 18 should be placed together). Meanwhile, Israel will be doing fine. It all goes back to the somewhat inadvertent blessing given by Isaac to Jacob: **"May peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you; be master of your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you."** (Genesis 27:29a). His brother was Esau, the father of the peoples of Edom, as this is where Esau settled (Genesis 32:3). This prophecy goes down to the end of time. **"In that day I will raise up the fallen shelter of David and wall up its breaches. I will also raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old, that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by My name."** declares Y^ehowah who does this (Amos 9:11–12).

"He will rule [the one coming] out of Jacob and he will destroy a remnant from Ar." [Numbers 24:19]

This is an elliptical sentence. In this case, the participle is missing. The KJV provides it in its translation: Out of Jacob *shall come* he that shall have dominion. Again, the near fulfillment of this verse is King David and King Solomon and the far fulfillment is by our Lord Jesus Christ. Ar, being an important city of Moab, also stands as synonymous for Moab.

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Balaam's Final Messages Concerning the Gentile Kingdoms

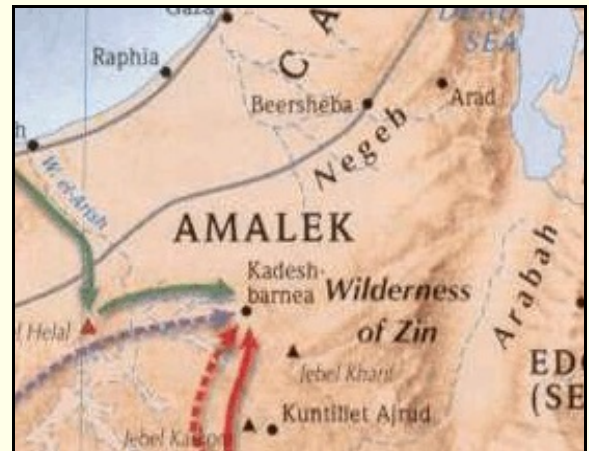
And he saw Amalek and he took up his memorable declaration: "A first of nations [or, a beginning of the Goim] [is] Amalek; and his latter end—he will perish forever!" [Numbers 24:20]

Fausset's Translation of v. 20b: **"Beginning of the pagan (was) Amalek, and its end (shall be) destruction"** Although I cannot find any translation which agree with him, this literally should read: **"Beginning of the Goim (was) Amalek, and its end (shall be) destruction."**

With this verse, we begin the several very short prophecies, possibly not recorded in full. At this point, we should examine the **Doctrine of the Amalekites**. Amalek was the first nation which Israel fought upon leaving Egypt (Exodus 14:8–13). They occupied portions of the land between Egypt and Israel, a nomadic group of desert people. Israel was to spend the next forty years in the desert following their exodus from Egypt that they had to soundly defeat them right at the beginning in order to maintain their own safety during their tenure in the desert. However, another band of Amalekites, upon entering the land, soundly defeated Israel, with the aide of some Canaanites (Numbers 14:45). When the Amalekites are called the *first* of nations, this does not mean that they were pre-eminent of all the nations in that area. They were just the first nation to oppose Israel in battle following the Egyptians. Their history goes back as far as Genesis 36, having a beginning which roughly paralleled that of the Jews. They were well known throughout the ancient world, yet Balaam prophesies here that they will fade out of history forever. David would deal the death blow to the Amalekites in 2Samuel 8:12 and 1Chronicles 18:11. We will never hear from them again, except as a few which remained as a scattered remnant during the time of Hezekiah. That is their last reference until they disappeared forever from the pages of history.

Summary of the Doctrine of the Amalekites

1. The origins of the Amalekites are unknown. They seem to appear suddenly in Genesis 14:7, although there is also a mention of an Amalek being born to the family of Esau (Genesis 36:12, 16). As a result, there are several theories concerning the origins of the Amalekites, none of which can be seen as definitive.
2. They primarily occupied the area south of Judah, although they also made inroads to Ephraim. Genesis 14:7 Exodus 17:8 Judges 12:15 1Samuel 30:1–3
3. The Amalekites were the first nation to attack Israel when they came out of Egypt. They attacked Israel from the rear, where there were the tired, weak and sickly Israelites. It is possible that this attack was based on water rights, even though the water provided for the Israelites was from God. Exodus 17:8–16 Deuteronomy 25:17–18
4. Because of this merciless and vicious attack, and because of the negative volition and anti-Semitism which this people exhibited over the years, God ordered their complete and total destruction. Deuteronomy 25:19 1Samuel 15:2–3
5. Saul disobeyed God about completely destroying the Amalekites, which was the act of disobedience which marked the end of his dynasty. 1Samuel 15
6. David was troubled by the Amalekites when he was an expat in the territory of the Philistines. They raided his camp when he was gone and took his women and the things which he had accumulated over the past year or so. 1Samuel 30
7. An Amalekite falsely claimed responsibility for killing Saul and was executed by David for this transgression. 2Samuel 1:1–16
8. The Amalekites were among the people which David struck down. 2Samuel 8:11–14 1Chronicles 18:11
9. The Amalekites are not mentioned again until the time of Hezekiah (circa 700 A.D.), when the tribe of Simeon defeats them. 1Chronicles 4:24
10. The last Amalekite that we here about is Haman, who is said to be descended from Agag (an unspecified Amalekite king). Haman, in the book of Esther, launches a plan to destroy all the Jews in Persia (a scheme thwarted by Esther and her uncle, Mordecai). Esther 3:1, 10 8:3, 5 9:24.



From <http://www.anova.org/sev/atlas/htm/029.htm>

Notice the near eastern parallelism that we see here. Amalek is named the *first* of nations, and then Balaam gives the epithet of Amalek—he will perish forever. All the history of Amalek is bookended by these two phrases.

Here is one of the most amazing things about the Bible. What if someone looked toward Scotland and said they would perish forever from the earth and looked toward Ireland and said that they would continue forever as a nation and be scattered throughout the world, yet still retain their national identity? It would be impressive if this came true. However, in the Bible, we will see prophecy after prophecy concerning the Jews and the various Gentile nations and they will all come true—100% fulfillment. At this point in time, there is no reason to favor the Jews over the Amalekites or vice versa and there is no reason to think one group would perish from the earth and that the other would continue as an identifiable entity forever. However, that is exactly what Balaam has done here—he has taken an important, fierce national entity and predicted its removal from planet earth forever. Do you know any Amalekites? No. Do you know any Jews? Certainly. The Scripture cannot be broken.

And he saw the Kenite and he took up his memorable declaration and said, "Enduring [is] your dwelling, a your nest is sitting in a rock." [Numbers 24:21]

In the English, we totally miss out on the paronomasia found here. Kenite is actually pronounced *chah-kee-NEE* and nest is pronounced *keen-neh-KAW* (we are not looking at the vocabulary form but the words as they are found here). A paronomasia draws attention to the two words, which are often similar in meaning, or tied closely together, or in apposition to one another. Here the Kenites are closely tied to the word for *nest*. What I would have expected to see here is (as well as in the previous verse) is that Balaam would *look toward* these various national entities and make his predictions. However, this is not the case here. Balaam sees Amalekite and he sees the Kenite, indicating that we are dealing, in part, with a visual prophecy on the part of Balaam. In his mind, almost as clear as seeing it in real life, he looks and sees the Kenite. The Kenites were also a rather loose band of men rather than a national entity, occupying the territory around Sinai and southern Palestine. When a bird places her nest in a rock, it is quite secure. The Kenites had a good relationship with Israel during Israel's sojourning in the desert (1Samuel 15:6). The Kenites would ally themselves with Israel during the period of the Judges (Judges 1:16). This will give them divine security as long as this alliance remains. Moses' father-in-law was a Kenite who lived in the area of the Midianites and this may have had some bearing upon the early alliance between Israel and the Kenites.

"But the Kenite will be consumed [or, is for a burning]; till when does Asshur keep you captive?" [Numbers 24:22]

However, the Kenites would not maintain this alliance with Israel, and—for that reason—also be destroyed and/or assimilated into the various other nations. God first promised Abraham that he would possess the land of the Kenites in Genesis 15:19. The Kenites are mentioned occasionally throughout Scripture, and disappear forever sometime after the time of David in 1Chronicles 2:55. The Assyrian captivity is apparently what removed them from history as a recognizable entity. We will examine the **Doctrine of the Kenites** when we get to Judges 1:16.

Let's see a few of the translations given for v. 23:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	"Who shall live when God does this <i>and</i> establishes [Assyria]?"
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	"who shall survive its fulfilment by God;"
KJV	"...who shall live when God doeth this!"
NASB	"...who can live except God has ordained it?"
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	"...who doth live when God doth this?"

This verse is a bit difficult to put together. Its meaning is clear. Balaam has just prophesied the end of two very prominent peoples (I hesitate to call them nations as they are a rather loose band of men) and he cries out, "Who can survive apart from God—His placement?" The interrogative *who* is found along with the verb *châyâh* (חיה) [pronounced *khaw-YAW*], which we have seen many times. Notice how close it is to the verb *hâyâh* (היה) [pronounced *haw-YAW*]? It means *to live, to have life*; in context, it means *to remain, to survive, to exist*. Strong's #2421 & 2425 BDB #310

This is followed by the *mîn* preposition, which denotes separation, and is translated correctly here as *apart from*. Then we have the Qal infinitive construct of *sîym* (סים) [pronounced *seem*] which means *to put, to place,*

to set. Strong's #7760 BDB #962. In the infinitive, this can act like a noun and therefore mean *placement, setting* or even *ordaining*. It should not necessarily be translated as a verb here. It has a 3rd person masculine singular suffix, which could be translated *his* or it can act as the object of the verb. The construct, followed by *God* means this was done *of God*.

And he took up his memorable declaration, and said, "Alas! Who can survive [or, live] apart from its placement of God [or, possibly, the setting (or, ordaining) of it by God]?" [Numbers 24:23]

Notice how Balaam began his previous two short messages: he saw Amalek, he saw the Kenites. However, here he just launches into this prophecy—Assyria, as a people and a world power, were in the far future, so Balaam does not see Assyria in the same way.

God chooses or ordains where all nations belong and allows their expansion, their destruction, their existence—Jesus Christ controls history. No nation has its existence apart from God's ordination. **From these coastlands of the nations were separated into their lands, every one according to its languages, according to their families, into their nations** (Genesis 10:5). **"And He made from one every nation of man to live on all the face of the earth, giving determined appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His offspring.'"** (Acts 17:26–28).

We in the United States seem to have a lot of arrogance when it comes to our position in the world—as though we have somehow done something to earn our position of prominence. We are a nation that has been blessed greatly of God, but this is due to a large number of believers (a larger percentage relative to other countries) and a small pivot of mature believers. God honors the doctrine—His Word—found in the mature believers and we as a nation are blessed for that reason. It is not that we have a great military or a fantastic political system or anything else which is man made. Remove the mature believers from the United States and it would fall in an instant. God uphold us.

In the original text, there are no vowels and no spaces between the words. With a change of the word division, we come up with a verse which makes more sense in context:

And he took up his memorable declaration, and said, "A people will gather from the North. [Numbers 24:23 (alternate)]

The context will make more sense as we move into the next verse.

"And—the ships [are] from the side of Chittim, and they have humbled Asshur, and they have humbled Eber, and it also is forever perishing." [Numbers 24:24]

Although Chittim is identified primarily with the island of Cypress in the Mediterranean Sea, ships coming from the side of Chittim could possibly mean from that direction as opposed from that people. Daniel projects this fulfillment into the future during the time of the tribulation. **"For ships of Chittim will come against him; therefore, he will be disheartened and will return and become enraged at the holy covenant and take action; so he will come back and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant. And forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation."** (Dan. 11:30). We are most likely dealing with ships from the northwest rather than specifically from Cypress. Commentators extending as far back as the Septuagint saw these as ships emanating from Rome. Septuagint B and the Targum of Onkelos reads *Romans*, as does the Vulgate *Italia*. The near fulfillment of Dan. 11:30 was in 169 BC when Antiochus IV (Antiochus Epiphanes) of Egypt was thwarted by the Romans. The Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy ties this to the deposing of Antiochus XIII, the last Syrian monarch, which occurred in 63 BC, after the successful campaign of Pompey. The far fulfillment will be during the tribulation.

A similar stance is found in the Apocrypha and the Pseudopigrapha, where references to Kittim refer to the Greek empire. Alexander of Macedon is said to have come from the land of Chittim (I Maccabees 1:1) and Perseus of

Macedon is referred to as the *king of Chittim* in I Macc. 8:5).¹⁶² Now why would the Bible refer to the Greeks and the Romans by the more abstruse reference as Chittim? Because, during the time of Moses, there was no Greece or Rome; however, it was clearly understood at that time where Chittim was. Greece, as a country, did not actually begin until about 800 BC; and is therefore mentioned specifically by Daniel (Dan. 8:21 10:20 11:2) and even in Zech. 9:13. The time that the book of Numbers was written was perhaps 600 years earlier. Since there is no Rome or Greece as of yet, and the readers at that time were not aware of the peoples inhabiting those areas, *Chittim* was a good geographical hat rack, pointing in the general direction. Therefore, it would have made little sense to say these ships would come from *Greece*.

We first find Eber and Assur mentioned together back in Genesis 10:21–22. They are both descendants of Shem. Chittim, on the other hand, is descended from Japheth (Genesis 10:2–4).

It is interesting that Balaam would refer to the humbling of Asshur (Assyria) and Eber (the Jews) in the same breath by the ships of the north. Assyria conquered Israel in 722 or 721 BC and Jerusalem fell in 587 BC to the neo-Babylonian empire. In the fourth century BC, Greece asserted its control over Palestine. Ptolemy I, under Alexander the Great peacefully took Judah in 320 BC. By that time the Assyrian empire was a province of Persian Empire, having been previously divided up between the Medes and the Babylonians. Alexander the Great took his troops all the way into the Tigris Euphrates Valley and conquered this land, ruling over an area which was once was the great empire of Assyria. In a sentence, Balaam gives us the outline to future of Palestine, before they had even entered into the land to conquer it.

However, even the ships of Chittim would also come to their end. The Roman empire itself would crumble around 476 AD under the last of their emperors, Romulus Augustus the Little.

And Balaam arose and went, and so he returned toward his place, and Balak also had gone on his way. [Numbers 24:25]

It is a sad thing that Balaam, the last of the Gentile prophets in the Age of the Gentiles, could have been great. His prophecy under God was recorded and was verified by history—yet, because of his motivation, his name remains a pariah throughout history, as attested to by the Scriptures. Your motivation in life is the key to your character. Balaam was motivated by money, Balak by fear and a desire to retain his power and autonomy. Both of their names have been stained forever by their motivation. Now Balak is burning in torments and Balaam will someday be picking cotton on someone's plantation in heaven, in perfect happiness, however.

What we are not told here, but told later, is that, although this ended the prophecy of Balaam, it did not end his talking to Balak. Recall v. 14 where it sounded as though Balaam was going to counsel Balak, but then launched into another prophecy (actually, into three sets of prophecies). Balak continued to speak to Balak, but it was not recorded here—otherwise it would have detracted from the previous messages were from God. Balak, at some point in time, asks Balaam for advice, seeing as how he cannot expect Balaam to curse Israel. Balaam advises Balak to seduce Israel with the women of Moab and bring the sons of Israel into idolatry. You see, the story of Balaam does not end here and this evil advice is condemns Balaam forever. [See, these caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against Y^ehowah in the matter of Peor, so the plague was among the congregation of Y^ehowah](#) (Numbers 31:16). Even Revelation 2:14 recognizes that Balaam later gave evil advice to Balak, which seduced many of the Jews. The result of this advice with be the events which transpire in the next chapter of Numbers. 24,000 Jews will die because of the evil advice of Balaam.

Notice how this chapter ends. Balaam returns in the direction of his place, which is with the Midianites, who first suggested to Balak to hire Balaam. He will stay there for awhile, until Moses brings in his troops and kills him. This last verse and the series of events which led to the hiring of Balaam implies that Balaam was a Midianite who was traveling about, selling his gift of prophecy—an itinerant prophet. This is why the Midianites knew who he was. This is why, in v. 4, Balaam says that he will soon return to his people. This final verse says that Balaam

¹⁶² Much of this and the preceding paragraph came from ZPEB Vol. 3, p. 834.

is returning to his place. However, when we next find Balaam, he is with the Midianites. These things indicate that it is more likely that Balaam was a Midianite rather than Mesopotamia.

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Numbers 25

Numbers 25:1–18

Outline of Chapter 25:

- Vv. 1–6 The Israelites are seduced by the women of Midian
- Vv. 7–9 Phinehas ben Eleazar halts the discipline of God
- Vv. 10–18 The divine appraisal of the incident

Introduction: Numbers 25 will give us the insidiousness of Balaam. His name is not mentioned here, probably because the incident concerning Balaam was not known at this time (as I stated before, I believe the previous three chapters to be inserted). The Moabites were in a panic concerning all of the Israelites and Balak, their king could not get Balaam to curse them. Then Balak apparently tracks Balaam down with the Midianites and they put their heads together as to how to deal with Israel. Balaam suggests that they infiltrate Israel with their own god, as Y^ehowah was too powerful and strong and the Jewish association with Y^ehowah has kept them blessed. So daughters of Moab are instructed to seduce the Jewish men and, simultaneously, expose them to their gods. The Midianites also become involved with the Jews in the same way—all of them giving sexual favors, but expecting the Jewish males to be open-minded enough to attend their church as well (which is where much of the fornication occurred). This is possibly the springtime—in any case, these are the fertility rites of the Moabites and the Midianites. The Midianites are so steeped in demonic religion, that even the daughter of one of their leaders becomes a priestess/prostitute of their religion and infiltrates the camp of Israel. The fact that a daughter of a prominent men of Midian is so employed should give you an idea as to the extent of their degeneracy.

The Israelites Are Seduced by the Women of Midian

And so Israel dwelt temporarily in Shittim, and the people began to fornicate [and join themselves] to the daughters of Moab; [Numbers 25:1]

The Emphasized Bible reads: **And Israel remained among the acacias.** The word is *shittîym* (שִׁטִּיִּם) [pronounced *shit-TEEM*] and it is the plural of *acacia* (a particular kind of tree, only found in the plural in the Bible—Strong's #7848); and it is also used as a proper noun (Shittim—Strong's #7851) for a city near the recently established border of Moab following their loss the the Amorites. The rule of thumb followed by most translators is this is translated *acacia* when it is combined with the construct of the word for *wood* (Exodus 25–27 30 35–38 Deuteronomy 10:3 Isaiah 41:19) and as a proper noun when lacking that word (Numbers 33:49 Joshua 2:1 3:1 Joel 3:18 Micah 6:5). BDB #1008

I have added a portion of what is elliptical and therefore not in the original text. The problem is the preposition which I have correctly translated *to*. Without any additional words, this preposition must be drastically changed in meaning in order for the sentence to flow and to make sense. However, the key here is that there are portions of the verse which much be placed in under the principle of ellipsis¹⁶³.

Shittim is captured Ammorite area (quite recently belonging to Moab) across the Jordan River from Jericho. The Jews would encamp here for awhile prior to going into the land. This was their last stop, so to speak (Numbers 33:49 Joshua 2:1). Moses will give his last great messages here, Joshua will be appointed in his place and the last of the degenerate Israelites will be wiped out here. What has been done is not mentioned here, but later in Numbers 31:16: **"Look, these caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against Y^ehowah in the matter of Peor, so the plague was among the congregation of Y^ehowah."** Balaam's advice was that they could not defeat the Israelites militarily—however, these are simply men, who have the weakness of a male; and, the advantage of the Israelites is Y^ehowah. Remove Y^ehowah from them, and they loose their

¹⁶³ Bullinger's *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, p. 63.

advantage. We have far more than simple immorality here; the women of the Moab have made a part of their seduction of the men of Israel involve the worship of their gods.

We are about to witness a horrible mixture of immorality and religion. Where else in the Bible does such a mixture take place? In Corinth. Therefore, you would expect this incident to be mentioned in Paul's epistles to the Corinthians. **And do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink and stood up to play. Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day** (1Corinthians 10:7–8)¹⁶⁴.

And they called for the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed themselves to their gods. [Numbers 25:2]

The pronoun *their* in both cases is in the feminine. Even though Baal-Peor is the god of all the Moabites (and apparently of the Midianites as well), they are specifically tied to these women, who seduced a portion of Israel away from Y^ehowah with their feminine wiles. The application to today is quite simple: believers continually find their morality and beliefs compromised by the opposite sex that they become close to. It does not make any difference how handsome or attractive that person is, or how much they are in love with you, if they are not believers in Jesus Christ, you are playing with fire when you become intimately involved with them (I include in this falling in love—it goes without saying that you are making a mistake to become sexually involved with them as it is wrong to become sexually involved with anyone prior to marriage). In this case, God will inflict upon them the sin unto death. Often, today, in an analogous situation, we are allowed to live, which is sometimes the worse punishment. The world is filled with millions upon millions of unhappy unions because they engaged in sex first or a believer chose to become tied to an unbeliever. **A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord** (1Corinthians 7:39). **Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?** (2Corinthians 6:14).

In the ancient world, it was very common for a particular group or nation to call themselves *the people*. They did not necessarily call themselves by the name that they were known by to outside nations, but referred to themselves as *the people*. We find this similar usage in Egyptian literature, if memory serves.

Jesus Christ said to the church at Pergamum: **"But I have a few things against you, because you have some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit immorality."** (Revelation 2:14). This is a description of what is occurring at Shittim, not what occurred at Pergamum. The eating is more than just having dinner with the Moabite women and it is more than just eating meat which has been sacrificed to an idol—it is eating meat as a part of a worship ceremony celebrating some Moabite heathen god. As a part of this ceremony, they bowed themselves before these idols. God had told the Israelites: **"You will have no other gods before Me...you will nor worship them or serve them; for I, Y^ehowah your God, am a jealous God. You will not commit adultery."** (Exodus 20:4a, 5, 14). Immediately, the Jews were breaking the first commandment and the seventh (in case you did not realize it, when you have sex with someone who is not your right woman outside of marriage, you are committing adultery, whether this is before or during a marriage). Y^ehowah had already told the Jews: **"Watch yourself that you make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going, so that it does not become a snare in your midst. But you are to tear down their altars and smash their pillars and cut down their Asherim. For you will nor worship any other god, for Y^ehowah, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God—so that you do not make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they play the harlot with their gods and sacrifice to their gods and someone invite you to eat of his sacrifice; and [so that] you [don't] take some of his daughters for your sons and his daughters play the harlot with their gods, and cause your sons to play the harlot with their gods."** (Exodus 34:12–16). What we have here is that this second generation of Jews are being exposed to similar influences as were the exodus generation—immediately prior to going into the land. Some of the remnant of the exodus generation is also involved in this incident (in fact, the last of the exodus generation).

¹⁶⁴ Paul mentions both the golden calf incident of Exodus 32 and the worship of Baal-Peor in one breath. This is apropos, as capital punishment was prescribed by God in both instances (Exodus 32:27).

There is a whole other issue which could be raised here concerning the eating of food sacrificed to idols. Paul covers this at the end of 1Corinthians 10. This is obviously not a problem that we run into very often; however, there are multifarious applications to our lives today. What issues are raised by implication is what is lawful for us to do—that is, what God allows us to do—is not always what we should do. There are times when we should practice self restraint even when it comes to some innocuous activities. As an example from the secular realm, we may feel justified in disregarding a particular traffic law under certain circumstances—however, when traveling with an impressionable youngster who knows the law, such license is detrimental to them. Similarly, in the sight of some impressionable young Christians or unbelievers, there are some things which, although we are allowed to do, we do not do them, as they tend to cloud or confuse certain issues in their minds. However, we will examine that in much greater detail in I Corinthians.

Balaam, although he was unable to prophesy against the Jews, did know human nature well enough to suggest to Balak how to temporarily neutralize the Jews. These are men who complained bitterly for forty years, who would be unhappy with their children, their home lives, their environment and these Moabite women were a bright spot in their lives. It did not matter that God had led them out of Egypt and had preserved their lives with manna and quail, providing water from rocks—these were hot, Moabite babes, which caused them to forsake all that they had seen for forty years. Not too different from the men that you know today. A condition of relations or the hope of relations with a Moabite woman was the worship of their gods.

And Israel was joined to Baal-Peor, and the anger of Y^ehowah burned against Israel. [Numbers 25:3]

Baal-Peor means, simply, the god of Peor. This would be an ideal time to examine the **Doctrine of Baal-Peor—not finished yet!!** At the very least, an idol is completely man-made. At the worst, an idol is a front for a demon. In the ancient world, there were generally demons receiving the worship behind every idol (which accounts for the fornication and the child sacrifice).

And Y^ehowah said to Moses, "Take all of the heads of the people and [cause] them [to] hang [or, dislocated or removed] in regard to Y^ehowah—in broad daylight [lit., in the sight of the sun]; that [lit., and] the fierceness of the anger of Y^ehowah may turn away from Israel." [Numbers 25:4]

It is guessed that we are speaking of crucifixion here or, who knows, an actual hanging (?). The word is *yāqatū* [pronounced *yaw-QAH*] and it means to be *dislocated* or *removed from* as in Jacob's leg was dislocated when he wrestled Y^ehowah (Genesis 32:25; see also Jeremiah 6:8 Ezekiel 23:17–18). In the Hiphil, this refers to some sort of capital punishment—it is just not certain what (2Samuel 21:6, 9, 13 25:4). Rotherham footnotes this as *to fasten, to a stake, to impale, to nail to—i.e., to crucify*, as the Vul. rightly translates¹⁶⁵ and cites both Fuerst and Davies Hebrew lexicons. Considering that this does not seem to be the meaning as it is found elsewhere, I would hesitate to be that specific. Strong's 3363 BDB #429. In examining the words found in this context, there is a reasonable possibility that we are referring to a hanging as we visualize one or to even a beheading. The word translated *chiefs, leaders, elders* is really the word for *heads*. It is used for those who are in charge and those who have authority, but it is used literally for a person's *head*, as well (Genesis 3:15 40:13, 16–17, 19 Exodus 29:6, 7, 10). Since we already have an established verbiage for a beheading found in Genesis 40, and not found here, I would guess that we are referring to a good old fashioned western hanging. Furthermore, the masculine plural suffix affixed to the verb *dislocate* likely refers to *heads*, as it is the only masculine plural noun in context. Now, there is another Hebrew word which is used specifically for *hanging*. We will cover that in the future (Deuteronomy 21:22). However, I feel compelled to point out that in the context of Deuteronomy 21:22–23, a person was executed first and then hung up for all to see.

If the word *heads* is not to be taken literally, then the heads of the people are those who have allowed the people to become involved with this demon-worship and perhaps were involved themselves. Often, these will be the elders, the ones from the previous generation; however, even if this is of the generation which God will allow into

¹⁶⁵ *The Emphasized Bible*, p. 185.

the land, they are fully responsible as well. The Hebrew reads *all of the heads of the people*—in context, we are referring to all of those who have sinned against God.

For our application: a public execution is not a barbaric act. God, right here, requires one. Criminals and would-be criminals are influenced greatly when they see one of their own hanged, or stoned, or shot or electrocuted. Not only do we need more executions in the United States, but they should be broadcast on television, with a clear declaration of their crimes for which they are being executed. We should examine the **Doctrine of Capital Punishment—not finished yet!**

And Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Execute [or, slay] [each] man his men who are joined to Baal-Peor." [Numbers 25:5]

Hârag (הָרַג) [pronounced *haw-RAHG*] means *to kill, to slay*, and, occasionally, *to execute* (Exodus 32:27 Leviticus 20:15–16 Deuteronomy 13:10). This word can refer to killing as a result of ruthless violence (Genesis 4:8, 14–15 12:12 20:11) or in war (Numbers 31:7–8 Joshua 8:24), as a result of God killing an individual or a people (Genesis 20:4 Exodus 4:23). This word can be used for the killing of animals (Numbers 22:29 Job 20:16) and it can mean *to destroy, to ruin* (Job 5:2 Proverbs 7:26 Jeremiah 4:31). Strong's #2026 BDB #246 The judges takes part in the executions and it is this verse which helps to indicate that *yâqa'* in the previous verse means *to hang* or some similar form of execution. Death is prescribed for those in authority who allowed this to occur and to those who were involved. Having authority means great responsibility.

And, observe, a man of the sons of Israel came and unto his brothers approached with a [lit., the] Midianite [woman], before the eyes of Moses, and before the eyes of all the company of the sons of Israel, and they were weeping at the opening of the tent of meeting; [Numbers 25:6]

Here we are dealing with more than just a mixed relationship. This is not a scene out of "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner." I took great pains to see that this verse was literally rendered. Midianite is in the feminine singular and is preceded by the definite article—the word *woman* does not occur. There was a specific female Midianite brought in before the eyes of the entire congregation. The word translated *brought* in many translations is the word *qâra*^{bv} (קָרַב) [pronounced *kaw-RA^{bv}*] used for *approaching* God with an offering (too often mistranslated *sacrifice, offer*). What we have here is a priestess being brought right into the midst of the congregation of Israel by one of the Israelites to be sexually shared with his brothers. Prior to this, those guilty of Baal-Peor worship went to the outskirts of the encampment of the congregation and engaged in fornication outside the camp. This person brought a priestess right into the camp to his brothers. As God often did in the past, the Israelites were struck with a plague which began to decimate their numbers. The people were crying at the opening of the tent of the meeting because there had begun this plague which was killing many of their family members.

Phinehas Ben Eleazar Halts the Discipline of God

And Phinehas ben Eleazar ben Aaron, the priest, saw, and arose from the midst of the company, and took a javelin in his hand; [Numbers 25:7]

Phinehas, as indicated here, was Aaron's grandson, and therefore a priest. Phinehas was a man of action. He recognized the problem and God had given a clear order to execute those involved in Baal-Peor worship.

And he went in after the man of Israel to the [large, vaulted] tent and pierced them both, the man of Israel and the woman, into her belly; and the plague was restrained from the sons of Israel; [Numbers 25:8]

In the translation here I am going specifically by BDB. We have two words which are almost exactly the same found but once in the Bible—here. *Qubbâh* (קִּבְוָה) [pronounced *koob-BAWH*] is said to mean *a large vaulted tent* in BDB. The NASB and *The Amplified Bible* give the alternate rendering *inner rooms*. Strong's #6898 (6895) BDB #866 In the Septuagint, the Greek word is *furnace*. This would indicate that this was a part of a heathen

ritual. The word often translated *belly* or *stomach* is $q\ddot{o}^b\ddot{v}\ddot{a}h$ (קֶבֶט) [pronounced *koe^b-VAWH*]. Strong's #6897 (6895) BDB #867 (rendered by the Greek word for *womb* in the Septuagint). Whereas these words look somewhat different, in the original Hebrew, where there were no vowel points, these were spelled identically (QBH, or קבה). The man and the woman were in the midst of having sex when Phinehas executed them.

This incident is later recalled in Psalm 106:28–30: **They joined themselves also to Baal-Peor, and ate sacrifices offered of the dead. Thus they provoked [God] to anger with their deeds; and the plague broke out among them. Then Phinehas stood up and interposed and so the plague was stayed. And it was calculated to him for righteousness to all generations forever.** Phinehas was already saved; this is experiential righteousness. There are some acts of our lives (hopefully, many) which result in permanent righteousness—that is, there is a reward laid up for us in heaven. Phinehas, without needing direction, understood the source of the plague, the insidious nature of this infiltration, and he put a stop to it. This plague could have taken out every last person in Israel. This is why this act of righteousness stood to all generations forever.

And the dead by the plague are twenty four thousand. [Numbers 25:9]

What the man and the priestess were doing was to bring out in the open what had been occurring on the outskirts of the encampment. The plague had begun several days previously. This was a person who was not going to be *hypocritical* about what he did. This allowed Phinehas to make an issue of what was occurring so that all in Israel would truly understand the divine viewpoint. Twenty-four thousand certainly did not die because of this one man, but because there were about twenty-four thousand men involved in this cult, and his death marked the end of the of this plague and the end of Israel's involvement with the Baal-Peor cult. This number of those who died is even greater than the number of men who died in the rebellion of Korah, which should give you an idea as to the insidiousness of false religion. **And Aaron...took his stand between the dead and the living, so that the plague was checked. But those who died by the plague were 14,700, besides those who died on account of Korah** (Numbers 16:47a, 48–49).

As the NIV Study Bible points out, the numbers given here are consistent with the census figures. Although a smaller number of Israelites would be easier to explain, the Bible consistently gives us a relatively large population for desert travel. Only a great number of miracles would possibly keep this large number of Israelites alive.

Not but awhile previous, I quoted Saint Paul and he gave the number twenty-three thousand. What is the explanation for that? Simple: Paul numbered those who died from the plague in one day. This was a relatively short incident. A few dozen of them went out one day and became involved with the Moabite and Midianite worship of Baal-Peor. They came and got their friends who, subsequently, came and got their friends. During this time, God wiped out about a thousand men. However, it got to a point where many thousands of Jews were about to become involved with Baal-Peor and God struck down 23,000 of them in one day, the number Paul quoted, being guided by the Holy Spirit as he wrote that. That very day, Phinehas personally killed these two and halted this plague.

I need to briefly cover the section of 1Corinthians 10 in a little more detail, as one explanation one expositor gave was that this is a different incident. 1Corinthians 10: 6–10 reads: **Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave wrong things, as they also craved. And do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play. Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did and twenty-three thousand of them fell in one day. Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by snakes. Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer.** This expositor identified the twenty-three thousand of v. 8 with the Old Testament quote in v. 7. The sentence structure here does not allow for that, but gives us four separate incidents, all separated by the Greek word *mêde* (μηδέ) [pronounced *may-DEH*]. V. 7 is the golden calf incident when Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments; v. 8 is this context; v. 9 was the verbal discontent expressed in Numbers 21:4–6; and v. 10 was a plague which struck those who were unhappy at God's judgement of Korah and those who rebelled with him.

God had used terminal illness to discipline the Jews on several occasions. The men who began the rumors about the giants of the land being too fearsome to attack died of terminal illness (Numbers 14:36–38), as did those who were swayed by the rebellion of Korah (Numbers 16:41–50). We have thirty-seven or so unrecorded years during which at least a half a million Jews died in the desert, so certainly plagues took out many of them.

The Divine Appraisal of the Incident

And Y^ehowah spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 25:10]

It has actually been a long time since we have heard this phrase. Recall that, for awhile in God's Word, this was found once or twice in every chapter.

"Phinehas ben Eleazar son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My fury from the sons of Israel, by his being jealous with My jealousy in their midst, and I have not consumed the sons of Israel in My jealousy. [Numbers 25:11]

Ben, as we have seen, means *son of*. The habit of identifying a person by his father's name goes way back into history. God uses the noun and the verb for *jealousy* three times in this verse; idolatry is forbidden because God is a jealous God. God will consume or destroy those who chase after other gods. There is no other God besides Y^ehowah. Everything else is just a cheap substitute—generally a demon with a man-made idol as a front. Phinehas made an issue of Israel's association with this cult and dealt a death blow to one overtly involved. This relayed divine viewpoint to the Jews.

Obviously God is not capable of jealousy, inasmuch as jealousy is a sin. God is given as the subject of a great many sins and God is sinless. This is known as anthropopathism—ascribing to God human characteristics which He does not possess. The purpose is to better explain His character in terms that we would better understand.

Herein, we have the true contrast between the exodus generation and their sons. In Leviticus 10:1–3, the uncles of Phinehas, Nadab and Abihu, did not take their priestly duties seriously. Even though God had given to them specific instructions as to what was acceptable in tabernacle worship and what was not, they violated God's directives. This was the pattern of their entire generation. However, their sons shed the mistakes of their fathers, as did Phinehas, and glorified God forever.

The worship of other gods was always to be the *modus operandi* of the Jewish reversionist. **And Judah did evil in the sight of Y^ehowah and they provoked Him to jealousy more than all that their fathers had done, with the sins which they committed. For they also built for themselves high places and pillars and Asherim on every high hill and beneath every luxuriant tree. And there were also male cult prostitutes in the land. They did according to all the abominations of the nations which Y^ehowah dispossessed before the sons of Israel (1Kings 14:22–24). And it came about because the sons of Israel had sinned against Y^ehowah their God, who had brought them up from the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and they had feared other gods and walked in the customs of the nations whom Y^ehowah had driven out before the sons of Israel and [they walked in the customs of] the kings of Israel which they had introduced. And the sons of Israel did things secretly which were not right, against Y^ehowah their God. Moreover, they built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city. And they set for themselves pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree, and there they burned incense on all the high places as the nations did which Y^ehowah had carried away to exile before them; and they did evil things provoking Y^ehowah (2Kings 17:7–11).** Even until today they do not recognize the Lord Who bought them.

"Therefore, say, notice, I am giving to him My covenant of peace; [Numbers 25:12]

This is an unusual circumstance. Notice that there was no trial, no lawyers, no plea bargaining. However this was not Phineas taking the Law into his own hands. He was not avenging another person or himself but he recognized that the Israelite's union with this woman was union with a demon, thus infecting as a cancer the entire body of

Israel. Under a theocracy (where God rules the nation), he had to act quickly to stem the tide before other Israelites brought additional Moabite priestesses into the camp. Anyone who witnessed or heard about this would think twice before coupling with a Moabite priestess.

The covenant of peace was the bond of peace established between God and man, based upon the sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cross. See the **Doctrine of God's Covenant of Peace—not finished yet!!**

"And it will be to him and to his seed after him a covenant of a priesthood forever, because he had been zealous [or, jealous] for his God, and he made an atonement for the sons of Israel."
[Numbers 25:13]

A picture of the death of our Lord is presented here. Our Lord was brought into close contact with sin and he died in our stead. His death resulted in the covenant of peace between God and ourselves; His death was an atonement—a covering of our sins—before a holy God. Even though this man had not intended to be, he, in his death and his close association with sin, was an illustration of what was to come and the result of his death was, in shadow form, similar to the result of the death of our Lord.

And the name of the man of Israel who was struck down, who had been struck down with the Midianites: Zimri ben Salu, a prince of the house of a father of the Simeonite; [Numbers 25:14]

Below is a chart, listing the parallels between the death of Zimri ben Salu and the death of our Lord.

Parallels	Zimri ben Salu	Jesus Christ
A woman's was closely involved with the original sin	Numbers 25:1, 6, 14	Genesis 3
Closely associated with sin	Numbers 25:1–2, 6	2Corinthians 5:21 Peter 2:24
A priest was instrumental in his death	Numbers 25:7–8	Matthew 26:27, 62–66
He was pierced through	Numbers 25:8	John 19:34
Death resulted in a covenant of peace	Numbers 25:12	John 20:21 Colossians 1:20
Death resulted in an atonement for God's people	Numbers 25:13	Romans 4:7 Tim. 2:5–6
His death resulted in a perpetual priesthood	Numbers 25:13	I Peter 2:5, 9
Through his death, God's wrath was turned away	Numbers 25:11	Romans 5:9 Thess. 1:10 5:9
Through his death, the plague brought on by sin was checked	Numbers 25:8–9	Romans 5:12, 21 6:18 Hebrews 9:26

Now no analogy is a perfect analogy and a shadow is not the same as the real thing. Although Zimri's death in many ways parallels the death of our Lord, he was slain because he was guilty and the priest in this case was acting out of righteousness rather than out of sin, which was the motivation for Caiaphas the High Priest acted. Zimri was actually a man of high regard who had power and influence. His decision to bring this woman into the camp could have been very detrimental to all of Israel, had not Phinehas ben Eleazar executed him on the spot, in the act. Because Phinehas was the man of righteousness in this incident, it is he who receives the divine reward and approval (Numbers 25:12–13).

And the name of the woman who was struck, the Midianitess: Cozbi, daughter of Zur, head of a people; he [was] of the house of a father in Midian. [Numbers 25:15]

The woman also came from a very influential family. This gives us an idea as to the extent of the degeneracy of the Midianites. You would expect a woman who was giving her body as an offering in the rites of Baal-Peor to be a woman without means or substance; one who has nothing else to give. However, this is a woman from an influential family and her own father had allowed her to be influenced into this course of action and into this kind of an association with Baal-Peor. Contrast this to the Law given to Israel: "**Also, the daughter of any priest, if she profanes herself by harlotry, she profanes her father; she will be burned with fire**" (Leviticus 21:9).

And Y^ehowah spoke unto Moses, saying, [Numbers 25:16]

Even though we are in the midst of a narrative, God is still speaking to Moses and guiding him.

"Treat with enmity the Midianites and [cause to] strike them [down]. [Numbers 25:17]

For some reason, this verse begins with *distress* in Young's Literal Translation and *harass* in Owen's translation. The word is tsârar (צָרַר) [pronounced *tsaw-RAHR*] and, while it has several meanings, is closely tied to the noun for *adversary, for*—the cognate is tsar (צָר) [pronounced *tsawr*] (Strong's #6887 BDB #865)—therefore, it means *show hostility toward, treat as an enemy*. Strong's #6887 BDB #865

Moses is told to, although they have not been aggressed upon in the traditional sense, to look upon the Midianites as enemies and to behave accordingly. God has allowed several other peoples to be bypassed by the Jews, but what has occurred here is an act of aggression by the Midianites, inspired by their demon gods. Moses' last act as ruler of Israel prior to his death was to organize a war party to take into Midian. **Then Y^ehowah spoke to Moses, saying, "Take full vengeance for the sons of Israel on the Midianites; afterward, you will be gathered to your people." And Moses spoke to the people, saying, "Arm men from among you for the war, that they may go against Midian, to execute Y^ehowah's vengeance on Midian."** (Numbers 31:1–3).

"For they are adversaries to you with their deceit(s), which they have deceived you concerning the matter of Peor, and concerning the matter of Cozbi, daughter of a prince of Midian, their sister, who is struck down in the day of the plague for the matter of Peor." [Numbers 25:18]

The word for adversaries here is tsar, mentioned above. When the Midianites made contact with the Jews, this was not in battle, but with their women and their gods, offering some sort of peace offering to the Jews, as it were. Their offering to the Jews must have appeared rather innocuous, although it was evil through and through. This could have been the move to solidify a political-religious bond between Israel and Midian and such an alliance would have threatened the truth that Israel was to proclaim. Satan's evil is not like you see in slasher movies where the villain is clearly identified by the number of people he kills. Satan is much more crafting and cunning than that and this is revealed in this attack by Midian on the Israelites. God explicitly explains to Moses that this is as vicious as an act of war and should be treated as such. We will see the slaughter of the Midianites in Numbers 31.

Numbers 26

Numbers 26:1–65

Outline of Chapter 26:

- Vv. 1–4 Y^ehowah orders a census be taken prior to entering the land
- Vv. 5–18 The southern encampment: Reuben, Simeon and Gad
- Vv. 19–27 The eastern encampment: Judah, Issachar and Zebulun
- Vv. 28–41 The western encampment: Manasseh, Ephraim and Benjamin
- Vv. 42–51 The northern encampment: Dan, Asher and Naphtali
- Vv. 52–65 Division of the land; the family of the Levites; closing remarks

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

Introduction: Numbers 26 gives us both a census and a list of tribes, families and clans of Israel at the time immediately prior to entering the land. There are only three remaining adults from the exodus generation: Moses, Caleb and Joshua. Moses is by far the oldest, being twenty to forty years older than Joshua. Everyone else was twenty years or younger at the beginning of the exodus, making them all under forty years old now. These were believers who were able to overthrow the terrible influence of their parents. I was personally very lucky to be raised by two parents who loved each other and each had a great deal of integrity and character. Most people today are not as fortunate. Not only are their minds warped by television, movies and advertising, but their divorced mother has had four different boyfriends living with her during their youth; or their father had a variety of women spending the night with him throughout their youth. Each parent ignored them and pursued their own selfish pleasures and now their own morals are warped by the morals of their parents. This is the reason the Bible often cites the four generation curse. It often takes four generations to remove oneself from the immorality of the first generation. You have parents who are immoral and are a bad influence, who raise children who learn no different, who raise another batch of children who are also ignorant of what is correct behavior, who raise the fourth generation who are even depraved than their predecessors. It often takes four generations until the fifth generation, recognizing the degeneracy of their own parents and grandparents, are able to break free of their lack of morality and lack of character and to choose the divine over the secular. This generation broke the curse immediately. They recognized the degeneracy of their parents and the grace and power of God. They spent forty years in the desert watching their parents die by the tens of thousands for their immorality and lack of trust in God. Moses was still alive, as were Joshua and Caleb. They had two choices—they could return to the desert and wander around and die painful, horrible deaths, or they could go into the land, as guided by God, and take it.

We have eleven tribes and two half-tribes of Jews. These are based upon the twelve sons of Jacob. This is further divided into sixty families, or clans—who were mostly the grandsons of Jacob. These clans are further subdivided into households, which would be a very large, extended family by today's standards (mom, dad, some of their brothers or sisters, grandparents and the children—basically, all of those who reside in the same tent together). We see this division clearly defined in Joshua 7:14: "In the morning then you will come near by your tribes. And it will come to pass that the tribe which Y^ehowah tkaes will come near by families, and the family which Y^ehowah takes will come near by households, and the household which Y^ehowah takes will come near man."

Furthermore, each tribe had a man in charge and he is often called a prince in the Scripture. Each family or clan also had a leader and these were the heads or dhiefs. As we go through this chapter, we will examine each of the Hebrew words found here and the type of government which is found in Old Testament Israel.

Y^ehowah Orders a Census Be Taken Prior to Entering the Land

And it came to pass after the plague, that Y^ehowah spoke to Moses and to Eleazar ben Aaron, the priest, saying,¹⁶⁶ [Numbers 26:1]

There are times I prefer to use the word *son* and times when I prefer the Hebrew transliteration *ben*. The latter helps us out here. It is Eleazar who is referred to as a priest, not Aaron—however, with the rendering *the son of*, it sounds as though it is Aaron who is called the priest. Of course he was—he was the high priest. However, it is Eleazar who is in view here. *Aaron* is more of a surname rather than a reference to his father. That is, when I am called Gary Kukis, I certainly received the last name from my father—however, that designation primarily distinguishes me from a million other Gary's in the world. Similarly, Eleazar ben Aaron is a designation for Eleazar rather than a specific reference to his father.

The plague which was the result of the sin of Baal-Peor marks the last time that God had to excise a significant portion of the Jewish population prior to moving into the land. 600,000 men over the age of 20 at the beginning of the exodus were believers, but far removed from the plan of God. God could not enter the land with these people—they would have been such a poor witness for Him, that Israel would not have been a witness for Y^ehowah. I know that this is a sore spot for some people, but God often uses disease and natural disaster to remove a cancerous portion of our population. This does not mean that all who die from disease or natural disaster are reversionists—it just means that this has been an historic method employed by God to remove a degenerate portion of a population and there is no reason to think that He operates any differently in that respect in the 20th century.

"Take a census [lit., take up to sum] of all the company of the sons of Israel, from a son of twenty years and upward, by the house of their fathers, everyone going out to war in Israel." [Numbers 26:2]

Israel has not entered the land and has only been in a few skirmishes up until this time. This has prepared them to go into the land. Now, their troops must be numbered so that the battle commanders can determine their manpower so that they will know how to deploy their men. This gives us the Biblical perspective on war also. War, in the Bible, is not defined as the greatest evil in the world that mankind should, with every ounce of effort, attempt to prevent. There are times when war is the most prudent action. We have seen several incidents so far where the children of Israel avoided a war with some countries and engaged in war with others. Obviously, it is not an action to be entered into impulsively. Furthermore, draft age is given: twenty years old on up. Joshua and Caleb, who are both in their eighties or nineties, will also be thoroughly involved in this war against the Canaanites.

God had, on two previous occasions, asked for a census of the population to be taken. In Exodus 30:12, a census was ordered to determine the ransom that Israel would pay as a contribution to God (see also Exodus 38:24–26). When the Jews first approached the land, God required a census to be taken to determine their military might (Numbers 1:2–3).

And Moses spoke—and Eleazar the priest also—with them, in the plains [the arabah] of Moab, by [the] Jordan [river], [near] Jericho, saying, [Numbers 26:3]

The Jews have paused for a moment. The last of the old generation had just been wiped out in the incident of idolatry involving the Moabites and the Midianites. They are encamped in an area which the Amorites just recently took from Moab, which the Jews took from the Amorites. The word often translated *plains* is *Arabah* and it refers to arid, unpopulated regions. However, this is not necessarily a *flat* region.

We identify our own home as (for instance) Humble, Texas; 77338. We do not say the town of Humble, in the state of Texas—having the particular zip code 77338. They also had a short hand for this area. They were near

¹⁶⁶ In the Hebrew text, *and it came to pass after the plague* is Numbers 25:19 and *then Y^ehowah said to Moses and to Eleazar ben Aaron, the priest, saying* is Numbers 26:1.

the Jordan and near Jericho. Owen does not indicate that this is in the construct nor does Zodiates (that would make it Jordan of Jericho or Jericho's Jordan).

"From a son of twenty years and upward," as Y^howah had commanded Moses and the sons of Israel who were coming up out of the land of Egypt. [Numbers 26:4]

The interest here is in just those men who would be able to enter into war with the Canaanites.

The Southern Encampment: Reuben, Simeon and Gad

Reuben, first-born of Israel—sons of Reuben: Hanoch, the family of the Hanochites; through Pallu, the family of the Palluites; [Numbers 26:5]

Reuben had four principle sons, two of them mentioned here. Hanoch and Pallu are mentioned only in the geneological records of Genesis 46:9 Exodus 6:14 1Chronicles 5:3. The head of a family is preceded by the lâmed preposition, which denotes direction and sometimes reference. Here, both concepts are in view. One of the difficulties of a translator is being able to come up with a relatively consistent rendering of the same words and yet still retain some readability and meaning. For that reason, I will go with the NIV rendering of *through* for the lâmed preposition (which I usually render *to, for, in regards to*). *Through*, in this context, indicates both direction and reference.

Through Hezron, family of the Hezronites; through Carmi, family of the Carmites. [Numbers 26:6]

The final two sons of Reuben, mentioned in the geneological records.

These [are] the families of the Reubenites; and their numbered ones are 43,730. [Numbers 26:7]

Forty years ago, the tribe size was 46,500.

And the descendants [lit., sons] of Pallu: Eliab. [Numbers 26:8]

Now we are breaking these down into households. Pallu is a son of Reuben, who probably saw Israel go into slavery (he was raised in Egypt). Eliab could be fairly far removed from Pallu—a grandson, great grandson, etc.

And the sons of Eliab: Nemuel and Dathan and Abiram (these [are] the Dathan and Abiram chosen [by popular demand] of the congregation who contended against Moses and Aaron in the company of Korah when they contended against Y^howah). [Numbers 26:9]

The word translated *famous* in the KJV is qârîy' (אֲרִי) [pronounced *kah-REE*] is only found in Numbers 1:16 16:2 26:2. It comes from the two-meaning-ed verb which we have studied: qârâ' (אָרָא) [pronounced *kaw-RAW*], which means *call, proclaim, read*. This is a reference to *the called ones, the proclaimed ones*—those who were chosen by popular demand; *the elected ones* is an good rendering if you bear in mind this refers to a democratic choice (which, in the Bible, is not necessarily good). Thieme renders this as *chosen by popular demand* and I will follow his lead. Strong's #7148 BDB #896

Korah rebelled in Numbers 16, deciding that it was time for a little democracy and that Moses had held the reigns of power for far too long. Their chief complaint was that they had just spent too damn much time in the desert and that was the fault of Moses and Aaron. They lusted after power and it was their contention that they were just as set apart to God as was Moses and Aaron. Nemuel is mentioned because he did not get sucked into this rebellion, as did his brothers.

And so the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them and Korah, in the death of the company, in the fire consuming the two hundred and fifty men, and they became a guidon [or, a banner, a standard]; [Numbers 26:10]

These were the two hundred and fifty men who followed Korah and burned incense to God, to show that they were holy and acceptable to God. Their memory remained with the children of Israel, many of whom witnessed the earthquake which swallowed these men. We examined this incident in Numbers 16. What these who died in the earthquake became was *nêç* (נֶחֱ) [pronounced *nayce*]. When Moses took the brass serpent and put it atop a pole, that *pole* was a *nêç* (Numbers 21:8–9). We first encountered this word in Exodus 17:15 where it means Y^ehowah *my banner*. Isaiah used this word most often (Isaiah 5:26 11:10, 12 13:2 18:3 Jeremiah 4:6, 21 50:2 51:12 etc.). I would think that Thieme would translate this a *guidon*. Strong's #5251 BDB #651 I can personally guarantee you that when their sons and daughters listened to them rant and rave at the dinner table about Moses and Aaron, then saw them rebel against Y^ehowah, and then saw them swallowed up in an earthquake, perhaps the first recorded (and possibly witnessed) earthquake by man—they thought about this. They thought that maybe what their parents said around the dinner table made some sense; however, as per Moses' warning, they were struck down by Y^ehowah. This would be an enduring vision in the minds of these impressionable young people—it would be a banner, a guidon, a banner which would re-route them away from destruction. Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave wrong things, as they also craved (1Corinthians 10:6).

And the sons of Korah did not die. [Numbers 26:11]

This is a marvelous testimony to the new generation. If anyone is going to be adversely influenced by Korah, it would be his sons. However, when he rebelled against Moses and Aaron, they held back. They did not join their father in his rebellion. They had learned to listen to and to respect Moses. Because they made their own choices, they were not held accountable for Korah's rebellion against God. "Fathers will not be put to death for [their] sons, nor will sons be put to death for [their] fathers; everyone will be put to death for his own sin." (Deuteronomy 24:16).

Sons of Simeon in regards to their families: through Nemuel, the family of the Nemuelites; through Jamin, the family of the Jaminites; through Jachin, the family of the Jachinites; through Zerah, the family of the Zerahites; through Shaul, the family of the Shaulites. [Numbers 26:12–13]

Simeon is the next born son of Jacob. In Genesis 46:10 and Exodus 6:15, Nemuel is Jemuel. Also, Simeon had six sons mentioned in Genesis 46:10 (and in Exodus 6:15); apparently, Ohad's family was absorbed or did not survive as a family. Jachin is written Jarib in 1Chronicles 4:24. Zerah is written Zohar in Genesis 46:16.

These [are] the families of the Simeonites: 22,200. [Numbers 26:14]

There were previously 59,300 in their tribe. Simeon had a lot of children, which grew into a tribe larger than Reuben's. However, there was so much degeneracy in their tribe and very few people of his tribe were right man/right woman during the exodus, so they subsequently had very few children who survived to enter into the land. In fact, the tribe of Simeon showed a greater loss in terms of percentage and in terms of raw numbers. And it is quite likely that some of their children followed them into their rebellion, which meant that they also died the sin unto death. This theory would be supported by the incident of Numbers 25 where Zimri, a Simeonite of reknown, actually brought the cult priestess into the camp of Israel, in the sight of everyone, to fornicate with her. As a result of the coupling of the sons of Israel with the cult priestesses of Baal-Peor, 24,000 people died the sin unto death by pestilence. This and other offenses against Y^ehowah account for the great attrition rate in the tribe of Simeon.

Sons of Gad according to their families: through Zephon, the family of the Zephonites; through Haggi, the family of the Haggies; through Shuni, the family of the Shunites; through Ozne, the family of the Oznites; through Eri, the family of the Erites; through Arod, the family of the Arodites; through Aroli, the family of the Arolites; [Numbers 26:15–17]

The families are being grouped as to their position around the tabernacle but not according to their marching orders. Zephon was Ziphion, Ozni was Ezbon and Arod was Arodi in Genesis 46:16. Also, in this passage, it is Arodi in the Samaritan and Syriac codices. Verbs and common nouns are a bit more consistent throughout the Old Testament; however, the proper names, especially when they are only found in a few places, lack consistency. Although these are the same people (and not some other brother not mentioned before). I can only make educated guesses as to the reasons for the inconsistencies:

(1) Certainly, the text could have become corrupt and a change of a vowel point would occur long after these books were written (recall that vowel points were inserted sometime after the incarnation). (2) Some changes in the consonants are possible, as the Hebrew has so many consonants which look alike. This does not account for all of the differences, however. (3) Even if parts of Genesis were in a different language other than Hebrew, Moses, as the editor, would have gotten the names of the families (or clans) correct as he knew the names of these families. However, Moses may have preserved the spelling from the records of Genesis and the actual names of the families themselves may have changed. The fact that there are differences between Genesis 46 and Numbers 26 indicates that Moses did not just sit down and write all of this himself. Had he done so, they would have been absolutely consistent. (4) People, for one reason or another, change their family name, sometimes slightly. (5) There may be two different people. For instance, as we have seen, not all of Reuben's sons became families. It is possible that one family could have died out and another could have replaced it (that is, there would have been a fork in another family and it may have become two families). (6) It would also be reasonable to suppose that, although one of the sons had the name Bob, his grandson, Charlie, might be the only survivor of his family, so the new family is called the Charlites.

These [are] the families of the sons of Gad: in regards to their number: 40,500. [Numbers 26:18]

In the first census, the Gadites numbered 45,650.

The Eastern Encampment: Judah, Issachar and Zebulun

The sons of Judah: Er, Onan (and Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan). [Numbers 26:19]

Recall that in Genesis 38, Judah had arranged a marriage between Er and a woman named Tamar. Y^ehowah killed Er under the principle, the sin unto death. We are not given any details other than he did evil in the sight of Y^ehowah (Genesis 38:7). However, under the social customs and laws of those times, if a man died, then his brother was to raise up seed (that is, impregnate) his brother's wife so that his name would not die out. Onan did not mind the sex part of this (which meant that he thereby defiled his brother's wife, making her—an innocent party—both unable to marry and without children). People—particularly ascetics—get confused as to exactly what Onan's sins was. The actual act of spilling his seed onto the ground was not the offense, per se, but the act of having sex with his dead brother's wife on the pretense of raising up children in his brother's name—that was his offense. God took his life for that offense. Furthermore, it is likely that he and his brother had a lot in common in the sin department and this was not his very first offense. As a result of their evil, these first two sons of Judah had no families to carry on their names. Now, it is confusion and utter nonsense to interpret that passage in such a way as to forbid birth control. That comes from the influence of religion and legalism. The implication is that if you are going to enjoy relations with your wife, then you had better be willing to support a son or daughter for the next twenty or so years to pay for that enjoyment. The same legalism fostered the idea that certain positions in the church (bogus positions at that) must be held by men who are celibate. As we have seen, the Old Testament priesthood was perpetuated through a genealogical line of the Levites, meaning that celibacy was not an option for them.

And the sons of Judah were, in regards to their families: through Shelah, the family of the Shelanites; through Perez, the family of the Perezites; through Zerah, the family of the Zerahites.
[Numbers 26:20]

Now God removed two families from Judah; however, as we will see, He blessed Judah with two families to take their place. Their younger brother, Perez, was born of Judah and Tamar, one half of twins. Not only did he and his win brother replace Er and Onan, but his family forked into two additional branches.

And then, the sons of Perez were: through Hezron, the family of the Hezronites; through Hamul, the family of the Hamulites. [Numbers 26:21]

What Judah should have done was to see that one of his sons impregnated Tamar to raise up descendants for Er. He did not. When that was no longer an option, he should have, with her permission, done this himself. She was forced to trick him to do what his duty was (recall that customs of those days were different). As a result, his family name was preserved. This was crucial, as both David and Solomon both came from the line of Judah. Both sides of our Lord's line were through Judah. In fact, they were descendants of Hezron (Matthew 1:1–16 Luke 3:23–33).

These [are] the families of Judah, according to their number: 76,500. [Numbers 26:22]

Judah has always been a large tribe, owing much of that to Tamar. Without her, his tribe would have been no more than two-thirds that number, if that. At the beginning of the exodus, there were 74,600 in the family of Judah.

The sons of Issachar in regards to their families: through Tola, the family of the Tolaites; through Puvah, the family of the Punites;¹⁶⁷ through Jashub, the family of the Jashubites; through Shimran, the family of the Shimronites. [Numbers 26:23–24]

In Genesis 46:13, Jashub is Job. The principal difference between the names is the *sh* insertion on Jashub (one letter in the Hebrew) and the dot of the letter *wâw* (ו) was moved (in Genesis 46:13 it is ו and here it is ו). My personal opinion here is that this was done to distinguish him from the very famous Job of the book of Job, who might have been his contemporary. However, at that time, the book of Job would not have been widely read or distributed so there would have been no need to distinguish the two Job's.

An interesting change is that in Genesis 46:13 we have Puvvah; in this verse we have Puvah; and in 1Chronicles 7:1 it is Puah. The same letter *wâw* (ו) is involved here. It is given a dot in Genesis 46, there is no dot in this verse, and, in 1Chronicles 7, the letter is missing altogether (but notice that the letter is also missing altogether from the name of his tribe, the Punites).

These [are] the families of Issachar in regards to their number: 64,300. [Numbers 26:25]

Issachar's tribe had increased from 54,400 to 64,300.

The sons of Zebulun in regards to their families: through Sered, the family of the Seredites; through Elon, the family of the Elintes; through Jahleel, the family of the Jahleelites. [Numbers 26:26]

Interestingly enough, this tribe is not mentioned in the 1Chronicles' genealogies.

There [are] the families of the Zebulunites in regards to their number: 60,500. [Numbers 26:27]

This was the fourth largest tribe of the Israelites. They increased from 57,400 to 60,500.

The Western Encampment: Manasseh, Ephraim and Benjamin

The sons of Joseph, according to their families: Manasseh and Ephraim. [Numbers 26:28]

¹⁶⁷ *Puite* in the Samaritan, Septuagint, Vulgate and Syriac.

Joseph, due to his faithfulness to God, was given a double portion. He fathered two tribes of Israelites. The double portion usually belongs to the eldest brother, but Reuben and his brothers, in their treachery against Joseph, lost this privilege (Genesis 37).

The sons of Manasseh: through Machir, the family of the Machirites (and Machir was the father of Gilead); through Gilead, the family of the Gileadites. [Numbers 26:29]

Since Genesis 46, we have seen further divisions of the tribe of Joseph. He only had two sons, which we know of, but those two sons had children who became families and they had children who became families. Joseph's independence must have been genetically transferred to many of his ancestors.

These [are] the sons of Gilead: lezer, the family of the lezerites; through Helek, the family of the Helekites; and through Asriel, the family of the Asrielites; and through Shekem, the family of the Shekemites; and through Shemida, the family of the Shemidaites; and through Hephher, the family of the Hephherites. [Numbers 26:30–32]

One of Manasseh's grandsons had six children which became separate families. In Joshua 17:2, where land allotments are being made, lezer is called Abiezer (ditto for Judges 6:11, 24, 34). Here, one is likely the shortened form of the other.

Now Zelophehad ben Hephher had no sons but daughters and the names of the daughters of Zelophehad: Mahlah, Noah, Haglah, Milcah and Tirzah. [Numbers 26:33]

This is a marvelous aside here. Their father, Zelophehad, was one of the degenerates from the exodus generation who died the sin unto death. He bore no sons. These are women who are believers who are of the generation who will enter into the land of Canaan. They will also bring before Moses an interesting question of law, which will be settled in the next chapter.

The name of Noah is not the same as the name of Noah in Genesis. In Genesis, Noah's name is Nôach (נֹחַ) [pronounced *NO-ahk*] and hers is the softer, more feminine Nô 'âh (נֹחַ) [pronounced *no-AW*].

There [are] the families of Manasseh. And their number was 52,700. [Numbers 26:34]

This is a great increase from 32,200. The order of the census here and the one taken in Numbers 1 is essentially the same with the exception of Manasseh being listed prior to Ephraim. This may have been due to their astronomical increase in numbers, which was greater in raw numbers and greater in percentage gain (see table at the end of v. 50).

There [are] the sons of Ephraim in regards to their families: through Shuthelah, the family of the Shuthelahites; through Becher, the family of the Becherites; in regards to Tahan, the family of the Tahanites. [Numbers 26:35]

In 1Chronicles 7:20, Becher is written Bered. This is strictly a problem with early manuscripts and the Hebrew letters. The *ch* in Hebrew is the letter châyth (ח) and *r* is rêysh (ר); remove a portion of the châyth or add a mark to the rêysh and you have changed the name. The final letters of both names, bêyth (ת) and rêyth are very similar in form and one can be easily mistaken for the other.

And¹⁶⁸ these [are] the sons of Shuthelah: through Eran,¹⁶⁹ the family of the Eranites. [Numbers 26:36]

¹⁶⁸ The western Samaritan, the Septuagint and the targums of Jonathan omit the word *and*.

¹⁶⁹ Some of the codices (western Samaritan, the Septuagint and Syriac) have *Edan* instead—recall how similar in the Hebrew is the dâleth and the rêysh.

This indicates that what we are following is a form of how families are named in a census, even though there is only one son mentioned here.

These [are] the families of the sons of Ephraim in regards to their number: 32,500. These [are] the sons of Joseph according to their families. [Numbers 26:37]

Whereas the tribe of Manasseh shown almost unprecedented growth, there was the serious attrition from 40,500 to 32,500 for the tribe of Ephraim.

The sons of Benjamin in regards to their families: through Bela, the family of the Belaites; through Ashbel, the family of the Ashbelites; through Ahiram, the family of the Ahiramites; through Shephupham,¹⁷⁰ the family of the Shuphamites; through Hupham, the family of the Huphamites. [Numbers 26:38–39]

In Genesis 46:21, *Ahiram* is *Ehi*, and in 1Chronicles 8:1, it is *Aharah*. *Shephupham* is *Muppim* in Genesis 46:21 and *Shuppim* in 1Chronicles 7:12; and in Genesis 46:21 *Hupham* is *Huppim*. Some of these differences would be easy to explain and some would not. My guess is that *Muppim* and *Huppim* are nicknames which stayed with the men for a long time, but were lost in time.

And the sons of Bela were: Ard and Naaman; through Ard¹⁷¹ the family of the Ardites, through Naaman, the family of the Naamites. [Numbers 26:40]

In Genesis 46:21, Benjamin is listed as having ten sons; however, Ard, is actually a grand son, through Benjamin's son Bela. This is not uncommon in Scripture. He may have resided in the home of Benjamin as though he were Benjamin's son. There are a lot of parents who have brought up their grand children that way. Ard is called Addar in 1Chronicles 8:3. As has been mentioned several times before, it is difficult to distinguish an *r* from a *d* in the Hebrew. Naanan's name is spelled somewhat differently in the Septuagint, Noeman in Genesis and Noema in Numbers and 1Chronicles. In the Greek, often the subsequent word determines whether something ends with an *an* as opposed to just an *a*.

These [are] the sons of Benjamin regard to their families and their number: 45,600. [Numbers 26:41]

This was an increase from 35,400.

The Northern Encampment: Dan, Asher and Naphtali

These [are] the sons of Dan in regard to their families: through Shuham, the family of the Shuhamites; these [are] the families of Dan in regards to their families. All the families of the Shuhamites in regards to their number: 64,400. [Numbers 26:42–43]

This was up slightly from 62,700. Dan had one son named in Genesis 46:23, Hushim (which may or may not be the same person); and the genealogy of Dan is not mentioned in 1Chronicles. This, however, does not mean that the tribe was lost, as we find several from the tribe of Dan mentioned chronologically after the 1Chronicles' genealogies (1Chronicles 27:22 2Chronicles 2:14 16:4).

The sons of Asher in regard to their families: through Imnah, the families of the Imnites; through Ishvi, the family of the Ishvites; through Beriah, the family of the Beriites; the sons of Beriah: through Heber, the family of the Heberites; through Malchiel, the family of the Malchielites; [Numbers 26:44–45]

¹⁷⁰ *Shupham* in Samaritan, Vulgate, Syriac and even in some Massoretic Text manuscripts.

¹⁷¹ *In regards to Ard* is not found in the Massoretic Test. It is found, however, in the Samaritan and the Vulgate.

Asher's first three sons were Imnah, Ishvah and Ishvi (Genesis 46:17)—the middle son, although mentioned later in 1Chronicles 7:30, is never mentioned in conjunction with a family. Beriah's line also forked into two major families: the Heberites and the Malchielites.

And the name of the daughter of Asher: Serah. [Numbers 26:46]

There were not many daughters named of the sons of Jacob. Serah is one of the few. Given the number of descendants of Jacob mentioned in Exodus 1:1, the sons of Jacob had very few daughters. She was Jacob's only granddaughter, and Dinah was his only daughter.

These [are] the sons of Asher in regard to their number: 53,400. [Numbers 26:47]

Up from 41,500.

The sons of Naphtali, in regard to their families: through Jahzeel, the family of the Jahzeelites; through Guni, the family of the Gunites; through Jezer, the family of the Jezerites; through Shillem, the family of the Shillemites. [Numbers 26:48–49]

Jahzeel is Jahziel in 1Chronicles 7:13; and Shillem is Shallum. Both of these vary only as to their vowel points, which were, as has been noted, added centuries after the Scripture was written. The line of Naphtali is given very little space in 1Chronicles. It runs for one verse, whereas, the line of the Levites is a chapter in itself of 81 verses.

There [are] the families of Naphtali in regards to their families; and their number was 45,400. [Numbers 26:50]

They dropped from 53,400.

This [was] the number of the people of Israel: 601,730. [Numbers 26:51]

Overall, this was a slight decrease from 603,550 (Numbers 1:46). Considering that their forty years in the desert was primarily discipline which resulted in the sin unto death for 600,000 men, this is not too much of a loss. They began with about 600,000 men (Exodus 12:37 38:26 Numbers 1:46 11:21) and still had that about that many. They regained basically all that they had lost.

Tribe	First Census	Second Census	Increase or Decrease	Percentage Change
REUBEN ¹⁷²	46,500	43,730	-2770	-5.96%
Simeon	59,300	22,200	-37100	-62.56%
Gad	45,650	40,500	-5150	-11.28%
JUDAH	74,600	76,500	1900	2.55%
Issachar	54,400	64,300	9900	18.20%
Zebulun	57,400	60,500	3100	5.40%
EPHRAIM	40,500	32,500	-8000	-19.75%
Manasseh	32,200	52,700	20500	63.66%
Benjamin	35,400	45,600	10200	28.81%

¹⁷² Those printed in small capitals were the standard bearers for their division.

Tribe	First Census	Second Census	Increase or Decrease	Percentage Change
DAN	62,700	64,400	1700	2.71%
Asher	41,500	53,400	11900	28.67%
Naphtali	53,400	45,400	-8000	-14.98%
TOTALS	603,550	601,730	-1820	-0.30%

Division of the Land; the Family of the Levites; Closing Remarks

Then Y^ehowah spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 26:52]

God spoke to Moses directly before the census and now immediately after to indicate what was to be done concerning the population of the Jews.

"To these is the land apportioned by inheritance, by the number of names; [Numbers 26:53]

As they enter into the land, the number of each tribe and family was to be taken into consideration when the land was divided between the tribes. It would be Joshua who would apportion the land. so Joshua took the whole land, according to all that Y^ehowah had spoken to Moses, and Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. Thus hte land had rest from war (Joshua 11:23; see Joshua 13–19).

"To the many you will increase their inheritance and to the few you will diminish their inheritance; according to his numbered ones is given his inheritance. [Numbers 26:54]

The births in any given family is a function of God's blessing, just as the deaths, at this time, were a result of His discipline. As their population increased or decreased, so should their portion of the land be increased or decreased.

"Only by lot is the land apportioned, by the names of the tribes of their fathers they inherit; [Numbers 26:55]

It is interesting that God does not simply assign areas to the families of the Israelites. They all are given lands according to *chance*, as though there were such a thing. I don't know if I am ready right at this time to discuss the theory of chance. Just because God knows the outcome, that does not necessarily eliminate the concept of chance (as His foreknowledge does not preclude free will).

"According to the mouth of the lot is their inheritance apportioned between many and few." [Numbers 26:56]

By the lot which is cast will the inheritance of the sons of Israel be determined. This will be repeated in Numbers 33:54 & 34:13. *According to the mouth of the lot* is idiomatic for what the casting of the lot says. We use a very similar idiom today. When writing notes on the board for my students, I was occasionally asked, due to my sloppy printing, *what does that say?* It actually says nothing; it *reads...*

And these [are] the Levites as numbered according to their families: in reference to Gershon, the family of the Gershonites; through Kohath, the family of the Kohathites; through Merari, the family of the Merarites. [Numbers 26:57]

I would suspect, because of their spiritual import, that the sons of Levi would be even more carefully recorded by families, as they assisted the Aaronites in the function of the priesthood. The census taken of the Levite tribes was done separately because (1) they were not counted to determine a land allotment, as they did not inherit any land; and, (2) they did not engage in war, so their numbers, in terms of men twenty and older, were not needed for tactical purposes.

There [are] the families of Levi: the family of the Libnites, the family of the Hebronites, the family of the Mahlites, the family of the Mushites, the family of the Korahites; [Numbers 26:58a]

Libni was the son of Gershon; Hebron was the son of Kohath; Mahli and Mushi were the sons of Merari. Korah was the son of Amminadab who was the son of Kohath.

And Kohath was the father of Amram. [Numbers 26:58b]

This verse further explores the family of Kohath and should have been removed from v. 58 and added to v. 59.

The name of Amram's wife: Jochebed, a daughter of Levi who was born to Levi in Egypt and she bore through Amram, Aaron and Moses, and Miriam, their sister. [Numbers 26:59]

Amram was a great grandson or a grandson of Kohath at the most recent. We have at least two intervening generations in here, and probably more. Levi lived 137 years, Kohath lived 133 years, and Amram, 137 years. Kohath was born to Levi in Palestine, and Levi moved with his three children from Palestine to Egypt while Joseph, his brother, was a ruler in Egypt. Given all that happened in the book of Genesis, I can't see Levi as any less than 40 or 50 when he enters into Egypt. Since Kohath, Gershon and Merari are said to move into the land with him as sons, yet their sons and wives are not named—nor computed into the number of those who moved to Egypt—we can assume that they were unmarried and probably under 30 years of age.

We need to deal with some genealogy with respect to Jochebed. It appears at first that Jochebed was Amram's father's sister (his aunt, in other words) in Exodus 6:18–20. However, we covered this back then that she was not that closely related. Here, she is apparently no more than a Levite. This verse appears to make Amram out to be the father of Moses and Aaron and 1Chronicles 23:12–13 makes Kohath the father of Amram. This opens up quite a can of worms and would be as good as place as any to examine **the Doctrine of Egyptian Slavery Time-Frame—the Long View and the Short View—not finished yet!!** However, the Scripture reads that Jochebed is a daughter of Levi—this does mean a daughter in the same sense that we take it. This is simply a female descendant of Levi. When it says that she was *born to Levi in Egypt*, this does not mean that she was born to the person of Levi in Egypt (although it certainly could, and that would be the first meaning). However, the sense is that she was born to *the tribe of Levi* in Egypt (*Levi* is a metonym for *the tribe of Levi*, which is certainly not unique to this passage).

And to Aaron were born Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. [Numbers 26:60]

These were Aaron's two bad sons, his great son and his okay son.

But Nadab died—Abihu also—when they brought near strange fire before the face of Y^ehowah. [Numbers 26:61]

The ceremonies performed by the priests were all to speak of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on our behalf on the cross. They could not be done haphazardly or with a great deal of individual originality. Nadab and Abihu did not take their responsibilities seriously enough (Leviticus 10:1–2). The gospel is too precious a message to be delivered in a slipshod manner. Each sacrifice and each priestly act had its meaning and God the Holy Spirit revealed the gospel to millions upon millions of people through these ceremonies. Therefore, they could not be performed incorrectly. The analogous situation today is when someone gives the gospel incorrectly. They get sloppy—they talk about asking God into your lives or Christ into your hearts. You're asked to pray for the Holy Spirit to come upon you. The gospel is clear and precise: we are to believe in Jesus Christ; we are to trust Him

for our salvation. This is the message which we present to an unbelieving world. There are no short cuts, no alternate routes. It is fortunate for us that we not killed for not being meticulous in this day and time in our presentation of the cross.

And their numbered ones are 23,000—every male from a son of a month and upwards, for they have not numbered themselves in the midst of the sons of Israel; for an inheritance was not given to them in the midst of the sons of Israel. [Numbers 26:62]

The Israelites were numbered in order to (1) apportion their land inheritance and, (2) to determine their military force. The Levites did not take part in war nor did they receive a land inheritance from God. They would minister to the Aaronites with regards to the tabernacle and the spiritual things. Their numbers were virtually unchanged; their previous population was 22,273.

The Levites were the spiritual leaders of Israel and God did not want them to be tied to a piece of real estate. They were without a land inheritance. **Only the Levites will perform the service of the tent of meeting, and they will bear their iniquity; it will be a perpetual statute throughout your generations, and among the sons of Israel they will have no inheritance** (Numbers 18:23). Just as we, as Christians, are sojourners in this world, with a heavenly inheritance, so the Levites.

There [are] those numbered by Moses and Eleazar, the priest, who have numbered the sons of Israel in the plains [or, *arabah*] of Moab, by the Jordan, Jericho. [Numbers 26:63]

As was mentioned, we might name an area like Sacramento, California and not say Sacramento **in** California; the designations of that day did not require them to say any more than by the Jordan, Jericho—this meant that they were at the part of the Jordan River across from Jericho.

And among these there was not a man of those numbered by Moses and Aaron the priest, who numbered the sons of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai; [Numbers 26:64]

As we have seen, there are two exceptions—Joshua and Caleb—a very, very small percentage of the exodus generation. **"Now in the time that it took for us to come from Kadesh-barnea, until we crossed over the brook Zered, as thirty-eight years; until all the generation of the men of war perished from within the camp, as Y^ehowah had sworn to the. Moreover, the hand of Y^ehowah was against them, to destroy them from within the camp until they all perished."** (Deuteronomy 2:13–14). **For who revolted when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt by Moses? And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they should not enter into His rest, but to those who were disobedient? And so we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief** (Hebrews 3:16–19).

For Y^ehowah said of them, "They will certainly die in the desert." And there was not left of them a man, save Caleb ben Jephunneh, and Joshua ben Nun. [Numbers 26:65]

Over 600,000 men, plus many of their wives, died the sin unto death in less than forty years in the desert. Now, after their deaths had been completed, the Jews could officially enter into the land and conquer it.

Numbers 27

Numbers 27:1–23

Outline of Chapter 27:

- vv. 1–11 **New inheritance laws**
- vv. 12–17 **Y^ehowah tells Moses that his career is over/Moses requests a successor**
- vv. 18–23 **God chooses Joshua to succeed Moses; Joshua is formally recognized**

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

- v. 18 **What We Know About Joshua So Far**

Introduction: Numbers 27 could have been easily divided into two separate chapters, as the material included in this chapter are two rather disjoint occurrences. We will examine some women, whose father died in the desert, go to Moses and request that they receive their share of their father's inheritance; and, secondly, Y^ehowah will tell Moses that he, Moses, will not enter the land along with the congregation of Israel. There is no protesting on the part of Moses and no whining—he accepts his destiny—he accepts God's plane for his life, and he moves on into dying grace. The only expressed concern of Moses is that he might be succeeded by a man who will be good for Israel.

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New Inheritance Laws

And daughters of Zelophehad ben Hephem, son of Gilead, son of Machir, son of Manasseh—of the family of Manasseh, son of Joseph, approached; and these [were] the names of his daughters: Mahiah, Noah, and Hoglah, and Milcah and Tirzah. [Numbers 27:1]

Recall that in the line of Moses, only a couple of generations were named. Here we have a man who left Egypt with his daughters. It is possible that they are of the twenty and younger set who remained alive after the forty years in the desert, but it is just as likely that they were above twenty when leaving Egypt because they are not married (all the men their age have died the sin unto death). Zelophehad is at least four generations removed from Joseph, if no intervening generations were left out (which we cannot assume). Therefore, Zelophehad ben Hephem is the great great grandson of Manasseh, son of Joseph; and these are his daughters who are approaching Moses. This allows for a two hundred or a four hundred year stay of slavery under the Egyptians. Since they are unlikely to become married yet are entering the land with the other Israelites, they do not want to go without their inheritance. What is occurring is not at all typical for the ancient world. In many societies, even until today, women have, for all intents and purposes, no legal standing. These could go directly to Moses.

And they took a stand before the face of Moses and before the face of Eleazar the priest and before the face of the leaders [or princes] and all the congregation at the door [or, opening] of the tent of meeting, saying, [Numbers 27:2]

For these women to come and to place a matter before Moses was unprecedented, insofar as we know. This is the first incident of women asserting their rights before Moses as those descended from Abraham. These women have no doubt discussed this issue amongst themselves and they believed themselves to be right, so the matter is taken before the supreme court of the land, before Moses and Eleazar.

Contrast the difference between the standing of these women as opposed to the Midianite women. The Midianite women, including those of prominent families, were priestesses for a national religion which engaged in, as a part of their religious rites, degenerate sexual practices. You would think that a father of a prominent family would have protected at least his own daughter better than this and that the priestesses would come from poverty, broken families, or as orphans. Can you imagine a society which practices this, along with, very likely, child sacrifice, allowing its women to come before the highest authorities of the land to petition for property rights? This is quite unusual.

"Our father died in the desert and he—[even] he—was not in the midst of the company who had gathered together against Y^ehowah in the company of Korah, but for his own sin he had died, and he had no sons; [Numbers 27:3]

Throughout the thirty-eight years of wandering, the Israelites died in huge numbers in several different rebellions—most of which are not even recorded in Scripture and are lost forever in history. Zelophehad ben Hopher, although he did not join Korah in his rebellion against Moses, is identified with this rebellion. This would indicate that he was one of the 14,700 who died because of the plague when the people grumbled about the deaths of Korah and his followers (Numbers 16:41–50). Every male of that generation died, except for Caleb and Joshua (Numbers 26:64–65).

The women present their father honestly—he was not a member of those who rebelled against Moses in the rebellion of Korah; however, he did die the sin unto death in the desert. Insofar as the ancient world was concerned, he had no legal heirs, as he left behind only daughters. The Jews were about to enter the land and divide it up as they conquered it. Each family is to have its own portion, but there are no laws which speak to women who are not married and are not a part of a family where there are any males remaining.

The reason that these women are alive as they have studied the Law of Moses. They were not looking for a loophole, per se, but wanted to know their legal rights. From their understanding of the Law, they were not specifically given land as women—however, they were not specifically excluded from Israel's inheritance. The specific lack of exclusion along with the whole tenor of the *seed of the woman* from Genesis 3 would indicate that women had some place in God's plan. Throughout many centuries in many different societies, this would be a totally revolutionary concept. Under some reigns, they would not have even received an audience of the highest official of the land. In others, they would have been mocked and in others they might have been executed for their impertinence. Few women fully appreciate the fact that God's Word has always given the woman a true standing in relationship to God. Although males and females have different roles in life, the Bible never denigrates the woman as does society (including an *enlightened* society as ours, where women are degraded by pornography, sexual abuse and rape).

"Why is the name of our father withdrawn from the midst of the family because he had no son? Give to us a possession in the midst of the brothers of our fathers." [Numbers 27:4]

Women, generally speaking, throughout the ancient world, had no legal standing. They did not participate in civil functions, they did not rule, and they did not hold property. This leaves these women, unmarried and without any inheritance of land. A typical response in the ancient world to these women would have been, "What, are you kidding?" However, Moses and Eleazar take them very seriously. Furthermore, it has always been a matter of great importance to maintain the family name. **"When brother live together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased will not outside to a strange man. Her husband's brother will go in to her and take her to himself as wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. And it will come to pass when the first-born whom she bears will assume the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out from Israel."** (Deuteronomy 25:5–6).

So Moses brought near their cause [or, case] before Y^ehowah. [Numbers 27:5]

The word for *brought near* is the same as the one for *approach* from v. 1—a word often mistranslated in the Law as *offer*, *sacrifice*. So far, there were no laws on the books dealing with women as property holders, or having the

right to hold property. Moses does not immediately dismiss their petition as a silly notion, but, because no laws have been given to deal with this situation, he takes the matter before God. The word rendered *case* or *cause* is the very often-used word *mîsh^epâṭ* (מִשְׁפָּט) [pronounced *mish^e-PAWT* or *meesh^e-PAWT*] and this is very consistently translated *judgment* throughout the KJV, with a several notable exceptions (Genesis 18:25 40:13 Exodus 15:25 21:9 26:30 Leviticus 5:10 9:16 Numbers 9:3, 14 15:16, 24). In fact, early on in the Old Testament, this word is translated *right, manner, ordinance, fashion, manner of law, ceremonies*; however, following the books of Moses, this is translated almost exclusively *judgment*. Strong's #4941 BDB #1048

As we have seen in the past, not every single situation has been covered by the Law. One area where the Law was deficient was the area of inheritance. There is a principle called readiness in teaching—certain children are ready at certain times to learn certain skills. For instance, a child might be ready to learn how to read at age three or age five. Prior to that, he may not have the interest and therefore, he may not be ready. God did not give a set of laws which covered every facet of the lives of the Jewish people, even though they tried to twist it into such a system. It was deficient in the area of inheritance; however, the people were not ready at that time for laws which dealt with inheritance—they just did not need those laws until now. A mistaken notion is that the Law of God is somehow weak or lacking; as though God forgot something. "Oh, yeah, we need to throw in this law as well." The Jews had been in the desert trying to just survive. They did not need to know who would inherit what and under what circumstances. Although everything that we need is provided for in His Word, God still wants us to come to Him in some matters. God is glorified when we come to Him. That is part of what is found here.

The NIV Study Bible reads: *This verse indicates how case law might have operated in Israel. The general laws would be proclaimed. Then legitimate exceptions or special considerations would come to the elders, and perhaps to Moses himself. He then would await a decision from the Lord. In this case, the Lord gave a favorable decision to these women*¹⁷³.

I want to caution you about one of the most misused tools of guidance: prayer. In only rare instances do you go to God in prayer and ask to be guided into a particular course of action. 99% of the time, God has covered what you should be doing in His Word. If you stay with doctrine, it will come to you. Most people, when they go to God in prayer, it is to try to obfuscate the clear teaching of Scripture. It seems as though *this* might be the will of God, but they really don't want to do *this*, so they go to God in prayer and then they come away in prayer and do whatever it was that they wanted to do. If you stick with God's Word, you will know what to do, when to do it, and with what motivation. This does not mean that you don't go to God in prayer—you just don't use that as an excuse to do whatever you want to do. "Oh, we prayed about this for a long time and then decided to do thus and so." Translated means, this is what we wanted to do all along so we prayed until we decided to do it. Now, there is the other type of people—the ascetics—who assume that God's will is going to be whatever hurts them the most so they pray and pray and pray for God's will and then decide that God wants them to be missionaries, even though this is the last thing in the world that they wanted to do.

And Y^ehowah spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 27:6]

You would think that the two books which contain more of God's direct words would have attained greater notoriety than have the two books of Leviticus and Numbers, but such has not been the case.

"Rightly are the daughters of Zelophehad speaking; you will certainly give [lit., in giving you will give] to them a possession of an inheritance in the midst of their father's brothers, and will cause to pass over to them the inheritance of their father. [Numbers 27:7]

God will deal with a couple of issues here. First, He deals with the issue at hand. The women are correct; they should receive the inheritance due to their father. The lack of a male in the family in no way diminishes their legal or property rights.

¹⁷³ NIV Study Bible, p. 228.

"And to the sons of Israel you will speak, saying, 'When a man dies and has no son, then you [all] will cause his inheritance to pass over to his daughter; [Numbers 27:8]

We begin the law of inheritance and the order in which it goes.

" 'And if he has no daughter, then you [all] will give his inheritance of his brothers; [Numbers 27:9]

If the man has no living sons or daughters, then his portion will be retained by his immediate family, falling into the hands of his own brothers. The state does not automatically take the land and redistribute it as the state deems fair.

" 'And if he has no brothers, then you [all] will give his inheritance to his father's brothers; [Numbers 27:10]

When a man dies without heirs and without brothers, the land goes back to father's brothers (it is assumed here that his father is no longer living, or the land would belong to his father). Generally speaking, when a man dies without heirs, he is often a young man; therefore the rest of his family would still be alive.

" 'And if his father had no brothers, then you [all] will give his inheritance to his relation who is near to him of his family, and he will possess it.' " It will come to pass in regards to the people of Israel for a statute of an ordinance in which Y^ehowah commanded Moses. [Numbers 27:11]

I don't know if I want to explain, linguistically, my rendering *in which*. Suffice to say it is the preposition *in* and a relative pronoun (although that is by far an oversimplification to a very complex relative pronoun—BDB takes three pages to explain it).

Having gone through all of the near relatives, any relative who is close now has a chance at the land. Note that nowhere in here does the state take control of the land. It does not go to Moses, to any of the Levites, or to the priesthood of Aaron. When those of authority are approached with a legal question, and the heirs are uncertain, those in authority generally like to take control. Examine our own inheritance laws and the what happens when a person dies intestate. However, this was taken to the supreme court of heaven where not every decision favors those in authority. God is fair.

After giving this set of laws, the Hebrews will be satisfied with God's Word on this matter. However, in a short time, they will give it more thought and ask a lot of *what if* questions. That will be dealt with in Numbers 36. We will study this even further in Joshua 17.

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Y^ehowah Tells Moses That His Career Is Over/Moses Requests a Successor

This may seem like an entirely new, unrelated topic; however, in the first portion of this chapter, we dealt with the concept of inheritance in a situation which had not been dealt with before. In this latter half of the chapter, Joshua will be announced as the one who will succeed Moses, another inheritance which had never occurred before.

And Y^ehowah said to Moses, "Go up to this mount Abarim and see the land which I have given to the sons of Israel; [Numbers 27:12]

This is one of the last times that God will speak directly to Moses regarding his own personal life. First, God will take Moses to a place from which much of the land of Israel could be viewed.

"And you will see it and you will be gathered to your people—you also as Aaron your brother was gathered. [Numbers 27:13]

A linguistic note here: recall the words I translated *to which*, they occur here and are rendered as.

Moses is invited to see the land which God will give to the people of Israel. This has been a long-standing promise between God and the children of Israel. Abraham was given a panoramic view of the land and now Moses will be given a similar view from a different direction. This parallels the passage in Deuteronomy 32:48–52. Notice that this is short-term prophecy. The death of Moses will come to pass in only a few short weeks (Deuteronomy 34:1–7).

"Because you [all] rebelled against My command [lit., mouth] in the desert of Zin, in the dispute of the company—to sanctify Me at the waters before their eyes." They are the waters of Meribah [bitterness] in Kadesh, in the desert of Zin. [Numbers 27:14]

This is ellipsis here. The second phrase is a continuation of the rebellion of the Jews. The gist is: "Because you all rebelled against My command in the desert of Zin in the dispute of the company; because you, Moses, rebelled against sanctifying Me at the waters before their eyes."

It was routine six for the people of Israel to rebel against God. Every few days or weeks there was another uprising against God or against His chosen men, Moses and Aaron. The exodus generation was a degenerate group. Moses, on the other hand, was to set God aside as holy and perfect and the actions of Moses were to be those prescribed by God directly. We studied the problem of the rock. *And Y^ehowah spoke to Moses, saying, "Take the rod and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and speak to the rock before their eyes, that it may yield its water. You will in this way cause to bring water forth for them out of the rock and cause the congregation and their animals to drink." So Moses took the rod from before Y^ehowah, just as He had commanded him; and Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly before the rock, and he said to them, "Listen now, you rebels—shall be bring water for you out of this rock?" Then Moses lifted up his hand and stuck the rock twice with his rod; and water came forth abundantly and the congregation and their animals drank. But Y^ehowah said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, you will not, therefore, bring this assembly into the land which I have given them." (Numbers 20:7–12).* The rock had already been struck (Exodus 17:5–6) and it was to be struck but once. This is not the same literal rock but it is the same figurative rock. To receive the living waters for two million people, Moses was to only speak to the rock. Moses, in his anger, and with a flair for the dramatic, struck the rock twice and ruined the analogy, the type, that God had desired to set up in history to speak of Jesus Christ.

Note the higher responsibility of Moses. His sin against God appears to pale in comparison to the degeneracy and the unbelief of the Israelites throughout their wanderings in the desert. However, the Bible will mention Moses' sin almost as often as God tells how He loathes the exodus generation (see Deuteronomy 1:37 32:51–52 Psalm 106:32). God had told Moses during the second no-water test to merely speak to the rock. He was not told to strike the rock. Moses struck the rock. For this sin, Moses would not enter the land. The problem here is with type, which may have not been fully understood by Moses. When Moses struck the rock one time, this was the judgment of Jesus Christ for our sins. Out of the rock—out of Jesus Christ—flowing living waters. Our Lord was judged but one time for our sins. He does not return to the cross. Our sins have been paid for in full all at once at the cross. Now, to those desiring salvation, they need only speak to the Rock and out from Him will flow living waters. Many of the things which occurred in the Old Testament were designed as the shadows of those things from the New. The cross, our Lord's sacrifice and our subsequent salvation and deliverance or portrayed repeatedly in the Old Testament, so that we might recognize the integration of the Old and New Testaments and so that those in the Old Testament might understand the gospel through these incidents, being further enlightened by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Greater authority, particularly in the spiritual realm, carries with it much greater responsibility and consequences for sin. A similar sin committed by an Israelite not in a position of leadership (for instance, the minor error in perception of Joshua in the manifestation of the Holy Spirit) is hardly noticed. However, an error in the obedience of a clear command by God—even though at the time, it seemed an unimportant distinction—prevented Moses from even entering the land. So, if you desire a position of authority, particularly in the spiritual realm—be

forewarned, there are transgressions for which you will receive an overabundance of discipline because of your position.

The two seemingly disjoint halves of Numbers 27 are tied together by God's provision of a land allotment for the daughters of Zelophehad and a denial of same to Moses.

And Moses spoke to Y^ehowah, saying, [Numbers 27:15]

Moses had stood in the gap on behalf of this group of people. They have maligned him, they have run him down, they have threatened violence upon him and his family. He just got angry one day, as would we all, and made a minor error. So you know what you or I would say. "Now just wait a minute, God, I made one damn mistake and it is just because these people pissed me off. You know what jerks they are. I have been faithful to you for forty years in hauling them from Egypt to here, listening to their wining, watching their bodies drop like flies in the desert, and now I don't get to enter the land because of one little mistake (and why it was a mistake, I don't know—the people got their water)." Moses does not take this approach.

"Y^ehowah—God of the spirits of all flesh—appoint a man over the company, [Numbers 27:16]

Other lesser men would have begged God for just some more time, e.g., Hezekiah. Moses was able to bring a case before God concerning a pronouncement of God's and ask for a re-evaluation. He had done that several times when God threatened to destroy all of Israel. Moses is not a weak sister who does not know how to react to his removal from office. However, he fully recognizes that what he did showed a lack of faith, even though it may not be perspicuous to him the reason why his striking the rock twice was a problem to God. However, Moses accepts that immediately and moves on (he had been warned in Numbers 20:12, so this is not the first time that Moses has heard this news).

Moses exhibits a greatness and responsible almost unparalleled in history. You should not be in authority unless you understand and recognize the greatness of Moses here. His first thought is not how he just got rooked out of some deal; his first thought is not for his own personal desires; his first thought is about those over whom he has authority. When you are in authority, you are in service to those below you. You are responsible to those below you. There are times that you must sweat some of their shadows into a wall, but you never act for personal gain or out of a personal vendetta. The first thought of a great man in authority is for those over whom he has authority. A great leader is not in it for approbation, for personal gain, for power or for glory. Their position of leadership is their lot in life which they serve honorably. Remove the approbation, the personal gain, the power and the authority, and they would still act honorably; they would still fulfill their responsibilities. This is Moses. Not one word is said concerning God's judgement. Moses thinks immediately about his congregation and about their welfare.

"[A man] who goes out before them and who comes in before them and who takes them out and brings them in; and the company of Y^ehowah is not as sheep who have no shepherd." [Numbers 27:17]

All the terms found here are idioms for leadership and guidance. *To go out and come in* is idiomatic for *standard governmental actions* or of *daily life*, depending upon the context (see also 2Chronicles 1:10 Psalm 121:8 Isaiah 37:28 John 10:9 Acts 1:21). Israel cannot be trusted to lead herself, just as we, on our own, do not come to god. We must be led by God the Holy Spirit in all respects—from salvation and throughout our entire lives. Since the Jews at that time lacked the Holy Spirit, God had to lead them through a leader who had the Holy Spirit. And even though this second generation is much greater than their predecessors, they still require a leader. These are sheep and they are God's sheep and Moses does not want them left without guidance. He has immediately accepted his fate and his first priority are those who are his responsibility.

God Chooses Joshua to Succeed Moses; Joshua Is Formally Recognized

And Y^howah said to Moses, "Take to yourself Joshua ben Nun, a man in whom [is] the Spirit, and you will lay your hand upon him. [Numbers 27:18]

God immediately honors the request of Moses. This prayer of Moses was answered in eternity past by God. God is glorified in being able to answer it. All of this time, God has been preparing Joshua to take Moses' place. However, what was required was for Moses to request this of God. God answers our prayers because He is glorified by our prayers.

A very small amount of information has been give us thus far about Joshua. However, up until this time...

What We Know About Joshua So Far

1. We first hear about Joshua after the first *no-water* test. Israel has just left Egypt, they have not yet received the Law, and Amalek attacks Israel. Joshua was placed over the war department and he went to battle against Amalek. They are defeated through God's help, as whenever Moses raised his arms, the battle went in favor of Israel; but when he dropped them, the Amalekites prevailed. Aaron and Hus finally propped up Moses' arms and Israel won this battle (Exodus 17:8–16).
2. Joshua has become a minister to Moses by Exodus 24:13. This is translated *servant*, but it is a different word than the word which means *slave*. A better rendering might be *assistant, aide, attendant, executive officer, chief of staff, right-hand man* (the same word is applied to Joseph as the overseer of the house of an Egyptian official in Genesis 39:4).
3. Joshua thought the sounds of reveling were the sounds of battle when he and Moses returned from Mount Sinai for the golden calf incident (Exodus 32:17–20).
4. Because of the golden calf incident, Moses would meet with God outside the camp of Israel. After those meetings, Moses would return to the camp of Israel but Joshua would not depart from the tent (Exodus 33:11).
5. Joshua, not fully understanding the power of the Spirit, asked Moses to restrain two men who were prophesying by the power of the Holy Spirit (Numbers 11:25–29).
6. Joshua was one of the men chosen to spy out the land when Israel was first on the border of the land of Canaan (Numbers 13:8, 16).
7. Joshua and Caleb carried the minority report to Moses and the people, indicating that they should invade the land and take it, as God had promised them (Numbers 14:6–10).
8. Because Joshua and Caleb believed God and were willing to enter into the land, they were kept alive whereas the rest of their generation—and, in particular—the rest of the spies, died in the desert (Numbers 14:30, 38 26:64–65).
9. Joshua was endued with the Holy Spirit (Numbers 27:18).

"And you will cause him to stand before Eleazar the priest, and before all the company and you will charge [or, commission] him in their sight [lit., eyes]; [Numbers 27:19]

Moses does not request that one of his sons take his position. He allows God to make the choice, inasmuch as God can see the inner man—God can recognize the character of a man and responsibility is conferred based on divine recognition of merit and not upon human viewpoint. God can see the future and God can see the inner man. Moses may have had a dozen or so men whom he would have chosen; maybe even a dozen or so men he would have chosen over Joshua. Having had the perspective of history and knowing that there is a book of Joshua even before knowing any details concerning the life of Moses, we have always taken this appointment for granted. However, given that there was both Caleb and Joshua and there was an entire new generation of spiritually growing people, this was not necessarily the obvious choice. Furthermore, why not Eleazar, who has shown himself to be a man worthy to follow in the footsteps of his father? There has been no edict to keep the priesthood separate from posts of governmental leadership.

"And you will put from your majesty [or, splendor or honor] upon him, so that all the company of the sons of Israel will listen. [Numbers 27:20]

What Moses will be placing upon Joshua is *hōwd* (תִּהְיֶה) [pronounced *hode*] and BDB translates this *splendor, majesty, vigour*. In the KJV, it is rendered *honor, presence, majesty, glory* and, even, *goodly*. This is not the same as the word for glory, found less than twenty-five times in Scripture, mostly in the Psalms (this is the first occurrence of this word, outside of three occurrences in the book of Job (Job 37:22 39:20 40:10). Strong's #1935 BDB #217

"And before the face of Eleazar the priest he will take a stand and he [Eleazar] will ask on behalf of [lit., for] him [Joshua] by the judgment of the Lights [or, Urim] before Y^ehowah; at His word, they go out, and at His word they come in; he [Joshua], and all the sons of Israel with him, even all the company." [Numbers 27:21]

These verses are occasionally difficult because of the large number of pronouns and almost equally large number of antecedents in them. God now speaks to Eleazar as well as to Moses. The High Priest, when needing guidance by God, would often go to the Urim and Thummin to determine whether a certain course of action should be followed or no; and which tribe or tribes, if any, should be involved. At God's Word, as given by Urim and Thummin, they would make their move (i.e., they would go in and they would go out—an idiom for the operation of their volition).

And Moses did as [that] which Y^ehowah had charged [or, commanded] him and took Joshua and caused him to stand before Eleazar, the priest, and before all the company. [Numbers 27:22]

This is the ceremony to indicate that Joshua would be the successor to Moses. There was no consolidation of power, no politics, no election; God directed Moses as to who the next leader would be and Moses publically recognized Joshua. That would be all there would be to that.

And He laid his hand upon him and he charged him, as Y^ehowah had spoken by the hand of Moses. [Numbers 27:23]

This is Eleazar performing this action—we know this because he, Eleazar, was acting as per the instructions of Y^ehowah as they had been received by Moses. The hand represents a person's ability to *do* something; it is a reference to the actions of a person, which, in this case, was merely speaking and relaying the instructions of Y^ehowah as to what was to occur at the ceremony of the installation of Joshua to leadership over the Jews.

Given the fact that we have two million people out in the desert all of whom descended from very rebellious parents, this will be the smoothest transition of power in the history of the Hebrews. Moses, prior to his death, asks for a successor and allows God to choose. Then Moses presents Joshua to the congregation in ceremony as his successor, with the blessing of Eleazar, the high priest. There will be no struggle to consolidate power, no rebellions, no grumbling. This is a new generation of Israel and Moses handled handing the baton of power perfectly.

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Numbers 28

Numbers 28:1–31

Outline of Chapter 28:

- vv. 1–8 Daily offerings
- vv. 9–10 Offerings on the Sabbath
- vv. 11–15 Monthly (or, new moon) offerings
- vv. 16–25 The Passover and the Feast of the Unleavened Bread offerings
- vv. 26–31 Offerings for the Feast of Weeks (or, the Feast of the First Fruits)

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

Introduction: Although it seems as though we have been waiting for a long time to enter into the land of promise, Numbers 28 will not be the entry chapter. In fact, because of what Y^ehowah told Moses in the previous chapter, we know that Israel would not be entering the land until the book of Joshua, after the death of Moses. Because the first generation of Hebrews have died out, we will have some things reviewed for the next generation. Some of these things had been taught while they were pre-school and grammar school age, which, although it is by no means a worthless endeavor, it will also require some review. Numbers 28–29 reviews and updates the ordinances concerning the offerings made to God during the various holy days. Animal sacrifices were continual. It appears as though the altar always had upon it an animal sacrifice or its meal offering. Israel had to know that it took an innocent, perfect animal to atone for its sins—and this offering had to be continual. Today, Jesus Christ has atoned for our sins and there is nothing which we can add to this. **Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the deaths, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives by means of the God (Romans 6:9–10). For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people, cause this He did once for all when He offered up Himself (Hebrews 7:26–27). So, Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many (Hebrews 9:28a). For the Law, since it has a shadow of the good things to come—not the real image of things, can never, by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins. But in those [offerings] there is a reminder of sins year by year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins...By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all; and every priests stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offering one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God (Hebrews 10:1–4, 10–12).**

However, these same feasts and sacrifices were viewed with disdain by God when the ritual occurred without the reality. That is, when the Jews just went through the motions in order to have good luck with God, as a system of works rather than one of celebration and thankfulness, the feast days were meaningless. And further, when the Jews on the one hand engaged in these festivals, and, on the other, practiced injustice, they became despised in His eyes. **"What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?" says Y^ehowah. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed cattle. And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats. When you come to appear before Me, who requires of you this trampling of My courts? Bring your worthless offerings no longer; their incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and Sabbath, the calling of assemblies—I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly. I hate your new moon [festivals] and your appointed feasts; they have become a burden to Me. I am weary of bearing [you]. So when you spread out your hands [to pray], I will hide My eyes from you. Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of bloodshed. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil. Learn to do good; seek justice, reprove the ruthless, defend the orphan, please for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together," says Y^ehowah, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like**

crimson, they will be like wool,—if you consent and obey, you will eat the best of the land; however, if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." Truly, the mouth of Y^ehowah has spoken (Isaiah 1:11–20).

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Daily Offerings

Exodus 29:38–46

And Y^ehowah said to Moses, saying, [Numbers 28:1]

If the Bible were not the Word of God, it certainly quotes God an inordinate number of times. By contrast, the *Book of Mormon*, as a for instance, is translated from reform Egyptian hieroglyphics with the aid of magic glasses (and few writers of Scripture can claim that) into a King James kind of English, two hundred years after King James English was actually spoken, yet there are a dearth of direct quotations from God. The Bible has no such lack.

"Command the sons of Israel, and you will said to them, My offering [or, the approach to Me or My means of approach], My bread for My fire-offerings—My tranquilizing scent; you will take heed to approach to Me in its appointed season. [Numbers 28:2]

When bringing offerings to God, this was not to be some haphazard, free-form arrangement. All offerings were to be brought before God as He has commanded, obeying the guidelines given by Him. This particular verse sets us up for the next two chapters. There will be appointed times and seasons that the sons of Israel will come to God with offerings to Him; this is so that they could approach Him properly. Although there was a series of offerings already prescribed, these were the offerings while Israel was still in the desert. This is a more elaborate system designed for Israel while in the land of milk and honey which would have been impossible to follow while out in the desert.

In this verse, the word offering is qorbân (or, qâr^ebân) (קָרְבָּן) [pronounced *kor-BAWN* or, possibly *qaw-r^e-BAWN*, instead]. This word is found almost exclusively in Leviticus and Numbers (primarily in the first three chapters of Leviticus and the 7th chapter of Numbers) and in Ezekiel 20:28 40:43. This appears to refer to an animal brought to be offered to God as a blood sacrifice or as a burn offering. This is the animal before it is sacrificed (Leviticus 1:3, 10 3:7, 12 Numbers 4:28, 32). We could get away with rendering this [*animal*] offering most of the time and be safe. However, a more literal rendering would be *that which is brought near*. The corresponding verb, qâra^bv, means *approach*; because of the above verb, I would rather translate this *an approach, a means of approach*. This is grace that God has provided the Jews a means of approaching Him. Translating this *sacrifice* or *offering* sounds too much like an obligation or a good deed on the part of the person doing the offering. BDB #898 Strong's #7133

It is interesting that this word, although used very little in the Old Testament, was taken by the Jews, changed somewhat, and used as a gimmick in New Testament times. All it takes is just a slight twist of the meaning and intent of that which is declared to us by God's Word, and it can be distorted terribly. That is, it came to mean *given to God* and certain personal items could be declared *corban*, meaning that they did not have to be shared with anyone else. Some errant adult children would not help support their parents because the things that they owned were declared corban and therefore could not be given away to just anybody—specifically, not to their poor or ailing parents. **He was also saying to them, "You conveniently [or, neatly] set aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition. For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and 'He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him be put to death'; but you say, 'If a man says to father or mother, anything of mine you might have been helped by is Corban'; (that is to say, given to God). "You no longer permit him to do anything for father or mother; invalidating the Word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many similar things."** (Mark 7:9–13 Exodus 20:12 21:17 Leviticus 20:9).

"And you will said to them, 'This [is] the fire-offering which you [all] will approach with to Y^ehowah; two lambs, sons of a year, perfect ones, daily, a continual burnt-offering. [Numbers 28:3]

The perfect lamb represents Jesus Christ; its death in being offered to God represents our Lord's death on the cross.

" 'The one lamb you will prepare in the morning, and the second lamb you will prepare between the evenings; [Numbers 28:4]

Between the evenings means between the afternoon and the evening. Josephus claims that the Passover lamb was traditionally slain between the ninth and eleventh hours (which is, between 3 and 5 pm); our Lord's spiritual death occurred between the sixth and the ninth hour (Matthew 27:45–46), His physical death following immediately thereafter (Matthew 27:48–50).

" 'And a tenth of the ephah of flour for a present, mixed with beaten oil, a fourth of the hin; [Numbers 28:5]

The flour spoke of the humanity of Jesus Christ, the oil of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The amount here is approximately two quarts (or two liters) of flour to one quart (or one liter) of oil. The ephah and the hin are both Egyptian measures, which would be natural for the Jews to pick up after four hundred years in slavery to the Egyptians. Those who cooked or made bricks or did anything with measurement would have had these units thoroughly ingrained in their lives (just as we in the United States had S.A.E units so firmly entrenched in our thinking). There was no reason for God to change this.

" 'A continual burnt-offering, which was made in mount Sinai, for sweet fragrance a fire-offering to Y^ehowah; [Numbers 28:6]

"And it will be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the doorway of the tent of meeting before Y^ehowah where I will meet with you to speak to you there." (Exodus 29:42). The continual offering means that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was always available and is always available. His sacrifice is always before us.

" 'And its libation, a fourth of the hin for the one lamb; in the sanctuary [or, holy place] you will cause a libation of strong drink to be poured out to Y^ehowah. [Numbers 28:7]

The strong drink here is an alcoholic beverage other than wine. When they were without grape vines, and therefore, without wine, they would make a liquor out of barley in order to observe the ordinances of the Law. In this way, according to *Barnes' Notes*, they were able to observe the spirit of the Law, although not the letter.¹⁷⁴ I would assume that the meaning of this *strong drink*, symbolically, is the same as the meaning for wine, which is blessing and happiness in this life, often a human happiness which is not divinely derived. Pouring this out around the altar (or, on the altar) is our suitable service to God—the sacrifice of our lives and human happiness to our Lord. This does not mean that our Christian lives will therefore lack happiness; sometimes we must let go of one thing in order to grab something else.

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Offerings on the Sabbath

" 'And on the Sabbath day, two lambs, sons of a years, perfect ones, and two-tenths [of an ephah] of flour, a present mixed with oil, and its libation; [Numbers 28:9]

¹⁷⁴ Barnes Notes, Vol. 2, p. 248.

We had not a specific Sabbath day offering prior to this. In addition to the daily offerings just noted, we have this group of offerings which are additionally brought to God on the Sabbath. When the lambs are one year old, they are young adults, beginning their adult lives. This corresponds to our Lord Jesus Christ, who, at around thirty, sacrificed His life and laid aside His perfect happiness, on our behalf. These three things together all speak of our Lord and His death on our behalf. An ephah is understood when designating the portions of a meal offering; and an ephah is approximately one bushel. The amount of flour here was about four quarts (or four and a half liters).

"The burnt-offering of every Sabbath [lit., the Sabbath in its Sabbath], in addition to [lit., beyond] the continual burnt offering and its libation. [Numbers 28:10]

That is, v. 9 was an offering to be offered on the Sabbath as well as the daily offerings. The priests were kept busy presenting the gospel in symbolic form.

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Monthly (or New Moon) Offerings

"And in the beginnings of your months, you [all] will approach with a burnt-offering to Y^ehowah: two bulls, sons of the herd, and one ram, seven lambs, sons of a year, perfect ones; [Numbers 28:11]

Like the Sabbath day offerings, these are new, not having been commanded before. In the land, where there is more grazing area, a greater number of animals than before could be brought before God. Therefore, God required more. **"To whom much is given, much is required."** (Luke 12:48b).

And afterward a continual burnt offering, also for the new moons and for all the fixed festivals of Y^ehowah that were consecrated, and from every one who offered a freewill offering to Y^ehowah (Ezra 3:5). A new moon and a new month signified the importance of a new beginning. For Israel, this would be celebrated with celebration, sacrifices and the blowing of trumpets (I have found two references to this in my sources, but no Scripture). We celebrate the New Year with equal pagan vigor. However, the celebration of newness goes to our future sanctification, the resurrection in our new bodies—bodies without the indwelling old sin nature and without the attachment to Adam's original sin.

The bulls are *sons of the herd*, just as Jesus Christ was taken from among men. In the millennium the offerings will look back to Jesus Christ, as a memorial: **And on the day of the new moon, a young bull without blemish, also six lambs and a ram, [all] without blemish; and he will provide a grain offering, an ephah with the bull, and the lambs as much as he is able and a hin of oil with an ephah (Ezekiel 46:6–7).**

So there is no confusion, we are no longer under the Law. The ceremonies found in the Law had the purpose of revealing Jesus Christ to those who observed them. However, today, **let no man act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—things which are a mere shadow of what is to come, but the reality belongs to Christ. Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on [what] he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind (Colossians 2:16–18).**

"And three-tenths [of an ephah] of flour, a present mixed with oil for the one bull, and two-tenths [of an ephah] of flour, a present, mixed with oil, for the ram; [Numbers 28:12]

All these sacrifices had to be identified with true humanity—therefore, the flour. The first amount of flour was about six quarts and the second, four quarts.

" 'And several tenths [lit., and a tenth tenth] [of an ephah] of flour, a present, mixed with oil, for the each [lit., one] lamb, a burnt offering, a tranquilizing scent, a fire offering to Y^ehowah; [Numbers 28:13]

There was to be a flour offering for each of the lambs.

" 'And their libations are a half of the hin to a bull, and a third of the hin to a ram, and a fourth of the hin to a lamb, of wine; this [is] the burnt-offering to Y^ehowah; besides the continual burnt-offering it is prepared and its libation. [Numbers 28:14]

We have the continual burnt offerings in the camp to illustrate the always present salvation to all those who desire it; there are more observing these burnt offerings on the Sabbath, so more offerings are given to Y^ehowah. The bull was accompanied by about two quarts of wine and the ram, about 1¼ quarts.

" 'And one kid of the goats for a sin-offering to Y^ehowah; besides the continual burnt-offering, it is prepared, and its libation. [Numbers 28:15]

There must be a sacrifice tied directly to the forgiveness of sins. The sin-offering of the goat is for unknown, unintentional sins. This offering is now to be offered at least once a month.

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The Passover and the Feast of the Unleavened Bread Offerings

Exodus 12:14–20 Leviticus 23:5–14 Deuteronomy 16:1–8

" 'And in the first month, in the fourteenth day of the month: the Passover to Y^ehowah: [Numbers 28:16]

This is the most holy of all the proceedings. This is where God took all the first-born of the Egypt and passed over the first-born of those who had the blood on their door sills, at the entrance of their homes. Similarly, we are passed over when God sees the blood at the entrance of our souls. People are identified with a lot of things first: Asian-American, African-American, Doctor, etc.; however, the most important identification that we have is our identification with Jesus Christ in His death.

" 'And in the fifteenth day of the month: a festival, seven days [during which] unleavened bread is eaten; [Numbers 28:17]

This is obviously the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Passover was always tied to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Passover speaks of our Lord's death on our behalf and how we are passed over in death. However, as a direct result, we have fellowship with God—unleavened fellowship with God—which is the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This chapter is a quick overview and an updating of some of the sacrifices and offerings which are expected of Israel. It is possible that these particular holy days are imminent and that, despite the fact that they are about to enter the land, Israel is to observe these days.

" 'In the first day [there will be] a holy gathering [or, convocation]; you [all] will do no servile [or, occupational] work; [Numbers 28:18]

One of the greatest abuses of the Law was the enforcement of this law in regards to feast days and the Sabbath. The Bible does not go into any great detail in this regard, so the apostate Jews took it upon themselves to define with the utmost precision what is work. Let's see if we can do the same in more general terms. We have two Hebrew words here: *m^elâ'kâh* (מַלְאָכָה) [pronounced *m^elaw-KAWH*] and it is used for service to God in the tabernacle (Exodus 36:3 38:24 Numbers 4:3 1Chronicles 23:4); for the work which God had done at creation (Genesis 2:2–3) or His works in general (Neh. 6:16 Psalm 73:29)—which use only makes sense, as He rests from

His work as we rest from ours; for the work of one's profession (Genesis 39:11 1Samuel 8:15 1Chronicles 26:29); and the work that we are to rest from (Exodus 31:3, 5, 14 Leviticus 16:29). Strong's 4399 & 4397 BDB #521 The second word means *labor, service* and it is 'ăvôdâh (עָבַד) [pronounced *g'ab-vo-DAWH*] and this is a word used for slavery and bondage (Exodus 1:14 2:23 5:9, 11 6:6); service to the tabernacle or any other worship service (Exodus 12:25 27:19 30:16 36:1) and it used for the work which should not be done during a Sabbath or during another holy day (Numbers 28:18, 25). BDB #715 Strong #5656 & 5647. The latter word tends to stand for work which is done for someone else or in service to someone else; and the first word focuses in on the labor or the work involved, whether it is in service to someone or not. Here, the Israelite is not to perform any service to another or engage in his profession.

" 'And you [all] will approach with a fire-offering, a burnt-offering to Y^ehowah: two bulls, sons of the herd, and one ram, and seven lambs, sons of a year, perfect ones—the are to you; [Numbers 28:19]

These offerings are precisely those brought before God at the beginning of the new month. This was done only on the day of Passover and not each of the days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

" 'And their present, flour mixed with oil, three-tenths [of an ephah] for a bull, and two-tenths [of an ephah] for a ram you will prepare; [Numbers 28:20]

Again, this signifies the humanity of Christ as indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

" 'And several tenths [lit., a tenth tenth] [of an ephah] you will prepare for every [lit., for the one] lamb, for the seven lambs; [Numbers 28:21]

The offering for each lamb is prepared.

" 'And one goat, a sin-offering, to make atonement [lit., a covering] for you. [Numbers 28:22]

The goat atones or covers the sin of the people until Christ comes, the fulfillment. The goat is for the unknown sins.

" 'Apart from the burnt-offering of the morning, which [is] for the continual burnt--offering, you will prepare these: [Numbers 28:23]

As you see, these offerings took up a great deal of time and effort. The gospel requires a great deal of work. The following will be offered throughout the week of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread.

" 'According to these, you [all] will prepare daily, seven days, bread of a fire-offering, a tranquilizing scent, to Y^ehowah; besides the continual burnt-offering, it is prepared, and its libation; [Numbers 28:24]

In addition to the meal offerings which accompanied the burnt offering, there was more; an additional amount of bread was made and sacrificed to God. This is for the feast of unleavened bread.

" 'And on the seventh day, you [all] will have a holy gathering [or, convocation]—you [all] will do no servile work. [Numbers 28:25]

This is at the end of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread.

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Offerings for the Feast of Weeks (or, the Feast of the First Fruits)

Exodus 23:16 34:22 Leviticus 23:15–22 Deuteronomy 16:9–12

" 'And in the day of the first-fruits, in your approaching with a new present to Y^ehowah, in your weeks, you [all] will have a holy gathering [or, convocation]—you will do no servile work. [Numbers 28:26]

We have now moved to the Feast of the First Fruits. This set of offerings were offered on one day only, as was done for the new moon and for the Sabbath, fifty days after the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This was also the day, fifty days after the crucifixion and resurrection that the disciples met and were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). In the New Testament, this was called the Feast of Pentecost, which means *fifty*.

" 'And you [all] will approach with a burnt-offering for a tranquilizing scent to Y^ehowah; two bulls, sons of the herd, one ram, seven lambs, sons of a year; [Numbers 28:27]

Notice that these holiday offerings are quite similar: the two bulls, the ram, and the seven lambs. The two bulls are the two deaths of Jesus Christ, both physical and spiritual; the ram is His death; and the seven lambs speak of perfection. However, what I don't quite follow is why, in the desert, two rams and one bull were offered (Leviticus 23:18), whereas, here, it is two bulls and one ram. I don't quite follow the significance of the change.

" 'And their present, flour mixed with oil, three-tenths [of an ephah] to the one bull, two tenths [of an ephah] to the one ram; [Numbers 28:28]

We also have this accompanying meal offering which is the same each time.

" 'Several tenths [lit., a tenth tenth] [of an ephah] to each [lit., the one] lamb, for the seven lambs; [Numbers 28:29]

This is the exact same guidelines as given above.

" 'One kid of the goats to make atonement for you; [Numbers 28:30]

It only requires the death of our Lord one time for our atonement.

" 'You will prepare [these] apart from the continual burnt-offering and its present—they will be without blemish to you and their libations.' " [Numbers 28:31]

The instructions concerning the holy days will continue in the next chapter.

Numbers 29

Numbers 29:1–40

Outline of Chapter 29:

- vv. 1–6 Offerings for the Feast of Trumpets
- vv. 7–11 Offerings on the Day of Atonement
- vv. 12–34 Offerings for the Feast of Tabernacles
- vv. 35–40 The solemn assembly offerings and conclusion

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

Introduction: Numbers 29 and Numbers 28 should have been one chapter. This is a continuation of the elaboration and update of the feast days for the new generation which will enter the land. And I guess that I am forced to admit that this will probably not be anyone's favorite passage from God's Word. It is a nuts and bolts dealing with what will be sacrificed and what will be offered to God.

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Offerings for the Feast of Trumpets

Exodus 23:16 34:22 Leviticus 23:23–25

"And in the seventh month, in the first of the month, you [all] will have a holy convocation; you will do no servile work; it is to you a day of shouting [or, of blowing trumpets]; [Numbers 29:1]

The first feast day examined here is known as the feast of trumpets. However, the word *t'rûw'âh* (תְּרוּעָה) [pronounced *t'rû-ḠAWH*] does not necessarily mean a blast of a trumpet (although it is translated in that manner in most of our English versions. We have seen this word used to mean a shout of joy (Job 8:21 33:26); and closely associated with the loud sounds of battle (Amos 1:14 2:2 Zeph. 1:16), as well as the call to gather for battle (Numbers 10:5–6 Jeremiah 4:19). However, we also find this word associated with this particular feast day (Leviticus 23:24 Numbers 29:1) as well as with the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 25:9). I would like to unequivocally state taht this involves a trumpet or does not, but there is strong evidence that it might (Leviticus 23:24 25:9 Numbers 10:5–6 31:6) and that it might not (Joshua 6:5 Ezra 3:11–13 Job 8:21). Therefore, I would have to go with this word referring to a very loud noise, its source derived by context or direct statement. Strong's #8643 BDB #929

Seven, being the number of perfection, implies that perhaps this onth would have the greatest number of religious holidays. During this month, covered in this chapter, we have the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of the Tabernacles, and, finally, a sacred assembly on the last day of the Feast of the Tabernacles.

"And you will prepare a burnt-offering, for a tranquilizing scent to Y^ehowah: one bull, a son of the herd, one ram, seven lambs (sons of a year)—perfect ones; [Numbers 29:2]

This is the Feast of Trumpets.

"And their present, flour mixed with oil, three-tenths [of an ephah] for the bull, two-tenths [of an ephah] for the ram, [Numbers 29:3]

This is quite similar to the previous chapter; each animal sacrifice is accompanied by a gift of flour and oil.

"And one-tenth [of an ephah] for each [lit., the one] lamb, for [each of] the seven lambs; [Numbers 29:4]

It is amazing to me what verses were combined and which ones were allowed to stand separately as one verse. Vv. 1–4 could have been easily one verse or two.

"And one kid of the goats, a sin-offering, to make atonement for you; [Numbers 29:5]

The goat is generally for the known or the unknown sins.

"Apart from the burnt-offering of the month, and its present, and the continual burnt-offering, and its present, and their libations, according to their ordinance, for a tranquilizing fragrance, a fire-offering to Y^ehowah. [Numbers 29:6]

The animals offered here are in addition to those offered at the beginning of the month and the continual burnt offering.

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Offerings on the Day of Atonement

Leviticus 16 23:26–32

"And on the tenth of this seventh month, you will have a holy gathering [or, convocation], and you will humble your souls; [and] you will do no work; [Numbers 29:7]

The Jews, when they wrenched the Law into a works-oriented salvation, did just the opposite of humbling their souls; they were proud that they had kept the Law in every respect that had chosen to keep. At least twice during this day of worship, the High Priest went before the Ark of the Covenant, to sprinkle blood upon the Ark. The humbling of the souls, or the afflicting of the souls by itself became a work, something which God should recognize and reward. "Why have we fasted and You do not see? [Why] have we humbled ourselves and You do not know? [God answers]: Behold, on the day of your fast, you take pleasure and drive hard all your workers. Behold, you fast for contention and strife and to strike with a wicked fist. You do not fast like today to make your voice heard on high. Is it a fast like this which I chose, a day for a man to humble himself? Is it for bowing on'es head like a reed and for spreading out sackcloth and ashes as a bed? Will you call this a fast, even an acceptable day to Y^ehowah. Is this not the fast which I chose—to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free and break every yoke. Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry and to bring the homeless poor into the house. when you see the naked, to cover him; and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?" (Isaiah 58:3–7).

"And you [all] will bring near a burnt-offering to Y^ehowah, a tranquilizing scent, one bull, a son of the herd, one ram, seven lambs, sons of a year, perfect ones—they are for you. [Numbers 29:8]

The burning speaks of judgment and this burning tranquilizes our Lord, Who stands ready to judge.

"And their present, flour mixed with oil, three-tenths [of an ephah] for the bull, two-tenths [of an ephah] for the one ram; [Numbers 29:9]

Every sacrifice was accompanied by a present, which not only represents our Lord, but our own spiritual service, our lives being flour, but filled with the Holy spirit (which is the oil).

"A tenth tenth [or, several tenths of an ephah] for the one lamb, for the seven lambs; [Numbers 29:10]

This is not a tenth of a tenth (I don't believe).

"One kid of the goats, a sin-offering; apart from the sin-offering of the atonements, and [apart from] the continual burnt-offering, and its present, and their libations. [Numbers 29:11]

So that Jews clearly understood, this was another offering, not a reminder of anotehr one; nor did it supplant any other offering.

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Offerings for the Feast of Tabernacles

Leviticus 23:33–36a, 39–43 Deuteronomy 16:13–15 Zech. 14:16–19

"And on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, you will have a holy gathering [or, convocation]; you [all] will not do any servile work; furthermore [lit., and] you will celebrate a festival to Y^ehowah seven days; [Numbers 29:12]

This is called the Festival of Booths or the Feast of Tabernacles. It speaks of us in our temporary shelters, which are our bodies. Now might be a good time to examine the **Doctrine of the Feast of the Tabernacles—not finished yet!** The number of sacrifices offered during this feast are by far the greatest number of sacrifices offered during any festive period.

"And you will approach with a burnt-offering, a fire--offering, a tranquilizing scent to Y^ehowah; thirteen bulls, sons of the herd, two rams, fourteen lambs, sons of a year; they will be perfect; [Numbers 29:13]

These offerings listed her in Numbers are much more specific than the information given to us in Leviticus. These feast days are covered again for the new generation about to enter the land, jjust as they were covered before upon the entering of the land.

"And their present: flour mixed with oil, three-tenths [of an ephah] to the one bull, for the thirteen bulls; two-tenths [of an ephah] to the one ram, for the two rams; [Numbers 29:15]

As I do this, I wonder if this information might be better organized into charts; for example, the previous few verses would be:

Vv. 12–16	And on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, you will have a holy gathering [or, convocation]; you [all] will not do any servile work; furthermore [lit., and] you will celebrate a festival to Y^ehowah seven days; And you will approach with a burnt-offering, a fire-offering, a tranquilizing scent to Y^ehowah;		
[day one]		thirteen bulls, sons of the herd	And their present: flour mixed with oil, three-tenths [of an ephah] to the one bull, for the thirteen bulls
		two rams	two-tenths [of an ephah] to the one ram, for the two rams
		fourteen lambs, sons of a year; they will be perfect	and several tenths [lit., a tenth tenth] [of an ephah] to the one lamb, for the fourteen lambs
		and one kid of the goats, a sin-offering; apart from the continual burnt-offering, and its present, and its libation.	

These first few verses name the specific feast and its time, and, by implication of the following verses, name the sacrifices to be offered on the first day.

Vv. 17–19	And on the second day:		
[day two]	twelve bulls, sons of the herd	And their present, and their libations, for the bulls, for the rams, and for the sheep; in their number, according to the ordinance	
	two rams,		
	fourteen lambs, sons of a year—perfect ones		
	and one kid of the goats, a sin-offering; apart from the continual burnt-offering, and its present, and their libations.		

In the previous set of verses, we have named the amount of the present to be offered with each animal, so that will not be repeated specifically.

Vv. 20–22	And on the third day:		
[day three]	eleven bulls,	Their present, and their libations, for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs; in their number, according to the ordinance	
	two rams,		
	fourteen lambs, sons of a year—perfect ones		
	and one kid of the goats, a sin-offering; apart from the continual burnt-offering, and its present, and its libation.		

Notice that there is a count down on the number of bulls each day. I do not know why that is.

Vv. 23–25	And on the fourth day:		
[day four]	ten bulls,	And their present, and their libations, for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs; in their number, according to the ordinance	
	two rams,		
	fourteen lambs, sons of a year—perfect ones		
	and one kid of the goats, a sin-offering; apart from the continual burnt-offering, and ¹⁷⁵ its present, and its libation.		

What is somewhat ambiguous to me is whether or not the people will work during the week; it is specifically stated that they will not work on day one and on day eight.

¹⁷⁵ The Massoretic text lacks the *and*; it is found, however, in the western Samaritan, the Onkelos, Syriac and the Vulgate. There are several instances throughout this chapter where the Massoretic text lacks the conjunction, but it is found in many of the codices. See Rotherham's *The Emphasized Bible*, pp. 190–191 for these passages.

Vv. 26–28	And on the fifth day:		
[day five]	nine bulls,	And their present, and their libations, for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs; in their number, according to the ordinance	
	two rams,		
	fourteen lambs, sons of a year—perfect ones		
	and one goat, a sin-offering; apart from the continual burnt-offering, and its present, and its libation.		

This gives us a clue to the meaning of ordinance; it is a law which deals with things outside of human rights, criminal and civil law. Calling it less important would be human viewpoint; however, there is no prescribed punishment for violating these particular regimen of sacrifices. It would be reasonable to assume that early on, a priest who got creative would certainly suffer the sin unto death, and likely executed by God.

Vv. 29–31	And on the sixth day:		
[day six]	eight bulls,	And their present, and their libations, for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs; in their number, according to the ordinance	
	two rams,		
	fourteen lambs, sons of a year—perfect ones		
	and one goat, a sin-offering; apart from the continual burnt-offering, and its present, and its libation.		

We continue to see a sacrifice of fourteen lambs.

Vv. 32–34	And on the seventh day:		
[day seven]	seven bulls,	And their present, and their libations, for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs; in their number, according to the ordinance	
	two rams,		
	fourteen lambs, sons of a year—perfect ones		
	and one goat, a sin-offering; apart from the continual burnt-offering, and its present, and its libation.		

The countdown on the number of bulls allowed for seven bulls to be offered on the seventh day. The number of bulls sacrificed will now suddenly drop from seven bulls to one bull for the eighth day. There is a similar marked decrease in the number of lambs sacrificed.

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The Solemn Assembly Offerings and Conclusion

Leviticus 23:36b Neh. 8:18

Vv. 35–38	And on the eighth day a restraint you [all] will have—you [all] will do no servile work; and you [all] will approach with a burnt offering, a fire-offering, a tranquilizing scent to Y^ehowah;		
	[day eight]	one bull,	And their present, and their libations, for the bull, for the ram, and for the lambs; in their number, according to the ordinance
one ram,			
seven lambs, sons of a year—perfect ones			
and one goat, a sin-offering; apart from the continual burnt-offering, and its present, and its libation.			

My guess is that on this final day, somewhat of a finale for this feast, the point is that more is not better. The Jews are not any more forgiven with one bull, one ram and seven lambs than they were with thirteen bulls, two rams and fourteen lambs.

This last day is sometimes taken as a separate holy day, called a *solemn assembly*. *And he read from the book of the Law of God daily, from the first day to the last day. And they celebrated the feast seven days, and on the eighth day, a solemn assembly according to the ordinance* (Neh. 8:18).

"These you [all] will prepare to Y^ehowah in your appointed seasons, apart from your vows, and your free-will offerings, for your burnt-offerings, and for your presents, and for your libations, and for your peace-offerings." [Numbers 29:39]

This is a summation of the previous two chapters.

Now would be a good time to examine the **Summary of Offerings Chart**.

And Moses communicated to the sons of Israel according to all that Y^ehowah had commanded Moses. [Numbers 29:40; 30:1 in Hebrew]

Moses received this directly from God and communicated this information to his people.

Numbers 30

Numbers 30:1–16

Outline of Chapter 30:

- Vv. 1–2 Introduction/the vow of the man
- Vv. 3–5 The woman's vow when under the authority of her father
- Vv. 6–8 The woman's vow carried over from her father's house to marriage
- Vv. 9–16 The single woman's vow/the vows made by a woman under the authority of her man

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

Introduction: I don't believe there is any place in the Bible where a vow is enjoined. However, you have no doubt heard of the person who makes deals with God—"Please, please please, God, allow this to happen or don't like this happen and I will do some silly thing that I don't really want to in order to reveal my gratitude." Often, people will pray for a job or for their girl friend or boy friend to come back to them or to just find a girl friend or boyfriend; and then they promise God stupid things like "I will forever be your humble servant"; "I will go to church every Sunday"; and, my personal favorite, "I will never do that again!". Numbers 30 indicates that God does not take vows lightly; that if you are going to make some sort of a vow or commitment to Him, then this should not be entered into lightly. The occasion for these vows was that this next generation of believers and their sons and daughters were more faithful to Y^ehowah than their predecessors, so they would be more likely to make vows to God and to make vows at a young age. Many of them certainly vowed that they would never be like their parents in spiritual matters, having seen their parents wasted by God in the desert. However, with their vows would come some overzealousness and some distortion, so Y^ehowah is setting up some guidelines in this chapter. Also, in this chapter, we will see some application to life, authority and marriage that most of you, in reading this on your three-year plan to read the Bible, would never catch.

Introduction/the Vow of the Man

And Moses spoke to the heads of the tribes of the sons of Israel, saying, "This [is] the Word which Y^ehowah has commanded: [Numbers 30:1; 30:2 in the Hebrew Bible]

The faithfulness of Moses is almost beyond belief. God has told him that he will not enter into the land. Compared to what the Israelites have done during the desert wanderings, what sin Moses did (by human viewpoint) seems so pale by comparison. But Moses shows no bitterness, no bad mental attitude—he continues in his position of authority as if nothing had happened. There is nothing to indicate that the Israelites even realized that he was disciplined or that he would not enter the land with them. However, he was certainly getting old and naming a successor would be expected. However, he continues with God's commandments to them.

"When a man vows a vow to Y^ehowah or has sworn an oath to bind a bond on his soul, he will not pollute [or, profane] his word; according to all that is going out from his mouth, he will do.
[Numbers 30:2; 30:3 in Hebrew]

What we have here is a public or a private commitment to God. Nâdar (נָדַר) [pronounced *naw-DAHR*] is the verb for *vow*, found here in the Qal imperfect; and the noun, also found here, is nêder (נֵדֶר) [pronounced *NAY-der*]. This means *to make a promise, to make a commitment, to give a word of assurance concerning a matter, to give one's personal and honorable guarantee, to make a solemn oath or pledge to do or not to do a thing*. Jacob, after his dream of the ladder reaching to heaven, made a private vow to God (Genesis 28:20). Israel as a nation, made a vow to God in Numbers 21:2. Jephthah, while filled with the Holy Spirit, made a vow to God (Judges 11:29–30). Hannah, before God and Eli the priest, made a vow concerning her son Samuel in 1Samuel 1:9–11. Vows are primarily made to God (Deuteronomy 23:23 2Samuel 15:7 Psalm 133:2) and may or may not be public. The

majority of the vows named in the Bible tend to be made in private. Sometimes these vows are accompanied by an animal sacrifice. There appears to be no more or less of a binding affect whether these vows are made in public or private. Strong's #5087–5088 BDB #623.

According to Barne's notes, the primary difference between a vow and a bond is a vow was positive and a bond was negative or retirctive. The vow was a situation where a person would dedicate something of his to God, whether is was a certain time period, their entire life, or perhaps some material prosperity. He might, in this process, have to trade some common, human enjoyment or experience because of this dedication to God. A bond directly bared a person from a particular activity¹⁷⁶.

And, to head you off at the pass, the only man-made vowing in the New Testament are made under questionable circumstances (Acts 18:18 21:23 23:12). In fact, James wrote, **But above all, my brothers, do not swer, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but let your yes be yes and your no, no; so that you may not fall under judgment** (James 5:12). James was simply quoting our Lord, who said, **"Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, 'You will not make false vows, but you will fulfill your vows to the Lord.'**¹⁷⁷ **However, I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is the footstod of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King.**¹⁷⁸ **Nor will you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black; but let your statement be, 'Yes, yes,' or 'No, no'; and anything beyond these is of evil."** (Matthew 5:33–37). The key is that the Jews were always very demonstrative in their faith, and would often make very solmen promises to God. At that time, it was acceptable and, even, regulated, but not, as I have said, enjoined by God. However, vows became such a frivolous and empty package of words, so heavily regulated by legalism, that, by New Testament times, not only had they lost their meaning, but they became an insult to God. I personally, have always felt incapable of making a vow to God concerning anything of importance, knowing how weak my flesh was. We are witnesses before the angels concerning God and all the emotion and sincerity in the world makes no difference when you make a vow and then, generally not too far into the future, you break them.

The Woman's Vow When under the Authority of Her Father

"And when a woman vows a vow to Y^ehowah, and has bound a bond in the house of her father in her youth; [Numbers 30:3; 30:4 in Hebrew]

People makes vows at all ages. This is interesting that only the woman—actually, the young lady—is dealt with here. So here the woman has made a vow to Y^ehowah and the content of the vow is not in question; but the fact of the vow. Being in the house of her father will give her a certain amount of slack, you might say.

"And her father has heard her vow, and her bond which she has bound on her soul and her father has kept silent in regards to her, then all of her vows stand and every bond which she has bound on her soul is established [lit. stands]. [Numbers 30:4; 30:5 in Hebrew]

So the young lady has made a vow, her father has heard it and does not contradict the vow or negate it. The father alows the vow to stand. Since she is under his roof, he can, as the parent, as the one who pays the bills, negate what she has vowed; he is responsible for her while she is under his roof.

"And if her father takes a stand in opposition to her in the day of his hearing, none of her vows and her bonds which she has bound on her soul are established [lit. stand]; then [lit., and] Y^ehowah will pardon [or, forgive] her, for her father has disallowed [lit., has taken a stand *against*] her. [Numbers 30:5; 30:6 in Hebrew]

¹⁷⁶ Barnes' Notes, Vol. 2, p. 251.

¹⁷⁷ Leviticus 19:12 Numbers 30:2 Deuteronomy 23:21

¹⁷⁸ Psalm 48:2

On the other hand, when she proclaims this vow, whatever it happens to be, if the father expressly disapproves of the vow—then she is not bound by that vow. The word which is translated *takes a stand in opposition* is *nûw'* (נֹוֹ) [pronounced *noo*], which we already studied in Numbers 14:34. Strong's #5106 BDB #626. Since she is still under his authority, what he says goes—therefore, she is not under a vow.

Now, the vow of a young man is not mentioned here. However, seeing as how the vow of a male is, and reading this previous few verses, it would be my opinion that the young male under the authority of his parents is treated exactly the same as the young woman living under the authority of her parents. In this regard, there is no difference. The difference occurs when the woman leaves the house. She leaves the house to place herself under the authority of a man, whereas the man leaves the house to be the authority over a household¹⁷⁹.

The Woman's Vow Carried over from Her Father's House to Marriage

"And if she is [to be married] to a husband [lit., and if in being, she is to a man], and her vows [are] on her, or a rash utterance of her lips, which she has bound on herself [lit., her soul]; [Numbers 30:6; 30:7 in Hebrew]

We have a similar situation; a woman has made a vow to Y^ehowah. The vow was made in her father's house but she has now gotten married. Or, she is still in her father's house, but she is betrothed to a man. In any case, this is somewhat of a transitional period for the woman. The authority over her is being transferred from her father to her husband. Even if the woman was still in her father's house, but betrothed to a man, she was so much considered belonging to that man that a sexual relation with another man during this time of engagement was, like adultery, punishable by death (Deuteronomy 22:23–24).

Now, very often, this vow of hers would have some sort of an affect on her marriage or her new household. The actual content of her obligation to Y^ehowah is not the issue. Here, and in Numbers 30:8, we have the noun to *speak rashly* (Strong's #4008 BDB #105), and the verb is found in Leviticus 5:4 Psalm 106:33 (32?) Proverbs 12:18 (Strong's #981 BDB #104).^{*} This would even apply to the very emotional *I swear to God that I will...* However, it would be my opinion that while that sort of rash statement is fodder for the degenerate English language today, particularly on television, it was not a part of even the most casual vocabulary of the Hebrew family—at least, not that close to the exodus. Again, it is interesting that this is given to the woman, but not to the man.

Notice the very different culture. The woman generally went directly from the care and authority of her father to the care and authority of her right man. She did not move into a town house or down the street or into a friend's flop tent. Such a culture gave the families a much greater stability than we see today.

"And her husband has heard and in the day of his hearing, he was silent in regard to her, then all¹⁸⁰ her vows stand and her bonds which she has bound on her soul are established [lit., stand]. [Numbers 30:7; 30:8 in Hebrew]

Like the father situation, the husband hears the vow and does not say anything about it, one way or the other. Then her soul to bound by that vow—whatever she has promised to perform, she has obligated herself to that vow. One kind of common vow that would be found in this sort of situation is that a woman might vow, as Hannah did in 1Samuel 1 that her first born would be a Nazarite. When she gets married, her father approaches the new husband and says, "Here's the deal about your first-born—this was her vow." The husband, at that point, has the option of divesting her of that vow. He may choose not for their first son to be a Nazarite.

¹⁷⁹ *Barne's Notes* states that the omission of vows made by boys and young men would infer that all of their vows are binding. Obviously, I disagree.

¹⁸⁰ The word *all* is found in the western Samaritan, the Septuagint, the Syriac and the Vulgate.

"And if in the day of her husband's hearing he takes a stand in opposition to her, then he has broken her vow which [is] on her, and the rash utterance of her lips which she has bound on her soul, and Y^ehowah will pardon [or, forgive] her. [Numbers 30:8; 30:9 in Hebrew]

No matter what the woman has said or vowed, she is under the authority of her husband here and if he, as her king-hero, disallows the vow—he takes an unequivocal stand against it—then she is no longer under that vow. The man, from the first day of their creation and through the fall, has been in authority over the woman. Only in the fall, could this authority have possibly changed hands. As I have mentioned, this makes the true stability of a marriage almost a sure thing insofar as the woman is concerned. If she can find a man to whom she will entrust her volition to—to whom she is willing to submit to, to place her free will in his hands—then she has found a solid marriage partner. If you look at your husband and from day one of your vows, think *I would no more obey him than cross a busy street blindfolded*, then you have discovered the essence of your marriage problems: you are either arrogant or you made a horribly bad choice.

The Single Woman's Vow/the Vows Made by a Woman under the Authority of Her

"As to the vow of a widow or a divorced [lit., cast-out] woman: all that she has bound on her soul is established on her [or, will take a stand against her]. [Numbers 30:9; 30:10 in Hebrew]

In the Hebrew culture, as it is in many cultures, the single woman out in the world was almost an unknown. Women remained at home until they were married, the authority over their souls transferring from the father to the husband. Those who had been widowed and those whose husband's divorced them (literally, cast them out) were the only significant population of single females.

"And if the house of her husband she has vowed, or has bound a bond on her soul with an oath; [Numbers 30:10; 30:11 in Hebrew]

The difference between this verse and v. 6, is that she made the vow in v. 6 in her father's house and it is carried over with her into the house of her husband. However, this vow originated in the house of her husband.

"And her husband has heard and has remained silent in regard to her—he has not taken a stand in opposition to her—then all her vows stand and every bond which she has bound on her soul stands. [Numbers 30:11; 30:12 in Hebrew]

This is no distinguishing here between a husband who does not actively oppose her vow because he is a milquetoast or because he agrees with her. She has placed herself under his authority and what he says goes—and what he doesn't say, goes. If the woman has made an intelligent choice, then she can trust her husband to look out for her in this regard. We have no understanding of authority whatsoever. Most people only think that having authority means you have some other person under you—you have someone else to boss around (even if it is just one person). When you are in authority over someone, they have been entrusted to you by God and you are responsible for these people. In a work environment, you are responsible for their decisions and their work—in school, as a coach or a teacher, you have a responsibility to look out for their best interests, not yours—which may involve taking a stand in opposition to them. In a marriage, this is a woman given to the care, love and honor of a man—he is responsible for her; he has a duty to look out for her best interests and the best interests of their family (as he is ultimately in charge in that regard). The husband who wants to be king and reign over his palace, getting served what he wants when he wants it is a fool and has no understanding of what he has undertaken. The woman, unfortunately, is the bigger fool for choosing to subjugate herself to such an ass. Most women, with the proper training, can be very discerning when it comes to placing their volition under someone else's authority. However, if they enter into marriage on a wave of libido, guaranteed that will be a rocky, mostly unhappy marriage (and she deserves it; no woman is forced to get married).

"And if her husband [lit. man], in breaking, breaks them on the day of hearing, none of the outgoing of her lips concerning her vows, or concerning the bond of her soul, stands—her man has broken them—and Y^ehowah forgives [or, pardons] her. [Numbers 30:12; 30:13 in Hebrew]

The word translated *forgive* or *pardon* is found used that way throughout the Bible; for instance: Exodus 34:9 Leviticus 4 Numbers 14:19 15 Psalm 103:3 Isaiah 55:7; it appears to be more widely used after the establishment of the Law. I had thought that perhaps it might mean *overlook, not hold responsible for, not hold to*; but it appears to mean *forgive* or *pardon*. Strong's #5545 BDB #699

"Every vow and every oath—a bond to humble the soul—her man establishes or her man breaks it. [Numbers 30:13; 30:14 in Hebrew]

Being under the authority of this man, her vows are subject to his approval or disapproval.

"And if her man in [his] silence, says nothing to her, from day unto day, then he has caused to stand all her vows, or all her bonds which [are] upon her; he has caused them to stand, for he has kept silent at her in the day of his hearing; [Numbers 30:14; 30:15 in Hebrew]

Again, it makes no difference how rash or well-thought out the vows were, nor is there an issue with what sort of man he is. If the man hears the vow and he doesn't say anything, then he has, in his silence and in his position of authority, bound this woman to whatever vow she has made.

"And if in breaking, he breaks them, after he has heard, then he will bear her iniquity." [Numbers 30:15; 30:16 in Hebrew]

Note, with authority comes responsibility. No matter what the vows were, if the husband did not take a stand against them to begin with, then he has become even more responsible than the woman is. If he later, after giving this some thought, or as circumstances change, decides to break these vows, then whatever penalty God associates with the breaking of these vows is upon him, not upon his wife. Even though we do not make vows today, we learn a great deal about the position of authority which the man has and what that means. Becoming Mr. Boss-man is not at all what authority means. And even if you, the woman, are so much in love with a man that you cannot stand it, if he is too immature to wield his authority—if you do not want to trust your volition to him, then you run the other way or you wait until he matures—otherwise, this very amateur surgeon gets to practice operating on you.

See The **Doctrine of Vows** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

"These [are] the statutes which Y^ehowah has commanded Moses between a man and his woman, between a father and his daughter—in her youth [and in] the house of her father. [Numbers 30:16; 30:17 in Hebrew]

Even God's Word points out here that this is not so much about vows as it is about the relationship and authority which exists between a woman and her husband or a woman and her father.

Numbers 31

Numbers 31:1–54

Outline of Chapter 31:

- Vv. 1–6 God prepares Israel for war against Midian
- Vv. 7–10 Israel defeats the Midianites
- Vv. 11–18 Divine viewpoint concerning the plunder gathered by the sons of Israel
- Vv. 19–24 The cleansing of those gone to battle
- Vv. 25–47 The division of the plunder
- Vv. 48–54 The voluntary offerings of the officers of war

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

Introduction: Numbers 31 is a fascinating chapter, dealing with the Israelites making war against the Midianites and the division of the resultant booty. Although the casual reader would not recognize it, the infiltration of the Midianite women of Numbers 25 was an act of aggression against the Israelites and this required a military response. Israel did not attack the Midianites and there could have been peaceful coexistence, had Balak, the Moabite leader, not brought in Balaam to curse the people of Israel. However, Balaam's advice to infiltrate the Israelites with pagan religion presented by both Moabite and Midianite women; however, the Midianite women were more aggressive in their infiltration, a daughter of means actually coming into the camp of Israel.

You have no doubt noticed that in Numbers 25, we dealt with the aggression of the Midianites, and then, suddenly six chapters later, we have the attack against the Midianites as directed by Y^ehowah. Why not simply organize this book so that these two events were successive chapters? This tells us the situation regarding the writing of the book of Numbers at this point in time. Logically and in retrospect, one would write first Numbers 25 and then Numbers 31. The intervening chapters about offerings and vows could have really been placed before or after the two engagements with the Midianites. They were not organized that way, however, because now either Moses is furiously writing, or, more than likely commanding his successor and assistant, Joshua, to record this information. Therefore, what occurred in Numbers 26–30 had already come to Moses and it was now being recorded, prior to the orders of Y^ehowah found in Numbers 30:2.

God Prepares Israel for War Against Midian

And Y^ehowah spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 31:1]

This exact phrase will occur less than a half dozen times throughout the rest of the Law, since the book of Deuteronomy is primarily a series of sermons.

"Execute the vengeance of the sons of Israel against the Midianites—and¹⁸¹ afterwards, you will be gathered to your people. [Numbers 31:2]

Since Israel has had a very mixed relationship with the Midianites, and since this is almost the last time that we will see them, it is time we examined the **Doctrine of the Midianites—not finished yet!** It is also time for us to examine the **Doctrine of War** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

It is interesting that God directed the Israelites to strike the Midianites and not Moab. Let's see if we can sort this out: (1) It was Balak of Moab who had become distressed because of the sons of Israel. (2) Balaam went and discussed this problem with the elders of the Midianites, who suggested Balaam be contacted. (3) He called in

¹⁸¹ The Massoretic text lacks the *and*; the Samaritan, the Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate and the Targum of Jonathan all have it.

Balaam, who very likely was a Midianite, or closely associated with the Midianites. (4) Although Balaam could not curse Israel, Balaam advised another and different means of attack. (5) Even though Balak spearheaded this operation, it becomes clear by the incident of the Midianite woman in Numbers 25 and by v. 16 of this chapter, that the Midianites were more energetic in their infiltration of Israel. (6) Furthermore, the Midianite women of means, of stature, from good homes, were the ones involved as temple prostitutes, indicating the level of degeneracy to which they and their families had fallen. (7) God still had some who were faithful in Moab (or, at least would be in the future); Ruth, who is in the line of our Lord, is a Moabitess. (8) Finally, although God did not cause the Jews to strike the Moabites, they were forever cursed for their action here. **No Ammonite or Moabite will enter the assembly of Y^ehowah; none of them even to the tenth generation, will they ever enter the assembly of Y^ehowah, because they did not meet you with food [lit., bread] and water on the way when you came out of Egypt, and because he¹⁸² [Moab] hired against you Balaam ben Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you."** (Deuteronomy 23:3–4).

What we have here is a true holy war, different from 99% of so-called *holy wars* in the past several centuries. There is no personal vendetta involved; Moses possibly would have just gone on his way and left things as they were, had he not been commanded by Y^ehowah to destroy the Midianites. This is no different than cutting out a cancer resident in a person's body. These people will never be saved and they will be a continual drag on all the rest of society. They must be destroyed to allow others to live, just as a cancer must be destroyed when inhabiting a person's body. This must never be twisted into meaning that the Jews themselves were so cold-blooded as to, on a whim, choose to destroy the bulk of a people in this way. As we will see later in the chapter, the Jews did not have the heart to kill all of the Midianites, and Moses, obeying the instructions of God, had to straighten them out (Numbers 31:15–18). God did not give them an alternative. And so that this will not be further misinterpreted, although the people of Israel are still God's people, chosen out from among all of the nations, they do not have the same close relationship with God and have not been commanded by God at any time in the past two thousand years to destroy any people in this manner (which does not preclude war for the Jew; they are just not authorized today to wipe out a nation in this way). When a nation like Midian or when a people like the Canaanites are wiped out in large numbers due to their degeneracy, this is a foreshadowing of God's future extermination of all those who do not have the name of Jesus on their lips. If you are not a part of God's people—redeemed by the blood of Christ—then you will be resurrected from torments to be thrown into the Lake of Fire, where all of those who have not had their sins removed from them, will be removed from God and this world as we know it. See also Deuteronomy 20:13 Judges 21:11 1Samuel 27:9 1Kings 11:15–16.

This will be the last military maneuver of Moses—his end is drawing near. God tells him that after this battle, he will be gathered to his people, an often used euphemism in the Old Testament for death (Genesis 25:8, 17 35:29 Numbers 20:24, 26 27:13).

And Moses spoke to the people, saying, "Receive arms from among you, men for the war [or, army] and they will be against Midian to execute the vengeance of Y^ehowah on Midian. [Numbers 31:3]

In bringing in the religious prostitutes to lure the Israelites away from Y^ehowah, this was an act of aggression not only against the Israelites but against God. The irony of all this is that Israel avoided confrontation with the Midianites in their moving toward the land. None of this had to occur. It was the decisions of Balak, the advice of Balaam and the actions of the temple prostitutes which brought this upon Midian.

"Each tribe will send a thousand [men] to the war [lit., a thousand in regards to each tribe, a thousand in regards to each tribe—from all of the tribes of Israel, you will send to the war (or, army)]. [Numbers 31:4]

Just as the Hebrew language often repeated a verb for emphasis, they repeated some phrases and this would affect the meaning. When a phrase like this—a thousand in regard to each tribe, a thousand in regards to each tribe—occurs, it means *a thousand from each tribe*. They did not have a word for *each* in the Hebrew, so it was

¹⁸² Note how many translations translate this and Neh. 13:1–3 incorrectly.

accomplished in this manner (to support this, note that we have 12,000 men in all; v. 5). The tribes all participate equally in this attack upon Midian.

And so, out of the thousands of Israel, a thousand in regards to the tribe, were committed, twelve thousand having been armed [withdrawn by arming] for war. [Numbers 31:5]

We have two verbs which need to be examined here. *Armed* is the word *châlat*s (חָלַט) [pronounced *khaw-LAH-TZ*] and BDB indicates that this is two different words, both spelled the same. In a way this is true, in the English language, but the two uses mean basically the same thing in the Hebrew. In the Qal or the Niphal stems, *châlat*s means *to remove, withdraw* (Leviticus 14:40 Deuteronomy 25:9–10 Hosea 5:6), yet, throughout this chapter (vv. 21, 27, 29–30, 32) it is rendered *armed* for war. However, these men were *removed* from the rest of Israel and set apart for war by *arming* them. In the Piel, it appears to mean *removed from danger.*, used primarily in poetry (Job 36:15 Psalm 6:4 7:4 18:19). Strong's #2502 BDB #323

There is a verb which occurs two times in the Bible, here and in v. 16, which is usually translated two different ways entirely. The verb is *mâçar* (מָצָר) [pronounced *maw-SHR*] (Strong's #4560 BDB #588) and it's possible cognate is *mâçôreth* (מְצֹרֶת) [pronounced *maw-SOH-reth*] (Strong's #4562 BDB #64),¹⁸³ so let me show you what the various translations do with this:

Translation	Niphal (passive) imperfect in v. 5	Qal infinitive from v. 16	Noun cognate from Ezekiel 20:37
<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	were provided	to trespass	permanently bound?
<i>The New English Bible</i>	were called up	into disloyalty (?)	the bond [or muster]
KJV	were delivered	to commit	the bond
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	volunteered	the cause of daring acts [or, the cause of committing]	the bond [or, crucible]
<i>New International Version</i>	were supplied	were the means of (?)	the bond
<i>New American Standard Bible</i>	were furnished [or, delivered]	[not translated]	the bond
<i>New Revised Standard Version</i>	were conscripted	made (?)	the bond
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	are given	to cause	the bond
<i>The Kukis Occasionally Literal Translation</i>	were committed	to commit ¹⁸⁴	a commitment

As you can see, it is difficult working with an English translation because you never really realize what is there. I think that it would be idea to present a very literal translation side by side a more figuratively-based, contextual translated version. In the former, idioms would be rendered literally, sometimes not making any sense; and in the latter, idioms would be translated as to their meaning as opposed to their word-by-word translation.

¹⁸³ There is even another possibly related word: *môçâr* (מֹצָר) [pronounced *moe-SAWR*] and found only in Job 33:16 and translated *instruction* or *warnings* (Strong's #4562 BDB #416).

¹⁸⁴ *The Emphasized Bible*, influenced by Davies renders this verse *the cause of daring acts of treachery against Y^ehowah*; however, Rotherham footnotes the *Oxford Gesenius*, an Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament, as rendering this *cause of committing treachery*.

And then Moses sent them, a thousand in regards to a tribe, to the army, them and Phinehas ben Eleazar, the priest, to the army; and the holy vessels, and the trumpets of the shouting in his hand. [Numbers 31:6]

All wars of Israel had a spiritual overtone to them. The trumpets are associated with God, whether in worship or in war (Numbers 10:10). You cannot underestimate the power of God in battle and the need for prayer and complete trust in Him. The last generation illustrated this when they fought against the Amalekites and the Canaanites. **But they went up heedlessly to the ridge of the hill country; neither the ark of the covenant of Y^ehowah nor Moses left the camp. Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down, and struck them and beat them down as far as Hormah** (Numbers 14:44–45). The Israelites had been instructed to only fight when they had spiritual support. **"The priestly sons of Aaron, moreover, will blow the trumpets; and this will be for you a perpetual statute throughout your generations. And when you go to war in your land against the adversary who attacks you, then you will sound an alarm with the trumpets, that you may be remembered before Y^ehowah your God and be saved from your enemies."** (Numbers 10:8–9). Phinehas ben Eleazar recognized the spiritual issues early on when he executed Zimri the Israelite and Cozbi, the Midianite woman, and was given the privilege of joining in with the army as their spiritual leader.

Israel did not just fight against a people in order to take their land. They were instructed to do so because of the degeneracy of the people. This is particularly illustrated here. Israel could have gone up against Moab and defeated them. They were 90% defeated already. Furthermore, Moab had some definite boundaries and Israel could have taken Moab from the Moabites. However, the nation which was disciplined was Midian due to the general degeneracy level of the populace. Israel did not appropriate any land in this attack nor were they clamouring to go to war against the Midianites. They will enjoy some bounty from the attack.

Israel Defeats the Midianites

And they warred against Midian as Y^ehowah had commanded Moses, and they killed every [adult] male; [Numbers 31:7]

This was an attack that would just about wipe the Midianites from the face of the earth. We will hear little or nothing about them every again. In this battle, as it is with all of our battles, the battle is the Lord's.

And the kings of Midian they killed, besides their pierced ones [or, as well as the others which were slain]: Evi and Rekem and Zur and Hur and Reba—five kings of Midian; and Balaam ben Beor, they have slain with the sword. [Numbers 31:8]

Châlal (חָלַל) [pronounced *khaw-LAHL*] and its root means *to bore*, by implication meaning *wound, dissolve*. Although BDB gives three separate definitions and listings for this verb, I think that we can correlate them. Men killed using swords and arrows, and those who died had been pierced. Because death is so closely associated with defilement and uncleanness, this word also came to mean *defiled, polluted*. Strong's #2490 BDB #319–320

It is this verse compared to Numbers 24:25 which indicates that Balaam was likely a Midianite, who had a second home and business in Pethor of Mesopotamia. **Then Balaam arose and departed and returned to his place** (Numbers 24:25a). This is almost immediately after Balaam's attempted cursing, indicating that returning to his place was to Midian. He may have been found by Balak in Mesopotamia, but he was likely there to peddle some of his itinerate cursing and blessing. Balaam obviously had to be with those in Midian and probably had a reasonable sum of money from Balak. This was not discussed in the Bible, apart from Balak promising those funds to Balaam if he would curse Israel. However, the key to the blessing of the sons of Israel was Y^ehowah; remove God and you remove their blessings. However, an outside force cannot remove Y^ehowah, but the people themselves can reject Him. Their method to remove God from Israel, thereby removing their source of blessing, was to send them women to lure them to other gods. Balaam was smart enough to suggest this—I am not so sure that Balak was.

Occasionally the Bible throws in some names whereas, at other times, it leaves out the name of the opposing leaders altogether. In their exodus from Egypt, we know the leader of Egypt as only Pharaoh. Although many have theorized which Pharaoh opposed Moses, the Bible is silent on this matter. However, Zur was an influential leader of the Midianites and yet had allowed his daughter to partake in the sexual seducing of Israel in order to lead the sons of Israel away from Y^ehowah. That a man could allow his own daughter to do that is dispicable—that he probably coerced and/or encouraged his daughter to do so is criminal. **And the name of the Midianite woman who was slain was cozbi the daughter of Zur, who was head of the people of a father's household in Midian** (Numbers 25:15). It was absolutely just that this man should die in battle against Israel.

And the sons of Israel took captive the women of Midian, and their infants; and all their cattle, and all their substance, and all their wealth—the sons of Israel [lit., they] plundered; [Numbers 31:9]

Part of war is taking up the spoils of battle. It does not make sense to destroy a people and to leave their substance there to rot. This is not evil, this is simply common sense. The women were taken captive for the purpose of having them as concubines (mistresses) or as slaves. The children were taken as slaves or as future wives and/or mistresses.

And they have burnt with fire all their cities, with their habitations [or, hamlets], and all their towers. [Numbers 31:10]

Although the maps and the histories all tend to name the Midianites as roaming people of the desert—as nomads without a permanent dwelling area, they obviously had some civilization which they called their own. The towers were religious buildings built high in order to reach God. The Habitations carry with them the connotation of circular, as in tents or semi-permanent shelters surrounding the cities. My educated guess is that the destruction was so complete that we do not have any archeological record of these cities or towers; their records and books and walls which may have held histories on them were destroyed. They may have been primarily nomads, but that does not mean that a significant portion of their population was not in a city—this verse indicates that they were, and that they were close to the Jordan River. Since we hear very little from the Midianites, except for Judges 6–8, after this time period, that we can assume this attack upon them essentially wiped out their permanent residence, causing their permanent traces of existence to be lost to history. With the information found in this verse it should be clear that finding any trace of them in history will be difficult.

Divine Viewpoint Concerning the Plunder Gathered by the Sons of Israel

And they [the Israelites] took all the spoil and all the prey, among man and among beast; [Numbers 31:11]

Because we have been so long without a war, we practically lack words in the English language for *spoil*; *plunder* and *booty*, both being notable, but almost archaic exceptions. I am guessing that this *plunder* from among men and among beast is the women and the animals that they took.

And they [caused to be] brought the captives and the booty and the spoil before Moses and before Eleazar the priest and before all the leaders of all¹⁸⁵ the company of the sons of Israel into the camp in the plains of Moab across the Jordan [from] Jericho. [Numbers 31:12]

The word for prey here is mal^eqôwach (מַלְקוֹחַ) [pronounced *ma-l^e-KOE-ahk*] and appears to paint a picture of whatever an animal can pick up in its jaws and walk away with—I based this on how it is found in Psalm 22:15, where it says **my tongue cleaves to my jaws**; other than that, this word is found only in this chapter (vv. 11–12, 26–27, 32) and in Isaiah 49:24–25. Strong's #4455 (and some forms of 3947) BDB #544 The other word is shâlal (שָׁלַל) [pronounced *shaw-LAWL*] is used much more often, found nearly 100 times in the Bible. It refers to that

¹⁸⁵ The word *all* is not found in the Massoretic text, but in the western Samaritan, the Targums of Jonathan, the Septuagint, the Syriac, and the Vulgate.

which was taken directly in war (Genesis 49:27 Exodus 15:9 Judges 8:24–25 Isaiah 55:12). Strong's #7998 BDB #1021

And Moses and Eleazar the priest, and all the leaders of the company went out to meet them, to the outside of the camp. [Numbers 31:13]

We have the same preposition used to go *into* the camp as *to* the outside of the camp. My guess here is that they had the intention of bringing the spoil into the camp, but Moses and the rest met them at the outskirts of the camp to discuss what had happened. Moses would have certainly known that they were coming through his G-2 system, which would be outstanding.

Now Moses was angry with the officers of the armed forces, commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds who were coming in from the army of the battle. [Numbers 31:14]

Those who were in command were the ones responsible for what had occurred. The problem with Midian was the women who had come to seduce the men of Israel, to draw them away from Y^ehowah. Therefore, destroying the men of Midian and bringing all their women into the camp was not the brightest thing to do.

So Moses said to them, "Have you kept alive every female?" [Numbers 31:15]

The action of the Midianites, particularly the Midianite women, was the problem. These leaders did not solve this problem, they had basically set about to intensify it, not thinking the matter through. Eleazar had just killed a Midianite woman who had been brought into the camp, along with the one who brought her in. Now the army was bringing into the camp not one woman, but thousands of them. I am certain that Moses also said, "What the hell were you using for brains when you did this?"

"Look, they, even they have been to the sons of Israel, through the word of Balaam, to commit treachery against Y^ehowah in the matter of Peor, so the plague was among the congregation of the Y^ehowah. [Numbers 31:16]

So Moses explains to them the problem here. The Midianite women were a great portion of the cause of the plague which was brought upon the congregation of Israel when 24,000 people died (Numbers 25:1–9). They had come through the word, or advice, of Balaam. Although we will hear about Balaam seven more times in the Old Testament, let's examine the **Doctrine of Balaam—not finished yet!!**

Moses explains that it is the females—they, even they—who had been to the sons of Israel. This is the problem, and the officers stupidly bring the problem en masse into the camp of Israel. It's like, what were you thinking?

"And now, you will slay every male among the infants; yes, and you will slay every woman known of man by the lying of a man; [Numbers 31:17]

The explanation is simple: the women who were the problem were those who were willing to trade their bodies in order to entice the Israelites away from Y^ehowah. These are not the actions of virgins. Virgins do not save themselves for their entire life, and suddenly give it away to lure someone into a different religion. Furthermore, those who had been married would not be able to adjust to life with those who had just killed their husbands and children. The Midianite boys had already been imprinted with enough degeneracy that they would be a constant thorn in the side of the Israelites. God will, in several instances, demand the entire destruction of a particular people (Deuteronomy 7:2 20:16–18); however, this is only done when a race has reached a stage of total and uncontroversable degeneracy (Genesis 15:16). This did not wipe out the Midianites altogether. We will hear from them again in Judges 7–8, in particular. However, many were settled in a particular area, whereas some had their flocks out grazing and others were nomads. It was the permanent settlement and those who dwelt there who were wiped out.

"And you will keep alive for yourselves every all the children among the females, who have not known the lying of a male. [Numbers 31:18]

A woman is a responder and those who have not been sexually transgressed can still respond to the men of Israel. From looking at the geneological records, when females are mentioned, generally speaking, they still seem to make up a small number of the immediate family. Therefore, Israel was allowed these other women. Furthermore, it was likely that some of them could, at reaching the age of accountability, become believers and it was likely that some of them had Israelites for their right men.

The Cleansing of Those Gone to Battle

"And you [all] will encamp at the outside of the camp seven days—any who have killed a person, and any who had come against a pierced one. You [all] will cleanse yourselves on the third day and on the seventh day—you [all] and your captives; [Numbers 31:19]

Even though these are national war heroes, their coming into contact with death has defiled them and they must be ceremonially cleansed before re-entering the camp. We saw the laws concerning this in Numbers 19:11–22. It is a picture of being in fellowship—inside the camp there is fellowship, but one must be in fellowship in order to enjoy it.

"And you will cleanse every garment and every skin vessel and every work of goats' [hair] and every wooden vessel." [Numbers 31:20]

Any association with death is an association with uncleanness. When the world was plunged into sin by Adam's sin, death entered the world. **Therefore, just as through one man, sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death will spread to all men, because** all have sinned (Romans 5:12). Association with death is association with this world and with sin, so all these men, despite their bravery and courage, still had to cleanse themselves.

And Eleazar the priest said to the men of the army who went into battle, "This [is] the statute of the Law which Y^ehowah has commanded Moses: [Numbers 31:21]

Even down to that which was acceptable as plunder was symbolic of that which is eternal.

"Only the gold, and the silver, and the brass [probably, copper], and the iron, and the tin and the lead, [Numbers 31:22]

The Massoretic text reads: **Only the gold and the silver, the brass [or, copper], the iron, the tin and the lead;** the western Samraian, Targums of Jonathan, Septuagint, Syriac and Vulgate all insert the additional *ands*.

These are the things which were allowed as booty. It is an interesting archeological note that these metals were used by the Midianites. They were well-known to the Egyptians centuries prior to the exodus. This list of items allowed as plunder, the women, the livestock and the metals, set a precedent for times to come (Deuteronomy 20:14), with some exceptions (1Samuel 15:2–3). Almost every time Israel conquered a people, there would be a few slight changes in what was allowed as plunder and what was not (see Deuteronomy 13:16 20:16–18).

"Everything which may go into fire, you [all] will cause to pass over through fire, and it will have been cleansed; only, with the water of separation it is cleansed, and all that may not go into fire, you cause to pass over through water; [Numbers 31:23]

Fire speaks of judgement in the Bible, but it is a very specific judgement—fire determines whether something is eternal or not; whether something is real or not. That which is destroyed by fire, is tied inexorably to this world and that which is cleansed by fire is eternal. **Now if any man build upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious**

stones, wood, hay, straw, [then] each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it will be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire (1Corinthians 15:12–15). Recall the judgement of Korah and his followers? And fire [lightning] came forth from Y^ehowah and consumed the two hundred and fifty men [of Korah] who were offering the incense (Numbers 16:35). And the light of Israel will become a fire and his Holy One a flame; and it will burn and devour his thorns and his briars in a single day (Isaiah 10:17). That the testing of your faith—more precious than gold, which is perishable—even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 1:7).

"And you [all] will wash your garments on the seventh day and you [all] will have become clean, and afterwards, you [all] will come into the camp." [Numbers 31:24]

Just as fire speaks of testing for purity and eternal worth, water cleanses that which has become unclean.

The Division of the Plunder

And Y^ehowah spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 31:25]

Although I realize that one or two of the other *great* religious books have a few quotes from God, there is no other book other than the Bible where direct quotes from Him so permeate the entire book.

"Take a head [count] of the prey of the captives, among man and among beast, you and Eleazar the priest, and the heads of the fathers of the company; [Numbers 31:26]

Nâsâ' (נָשָׂא) [pronounced *naw-SAW*] means to *lift, carry, take*; and, when joined with the word rô'sh (רֹשׁ) [pronounced *roshe*] (which means *head, chief*), it means *to take a head count*.

We will find out that the Midianites were a rather successful and prosperous nation after this tally of the plunder taken in by the Israelites.

"And you [Moses] will have the prey between those handling the battle who go out to the army and all the company; [Numbers 31:27]

There are 12,000 men who went out to war and they will receive half of the plunder. The rest will go to the congregation of Israel.

"And you [Moses] will levy a tax [lit., raise a tribute] to Y^ehowah from the men of war who go out to the army, one person [lit., soul] out of five hundred, of man and of the herd, and of the asses, and of the flock; [Numbers 31:28]

This seems like a very small percentage here. However, we will put some numbers to this in a moment. The Levites did not work in the fields nor did they go out to war. Their only means of support came from the other Israelites (Numbers 18:19–24 Deuteronomy 18:1–5). God fairly divided up the spoils of war between those who went to war, those who remained with the community, and those who represent God here on earth (as it was His war).

"From their half, you will take and you will give [them] to Eleazar the priest—a contribution to Y^ehowah." [Numbers 31:29]

T^erûmâh (תְּרוּמָה) [pronounced *t'roo-MAWH*] (BDB #929 Strong's #8641) as we have seen, is related to the words *lift, hold up* but it means *contribution*. This sounds as though only one out of five hundred men had to pay this entire tax as opposed to each man giving of his share of the plunder to the Aaronic priesthood.

"From the sons of Israel's half, you will take one possession out of fifty, of men, of the herd, [and] of the asses, and of the flock, [and]¹⁸⁶ of all the cattle, and you will given them to the Levites keeping the responsibility of the tabernacle of Y^ehowah." [Numbers 31:30]

Then the portion of the booty which went to those of Israel who did not go to battle, one out of fifty would be given over to the Levites. Note there is a difference between the Levites and those of the priesthood.

And Moses did [this]—and Eleazar the priest as well—as Y^ehowah had commanded Moses. [Numbers 31:31]

This seems to be a common way of phrasing things in the Hebrew. God commanded Moses, so Moses is recorded primarily as the person who accomplished what God ordered and the verb is therefore in the 3rd person singular. However, Eleazar was certainly involved in the process, so he is mentioned as well.

And the prey, the remnant of the spoil which the people of the army had spoiled, is, of the flock 675,000 [sheep], and of the herd, 72,000 [cattle], and of asses, 61,000; [Numbers 31:32–34]

As you can see, there was a great deal of plunder to be had from the Midianites. They certainly operated from several cities as bases of operation, and then took their animals throughout the desert in search of food and water (and, as I have mentioned, I suspect that this area was not as dry and as barren then as it is today). These numbers were certainly rounded off to the thousands, making the number given to God easy to determine. Even though the Midianites were severely decimated here, they built up their resources again, and, by the time of the Judges, were rich in livestock once again (Judges 6:5–6).

And of human beings—of the women who had not known the lying of a male—all the persons, 32,000. [Numbers 31:35]

Recall that the Midianite society, though prosperous, had become quite degenerate and many of the women in their society had been given over to religious depravity by their own fathers. This is cruel and evil degeneracy, indicating that the men had no natural affection, no desire to protect those that were theirs. A normal father, when faced with the possibility that his daughter might be promiscuous, would be one of anger and self-recrimination. These men, on the other hand, encouraged such behavior. **And, according as they did not approve of having God in [their] knowledge, God gave them up to a disapproved mind, to do the things which are not seemly, having been filled with all unrighteousness, whoredom, wickedness, covetousness, malice, full of envy, murder strife, deceit, evil dispositions; whisperers, speaking evil, haters of God, insulting, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, unintelligent, faithless, without nature affection, implacable, unmerciful, who the righteous judgment of God, having known that those practicing such things are worth of death; not only do they do them, but they further have delight with those practicing them** (Romans 1:28–32; see also II Tim. 3:1–5). A man who would allow his daughter to become so involved with the phallic cults lacks natural affection. This is extremely low in terms of morality, and why God ordered the men to be completely obliterated. Probably two-thirds of these women are under age ten, and one-third of varying ages, making up, perhaps one-tenth or less of the entire female population. This would indicate that the Midianite population was in excess of 600,000 and in a very short time, they were wiped out by Israel, including even traces of their degenerate existence.

And the half, the portion of those who go out into the army, the number of the flock is 337,500 [sheep]; [Numbers 31:36]

This is exactly half of the sheep.

And the tribute of the sheep to Y^ehowah is 675; [Numbers 31:37]

¹⁸⁶ These two *ands* are not found in the Massoretic text, but in the western Samaritan, the Targums of Jonathan, the Septuagint, the Syriac and the Vulgate.

This is 1/500th of half of the sheep.

And the herd: 630,000, and their tribute to Y^ehowah: 72; the asses: 30,500, and their tribute to Y^ehowah is 61; [Numbers 31:38–39]

Again, this is half of the plunder and 1/500th of them are given over to Y^ehowah, through the service of the Levites and the Aaronic priesthood.

And the human beings: 16,000 and their tribute to Y^ehowah: 160. [Numbers 31:40]

Now, these young female were not sacrificed or even necessarily placed into slavery; some of them very likely became the wives of some of the priests.

And Moses gave the tribute—a contribution of Y^ehowah—to Eleazar, the priest, as Y^ehowah had commanded Moses. [Numbers 31:41]

There are far fewer in the Aaronic priesthood than there are in the Levite tribe; therefore, the previous amounts given over to the Aaronic priesthood will be much smaller than the number given to the Levites.

And of the sons of Israel's half, which Moses halved [or, divided] from the men who warred: [Numbers 31:42]

This is the other half of the animals which were given to the children of Israel who did not go into battle.

And the company's half is, of the flock: 337,500 [sheep]; and of the herd, 630,00 [cattle]; and of the asses, 30,500. [Numbers 31:43–45]

In looking at the Hebrew, these verse could be better translated; however, the meaning is clear—this is the other half of the animals given over to children of Israel.

And of human beings, 16,000. [Numbers 31:46]

Again, these were all female virgins who were taken primarily to wife by the sons of Israel.

Moses took from the sons of Isrel's half the one possession from the fifty, of man and of beast, and gave them to the Levites keeping the responsibility of the tabernacle of Y^ehowah, as Y^ehowah had commanded Moses. [Numbers 31:47]

Therefore, the Levites received 6750 sheep, 720 cattle, 610 donkeys and 320 persons. There were 23,000 male Levites from a month and upward. Perhaps half of them were adults and received a portion of this. Likely, the animals were distributed to families, rather than to individuals.

The Voluntary Offerings of the Officers of War

And the inspector whom the thousands of the army had (the heads of thousands and the heads of hundreds), approach Moses; [Numbers 31:48]

Any time I see a large contingent of men approaching Moses to speak, I feel rather queasy, as, in the past, all such conversations were complaints and expressions of bitter resentment. However, this is a new generation.

And they said to Moses, "You r servants have taken a head [count] of the men of war who [are] with us, and not a man of us has been missed; [Numbers 31:49]

Their approach to Moses is entirely different. They did not come to him to complain, but to give him the casualty report. This is phenomenal. This indicates that the degenerates had been wiped out already, the last ones taken by God in the plague.

"And we will approach with Y^ehowah's offering, each that which he has found, gold jewelry [lit., vessels of gold]: armllet, bracelet, seal-ring, [ear]ring, and bead) to make atonement for ourselves before the face of Y^ehowah." [Numbers 31:50]

This is just not one item of each, but a list of the different types of gold jewelry that they had gathered. We know this because of the weight of these items as given below (if there was just one each of those listed, then they had to be awfully large). Almost any of these items could have been put into a pocket and never noticed. These men are bringing forth a full disclosure of what they have gotten and giving a portion of that to Y^ehowah without being asked or required. They understood from the tribute which they made to Y^ehowah by way of livestock. Application: when it comes to our reasonable service to God and our gifts; it is not spelled out exactly what percentage should be given to Him. We are to set aside at the first of the week (on payday) that as God has prospered us. That belongs to God.

And Moses received—Eleazar the priest also—the gold from them, every made vessel, and all the gold of the contribution that they raised up to Y^ehowah is 16,750 shekels, from heads of the thousands and from heads of the hundreds; [Numbers 31:51–52]

This is approximately 420 pounds, which at \$450/ounce by today's prices: is worth over \$3,000,000 today. This came directly from those who commanded the men.

(The men of the army had spoiled each for himself); [Numbers 31:53]

The implication here is that the heads of the troops brought in all of this gold to place before the face of Y^ehowah. The troops themselves did not follow suit. Also, some of what they took would be less intrinsically valued (Numbers 31:20–22).

And Moses took—Eleazar the priest also—the gold from the heads of the thousands and of the hundreds and they brought it into the tent of meeting, a memorial for the sons of Israel before Y^ehowah. [Numbers 31:54]

This verse further indicates that this came from the leaders of the troops and not from the troops themselves. All of this gold would be a memorial to the victory over the Midianites.

Numbers 32

Numbers 32:1–42

Outline of Chapter 32:

- Vv. 1–5 **The sons of Gad and Reuben ask to reside in Gilead**
- Vv. 6–12 **Moses questions the motivation of Gad and Reuben**
- Vv. 16–19 **Gad and Reuben assure Moses that they will assist in the conquering of Canaan**
- Vv. 20–24 **Moses restates the terms of their agreement in private**
- Vv. 25–27 **The sons of Gad and Reuben privately agree to these terms**
- Vv. 28–32 **This agreement is made public**
- Vv. 33–38 **Reconstruction of razed cities by Gad and Reuben**
- Vv. 39–42 **A portion of the tribe of Manasseh also given a share of Gilead**

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

Introduction: Numbers 32 is a record of the last war east of the Jordan. It will be the last battle that Moses will serve as commander and chief. During this time, the tribes of Reuben and Gad will become attached to the land which they have just helped to conquer and will desire it for their own. What will follow is an agreement or a verbal contract. Gad and Reuben (I am here referring to the heads of their families and not to Gad and Reuben themselves, who died hundreds of years previous) express their desire to Moses and Moses has some reservations. So he tells them why he is reticent. Gad and Reuben offer assurances to Moses, carefully listing their responsibilities as they saw them. Moses will repeat this agreement back to them, to make certain that both parties are in full accord, in front of Eleazar, who would act as a witness (and, who knows, he might have even recorded this contract in writing). And then this verbal contract is repeated in front of the heads of state who stand as witnesses to the final contract. Finally, this is recorded as a part of the Word of God to stand as a written witness to their contract. The steps followed here are not unlike those followed today when a contract is hashed out, other than there were no disagreements recorded here in Numbers.

Almost anyone who has been a Christian for awhile, particularly if you have watched any flamboyant evangelists, recall hearing the verse, "[Your sin will find you out!](#)" It is unlikely that you realized that this verse occurred way back in the time of Moses, was spoken by Moses, and is found right here in Numbers 32. I can almost guarantee that not even one out of ten of you know the context of that oft-quoted verse. The context is that the tribes of Gad and Reuben like it right where they are; they own a lot of cattle, the land is perfect for cattle grazing (as I said, the land was much more fertile and the rainfall more plentiful during those days); and they didn't need to go into the land, across the Jordan. The leaders of the tribe talked it over and they are happy to stay right there. The problem is their motivation—are they motivated by the desire for that land or are they motivated because they would just soon as not partake in any more warfare, and allow their brothers to enter the land without them. If the latter reason is their motivation—that is, if they do not want to enter the land due to the sin of pacifism, their sin would find them out.

The Sons of Gad and Reuben Ask to Reside in Gilead

Now the sons of Reuben had a multitude of cattle—and the sons of Gad—very many, [in fact]; and they saw the land of Jazer, and the land of Gilead, and observed [lit., lo] the place [was] a place for cattle; [Numbers 32:1]

Reuben and Gad were cattle ranchers, just like the Midianites. As we observed in the previous chapter and as we will see in the future in Judges 6, the Midianites had a great number of animals and they lived where they did because the grazing land was so terrific. The tribes of Reuben and Gad noticed the same thing. If you are a cattle rancher, this area was perfect. There was grazing land and rolling hills and valleys for as far as you could see in

all directions; and the area was well-watered. Recall, they have just spent forty years in the desert, and this is a paradise. They have no need to go further into the land—they are happy right there.

And the sons of Gad and the sons of Reuben, came in and spoke to Moses and to Eleazar the priest, and to the princes of the company, [Numbers 32:2]

This desire that they had could affect all of their brothers. One of the reasons that the Jews did not enter into the land thirty-eight years ago is that the Israelites were afraid; they were crying and whining because those in the land were way too big and they were but grasshoppers in their sight. God loathed that generation.

"Ataroth and Dibon and Jazer and Nimrah and Heshbon and Elealeh and Sebam¹⁸⁷ and Nebo and Beon: [Numbers 32:3]

These are the cities which the Israelites have just either captured or burned down or are in the immediate area. Heshbon and Jazer were cities formerly belonging to the Amorites (Numbers 21:24, 26, 30, 32). Nebo had belonged to the Moabites. It is mentioned in the travelogue of Numbers 33 (v. 47), which would place it in Moab prior to camping where they were now. The name of this city is also found upon the famous Moabite Stone, written at the command of Mesha, king of Moab, who retook this city and annexed it to Dibon. Parallel Scripture includes 1Kings 16 Jeremiah 48:18–22. Sebam was a Moabite city recently taken by the Amorites and then taken by the Jews, renamed Sibmah (Joshua 13:19–21). This city, along with Elealeh, was destined to be retaken by Moab (Isaiah 16:6–9 Jeremiah 48:32).

"[That is], the land which Y^ehowah has struck down before the company of Israel, is a land for cattle, and your servants have cattle." [Numbers 32:4]

"Could you imagine the chances of that? We have just conquered cities in an area just perfect for cattle, and, what a coincidence, we just happen to have a lot of cattle." Often an analogy is drawn here between the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the believer who has one foot in the world and one foot in doctrine. That is, the believer who chooses his inheritance from the world and not from the land promised him by God. However, this analogy does not really go very far, nor does any other writer of Scripture draw the same analogy.

"And they said, "If we have found grace in your eyes, let this land be given to your servants for a possession; cause us not to pass over the Jordan." [Numbers 32:5]

Here is where Moses has to be careful: what they have said up until this time seems reasonable. They have a lot of cattle, this is land perfect for cattle; and Israel has just conquered it. These two tribes are ready to lay down stakes right here. It is the last line which Moses finds disturbing. **"Do not cause us to pass over the Jordan."** Israel is under orders from Y^ehowah—all twelve tribes—to enter the land and to take the land. Thirty-eight years ago, God sent them back in the desert for not believing Him and taking what was given them. God has given us salvation—we are cursed and spend out our eternity where it is hot and dry if we do not take it. This area was certainly a gift from God; however, the immediate area which was to be conquered was west of the Jordan River. The taking of this piece of real estate was an unexpected early bonus.

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Moses Questions the Motivation of Gad and Reuben

And Moses said to the sons of Gad and to the sons of Reuben, "Do your brothers go into the battle and you [all]—do you [all] [just] sit here?" [Numbers 32:6]

¹⁸⁷ KJV: Shebam

Israel has had its marching orders for almost forty years. Is it right for their brothers to go into battle and for Gad and Reuben, after a few brief skirmishes, to retire, and not to fight side-by-side with their brothers?

"And why do you [all] stand in opposition to the hearts of the sons of Israel from passing over into the land which Y^ehowah has given to them? [Numbers 32:7]

Their very actions of not going into the land have an unquestionable effect on their brothers—all of Israel conquered this land of the Moabites, Midianites and Amorites. This was not just an operation of Gad and Reuben. However, it sounds as though Gad and Reuben are ready to stop their assistance in entering the land. This would set a dangerous precedent. Then any tribe, after the conquering of an area, could say, "This is fine, we are going to stay right here; you go on without us."

Mosee was a student of human nature. He had seen it all. He had seen all forms of cowardice, of degeneracy, of self-serving behavior. He knew that the withdrawal of these two tribes would devastate the momentum of Israel and he knew that the tribes of Gad and Reuben perhaps had a hidden agenda. This is what Moses tactfully searches for.

"Thus did your fathers in my sending them from Kadesh-Barnea to see the land; [Numbers 32:8]

What is occurring now could, depending upon the motivation of the Gadites and the Reubenites, put them all back to square one.

"And they went up to the valley of Eschol and saw the land and stood in opposition to the heart of the sons of Israel so as not to go into the land which Y^ehowah had given to them; [Numbers 32:9]

It was cowardice which motivated the sons of Israel to not enter the land at first and this could spark a similar wave of cowardice (which, again, could be the key to their motivation). It was in this valley of Eschol where the spies found a single cluster of grapes so huge that they had to bring it back on a pole carried by two men in order to show it to everyone (Numbers 13:23–24). That indicates how prosperous and lush this land of Israel was. Today, the land and its inhabitants are under severe discipline.

"And the anger of Y^ehowah burned in that day and He swore, saying, [Numbers 32:10]

One of the things which God despises is disobedience to Him; that this motivation is due to cowardice causes His anger to burn.

" 'They will not see—the men who are coming up out of Egypt from a son of twenty years and upward—the ground which I have sworn to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, for they have not completely and fully followed My leading [lit. been fully after Me].' [Numbers 32:11]

Because of the cowardice of the exodus generation, God would scatter their bodies in the desert and not even allow them to see the land that he had promised to their fathers. **And Y^ehowah spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, "How long [should] I bear this evil congregation who are grumbling against Me? I have heard the complaints of the sons of Israel which they are making against Me. Say to them, 'As I live,' says Y^ehowah, 'just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will certainly do to you; your corpses will fall in this desert, even all your numbered men, according to your complete number from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against Me. You will certainly not come into the land in which I swore to settle you, except Caleb ben Jephunneh and Joshua ben Nun. Your children, however, whom you said would become a prey—I will bring them in, and they will know the land which you have rejected. And as for you, your corpses will fall in this desert.' "** (Numbers 14:26–32). What is pictured here is a gift from God; the land of milk and honey which God gave to them, is analogous to heaven and eternity with God—we have been given this, gracefully, something which we did not earn or deserve—but we must take it. And if we reject it, this promise goes to another generation.

"Except Caleb ben Jephunneh the Kenezite, and Joshua ben Nun, for they have completely and fully followed the lead of [lit. have been fully after] Y^ehowah. [Numbers 32:12]

The verb is mâlê' (מָלֵא) [pronounced *maw-LAH*] means *to fill* and is found about three hundred times in the Old Testament. It is used for the filling of the Spirit (Exodus 28:3), for the filling of the tabernacle with the glory of God (Exodus 40:34–35), to the filling with a liquid (Joshua 3:15) to the fulfillment of one's life (Genesis 29:21). Strong's #4390 BDB #569. This is followed by the preposition 'achar (אַחַר) [pronounced *ah-KHAHR*] and it means *after, behind*. Together, the words means *to completely follow after, to fully follow Y^ehowah, to completely and fully follow where one is being led*. Strong's #310 BDB #29.

"And the anger of Y^ehowah burned against Israel and He caused them to wander in the desert forty years, until the termination of all the generation which is doing the evil thing in the eyes of Y^ehowah. [Numbers 32:13]

Tâmam (תָּמַם) [pronounced *taw-MAHM*] means *complete, finish, terminate, to be depleted, to be at an end or bring to an end*. We first found this verb in Genesis 47:15, 18 when Jacob's money had been depleted. It is used several times to refer to the scattering of the dead bodies of the exodus generation throughout the desert (Numbers 14:33 Deuteronomy 2:14). It is not always a negative word; it can refer to the finishing of a project (Deuteronomy 34:8 1Kings 7:22) (this is similar to, but not synonymous with, the accomplishing of a project; this is more of a passive verb).

"And, notice, you [all] have risen in the place [or, stead] of your fathers, an increase of men—sinners, to add yet to the fury of the anger of Y^ehowah toward Israel; [Numbers 32:14]

It may have seemed simple to some of you—the men of Reuben and Gad had cattle and this was a good place to settle with cattle, but the issues are much deeper than this. The Bible continues to probe human motivation, because **the Word of God is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, the joints and the marrow, and is a critic of thoughts and intents of the heart** (Hebrews 4:12).

"When you [all] turn back from following Him, then He will add yet to deposit [or, to leaving] them [lit., him] in the desert, and you [all] have done corruptly to all this people." [Numbers 32:15]

Deposit is the verb nûwach (נָוַח) [pronounced *NOO-ahk*] and it means *rest, cause to rest, set down, lay down, deposit, leave*. Strong's 5117 (and 3240) BDB #628 Depositing or leaving *him* in the desert refers to Israel as a whole (*Israel* is in the 3rd person, singular masculine, as is the suffix of the verb). Moses is warning that their actions could result in God taking all of their generation back into the desert and leaving them there. Moses knows for a fact that God will do that.

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Gad and Reuben Assure Moses That They Will Assist in the Conquering of Canaan

And they came near to him and said, "Folds for the flock we will build for our cattle here, and cities for our infants; [Numbers 32:16]

The leaders of the two tribes think and conference for a moment, and then they approach Moses. This is not just one guy who volunteers this for the rest of them. They just had to determine what they could agree upon planning to do.

"And we—[even] we—are armed hasting before—the sons of Israel till we have brought them into their place; and our infants will dwell in the cities of defense [or, fortified cities] because of the inhabitants of the land; [Numbers 32:17]

Several of them speak to Moses and this is the distilled version. They will set aside their men for the armed forces until Israel is brought into the land. The benefit to Israel of them living there is that they will act as a first line of defense to any of the nations on the borders of the land of promise.

Recall that *châlat*s (חַלָּטִים) [pronounced *khaw-LAH-TZ*] means *to remove, withdraw, to partition out or to set aside by arming someone, removed from the rest of Israel inasmuch as they are soldiers for war*. Strong's #2502 BDB #323 So they have been culled out from the rest of Israel, removed from the rest of Israel insofar as being armed for battle and being given equipment to use in war. We will see this promised fulfilled in Joshua 4:11–12: *And it came to pass when all the people had finished crossing, that the ark of Y^ehowah and the priests crossed before the people. And the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh crossed over in battle array before the face of the sons of Israel, just as Moses had spoken to them—about 40,000 equipped for war crossed for battle before the face of Y^ehowah to the desert plains of Jericho (that act of aggression would begin Israel's move into the land of Canaan).*

"We will not turn back to our houses until the sons of Israel have inherited each his inheritance;
[Numbers 32:18]

This is a pledge or an oath, and the proper precedent to set: even though they will take their inheritance first, they will not be finished with conquering the land until every tribe of Israel has taken its own inheritance.

"For we will not inherit with them beyond the Jordan and yonder, for our inheritance has come to us beyond the Jordan at the east [lit., sun-rising]." [Numbers 32:19]

Furthermore, even though the Reubenites and the Gadites will enter the land and conquer the land with the sons of Israel, this is the land which they desire. They do not desire to own whatever they may conquer down the road. Insofar as they are concerned, this, right here, east of the Jordan, is their inheritance.

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Moses Restates the Terms of Their Agreement in Private

Deuteronomy 3:18–20

And Moses said to them "If you [all] will do what it is that you say you will do [lit., do this word], if you are armed before Y^ehowah for battle; [Numbers 32:20]

The position which they have taken and presented sounds completely reasonable. Moses is satisfied with what they have chosen, as long as they do just exactly what they say they will do. If their word is their bond, then Moses does not need to inquire of Y^ehowah; he is satisfied with their stance. Moses even mentions this oral contract in his swan song to Israel: *"Then I commanded you at that time, saying 'Y^ehowah your God has given you this land to possess it; all you valiant men will cross over armed before your brothers, the sons of Israel.'" (Deuteronomy 3:18).*

"And every armed one of you has passed over the Jordan before the face of Y^ehowah, till his dispossessing His enemies from before Him; [Numbers 32:21]

Moses is simply repeating this agreement as an oral contract. He is saying, "This is what I understand you to say—are we in complete agreement with this?" This is spoken before Eleazar the priest, who will be there after Moses has died. Moses is accomplishing several things right here. He is establishing an oral contract between himself as representing the interests of Israel and the heads of state of Gad and Reuben and this is done before Eleazar the priest, who no doubt is guided in this exchange.

"And the land has been subdued before Y^ehowah—then afterwards, you [all] will turn back, and you will have been acquitted by Y^ehowah, and by Israel; for this land has been to you for a possession before Y^ehowah. [Numbers 32:22]

Notice that Moses carefully re-iterates what is expected of the Gadites and the Reubenites. This stands as a witness before all of the leaders and before Eleazar the priest. They must fulfill their responsibilities to the rest of the tribes and then they may return to their property which they like so well. Moses reviewed this portion of their agreement as well in Deuteronomy 3:20: "Until Y^ehowah gives rest to your fellow-countrymen as to you, and they also possess the land which Y^ehowah your God will give them beyond the Jordan—then you may return every man to his possession, which I have given you." These two and a half tribes fulfilled this obligation by the time of Joshua 22:1–4: Then Joshua summoned the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, and he said to them, "You have kept all that Moses the sergeant of Y^ehowah commanded you, and you have listened by my voice in all that I have commanded you. You have not forsaken your brothers these many days to this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of Y^ehowah, your God. And now Y^ehowah, your God has given rest to your brothers, as He spoke to them. Therefore, turn now and go to your tenets, to the land of your possessions, which Moses the servant of Y^ehowah gave you beyond the Jordan."

"And if you [all] do not do so, observe, you [all] have sinned against Y^ehowah, and you [all] will know your sin, which will find you. [Numbers 32:23]

Moses is aware that he will not enter the land with these people and they may be aware of that themselves. He is concerned that, in examining his age, they will make a pact with him, begin to build these cities and folds, and then later, not join Israel for battle, but claim to have an agreement with Moses to just remain there without having to help Israel conquer the land. As I said, Moses is a great student of human nature and he knows the corruption that man is capable of. They have come a presented what appears to be a very reasonable request and are willing to take responsibility for joining Israel in war. However, if these are men without character, this could all be just a smoke screen to settle down and not go to war, following the death of Moses. If they begin their building while Moses is alive, and then, once he has died, just settle in, then there is simply their word against the word of Eleazar. So Moses makes the agreement crystal clear before Eleazar and warns the sons of Reuben and Gad that, in any event, if they do not keep their word, their sin will find them out. So, did you ever realize before this time that the sin which would find them out would not be the sin of adultery or drunkenness or murder, but of pacifism?

Next issue is just exactly what does Moses mean? He questions their motivation and is particularly concerned that he may grant them a piece of land, die, and then they will not continue to conquer the land with the rest of their brothers. They will point to the land and the okay given by Moses and shirk their responsibilities. What Moses is saying has wide application to all of us. It does not matter what the sin is, know that your sin will find you out. Know that you are answerable to God, not to Moses or to the other sons of Israel, but directly to God. We will later see an example of this in Joshua 7. If the Reubenites or the Gadites sinned the sin of pacifism, they would pay a penalty. No matter what sin we commit, we pay a penalty. **For our transgressions are multiplied before You and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us and we know our iniquities** (Isaiah 59:12). The only way to avoid this is to rebound (simply confess our sins to God). There is nothing that we can do in secret that God does not see and there is no sin that he overlooks. Out only bet is to either not sin, or to rebound as quickly as possible when we do.

"Build for yourselves cities for your infants, and folds for your flock and that which is going out from your mouth, [that] you [all] will do." [Numbers 32:24]

At this moment, they are allowed to go into this land and make it livable for their families. They will only have a very short time, several days to maybe a few weeks to make the land inhabitable by their loved ones. I know that you do not know what *folds* are; they are walls made out of rubble and loose stones to keep the sheep confined, barbed wire being in short supply in those days.

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The Sons of Gad and Reuben Privately Agree to These Terms

And the sons of Gad and the sons of Reuben spoke to Moses, saying, "Your servants do as my lord has commanded; [Numbers 32:25]

Literally, this verse reads: **And he spoke—the sons of Gad and the sons of Reuben—to Moses, saying, "Your servants will do as my lord had commissioned."** Often the singular is placed in for the plural, when one man speaks for the group or the group speaks as one man. Even though Moses merely reiterated what the Gadite and Reubenite leaders spoke in the first place, coming from his mouth it was a command to be obeyed exactly as given.

"Our infants, our wives, our cattle and all our livestock are there in the cities of Gilead; [Numbers 32:26]

Gilead was the name for the area east of the Jordan and between the two seas, roughly. This was the area in which those cities were where the two tribes wanted to reside.

"And your servants will pass over, every armed one of the army, before Y^ehowah, to battle, as my lord has said." [Numbers 32:27]

This is a formal agreement to the terms, addressing the most important portion of the agreement to Moses: that they not desert the other Israelites.

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This Agreement Is Made Public

And Moses issued a formal directive concerning them, Eleazar the priest, and Joshua ben Nun and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the sons of Israel; [Numbers 32:28]

Tsâwâh (צָוָה) [pronounced *tsaw-WAWH*] means, according to BDB, *to lay charge, to give charge, to command, to order*; here, it means that Moses issues a formal command or directive before the heads of state, so that this directive is witnessed and heard by all with authority.

And Moses said to them, "If the sons of Gad and the sons of Reuben pass over the Jordan with you, every one armed for battle before Y^ehowah and the land has been subdued before you, then you [all] will give to them the land of Gilead for a possession; [Numbers 32:29]

Moses knows that he is not going into the land with the Israelites; therefore, it has to be clear to the leaders what Gad and Reuben have agreed to.

"And if they do not pass over armed with you, then they have possessions in your midst in the land of Canaan." [Numbers 32:30]

If the Gadites and Reubenites do not go into the land with the rest of their brothers, then they will not be awarded these prime grazing land on the east side of the Jordan, but they will be given an inheritance from within the land. The rendering of the Septuagint is quite different at this point, having some additional text: **But if they will not pass over armed with you to do battle before the face of Y^ehowah, then you will bring over their little-ones and their wives and their cattle before you into the land of Canaan.**

And the sons of Gad and the sons of Reuben answered, saying, "That which Y^ehowah has spoken to your servants, so we will do; [Numbers 32:31]

This is the formal agreement of the Gadites and Reubenites before the heads of the tribes of Israelites—nothing is new here; their agreement is just being publically attested to and ratified.

"We, [even] we, will pass over the land of Canaan armed before the face of Y^ehowah and with us [is] the possession of our inheritance beyond the Jordan." [Numbers 32:32]

They obviously are not physically taking with them the possession of their inheritance—that is, the land granted them by this agreement—with them is the right of possession or a verbal deed of possession of this land. This verse is the breakdown of their agreement in a nutshell: (1) they will accompany their brothers into the land of Canaan as a military force and (2) they will receive in exchange this land on the east side of the Jordan.

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Reconstruction of Razed Cities by Gad and Reuben

Deuteronomy 3:8–17 Joshua 12:1–6

And Moses gave to them, to the sons of Gad and to the sons of Reuben, and to the half of the tribe of Manasseh ben Joseph, the kingdom of Sihon, king of the Amorite, and the kingdom of Og, king of the Bashan, the land by its cities, in the borders, the cities of the land round about. [Numbers 32:33]

On these pages of Scripture, we have the written record of this agreement. Moses has great responsibilities to all of the sons of Israel, and records all of this information in great detail, that, long after he has died, we have an unambiguous written record of the agreement and its private and public ratification. Notice that during this time, either a portion of the tribe of Manasseh has asked to occupy some of this territory or Moses had assigned them a piece of it.

And the sons of Gad built Dibon, and Ataroth, and Aroer; [Numbers 32:34]

The Israelites razed these cities and now the tribe of Gad was rebuilding them. Dibon and Ataroth were previously mentioned in v. 3. It was in Dibon in the year 1868 where the famous Moabite stone was found. Recall that the Moabites were a result of an incestuous union between Lot and his eldest daughter (we derive this from the Septuagint version of Genesis 19:37, as the Massoretic text is silent here). This stone, is a record of the king of Moab, Mesha, son of Chemosh, and of his recapturing of this area, events which took place in the ninth century, BC. A portion of the stone reads: *Omri, king of Israel, had oppressed Moab for many days for Chemosh was angry with his land. His son succeeded him and he too said, "I will oppress Moab." In my time he said [this]; however, I triumphed over him and over his house, while Israel has perished forever.* Chemosh was the deity of Moab, the stone was obviously not divinely inspired. *So I went up [to Nebo] by night, fought against it from daybreak to noon and took it, slaying women, girls and maidservants, for I had consecrated it to Ashtar--Chemosh. And I took from there the vessels of YHWH, hauling them before Chemosh. The king of Israel had built Jahaz and stayed there while he was fighting against me, but Chemosh drove him out before me. So I took two hundred Moabites, all experience fighting men, and sent them against Jahaz which, after capture, I annexed to Dibon.* All of this has its parallels in the Old Testament (2Kings 3 Jeremiah 18, 48). Notice that the Moabites had a practice of complete annihilation of a population, a Satanic copy of Israel's modus operandi.

Aroer was originally the southern most city of the Amorite kingdom which was given to Gad and Reuben (Deuteronomy 3:12 4:48 Joshua 12:2). It is unclear whether this was the original name or whether Gad renamed the city as they rebuilt it. This city falls between the territories of Gad and Reuben (see Joshua 13:16).

And Atroth-Shopan, and Jaazer, and Jogbehah; [Numbers 32:35]

Atroth-Shophan is probably one city and not two; it is only mentioned here, distinguished from Ataroth of the previous verse by the additional word *Shophan*, which means *of the burrow*. Although most translations do not mention it, Jaazer is spelled here with an extra 'ayin [pronounced *AH-yin*]. I would have thought that this was a slight change of name as given by the Israelites, but we find the same extra 'ayin when Moses captured the city originally in Numbers 21:32, so this is likely two ways of writing the name of this city in Hebrew (we had the same situation when writing, in English, the name of Qadafy). Jogbehah should be on the eastern portion of the land given to Gad, as Gideon passed on its east side to execute a surprise attack on Midian (Judges 8:11–12).

And Beth-Nimrah, and Beth-Haran, cities of defense [or, fortified cities], and sheepfolds.
[Numbers 32:36]

Beth-Nimrah is called Nimrah in v. 3. *Beth* just means *house*; so likely, this city was named after its founder or principle leader at one time. Beth-Haran (which is probably the same as Beth-Haram of Joshua 13:27) was a fortified city, designed as the first line of defense for this area, a city that would be passed through in order to enter into the land of Gad.

And the sons of Reuben built Heshbon, and Elealeh, and Kirjathaim; [Numbers 32:37]

Kirjathaim is also spelled Kiriathaim (there is no *j* in Hebrew). Moab eventually took this city back, as it did several others (Jeremiah 48:1, 23).

And Nebo, and Baal-Meon ([their] names being changed), and Shibmah; and they called by their own names [lit., called names the names of] the cities which they have built. [Numbers 32:38]

Whereas Nebo is consistently rendered throughout Scripture, Baal-Meon is also called Beth-baal-meon (Joshua 13:17) and Beth-meon (Jeremiah 48:23) and Beon (Numbers 32:3), the latter being its original name. However, the changing of names is in the plural, possibly referring to Baal-Meon and Shibmah. The last phrase of this sentence means that when they rebuilt the cities, they gave them the names of the cities that they had razed, or made slight changes to same. The term *built* does not call for extensive construction; they did not have time for that with their responsibilities to the other tribes. This means that they pitched the tents for their families and set up some systems of defense and protection.

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A Portion of the Tribe of Manasseh Also Given a Share of Gilead

And [also] sons of Machir ben Manasseh had gone to Gilead and captured it and dispossessed the Amorite who was in it; [Numbers 32:39]

This family had also been involved in the capture of this general area and they apparently liked it as well. They did not think to go to Moses and ask for the land originally, but possibly got the idea after Gad and Reuben went to Moses. It was either that, or Moses just assigned it to them—in either case, this assignment was based upon their bravery and valor in war. They had been the leading force in the dispossession of this land, so it was only apropos to assign it to them. **Now, the lot for the tribe of Manasseh (for he was the first-born of Joseph): to Machir the first-born of Manasseh, the father of Gilead, there was to him Gilead and Bashan, because he was a man of war** (Josh. 17:1).

So Moses gave Gilead to Machir ben Manasseh, and he lived in it. [Numbers 32:40]

As is often done in the Old Testament, Machir ben Manasseh does stand for an individual (in this case, Machir had died some time ago—in Genesis 50:23, his sons are said to be brought up on Joseph's knee) but to the family which came from him. Gilead is probably a specific city in the area called Gilead. Often an area is named for a prominent city or vice versa (as in New York, New York). Gilead also refers to a family descended from Machir

ben Manasseh (Numbers 26:29–30 27:1). I am inclined to say that the identical names is more one of coincidence. Mount Gilead occurs in Genesis 31:21, 23, 25, so likely the son was named after the country; it just turns out that family chose to reside in Gilead. The tribe of Manasseh will end up occupying two non-contiguous areas.

Easton: *Manasseh's oldest son (Joshua 17:1), or probably his only son (see 1Chronicles 7:14, 1Chronicles 7:15; compare Numbers 26:29–33; Joshua 13:31). His descendants are referred to under the name of Machirites, being the offspring of Gilead (Numbers 26:29). They settled in land taken from the Amorites (Numbers 32:39, Numbers 32:40; Deuteronomy 3:15) by a special enactment (Numbers 36:1–3; Joshua 17:3, Joshua 17:4). He is once mentioned as the representative of the tribe of Manasseh east of Jordan (Judges 5:14).*¹⁸⁸

And Jair ben Manasseh had gone and captured their tent-villages and called them *Tent Villages of Jair*; [Numbers 32:41]

The Hebrew word found here is *chavvôwth* (חַיִּוֹת) [pronounced *khahv-VOWTH*] and it does not mean *town* but *tent-villages*. Strong's #2334 BDB 295 See also Deuteronomy 3:18

Jair is an individual, a descendant of Manasseh. However, it is not clear whether this is a family or an individual that is being referred to. From examining this and Judges 10:3–5, it is my opinion that Jair is a very young, military leader, who led a force into this area and capture it (it is not as though he is taking a city). After assisting his fellow countrymen in conquering the land of Canaan, Jair returned to this area, named after him (Deuteronomy 3:14). This area was later renamed Ramoth-Gilead during the time of David or Solomon (1Kings 4:13), and had grown from a tent village into some sixty cities (Joshua 13:30), later consolidated, due to growth, to thirty cities (Judges 10:4) and finally to twenty-three cities, an area later taken by the Syrians (1Kings 22:3–15 1Chronicles 2:22). At some time after he returned to this area, Jair became a judge over that area (Judges 10:3–4). Although some Biblical scholars¹⁸⁹ list the Jair of Judges 10 as separate from this Jair in Numbers, there is no reason for doing so. He would have been, like all of those who entered into the land of Canaan, the generation which followed Joshua's; therefore, after the death of Joshua, it would only be logical for a war hero of some age and stature, whose hometown he originally captured and bears his name, to become a judge over that and the surrounding area.

The Macharites conquered a very large area, moving on a momentum that could not be stopped. They actually conquered much more area than they could occupy. Furthermore, they did not annihilate the races of people who occupied this area (Joshua 17:12–13).

And Nobah had gone and captured Kenath, and its villages [or, daughters] and called it Nobah, by his own name. [Numbers 32:42]

It is asserted that Nobah is of the tribe of Manasseh also, although there is no other evidence of that, other than context. You would never see this for yourself in a verse like this, but here we have reasonable evidence of Mosaic authorship. You may or may not be aware that there has come about, in the past century, a theory that the books of Moses were written by several people long after the events occurred. Now, whereas I personally believe that Genesis is the product of several authors, one picking up where another one left off, I believe that the events were recorded by eyewitnesses to those events. However, there are some errant scholars who, because they do not like the idea that Moses could write prophecy that could come true, assert that Moses therefore could not have written the Law, but that it was written long after the prophecies came true. For a person entrenched in human viewpoint, who cannot deal with divinely inspired Scripture, this is the only reasonable alternative. However, this was not the case, and this tiny verse provides evidence that it was written by Moses and not by some sixth century BC author.

¹⁸⁸ M.G. Easton M.A., D.D., *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*; 1897; from e-Sword, topic: Machir.

¹⁸⁹ For instance, ZPEB allows for either interpretation; Barnes' Notes lists the Jair of Numbers separate from the Jair of Judges (*doubtless as descendant was their wording in vol. 2, p. 257*).

As has happened many times in the past, a military leader may capture a village or town and name it after himself. However, if his descendants do not ever distinguish themselves, after awhile, the name of the area will often revert back to what it was originally named. This area called Kenath was temporarily named Nobah, a name which stayed with this area until the time of the Judges (as we can see in Judges 8:11) and perhaps for a awhile later. However, that name was lost to history, as was Nobah (who is never mentioned again in Scripture), and this area, a thousand years later, became known as Kenath again (1Chronicles 2:23). Had Numbers been written at some later date, far after the time of Moses, as some alleged scholars have erroneously suggested, then it would have been illogical to include this verse—Nobah, whose name is found nowhere else and in no other historical document, would have been a man long forgotten by history. Therefore, it would make no sense for a sixth century BC author to take an area known as Kenath and give it another name. On the other hand, a contemporary of this event—Moses, for instance—would be very likely to record this information. The name of this area changed from Kenath to Nobah and Moses, if anything, would have expected the name *Kenath* to fade from history, so he therefore gives us the briefest of historical comment. "This place that used to be called Kenath; Nobah took it and named it after himself—it is now called, Nobah."

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Numbers 33

Numbers 33:1–56

Outline of Chapter 33:

- vv. 1–2 **Title and preface**
- vv. 3–10 **The first month: from Egypt to the other side of the Sea of Reeds**
- vv. 11–14 **Month two: from the Sea of Reeds to Raphdim**
- v. 15 **A year in the desert**
- vv. 16–35 **The Jews travel from Mount Sinai to Kadesh**
- v. 36 **The sons of Israel at Kadesh and the 38 silent years**
- vv. 37–39 **The death of Aaron**
- vv. 40–49 **Israel travels to the east side of the land of Canaan**
- vv. 50–56 **God's instructions to Israel concerning the possessing of the land**

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

- Introduction **Moses Leads the People from Egypt to the Land of Promise** (a map)
- v. 15 **The Events Occurring at Mount Sinai**
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- v. 15 **The Promises of God**
- v. 36 **The Events Occurring at Kadesh**
- v. 36 **The Laws and Ordinances Given at Kadesh**

Introduction: Numbers 33 is the travelogue. We are told the direction in which the Israelites went and the places that they went to over the forty years in the desert. I personally enjoyed the actual study of this travelogue. It put some things into perspective and has allowed for a good, linear summation of the movement of the Israelites from Egypt. Being of a western mind, I am better able to deal with linear time and travel and that is what this chapter allows us. The sporadic use of dates throughout the books of Moses will also guide us; not only will we be able to tie much of this down into a specific time period but we will learn why these thirty-eight years were silent and how this ties into the feast days.

In examining my source material, I have found that there is very little by way of notes on this particular chapter. For instance, *The Emphasized Bible* has but two or three footnotes, the NIV Study Bible has but two informational-interpretive notes, *The Amplified Bible* has only one reference to another portion of God's Word, and several books of mine have no references whatsoever to this portion of God's Word. On the other hand, I have been looking forward to this chapter and put together 17 or 18 pages of text (using primarily my NASB and *Young's Literal Translation* before I discovered that there was an absolute dearth of material on this chapter. So far, I have only seen a reasonable amount of commentary in *Barnes' Notes*. Several authors claim that the purpose of this chapter was to reveal God's providential care for Israel. I would think that quite a large number of previous chapters do a much better job of that, giving actual historical incidents and God's divine intervention. This gives us an overall view of where Israel moved and allows us a very linear historical perspective of this time period. It helps us with thirty-eight silent years, covered here and there throughout the Pentateuch in a single verse.

God specifically told Moses to record this information found in this chapter (v. 21). For that reason, we will actually study this chapter. Furthermore, we are specifically told in this chapter that Moses wrote this information down. This would imply that he personally wrote most of the Pentateuch.

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Moses Leads the People from Egypt to the Land of Promise (a map); from Bible-history.com; accessed June 19, 2016.



Title and Preface

V. 1 is the title of this chapter (or at least vv. 1–50) and v. 2 is the preface of this portion of God's Word.

These [are] the travels of the sons of Israel who have come out of the land of Egypt in regards to their organized groupings, by the hand of Moses and Aaron. [Numbers 33:1]

Maçça' (מַחֲצָא) [pronounced *mahs-SAH*] means *travels, journeys, journeyings*. BDB describes it as the pulling up (of the tent and tent spikes), breaking camp and setting out. Strong's 4550 BDB #652

Tsâbâ' (צָבָא) [pronounced *tsaw^b-VAW*], generally means *army*. However, this can refer to *an organized group or groups* Strong's #6635 BDB #838

You led Your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron (Psalm 77:20). Yâd (יָד) [pronounced *yawd*] is the Hebrew word for *hand*. The Bible often speaks of *filling the hand* with something. This has nothing to do with

liquids; when a hand is filled with a bow (2Kings 9:24), it means he caused his hand to grab or seize the bow. The hand has been filled because he cannot take up something else in his hand (and still properly handle the bow). We saw that throughout the book of Leviticus, when a priest was installed or consecrated, often the phrase was *fill the hand*. When the hands drop down (2Samuel 4:1), a person's strength has failed them, they have grown weak or feeble. The power to deliver is related to the word hand (Exodus 13:3, 14 Numbers 23 Deuteronomy 6:21 Isaiah 50:2 59:1). The *hand* can be used to represent *strength, power, or ability* (Leviticus 5:7 14:21 Numbers 6:21 Joshua 8:20). Here, when the word *hand* is used, it is a reference to *leadership and guidance*. Strong's #3027 BDB #388

This verse is a title of this section.

And Moses wrote [down] [or, chronicled] their departures, by their travels [i.e., the act of breaking of camp and setting out] in accordance with the command [lit., mouth] of Y^ehowah; and these [are] their travels, in regards to their departures: [Numbers 33:2]

Môwtsâ' (מֹוֹטְסָא') [pronounced *mow-TSAW*] is the *act of going forth, egression, departure, embarkment, migration*. Strong's #4161 BDB #425. The word kâtha^{bv} (כָּתַב) [pronounced *kaw-THAH^{bv}*] means *to write, to write down, to chronicle, to record, to document*. Strong's #3789 BDB #507

God has told Moses to write down, or record certain things on several occasions, indicating that Moses is the author of the bulk of the Pentateuch. (1) After the giving of the manna and the provision of water, and the fight with Amalek, God told Moses to write down in **the** book that God would wipe Amalek's memory from under heaven and that the Y^ehowah would war against Amalek from generation to generation (Exodus 17:14). (2) The definite article indicates that there was a book in existence at this time and that Moses was to record that information in it. (3) After receiving the Ten Commandments and a series of laws, Moses wrote them down (Exodus 24:4). (4) When God renewed His covenant with Israel, Moses was told to write it down—this was the second time that Moses had to go up the mountain to speak to God (Exodus 34:27–28). (5) God wrote out the Ten Commandments (Exodus 34:1). (6) When Moses was finished, he had a book that all of the people were aware of—a book that the Israelites were enjoined to obey (Deuteronomy 28:58–61). (7) Moses is said to have finished writing all the words of the Law in Deuteronomy 31:24.

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The First Month: from Egypt to the Other Side of the Sea of Reeds

Exodus 12:29–16:1

And they traveled from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month, on the day after the Passover, the sons of Israel have exited boldly [lit., with a high hand] before the eyes of all the Egyptians. [Numbers 33:3]

ZPEB tells us Rameses (or, Raamses) is Egyptian for *estate of Ramses [the King]*. This gives us a bit of a problem. We find Rameses mentioned as early on as Genesis 47:11 as the place where Joseph settled his family. However, BDB lists Rameses as having been built by Rameses II, hence its name. However, Rameses I and Rameses II both come from the nineteenth dynasty of Egypt, which began circa 1314 BC. One possibility is that this city is named in retrospect, but it would have been built too late for Moses to go back and insert it into the documents which he had already written and, furthermore, that was not the way they did that then. They might write "Kingwood [that is, Humble]" to indicate a recent change of name. However, we do not have that here. One possibility would be that all of this was written hundreds of years later with the more recent names given to the cities and areas, but that is not always the case—in fact, that is what is confusing about some of the geography of the Bible is that the places named had fallen out of historical view. It will be like that for much of Numbers 33. However, Rameses existed back in Genesis 47 and was being built in Exodus 1:11.

This is a general problem which we ran into when first dealing with the Exodus. Although the Bible is very specific in terms of dates and families and areas, it is discounted whenever any other history is unearthed. Therefore, from the bits and pieces of information that we have about Egypt, we have constructed what is thought to be an *accurate* timetable and we have always tried to correlate Biblical history with these other notions of chronology, whereas it should be the other way around. A few points: (1) It is clear in history that many kings exaggerate the length of their rule, the prosperity under them and their glorious victories in battle. All such records from kings or from their official historians should be suspect. (2) The reigns of certain kings, particularly when they were utter failures, might be swept under the carpet, so to speak. It would not be unlikely that the king of the exodus would be a stain upon Egyptian history—every family suffered a death because of him, every farmer and rancher suffered great losses, the general populace found themselves in great pain and discomfort because of him. I would not be surprised if his name were removed from Egyptian history. (3) The most complete and accurate list of Egyptian kings is from the Turin Papyrus of Kings, once had the names of nearly all of the kings of Egypt; however, today it is in terrible condition. The Turin Papyrus of Kings gives the lengths of reigns and the years that certain dynasties ruled. This same list also includes the earliest dynasties of gods and spirits over Egypt. Bonus. (4) We also have lists of other kings (like those of Sethos I and Ramses II), some which give only the names of the kings and some which omit certain more obscure kings and time periods. (5) Many authors believe that we can set the dates of the Egyptian pharaohs and be within a decade of accuracy. I don't believe that we can expect to be that accurate.

But back to the original problem: the city of Rameses. *Rameses* (which is Ra-mes-su in Egyptian),¹⁹⁰ doesn't mean *the estate of Rameses* but it means the *son of Ra* (who is the sun god of Egypt, who became the dominant figure of a trio of gods). The an area or a city might be named this would seem natural; and that a child born in the Egyptian castle might be named this would also seem natural; one does not have to precede the other. Furthermore, the building of the city of Rameses as found in Exodus 11:11 does not have to correspond with the building of Rameses by Rameses II—famous cities are built and rebuilt many times. The city found in Exodus had its economy totally ruined and its people decimated.

On the fourteenth day of that first month, the sons of Israel celebrated the first Passover, as the Egyptians saw their first-born all die that evening. **Now it came about at midnight that Y^ehowah struck all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh, who sat on his throne, to the first-born of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the first-born of [their] livestock. And Pharaoh arose in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians, and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was no home where there was not someone dead. Then he called for Moses and Aaron at night and said, "Rise up, get out from among my people, both you and the sons of Israel; and go worship Y^ehowah, as you have said. Take both your blocks and your herds, as you have said, and go, and [in doing this you] bless me also." And the Egyptians urged the people to send them out of the land in haste, for they said, "We will all be dead." So the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading bowls bound up in the clothes on their shoulders...so the sons of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about 600,000 men on foot, aside from children (Exodus 12:29–34, 37).** During that night, the sons of Israel prepared to leave, as urged by the Egyptians, and they all set out the very next day, the fifteenth day of the first month.

While [lit., and] the were burying those whom Y^ehowah had struck down among them, every first-born, and on their gods has Y^ehowah executed [lit., done] judgments. [Numbers 33:4]

God said to Moses, "For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night and I will strike down all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt will I execute judgments—I am Y^ehowah." (Exodus 12:12). As you will recall, each judgment was a direct attack upon the deities of Egypt.

Then the sons of Israel traveled from Ramese and they bivouacked [or, encamped] at Succoth. [Numbers 33:5]

¹⁹⁰ I think I read this in Will Durant's *The Story of Civilization* Vol. I, but I cannot find where.

It was during this portion of the trip and the stay over in Succoth that the Passover was set up as an annual celebration of deliverance from Egypt and of the passing over the Israelites when God struck the Egyptians with death. During this traveling, or when they stopped at night, God spoke to Moses and gave to him the ordinance of the week of unleavened bread along with the setting apart of the first-born of Israel to God. Joseph's bones are mentioned during this period of travel (Exodus 13:19).

Succoth is not the same city here as mentioned in Genesis 33:17 (or in Joshua 13:27 Judges 8:6). It is thought to be west of the bitter lakes on the eastern part of the Wadi Tumeilat. We only hear of it as a stopping and starting point (Exodus 12:37 13:20).

Then they traveled from Succoth and bivouacked in Etham, which [is] in the extremity of the desert; [Numbers 33:6]

Nâca' (נָצָא) [pronounced *naw-SAH*] means *to pull up the tent pins*; it is the verbal cognate of maçça' (מַצָּעָה) [pronounced *mahs-SAHG*] which we just studied in v. 1. It could be translated *journey, travel, force march, set out*. This word occurs no less than 42 times in Numbers 33, in almost every verse.

This verse is pretty much a word-for-word quote from Exodus 13:20: **Then they set out from Succoth and bivouacked in Etham on the edge of the desert.** Since this area is unknown, some sources think they went south and others north (mostly depending upon how far north or south they place Etham). In any case, the desert and the sea of Reeds is before them. Because of Exodus 14:1–3 (**Now Y^ehowah said to Moses, saying, "Tell the sons of Israel to turn back and camp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea; you will camp in the front of Baalzephon, opposite it, by the sea. for Pharaoh will say of the sons of Israel, 'They are wandering aimlessly in the land; the desert has shut them in.' "**), I believe that they traveled south, perhaps to the Bitter Lakes, and then backtracked, going north. God knew that they were about to spend forty years in the desert and He did not want Egypt to come after them during their times of weakness. God chose this time to completely decimate the Egyptian army and leadership. It will take them years to rebuild.

Concerning these various stops that Israel makes, The Cambridge Bible writes: *'The exact line of march pursued by the people after leaving Goshen cannot now be traced1[85]. Of the 40 stations mentioned in Numbers 33 (P) as passed by the Israelites between Rameses and the steppes of Moab, the names of most have entirely disappeared; and the only stations of which the sites can be said to be certain are 'E?ion-geber, Kadesh, Dibon, and Nebo. Even the site of Sinai is not beyond question (see p. 189 f.); and the other places mentioned can only be located conjecturally.*

The Cambridge Bible continues: *The Israelites started (Exodus 12:37) from Rameses, not improbably (see on Exodus 1:11) er-Re?abeh, 10 miles W. of Pithom, passed Succoth (Exodus 12:37), which is almost certainly the Egyptian Thukke,—either the district round Pithom, or a city very near it; and then (Exodus 13:20) encamped at Etham, on the 'edge of the wilderness.' The site of Etham is quite uncertain; but it was presumably some place 4–5 miles N. of L. Timsah, on the W. 'edge' of the wilderness E. of the isthmus. Instead, however, of going on from Etham, by the direct route to Canaan, through the later 'land of the Philistines,' they made a sharp turn back, towards the (Egyptian) wilderness to the (west side of) the 'Sea of reeds' (the Red Sea),—i.e. either as far as the west side of the present Gulf of Suez, or if, as is very probable (see p. 126), this gulf, at the time of the Exodus, extended northwards as far as L. Timsah, to some point on the W. of this northern extension, the position of which, as the sites of Pi-hahiroth, Migdol, and Ba'al-zèphon (Exodus 14:2) are all entirely unknown (p. 122 f.), cannot be fixed with certainty, but where, no doubt,—as even Naville and Dawson suppose,—the water was shallow. M. Naville thinks that the passage took place between L. Timsah and the Bitter Lakes, a little N. of the 'Serapeum' (see the map); Sir J. W. Dawson considers that the best place would have been near the S. end of the great Bitter Lake, between the present railway stations Fxyid and Geneffa (cf. p. 126). Wherever the point which the Israelites reached was, the Egyptian wilderness seemed to have 'shut them in' (Exodus 14:3): the sea was in front of them; and to the Egyptians it appeared that they had but to follow them in order to have them in their power. But the waters were shallow: a high wind arose in the night, and, aided perhaps by a low tide, drove the waters aside, leaving a relatively dry passage (Exodus*

14:21), by which the Israelites were able to cross. The Egyptians pursued after them: but the storm increased in violence (cf. Psalm 77:17–19); they were terrified (if Exodus 14:24 is rightly interpreted) by the lightnings that burst from a heavy cloud near; the wheels of their chariots became clogged in the wet sand; they saw that further advance was impossible, and beat a speedy retreat. But meanwhile the wind had suddenly veered; and in the early morning the waters returned, sweeping the Egyptians away before they could regain secure ground (Exodus 14:27 b, Exodus 15:10). The Exodus was thus accomplished; and the Israelites were safe on the E. side of the 'Sea of reeds.' The deliverance was a great one, and it was fraught with momentous consequences for the future: but either tradition, or poetic imagination, or both, magnified it into one of altogether incredible dimensions: a pathway cut through the sea, with a wall of water standing up on each side (Exodus 14:22; Exodus 14:29 P; cf. Exodus 15:8), and 2,000,000 persons (p. 101), with tents, baggage, and cattle, passing through it in a single night!¹⁹¹

And they traveled from Etham and turned back on Pi-Hahiroth, which faces Baal-zephon; and they bivouacked before the face of Migdol. [Numbers 33:7]

Pharaoh has his spies out, even though he told Israel to leave Egypt. He will know where they are at all times. The route taken here will confuse him. They have gone east and south, and suddenly they have turned and gone north. Pi-Hahiroth possibly means *mouth of the canals*; but it could also mean *house of [the goddess] Heret*. Its exact location is unknown, as are Baal-zephon and Migdol. These are certainly settlements of the Egyptians, from whence Pharaoh will receive information as to the whereabouts of the Jews (he obviously cannot hop on a horse and just start riding, hoping to run into Israel, although they would be easy to track). **When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the heart of Pharaoh was changed toward the people and they said, "What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" So he made his chariot ready and took his people with him; and he took 600 select chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt of Egypt with officers over all of them. And Y^ehowah strengthened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he chased after the sons of Israel as the sons of Israel were going out boldly [lit., with a high hand]. Then the Egyptians chased after them—all the horses, chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and they overtook them camping by the sea, beside Pi-Hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon (Exodus 14:5–9).**

And they traveled from before the face of Pi-Hahiroth,¹⁹² and passed over through the midst of the sea, into the desert, and went a journey of three days in the wilderness of Etham, and bivouacked in Marah. [Numbers 33:8]

At this time, Y^ehowah bathed the area between the Egyptian and the Israel encampments with a thick cloud, blew the waters back of the Sea of Reeds, and allowed the Israelites to pass through. Once they were nearly on the other side: **And the sons of Israel went through the midst of the sea on the dry land, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. Then the Egyptians took up the pursuit, and all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots and his horsemen went in after them into the midst of the sea. And it came about at the morning water, that Y^ehowah looked down on the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud and brought the army of the Egyptians into confusion. and He caused their chariot wheels to swerve, and He made them drive with difficulty; so the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from Israel, for Y^ehowah is fighting for them against the Egyptians." The Y^ehowah said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the water may come back over the Egyptians, over their chariots and their horsemen." so Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal state a day-break, while the Egyptians were fleeing right into it; then Y^ehowah overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. So the water returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen, even Pharaoh's army that had gone into the sea after them; not even one of them remained. But the sons of Israel walked on dry land through the midst of the sea, and the waters a wall to them, on their right hand and on their left (Exodus 14:22–29). The Egyptians began to follow in full pursuit, a huge army, as Israel traveled through the midst of the sea. Then they got spooked and some began to turn around, causing the army to**

¹⁹¹ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Exodus Book Commentary (Historical and Religious Character of Exodus).

¹⁹² Most Massoretic texts read merely *Hahiroth*; however, several Massoretic texts along with the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Vulgate read *Pi-hahiroth*. *Pi* is a common Egyptian prefix.

suddenly stop in the midst of the sea. Then God brought the waters in over them, drowning the entire Egyptian army so that not one of them remained.

This put the Jews into an emotional high and Moses and the congregation sang a song to God. However, when they emerged on the other side of the Sea of Reeds, they traveled into the desert for three days. **Then Moses led Israel from the Sea of Reeds and they went out into the desert of Shur and they went three days in the desert and found no water** (Exodus 15:22). This was the first time that they had gone without water for that long a period of time. I believe that Egypt was much wetter and fertile during that time period as well as the land of Canaan and it is even possible that this particular sea of Reeds has since dried up. In any case, on the other side, they went into the desert and there was no water and God tested them. They failed, as the Jews would throughout their desert wanderings. They bitched and moaned and complained. However, this provided Y^ehowah with the chance to reveal a wonderful analogy when they came to the waters of Marah, which were bitter—this was a stream or lake of brackish water, too salty to drink. Moses went to God and God showed him a tree—and we are in this bitter world without refreshment, and when we go to God for the first time, He shows us a tree—the tree upon which our Savior was slain. This tree shown to Moses was thrown into the midst of the waters and they became sweet, just as when we believe in Jesus Christ, we are surrounded by and become an oasis in a desert, beckoning those who walk past us.

And they traveled from Marah, and came in to Elim, and in Elim [were] twelve fountains of waters, and seventy palm trees, and they bivouacked there. [Numbers 33:9]

Then they came to Elim where there [were] twelve springs of water and seventy date palms, and they camped there beside the waters (Exodus 15:27). Notice, after being delivered by Y^ehowah in the desert, there was great prosperity, with a huge, beautiful abundant oasis. These were not tiny watering holes, but there was a great amount of water, enough for two million Israelites to fully enjoy. They stopped here for refreshment and to water their livestock and to rest. Elim is identified today with Wadi Aharandel, which is called by Edersheim *a sweet and fertile spot*¹⁹³.

And they traveled from Elim, and bivouacked by the Sea of Reeds. [Numbers 33:10]

Then they set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the sons of Israel came to the desert of Sin, which was between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteen day of the second month after their departure from the land of Egypt (Exodus 16:1). This stop at the Sea of Reeds is not mentioned in Exodus. Edersheim has a nifty description of this: *Leaving Elim, the character of the scenery changes. Instead of dreary level plains of sand, as hitherto, we are now entering among the mountains, and the bright greens of the caper-plant forms a striking contrast to the red sandstone of the rocks. Hitherto the rout of Israel had been directly southward, in pursuing it, they had successfully skirted the Teh, and near Elim a belt of sand. But now the host was to enter on the Sinaitic range itself. From Numb. 33:10, we know that from Elim their journey first brought them again to the shore of the "Sea of Weeds."*¹⁹⁴

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Month Two: from the Sea of Reeds to Raphdim

Exodus 16:1–18:27

And they traveled from the Sea of Reeds, and bivouacked in the desert of Sin. [Numbers 33:11]

It was at this time that the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses once again. This time it was concerning their lack of food. God provided them with manna from heaven. Edersheim calls the wilderness of Sin *a dreary, desolate tract, which obtains its name from a long ridge of white chalk hills. In this inhospitable desert, the*

¹⁹³ Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*, p. 194.

¹⁹⁴ Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*, p. 194.

provisions which Israel had brought from Egypt, and which had now lasted a month, began to fail. Behind them, just above the range of chalk cliffs, they would see, in the distance, the purple streaks of those granite mountains which form the proper Sinaitic group. To the west lay the sea and across it, in the dim mist, they could just descry the rich and fertile Egypt, which left had for ever left behind. Once more their unbelief broke forth¹⁹⁵.

And they traveled from Sin, and bivouacked at Dophkah. [Numbers 33:12]

This stop is not mentioned in Exodus; this was one of the places where they camped prior to arriving at Sinai. Scofield says the name *Dophkah* suggests smelting and that this stop could be Serâ-bît-el-Khâdim. *Barne's Notes* indicates that *Dophkah* was in the *Wady Sih*, a day's journey from the *Wady Nash*.¹⁹⁶ This is where the desert of Sin properly ends, the predominance of Sandstone giving way to porphyry [pronounced *POOR-fay-ree*] and granite.¹⁹⁷ The former rock is a dark, purplish-red stone which contains small crystals of feldspar.

And they traveled from Dophkah, and bivouacked Alush. [Numbers 33:13]

This is the second stopping place in the desert of Sin, on the way to Sinai, not mentioned anywhere else, other than by implication in Exodus 17:1: **Then all the congregation of the sons of Israel traveled by breaking camp and moving on from the desert of Sin, according to the mouth of Y^ehowah, and camped at Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink.**

And they traveled from Alush, and bivouacked at Rephidim; now, it was there that the people had no water to drink. [Numbers 33:14]

Scofield suggests that Rephidim is equivalent to Wadi Refâyed. It was at Rephidim where Israel had its first no-water test. What is pictured in my children's Bibles is Moses and twenty guys standing around a boulder and Moses hits it with his staff and a stream of water comes out like someone had slipped a hose in the rock. Given the number and thirst of the people, this would have done little or nothing. Water came out of that rock with much greater force than had you knocked over a fire hydrant. This was a volcanic eruption of water—**He opened the rock and water flowed out; it ran in the dry places—a river** (Psalm 105:41). **He split the rocks in the desert and gave abundant water to drink like the ocean depths. He brought forth streams also from the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers** (Psalm 78:15–16). What occurred was spectacular.

Right here is another *proof* that the books of Moses were not written hundreds of years later. The Psalms, which were written hundreds of years later, give a much more detailed description of the amount of water and how incredibly spectacular this miracle was. Moses covers it in a verse: [Y^ehowah speaks to Moses]: **"Watch; I will stand before you there upon the rock at Horeb; and you will strike the rock, and water will gush out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel** (Exodus 17:6). Moses is the master of understatement here; however, what God the Holy Spirit, the divine editor wants us to see is fact that Y^ehowah stands before Moses on the rock and Moses strikes that rock—the staff strikes Y^ehowah! The miracle is less important than what has just occurred—Y^ehowah has been struck and from Him flows living water. The Psalmists later point out just how spectacular this sight was. Had this been written during the time of the Psalmist or later, this incident would have been given a greater and more graphical description.

Raphidim was quite memorable. After this incident with the no water, the Israelites stay there awhile. They at first had what amounted to a river, flowing in the desert from that rock and it has settled into springs, in all of the lower areas around them. They stop and enjoy this abundance of water. During this time, Amalek comes to do battle against them and Israel defeats Amalek. The Moses is reunited with his father-in-law, whom he appears to have a much greater rapport with than with his wife (the mobilization of the troops of Amalek, the war between Amalek

¹⁹⁵ Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*, pp. 194–195.

¹⁹⁶ A *wady* is either a channel which is filled with water during rainfall or an oasis. Egyptian areas are named *Wady Something* refer to a logical rest stop where there may or may not be a small populace.

¹⁹⁷ *Barnes' Notes*, Vol. 2, p. 46.

and Israel, and, of course, the movement of Israel out of Egypt has been broadcast throughout the eastern world and Jethro, hearing of all of this, set out to find Moses.

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A Year in the Desert

Exodus 19:1 through Numbers 10:10

And they traveled from Rephidim, and bivouacked in the desert of Sinai. [Numbers 33:15]

In the third month after the sons of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day, they came into the desert of Sinai. When they traveled from Rephidim, they came to the desert of Sinai, and camped in the desert; and there Israel camped in front of the mountain (Exodus 19:1–2).

It was at Sinai that the Law was given and where the people were numbered for war. They arrived at the desert of Sinai exactly the third month after leaving Egypt and remained there for almost a full year (Exodus 19:1 Numbers 10:11). This would be quite the eventful year. The Jews are about to receive a great deal of divine viewpoint, so that you know Satan will be there fighting against God, attempting to lead the children of Israel astray in any way possible. During this time, we have a great number of incidents.

The Events Occurring at Mount Sinai	
Exodus 19	Moses goes to the top of Mount Sinai to speak to Y ^e howah
Exodus 20	Moses receives the Ten Commandments
Exodus 24	The people promise obedience to the Law
Exodus 32	The people worship the golden calf made with their own hands while Moses is on Mount Sinai; Moses smashes the tablets with the Ten Commandments on them; God threatens to destroy all of Israel and Moses intercedes on their behalf
Exodus 33	God gives the children of Israel marching orders and chews them out, but Moses intercedes
Exodus 34:1–9	God writes Ten Commandments on tablets a second time
Exodus 34:10–35	God gives instructions concerning what the Israelites should do upon entering the land
Exodus 35:10–38:31	The tabernacle is constructed
Exodus 39	The priestly garments are made
Exodus 40	The tabernacle is erected and Y ^e howah's glory fills it
Leviticus 8–9	Aaron's sons are consecrated into the priesthood; Aaron offers sacrifices
Leviticus 10	Nadab and Abihu sin against God
Leviticus 24:10–16	A young man, half-Egyptian, blasphemes God's Name
Numbers 1–2 3:14–24	A census is taken for the purposes of warfare

The Events Occurring at Mount Sinai	
Numbers 7	The leaders of the twelve tribes bring their offerings before Moses and Aaron
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Exodus 21 Leviticus 24:17–23	Ordinances concerning slavery, capital crimes, assault, dangerous livestock
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Exodus 23:14–19	The various feasts
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Exodus 25:10–27:21 30:1–31:18 Leviticus 24:1–9 Numbers 8:1–4	The tabernacle and its furniture
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Leviticus 11	Animals which are clean and unclean
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Leviticus 13–14	Leprosy and its cleansing
Leviticus 15	Quarantine
Leviticus 16 23:26–44	That great Day of Atonement
Leviticus 17	Unauthorized sacrifices; the eating of blood forbidden
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The Laws and Ordinances Given at Mount Sinai	
Leviticus 19:9–20:9, 23–27 Numbers 5	Miscellaneous laws
Leviticus 23:5–25 Numbers 9	Religious celebrations
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Numbers 3–4 8:5–26	The Levites are to assist the Aaronic priesthood
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The Promises of God	
Exodus 23:20–33	The conquest of the land is promised to the sons of Israel
Leviticus 26	Blessings promised for obedience and cursings for disobedience

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The Jews Travel from Mount Sinai to Kadesh

Numbers 10:11–12:16

And they traveled from desert of Sinai, and bivouacked at Kibroth-hattaavah. [Numbers 33:16]

The people traveled for three days (Numbers 10:33) and they began to complain. First they complained about things in general, and God burnt many of them with lightning (Numbers 10:1–3) in an area they named Taberah (which means *burning*). Then they complained about the manna, which they had grown tired of. They began to think about the fish, cucumbers and the melons, the leeks, the onions and the garlic that they are back in Egypt. This got on Moses' last nerve and he asked God to just kill him and get it over with. God fed the people quail and then struck the people with disease. After burying many of those who succumbed to the disease there, they named this stop Kibroth-hattaavah, which means *graves of lusting*. **So the name of that place was called Kibroth-hattaavah, because there they had buried the people who had been greedy** (Numbers 11:34). **"Again, at Taberah and at Massah¹⁹⁸ and at Kibroth-hattaavah, you provoked Y^ehowah to wrath."** (Deuteronomy 9:22).

And they traveled from Kibroth-hattaavah, and bivouacked at Hazeroth. [Numbers 33:17]

This short stop is been mentioned several times in Scripture (Numbers 11:35 12:16 Deuteronomy 1:1). This is where Miriam, leading her brother Aaron by the nose, complained to Moses about his marriage to the Cushite woman and about their relative spirituality. Miriam was far too concerned that Moses might be touting his position too much (Numbers 12:1–5). Because Miriam was totally out of line, God disciplined her with leprosy (Numbers 12:6–15). We will deal with Deuteronomy 1:1 when we get there.

¹⁹⁸ See Exodus 17:7.

The Israelites were moving closer and closer to the land. They had the manpower, the Law and Y^ehowah; they were ready to enter into the land. The spiritual issues between the three leaders of the Israelites had been made clear.

And they traveled from Hazeroth, and bivouacked at Rithmah. [Numbers 33:18]

The people traveled out from Hazaeroth and camped in the desert of Paran (Numbers 12:16b). This lone verse tells us that Rithmah is found in the desert of Paran, on the way from Hazeroth to Kadesh-barnea. The name *Rithmah*, comes from the word *retem* which is a broomplant or a broom bush, called a *juniper* in the KJV.¹⁹⁹ We have about 2,000,000 people who have to travel a distance of 200 miles. During this time, Moses will teach doctrine to keep them going. They will average a mere 10 miles per day.

And they traveled from Rithmah, and bivouacked at Rimmon-perez. [Numbers 33:19]

This stopping place is also mentioned nowhere else but in this and the next verse. Rimmon-perez means *the pomegranate breach*. We would still be in the desert of Paran. We will now have a great series of stopping points between Mount Sinai and Kadesh-barnea.

I should point out the alternative viewpoint, as presented by *Barnes' Notes*: by comparing Numbers 12:16, 13:26 and 33:18, the author equates Rithmah with Kadesh, and groups vv. 19–36 as the period of 38 years of aimless, disciplinary wandering. Since Moses calls Kadesh by the name *Kadesh* in Numbers 13:26 and 33:36–37, there is no reason to think that Moses gave it sort of a mystery name here. Nor is there a need to assume that Israel wandered in the desert for 38 years. When the cloud above the tabernacle lifted and moved, Israel moved in a particular direction with a purpose. However, after their failure in Numbers 14–15, there was no reason for Israel to wander, other than to find water and food, both of which should have been available at Kadesh (recall that God still provided the Israelites with manna every day). I personally believe that there was no wandering taking place during those thirty-eight years, but that Israel merely parked itself at Kadesh until God killed off that evil, exodus generation of adults. Then they moved again with purpose. So vv. 19–36 belong to the daily march from Mount Sinai to Kadesh-barnea and would be inserted between Numbers 12:16. The spies of Numbers 14 may have been sent out to scope out the land prior to the arrival of the Israelites at Kadesh, say from Jotbathah, Abronah or Ezion-geber (Numbers 33:34–36).

And they traveled from Rimmon-perez, and bivouacked at Libnah. [Numbers 33:20]

Libnah is found only in this verse, although some connect it to Laban of Deuteronomy 1:1. Libnah means *whiteness*; possibly so named because of the white poplar trees which grew in that area.

And they traveled from Libnah, and bivouacked at Rissah. [Numbers 33:21]

Rissah is mentioned only in this context. *Rissah* means *drew*.

And they traveled from Rissah, and bivouacked in Kehelathah. [Numbers 33:22]

Khelathah is found only here. *Barnes' Notes* identifies Rissah, Haradah (vv. 24–25) and Tahath (vv. 26–27) with Rasa, Aradeh and Elthi of the Roman tables. *Khelathah* means *assembling*.

And they traveled from Kehelathah, and bivouacked Mount Shepher. [Numbers 33:23]

This camping place is found only in this context and nowhere else in Scripture. Mount Shepher means *the mount of beauty* or *the mount of goodliness*.

And they traveled from Mount Shepher, and bivouacked at Haradah. [Numbers 33:24]

¹⁹⁹ *Barnes' Notes*, Vol. 2, p. 259.

Haradad is mentioned only here. *Haradad* means *a place of terror*.

And they traveled from Haradah, and bivouacked at Makheloth. [Numbers 33:25]

The location of Makheloth is unknown and mentioned nowhere else. *Makheloth* means *assemblies*. Moses may have spoken to the people here in various groups or they could have been grouped together for a variety of reasons.

And they traveled from Makheloth, and bivouacked at Tahath. [Numbers 33:26]

We have 2,000,000 people here and all their livestock. They appear to travel for a day, camp and move on. Tahath is found only here in Scripture.

And they traveled from Tahath, and bivouacked at Terah. [Numbers 33:27]

The encampment of Terah may have been named after Abraham's father.

And they traveled from Terah, and bivouacked at Mithkah. [Numbers 33:28]

Mithkah probably means *sweetness* and it may refer to bodies of water off the Gulf of Aqaba which are freshwater (Edersheim takes the same stance).

And they traveled from Mithkah, and bivouacked at Hashmonah. [Numbers 33:29]

These are not cities or villages that Israel was traveling through—they likely named each of these stopping places themselves. Hashmonah means *fat, fruitful*, indicating some prosperity. We never hear these names again because these are areas which are never settled on a semi-permanent basis during the time of the exodus or anytime soon thereafter. Barnes' identifies this with *Heshmon* of Joshua 15:27; however, despite the similarity in name, since Heshmon is at the far southern portion of Judah (Joshua 15:1), this would still be too far north for the Israelites to be wandering (either after an unsuccessful attack upon the Canaanites—Barnes' timetable— or prior to such an attack—which is the correct view).

And they traveled from Hashmonah, and bivouacked at Moseroth. [Numbers 33:30]

Moseroth means *chastisement* and, likely, this was another point at which some of the congregation of Israel died the sin unto death. This area is associate with Mount Hor, as Deuteronomy 10:6 reads: "**Now the sons of Israel traveled from Meeroth Bene-jaakan to Moserah.**²⁰⁰ **There Aaron died and there he was buried and Eleazar his son ministered as priest in his place.**" This was the second time to travel through these areas. Here they are traveling north, north east, and at Aaron's death, they had been traveling south, south-west. We are somewhat near Mount Hor, as Numbers 20:24–27 33:38 tell us that Aaron died upon Mount Hor in the fortieth year and died. We are close enough here to see Mount Hor.

And they traveled from Moseroth, and bivouacked at Bene-jaakan. [Numbers 33:31]

Bene-jaakan were a tribe of Horites who lived around Mount Hor at the time of the Exodus. The name here means *sons of Jaakan*, and Jaakan was one of the three named sons of Ezer in Genesis 36:20–30. Their name here indicates perhaps a skirmish or an encountering with these people may have occurred. They knew Israel was coming a perhaps came down to the camp to investigate. These Horites were later displaced, during the next forty years as a matter of fact, by the sons of Esau (Deuteronomy 2:12).

²⁰⁰ In the Hebrew, the difference between Moseroth and Moserah is the last vowel point (which were added many centuries later) and the last letter; in the Hebrew h is ה and th is ת; not a lot of difference. They are related letters as well.

We also find this area mentioned in Deuteronomy 10:6a: [Now the sons of Israel had traveled from Beeroth Bene-jaakan²⁰¹ to Moserah; there Aaron died and there he was buried and Eleazar.](#) The reverse order here occurs because this is the trip back from Kadesh when the Israelites intended to travel to the King's Highway and then go due north.

These two verses indicate that these two stopping places were much closer to Mount Hor than any map indicates. By most accounts, we are traveling along side the gulf of Aqaba; however, I think that we have gone past the Gulf of Aqaba some time ago and are traveling now at the southern foot of Mount Hor.

And they traveled from Bene-jaakan, and bivouacked at Hor-haggidgad. [Numbers 33:32]

Mount Haggidgad is mentioned only here; it is possible that this is the same place as Gudgodah. [From there \[the place where Aaron died\], they traveled to Gudgodah; and from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a land of brooks and water](#) (Deuteronomy 10:7). Deuteronomy 10:6 is parenthetical, indicating the reverse order of travel on the second time through that area; in Deuteronomy 10:7 we are back on track, covering in a very limited way, this portion of their advance.

And they traveled from Hor-haggidgad, and bivouacked at Jotbathah. [Numbers 33:33]

Jotbathah was mentioned as the next stop from Mount Haggidgad in this verse and the next stop from a land of brooks and water in Deuteronomy 10:7. *Jotbathah* means *goodness*. We have left Mount Hor and Hor-haggidgad is the next mountain to the north of Israel's camp as Israel moves west. It is likely that down this mountain flowed many brooks and there were many springs of water. In order for Israel to survive there had to be a lot of water in the desert. God is a God of miracles and for just that year, He may have provided an over abundance of rainfall, or possibly for the couple years previous to provide enough vegetation for their livestock and water for them.

And they traveled from Jotbathah, and bivouacked at Abronah. [Numbers 33:34]

Abrona means *bank, crossing, ford*; meaning that at this point, the Israelites went across a river or large stream.

And they traveled from Abronah, and bivouacked at Ezion-geber. [Numbers 33:35]

The Jews stopped at Ezion-geber twice; here and sometime after they were rebuffed later at the southern border of Palestine. Although some maps place Ezion-geber on the far northern end of the Gulf of Aqabah, I believe it to be further north than that. This was a famous sea port utilized often by King Solomon (1Kings 9:26–28 10:11, 22 2Chronicles 8:17–18). Ezion-geber is mentioned once more in connection with a bad alliance between King Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah (2Chronicles 20:35–37).

The second time is mentioned in Deuteronomy 2:8: ["So we passed beyond our brothers, the sons of Esau, who live in Seir, away from the Arabah road, away from Elath and from Ezion-geber. And we turned and passed through by the way of the wilderness of Moab."](#) This second time is when the sons of Israel walked around the borders of Edom. [King Solomon also built a fleet of ships in Ezion-geber, which is near Eloth²⁰² on the shore of the Sea of Reeds, in the land of Edom](#) (1Kings 9:26).

There is a geographical problem here. If Ezion-geber is right at the northern end of the modern Gulf of Aqaba, then this more or less places Mount Hor off the Gulf of Aqaba, which would not make sense. Another option is for Ezion-geber to be south, southwest of Mount Hor and for the ships that were built in 1Kings 9 and 2Chronicles 20 to be built there and then transported down to Elath, which would be nearby where the mouth of the Gulf of Aqaba used to be. On land, that would be quite a feat and it would seem, even though there might be a lot of wood available at the foot of Mount Hor, that it would be a lot of trouble.

²⁰¹ This means *wells of the sons of Jaakan*.

²⁰² Eloth and Elath are probably the same city.

A third possibility is that Ezion-geber was originally built at the foot of the southwest portion of Mount Hor and a second Ezion-geber was built closer to the Gulf of Aqaba. I find this the least-likely of all of the possibilities, even though we have seen when new areas are settled, old names are applied (like New York or New Brunfield).

However, as I write this, a fourth possibility comes to me; and, not knowing the geography of the area, I do not know how likely this is, however, this seems to be the most likely of the various options herein presented: I believe that the land of Canaan and that general area to be much more prosperous and well-watered than we find today. I wonder if we did not have, at that time, enough of a freshwater river or a salt water inlet to at least guide boats in and out of the Gulf of Aqaba from Ezion-geber, which could, under those circumstances, be much farther north than most maps place it. Elath would also be much further north than indicated by the maps. It is not farfetched to assume that the land of Promise, at this time, was better watered—possibly not just for that year, but in general. God the Holy Spirit tells us: [He changes rivers into a desert; and springs of water in a thirsty ground; a fruitful land into a sal waste. Because of the wickedness of those who dwell in it. He changes a desert into a pool of water, and a dry land into springs of water. And there He makes the hungry to dwell, so that they may establish an inhabited city](#) (Psalm 107:34–36). The example I have given before—the Los Angeles area or Palm Springs are perfect examples of what a little water can do to a desert.

In any case, a farther northward placement of Ezion-geber makes a lot more sense to this travelogue. This way the Jews are not making twenty stops along the Gulf of Aqaba, yet move from the Gulf to Kadesh in one movement, a distance which would traditionally three-fourths as far. This more evenly spaces out the stops made between Mount Sinai and Kadesh and the death of Aaron at Mount Hor being near Bene-jaakan and Moserah would make more sense.

After considering these various possibilities, I then noticed Barnes' slant on this: [Ezion-geber means] "*Giant's backbone.*" *The Wâdy-Ghadhyân, a valley running eastward into the Arabah some miles north of the present head of the Elanitic gulf. A salt marsh which here overspreads a portion of the Arabah may be taken as indicating the limit to which the sea anciently reached; and we may thus infer the existence here in former times of an extensive tidal have, at the head of which the city of Ezion-geber stood. Here it was that from the time of Solomon onward the Jewish navy was constructed (1Kings 9:26 22:49).* Occasionally, when I am out of my depth, as in the field of mid-eastern geography, it is nice to know that someone has taken a similar stand. Therefore, we will place Ezion-geber 60–90 miles north of the present day northern extremity of the Gulf of Aqaba, and assume that there was a contiguous flow of water from Ezion-geber to that extremity in those days.

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The Sons of Israel at Kadesh and the 38 Silent Years

Numbers 13:1–20:1 Deuteronomy 1:20–46

[And they traveled from Ezion-geber, and bivouacked in the desert of Zin, that is, Kadesh.](#)

[Numbers 33:36]

This is quite interesting; these previous twenty-or-so stops has at best brought the Jews 175-200 miles. My guess is that Moses would teach them at each stopping point and that the amount of the advance was fairly casual. [Whether it was two days or a month or a year that the cloud lingered over the tabernacle, staying above it, the sons of Israel remained camped and did not set out; but when it was lifted, they did set out. At the command \[lit., mouth\] of Y^ehowah they camped and at the command \[lit., mouth\] of Y^ehowah they traveled; they kept the responsibilities of Y^ehowah according to the command of Y^ehowah through Moses](#) (Numbers 9:22–23)

[Then the sons of Israel, the whole congregation, came to the desert of Zin in the first month; and the people stayed at Kadesh](#) (Numbers 20:1a). It was from here that they ran their base of operations when the spies were sent into the land of Canaan (Numbers 13:21).

At this point, as was in Numbers 33:15, we have a great passage of time dealt with in one short verse. We will cover this in the same way; we will list the events and the Laws and ordinances given by God during that time period where these were recorded:

The Events Occurring at Kadesh	
Numbers 13:1–24	Spies were sent into the land in preparation for military action
Numbers 13:25–33	Ten of the spies report that the occupants of the land are too large for Israel to attack; the minority report of Caleb and Joshua is to go forward with the invasion.
Numbers 14:1–10	Because the ten spies spread rumors among the people concerning the impossibility of victory, the people cry and rebel against Moses and Aaron.
Numbers 14:11–38	Moses intercedes between an angry Y ^h owah and the degenerate exodus generation; the sons of Israel will still be given the land, but God will scatter the corpses of the adult generation in the desert prior to
Numbers 14:39–45	The repentant Israelites, in a flash of emotion, storm into the land of Canaan and are struck down by the Amalekites and the Canaanites
Numbers 16:1–40	Korah rebels against Moses and Aaron; the rebels are destroyed in a great earthquake
Numbers 16:41–50	A plague strikes the rebel sympathizers
Numbers 17	Aaron's rod buds
Numbers 20:1	Thirty-eight years pass
Numbers 20:2–13	The new sons of Israel are given the <i>no--water</i> test; they fail, as does, unfortunately, Moses
Numbers 20:14–22	Moses sends messengers to Edom to ask permission to travel through their land. Their intention is to cut through to the King's Highway and then head due north. Edom refuses and subsequently brings out a large force of men to stand Israel off.

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The Laws and Ordinances Given at Kadesh	
Numbers 15:1–31	Ordinances concerning offerings and their accompanying meal offerings and libations
Numbers 15:32–41	Sabbath laws
Numbers 18	Ordinances concerning the priests and the Levites
Numbers 19	The offering of the red heifer and cleanness v. uncleanness

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"So you remained in Kadesh many days, as the days." (Deuteronomy 1:46). Then the sons of Israel, the whole congregation, came to the desert of Zin in the first month; and the people stayed at Kadesh. Now Miriam had died there and was buried there (Numbers 20:1). In these verses, as in Numbers 33:36, we have a great passage of time. They arrived at the first month of probably the third year. No year is given. Previous to Numbers 20, we have the Israelites traveling from Egypt to the land. In Numbers 20, we have what occurred immediately before

the Israelites shipped out to go to the land from the east side. There is never a mention of the Israelites doing anything during those thirty-eight years. From the gist of this travelogue, which seems to be pretty extensive, somethings listing stopping places not noted previously in Scripture, it sounds as though the Israelites did not wander during those thirty-eight years, but that they stayed right in Kadesh. Recall that over 600,000 of them would die the sin unto death (some had in the Korah rebellion, in the unauthorized attack on the inhabitants of Canaan and in the sympathizing with those who rebelled with Korah. This would require a lot of burying, although it is possible that they just carried the corpses out of the main camp into an area of the desert and just dumped them. It is difficult to imagine 600,000 people in the first place; and the notion of 600,000 corpses is beyond our collective imaginations. The Israelites died at a rate of over 40 a day. The nation Israel would be in constant mourning, with large numbers of them unclean on any given day, with more people to bury than they had time for. At this rate, I believe that it took very little time before the people began to haul the corpses into the desert, into a common burial ground, and left to rot out in the elements. What a picture of loss of reward and of eternal separation from God!

After all of these people have died, God then tests the next generation with the *no water* tet of forty years before. Here, both the people and Moses failed (see Numbers 20). God mentions this failure to Moses, a year or two later, prior to their entrance into the land. [Then Y^ehowah said to Moses, "Go up to this mountain of Abarim and see the land which I have given to the sons of Israel. And when you have seen it, you too will be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother was. For in the desert of Zin, during the strife of the congregation, you rebelled against My mouth for My sanctity before their eyes at the water." \(these are the waters of Meribah of Kadesh in the desert of Zin\) \(Numbers 27:12–14\).](#)

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The Death of Aaron

Numbers 20:22–29

[And they traveled from Kadesh, and bivouacked at Mount Hor, at the edge of the land of Edom.](#)
[Numbers 33:37]

[Thus Edom refused to allow Israel to pass through his territory, so Israel turned away from him. Now when they set out from Kadesh, the sons of Israel, the whole congregation, came to Mount Hor \(Numbers 20:22–23\).](#) This movement makes sense. They have camped out at Kadesh Barnea for thirty-eight years and now it is time to be mobile again. God has killed off that evil exodus generation. Now they are heading eastward. They were originally repulsed by the Canaanites in their attack from the south, so they plan to go around to the east side of the promised land and advance through that direction. The logical way to travel would be to Mount Hor and then to move northward along the King's Highway. They only require permission from the Edomites (the sons of Esau) to travel in that way through their land. They would not force their entry into Edom nor would the Jews attack the Edomites, as God put the Edomites as off limits to their attack, as He had assigned them that particular area (Deuteronomy 2:4–6).

[And Aaron the priest went up into Mount Hor, by the command \[lit., mouth\] of Y^ehowah and he died there, in the fortieth year of the going out of the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt, in the fifth month on the first of the month; \[Numbers 33:38\]](#)

Aaron always was relatively compliant. Had he the sense to know who to be compliant to, he would have been a man almost without fault. He knows that if God has ordered him to go up to Mount Hor to die, then he has not choice.

The time period here is significant. We are in that time period of the feasts where several months go by without any celebrations. At Pentecost, in the third month, the feast stop until the seventh month, wherein we have the Feast of Trumpets, the Great Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles. This gap in the history of Israel and this gap in the feast days is the church age. Every single year the Jews celebrated from the first month

through the third with four celebrations (there is the slight gap between the third celebration and the fourth, which is the time between the resurrection of our Lord and the giving of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost). After this fourth celebration, the Feast of Pentecost, Israel has no more feast days for three or so months. This gap allows for the bringing in of the Gentiles, the church age, and for the setting aside of Israel. Just as their feasts are set aside for a time, just as the Israelites during this historical period were set aside for a time, so, during this church age is the nation Israel set aside for a time. God not only predicts history but continually foreshadows it in the Old Testament.

It is no coincidence that the Lord will regather Israel with trumpets in the end times—this corresponds to the Feast of Trumpets. Israel herself will be atoned for (or was atoned for) at the cross; it is just that the nation Israel did not recognize her Savior, her Deliverer at that time. Hence, the regathering of Israel is followed by that Great Day of Atonement.

This is why, during this time period, God reiterates the offerings of the seventh month in Numbers 29. There are times when the placement of certain things in the Law appears to be haphazard, but we are now in month five and soon there will be three Feasts celebrated in the seventh month—therefore, what is required must be explained to the sons of Israel.

And Aaron—the son of 123 years in his dying in Mount Hor. [Numbers 33:39]

Aaron was a several years older than Moses. Moses will die soon, at age 120 (Deuteronomy 34:5–7) on the verge of entering the land. He had the strength to lead Israel into the land; however, Kadesh was the fatal mistake of Moses when he did not follow the Lord fully. For Aaron, it is just his time. He hasn't done anything particularly wrong nor is death a penalty to be endured; it is a promotion. Except for being spineless, Aaron was a great right hand man for Moses. Examine the **Doctrine of Aaron—not finished yet!!**

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Israel Travels to the East side of the Land of Canaan

Numbers 21:1–32:42

And the Canaanite—a king of Arad—who was dwelling in the Negev [lit., the south], in the land of Canaan, heard of the coming of the sons of Israel. [Numbers 33:40]

When the Canaanite, the king of Arad, who lived in the south, heard that Israel was coming by way of Atharim [lit., devote to destruction], then he fought against Israel and took some of them captive. So Israel made a vow to Y^ehowah and said, "If You will in delivering deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities." So Y^ehowah heard the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; then they utterly destroyed them and their cities. thus the name of the place was called Chormah [lit., devoted to destruction] (Numbers 21:1–3).

This Canaanite has heard that Israel is moving into the land and would take no prisoners. The Canaanites soundly defeated Israel and allowed them to remain in Kadesh for the time being. However, under the close scrutiny of the Canaanites, it was observed that Israel was mobilizing for war. Their spies understood that an attack by Israel would include the wholesale destruction of their women and children. So King Arad strikes Israel just as Israel is moving away from the land—he struck the tail of Israel as they moved east and southeast. This was Israel's first armed conflict since being repulsed by the Canaanite (and by Amalek) at Kadesh Barnea.

It is this particular incident which makes me think that Israel was taking a northern route, up to the Salt Sea, and then due east from there, to remain on the border of Edom, and move between Moab and Edom. If from Mount Hor, the Jews moved due south, as is generally thought, then King Arad would have less reason to attack—after all, they are going in the wrong direction.

Following this great victory, there were a number of Israelites who were reversionistic and God would have to remove them with the plague of the serpents. They had just witnessed a great deliverance by God of the Canaanite into their hand and now they were bitching and complaining again. The reason is understandable: they have just defeated their enemy who defeated them thirty-eight years previous. Why not just go up into the land from the south on this momentum of victory? They spent most of their youth traveling in the desert and they became impatient due to this journey (Numbers 21:4). Instead of now going into the land, Moses leads them away from the land to Mount Hor. This is certainly by the leading of the Holy Spirit—the cloud's lifting and movement above the tabernacle.

And they traveled from Mount Hor, and bivouacked at Zalmonah. [Numbers 33:41]

Zalmonah means *dark, gloomy* and this is likely how they felt after they began to move away from the land. This confused and disturbed them; they had just defeated one of their enemies, the King of Arad, and now they were still, for all intents and purposes, retreating from the land. Y^ehowah was leading them, so everything was under control; however, some of them did not trust God; therefore, they began to complain again.

I am not completely confident of this particular route. There are two or three separate views. (1) The Israelites traveled almost due South and a little east to the Gulf of Aqaba and then came up on the east side of Edom. (2) The Gulf of Aqaba extended further north than it does not, with a water way running from Ezion-geber down to the gulf; and that they went down as far as this water way. (3) From Mount Hor, they went north, not quite into the land, and crossed over between the Dead Sea and Edom toward the border of Edom and Moab. I tend to go with the latter view, although I would not put money on that at this time.

And they traveled from Zalmonah, and bivouacked Punon. [Numbers 33:42]

Punon may possibly be identified with Pinon, a chief who was descended from Esau (Genesis 38:40–41). ZPEB lists this as an important copper mining center which was found at the juncture of two rivers (wadis) with mining operations predating the exodus by as much as five hundred years. When Israel passed through, it had been deserted for a couple hundred years, but would later, under the Nabateans, be revived. According to *Barnes' Notes*, Zalmonah and Punon are stops along the Pilgrim's Road, which route can be determined by comparing this passage to Numbers 21:4 and following. However, I cannot find any other reference to the Pilgrim's Road in any of my other source material, including Will Durant's series, *The Story of Civilization*, ZPEB, or any of my Bible dictionaries; and, unfortunately, *Barnes' Notes* does not have a set of maps to go with it—so this doesn't help us much.

The Jews continue to complain about the journey (away from the land) and the food and the lack of water (Numbers 21:5). So God sent serpents among the children of Israel and these serpents killed great numbers of them (Numbers 21:6–9). So they came to Moses and confessed their sins and Moses had them build a serpent of bronze. The serpent is tied to sin and the bronze is tied to fire, which is judgement. The Jews who were bitten by the serpents, by sin, were to look to where sin was judged and they lived.

And they traveled from Punon, and bivouacked at Oboth. [Numbers 33:43]

Oboth is the next stopping point mentioned in Numbers 21 after the event of the Bronze serpent (Numbers 21:10–11).

And they traveled from Oboth, and bivouacked at Iye-abarim, at the border of Moab. [Numbers 33:44]

According to Scofield, *Iye-abarim* means *the ruins of Abarim*. It is likely that *Abarim* refers to a generalized area (notice that the *mountains of Abarim* are mentioned in vv. 47–48), several stops later; so we are at an abandoned city or a city which was had been a war zone.

The intent here was to circumvent Edom to get to Moab. So, by whichever route that they took, they were now between the Amorites and Moab, on the eastern portion of Moab. **And they traveled from Oboth and bivouacked at Iyeabarim, in the desert which is opposite Moab, to the east [lit., sun rising]** (Numbers 21:11).

And they traveled from Iyim, and bivouacked at Dibon-gad. [Numbers 33:45]

Iyim is the abbreviated form of Iye-abarim. In Numbers 32, this area that they are traveling through was given over to the tribes of Reuben and Gad and that Gad had rebuilt Dibon (Numbers 32:34). This indicates, by comparing Numbers 21:30–32:34 and this verse that they were written in the same order; that is, it would make sense to call this Dibon-gad after the tribe of Gad rebuilt it, but to refer to it as Dibon prior to that time. This tells us that Moses penned Numbers 33 after he wrote Numbers 21, during a different time period (although the actual writing may have only been separated by a month or so). As you have no doubt noticed, I have a real interest in who wrote what and when did they write it and, whenever possible, under what circumstances did they write.

And they traveled from Dibon-gad, and bivouacked at Almon-diblathaim. [Numbers 33:46]

This is an unknown stopping place in Moab.

This verse, if you are following carefully, might be a source of confusion. Previously, we have read: **From there [Iye-abarim] they traveled [to] and bivouacked at Wadi Zered. From there, they traveled and bivouacked on the other side of Arnon, which is in the desert that comes out of the border of the Amorites, for the Arnon is the boarder of Moab, between Moab and the Amorite...and from the desert, to Mattahnah; and from Mattanah to Nahaliel; and from Nahaliel to Bamoth; and from Bamoth to the valley that is in the land of Moab, at the top of Pisgah, which overlooks Jeshimon [lit., wasteland]** (Numbers 21:12–13, 18b–20). Moses just wrote that not too long ago, and chose not to repeat himself here. However, he had left out a few stops, and mentions those here.

However, a lot has taken place during these stops. Israel fought against the Amorites and took over their cities, which they had recently taken from Moab. Then the Israelites went far north and fought the king of Bashan (Numbers 21:21–35). During this time period, there was another drama unfolding nearby, where Balaam had been called in by Balak, king of Moab, to curse Israel (Numbers 22–24).

And they traveled from Almon-diblathaim, and bivouacked in the mountains of Abarim, before the face of Nebo. [Numbers 33:47]

We are very close here to their final stopping point prior to crossing over the Jordan. Moses will return here as per Numbers 27:12 to see the land of promise from it. According to ZPEB, these mountain ranges are only 600 feet above the plateau that they are on, but 4000 feet above the Dead Sea. A relatively easy climb for Moses.

And they traveled from mountains of Abarim, and bivouacked in the plains of Moab by the Jordan Jericho. [Numbers 33:48]

We are in recently captured territory, originally belonging to Moab, then very briefly to the Amorites and now to Israel.

And they bivouacked by the Jordan, from Beth-jeshimoth as far as Abel-shittim in the plains of Moab. [Numbers 33:49]

Israel was extremely large for such a mobile populace, and this describes how far apart they were spread in this encampment. This is not a new stop, separate from v. 48, but this verse just explains how they were camped. *Beth-jeshimoth* means *house of deserts* or *house of desolations*. *Shittim* means *the meadow of the acacias*. *Abel-shittim* means *the plains of Shittim*.

God is not ready for the Jews to cross the Jordan and attack the inhabitants of Jericho yet. Moses has to die and the new generation needs to be numbered and organized. During this time, the Jews were tempted in Shittim by

the daughters of Moab and Midian, who brought with them their national gods. The plague which followed took out many of the Israelites—probably the last of the older generation. A census taking followed this, along with instructions about celebrating the feasts and the sacrifices during the seventh month. Israel also struck Midian and took a great deal of their wealth captive. And this brings us entirely up to date.

Some final points to note on vv. 3–49: (1) While this is not an exhaustive list of every stopping place of Israel, it contains more stopping places than any of the other grouped portions of God's Word. (2) Numbers 33 includes a great number of stopping places which are not found anywhere else—their significance, sometimes being lost to history. (3) Not every stopping point was a major city or even a town. Sometimes when the sons of Israel stopped, particularly at the beginning of this 40 year trek, just named the place where they stopped and Moses, from his great memory and the assistance of God the Holy Spirit brought this information to his frontal lobe and he recorded it. (4) There are places where Israel bivouacked which are not mentioned in Numbers 33. We have mentioned some of them: Mattahnah, Nahaliel, and Bamoth (Numbers 21:18–20). (5) There are exactly forty stopping places mentioned, and the number forty seems to be often tied to privation and testing. Some stopping places were possibly left off for that reason; some places are mentioned by name in the Bible, but Israel did not camp in those places but merely passed through. (6) In any case, these are a completely accurate recitation of the sites where Israel rested and moved f Romans (7) For the believer in Jesus Christ, there are always lessons to be learned and information to be culled from even the most mundane of passages. I am hoping that this portion which you used to once skim in 37 seconds has become somewhat more meaningful through this study.

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God's Instructions to Israel Concerning the Possessing of the Land

And Y^ehowah spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab, by Jordan, Jericho, saying, [Numbers 33:50]

The Israelites are about to enter into one of the most important things that they have ever done, so they need to have spiritual instruction and guidance. God speaking to Moses here is absolutely apropos to the situation.

"Speak to the sons of Israel and you will say to them, 'When you [all] are passing over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, [Numbers 33:51]

God has always worked through authorities that He has set up. God rarely spoke to the hoi polloi directly.

" 'And you will [permanently] dispossess all the inhabitants of the land from before your face, and you will destroy all their figured stones and you will destroy all their molten images and you will [cause to] lay waste all of their high places; [Numbers 33:52]

Back in Leviticus 23:30, we examined the Hebrew word ^ʾāḇvad (אָבַד) [pronounced aw^b-VAHD], which, in the Piel stem it means *to destroy* (Numbers 33:52 Deuteronomy 12:2–3); in the Hiphil it means *to cause the destruction of, to put to death* (Numbers 24:19 Joshua 7:7). Strong's #6 BDB #1 Here, it is found twice in the Piel perfect and thirdly in the Hifil imperfect. Because their idols and images are destroyed once and for all, their places of licentious worship will be caused to languish. In other words, the Jews do not bring in bull dozers and doze the mountains of the heathen in order to destroy their high places; they just remove the idolatry once and for all, and these places of worship are caused to go to waste. If someone moves out of a house and the house is allowed to eventually go to waste, even though there are no direct forces of man causing it to go to waste. This command was given to Israel quite a number of times: **"You will not worship their gods nor serve them, nor do according to their deeds; but you will utterly overthrow them and break their pillars into pieces."** (Exodus 23:24). **"But thus you will do to them: you will tear down their altars and smash their pillars and cut down their Asherim and burn their engraved images with fire."** (Deuteronomy 7:1). See also Deuteronomy 12:2–3, 30–31.

The physical battle on earth is but a shadow of the underlying spiritual battle. Satan has lured the Canaanites away from the truth by using his demon army. This demon infiltration is a cancer and has to be wiped out. This

does not give us the option to go out and reek havoc on the lives of cultists and those who are not Christian—the Jews had a special mandate from God to do this. We do not have this mandate nor is there anywhere in the New Testament where it is implied that we should practice religious intolerance; however, in the Old Testament, under the nation Israel in the dispensation of Israel, the Jews were instructed to attack and sometimes to totally obliterate other peoples. However, what is given the foremost attention is the destruction of their idol worship. Had God sent the Jews into the United States, they would not have been instructed to preserve the traditions and religion of the noble Redman.

" 'And you [all] will possess the land and you will dwell in it, for I have given the land to you—to possess it. [Numbers 33:53]

God renews his covenant with Israel. He has promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and He has promised the land to Moses; but here God's promise is made to the children of Israel. "You are about to cross the Jordan to go in to possess the land which Y^ehowah your God is giving you, and you will possess it and live in it." (Deuteronomy 11:31). This promise will be fulfilled in Joshua 21:43–45: So Y^ehowah gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it. And Y^ehowah gave them rest on every side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies stood before them; Y^ehowah gave all their enemies into their hand. Not a word of the good words which Y^ehowah had spoken to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass. God the Holy Spirit looks back upon this time in the Psalms: So He brought them to His holy land, to this hill country which His right hand had gained. He also drove out the nations from before them and He apportioned them for an inheritance by measurement and made the tribes of Israel dwell in their tents (Psalm 78:54–55).

" 'And you [all] will inherit the land by lot by your families; to the many you [all] will increase their inheritance; and to the few, you [all] will diminish their inheritance; whither the lot goes out to him, it is his; by the tribes of your fathers you all will inherit. [Numbers 33:54]

This simply means, the larger the population, the larger the inheritance. The populations would inherit the land in such a way that their tribe would be kept together. Numbers 26:53–56 promises the same thing as this verse. It is important to note that those in the highest category of spirituality, the Levites and the Aaronic priesthood, did not receive a portion of the land. Now, if the land of promise was that great, then it would stand to reason that if anything, the Levites would received the greatest portion of land from God. However, the actual gift of the promised land to the Israelites is a forshadowing of what God has for us in heaven. **Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who, according to His great mercy, has caused us to be born again to a living confidence through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, resulting in an inheritance—imperishable and undefiled and [one which] will not decay—reserved in heaven for you (I Peter 1:3–4).** See the **Doctrine of Inheritance—not finished yet!**

" 'And if you [all] do not dispossess the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it will be those whom you [all] allow to remain of them [are] for barbs in your eyes and for thorns in your sides; and they will distress you on the land in which you [all] are dwelling. [Numbers 33:55]

Whereas, we have seen the warnings given in vv. 51–54, these last couple of verses introduce the Israelites to a rather new concept—they are to destroy the peoples which God designates or they will be punished for not destroying them for years to come. They have already been told by God to come and take the land, but there will be consequences if they do not do it according to God's plan. What happened in Baal-Peor is a taste of what involvement with the heathen brought to the Jews.

This leads me to a side issue, but one that is important. God continually demanded that the Jews keep themselves *pure*; that is, they were not to intermarry. Some have used this and apply this concept to interracial marriages. Now, if you personally choose not to marry a person outside of your race or outside of your nationality, this is a personal choice; and if you choose to spend your time with people of your own color and your own nationality or ethnic heritage, this is your choice. However, the Jews were enjoined not to intermarry because of the idol worship found in the heathen with whom they would intermarry. We are given exactly the same command

in Corinthians—we are not to be unequally yoked; we are not to join in marriage with unbelievers, for what fellowship has light and darkness? Race is not the issue (which is clear by Galatians 3:28); the issue is whether someone is a believer or not. A believer should not intermarry with an unbeliever just as a Jew should not marry an unbelieving Gentile under the dispensation of Israel (**Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership has righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness—1Corinthians 6:14**).

God has given the land completely to Israel. There will be instances where they are to wipe out the entirety of the indigenous population. If they don't and they, for whatever reason, allow some of them to live or some of them to remain, when this is clearly against God's will, then those who remain will grow into a population which will cause pain and suffering to Israel. **They did not destroy the peoples as Y^ehowah commanded them, but they mingled with the nations and learned their practices and served their idols which became a snare to them. They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons and shed innocent blood—the blood of their sons and their daughters whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; and the land was polluted with the blood. Thus they became unclean in their practices and played the harlot in their deeds. There, the anger of Y^ehowah was kindled against His people, and He abhorred His inheritance. then He gave them into the hand of the Gentiles and those who hated them ruled over them. Their enemies also oppressed them and they were subdued under their power. Many times He would deliver them; they, however, were rebellious in their counsel and so sank down in their iniquity (Psalm 106:34–43). [Joshua is speaking to the children of Israel] "Know with certainty that Y^ehowah your God will not continue to drive these nations out from before you; but they will be a snare and a strap to you, and a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from off his good land which Y^ehowah your God has given you. Now look here, today I am going the way of all the earth and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one word of all the good words which Y^ehowah your God spoke concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you and not one of them has failed. And it will come to pass that just as all the good words which Y^ehowah your God spoke to you have come upon you, so Y^ehowah will bring upon you all the threats, until He has destroyed you from off this good land which Y^ehowah your God has given you. when you transgress the covenant of Y^ehowah your God, which He commanded you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, then the anger of Y^ehowah will burn against you, and you will perish quickly from off the good land which He has given you." (Joshua 23:13–16). We saw much of this fulfilled in the book of Judges—particularly the first several chapters. Once Israel has been regathered and redeemed by our Lord Jesus Christ, then **there will be no more for the house of Israel a prickling brier or a painful thorn from any round about them who scorned them; then they will know that I am Y^ehowah Elohim (Ezekiel 28:24)**.**

If you are Jewish and reading this, where are your brothers? Has God given them the land of promise and are they living there in peace? Or are your brothers scattered throughout all the Gentile nations of the earth? You are worshipping the wrong god—you are engaged in idolatry. **There is one God, and one mediator between God and men—the man Christ Jesus (I Tim. 2:5). "Oh Jerusalem Jerusalem, [you who] kills the prophets and you stone those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen [gathers] her brood under her wings, but you would not!" (Luke 13:34)**.

And if you [all] do not dispossess the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it will be those whom you allow to remain of them are barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides; and they will distress you on the land in which you are dwelling (Numbers 33:55). V. 55 is a real and literal promise from God; however, it is analogous to sin in our lives. If there are sins in our lives which we allow to remain, when they are clearly against God's will, then they will multiply and they will become barbs in our eyes and thorns in our sides. An illustration which I have used repeatedly is the one of premarital sex. You might find your right person, but if you engage in sex outside of marriage, this is a sin which will become barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides. It is even worse when this is done with the wrong person (which is generally the case) because then you often end up spending the rest of your life with the wrong person and what better describes this than *barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides*? Whatever sins you allow to fester in your life, whether they be sins of asceticism, such as self-righteousness, gossip, judging or sins of lasciviousness, such as drunkenness, fornication, drug use, or self-indulgence (and I am certain that I missed your own favorite brand)—they will cause you increased pain and suffering the longer they remain a part of your life. Your only way out is rebound and lots of doctrine.

" 'And it will come to pass, as I thought to do to them, I will do to you.' " [Numbers 33:56]

God, through Israel, would destroy the inhabitants of Canaan, as their degeneracy had exceeded the legal limits on this earth. However, if God expects the Jews to destroy a populace in its entirety and the Jews do not, then God will address Israel directly with plagues and pressures and problems. God, through Israel, would expel the Canaanites from the land. This is His promise to Israel that if they do not obey His Word, that He will dispossess them as well. We are now living in the era of the great dispossession—one predicted almost forty years prior to their movement into the land (Leviticus 26), and repeated here.

Numbers 34

Numbers 34:1–29

Outline of Chapter 34:

- Vv. 1–15 The borders of the land Joshua is to take
- Vv. 16–29 God chooses the leaders who will take the land

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

Introduction: Numbers 34 deals with the amount of land that Israel is supposed to occupy early on in their history. Moses is still the head of Israel, and, although he will not go into the land, God will tell him what the borders of Israel are to be. Recall that all the promises made concerning the land were made to certain individuals. God needs to set up some specific boundaries within which the children of Israel can operate. Then God will choose who will go into the land to lead Israel in the taking of the land.

The Borders of the Land Joshua is to Take

Joshua 15:1–11 Ezekiel 47:13–20

And Y^ehowah spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 34:1]

We are counting down for the book of Numbers; we will only see this phrase three more times.

"Command the sons of Israel (and you will say to them): 'When you [all] come in unto the land of Canaan—this is the land which falls to you by inheritance, the land of Canaan, by its borders—' [Numbers 34:2]

These Jews have received the land of Canaan, not by virtue of any good thing which they have done, but because they have inherited it. The land was originally promised to Abraham and his descendants; they are his descendants and will receive it for that reason.

" 'Then the south quarter will be to you from the desert of Zin, by the sides of Edom; in fact, the south border will be to you from the extremity of the Salt Sea, eastward. [Numbers 34:3]

This is not the final border of Israel; this is the land which they are to occupy almost immediately. They were camped somewhat south of here when they failed to take the land thirty-eight years ago in Numbers 14. Here, the southeast border begins at the end of the Salt Sea, where the desert of Zin, the Salt Sea and the border of Moab all meet. Joshua gives us what he actually conquered in Joshua 15: **Now the lot of the tribe of the sons of Judah according to their families was to the border of Edom, southward to the desert of Zin at the extreme south and their south border was from the lower end of the Salt Sea from the bay that turns to the south** (Joshua 15:1–2)

" 'And the border will turn around to you from the south to the ascent of Akrabbim, and will pass on to Zin, and its outgoings will be from the wouth to Kadesh-barnea, and it will go out at Hazar-addar, and it will pass on to Azmon. [Numbers 34:4]

The border will move in the southwesterly direction, along the border of Moab, sweeping south to include Kadesh-barnea. Akrabbim means *scorpion*. On my map, the Ascent of Akrabbim is north-northwest of Edom, in the southern portion of the land of Canaan. The Jews, having traveled throughout this area on the outskirts of Israel, have become experts in geography. There only weak point would be the far west of the promised land (the Mediterranean Sea—difficult to miss) and the northern portion, west of the Sea of Chinneroth. **Then it proceeded southward to the ascent of Akrabbim and ocntinued to Zin, then went up by the south of Kadesh-barnea and**

continued to Hezron, and went up to Addar and turned about to Karka. And it continued to Azmon and proceeded to the River of Egypt and the border ended at the sea—this will be your south border (Joshua 15:3–4).

" 'And the border will turn around from Azmon to the brook of Egypt, and its outgoings have been at the sea. [Numbers 34:5]

It looks as though we go across along the River of Egypt (however, this may be a little too far south?). This could be a Wadi (a river which ran only during the rainy season). Ezekiel was a great student of the books of Numbers and Leviticus—in fact, there are several words found in only these three books and nowhere else. Ezekiel describes the borders in terms of the names of the cities extant in his day: **And the south side toward the south from Tamar as far as the waters of Meribath-kadesh to the brook [of Egypt] to the Great Sea. This is the south side toward the south** (Ezekiel 47:19).

For those familiar with the area, Barnes' Notes gives a reasonable determination of what the modern-day southern boundary would be. We begin at the Dead Sea; a deep and narrow Wâdy-el-Fikreh (which feeds into the Dead Sea?) moves in a southwesterly direction, becoming Wady el-Marrah, which dissipates in the hills of the desert of Zin. Kadesh-barnea is the most southwesterly point, corresponding perhaps to Ain el-Weibeh, the brook of Egypt would then be Wady el-Arish, seventy miles away—in between this wady and Ain el-Weibeh would have been Hazar-addar and Azmon. Hazarim refers to nomadic hamlets and Addar was possibly one of them. Azmon could be the modern Kasâimeh, which is a group of springs which are west of Ain el-Kudeirât. An alternate boundary line is proposed: the valley south of the Dead Sea, known today as the Ghôr, is followed along the Arabah, going south of the Azazieh mountains, moving southeast of the mountain Gadis to Wady el-Arish²⁰³.

" 'As to the west border, even the great sea will be to you a border; this is to you the west border. [Numbers 34:6]

This one is fairly simple; the Mediterranean Sea is their western border; this would be hard to miss. **And the west border was at the Great Sea, even [the] coastline** (Joshua 15:12a). God described the border of Israel in a clockwise direction, beginning from the south. Joshua describes it in a counterclockwise direction.

" 'And this is to you the north border; from the great sea, you [all] mark out for yourselves mount Hor; [Numbers 34:7]

As we have seen earlier, Mount Hor is *mountain the mountain* (the only difference in the words are the vowel points). My feeling is that this means more of a spectacular mountain among mountains; something about it makes it stand out. Or it may be a mountain whose proper name was unknown to the Jews. Above the Sea of Chinneroth are the mountains of Lebanon and I believe it is to these which God is referencing. Rotherham identifies this as a spur of the Lebanon.²⁰⁴ **And the border proceeded to the side of Edron northward. Then the border curved to Shikkeron and continued to Mount Baalah and proceeded to Jabneel, and the border ended at the sea** (Joshua 15:11). God gives the Moses the names of established cities, ones that many of the Israelites will know. Joshua gives the names of new Jewish encampments, some of which may grow into great cities and others of which will always remain not much more than a campsite.

" 'From mount Hor, you [all] will mark out to go in to Hamath, and the outgoings of the border have been to Zedad; [Numbers 34:8]

The exact location of Hamath has never been ascertained. Edersheim that it must be *in that broad rich plain, planked towards the west by the Lebanon, and watered by the Orontes, which ascends for a distance of about eight hours from Homs to Hamath.*²⁰⁵ It would have been at the southern boundary of the area controlled by

²⁰³ Barnes' Notes, Vol. II, p. 260.

²⁰⁴ The Emphasized Bible, p. 195.

²⁰⁵ Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*, p. 870.

Hamath—however, this area was not reached until the time of David and Solomon. What appears to have happened is that the land of Hamath came to encompass a larger area as time went on, so that during the time of Jeremiah, we read: **But the army of the Chaldeans pursued them and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho; and they seized him and brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath, and he passed sentence on him** (Jeremiah 39:5).

Zedad, against on the northern border, was known to the Israelites then, but not today. **And this [will be] the boundary of the land: on the north side, from the Great Sea the way of Hethlon, to the entrance of Zedad, Hamath, Berothah, Sibram, which is between the border of Damascus and the border of Hamath; Hazer-hatticon, which is by the border of Hauran** (Ezekiel 47:15–16).

In any case, the brook of Egypt and the entrance to Hamath are occasionally used as the northern and southern borders of Israel, as in 1Kings 8:65: **So Solomon observed the feast at that time, and all Israel with him, a great assembly from the entrance of Hamath to the brook of Egypt, before Y^howah our God, for seven days and seven days; fourteen days [total]**. See also 2Kings 14:25.

" 'And the border will go to Ziphron, and its outgoings will be at Hazar-Enan; this is to you the north border. [Numbers 34:9]

The cities or areas are unknown today yet known to Israel in those days. Their mention here and in Ezekiel 47 (for the restored kingdom boundaries) is not enough to place them any more exactly than on the northern border of Israel.

Barnes' Notes concerning the northern border: Mount Hor is the 80 mile long western crest of Mount Lebanon, which begins east of Zidon and ends above the entrance of Hamath. The northernmost point is Zedad (Sadad), which is 30 miles east of the entrance of Hamath. The border moves southwest to Ziphorn (Zifrân), which is 40 miles northeast of Damascus. Ayûn ed-Dara could be the present-day location of Hazar-enan²⁰⁶.

" 'And you [all] will mark out for yourselves for the border eastward, from Hazar-Enan to Shepham; [Numbers 34:10]

This places Hazar-Enan at least on the northeast corner of Israel.

" 'And the border has gone down from Shepham to the Riblah, on the east of Ain, and the border has gone down and has struck against the shoulder of the Sea of Chennereth eastward; [Numbers 34:11]

Riblah in this verse is not thought to be the same Riblah mentioned in 2Kings 23 or in Jeremiah 52 (that Riblah is north of Damascus); it carries the definite article here and may not be a city but a description whose meaning has been lost. It may be the area of Riblah, from whence the city got its name. On the other hand, Ezekiel mentions Damascus in his northern border (Ezekiel was naming the borders for the millennial Israel): **And the east side, from between Hauran, Damascus, Gilead, and the land of Israel, [will be] the Jordan; from the border to the eastern sea, you will measure. This is the east side** (Ezekiel 47:18).

The Vulgate and rabbinical text both replace *Ain* with *Daphne*, which is said to be near Lake Huleh (which I cannot find). *Ain* means *eye* or *spring* [of water]. This is not the same Ain as we find in Joshua 34:11, which is much further south in Judah. We know the Sea of Chennereth today as the Sea of Galilee. All we know for certain is that we are at the northeast border of Israel.

" 'And the border has gone down to the Jordan, and its outgoings are at the Salt Sea; this is for you, the land by its borders round about.' " [Numbers 34:12]

²⁰⁶ *Barnes' Notes*, Vol. II, p. 261.

These are the only borders that we can comfortably identify along with the Great Sea. The reason the area to the east of the Jordan is not mentioned is because that is already occupied by Reuben, Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh. **And the east border was the Salt Sea, as far as the mouth of the Jordan. And the border of the north side was from the bay of the sea at the mouth of the Jordan** (Joshua 15:5).

Barnes' Notes on the southern eastern border: We do not know where Shepham is. Some read Riblah as Har--bel, or the Mountain of Bel, which could be the Har-baal-Hermon of Judges 3:3. *Barnes' Notes*, submits that the most logical landmark would be the summit of Mount Hermon, the most striking mountain of all the Antilibanus range. Mount Hermon is 10,000 feet high, making it higher than every other mountain in the Holy land. Ain, which means fountain, is taken to be the fountain of the Jordan, which is found right in the southwest plain at the foot of Mount Hermon, where Daphne and Paneas, two of the sources of the river Jordan. Gennesaret (Mat. 14:34 Luke 5:1), probably a corruption of Chennereth, would be the Sea of Chennereth.²⁰⁷ The land described in Numbers 34:3–12 is not as extensive as that promised in Genesis 15:18 or in Exodus 23:31. This description is exactly what Israel would conquer (or partially conquer) and inhabit in the immediate future. These boundaries would be exceeded by the time of King David and King Solomon. What is quite amazing is that we have this fairly large peace of real estate which is occupied by several different groups of people. The idea of a kingdom covering this much ground in those days was quite unusual. The norm for a people was to occupy a small piece of real estate, wherein was a fortified city surrounded by some farmland and this was their *country*. Here, God has promised a people, who are not by nature predatory or warlike, a huge chunk of real estate which belongs to a half-dozen different groups. Since Israel conquered this portion which God gave them, we fail to appreciate that this is quite an unusual promise to deliver to these former slaves and children of slaves.

And Moses commanded the sons of Israel, saying, "This [is] the land which you [all] inherit by lot, which Y^ehowah has commanded to give to the nine and a half tribes [lit., nine tribes and the half of the tribe]; [Numbers 34:13]

The Levites do not receive a portion of land; Gad, Reuben and half of Manasseh have already chosen their land; this leaves 9½ tribes. **For Moses had given the inheritance of the two and a half tribes beyond the Jordan, but he did not give an inheritance to the Levites among them** (Joshua 14:3).

"For the tribe the sons of Reuben have received, by the house of their fathers; and the tribe of the children of Gad, by the house of their fathers; and the half of the tribe of Manasseh have received their inheritance; [Numbers 34:14]

These 2½ tribes have taken their inheritance, so there is no need to tell Israel to conquer that land; that would be superfluous; they already have conquered it.

"The two and half tribes have received their inheritance beyond the Jordan Jericho, eastward at the sun-rising." [Numbers 34:15]

We should examine here the **Doctrine of the Land Grant to Israel—not finished yet!**

God Chooses the Leaders Who Will Take the Land

And Y^ehowah spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 34:16]

One of the many distinctive differences between God's word and all other religious books is that God speaks in His Word.

²⁰⁷ *Barnes' Notes*, Vol. II, p. 261.

"These [are] the names of the men who will give to you the inheritance of the land: Eleazar the priest, and Joshua son of Nun; [Numbers 34:17]

Notice, this time, God is choosing the men who will lead Israel. In Numbers 14, the *prominent leaders* of Israel went into the land. The two tribes represented here are the Levites and Ephraim.

"And one prince—one prince—for a tribe you [all] will take to give the land by inheritance. [Numbers 34:18]

God does not set up committees to discuss things when it comes to true leadership. God chooses leaders with authority.

"And of the tribe of the sons of Judah, Caleb ben Jephunneh; [Numbers 34:19]

We have already studied Caleb—he, Joshua and Eleazar were the spiritual atlases of their day.

"And of the tribe of the sons of Simeon, Shemuel ben Aminihud; [Numbers 34:20]

We have only Shemuel's name here; however, since God chose him, we know that he is a supergrace believer.

"And of the tribe of the sons of Benjamin, Elidad ben Chislon; [Numbers 34:21]

It is possible that this is Eldad of Numbers 11:16–29 who prophesied in the camp is Israel. Eldad was one of the seventy elders chosen to assist Moses in administrative matters as the sons of Israel transversed the desert.

"And of the tribe of the sons of Dan, the prince Bukki ben Jogli; [Numbers 34:22]

Bukki, like the next several chosen men, was a man of prominence in his tribe, and therefore called a *chief* or *prince*. Once and awhile, great men of leadership do rise to power.

"Of the sons of Joseph, of the tribe of the sons of Manasseh, the prince Hanniel ben Ephod; [Numbers 34:23]

Hanniel (actually, Channiel) means *grace of God*. This is not the same as the Haniel found in 1Chronicles 7:39.

"And of the tribe of the sons of Ephraim, the prince Kemuel ben Shiphtan; [Numbers 34:24]

There are several Kemuel's found in the Bible (see also Genesis 22:21 and 1Chronicles 27:17); this particular prince is mentioned but once.

"And of the tribe of the sons of Zebulun, the prince Elizaphan ben Parnach; [Numbers 34:25]

This man is not the same as the famous Levite of Numbers 3:29–30 and several other places. He is found once in the Bible and that is here. His name means *God has protected*.

"And of the tribe of the sons of Issachar, the prince Paltiel ben Azzan; [Numbers 34:26]

Paltiel means *deliverance of God*; he is found only here.

"And of the tribe of the sons of Asher, the prince Ahihud ben Shelomi; [Numbers 34:27]

Ahihud means *brother is majesty*; perhaps, his older brother was thought to be a leader and so named, making Ahihud his majesty's brother. However, God chose Ahihud.

"And of the tribe of the sons of Naphtali, the prince Pedahel ben Ammihud." [Numbers 34:28]

Pedahel means *God has delivered*; his name is found only here.

These [are] those whom Y^howah has commanded to give the sons of Israel inheritance in the land of Canaan. [Numbers 34:29]

Notice that God chose these men. He did not choose the men of Numbers 14—it did not matter who the spies were in Numbers 14—Israel at that time was too degenerate to enter into the land.

The order in which these tribes are named is interesting. I would have never caught it, but *Barnes' Notes* points out²⁰⁸ that when taken in pairs, Judah and Simeon, Benjamin and Dan, Manasseh and Ephraim, Zebulun and Issachar, Asher and Naphtali, this is how the tribes settled in the land moving from the south to the north. This is a marvelous example of tongue-in-cheek humor used by God the Holy Spirit. The Israelites have not even entered the land yet, they do not know at this time how the land will be divided up,²⁰⁹ whether God will assign the land or the Israelite tribes will choose, as did Reuben and Gad, and God the Holy Spirit already has arranged them in order, as per the land they would occupy. This is something that would not have been done after the fact, or else we would have manuscripts with divergent readings. Furthermore, if someone did this after the fact, they would do something to point it out. You don't just corrupt Scripture or set up a specific order like this and then just let it go, hoping that someone will notice how clever you were. However, it is in keeping with God the Holy Spirit to be subtle in His marvelous insights.

²⁰⁸ *Barnes' Notes*, Vol. II, p. 261.

²⁰⁹ See Joshua 13–19.

Numbers 35

Numbers 35:1–34

Outline of Chapter 35:

- Vv. 1–5 **Cities for the Levites**
- Vv. 6–15 **The cities of asylum**
- Vv. 16–34 **Differentiating between manslaughter and capital murder**

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

Introduction: Numbers 35, like many passages in the Bible, runs on two levels: the Levites will be given literal cities in which to raise and graze their flocks and families. Secondly, a man who is guilty of unintentional manslaughter will be given a place to go for refuge—that is, he cannot be prosecuted in that area. This chapter is a shadow of Israel (and of the church). As the Levites and the Aaronic priesthood are scattered throughout Israel, Israel will be scattered throughout the world. So is the church scattered throughout the world today. We must have a place to live, surrounded most of the time by unbelievers, those who need the gospel. And although we have sinned against God and although there are times when the world will persecute us, we will be provided with refuge under the protection of our savior.

Also, this chapter gives us the level of sophistication of the Law of God. We have had the criminal law of the land in effect in our country for several hundred years now, with legislation being added periodically to improve upon it or to fix it—despite all of that time, our legal system is inferior to that of Israel's of over three millennia ago. For those interested in law, go to law school—if you are interested in justice, read this chapter. We belong to a God of justice.

There is a word that we will find throughout this chapter which must be dealt with: it is the masculine singular noun *miq^olâṭ* (מִקְלוֹט) [pronounced *mik-LAWT*], which means *refuge, asylum*. To differentiate this from the other several words also rendered *refuge*, we will render this *asylum*. Strong's #4733 BDB #886.

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Cities for the Levites

Joshua 21:1–43

And Y^ehowah spoke to Moses, in the plains of Moab, by Jordan Jericho, saying, [Numbers 35:1]

Here, Moses is being certain to point out where, and therefore when, the following was spoken. He prefaced the end of Numbers 33 the same way (Numbers 33:50). Moses is at the end of his human life and Israel is about to cross the Jordan into the Land of Promise.

"Command the sons of Israel, and they will give to the Levites from the inheritance of their possession cities to inhabit; also, an area surrounding the cities [lit., also a suburb for the cities round about them] you [all] will give to the Levites. [Numbers 35:2]

The Levites, who assist the Aaronic priesthood, must have some place to live. They all have families (as has been noted many times previous, they are not celibate), they are allowed to have personal possessions (e.g., their flocks and livestock), and they must be in a position to intermingle with the general populace.

"And the cities have been to them to inhabit, and their surrounding area are for their cattle, and for their goods and for all their livestock. [Numbers 35:3]

The Levites did not take a vow of poverty, per se, but they did not live in one centralized area as the tribe of Judah did. Levites would be scattered throughout the land of Israel, to help minister to the people in their spiritual needs. This is a far cry from their father who, along with Simeon, killed every single male of the city of Hamor because his son had raped their sister (Genesis 34).

"And the surrounding area of the cities which you [all] will give to the Levites [are], from the wall of the city and without, a thousand cubits round about. [Numbers 35:4]

The Levites would be given land around the city for the grazing of their livestock. It sounds as though this would extend out about 1500 feet, or a more than a quarter mile in all directions. However, that is not what is being said.

"And you will measure from the outside of the city, the east quarter, two thousand by the cubit, and the south quarter, two thousand by the cubit, and the west quarter, two thousand by the cubit, and the north quarter, two thousand by the cubit; and the city in the midst; this is to you²¹⁰ the surrounding area and the city. [Numbers 35:5]

I didn't exactly follow these two verses at first. The first sounds as though it gives them a thousand cubits around the city and this sounds like it is two thousand cubits around the city. We don't have a contradiction here because we have the same author, Moses, writing one verse right after the other; and the one speaking this is God, Who does not make mistakes. One of the explanations which I read claimed that the border around the city was anywhere from 1000-2000 cubits; and it was affected by natural boundaries and the landscape.²¹¹ Another explanation was that their livestock occupied the first 1500 feet and their crops the next 1500 feet²¹²—I just don't know whether the Levites grew crops or not (they did receive a certain percentage of the land for their income. However, I think what the intention here is that the pastureland for the livestock does not begin at the city walls, it begins a 1500 feet outside the city walls and extends for another 1500 feet past that. This creates a buffer zone between the city and the pastureland, which would allow for some expansion of the city's limits. This is not too unlike zoning.

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The Cities of Asylum

Exodus 21:13–14 Deuteronomy 19:1–9 Joshua 20:3–9

"And the cities which you [all] will give to the Levites [are] the six cities of asylum, which you [all] give for the fleeing away of the man-slayer, and besides them, you all will give them forty two cities. [Numbers 35:6]

The first time we heard of these cities of asylum was a brief reference in Exodus 21:12–13: "He who strikes a man so that he dies must be executed. But if he did not lie in wait, but God let [him] fall into his hand, then I will appoint you a place to which he may flee." This time we will get a little more information about these cities of asylum.

"All the cities which you [all] give to the Levites are forty eight cities, them and their suburbs. [Numbers 35:7]

²¹⁰ Certain versions have *to you*, as does the western Samaritan, the Oracles of Jonathan, the Septuagint, the Syriac and others. The accepted reading in the Massoretic text is *to them*.

²¹¹ *Barnes' Notes*, Vol. II, p. 262.

²¹² Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*, p. 293. Edersheim writes: *Very varied interpretations of these two difficult verse have been proposed. That adopted in the text is in accordance with Jewish tradition and the most simple, while it meets all the requirements of the text.* I am not completely fixated on any of the explanations.

So there is no mistaking it, the Levites are given forty-eight cities in all. Edersheim points out that this is 4 x 12, 4 being a number which represents the kingdom of God on earth, and 12 represents the number of tribes of Israel²¹³.

"And the cities which you [all] give [to be] the possession of the sons of Israel, from the many you [all] multiply, and from the few you [all] diminish; each, according to his inheritance which they inherit, will give of his cities to the Levites." [Numbers 35:8]

So, depending upon the size of the various tribes, so will the number of cities and the amount of land be meted out. And a proportionate amount of these cities and land will be given to the Levites. It would seem that each tribe should contribute four cities each (recall that Joseph has been broken into two half-tribes under the principle of the double-portion); however, it is not clear whether the size of the cities or the number of cities given will be dependant upon the size of the tribe involved.

And Y^ehowah spoke to Moses, saying, [Numbers 35:9]

Moses may have lost his train of thought, thinking back about these cities of asylum. Sometimes, as a teacher, I would introduce a new concept informally, prematurely, and then tell my students not to worry or to think about it. Then when they were exposed to that concept formally, they had seen it before and it was not so forboding. I don't know that this was the case here or not. This may not be the exact chronological order that this information was given to Moses, but, when he wrote down one, he knew that he had to recall the other.

"Speak to the sons of Israel, and you will say to them, 'When you are passing over the Jordan to the land of Canaan, [Numbers 35:10]

Why those who cut these verses up tended to stop mid-sentence so often, I will never know. But God is about to give them the laws for their entrance into the land of Canaan.

" 'And you have prepared to yourselves cities—cities of asylum they are to you—then a man-slayer, unintentionally striking down a man, will flee there. [Numbers 35:11]

This is involuntary manslaughter. As the parents, the children and the spouse will tell you, the person is just as dead—however, the person who committed this crime did it unintentionally. They are guilty, but there is a reprieve. Even as we, if we were able to rid our lives of intentionally committed sins, knowing full well they are sins—even then, we would commit sins, unknown sins and unintentional sins—God has a pardon for us for all sins, including those.

This topic is particularly close to Moses. Recall that early in his life, when Moses was an Egyptian noble, he saw an Egyptian slave master abusing a Hebrew slave. Moses then struck and killed the taskmaster, causing him to flee from Egypt (Exodus 2:11–15). I don't want you to overthink this, but Moses was guilty here of first degree (that is, premeditated) murder and God allowed him to live. God also allowed Cain to live after murdering Abel. Here we are dealing with God's decisions and God has all the facts, knowing the future as perspicuously as he knows the past.

The actual cities of asylum will not be named until Israel has conquered the land; at that time, God will appoint the six cities (Joshua 20). The cities will be placed in such a way that they are accessible to all of the Israelites. Three will be to the west of the Jordan and three to the east (or, as described by the NIV Study Bible, Canaan proper and Transjordan).

" 'And the cities have been to you for a asylum from the redeemer, and the man-slayer will not die till his standing before the company for judgment [or, judicial sentencing]. [Numbers 35:12]

²¹³ Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*, p. 294.

The KJV rendering of the word *gâ'al* (גָּאֵל) [pronounced *gaw-AHL*] is unfortunate at this point. We find it translated *avenger* here, and elsewhere as *revenger*, *kinsman*; however, this is the verb for *redeem* found in the Qal participle. The verb is so ancient as to its origins, that its original meaning is lost to antiquity, if it were any different. There are several implications here—near relationship and payment, which is why this is sometimes rendered *kinsman-redeemer*. We will cover this in greater detail in v. 19. Strong's #1350 BDB #145

So that every killer does not run for a city of asylum and claim involuntary manslaughter, this acted somewhat like a district court of appeals. The criminal here is admitting guilt. By running for a city of asylum, he is saying, "Yes, I killed Charlie Brown." However, he is claiming that it was involuntary manslaughter and he will stand trial for motive, not for the actual act itself. The court system outside the cities of asylum only had to determine guilt or innocence; motive was not an issue, nor was intention.

Now why can't you have an appellate court just within every city? For several reasons: (1) Involuntary manslaughter, particularly in that society, was not an everyday event. It did not occur very often and this need for a city of asylum was a very occasional thing. Why were not the regular courts used then to handle appeals? (2) Objectivity was easier to obtain outside the city from where the crime occurred. The Levites were less likely to render a prejudicial verdict than would those who are relatives of the slain, particularly if the man on trial is on a temporary green card and the slain person has a lot of friends in that area. Such verdicts need to be determined by impartial judges, and the Levites, skilled in the area of God's Law, would be the fittest persons to render such verdicts. (3) Finally, even after an acquittal, the defendant still needed to reside outside of the area where the incident occurred. The NIV Study Bible points out that there was a natural tension between tribal law and civil law. In a nomadic group, laws and customs tended to lean more toward vigilantism; a close relative felt obligated to avenge the death of a loved one, whether or not the perpetrator's action was intentional. It was expected; this is how an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth became distorted. God is a God of order and of authorities and He protects the innocent. When the defendant was acquitted, remaining in this city of asylum afforded him personal protection from those who felt obligated to avenge the death, despite the judicial determination.

Numbers 20:4–5 gives us additional information: "And he will flee to one of these cities [of asylum] and he will stand at the entrance of the gate of the city and state his case in the hearing of the elders of that city; and they will take him into the city to them and give him a place so that he may dwell among them. Now if the redeemer pursues him, then they will not deliver the manslayer into his hand, because he struck [and killed] his neighbor unintentionally [and without premeditation] and did not hate him beforehand." These verses indicate that motivation is a consideration in guilt or innocence. Immediately I begin thinking about the loopholes. What about the fifteen-year-old kid who has never shot a gun, carries a gun into a convenience store to rob; he may not intend to kill the clerk, but is carrying the gun to indicate that he is serious. If things go awry and he kills the clerk, even though he did not originally intend to, wouldn't this fall under involuntary manslaughter? Absolutely not! Lack of premeditation does not vindicate assault with a deadly weapon, as we will see. God's Law will be absolutely perspicuous on that point.

There are various things being taught in every dispensation. Prior to the Law, man could object: "Had I known what was right and what was wrong, I wouldn't have done that." However, the giving of the Law reveals that man is thoroughly corrupt. Even in the face of clearly understanding what is correct and what is not, man still subverts God's will. We saw this throughout history at a level that most would not have predicted. The Jewish religious leaders took what was perfect, just and good and distorted it to this horrendous system of legalism, which lost almost all perspective of God's grace and our depravity—two absolutely essential doctrines revealed clearly in the Law and the prophets.

"As to the cities which you [all] give—six [will be] cities of asylum to you; [Numbers 35:13]

There were enough cities of asylum throughout the land that anyone who needed to could walk to them. They were simply a court of appeals, although there was some ritual attached to the appeal. A person guilty of involuntary manslaughter, even though he might have no fear of persecution of the law, some nomadic customs demanded that a relative of the one slain avenge the family and kill the slayer. Even when criminal law was established, this custom of tribal vengeance was difficult to uproot. This city of asylum provided a person a place

of refuge more from retribution than from the law. Blood feuds often erupted among nomadic groups over manslaughter, whether it was voluntary or not. This step of establishing cities of asylum helped to prevent a series of retributive murders. We have the famous feud in the United States of the Hatfields and the McCoys. The original cause is lost in all of the chaotic violence which ensues. Israel, representing the Y^ehowah Elohim and God's Law on earth, was not to fall into such a pitiful state of anarchy.

" 'The three of the cities you [all] will give beyond the Jordan, and the three of the cities you [al] will give [will be] in the land of Canaan; they are cities of asylum. [Numbers 35:14]

In at least the context of this chapter, the land of Canaan refers specifically to the land named in the previous chapter, specifically between the Salt Sea the Jordan River and the Mediterranean; the area to the east of the Jordan, although Israel's, was not called the land of Canaan.

God's Word often runs on two levels. We are guilty of disobeying the Law. In fact, we are all guilty of, for all intents and purposes, murder. "You have heard that the ancients were told You will not commit murder and Whoever commits murder will be liable to the court. But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother is guilty before the court...and whoever shall say, "You fool" is guilty—into the hell of fire." (Matthew 5:22a, c). Jesus Christ is our refuge: There is therefore now no judgment for those who are in Christ Jesus...Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the One Who justifies; Who is the One who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died—yes, rather—Who was raised, Who is at the right hand of God, Who also intercedes for us. (Romans 8:1, 33–34). God is our refuge and strength—a very present help in trouble (Psalm 46:1).

" 'To sons of Israel, and to a temporary visitor and to a settler in their midst, these six cities are for a asylum, for the fleeing to them of any one guilty of involuntary manslaughter [lit., of any one striking down a person unawares]. [Numbers 35:15]

The laws of the land did not apply only to Israel, but those who came to Israel were given the same rights under the law. This was unusual for the ancient world, and, in some places today, is still unusual. It is much more common for the immigrant to receive much harsher treatment under criminal law than does the average citizen.

This is one of the areas where the Law of Moses differed from the Hammurabi Code. The Code of Hammurabi reads: *If [the victim] has died because of his blow, he will swear [that this was involuntary manslaughter] and if it was a member of the aristocracy, he will pay one-half mina of silver. If it was a member of the commonality, he will pay one-third mina of silver.*²¹⁴ No matter what, there was a payment to be made; which is what some of our juries do. When a civil suit is filed against a company with deep pockets, even if it was not the fault of the company, damages are often awarded out of sympathy. This is human nature, not God's plan. Furthermore, notice that the death of the aristocrat is deemed somewhat more important than the death of the common man.

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Differentiating Between Manslaughter and Capital Murder

Deuteronomy 19:4–11

" 'And, if with an instrument of iron he has struck him, so that he dies, he [is] a murderer; the murderer must be executed [in dying, the murderer is to be executed]. [Numbers 35:16]

This is assault with a deadly weapon. You cannot assault a person with a deadly weapon and then claim that it was just an accident. If you kill a person that you assault with a deadly weapon, you are a murderer and will face capital punishment. Here, the person is struck with a weapon designed to kill or with an instrument of iron which logically is capable of killing.

²¹⁴ Quote taken from Charles A. Clough, *Dawn of the Kingdom*, ©1974, p. 77, which he in turn took from T. J. Meek's translation of *the Code of Hammurabi*; Pritchard, p. 175. I changed slightly what was in the brackets.

In this verse, as well as throughout much of the Old Testament, a particular phrase is used to designate that capital punishment must be employed. However, let's examine this entire verse for the words used. There are over a half dozen words used in the Old Testament which signify death of some sort or another. We begin with the Hiphil perfect of *nâkâh* (נָכַח) [pronounced *naw-KAWH*] usually translated *smite* in the KJV. In today's vernacular, we might use the phrase *to strike down, to strike, assault, hit*. Often this is equivalent to intentional manslaughter. Here, in the Hiphil, the subject has *caused* the victim to be struck with an instrument of iron. In other words, this can be thrown at the victim as well as swung at the victim. BDB #645 Strong #5221

Mûwth (מָוַת) [pronounced *mooth*], the simple word for *die*. In the Qal imperfect, we are examining a process of dying. The person who dies may take even a week to die and he might die instantly. However, in examining the process of dying, with the imperfect voice, the emphasis is upon the cause as well. Strong's #4191 BDB #559

Now the subject of the verse is not called a *mûther*, a killer, he is called a murderer—this is a different word which specifically refers to capital murder (there is no distinguishing in the Bible between first and second degree murder). This word is the Qal active participle of *râtsach* (רָצַח) [pronounced *raw-TSAHKH*] and this word means *murder, slay*. In the Qal active participle, the proper translation is *murderer*. Strong's #7523 BDB #953 This term is used twice in this verse.

Finally we have the oft-used phrase, the Qal infinite absolute of *mûth* followed by the Hophal imperfect of *mûth*. The infinite absolute is a verbal noun which can serve as a noun, verb or adverb. This is used to intensify the meaning of the main verb and is often translated *surely, certainly, indeed*. In this case, that is too pansy of a translation. The Hophal is the passive of the Hiphil; therefore, it is the passive causative. The subject of the verb, the murderer, will receive the action of the verb—in other words, he will receive death; he will be caused to die. In other words, this means, in the Hophal, *to execute*. The intensification of the verb means *he must be executed!* God did not give the Israelites a choice here. This means, if some thirteen year old kid gets in a fight with someone else that he hates, and he *doesn't completely mean to* but he kills him; that thirteen year old kid *must be executed!* An eleven year old kid who walked into a convenience store with a gun to show he's tough, and ends up being forced to use it: that little eleven year old kid *must be executed!* Capital punishment enjoined by God for the sin of murder is one of the earliest commandments given man [God is speaking to Noah]: **"Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood will be shed. for in the image of God, He made man."** (Genesis 9:6).

"And if with a stone [in] the hand, wherewith he dies—he has struck him and he dies, he [is] a murderer; in dying the murderer is *must be executed*. [Numbers 35:17]

A stone is also considered assault with a deadly weapon.

"Or with a wooden instrument [in] the hand, wherewith he dies—he has struck him down and he dies, he [is] a murderer; in dying, the murderer will be executed. [Numbers 35:18]

Even a weapon made of wood is considered a deadly weapon.

"The redeemer of blood himself will put the murderer to death; in his coming against him he will execute him. [Numbers 35:19]

See the **Doctrine of the Redeemer—not finished yet!** The Bible is unequivocal about capital punishment. In this chapter alone, Israel is enjoined to employ capital punishment for murder no fewer than six times. **"And if a man takes the life of any human being, he will must be executed."** (Leviticus 24:17).

"And, if in hatred he thrust him through, or has thrown [anything] at him by lying in wait, and he dies; [Numbers 35:20]

Now motive enters into the picture. The person claiming that it was involuntary manslaughter is examined as to his motive—if he killed the victim out of hatred or if he waited for him and threw anything at him, this made him guilty of a capital offense. **"But if there is a man who hates his neighbor and lies in wait for him and rises up**

against hi and strikes him so that he dies, and he flees to one of these cities, then the elders of the city will send and take him from there and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood that he may die. You will not pity him, but you will purge the blood of the innocent from Israel, that it may go well with you." (Deuteronomy 19:11–12).

The Bible is filled with illustrations of this portion of Scripture. We have the concept of a kinsman-redeemer-avenger in 2Samuel 3:26–30 where premeditation is clearly involved (this is where Joab murdered Abner, avenging his brother's death—also see 2Samuel 20:7–10 and 1Kings 2:28–34).

" 'Or, in enmity, he has struck him with his hand, and he dies; the striker in dying will be executed—he [is] a murderer [and] the redeemer of blood will put the murderer to death in his coming against him. [Numbers 35:21]

If he is just an enemy and he physically strikes him, whereas that is considered second degree murder in our society, it is a capital offense (the Bible did not distinguish between first and second degree murder).

" 'And if, in an instant, without enmity, he has thrust him through, or has thrown at him any instrument, without lying in wait; [Numbers 35:22]

Now we are examining what involuntary manslaughter is. The offender threw something, without the intent of harming anyone, and it strikes and kills another—that is involuntary manslaughter.

" 'Of with any stone wherewith he dies, without seeing, and causes [the stone] to fall upon him, and he dies, and he [is] not his enemy, nor seeking his harm; [Numbers 35:23]

He might be working construction and drops a stone off a three-story building and it kills someone—this is involuntary manslaughter.

" 'Then have the company judge between the one who strikes and the redeemer of blood by these judgments; [Numbers 35:24]

What is designed to be a perfectly good and reasonable law is always subject to abuse. Witness our legal system where illegal search and seizure had been transformed from protecting the innocent to protecting the guilty. No longer is our judicial system primarily concerned with innocence vs. guilt, but those who are guilty have lawyers who search for loopholes to allow their defendants to go free, and prosecutors, in their zealotry to convict, have been known to suppress or ignore exculpatory evidence.

This verse helps us to understand the word *company* as opposed to *congregation*. *Company* is an organized subgroup. Here, the *company* is the jury—the Levite elders. They hear from two witnesses: the redeemer (the blood relative who has been sent to redeem the life of his relative by killing the one guilty of manslaughter) and the one guilty of manslaughter. The Levite elders will hear the evidence and determine the fate of the slayer.

" 'And the company will deliver the man-slayer out of the hand of the redeemer of blood, and the company will cause him to turn back unto the city of his asylum to where he has fled, and he will dwell in it until the death of the chief priest, who has been anointed with the holy oil. [Numbers 35:25]

This is an interesting requirement. The person guilty of involuntary manslaughter does not automatically return to his home town. He remains in a state of limbo, as it were, remaining within the city of asylum, until the death of the high priest. This has both practical and symbolic meaning. On the practical side, this allows the victim's family time to heal emotionally so that they do not kill the one guilty of manslaughter upon his return. It is tragic when someone decides to take the law into their own hand and they face execution because of it. Three people have died needlessly: the original victim, the one guilty of involuntary manslaughter, and a relative of the victim. The time spent in this city of asylum keeps this sort of thing from occurring.

Also, even though the manslaughter has been judged to have been unintentional, the person who committed the act remains in exile, as it were, from his own land and his own family for what might amount to several decades. Taking the life of another is the most serious of all the overt sins and its seriousness is emphasized by the actions herein required. This obviously would greatly inconvenience the one who committed the unintentional killing, as well it should.

On the spiritual side, the high priest represents Jesus Christ and the one guilty of involuntary man slaughter is not free until the high priest dies. Those who lived prior to the giving of the Law—two thousand years at least of human history—did not have the law to tell them that they were sinners. They did learn this through their families, but there had not been an undeniable proclamation from God. They, if they had trusted in Y^ehowah, would remain in a state of limbo until Jesus Christ in history died for their sins. The sons of Israel, even with the Law, might try to claim that they did not choose to be born with an old sin nature—that they are not really responsible for their actions—they will also be put into a state of limbo (called paradise, in the Bible) until the historical death of our Lord. In any other enlightened society like Israel's there would have been placed a specific time limit—they would remain in the city for five years or fifty years—however, this Law always has spiritual implications. Throughout the Old Testament, there is a constant foreshadowing of Jesus Christ and His death upon the cross for our redemption by blood. Jesus Christ is our High Priest. **So Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many...but He, having offered one sacrifice for the sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God...for the Law accomplished nothing, and on the other hand, there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God** (Hebrews 9:28a 10:12 7:19).

" 'And if the man-slayer goes out [from] the border of the city of his asylum at all to where he has fled; [Numbers 35:26]

Being guilty of involuntary manslaughter does not mean that you can just surreptitiously slip out and return to your life as you left it. A man who leaves this city of asylum, who does not wait for the death of the high priest to free him completely, places himself under risk of punishment.

" 'And the redeemer of blood finds him at the outside of the border of the city of his asylum and the redeemer of blood executes the man-slayer, blood is not for him. [Numbers 35:27]

When you leave your place of refuge and are executed, there is no retribution for you. The Law states that you must remain inside the city until the chief priest dies and going outside the Law or trying to circumvent the Law, no longer gives you protection under the Law. Just because Jesus Christ has died for our sins, there is no circumventing this sacrifice. We must apply it to ourselves—we must take of this gift from God. We must believe in Jesus Christ. If we try to be redeemed by any method other than what is proscribed by the Law, we face eternal execution. Jesus Christ is the city of our asylum and we can take refuge in no other. **"For there is none other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."** (Acts 4:12).

" 'For in the city of his asylum he will dwell until the death of the chief priest; and after the death of the chief priest the man-slayer may turn back to the city of his possession. [Numbers 35:28]

No matter how long it takes, the man-slayer cannot return to his family or home or possessions until the death of the high priest. I believe that we as Christians, in our unbelieving state, are afforded some protection by God; that is, God knows if we will believe or not and He protects us until that moment of belief. There are some people that no matter how long they live and no matter what pressure is placed upon them, at their death, they will curse God and die—unredeemed. To them, there is no city of protection. They do not flee to the city of asylum and they will not wait for the death of their high priest. The redeemer of blood will slay them. **"For not even the Father judges any one, but He has given all judgment to the Son...He have Him authority to execute judgment, because He is Son of Man."** (John 5:22, 27). **Who can bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one Who justifies. Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died; yea, rather, Who was raised, Who is at the right hand of God, Who also intercedes for us** (Romans 8:33–34). In this law, Jesus Christ is reveal in the person of the high priest as well as in the person of the redeemer of blood. It requires two natures to explain the character of our Lord, as He is the God-man, the person of two natures.

" 'And these things will be to you for a statue of judgment to your generations in all your dwellings. [Numbers 35:29]

I am not certain whether this verse applies to what follows or what has preceded this.

" 'Whoever strikes a person, by the mouth of witnesses will one execute the murderer; and one witness [alone] will not testify against a person in a capital case [lit., to die]. [Numbers 35:30]

Whether we like this or not, there must be two witnesses in order to condemn a man to death. Today, we require corroborating evidence. Let's look at this carefully: this does not mean that a murderer, as long as he murders in private, can go free. That is not the intention here. Witnesses can witness a lot of things. They may have seen him go out that night with the stone; another witness may have heard him express hatred for the man he killed. What we cannot have is one person claiming that Charlie Brown hates John Smith and has been threatening to kill him and now John Smith is dead—murdered. This is not enough to convict Charlie Brown. In this regard, our laws judicial evidence and guilt are to be commended. We convict as long as there is no reasonable doubt to the contrary. **"On the evidence [lit., mouth] of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die will be put to death; he will not be put to death on the evidence [lit., mouth] of one witness."** (Deuteronomy 17:6).

A superficial reading of this passage would tend to make one think that circumstantial evidence is not enough to convict. This just simply is not the case. First off, the two or three witness rule applies to all prosecuted crime. **"A single witness will not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence [lit., witness] of two or three witnesses a matter will be confirmed"** (Deuteronomy 19:15). Now, if our concept of *witness* is limited to witnessing the actual act, what are we going to do about adultery? Should two witnesses break into a bedroom or into a house any time that they suspect an adulterous act might be taking place? This is foolishness. God is a God of justice and judgment. Criminals are not let off because they are crafty. Committing a criminal act in secret does not preclude prosecution. Don't you recall that *witness* is more than just a person who actually saw the crime occur? **"Now if a person sins, after he hears a public adjuration, when he is a witness, whether he has seen or known, if he does not tell, then he will bear his guilt."** (Leviticus 5:1). Here, one with pertinent information is called upon to tell it or they are guilty before God. The word *witness* can be also translated *evidence*, as we saw in Exodus 22:13: **"If it is all torn to pieces, let him bring it as evidence [lit., as a witness]; he will not make restitution for what has been torn to pieces."** Here, the lacerated corpse of the animal is brought before the court and it is called a *witness*; obviously this dead animal is not an eyewitness to the crime, one who will give testimony thereto.²¹⁵ The animal is evidence, not a witness (the crime the caretaker is accused of is either personally stealing or killing another's animal entrusted to him). The word *witness* also is applied to a pile of rocks, a symbol of an agreement entered into by two parties in disagreement (Genesis 31:46–49; see also Joshua 24:25–27). When Scripture is compared to Scripture, the true meaning of two or three witnesses is ascertained. We are speaking of people who have evidence and information pertinent to the crime committed—in this case, capital murder.

Not only is this a rule of evidence in a criminal trial, but this should be our rule when exploring the Bible. Too often, people jump from one verse to another, totally ignoring context, syntax and vocabulary, *proving* the weirdest things. Every significant doctrine in Scripture can be confirmed with two or three verses which speak right on point to that doctrine. When we deal with the most fundamental of doctrines, such as our salvation, we can fill pages with verses which testify to salvation by faith alone in Christ alone—apart from any personal merit, worth, or dedication. And just so you don't think that I was the first person to think of applying the concept of two or three witnesses to spiritual matters: **The Pharisees therefore said to Him, "You are bearing witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true." Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true; for I know where I came from, and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. You people judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone. But even if I do judge, My judgment is true, for I am not alone; but I and He who sent Me. Even in your law it has been written that the testimony of two men is true. I am He who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me."** (John 8:13–18).

²¹⁵ This line of reasoning, by the way, was taken from *The Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, Gleason L. Archer, pp. 143–145.

" 'And you [all] will take no atonement [or, ransom] for the life of a murderer who [is] condemned to die, for he, in dying, will be executed. [Numbers 35:31]

The Hittite Code, relatively contemporary for that time, allowed the accused, in some instances, to pay blood money rather than to suffer capital punishment. How long will it be in our legal system before a man is allowed to compensate a family momentarily for killing a loved one rather than to face execution, using the argument that an execution will not bring their loved one back whereas a monetary contribution might provide for his family, send his children to college, etc., etc. I wouldn't doubt that there are some instances today of some suits which go to civil court rather than criminal court, where the defendant has, for all intents and purposes, murdered.

There are no extenuating circumstances for first or second degree murder; there is no discussion of diminished capacity, ability to distinguish between right and wrong, etc.—there is no further atonement for one who has gone through the court system and they have found him guilty of murder. Nor is there jail time, whether lifetime imprisonment or imprisoned with no hope for parole. Age is not a consideration. Murder is not a minor accident and the pain that it causes is considerable. A murderer is condemned to die and there is no reprieve.

I recall years ago a very poorly prepared Sunday school teacher explaining that the Bible says "Thou shalt not kill" and there are no exceptions. The Bible reads "You will not murder" and the penalty for murder is capital punishment.

In studying these laws, you should have a renewed appreciation for the intention of our original criminal laws, which were obviously Biblically based, as was our court system. A jury trial is very similar to judgement by the elders of the city (Joshua 20:4). The differentiation between the two types of killing, murder and involuntary manslaughter, is essential to a society governed by law. The intention of the law is to punish the guilty and acquit the innocent. This also allows you to clearly perceive how far astray we have traveled from these basic principles. God spoke these words to Moses over four thousand years ago and this very passage could be exegeted by Moses today on the origins and the ethics of the law, and be absolutely up-to-date. Properly examined, food for our souls is abundant throughout the Old and New Testaments. We see where our country and our laws have strayed from Biblical viewpoint, and the horrendous results; as well as where we have strayed from the perfect morality put forth in God's Word and the painful results of that. The pastor who ignores or downplays or de-emphasizes the Old Testament in his teaching does a great disservice to his flock and is in rebellion against God. God's entire Word must be taught in its correct dispensational context.

" 'And you [all] will take no atonement or, ransom] for him to flee to the city of his asylum, to turn back to dwell in the land, until the death of the priest.²¹⁶ [Numbers 35:32]

A person convicted of murder does not receive the same consideration as one who was not.

" 'And you [all] will not profane the land which you [all] are [dwelling²¹⁷ in]; for the blood profanes the land; as to the land, it is not pardoned for blood which is shed in it, except by the blood of him who sheds it; [Numbers 35:33]

The Israelites would profane the land if they allowed condemned murderers to live. Violence and murder profanes the plane—when it reads **as for the land, it is not pardoned, for blood which is shed in it, except by the blood of him who sheds it** means that when a person murders, he must die for that crime; otherwise, the land suffers for it. As we have seen in our country, we have cut back severely on the number of people who Biblically should be executed and crime is rampant in our country. When people are allowed to murder and avoid capital punishment, the land is not pardoned for this sin. That is, the land is even under divine discipline for allowing such an action to go unpunished. The earth had become corrupt and polluted before: **Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God and the earth was filled with violence. and God looked on the earth, and observed it was corrupt; for all flesh**

²¹⁶ The western Samaritan, Septuagint and Syriac codices read *high priest*.

²¹⁷ The western Samaritan, Septuagint, Syriac and Vulgate codices all have the additional verb *dwelling*.

had corrupted their way upon the earth. Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is full and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth." (Genesis 6:11–13).

" 'And you [all]²¹⁸ will not defile the land in which you [all] are dwelling, in the midst of which I tabernacle, for I, Y^ehowah, do tabernacle in the midst of the sons of Israel.' " [Numbers 35:34]

It is the people who defile themselves when they allow murderers to escape capital punishment. Here it is stated that the people defile (or pollute) the land—this means they defile their own country when murderers go free.

Now, there is a totally different application of this chapter which most miss. The unbeliever who flees to the city of refuge becomes a believer upon entrance into the city. That is, going to the city of refuge is analogous to an unbeliever becoming a believer. Although one could reasonably apply the death penalty to such a one, in the city of Levites, they have refuge. Analogous to taking refuge in Christ. Finally, the blood relative avenger works this way: God the Father is the blood relative avenger of Christ the Son. It is our sins which put Jesus upon the cross—we are to blame for His crucifixion. Therefore, we are clearly deserving of death from God the Father. However, when we take refuge in Him, we are safe from punishment. The subsequent trial—Charlie Brown's sins are so and so; this sins have all been paid for on the cross; the charges against Charlie Brown are dismissed without prejudice. However, you will note that Charlie Brown must remain in the city of refuge.

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²¹⁸ This is not plural in the Massoretic text, but it is in the western Samaritan, the targums of Onkelos and Jonathan, the Septuagint, the Syriac and the Vulgate.

Numbers 36

Numbers 36:1–13

Outline of Chapter 36:

- Vv. 1–4 The inheritance problem
- Vv. 5–9 Y^ehowah solves the inheritance problem, speaking through Moses
- Vv. 10–13 Addendum to the inheritance problem

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines:

Introduction: The book of Numbers ends on an odd note; back in Numbers 27, there were several daughters of Zelophehad a Manassehite. The daughters were unmarried and they had no brothers. He had died as one of the exodus generation and they went to Moses, believing that they should have their father's inheritance. Moses took the matter to God and was told that they indeed deserved their father's inheritance. Now we have the problem of what happens when they get married; if one marries a Danite, then where does the land go? Does it go with her to the inheritance of Dan (her husband being the head of the family), or does it remain with the tribe of Manasseh? We have two problems—the land is not really hers if it does not remain with her, yet the land is not supposed to be transferred in title to anyone from another tribe. Furthermore, if the land title was transferred, then we would have the occasional patchwork of uncontiguous land.

The Inheritance Problem

And the heads of the fathers of the families of the sons of Gilead ben Machir, son of Manasseh, of the families of the sons of Joseph, approached, and they spoke before Moses, and before the princes, heads of the fathers of the sons of Israel; [Numbers 36:1]

It is possible that one of the daughters has spoken of marriage or these men or they had thought about the ruling of Moses from Numbers 27 and realized that there was a potential problem here.

And said, "Y^ehowah commanded my lord t give the land for inheritance by lot to the sons of Israel and my lord has been commanded by Y^ehowah to give the inheritance of Zelophehad our brother to his daughters. [Numbers 36:2]

They recap for Moses the decision which has been rendered and the fact that God rendered it. My guess is that they state this out of respect for Moses and so the court reporter can set the stage for their clarification of the Law—at this point in the life of Moses, I would think that he may have employed an amanuensis (although that is nowhere specifically stated).

"And [if] they become to one of the [other] sons of the tribe of the sons of Israel for wives and their inheritance is [therefore] withdrawn from the inheritance of our fathers, and it is added to the inheritance of the tribe which is theirs, and from the lot of our inheritance it is withdrawn, [Numbers 36:3]

Because there is no *if* here, it sounds as though one of the women has gotten married to someone outside the tribe, which would logically pool the woman's land grant to the tribe of the man she has married. However, later on in this chapter it will be clear that this has not come to pass yet.

"And if it is the jubilee of the sons of Israel, then their inheritance is added to the inheritance of the tribe which is theirs, and from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers is their inheritance withdrawn." [Numbers 36:4]

No matter how you slice it, their land grant will go to the tribe of the man that they marry. They might take it with them into marriage; they may sell it (which ends up being a lease, for all intents and purposes); but, it eventually ends up as a possession of a different tribe other than Manasseh.

Y^ehowah Solves the Inheritance Problem, Speaking Through Moses

And Moses commanded the sons of Israel, by the mouth of Y^ehowah, saying, "Correctly are the tribe of the sons of Joseph speaking; [Numbers 36:5]

Moses says, "Yes, there is a problem here and it is clear that this land would be returned, as has been stated, not to the tribe of Manasseh, but to whatever tribe these women marry into. The phrase *by the mouth of Y^ehowah* seems to indicate that Moses took this matter before God before rendering a decision; Moses was not speaking Exodus cathedra—i.e., he was not rendering a decision he believed to be in line with the will of Y^ehowah, because he went directly to God (as we see in the next verse).

"This [is] the word which Y^ehowah had commanded concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, 'To those good in their eyes let them be for wives; only, to a family of the tribe of their fathers let them be for wives; [Numbers 36:6]

The decision, which is quite interesting—and confined to the dispensation of Israel, by the way—is that these women are to marry inside the tribe of Manasseh.

" 'And the inheritance of the sons of Israel will not return from tribe to tribe; for each to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers do the sons of Israel cleave. [Numbers 36:7]

Each person remains in the tribe in which they were born, along with their inheritance. Since 99% of the time, the land remained with the family's males, this issue never came up. If someone was in the tribe of Naphtali and they married, the land remained with the tribe of Naphtali because they were males. However, once and awhile, a family would end up being all female and the inheritance of their father was not given to someone else—it remained with the daughters. However, this necessitated that the daughters marry within their own tribe.

This was a general law. Once the land was distributed to the sons of Israel, it was to remain with the family forever. Recall the Year of Jubilee when those who had bought land or traded land to someone else received their land back (or, their family received the land back). We have an Old Testament case where King Ahab desired to have Naboth's vineyard, but Naboth knew that it was no scriptural to give away his fathers' land 1Kings 21:1–4).

" 'And every daughter possessing an inheritance, of the tribes of the sons of Israel, is to one of the family of the tribe of her father for a wife, so that the sons of Israel possess each the inheritance of his fathers, [Numbers 36:8]

This ruling applies not just to the daughters in question but to all daughters who, in this way, receive a land inheritance.

" 'And their inheritance will not turn around from [one] tribe to another tribe; for each to his inheritance will they cleave, the tribes of the sons of Israel.' " [Numbers 36:9]

This will solve the problem brought forth by these men. However, it introduces a new problem: what if one of these women want to marry someone outside their tribe? Since that issue is not addressed here and because this is a part of the dispensation of Israel and not of our dispensation, I will refrain from speaking Exodus cathedra.

Addendum to the Inheritance Problem

As Y^ehowah had commanded Moses, so have the daughters of Zelophehad done. [Numbers 36:10]

It is this verse (along with some others) which indicate to me that this portion of Scripture—that is, the last couple verses of this chapter of Numbers—were appended by Joshua. It seems likely that these women did not all up and get married during that month, right prior to entering the land, prior to actually being given an inheritance (recall, they have not even gone into the land and, therefore, the land has not been divided up). Joshua divides up the land several years later. I mentioned the idea of an amanuensis earlier. My educated guess is that Joshua had been the amanuensis of Moses for sometime now; it is not that Moses would have been too infirm to write—there is the indication at the end of Deuteronomy that Moses died in excellent health—however, just as an executive has a secretary, it would make sense for the head of the nation of Israel to also employ a secretary and that person would logically be Joshua. Therefore, Joshua could, from time to time, append a passage of Scripture because (1) he wrote it in the first place—as the secretary of Moses; and (2) he is also an author of Scripture. However, I want to make it clear that an occasional clarification or an historical note as added by Joshua (and, perhaps later, by other writers of Scripture) does not fall outside the realm of inspiration. Furthermore, this is not the same as redaction (that is, the out and out revision or editing of Scripture), which I believe to be minimal, if it occurred at all. On the other hand, there were certainly some unauthorized additions to Scripture, both in the Old and New Testaments. In the New Testament, since we have a greater number of manuscripts, it is easier to spot what has been added (e.g., the end of the book of Mark and the story of the woman taken in adultery, where Jesus takes a moment to draw stuff in the dirt).

On the other hand, there would be a good argument for Moses to have written all of the Pentateuch in his own hand, as he was perhaps the best educated of the nation of Israel at that time. He spoke at least two languages and was trained in the best schools of Egypt (or, privately tutored by the very best teachers of Egypt, since he was royalty). However, this does not preclude education among the people of Israel. In fact, the very fact of Moses seeing that Scripture was recorded, either by his own hand or by the hand of an amanuensis, indicates that a form of education did occur for all the sons of Israel. Some of the admonishments of the book of Deuteronomy assume the ability to read and write.

And Mahiah, Tirzah, and Hegliah, and Milcah, and Noah, daughters of Zelophehad, are to the sons of their fathers' brothers for wives; [Numbers 36:11]

I sounds here as though they married their first cousins. Although, that is not precluded here, it is not necessarily the case with the language used in this verse. The concept of evolution is exactly backwards. As our time progresses here on this earth, the genetic pool because more corrupt, not more improved. This is why the sons of Adam could marry the daughters of Adam without fear of birth defects; this is why Israel could marry within their own tribe without fear of birth problems. And here, it would be possible for a person to marry their first cousin without a reasonable expectation of genetic disorders. However, this verse merely states that these women married within their tribe. The word *brothers*, as the use of the word *father*, is not quite as strictly defined as it is in our language. In fact, these words are not absolute concepts in the English language either; however, the exception to the strict usage of the words was more prevalent in the Hebrew language of that day than it is in the English language today. That is, I might use the word *father* and 99% of the time I am speaking of my biological father. However, the same word in the Hebrew might refer 60% to the biological father of the person in context. However, we will later have a situation wherein the sisters of a brother-less family all marry their first cousins—all from the same family (1Chronicles 23:21–22).

The NIV Study Bible observes that, beginning at the Exodus, and before, the children of Israel rebelled against God and when brought right up to the land in the book of Numbers, the entire congregation of those able to fight did not, but rebelled against God instead. In fact, the majority of the book of Numbers is Israel's rebellion against God. This book ends on a happy note—these women were concerned about their father's inheritance in the land and they were concerned about their place in God's plan and their place in the land. When given a ruling, they

dutifully obeyed God and Moses. What an improvement over the generation of believers who left Egypt forty years ago!

Of the families of the sons of Manasseh, son of Joseph, they have been for wives, and their inheritance is with the tribe of the family of their father. [Numbers 36:12]

So, the addendum here is that these women, the test case of the court, did eventually marry within the tribe of Manasseh, so resolving all of this. This will be mentioned in the book of Joshua (Joshua 17), and we will cover these women in more detail at that time. However, what seems to be likely is that vv. 10–12 were added later, not by Moses, but by the hand of another author. My guess is that it was Joshua. Although Joshua never attempted to upstage Moses, nor did he ever give any indication that he was jealous or felt as though he got the short end of the stick, he did add an addendum to the end of the book of Deuteronomy (which was absolutely necessary) and then seamlessly move into the book which bears his name. My thinking is that when Joshua had the books of Moses copied, he added a comment here or there, or an addendum, and this is what occurred at this juncture. Few authors would be so presumptuous to do such a thing.

I should go off on another tangent here so that this is not misunderstood. Moses, through most of his life, did not fully comprehend that he was writing God's Word. He was extremely careful from the books of Exodus through Numbers to make is clear when God was speaking and when Moses was speaking. He was even careful to indicate when he was speaking and quoting what God had said to him (this passage is a good example of that). However, in the book of Deuteronomy, during the last month of his life, Moses realized that God had allowed him to speak His Word. Whether Moses fully understood the doctrine of inspiration with respect to what he had previously written is not completely clear (although he will make it mandatory for all kings to have a copy of his writings to study); however, what appears to be clear, is that when he spoke throughout the book of Deuteronomy, it was with the air of divine authority. Moses took whatever steps to see that what he said was recorded (I will speak to this later, but I think that he developed his *sermons* (I grimace to write that) and had someone write them down (my guess is that was Joshua). Then, from his writings, not from the top of his head, did he speak to the people. This will be covered in more detail in the book of Deuteronomy. However, what is clear is that Moses fully understood that what he had to say to the people was divine viewpoint and that he did not have to stop periodically and tell us that this is what God had said to him. Many Jews, although they differ on their interpretations of inspiration, often view the book of Deuteronomy as an abbreviated version of the law. If you don't have enough time to study the entire Pentateuch, then study the book of Deuteronomy. Now, I went off on the tangent because Joshua very likely realized that what Moses recorded was God's Word and that part of his work was to complete that and to record the remaining history of Israel during his life. How completely Joshua understood this is unknown to us; however, my thinking is that from the time he took over the reigns of leadership, he recognized his position in Israel as Moses recognized his own during his final month. Therefore, Joshua knew that he must finish the book of Deuteronomy—i.e., record the death and burial of Moses—and that he must continue recording Israel's history. Because he was likely the first copyist for the works of Moses, Joshua would feel no apprehension about adding in a verse here or there to the books of Moses to provide for us the proper addendum in context for the passage at hand. What Joshua added was God's Word, even though it was by his hand and not the hand of Moses. This is not arrogance, but a recognition of his place in history. Since I personally have a rough idea of my own place in history, I would never hold up my writings as anywhere close to God's Word, nor would I attempt to make a change in a passage which I did not feel was warranted by other manuscripts or by nuances found in the Hebrew. As for appending a passage for whatever reason, this is not even an option. My place in this scheme is to interpret God's Word to the best of my ability as I am led by the Holy Spirit. If I achieve accuracy in this endeavor more often than not, then I have fulfilled the place that God has for me.

These [are] the commands and the judgments which Y^{ehowah} had commanded, by the hand of Moses, concerning the sons of Israel, in the planes of Moab, by Jordan Jericho. [Numbers 36:13]

This is a tough verse, because it sounds very much like the beginning of Deuteronomy. Recall that in Numbers 33, we seemed to have two sentences introduce the travelogue found in that chapter. This sounds very much like the beginning of the next chapter. Remember, that these books and verses are separated by tradition and not necessarily by God the Holy Spirit.

On the other hand, this does make for a neat ending to this book. Deuteronomy, although picking up right where Numbers leaves off, will be a very different sort of a book. Deuteronomy is a record of the last several sermons of Moses prior to invasion of Canaan by the sons of Israel. This is a new generation. They have listened to Moses speak and have listened to the Law, and in Deuteronomy, this will be summed up for them.

We have the phrase *by the hand of Moses*; the *hand* represents a number of things in Scripture (we examined this briefly in Numbers 33:1)—this could certainly refer to Moses personally recording everything found in the Pentateuch; however, I think that this refers more to the Pentateuch being recorded and copied under the direction of Moses. Whether he physically penned all or a great portion of the Pentateuch or whether much of it was done by Joshua or another amanuensis is not really an issue. **All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work** (II Tim. 3:16–17). Even if Moses physically wrote 99% of the Pentateuch, it was still subject to immediate recopying. Certainly, Moses and his successor, Joshua, recognized the value of God's Word and the importance of keeping several good copies around. One of the marvelous gifts of the Old Testament, which is sometimes thought as unglamorous, if thought of at all, is that of the office of the Scribe. We have the Bible in our hands today because of millions of men who dedicated their lives to God's Word—and some of those men carefully copied Scripture, letter by letter, word by word, making every effort imaginable to insure the accuracy of the transmission of the text. These men knew the middle letter and the middle word of any given book or portion of Scripture; they knew the number of words and the numbers of letters and they cross-checked their work thoroughly, giving great respect to God's Word—a respect which the average Christian does not even have a clue.