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a *Grace Notes* course

## **Numbers**

From Commentary on the Old Testament

C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch

adapted for Grace Notes training by Warren Doud

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## Numbers - Keil and Delitzsch

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## Introduction

Contents and Arrangement of the Book of Numbers.

The fourth book of Moses, which the Jews call either *Vayedabber* (וידבר), from the opening word, מספרים (Ἀριθμοί, *Numeri*, LXX, Vulg.), or פקודים *recensiones* (= *liber recensionum*),

and to which the heading במדבר (*in the wilderness*) is given in the Masoretic texts with a more direct reference to its general contents, narrates the guidance of Israel through the desert, from Mount Sinai to the border of Canaan by the river Jordan, and embraces the whole period from the second month of the second year after the exodus from Egypt to the tenth month of the fortieth year.

As soon as their mode of life in a spiritual point of view had been fully regulated by the laws of Leviticus, the Israelites were to enter upon their journey to Canaan, and take possession of the inheritance promised to their fathers. But just as the way from Goshen to Sinai was a preparation of the chosen people for their reception into the covenant with God, so the way from Sinai to Canaan was also a preparation for the possession of the promised land. On their journey through the wilderness the Israelites were to experience on the one hand the faithful watchfulness and gracious deliverance of their God in every season of distress and danger, as well as the stern severity of the divine judgments upon the despisers of their God, that they might learn thereby to trust entirely in the Lord, and strive after His kingdom alone; and on the other hand they were to receive during their journey the laws and ordinances relating to their civil and political constitution, and thereby to be placed in a condition to form and maintain themselves as a consolidated nation by the side of and in opposition to the earthly kingdoms formed by the nations of the world, and to fulfil the task

assigned them by God in the midst of the nations of the earth. These laws, which were given in part at Sinai, in relation to the external and internal organization of the tribes of Israel as the army and the congregation of Jehovah, and in part on various occasions during the march through the desert, as well as after their arrival in the steppes of Moab, on the other side of the Jordan opposite to Jericho, with especial reference to the conquest of Canaan and their settlement there, are not only attached externally to the history itself in the order in which they were given, but are so incorporated internally into the historical narrative, according to their peculiar character and contents, as to form a complete whole, which divides itself into three distinct parts corresponding to the chronological development of the history itself.

The First part, which extends from Numbers 1–10:10, contains the preparations for departing from Sinai, arranged in four groups:—viz., (1) the outward arrangement and classification of the tribes in the camp and on their march, or the numbering and grouping of the twelve tribes around the sanctuary of their God (Numbers 1 and 2), and the appointment of the Levites in the place of the first-born of the nation to act as servants of the priests in the sanctuary (Numbers 3 and 4); (2) the internal or moral and spiritual organization of the nation as the congregation of the Lord, by laws relating to the maintenance of the cleanliness of the camp, restitution for trespasses, conjugal fidelity, the fulfilment of the vow of the Nazarite, and the priestly blessing (Numbers 5 and 6); (3) the closing events at Sinai, viz., the presentation of dedicatory offerings on the part of the tribe princes for the transport of the tabernacle and the altar service (Numbers 7), the consecration of the Levites (Numbers 8), and the feast of Passover, with an arrangement for a supplementary Passover (Numbers 9:1–14); (4) the appointment of signs and signals for the march in the desert (Numbers 9:5–10:10). In the Second part (Numbers 10:11–21), the history of the journey is given in the three stages of its progress from Sinai to the

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heights of Pisgah, near to the Jordan, viz., (1) from their departure from the desert of Sinai (Numbers 10:11–36) to their arrival at the desert of *Paran*, at Kadesh, including the occurrences at Tabeerah, at the graves of lust, and at Hazeroth (Numbers 11 and 12), and the events at Kadesh which led God to condemn the people who had revolted against Him to wander in the wilderness for forty years, until the older generation that came out of Egypt had all died (Numbers 13 and 14); (2) all that is related of the execution of this divine judgment, extending from the end of the second year to the reassembling of the congregation at Kadesh at the beginning of the fortieth year, is the history of the rebellion and destruction of Korah (Numbers 16–17:15), which is preceded by laws relating to the offering of sacrifices after entering Canaan, to the punishment of blasphemers, and to mementos upon the clothes (Numbers 15), and followed by the divine institution of the Aaronic priesthood (Numbers 17:16–28), with directions as to the duties and rights of the priests and Levites (Numbers 18), and the law concerning purification from uncleanness arising from contact with the dead (Numbers 19); (3) the journey of Israel in the fortieth year from Kadesh to Mount Hor, round Mount Seir, past Moab, and through the territory of the Amorites to the heights of Pisgah, with the defeat of the kings of the Amorites, Sihon and Og, and the conquest of their kingdoms in Gilead and Bashan (Numbers 20 and 21). In the Third part (Numbers 22–36), the events which occurred in the steppes of Moab, on the eastern side of the plain of Jordan, are gathered into five groups, with the laws that were given there, viz., (1) the attempts of the Moabites and Midianites to destroy the people of Israel, first by the force of Balaam's curse, which was turned against his will into a blessing (Numbers 22–24), and then by the seduction of the Israelites to idolatry (Numbers 25); (2) the fresh numbering of the people according to their families (Numbers 26), together with a rule for the inheritance of landed property by daughters (Numbers 27:1–11), and the appointment of Joshua as the

successor of Moses (Numbers 27:12–23); (3) laws relating to the sacrifices to be offered by the congregation on the Sabbath and feast days, and to the binding character of vows made by dependent persons (Numbers 28–30); (4) the defeat of the Midianites (Numbers 31), the division of the land that had been conquered on the other side of the Jordan among the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half Manasseh (Numbers 32), and the list of the halting-places (Numbers 33:1–49); (5) directions as to the expulsion of the Canaanites, the conquest of Canaan and division of it among the tribes of Israel, the Levites and free cities, and the marriage of heiresses (Numbers 33:50–56).

### Numbers 1

PREPARATIONS FOR THE DEPARTURE OF ISRAEL FROM SINAI. Ch. 1:1–10:10.

*Numbering of the People of Israel at Sinai.—Ch. 1–4.*

**Numbers 1:1–10:10.** Four weeks after the erection of the tabernacle (cf. Numbers 1:1 and Ex. 40:17), Moses had the number of the whole congregation taken, by the command of God, according to the families and fathers' houses of the twelve tribes, and a list made of all the males above twenty years of age for service in the army of Jehovah (Numbers 1:1–3). Nine months before, the numbering of the people had taken place for the purpose of collecting atonement-money from every male of twenty years old upwards (Ex. 30:11ff, compared with Ex. 38:25, 26), and the result was 603,550, the same number as is given here as the sum of all that were mustered in the twelve tribes (Numbers 1:46). This correspondence in the number of the male population after the lapse of a year is to be explained, as we have already observed at Ex. 30:16, simply from the fact that the result of the previous census, which was taken for the purpose of raising head-money from every one who was fit for war, was taken as the basis of the mustering of all who were fit

for war, which took place after the erection of the tabernacle; so that, strictly speaking, this mustering merely consisted in the registering of those who had been numbered in the public records, according to their families and fathers' houses. It is most probable, however, that the numbering and registering took place according to the classification adopted at Jethro's suggestion for the administration of justice, viz., in thousands, hundred, fifties, and tens (Ex. 18:25), and that the number of men in the different tribes was reckoned in this way simply by thousands, hundreds, and tens,—a conclusion which we may draw from the fact, that there are no units given in the case of any of the tribes. On this plan the supernumerary units might be used to balance the changes that had taken place in the actual condition of the families and fathers' houses, between the numbering and the preparation of the muster-rolls, so that the few changes that had occurred in the course of nine months among those who were fit for war were not taken any further into consideration, on account of their being so inconsiderable in relation to the total result. A fresh census was taken 38 years later in the steppes of Moab (Numbers 26), for the division of the land of Canaan among the tribes according to the number of their families (Numbers 33:54). The number which this gave was 601,730 men of twenty years old and upwards, not a single one of whom, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, was included among those that were mustered at Sinai, because the whole of that generation had died in the wilderness (Numbers 26:63ff.). In the historical account, instead of these exact numbers, the number of adult males is given in a round sum of 600,000 (Numbers 11:21; Ex. 12:37). To this the Levites had to be added, of whom there were 22,000 males at the first numbering and 23,000 at the second, reckoning the whole from a month old and upwards (Numbers 3:39; 26:62). Accordingly, on the precarious supposition that the results obtained from the official registration of births and deaths in our own day furnish any approximative standard for the people of Israel,

who had grown up under essentially different territorial and historical circumstances, the whole number of the Israelites in the time of Moses would have been about two millions. Modern critics have taken offence at these numbers, though without sufficient reason. When David had the census taken by Joab, in the closing years of his reign, there were 800,000 men capable of bearing arms in Israel, and 500,000 in Judah (2 Sam. 24:9). Now, if we suppose the entire population of a country to be about four times the number of its fighting men, there would be about five millions of inhabitants in Palestine at that time. The area of this land, according to the boundaries given in Numbers 34:2–12, the whole of which was occupied by Israel and Judah in the time of David, with the exception of a small strip of the Phoenician coast, was more than 500 square miles. Accordingly there would be 10,000 inhabitants to each square mile (German); a dense though by no means unparalleled population; so that it is certainly possible that in the time of Christ it may have been more numerous still, according to the account of *Josephus*, which are confirmed by *Dio Cassius* (cf. *C. v. Raumer, Palästina*, p. 93). And if Canaan could contain and support five millions of inhabitants in the flourishing period of the Israelitish kingdom, two millions or more could easily have settled and been sustained in the time of Joshua and the Judges, notwithstanding the fact that there still remained large tracts of land in the possession of the Canaanites and Philistines, and that the Israelites dwelt in the midst of the Canaanitish population which had not yet been entirely eradicated (Judg. 3:1–5). If we compare together the results of the two numbering in the second and fortieth years of their march, we shall find a considerable increase in some of the tribes, and a large decrease in others. The number of men of twenty years old and upwards in the different tribes was as follows:—

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

Consequently by the second numbering Dan had increased 1700, Judah 1900, Zebulon 3100, Issachar 9900, Benjamin 10,200, Asher 11,900, Manasseh 20,900. This increase, which was about 19 per cent. in the case of Issachar, 29 per cent. in that of Benjamin and Asher, and 63 per cent. in that of Manasseh, is very large, no doubt; but even that of Manasseh is not unparalleled. The total population of Prussia increased from 10,349,031 to 17,139,288 between the end of 1816 and the end of 1855, that is to say, more than 65 per cent. in 39 years; whilst in England the population increased 47 per cent. between 1815 and 1849, i.e., in 34 years. On the other hand, there was a decrease in Reuben of 2770, in Gad of 5150, and Ephraim of 8000, in Naphtali of 8000, and in Simeon of 37,100. The cause of this diminution of 6 per cent. in the case of Reuben, 12 per cent. in Gad, 15 per cent. in Naphtali, 20 per cent. in Ephraim, and nearly 63 per cent. in Simeon, it is most natural to seek for in the different judgments which fell upon the nation. If it be true, as the earlier commentators

conjectured, with great plausibility, on account of the part taken by Zimri, a prince of the tribe (Numbers 25:6, 14), that the Simeonites were the worst of those who joined in the idolatrous worship of Baal Peor, the plague, in which 24,000 men were destroyed (Numbers 25:9), would fall upon them with greater severity than upon the other tribes; and this would serve as the principal explanation of the circumstance, that in the census which was taken immediately afterwards, the number of men in that tribe who were capable of bearing arms had melted away to 22,200. But for all that, the total number included in the census had only been reduced by 1820 men during the forty years of their journeying through the wilderness.

The tribe of Levi appears very small in comparison with the rest of the tribes. In the second year of their journey, when the first census was taken, it only numbered 22,000 males of a month old and upwards; and in the fortieth year, when the second was taken, only 23,000 (Numbers 3:39; 26:62). "Reckoning," says *Knobel*, "that in Belgium, for example, in the rural districts, out of 10,000 males, 1074 ie in the first month after their birth, and 3684 between the first month and the twentieth year, so that only 5242 are then alive, the tribe of Levi would only number about 13,000 men of 20 years old and upwards, and consequently would not be half as numerous as the smallest of the other tribes, whilst it would be hardly a sixth part the size of Judah, which was the strongest of the tribes." But notwithstanding this, the correctness of the numbers given is not to be called in question. It is not only supported by the fact, that the number of the Levites capable of service between the ages of 30 and 50 amounted to 8580 (Numbers 4:48),—a number which bears the most perfect proportion to that of 22,000 of a month old and upwards,—but is also confirmed by the fact, that in the time of David the tribe of Levi only numbered 38,000 of thirty years old and upwards (1 Chron. 23:3); so that in the interval between Moses and David their rate of increase was still below that of the other tribes, which had grown from 600,000 to 1,300,000 in the

same time. Now, if we cannot discover any reason for this smaller rate of increase in the tribe of Levi, we see, at any rate, that it was not uniform in the other tribes. If Levi was not half as strong as Manasseh in the first numbering, neither Manasseh nor Benjamin was half as strong as Judah; and in the second numbering, even Ephraim had not half the number of men that Judah had.

A much greater difficulty appears to lie in the fact, that the number of all the male first-born of the twelve tribes, which was only 22,273 according to the census taken for the purpose of their redemption by the Levites (Numbers 3:43), bore no kind of proportion to the total number of men capable of bearing arms in the whole of the male population, as calculated from these. If the 603,550 men of twenty years old and upwards presuppose, according to what has been stated above, a population of more than a million males; then, on the assumption that 22,273 was the sum total of the first-born sons throughout the entire nation, there would be only one first-born to 40 or 45 males, and consequently every father of a family must have begotten, or still have had, from 39 to 44 sons; whereas the ordinary proportion of first-born sons to the whole male population is one to four. But the calculation which yields this enormous disproportion, or rather this inconceivable proportion, is founded upon the supposition that the law, which commanded the sanctification of the male first-born, had a retrospective force, and was to be understood as requiring that not only the first-born sons, who were born from the time when the law was given, but all the first-born sons throughout the entire nation, should be offered to the Lord and redeemed with five shekels each, even though they were fathers or grandfathers, or even great-grandfathers, at that time. Now if the law is to be interpreted in this sense, as having a retrospective force, and applying to those who were born before it was issued, as it has been from the time of *J. D. Michaelis* down to that of *Knobel*, it is an unwarrantable liberty to restrict its application to the first-born sons, who had not yet become

fathers themselves,—a mere subterfuge, in fact, invented for the purpose of getting rid of the disproportion, but without answering the desired end.

If we look more closely at the law, we cannot find in the words themselves “all the first-born, whatsoever openeth the womb” (Ex. 13:2, cf. Numbers 3:12), or in the *ratio legis*, or in the circumstances under which the law was given, either a necessity or warrant for any such explanation or extension. According to Ex. 13:2, after the institution of the Passover and its first commemoration, God gave the command, “Sanctify unto Me all the first-born both of man and of beast;” and added, according to vv. 11ff., the further explanation, that when the Israelites came into the land of Canaan, they were to set apart every first-born unto the Lord, but to redeem their first-born sons. This further definition places it beyond all doubt, that what God prescribed to His people was not a supplementary sanctification of all the male first-born who were then to be found in Israel, but simply the sanctification of all that should be born from that time forward. A confirmation of this is to be found in the explanation given in Numbers 3:13 and 8:17: “All the first-born are Mine; for on the day that I smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, I hallowed unto Me all the first-born in Israel, both man and beast.” According to this distinct explanation, God had actually sanctified to Himself all the first-born of Israel by the fact, that through the blood of the paschal lamb He granted protection to His people from the stroke of the destroyer (Ex. 12:22, 23), and had instituted the Passover, in order that He might therein adopt the whole nation of Israel, with all its sons, as the people of *His* possession, or induct the nation which He had chosen as His first-born son (Ex. 4:22) into the condition of a child of God. This condition of sonship was henceforth to be practically manifested by the Israelites, not only by the yearly repetition of the feast of Passover, but also by the presentation of all the male first-born of their sons and their cattle to the Lord, the first-born of the cattle being sacrificed to Him upon the altar, and the first-born sons



being redeemed from the obligation resting upon them to serve at the sanctuary of their God. Of course the reference was only to the first-born of men and cattle that should come into the world from that time forward, and not to those whom God had already sanctified to Himself, by sparing the Israelites and their cattle.

This being established, it follows that the 22,273 first-born, who were exchanged for the Levites (Numbers 3:45ff.), consisted only of the first-born sons who had been born between the time of the exodus from Egypt and the numbering of the twelve tribes, which took place thirteen months afterwards. Now, if, in order to form an idea of the proportion which this number would bear to the whole of the male population of the twelve tribes of Israel, we avail ourselves of the results furnished by modern statistics, we may fairly assume, according to these, that in a nation comprising 603,550 males above 20 years of age, there would be 190,000 to 195,100 between the ages of 20 and 30. And, supposing that this was the age at which the Israelites married, there would be from 19,000 to 19,500 marriages contracted upon an average every year; and in a nation which had grown up in a land so celebrated as Egypt was in antiquity for the extraordinary fruitfulness of its inhabitants, almost as many first-born, say at least 19,000, might be expected to come into the world. This average number would be greater if we fixed the age for marrying between 18 and 28, or reduced it to the seven years between 18 and 25. But even without doing this, we must take into consideration the important fact that such averages, based upon a considerable length of time, only give an approximative idea of the actual state of things in any single year; and that, as a matter of fact, in years of oppression and distress the numbers may sink to half the average, whilst in other years, under peculiarly favourable circumstances, they may rise again to double the amount. When the Israelites were groaning under the hard lash of the Egyptian taskmasters, and then under the inhuman and cruel edict of Pharaoh, which commanded all

the Hebrew boys that were born to be immediately put to death, the number of marriages no doubt diminished from year to year. But the longer this oppression continued, the greater would be the number of marriages concluded at once (especially in a nation rejoicing in the promise of numerous increase which it had received from its God), when Moses had risen up and proved himself, by the mighty signs and wonders with which he smote Egypt and its haughty king, to be the man whom the God of the fathers had sent and endowed with power to redeem His nation out of the bondage of Egypt, and lead it into Canaan, the good land that He had promised to the fathers. At that time, when the spirits of the nation revived, and the hope of a glorious future filled every year, there might very well have been about 38,000 marriages contracted in a year, say from the time of the seventh plague, three months before the exodus, and about 37,600 children born by the second month of the second year after the exodus, 22,273 of them being boys, as the proportion of male births to female varies very remarkably, and may be shown to have risen even as high as 157 to 100, whilst among the Jews of modern times it has frequently been as high as 6 to 5, and has even risen to 3 to 2 (or more exactly 29 to 20).

In this way the problem before us may be solved altogether independently of the question, whether the law relates to all the first-born sons on the father's side, or only to those who were first-born on both father's and mother's side, and without there having been a daughter born before. This latter view we regard as quite unfounded, as a mere subterfuge resorted to for the purpose of removing the supposed disproportion, and in support of which the expression "opening the womb" (*fissura uteri*, i.e., *qui findit uterum*) is pressed in a most unwarrantable manner. On this point, *J. D. Michaelis* has correctly observed, that "the etymology ought not to be too strongly pressed, inasmuch as it is not upon this, but upon usage chiefly, that the force of words depends." It is a fact common to all

languages, that in many words the original literal signification falls more and more into the background in the course, of years, and at length is gradually lost sight of altogether. Moreover, the expression “openeth the womb” is generally employed in cases in which a common term is required to designate the first-born of both man and beast (Ex. 13:2, 12–15; 34:19, 20; Numbers 3:12, 13; 8:16, 17; 18:15; Ezek. 20:16); but even then, wherever the two are distinguished, the term **בְּכוֹר** is applied as a rule to the first-born sons, and **פֶּטֶר** to the first-born of animals (comp. Ex. 13:13*b* with v. 12 and 13*a*; and Numbers 34:20*b* with vv. 19 and 20*a*). On the other hand, where only first-born sons are referred to, as in Deut. 21:15–17, we look in vain for the expression *peter rechem*, “openeth the womb.” Again, the Old Testament, like modern law, recognises only first-born sons, and does not apply the term first-born to daughters at all; and in relation to the inheritance, even in the case of two wives, both of whom had born sons to their husband, it recognises only *one* first-born son, so that the fact of its being the first birth on the mother’s side is not taken into consideration at all (cf. Gen. 46:8; 49:3; Deut. 21:15–17). And the established rule in relation to the birthright,—namely, that the first son of the father was called the first-born, and possessed all the rights of the first-born, independently altogether of the question whether there had been daughters born before,—would no doubt be equally applicable to the sanctification of the first-born sons. Or are we really to believe, that inasmuch as the child first born is quite as often a girl as a boy, God exempted every father in Israel whose eldest child was a daughter from the obligation to manifest his own sonship by consecrating his first-born son to God, and so demanded the performance of this duty from half the nation only? We cannot for a moment believe that such an interpretation of the law as this would really be in accordance with the spirit of the Old Testament economy.

**Numbers 1.** Muster of the Twelve Tribes, with the Exception of that of Levi.—Vv. 1–3. Before the departure of Israel from Sinai, God commanded Moses, on the first of the second month in the second year after the exodus from Egypt, to take the number of the whole congregation of the children of Israel, “according to their families, according to their fathers’ houses (see Ex. 6:14), in (according to) the number of their names,” i.e., each one counted singly and entered, but only “every male according to their heads of twenty years old and upwards” (see Ex. 30:14), viz., only

**כָּל-יֵצֵא צֶבֶא** “all who go forth of the army,”

i.e., all the men capable of bearing arms, because by means of this numbering the tribes and their subdivisions were to be organized as hosts of Jehovah, that the whole congregation might fight as an army for the cause of their Lord (see at Ex. 7:4).

**Numbers 1:4–16.** Moses and Aaron, who were commanded to number, or rather to muster, the people, were to have with them “a man of every tribe, who was head-man of his fathers’ houses,” i.e., a tribe-prince, viz., to help them to carry out the mustering. *Beth aboth* (“fathers’ houses”), in v. 2, is a technical expression for the subdivisions in which the *mishpachoth*, or families of the tribes, were arranged, and is applied in v. 4 according to its original usage, based upon the natural division of the tribes into *mishpachoth* and families, to the fathers’ houses which every tribe possessed in the family of its first-born. In vv. 5–15, these heads of tribes were mentioned by name, as in Numbers 2:3ff., 7:12ff., 10:14ff. In v. 16 they are designated as “called men of the congregation,” because they were called to diets of the congregation, as representatives of the tribes, to regulate the affairs of the nation; also “princes of the tribes of their fathers,” and “heads of the thousands of Israel:” “prince,” from the nobility of their birth; and “heads,” as chiefs of the *alaphim* composing the tribes. *Alaphim* is equivalent to *mishpachoth* (cf. Numbers 10:4; Josh. 22:14); because the number of heads of families in the *mishpachoth* of a tribe might

easily amount to a *thousand* (see at Ex. 18:25). In a similar manner, the term “*hundred*” in the old German came to be used in several different senses (see *Grimm, deutsche Rechtsalterthümer*, p. 532).

**Numbers 1:17–47.** This command was carried out by Moses and Aaron. They took for this purpose the twelve heads of tribes who are pointed out (see at Lev. 24:11) by name, and had the whole congregation gathered together by them and enrolled in genealogical tables.

הַתִּלְדָּה, to announce themselves as born, i.e., to have themselves entered in genealogical registers (books of generations). This entry is called a פְּקָדָה, *mustering*, in v. 19, etc. In vv. 20–43 the number is given of those who were mustered of all the different tribes, and in vv. 44–47 the total of the whole nation, with the exception of the tribe of Levi. “*Their generations*” (vv. 20, 22, 24, etc.), i.e., those who were begotten by them, so that “*the sons of Reuben, Simeon,*” etc., are mentioned as the fathers from whom the *mishpachoth* and fathers’ houses had sprung. The לְ before בְּנֵי

שְׂמֵעוֹן in v. 22, and the following names (in vv. 24, 26, etc.), signifies “*with regard to*” (as in Isa. 32:1; Ps. 17:4, etc.).

**Numbers 1:48–54.** Moses was not to muster the tribe of Levi along with the children of Israel, i.e., with the other tribes, or take their number, but to appoint the Levites for the service of the dwelling of the testimony (Ex. 38:21), i.e., of the tabernacle, that they might encamp around it, might take it down when the camp was broken up, and set it up when Israel encamped again, and that no stranger (*zar*, non-Levite, as in Lev. 22:10) might come near it and be put to death (see Numbers 3). The rest of the tribes were to encamp every man in his place of encampment, and by his banner (see at Numbers 2:2), in their hosts (see Numbers 2), that wrath might not come upon the congregation, viz., through the approach of a

stranger. קִצְוֵי, the wrath of Jehovah, breaking in judgment upon the unholy who approached His sanctuary in opposition to His command (Numbers 8:19; 18:5, 22). On the expression “*keep the charge*” (*shamar mishmereth*), see at Gen. 26:5 and Lev. 8:35.

## Numbers 2

**Numbers 2.** Order of the Twelve Tribes in the Camp and on the March.—Vv. 1, 2. The twelve tribes were to encamp each one by his standard, by the signs of their fathers’ houses, opposite to the tabernacle (at some distance) round about, and, according to the more precise directions given afterwards, in such order that on every side of the tabernacle three tribes were encamped side by side and united under one banner, so that the twelve tribes formed four large camps or divisions of an army. Between these camps and the court surrounding the tabernacle, the three leading *mishpachoth* of the Levites were to be encamped on three sides, and Moses and Aaron with the sons of Aaron (i.e., the priests) upon the fourth, i.e., the front or eastern side, before the entrance (Numbers 3:21–38). דָּגֹל, a

standard, banner, or flag, denotes primarily the larger *field sign*, possessed by every division composed of three tribes, which was also the banner of the tribe at the head of each division; and secondarily, in a derivative signification, it denotes the *army* united under one standard, like σημαία, or *vexillum*. It is used thus, for example, in vv. 17, 31, 34, and in combination

with מַחֲנֵה in vv. 3, 10, 18, and 25, where “*standard of the camp of Judah, Reuben, Ephraim, and Dan*” signifies the hosts of the tribes arranged under these banners. אֲתֹת, the *signs* (ensigns), were the smaller flags or banners which were carried at the head of the different tribes and subdivisions of the tribes (the fathers’ houses). Neither the Mosaic law, nor the Old Testament generally, gives us any intimation as to the form or character of the

standard (*degel*). According to rabbinical tradition, the standard of Judah bore the figure of a lion, that of Reuben the likeness of a man or of a man's head, that of Ephraim the figure of an ox, and that of Dan the figure of an eagle; so that the four living creatures united in the cherubic forms described by Ezekiel were represented upon these four standards.

**Numbers 2:3–31.** *Order of the tribes in the camp and on the march.*—Vv. 3–9. The standard of the tribe of Judah was to encamp in front, namely towards the east, according to its hosts; and by its side the tribes of Issachar and Zebulun, the descendants of Leah, under the command and banner of Judah: an army of 186,400 men, which was to march out first when the camp was broken up (v. 9), so that Judah led the way as the champion of his brethren (Gen. 49:10).

**Numbers 2:4.** *“His host, and those that were numbered of them”* (cf. vv. 6, 8, 11, etc.), i.e., the army according to its numbered men.

**Numbers 2:10–16.** On the south side was the standard of Reuben, with which Simeon and Gad, descendants of Leah and her maid Zilpah, were associated, and to which they were subordinated. In v. 14, *Reuel* is a mistake for *Reuel* (Numbers 1:14; 7:42; 10:20), which is the reading given here in 118 MSS cited by *Kennicott* and *De Rossi*, in several of the ancient editions, and in the *Samaritan*, *Vulgate*, and *Jon. Saad.*, whereas the *LXX*, *Onk.*, *Syr.*, and *Pers.* read *Reuel*. This army of 151,450 men was to break up and march as the second division.

**Numbers 2:17.** The tabernacle, the camp of the Levites, was to break up after this in the midst of the camps (i.e., of the other tribes). *“As they encamp, so shall they break up,”* that is to say, with Levi in the midst of the tribes, *“every man in his place, according to his banner.”* **טָּ**, *place*, as in Deut. 23:13, Isa. 57:8.

**Numbers 2:18–24.** On the west the standard of Ephraim, with the tribes of Manasseh and Benjamin, that is to say, the whole of the descendants of Rachel, 108,100 men, as the third division of the army.

**Numbers 2:25–31.** Lastly, towards the north was the standard of Gad, with Asher and Naphtali, the descendants of the maids Bilhah and Zilpah, 157,600 men, who were to be the last to break up, and formed the rear on the march.

**Numbers 2:31.** **לְדֹגְלֵיהֶם** (*according to their standards*) is equivalent to **לְצִבְאוֹתָם** (*according to their hosts*) in vv. 9, 16, and 24, i.e., according to the hosts of which they consisted.

**Numbers 2:32–34.** In v. 32 we have the whole number given, 603,550 men, not including the Levites (v. 33, see at Numbers 1:49); and in v. 34 the concluding remark as to the subsequent execution of the divine command,—an anticipatory notice, as in Ex. 12:50; 40:16, etc.

### Numbers 3

**Numbers 3.** Muster of the Tribe of Levi.—As Jacob had adopted the two sons of Joseph as his own sons, and thus promoted them to the rank of heads of tribes, the tribe of Levi formed, strictly speaking, the thirteenth tribe of the whole nation, and was excepted from the muster of the twelve tribes who were destined to form the army of Jehovah, because God had chosen it for the service of the sanctuary. Out of this tribe God had not only called Moses to be the deliverer, lawgiver, and leader of His people, but Moses' brother Aaron, with the sons of the latter, to be the custodians of the sanctuary. And now, lastly, the whole tribe was chosen, in the place of the first-born of all the tribes, to assist the priests in performing the duties of the sanctuary, and was numbered and mustered for this its special calling.

**Numbers 3:1–4.** In order to indicate at the very outset the position which the Levites were to occupy in relation to the priests (*viz.*, Aaron and his descendants), the account of their muster commences not only with the enumeration of the sons of Aaron who were chosen as priests (vv. 2–4), but with the heading: *“These are the generations of Aaron and Moses in the day* (i.e.,

at the time) when *Jehovah* spake with Moses in Mount Sinai (v. 1). The *toledoth* (see at Gen. 2:4) of Moses and Aaron are not only the families which sprang from Aaron and Moses, but the Levitical families generally, which were named after Aaron and Moses, because they were both of them raised into the position of heads or spiritual fathers of the whole tribe, namely, at the time when God spoke to Moses upon Sinai. Understood in this way, the notice as to the time is neither a superfluous repetition, nor introduced with reference to the subsequent numbering of the people in the steppes of Moab (Numbers 26:57ff.). Aaron is placed before Moses here (see at Ex. 6:26ff.), not merely as being the elder of the two, but because his sons received the priesthood, whilst the sons of Moses, on the contrary, were classed among the rest of the Levitical families (cf. 1 Chron. 23:14).

**Numbers 3:2ff.** Names of the sons of Aaron, the *"anointed priests* (see Lev. 8:12), *whose hand they filled to be priests,*" i.e., who were appointed to the priesthood (see at Lev. 7:37). On Nadab and Abihu, see Lev. 10:1, 2. As they had neither of them any children when they were put to death, Eleazar and Ithamar were the only priests *"in the sight of Aaron their father,"* i.e., during his lifetime. *"In the sight of:"* as in Gen. 11:28.

**Numbers 3:5–10.** The Levites are placed before Aaron the priest, to be his servants.

**Numbers 3:6.** *"Bring near:"* as in Ex. 28:1. The expression עָמַד לְפָנַי is frequently met with in connection with the position of a servant, as standing before his master to receive his commands.

**Numbers 3:7.** They were to keep the charge of Aaron and the whole congregation before the tabernacle, to attend to the service of the dwelling, i.e., to observe what Aaron (the priest) and the whole congregation were bound to perform in relation to the service at the dwelling-place of *Jehovah*. *"To keep the charge:"* see Numbers 1:53 and Gen. 26:5. In v. 8 this is more fully explained: they were to keep the vessels of the tabernacle, and to attend to all

that was binding upon the children of Israel in relation to them, i.e., to take the oversight of the furniture, to keep it safe and clean.

**Numbers 3:9.** Moses was also to give the Levites to Aaron and his sons. *"They are wholly given to him out of the children of Israel:"* the

repetition of נְתוּנִים here and in Numbers 8:16 is emphatic, and expressive of complete surrender (*Ewald*, § 313). The Levites, however, as *nethunim*, must be distinguished from the *nethinim* of non-Israelitish descent, who were given to the Levites at a later period as temple slaves, to perform the lowest duties connected with the sanctuary (see at Josh. 9:27).

**Numbers 3:10.** Aaron and his sons were to be appointed by Moses to take charge of the priesthood; as no stranger, no one who was not a son of Aaron, could approach the sanctuary without being put to death (cf. Numbers 1:53 and Lev. 22:10).

**Numbers 3:11–13.** God appointed the Levites for this service, because He had decided to adopt them as His own in the place of all the first-born of Egypt. When He slew the first-born of Egypt, He sanctified to Himself all the first-born of Israel, of man and beast, for His own possession (see Ex. 13:1, 2). By virtue of this sanctification, which was founded upon the adoption of the whole nation as His first-born son (see p. 341), the nation was required to dedicate to Him its first-born sons for service at the sanctuary, and sacrifice all the first-born of its cattle to Him. But now the Levites and their cattle were to be adopted in their place, and the first-born sons of Israel to be released in return (vv. 40ff.). By this arrangement, through which the care of the service at the sanctuary was transferred to one tribe, which would and should henceforth devote itself with undivided interest to this vocation, not only was a more orderly performance of this service secured, than could have been effected through the first-born of all the tribes; but so far as the whole nation was concerned, the fulfilment of its obligations in relation to this service was undoubtedly facilitated. Moreover, the Levites

had proved themselves to be the most suitable of all the tribes for his post, through their firm and faithful defence of the honour of the Lord at the worship of the golden calf (Ex. 32:26ff.). It is in this spirit, which distinguished the tribe of Levi, that we may undoubtedly discover the reason why they were chosen by God for the service of the sanctuary, and not in the fact that Moses and Aaron belonged to the tribe, and desired to form a hierarchical caste of the members of their own tribe, such as was to be found among other nations: the magi, for example, among the Medes, the Chaldeans among the Persians, and the Brahmins among

the Indians. לִי אֲנִי יְהוָה, "to Me, to Me, Jehovah" (vv. 13, 41, and 45; cf. Ges. § 121, 3).

**Numbers 3:14–20.** The muster of the Levites included all the males from a month old and upwards, because they were to be sanctified to Jehovah in the place of the first-born; and it was at the age of a month that the latter were either to be given up or redeemed (comp. vv. 40 and 43 with Numbers 18:16). In vv. 17–20 the sons of Levi and their sons are enumerated, who were the founders of the *mishpachoth* among the Levites, as in Ex. 6:16–19.

**Numbers 3:21–26.** The Gershonites were divided into two families, containing 7500 males. They were to encamp under their chief Eliasaph, behind the tabernacle, i.e., on the western side (vv. 23, 24), and were to take charge of the dwelling-place and the tent, the covering, the curtain at the entrance, the hangings round the court with the curtains at the door, and the cords of the tent, "in relation to all the service thereof" (vv. 25ff.); that is to say, according to the more precise injunctions in Numbers 4:25–27, they were to carry the tapestry of the dwelling (the inner covering, Ex. 26:1ff.), and of the tent (i.e., the covering made of goats' hair, Ex. 26:7ff.), the covering thereof (i.e., the covering of rams' skins dyed red, and the covering of sea-cow skin upon the top of it, Ex. 27:16), the hangings of the court and the curtain at the entrance (Ex. 27:9, 16), which surrounded the altar (of burnt-offering) and the

dwelling round about, and their cords, i.e., the cords of the tapestry, coverings, and curtains (Ex. 27:14), and all the instruments of their service, i.e., the things used in connection with their service (Ex. 27:19), and were to attend to everything that had to be done to them; in other words, to perform whatever was usually done with those portions of the sanctuary that are mentioned here, especially in setting up the tabernacle or taking it down. The suffix in

מִיתָרָיו (v. 26) does not refer to the court mentioned immediately before; for, according to v. 37, the Merarites were to carry the cords of the hangings of the court, but to the "dwelling and tent," which stand farther off. In the same way the words, "for all the service thereof," refer to all those portions of the sanctuary that are mentioned, and mean "everything that had to be done or attended to in connection with these things."

**Numbers 3:27–32.** The *Kohathites*, who were divided into four families, and numbered 8600, were to encamp on the south side of the tabernacle, and more especially to keep the charge of the sanctuary (v. 28), viz., to take care of the ark of the covenant, the table (of shew-bread), the candlestick, the altars (of incense and burnt-offering), with the holy things required for the service performed in connection therewith, and the curtain (the veil before the most holy place), and to perform whatever had to be done ("all the service thereof," see at v. 26), i.e., to carry the said holy things after they had been rolled up in covers by the priests (see Numbers 4:5ff.).

**Numbers 3:32.** As the priests also formed part of the *Kohathites*, their chief is mentioned as well, viz., *Eleazar* the eldest son of Aaron the high priest, who was placed over the chiefs of the three Levitical families, and called פְּקֻדָּה, *oversight of the keepers of the charge of the sanctuary*, i.e., authority, superior, of the servants of the sanctuary.

**Numbers 3:33–37.** The *Merarites*, who formed two families, comprising 6200 males, were to

encamp on the north side of the tabernacle, under their prince *Zuriel*, and to observe the boards, bolts, pillars, and sockets of the dwelling-place (Ex. 26:15, 26, 32, 37), together with all the vessels thereof (the plugs and tools), and all that had to be done in connection therewith, also the pillars of the court with their sockets, the plugs and the cords (Ex. 27:10, 19; 35:18); that is to say, they were to take charge of these when the tabernacle was taken down, to carry them on the march, and to fix them when the tabernacle was set up again (Numbers 4:31, 32).

**Numbers 3:38, 39.** Moses and Aaron, with the sons of the latter (the priests), were to encamp in front, before the tabernacle, viz., on the eastern side, *“as keepers of the charge of the sanctuary for the charge of the children of Israel,”* i.e., to attend to everything that was binding upon the children of Israel in relation to the care of the sanctuary, as no stranger was allowed to approach it on pain of death (see Numbers 1:51).

**Numbers 3:39.** The number of the Levites mustered, 22,000, does not agree with the numbers assigned to the three families, as  $7500 + 8600 + 6200 = 22,300$ . But the total is correct; for, according to v. 46, the number of the first-born, 22,273, exceeded the total number of the Levites by 273. The attempt made by the Rabbins and others to reconcile the two, by supposing the 300 Levites in excess to be themselves first-born, who were omitted in the general muster, because they were not qualified to represent the first-born of the other tribes, is evidently forced and unsatisfactory. The whole account is so circumstantial, that such a fact as this would never have been omitted. We must rather assume that there is a copyist's error in the number of one of the Levitical families;

possibly in v. 28 we should read *שש* for *שלש* (8300 for 8600). The *puncta extraordinaria*

above *וְאֶהְרֵן* are intended to indicate that this word is either suspicious or spurious (see at Gen. 33:5); and it is actually omitted in *Sam.*, *Syr.*, and 12 MSS, but without sufficient reason:

for although the divine command to muster the Levites (vv. 5 and 14) was addressed to Moses alone, yet if we compare Numbers 4:1, 34, 37, 41, 45, where the Levites qualified for service are said to have been mustered by Moses and Aaron, and still more Numbers 4:46, where the elders of Israel are said to have taken part in the numbering of the Levites as well as in that of the twelve tribes (Numbers 1:3, 4), there can be no reason to doubt that Aaron also took part in the mustering of the whole of the Levites, for the purpose of adoption in the place of the first-born of Israel; and no suspicion attaches to this introduction of his name in v. 39, although it is not mentioned in vv. 5, 11, 14, 40, and 44.

**Numbers 3:40–51.** After this, Moses numbered the first-born of the children of Israel, to exchange them for the Levites according to the command of God, which is repeated in vv. 41 and 44–45 from vv. 11–13, and to adopt the latter in their stead for the service at the sanctuary (on vv. 41 and 45, cf. vv. 11–13). The number of the first-born of the twelve tribes amounted to 22,273 of a month old and upwards (v. 43). Of this number 22,000 were exchanged for the 22,000 Levites, and the cattle of the Levites were also set against the first-born of the cattle of the tribes of Israel, though without their being numbered and exchanged head for head. In vv. 44 and 45 the command of God concerning the adoption of the Levites is repeated, for the purpose of adding the further instructions with regard to the 273, the number by which the first-born of the tribes exceeded those of the Levites. *“And as for the redemption of the 273 (lit., the 273 to be redeemed) of the first-born of the children of Israel which were more than the Levites, thou shalt take five shekels a head,”* etc. This was the general price established by the law for the redemption of the first-born of men (see Numbers 18:16). On the sacred shekel, see at Ex. 30:13. The redemption money for 273 first-born, in all 1365 shekels, was to be paid to Aaron and his sons as compensation for the persons who properly belonged to Jehovah, and had been appointed as first-born for the service of the priests.

**Numbers 3:49.** “*The redeemed of the Levites*” are the 22,000 who were redeemed by means of the Levites. In v. 50, the *Chethibh* חֶפְדִּים is the correct reading, and the *Keri* חֶפְדִּים an unnecessary emendation. The number of the first-born and that of the Levites has already been noticed at pp. 654, 655.

#### Numbers 4

**Numbers 4.** Rules of Service, and Numbering of the Levites Qualified for Service.—After the adoption of the Levites for service at the sanctuary, in the place of the first-born of Israel, Moses and Aaron mustered the three families of the Levites by the command of God for the service to be performed by those who were between the ages of 30 and 50. The particulars of the service are first of all described in detail (vv. 4–33); and then the men in each family are taken, of the specified age for service (vv. 34–49). The three families are not arranged according to the relative ages of their founders, but according to the importance or sacredness of their service. The Kohathites take the lead, because the holiest parts of the tabernacle were to be carried and kept by this family, which included the priests, Aaron and his sons. The service to be performed by each of the three Levitical families is introduced in every case by a command from God to take the sum of the men from 30 years old to 50 (see vv. 1–3, 21–23, 29 and 30).

**Numbers 4:2–20.** *Service of the Kohathites, and the number qualified for service.*—Vv. 2, 3. “*Take the sum of the sons of Kohath from among the sons of Levi:*” i.e., by raising them out of the sum total of the Levites, by numbering them first and specially, viz., the men from 30 to 50 years of age, “*every one who comes to the service,*” i.e., who has to enter upon service “*to do work at the tabernacle.*” אֲבָא (Angl. ‘host’) signifies military service, and is used here with special reference to the service of the Levites as the *militia sacra* of Jehovah.

**Numbers 4:4.** The service of the Kohathites at the tabernacle is (relates to) “*the most holy*” (see at Ex. 30:10). This term includes, as is afterwards explained, the most holy things in the tabernacle, viz., the ark of the covenant, the table of shew-bread, the candlestick, the altar of incense and altar of burnt-offering, together with all the other things belonging to these. When the camp was broken up, the priests were to roll them up in wrappers, and hand them over in this state to the Kohathites, for them to carry (vv. 5–15). First of all (vv. 5, 6), Aaron and his sons were to take down the curtain between the holy place and the most holy (see Ex. 26:31), and to cover the ark of testimony with it (Ex. 25:10). Over this they were to place a wrapper of sea-cow skin (*tachash*, see Ex. 25:5), and over this again another covering of cloth made entirely of hyacinth-coloured purple (as in Ex. 28:31). The sea-cow skin as to protect the inner curtain, which was covered over the ark, from storm and rain; the hyacinth purple, to distinguish the ark of the covenant as the throne of the glory of Jehovah. Lastly, they were to place the staves into the rings again, that is to say, the bearing poles, which were always left in their places on the ark (Ex. 25:15), but had necessarily to be taken out while it was being covered and wrapped up.

**Numbers 4:7, 8.** Over the table of shew-bread (Ex. 25:23) they were to spread a hyacinth cloth, to place the plates, bowls, wine-pitchers, and drink-offering bowls (Ex. 25:29) upon the top of this, and to lay shew-bread thereon; and then to spread a crimson cloth over these vessels and the shew-bread, and cover this with a sea-cow skin, and lastly to put the bearing poles in their places.

**Numbers 4:9, 10.** The candlestick, with its lamps, snuffers, extinguishers (Ex. 25:31–37), and all its oil-vessels (oil-cans), “*wherewith they serve it,*” i.e., prepare it for the holy service, were to be covered with a hyacinth cloth, and then with a wrapper of sea-cow skin, and laid



upon the carriage. מוט (vv. 10 and 12), bearing frame, in Numbers 13:23 bearing poles.

**Numbers 4:11, 12.** So again they were to wrap up the altar of incense (Ex. 30:1), to adjust its bearing poles; and having wrapped it up in such coverings, along with the vessels belonging to it, to lay it upon the frame.

**Numbers 4:13, 14.** The altar of burnt-offering was first of all to be cleansed from the ashes; a crimson cloth was then to be covered over it, and the whole of the furniture belonging to it to be placed upon the top; and lastly, the whole was to be covered with a sea-cow skin. The only thing not mentioned is the copper laver (Ex. 30:18), probably because it was carried without any cover at all. The statement in the Septuagint and the Samaritan text, which follows v. 14. respecting its covering and conveyance upon a frame, is no doubt a spurious interpolation.

**Numbers 4:15.** After the priests had completed the wrapping up of all these things, the Kohathites were to come up to carry them; but they were not to touch “the holy” (the holy things), lest they should die (see Numbers 1:53; 18:3, and comp. 2 Sam. 6:6, 7).

**Numbers 4:16.** The oversight of the oil for the candlestick (Ex. 27:20), the incense (Ex. 30:34), the continual meat-offering (Ex. 29:40), and the anointing oil (Ex. 30:23), belonged to Eleazar as the head of all the Levites (Numbers 3:32). He had also the oversight of the dwelling and all the holy things and furniture belonging to it; and, as a comparison of vv. 28 and 33 clearly shows, of the services of the Kohathites also.

**Numbers 4:17–20.** In order to prevent as far as possible any calamity from befalling the Levites while carrying the most holy things, the priests are again urged by the command of God to do what has already been described in detail in vv. 5–15, lest through any carelessness on their part they should cut off the tribe of the families of the Kohathites, i.e., should cause their destruction; viz., if they should approach the holy things before they had been wrapped up by Aaron and his sons in the manner

prescribed and handed over to them to carry. If the Kohathites should come for only a single moment to look at the holy things, they would

die. אֶל־תִּכְרִיתוּ, “cut ye not off,” i.e., “take care that the Kohathites are not cut off through your mistake and negligence” (Ros.). “The tribe of the families of the Kohathites:” shebet, the tribe, is not used here, as it frequently is, in its derivative sense of tribe (*Tribus*), but in the original literal sense of *stirps*.

**Numbers 4:19.** “This do to them:” sc., what is prescribed in vv. 5–15 with reference to their service.

**Numbers 4:20.** כְּבִלְעַ, “like a swallow, a gulp,”

is probably a proverbial expression, according to the analogy of Job 7:19, for “a single instant,” of which the Arabic also furnishes examples (see A. Schultens on Job 7:19). The *Sept.* rendering, ἐξάπινα, conveys the actual sense. A historical illustration of v. 20 is furnished by 1 Sam. 6:19.

**Numbers 4:21–28.** The service of the Gershonites is introduced in vv. 21–23 in the same manner as that of the Kohathites in vv. 1–3; and in vv. 24–26 it is described in accordance with the brief notice and explanation already given in Numbers 3:24–26.

**Numbers 4:27.** Their service was to be performed “according to the mouth (i.e., according to the appointment) of Aaron and his sons, with regard to all their carrying (all that they were to carry), and all their doing.”—“And ye (the priests) shall appoint to them for attendance (in charge) all their carrying,” i.e., all

the things they were to carry. פָּקַד

בְּמִשְׁמֶרֶת, to give into keeping. The

combination of פָּקַד with בְּ and the accusative

of the object is analogous to נָתַן בְּ, to give into a persons’ hand, in Gen. 27:17; and there is no satisfactory reason for any such emendations of the text as *Knobel* proposes.

**Numbers 4:28.** “*Their charge (mishmereth) is in the hand of Ithamar,*” i.e., is to be carried out under his superintendence (cf. Ex. 38:21).

**Numbers 4:29–33.** “*Service of the Merarites.*—

Vv. 29 and 30, like vv. 22 and 23. פָּקַד, to

muster, i.e., to number, equivalent to נָשָׂא

וְרָאָה, to take the number.

**Numbers 4:31, 32.** Vv. 31 and 32, like Numbers 3:36 and 37. “*The charge of their burden*” (their carrying), i.e., the things which it was their duty to carry.

**Numbers 4:32.** לְכֹל-כְּלֵיהֶם: with regard to all their instruments, i.e., all the things used for setting up, fastening, or undoing the beams, bolts, etc.; see Numbers 3:36 and Ex. 27:19.

**Numbers 4:34–49.** Completion of the prescribed mustering, and statement of the number of men qualified for service in the three Levitical families: viz., 2750 Kohathites, 2630 Gershonites, and 3200 Merarites—in all, 8580 Levites fit for service: a number which bears a just proportion to the total number of male Levites of a month old and upwards, viz., 22,000 (see above, p. 655).

**Numbers 4:49.** “*According to the commandment of Jehovah, they appointed them through the hand of Moses* (i.e., under his direction), *each one to his service, and his*

*burden, and his mustered things* (פְּקֻדָּיו), i.e., the things assigned to him at the time of the mustering as his special charge (see Ex. 38:21).

## Numbers 5

*Spiritual Organization of the Congregation of Israel.—Ch. 5 and 6*

**Numbers 5–6.** From the outward organization of the tribes of Israel as the army of Jehovah, the law proceeds to their internal moral and spiritual order, for the purpose of giving an inward support, both moral and religious, to

their outward or social and political unity. This is the object of the directions concerning the removal of unclean persons from the camp (Numbers 5:1–4), the restitution of anything unjustly appropriated (vv. 5–10), the course to be pursued with a wife suspected of adultery (vv. 11–31), and also of the laws relating to the Nazarite (Numbers 6:1–21), and to the priestly blessing (vv. 22–27).

**Numbers 5:1–4.** Removal of Unclean Persons out of the Camp.—As Jehovah, the Holy One, dwelt in the midst of the camp of His people, those who were affected with the uncleanness of leprosy (Lev. 13), of a diseased flux, or of menstruation (Lev. 15:2ff., 19ff.), and those who had become unclean through touching a corpse (Numbers 19:11ff., cf. Lev. 21:1; 22:4), whether male or female, were to be removed out of the camp, that they might not defile it by their uncleanness. The command of God, to remove these persons out of the camp, was carried out at once by the nation; and even in Canaan it was so far observed, that lepers at any rate were placed in special pest-houses outside the cities (see at Lev. 13:45, 46).

**Numbers 5:5–10.** Restitution in Case of a Trespass.—No crime against the property of a neighbour was to remain without expiation in the congregation of Israel, which was encamped or dwelt around the sanctuary of Jehovah; and the wrong committed was not to remain without restitution, because such

crimes involved unfaithfulness (מַעַל, see Lev. 5:15) towards Jehovah. “*If a man or a woman do one of the sins of men, to commit unfaithfulness against Jehovah, and the same soul has incurred guilt, they shall confess their sin which they have done, and (the doer) shall recompense his debt according to its sum*” (בְּרֵאשׁוֹ, as in Lev. 5:24),

etc. מִכָּל-חַטָּאת הָאָדָם, one of the sins occurring among men, not “a sin against a man” (Luther, Ros., etc.). The meaning is a sin, with which a מַעַל was committed against Jehovah, i.e., one of the acts described in Lev. 5:21, 22, by

which injury was done to the property of a neighbour, whereby a man brought a debt upon himself, for the wiping out of which a material restitution of the other's property was prescribed, together with the addition of a fifth of its value, and also the presentation of a sin-offering (Lev. 5:23–26). To guard against that disturbance of fellowship and peace in the congregation, which would arise from such trespasses as these, the law already given in Lev. 5:20 is here renewed and supplemented by the additional stipulation, that if the man who had been unjustly deprived of some of his property had no *Goël*, to whom restitution could be made for the debt, the compensation should be paid to Jehovah for the priests. The *Goël* was the nearest relative, upon whom the obligation rested to redeem a person who had fallen into slavery through poverty (Lev. 25:25). The allusion to the *Goël* in this connection presupposes that the injured person was no longer alive. To this there are appended, in vv. 9 and 10, the directions which are substantially connected with this, viz., that every heave-offering (*Terumah*, see at Lev. 2:9) in the holy gifts of the children of Israel, which they presented to the priest, was to belong to him (the priest), and also all the holy gifts which were brought by different individuals. The reference is not to literal sacrifices, i.e., gifts intended for the altar, but to dedicatory offerings, first-fruits, and such like. **אִישׁ**

**אֶת־קִדְשָׁיו**, "with regard to every man's, his holy gifts ... to him (the priest) shall they be; what any man gives to the priest shall belong to him." The second clause serves to explain and

confirm the first. **אֵת**: *as far*, with regard to, *quoad* (see *Ewald*, § 277, d; *Ges.* § 117, 2, note).

**Numbers 5:11–31.** Sentence of God upon Wives Suspected of Adultery.—As any suspicion cherished by a man against his wife, that she either is or has been guilty of adultery, whether well-founded or not, is sufficient to shake the marriage connection to its very roots, and to undermine, along with marriage, the

foundation of the civil commonwealth, it was of the greatest importance to guard against this moral evil, which was so utterly irreconcilable with the holiness of the people of God, by appointing a process in harmony with the spirit of the theocratical law, and adapted to bring to light the guilt or innocence of any wife who had fallen into such suspicion, and at the same time to warn fickle wives against unfaithfulness. This serves to explain not only the introduction of the law respecting the *jealousy-offering* in this place, but also the general importance of the subject, and the reason for its being so elaborately described.

**Numbers 5:12–15.** If a man's wife went aside, and was guilty of unfaithfulness towards him (v. 13 is an explanatory clause), through a (another) man having lain with her with *emissio seminis*, and it was hidden from the eyes of her husband, on account of her having defiled herself secretly, and there being no witness against her, and her not having been taken (in the act); but if, for all that, a spirit of jealousy came upon him, and he was jealous of his wife, and she was defiled, ... or she was not defiled: the man was to take his wife to the priest, and bring as her sacrificial gift, on her account, the tenth of an ephah of barley meal, without putting oil or incense, "for it is a *meat-offering of jealousy, a meat-offering of memory, to bring iniquity to remembrance.*" As the woman's crime, of which her husband accused her, was naturally denied by herself, and was neither to be supported by witnesses nor proved by her being taken in the very act, the only way left to determine whether there was any foundation or not for the spirit of jealousy excited in her husband, and to prevent an unrighteous severance of the divinely appointed marriage, was to let the thing be decided by the verdict of God Himself. To this end the man was to bring his wife to the priest with a sacrificial gift, which is expressly called

**קִרְבַּנָּה**, *her offering*, brought **עָלֶיהָ** "on her account," that is to say, with a meat-offering, the symbol of the fruit of her walk and conduct before God. Being the sacrificial gift of a wife

who had gone aside and was suspected of adultery, this meat-offering could not possess the character of the ordinary meat-offerings, which shadowed forth the fruit of the sanctification of life in good works (p. 456); could not consist, that is to say, of fine wheaten flour, but only of barley meal. Barley was worth only half as much as wheat (2 Kings 7:1, 16, 18), so that only the poorer classes, or the people generally in times of great distress, used barley meal as their daily food (Judg. 7:13; 2 Kings 4:42; Ezek. 4:12; John 6:9, 13), whilst those who were better off used it for fodder (1 Kings 5:8). Barley meal was prescribed for this sacrifice, neither as a sign that the adulteress had conducted herself like an irrational animal (*Philo, Jonathan, Talm., the Rabb., etc.*), nor “because the persons presenting the offering were invoking the punishment of a crime, and not the favour of God” (*Cler., Ros.*): for the guilt of a woman was not yet established; nor even, taking a milder view of the matter, to indicate that the offerer might be innocent, and in that case no offering at all was required (*Knobel*), but to represent the questionable repute in which the woman stood, or the ambiguous, suspicious character of her conduct. Because such conduct as hers did not proceed from the Spirit of God, and was not carried out in prayer: oil and incense, the symbols of the Spirit of God and prayer (see pp. 435 and 457), were not to be added to her offering. It was an offering of jealousy (קְנֵאתִים, an intensive plural), and the object was to bring the ground of that jealousy to light; and in this respect it is called the “meat-offering of remembrance,” sc., of the woman, before Jehovah (cf. Numbers 10:10; 31:54; Ex. 28:12, 29; 30:16; Lev. 23:24), namely, “the remembrance of iniquity,” bringing her crime to remembrance before the Lord, that it might be judged by Him.

**Numbers 5:16–22.** The priest was to bring her near to the altar at which he stood, and place her before Jehovah, who had declared Himself to be present at the altar, and then to take holy water, probably water out of the basin before the sanctuary, which served for holy purposes

(Ex. 30:18), in an earthen vessel, and put dust in it from the floor of the dwelling. He was then to loosen the hair of the woman who was standing before Jehovah, and place the jealousy-offering in her hands, and holding the water in his own hand, to pronounce a solemn oath of purification before her, which she had to appropriate to herself by a confirmatory Amen, Amen. The water, which the priest had prepared for the woman to drink, was taken from the sanctuary, and the dust to be put into it from the floor of the dwelling, to impregnate this drink with the power of the Holy Spirit that dwelt in the sanctuary. The dust was strewed upon the water, not to indicate that man was formed from dust and must return to dust again, but as an allusion to the fact, that dust was eaten by the serpent (Gen. 3:14) as the curse of sin, and therefore as the symbol of a state deserving a curse, a state of the deepest humiliation and disgrace (Micah 7:17; Isa. 49:23; Ps. 72:9). On the very same ground, an earthen vessel was chosen; that is to say, one quite worthless in comparison with the copper one. The loosening of the hair of the head (see Lev. 13:45), in other cases a sign of mourning, is to be regarded here as a removal or loosening of the female head-dress, and a symbol of the loss of the proper ornament of female morality and conjugal fidelity. During the administration of the oath, the offering was placed in her hands, that she might bring the fruit of her own conduct before God, and give it up to His holy judgment. The priest, as the representative of God, held the vessel in his hand, with the water in it, which was called the “water of bitterness, the curse-bringing,” inasmuch as, if the crime imputed to her was well-founded, it would bring upon the woman bitter suffering as the curse of God.

**Numbers 5:19.** The oath which the priest required her to take is called, in v. 21, שְׁבַעַת הָאָלָה, “oath of cursing” (see Gen. 26:28); but it first of all presupposes the possibility of the woman being innocent, and contains the assurance, that in that case the curse-water

would do her no harm. *"If no (other) man has lain with thee, and thou hast not gone aside to union* (חֲמִאָה, accus. of more precise definition, as in Lev. 15:2, 18), *under thy husband,"* i.e., as a wife subject to thy husband (Ezek. 23:5; Hos. 4:12), *"then remain free from the water of bitterness, this curse-bringing,"* i.e., from the effects of this curse-water. The imperative is a sign of certain assurance (see Gen. 12:2; 20:7; cf. Ges. § 130, 1). *"But if thou hast gone aside under thy husband, if thou hast defiled thyself, and a man has given thee his seed beside thy husband,"* ... (the priest shall proceed to say; this is the meaning of the repetition of וְהִשְׁבִּיעַ ... לְאִשָּׁה, v. 21), *"Jehovah shall make thee a curse and an oath among thy people, by making thy hip to fall and thy belly to swell; and this curse-bringing water shall come into thy bowels, to make the belly to vanish and the hip to fall."* To this oath that was spoken before her the woman was to reply, *"true, true,"* or *"truly, truly,"* and thus confirm it as taken by herself (cf. Deut. 27:15ff.; Neh. 5:13). It cannot be determined with any certainty what was the nature of the disease threatened in this curse. *Michaelis* supposes it to be dropsy of the ovary (*hydrops ovarii*), in which a tumour is formed in the place of the *ovarium*, which may even swell so as to contain 100 s. of fluid, and with which the patient becomes dreadfully emaciated. *Josephus* says it is ordinary dropsy (*hydrops ascites*: Ant. iii. 11, 6). At any rate, the idea of the curse is this: Δι' ὧν γὰρ ἡ ἀμαρτία διὰ τούτων ἡ τιμωρία ("the punishment shall come from the same source as the sin," *Theodoret*). The punishment was to answer exactly to the crime, and to fall upon those bodily organs which had been the instruments of the woman's sin, viz., the organs of child-bearing.

**Numbers 5:23–28.** After the woman's *Amen*, the priest was to write *"these curses,"* those contained in the oath, in a book-roll, and wash them in the bitter water, i.e., wash the writing in the vessel with water, so that the words of the curse should pass into the water, and be imparted to it; a symbolical act, to set forth the

truth, that God imparted to the water the power to act injuriously upon a guilty body, though it would do no harm to an innocent one. The remark in v. 24, the priest was to give her this water to drink is anticipatory; for according to v. 26 this did not take place till after the presentation of the sacrifice and the burning of the memorial of it upon the altar. The woman's offering, however, was not presented to God till after the oath of purification, because it was by the oath that she first of all purified herself from the suspicion of adultery, so that the fruit of her conduct could be given up to the fire of the holiness of God. As a known adulteress, she could not have offered a meat-offering at all. But as the suspicion which rested upon her was not entirely removed by her oath, since she might have taken a false oath, the priest was to give her the curse-water to drink after the offering, that her guilt or innocence might be brought to light in the effects produced by the drink. This is given in v. 27 as the design of the course prescribed: *"When he hath made her to drink the water, then it shall come to pass, that if she be defiled, and have done trespass against her husband, the water that causeth the curse shall come (enter) into her as bitterness (i.e., producing bitter sufferings), namely, her belly shall swell and her hip vanish: and so the woman shall become a curse in the midst of her people."*

**Numbers 5:28.** *"But if she have not defiled herself, and is clean (from the crime of which she was suspected), she will remain free (from the threatened punishment of God), and will conceive seed,"* i.e., be blessed with the capacity and power to conceive and bring forth children.

**Numbers 5:29–31.** Vv. 29–31 bring the law of jealousy to a formal close, with the additional remark, that the man who adopted this course with a wife suspected of adultery was free from sin, but the woman would bear her guilt (see Lev. 5:1), i.e., in case she were guilty, would bear the punishment threatened by God. Nothing is said about what was to be done in case the woman refused to take the oath prescribed, because that would amount to a confession of her guilt, when she would have to

be put to death as an adulteress, according to the law in Lev. 20:10; and not she alone, but the adulterer also. In the law just mentioned the man is placed on an equality with the woman with reference to the sin of adultery; and thus the apparent partiality, that a man could sue his wife for adultery, but not the wife her husband, is removed. But the law before us applied to the woman only, because the man was at liberty to marry more than one wife, or to take concubines to his own wife; so that he only violated the marriage tie, and was guilty of adultery, when he formed an illicit connection with another man's wife. In that case, the man whose marriage had been violated could proceed against his adulterous wife, and in most instances convict the adulterer also, in order that he might receive his punishment too. For a really guilty wife would not have made up her mind so easily to take the required oath of purification, as the curse of God under which she came was no easier to bear than the punishment of death. For this law prescribed no ordeal whose effects were uncertain, like the ordeals of other nations, but a judgment of God, from which the guilty could not escape, because it had been appointed by the living God.

**Numbers 6:1–21. The Nazarite.**—The legal regulations concerning the vow of the Nazarite are appended quite appropriately to the laws intended to promote the spiritual order of the congregation of Israel. For the Nazarite brought to light the priestly character of the covenant nation in a peculiar form, which had necessarily to be incorporated into the spiritual organization of the community, so that it might become a means of furthering the sanctification of the people in covenant with the Lord. **Numbers 6**

**Numbers 6:1, 2.** The words, "if a man or woman make a separate vow, a Nazarite vow, to live consecrated to the Lord," with which the law is introduced, show not only that the vow of the Nazarite was a matter of free choice, but that it was a mode of practising godliness and piety already customary among the people. *Nazir*, from נָזַר to separate, lit., the separated, is

applied to the man who vowed that he would make a separation to (for) Jehovah, i.e., lead a separate life for the Lord and His service. The origin of this custom is involved in obscurity. There is no certain clue to indicate that it was derived from Egypt, for the so-called hair-offering vows are met with among several ancient tribes (see the proofs in *Spencer, de legg. Hebr. rit.* iv. 16, and *Knobel in loc.*), and have no special relationship to the Nazarite, whilst vows of abstinence were common to all the religions of antiquity. The Nazarite vow was taken at first for a particular time, at the close of which the separation terminated with release from the vow. This is the only form in which it is taken into consideration, or rules are laid down for it in the law before us. In after times, however, we find life-long Nazarites among the Israelites, e.g., Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist, who were vowed or dedicated to the Lord by their parents even before they were born (Judg. 13:5, 14; 1 Sam. 1:11; Luke 1:15).

**Numbers 6:3–8.** The vow consisted of the three following points, vv. 1–4: In the *first* place, he was to abstain from wine and intoxicating drink (*shecar*, see Lev. 10:9); and neither to drink vinegar of wine, strong drink, nor any juice of the grape (lit., dissolving of grapes, i.e., fresh must pressed out), nor to eat fresh grapes, or dried (raisins). In fact, during the whole period of his vow, he was not to eat of anything prepared from the vine, "from the kernels even to the husk," i.e., not the smallest quantity of the fruit of the vine. The design of this prohibition can hardly have been, merely that, by abstaining from intoxicating drink, the Nazarite might preserve perfect clearness and temperance of mind, like the priests when engaged in their duties, and so conduct himself as one sanctified to the Lord (*Bähr*); but it goes much further, and embraces entire abstinence from all the *deliciae carnis* by which holiness could be impaired. Vinegar, fresh and dried grapes, and food prepared from grapes and raisins, e.g., raisin-cakes, are not intoxicating; but grape-cakes, as being the dainties sought after by epicures and debauchees, are cited in

Hos. 3:1 as a symbol of the sensual attractions of idolatry, a luxurious kind of food, that was not in harmony with the solemnity of the worship of Jehovah. The Nazarite was to avoid everything that proceeded from the vine, because its fruit was regarded as the sum and substance of all sensual enjoyments.

**Numbers 6:5.** *Secondly*, during the whole term of his vow of consecration, no razor was to come upon his head. Till the days were fulfilled which he had consecrated to the Lord, he was to be holy, "to make great the free growth (see Lev. 10:6) of the hair of his head." The free growth of the hair is called, in v. 7, "the diadem of his God upon his head," like the golden diadem upon the turban of the high priest (Ex. 29:6), and the anointing oil upon the high priest's head (Lev. 21:12). By this he sanctified his head (v. 11) to the Lord, so that the consecration of the Nazarite culminated in his uncut hair, and expressed in the most perfect way the meaning of his vow (*Oehler*). Letting the hair grow, therefore, was not a sign of separation, because it was the Israelitish custom to go about with the hair cut; nor a practical profession of a renunciation of the world, and separation from human society (*Hengstenberg*, pp. 190–1); nor a sign of abstinence from every appearance of self-gratification (*Baur* on Amos 2:11); nor even a kind of humiliation and self-denial (*Lightfoot, Carpzov. appar.* p. 154); still less a "sign of dependence upon some other present power" (*M. Baumgarten*), or "the symbol of a state of perfect liberty" (*Vitringa, obss. ss.* 1, c. 6, § 9; cf. 6:22, 8). The free growth of the hair, unhindered by the hand of man, was rather "the symbol of strength and abundant vitality" (cf. 2 Sam. 14:25, 26). It was not regarded by the Hebrews as a sign of sanctity, as *Bähr* supposes, but simply as an ornament, in which the whole strength and fulness of vitality were exhibited, and which the Nazarite wore in honour of the Lord, as a sign that he "belonged to the Lord, and dedicated himself to His service," with all his vital powers.

**Numbers 6:6–8.** Because the Nazarite wore the diadem of his God upon his head in the growth of his hair, and was holy to the Lord during the whole period of his consecration, he was to approach no dead person during that time, not even to defile himself for his parents, or his brothers and sisters, when they died, according to the law laid down for the high priest in Lev. 21:11. Consequently, as a matter of course, he was to guard most scrupulously against other defilements, not only like ordinary Israelites, but also like the priests. Samson's mother, too, was not allowed to eat anything unclean during the period of her pregnancy (Judg. 13:4, 7, 14).

**Numbers 6:9–12.** But if any one died suddenly in a moment "by him" (עָלָיו, in his neighbourhood), and he therefore involuntarily defiled his consecrated head, he was to shave his head on the day of his purification, i.e., on the seventh day (see Numbers 19:11, 14, 16, and 19), not "because such uncleanness was more especially caught and retained by the hair," as *Knobel* fancies, but because it was the diadem of his God (v. 7), the ornament of his condition, which was sanctified to God. On the eighth day, that is to say, on the day after the legal purification, he was to bring to the priest at the tabernacle two turtle-doves or young pigeons, that he might make atonement for him (see at Lev. 15:14, 15, 29ff., 14:30, 31, and 12:8), on account of his having been defiled by a corpse, by preparing the one as a sin-offering, and the other as a burnt-offering; he was also "to sanctify his head that same day," i.e., to consecrate it to God afresh, by the unimpeded growth of his hair.

**Numbers 6:12.** He was then "to bring a yearling sheep as a trespass-offering;" and the days that were before were "to fall," i.e., the days of consecration that had already elapsed were not to be reckoned on account of their having fallen, "because his consecration had become unclean." He was therefore to commence the whole time of his consecration entirely afresh, and to observe it as required by the vow. To this end he was to bring a trespass-

offering, as a payment or recompense for being reinstated in the former state of consecration, from which he had fallen through his defilement, but not as compensation “for having prolonged the days of separation through his carelessness with regard to the defilement; that is to say, for having extended the time during which he led a separate, retired, and inactive life, and suspended his duties to his own family and the congregation, thus doing an injury to them, and incurring a debt in relation to them through his neglect” (*Knobel*). For the time that the Nazarite vow lasted was not a lazy life, involving a withdrawal from the duties of citizenship, by which the congregation might be injured, but was perfectly reconcilable with the performance of all domestic and social duties, the burial of the dead alone excepted; and no harm could result from this, either to his own relations or the community generally, of sufficient importance to require that the omission should be repaired by a trespass-offering, from which neither his relatives nor the congregation derived any actual advantage. Nor was it a species of fine, for having deprived Jehovah of the time dedicated to Him through the breach of the vow, or for withholding the payment of his vow for so much longer a time (*Oehler* in *Herzog*). For the position of a Nazarite was only assumed for a definite period, according to the vow; and after this had been interrupted, it had to be commenced again from the very beginning: so that the time dedicated to God was not shortened in any way by the interruption of the period of dedication, and nothing whatever was withheld from God of what had been vowed to Him, so as to need the presentation of a trespass-offering as a compensation or fine. And there is no more reason for saying that the payment of the vow was withheld, inasmuch as the vow was fulfilled or paid by the punctual observance of the three things of which it was composed; and the sacrifices to be presented after the time of consecration was over, had not in the least the character of a payment, but simply constituted a solemn conclusion, corresponding to the idea of the consecration itself, and were the means

by which the Nazarite came out of his state of consecration, without involving the least allusion to satisfaction, or reparation for any wrong that had been done.

The position of the Nazarite, therefore, as *Philo*, *Maimonides*, and others clearly saw, was a condition of life consecrated to the Lord, resembling the sanctified relation in which the priests stood to Jehovah, and differing from the priesthood solely in the fact that it involved no official service at the sanctuary, and was not based upon a divine calling and institution, but was undertaken spontaneously for a certain time and through a special vow. The object was simply the realization of the idea of a priestly life, with its purity and freedom from all contamination from everything connected with death and corruption, a self-surrender to God stretching beyond the deepest earthly ties, “a spontaneous appropriation of what was imposed upon the priest by virtue of the calling connected with his descent, namely, the obligation to conduct himself as a person betrothed to God, and therefore to avoid everything that would be opposed to such surrender” (*Oehler*). In this respect the Nazarite’s sanctification of life was a step towards the realization of the priestly character, which had been set before the whole nation as its goal at the time of its first calling (Ex. 19:5); and although it was simply the performance of a vow, and therefore a work of perfect spontaneity, it was also a work of the Spirit of God which dwelt in the congregation of Israel, so that Amos could describe the raising up of Nazarites along with prophets as a special manifestation of divine grace. The offerings, with which the vow was brought to a close after the time of consecration had expired, and the Nazarite was released from his consecration, also corresponded to the character we have described.

**Numbers 6:13–21.** The directions as to the release from consecration are called “*the law of the Nazarite*” (v. 13), because the idea of the Nazarite’s vows culminated in the sacrificial festival which terminated the consecration, and



it was in this that it attained to its fullest manifestation. *"On the day of the completion of the days of his consecration,"* i.e., on the day when the time of consecration expired, the Nazarite was to bring to the tabernacle, or offer as his gifts to the Lord, a sheep of a year old as a burnt-offering, and an ewe of a year old as a sin-offering; the latter as an expiation for the sins committed involuntarily during the period of consecration, the former as an embodiment of that surrender of himself, body and soul, to the Lord, upon which every act of worship should rest. In addition to this he was to bring a ram without blemish as a peace-offering, together with a basket of unleavened cakes and wafers baked, which were required, according to Lev. 7:12, for every praise-offering, *"and their meat and drink-offerings,"* i.e., the gifts of meal, oil, and wine, which belonged, according to Numbers 15:3ff., to the burnt-offerings and peace-offerings.

**Numbers 6:16.** The sin-offering and burnt-offering were carried out according to the general instructions.

**Numbers 6:17.** The completion of the consecration vow was concentrated in the preparation of the ram and the basket of unleavened bread for the peace-offering, along with the appropriate meat-offering and drink-offering.

**Numbers 6:18.** The Nazarite had also to shave his consecrated head, and put the hair into the altar-fire under the peace-offering that was burning, and thus hand over and sacrifice to the Lord the hair of his head which had been worn in honour of Him.

**Numbers 6:19, 20.** When this had been done, the priest took the boiled shoulder of the ram, with an unleavened cake and wafer out of the basket, and placed these pieces in the hands of the Nazarite, and waved them before Jehovah. They then became the portion of the priest, in addition to the wave-breast and heave-leg which fell to the priest in the case of every peace-offering (Lev. 7:32–34), to set forth the participation of the Lord in the sacrificial meal (see pp. 540, 541). But the fact that, in addition

to these, the boiled shoulder was given up symbolically to the Lord through the process of waving, together with a cake and wafer, was intended to indicate that the table-fellowship with the Lord, shadowed forth in the sacrificial meal of the peace-offering, took place here in a higher degree; inasmuch as the Lord directed a portion of the Nazarite's meal to be handed over to His representatives and servants for them to eat, that he might thus enjoy the blessedness of having fellowship with his God, in accordance with that condition of priestly sanctity into which the Nazarite had entered through the vow that he had made.

**Numbers 6:20.** *"After that the Nazarite may drink wine"* (again), probably at the sacrificial meal, after the Lord had received His share of the sacrifice, and his release from consecration had thus been completed.

**Numbers 6:21.** *"This is the law of the Nazarite, who vowed his sacrificial gifts to the Lord on the ground of his consecration,"* i.e., who offered his sacrifice in accordance with the state of a Nazarite into which he had entered. For the sacrifices mentioned in vv. 14ff. were not the object of a special vow, but contained in the vow of the Nazarite, and therefore already vowed (*Knobel*). *"Beside what his hand grasps,"* i.e., what he is otherwise able to perform (Lev. 5:11), *"according to the measure of his vow, which he vowed, so must he do according to the law of his consecration,"* i.e., he had to offer the sacrifices previously mentioned on the ground of his consecration vow. Beyond that he was free to vow anything else according to his ability, to present other sacrificial gifts to the Lord for His sanctuary and His servants, which did not necessarily belong to the vow of the Nazarite, but were frequently added. From this the custom afterwards grew up, that when poor persons took the Nazarite's vow upon them, those who were better off defrayed the expenses of the sacrifices (Acts 21:24; *Josephus*, Ant. xix. 6, 1; *Mishnah Nasir*, ii. 5ff.).

**Numbers 6:22–27.** The Priestly or Aaronic Blessing.—The spiritual character of the congregation of Israel culminated in the

blessing with which the priests were to bless the people. The directions as to this blessing, therefore, impressed the seal of perfection upon the whole order and organization of the people of God, inasmuch as Israel was first truly formed into a congregation of Jehovah by the fact that God not only bestowed His blessing upon it, but placed the communication of this blessing in the hands of the priests, the chosen and constant mediators of the blessings of His grace, and imposed it upon them as one portion of their official duty. The blessing which the priests were to impart to the people, consisted of a triple blessing of two members each, which stood related to each other thus: The second in each case contained a special application of the first to the people, and the three gradations unfolded the substance of the blessing step by step with ever increasing emphasis.—The *first* (v. 24), “*Jehovah bless thee and keep thee,*” conveyed the blessing in the most general form, merely describing it as coming from Jehovah, and setting forth preservation from the evil of the world as His work. “The blessing of God is the goodness of God in action, by which a supply of all good pours down to us from His good favour as from their only fountain; then follows, secondly, the prayer that He would keep the people, which signifies that He alone is the defender of the Church, and that it is He who preserves it with His guardian care” (*Calvin*).—The *second* (v. 25), “*Jehovah make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee,*” defined the blessing more closely as the manifestation of the favour and grace of God. The face of God is the personality of God as turned towards man. Fire goes out from Jehovah’s face, and consumes the enemy and the rebellious (Lev. 10:2, cf. 17:10; 20:3; Ex. 13:24; Ps. 34:17), and also a sunlight shining with love and full of life and good (Deut. 30:30; Ps. 27:1; 43:3; 44:4). If “the light of the sun is sweet, and pleasant for the eyes to behold” (Eccl. 11:7), “the light of the divine countenance, the everlasting light (Ps. 36:10), is the sum of all delight” (*Baumg.*). This light sends rays of mercy into a heart in need of salvation, and makes it the recipient of grace.—

The *third* (v. 26), “*Jehovah lift up His face to thee, and set (or give) thee peace*” (good, salvation), set forth the blessing of God as a manifestation of power, or a work of power upon man, the end of which is peace (*shalom*), the sum of all the good which God sets,

prepares, or establishes for His people. נְשָׂא

אֶל פְּנֵים אֵל, to lift up the face to any one, is equivalent to looking at him, and does not differ from נְשָׂא עֵינָיִם or שִׁים (Gen. 43:29; 44:21).

When affirmed of God, it denotes His providential work upon man. When God looks at a man, He saves him out of his distresses (Ps. 4:7; 33:18; 34:16).—In these three blessings most of the fathers and earlier theologians saw an allusion to the mystery of the Trinity, and rested their conclusion, (a) upon the triple repetition of the name *Jehovah*; (b) upon the *ratio praedicati*, that Jehovah, by whom the blessing is desired and imparted, is the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and (c) upon the *distinctorum benedictionis membrorum consideratio*, according to which *bis trina beneficia* are mentioned (cf. *Calovii Bibl. illustr. ad h. l.*). There is truth in this, though the grounds assigned seem faulty. As the threefold repetition of a word or sentence serves to express the thought as strongly as possible (cf. Jer. 7:4; 22:29), the triple blessing expressed in the most unconditional manner the thought, that God would bestow upon His congregation the whole fulness of the blessing enfolded in His Divine Being which was manifested as Jehovah. But not only does the name Jehovah denote God as the absolute Being, who revealed Himself as Father, Son, and Spirit in the historical development of His purpose of salvation for the redemption of fallen man; but the substance of this blessing, which He caused to be pronounced upon His congregation, unfolded the grace of God in the threefold way in which it is communicated to us through the Father, Son, and Spirit.

**Numbers 6:27.** This blessing was not to remain merely a pious wish, however, but to be

manifested in the people with all the power of a blessing from God. This assurance closes the divine command: *“They shall put My name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them.”*

## Numbers 7

*Closing Events at Sinai.—Ch. 7–9:14.*

**Numbers 7.** Presentation of Dedicatory Gifts by the Princes of the Tribes.—V. 1. This

presentation took place at the time (יָוֹם) when Moses, after having completed the erection of the tabernacle, anointed and sanctified the dwelling and the altar, together with their furniture (Lev. 8:10, 11). Chronologically considered, this ought to have been noticed after Lev. 8:10. But in order to avoid interrupting the connection of the Sinaitic laws, it is introduced for the first time at this point, and placed at the head of the events which immediately preceded the departure of the people from Sinai, because these gifts consisted in part of materials that were indispensably necessary for the transport of the tabernacle during the march through the desert. Moreover, there was only an interval of at the most forty days between the anointing of the tabernacle, which commenced after the first day of the first month (cf. Ex. 40:16 and Lev. 8:10), and lasted eight days, and the departure from Sinai, on the twentieth day of the second month (Numbers 10:11), and from this we have to deduct six days for the Passover, which took place before their departure (Numbers 9:1ff.); and it was within this period that the laws and ordinances from Lev. 11 to Numbers 6 had to be published, and the dedicatory offerings to be presented. Now, as the presentation itself was distributed, according to vv. 11ff., over twelve or thirteen days, we may very well assume that it did not entirely precede the publication of the laws referred to, but was carried on in part contemporaneously with it. The presentation of the dedicatory gifts of one tribe-prince might possibly occupy only a few hours of the day appointed for the purpose; and the rest of the

day, therefore, might very conveniently be made use of by Moses for publishing the laws. In this case the short space of a month and a few days would be amply sufficient for everything that took place.

**Numbers 7:2–9.** *The presentation of six waggons and twelve oxen for the carriage of the materials of the tabernacle is mentioned first, and was no doubt the first thing that took place. The princes of Israel, viz., the heads of the tribes (fathers' houses), or princes of the tribes (see Numbers 1:4ff.), “those who stood over those that were numbered,” i.e., who were their leaders or rulers, offered as their sacrificial gift six covered waggons and twelve oxen, one ox for each prince, and a waggon for*

every two. עֲגֻלֹת צָבָה, ἀμάξας λαμπηνίκας (LXX), i.e., according to *Euseb. Emis.*, two-wheeled vehicles, though the Greek scholiasts explain λαμπήνη as signifying ἄμαξα περιφανήδ βασιλική and ῥέδιον περιφανές ὁ ἐστὶν ἄρμα σκεπαστόν (cf. *Schleussner, Lex. in LXX s.v.*), and *Aquila*, ἄμαξαι σκεπασταί, i.e., *plaustra tecta* (*Vulg.* and *Rabb.*). The meaning “litters,” which *Gesenius* and *De Wette* support, can neither be

defended etymologically, nor based upon עֲבִים in Isa. 66:20.

**Numbers 7:4–6.** At the command of God, Moses received them to apply them to the purposes of the tabernacle, and handed them over to the Levites, *“to every one according to the measure of his service,”* i.e., to the different classes of Levites, according to the requirements of their respective duties.

**Numbers 7:7–9.** He gave two waggons and four oxen to the Gershonites, and four waggons and eight oxen to the Merarites, as the former had less weight to carry, in the coverings and curtains of the dwelling and the hangings of the court, than the latter, who had to take charge of the beams and pillars (Numbers 4:24ff., 31ff.). *“Under the hand of Ithamar”* (v. 8); as in Numbers 4:28, 33. The Kohathites received no waggon, because it was their place to attend to *“the sanctuary”* (the holy), i.e., the holy things,

which had to be conveyed upon their shoulders, and were provided with poles for the purpose (Numbers 4:4ff.).

**Numbers 7:10–88.** *Presentation of dedicatory gifts for the altar.*—V. 10. Every prince offered “the dedication of the altar,” i.e., what served for the dedication of the altar, equivalent to his sacrificial gift for the consecration of the altar, “on the day,” i.e., at the time, “that they anointed it.” “Day:” as in Gen. 2:4. Moses was directed by God to receive the gifts from the princes on separate days, one after another; so that the presentation extended over twelve days. The reason for this regulation was not to make a greater display, as *Knobel* supposes, or to avoid cutting short the important ceremony of consecration, but was involved in the very nature of the gifts presented. Each prince, for example, offered, (1) a *silver dish* (*kearah*, Ex. 25:29) of 130 sacred shekels weight, i.e., about 4 1/2 s.; (2) a *silver bowl* (*mizrak*, a sacrificial bowl, not a sacrificial can, or wine-can, as in Ex. 27:3) of 70 shekels weight, both filled with fine flour mixed with oil for a meat-offering; (3) a *golden spoon* (*caph*, as in Ex. 25:29) filled with incense for an incense-offering; (4) a *bullock, a ram, and a sheep* of a year old for a burnt-offering; (5) a *shaggy goat* for a sin-offering; (5) *two oxen, five rams, five he-goats, and five sheep* of a year old for a peace-offering. Out of these gifts the fine flour, the incense, and the sacrificial animals were intended for sacrificing upon the altar, and that not as a provision for a lengthened period, but for immediate use in the way prescribed. This could not have been carried out if more than one prince had presented his gifts, and brought them to be sacrificed on any one day. For the limited space in the court of the tabernacle would not have allowed of 252 animals being received, slaughtered, and prepared for sacrificing all at once, or on the same day; and it would have been also impossible to burn 36 whole animals (oxen, rams, and sheep), and the fat portions of 216 animals, upon the altar.

**Numbers 7:12–83.** All the princes brought the same gifts. The order in which the twelve

princes, whose names have already been given at Numbers 1:5–15, made their presentation, corresponded to the order of the tribes in the camp (Numbers 2), the tribe-prince of Judah taking the lead, and the prince of Naphtali coming last. In the statements as to the weight of the silver *kearoth* and the golden *cappoth*, the word *shekel* is invariably omitted, as in Gen. 20:16, etc.—In vv. 84–86, the dedication gifts are summed up, and the total weight given, viz., twelve silver dishes and twelve silver bowls, weighing together 2400 shekels, and twelve golden spoons, weighing 120 shekels in all. On the sacred shekel, see at Ex. 30:13; and on the probable value of the shekel of gold, at Ex. 38:24, 25. The sacrificial animals are added together in the same way in vv. 87, 88.

**Numbers 7:89.** Whilst the tribe-princes had thus given to the altar the consecration of a sanctuary of their God, through their sacrificial gifts, Jehovah acknowledged it as His sanctuary, by causing Moses, when he went into the tabernacle to speak to Him, and to present his own entreaties and those of the people, to hear the voice of Him that spake to him from between the two cherubim upon the ark of the covenant. The suffix in אֲתָוָה points back to the name *Jehovah*, which, though not expressly mentioned before, is contained *implicite* in *ohel moëd*, “the tent of meeting.” For the holy tent became an *ohel moëd* first of all, from the fact that it was there that Jehovah appeared to Moses, or met with him (נוֹעַד, Ex. 25:22).

מִדְבָּר, *part. Hithpael*, to hold conversation. On the fact itself, see the explanation in Ex. 25:20, 22. “This voice from the inmost sanctuary of Moses, the representative of Israel, was Jehovah’s reply to the joyfulness and readiness with which the princes of Israel responded to Him, and made the tent, so far as they were concerned, a place of holy meeting” (*Baumg.*). This was the reason for connecting the remark in v. 89 with the account of the dedicatory gifts.

## Numbers 8

**Numbers 8.** Consecration of the Levites.—The command of God to consecrate the Levites for their service, is introduced in vv. 1–4 by directions issued to Aaron with regard to the *lighting of the candlestick* in the dwelling of the tabernacle. Aaron was to place the seven lamps upon the candlestick in such a manner that they would shine אֶל-מוֹל פְּנֵיו. These directions are not a mere repetition, but also a more precise definition, of the general instructions given in Ex. 25:37, when the candlestick was made, to place the seven lamps upon the candlestick in such a manner that each should give light over against its front, i.e., should throw its light upon the side opposite to the front of the candlestick (see p. 434). In itself, therefore, there is nothing at all striking in the renewal and explanation of those directions, which committed the task of lighting the lamps to Aaron; for this had not been done before, as Ex. 27:21 merely assigns the daily preparation of the candlestick to Aaron and his sons; and their being placed in the connection in which we find them may be explained from the signification of the seven lamps in relation to the dwelling of God, viz., as indicating that Israel was thereby to be represented perpetually before the Lord as a people causing its light to shine in the darkness of this world (p. 435). And when Aaron is commanded to attend to the lighting of the candlestick, so that it may light up the dwelling, in these special instructions the entire fulfilment of his service in the dwelling is enforced upon him as a duty. In this respect the instructions themselves, coupled with the statement of the fact that Aaron had fulfilled them, stand quite appropriately between the account of what the tribe-princes had done for the consecration of the altar service as representatives of the congregation, and the account of the solemn inauguration of the Levites in their service in the sanctuary. The repetition on this occasion (v. 4) of an allusion to the artistic character of the candlestick, which had been made according to the pattern seen by Moses in the

mount (Ex. 25:31ff.), is quite in keeping with the antiquated style of narrative adopted in these books.

**Numbers 8:5–22.** *Consecration of the Levites* for their service in the sanctuary.—The choice of the Levites for service in the sanctuary, in the place of the first-born of the people generally, has been already noticed in Numbers 3:5ff., and the duties binding upon them in Numbers 4:4ff. But before entering upon their duties they were to be consecrated to the work, and then formally handed over to the priests. This consecration is commanded in vv. 7ff., and is not called קִדְּשׁ, like the consecration of the

priests (Ex. 29:1; Lev. 8:11), but טָהַר to *cleans*e. It consisted in sprinkling them with sin-water, shaving off the whole of the hair from their bodies, and washing their clothes, accompanied by a sacrificial ceremony, by which they were presented symbolically to the Lord as a sacrifice for His service. The first part of this ceremony had reference to outward purification, and represented cleansing from the defilement of sin; hence the performance of it is called הִתְחַטָּא (to cleanse from sin) in v.

21. “*Sprinkle sin-water upon them.*” The words are addressed to Moses, who had to officiate at the inauguration of the Levites, as he had already done at that of the priests. “*Water of sin*” is water having reference to sin, designed to remove it, just as the sacrifice offered for the

expiation of sin is called חַטָּאת (sin) in Lev. 4:14, etc.; whilst the “*water of uncleanness*” in Numbers 19:9, 13, signifies water by which uncleanness was removed or wiped away. The nature of this purifying water is not explained, and cannot be determined with any certainty. We find directions for preparing sprinkling water in a peculiar manner, for the purpose of cleansing persons who were cured of leprosy, in Lev. 14:5ff., 50ff.; and also for cleansing both persons and houses that had been defiled by a corpse, in Numbers 19:9ff. Neither of these, however, was applicable to the cleansing of the

Levites, as they were both of them composed of significant ingredients, which stood in the closest relation to the special cleansing to be effected by them, and had evidently no adaptation to the purification of the Levites. At the same time, the expression "sin-water" precludes our understanding it to mean simply clean water. So that nothing remains but to regard it as referring to the water in the laver of the sanctuary, which was provided for the purpose of cleansing the priests for the performance of their duties (Ex. 30:18ff.), and might therefore be regarded by virtue of this as cleansing from sin, and be called "sin-water" in consequence. *"And they shall cause the razor to pass over their whole body,"* i.e., shave off all the hair upon their body, *"and wash their clothes,*

*and so cleanse themselves."* הַקְּעִבִיר הַתֵּנֶר is to

be distinguished from גָּלַח. The latter signifies to make bald or shave the hair entirely off, which was required of the leper when he was cleansed (Lev. 14:8, 9); the former signifies merely cutting the hair, which was part of the regular mode of adorning the body. The Levites also were not required to bathe their bodies, as lepers were (Lev. 13:8, 9), and also the priests at their consecration (Lev. 8:6), because they were not affected with any special uncleanness, and their duties did not require them to touch the most holy instruments of worship. The washing of the clothes, on the other hand, was a thing generally required as a preparation for acts of worship (Gen. 35:2; Ex. 19:10), and was omitted in the case of the consecration of the priests, simply because they received a holy

official dress. הַטְּהָרוּ for הַטְּהָרוּ, as in 2 Chron. 30:18.

**Numbers 8:8.** After this purification the Levites were to bring two young bullocks, one with the corresponding meat-offering for a burnt-sacrifice, the other for a sin-offering.

**Numbers 8:9.** Moses was then to cause them to draw near before the tabernacle, i.e., to enter the court, and to gather together the whole

congregation of Israel, viz., in the persons of their heads and representatives.

**Numbers 8:10.** After this the Levites were to come before Jehovah, i.e., in front of the altar; and the children of Israel, i.e., the tribe-princes in the name of the Israelites, were to lay their hands upon them, not merely "as a sign that they released them from the possession of the nation, and assigned them and handed them over to Jehovah" (*Knobel*), but in order that by this symbolical act they might transfer to the Levites the obligation resting upon the whole nation to serve the Lord in the persons of its first-born sons, and might present them to the Lord as representatives of the first-born of Israel, to serve Him as living sacrifices.

**Numbers 8:11.** This transfer was to be completed by Aaron's waving the Levites as a wave-offering before Jehovah on behalf of the children of Israel, i.e., by his offering them symbolically to the Lord as a sacrifice presented on the part of the Israelites. The ceremony of waving consisted no doubt in his conducting the Levites solemnly up to the altar, and then back again. On the signification of the verb, see at Lev. 7:30. The design of the waving is given in v. 11, viz., *"that they might be to perform the service of Jehovah"* (vv. 24–26 compared with Numbers 4:4–33).

**Numbers 8:12.** The Levites were then to close this transfer of themselves to the Lord with a sin-offering and burnt-offering, in which they laid their hands upon the sacrificial animals. By this imposition of hands they made the sacrificial animals their representatives, in which they presented their own bodies to the Lord as a living sacrifice well-pleasing to Him (see pp. 508, 509). The signification of the dedication of the Levites, as here enjoined, is still further explained in vv. 13–19. The meaning of vv. 13ff. is this: According to the command already given (in vv. 6–12), thou shalt place the Levites before Aaron and his sons, and wave them as a wave-offering before the Lord, and so separate them from the midst of the children of Israel, that they may be Mine. They shall then come to serve the tabernacle.

So shalt thou cleanse them and wave them. The same reason is assigned for this in vv. 16, 17, as in Numbers 3:11–13 (כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּכֹר לָל, cf. Numbers 3:13); and in vv. 18 and 19, what was commanded in Numbers 3:6–9 is described as having been carried out. On v. 19b see Numbers 1:53.

**Numbers 8:20–22.** Vv. 20–22 contain an account of the execution of the divine command.

**Numbers 8:23–26.** *The Levitical period of service* is fixed here at twenty-five years of age and upwards to the fiftieth year. “*This is what concerns the Levites,*” i.e., what follows applies to the Levites. “*From the age of twenty-five years shall he (the Levite) come to do service at the work of the tabernacle; and at fifty years of age shall he return from the service of the work, and not work any further, but only serve his brethren at the tabernacle in keeping charge,*” i.e., help them to look after the furniture of the tabernacle. “*Charge*” (*mishmereth*), as distinguished from “*work,*” signified the oversight of all the furniture of the tabernacle (see Numbers 3:8); “*work*” (service) applied to laborious service, e.g., the taking down and setting up of the tabernacle and cleaning it, carrying wood and water for the sacrificial worship, slaying the animals for the daily and festal sacrifices of the congregation, etc.

**Numbers 8:26b.** “So shalt thou do to the Levites (i.e., proceed with them) *in their services.*” מִשְׁמֶרֶת מִשְׁמֶרֶת, attendance upon an official post. Both the heading and final clause, by which this law relating to the Levites’ period of service is bounded, and its position immediately after the induction of the Levites into their office, show unmistakably that this law was binding for all time, and was intended to apply to the standing service of the Levites at the sanctuary; and consequently that it was not at variance with the instructions in Numbers 4, to muster the Levites between thirty and fifty years of age, and organize them for the transport of the tabernacle on the journey

through the wilderness (Numbers 4:3–49). The transport of the tabernacle required the strength of a full-grown man, and therefore the more advanced age of thirty years; whereas the duties connected with the tabernacle when standing were of a lighter description, and could easily be performed from the twenty-fifth year (see *Hengstenberg’s* Dissertations, vol. ii. pp. 321ff.). At a later period, when the sanctuary was permanently established on Mount Zion, David employed the Levites from their twentieth year (1 Chron. 23:24, 25), and expressly stated that he did so because the Levites had no longer to carry the dwelling and its furniture; and this regulation continued in force from that time forward (cf. 2 Chron. 31:17; Ezra 3:8). But if the supposed discrepancy between the verses before us and Numbers 4:3, 47, is removed by this distinction, which is gathered in the most simple manner from the context, there is no ground whatever for critics to deny that the regulation before us could have proceeded from the pen of the Elohist.

## Numbers 9

**Numbers 9:1–14.** The Passover at Sinai, and Instructions for a Supplementary Passover.— Vv. 1–5. On the first institution of the Passover, before the exodus from Egypt, God had appointed the observance of this feast as an everlasting statute for all future generations (Ex. 12:13, 24, 25). In the first month of the second year after the exodus, that is to say, immediately after the erection of the tabernacle (Ex. 40:2, 17), this command was renewed, and the people were commanded “to keep the Passover in its appointed season, according to all its statutes and rights;” not to postpone it, that is, according to an interpretation that might possibly have been put upon Ex. 12:24, 25, until they came to Canaan, but to keep it there at Sinai. And Israel kept it in the wilderness of Sinai, in exact accordance with the commands which God had given before (Ex. 12). There is no express command, it is true, that the blood of the paschal lambs, instead of being smeared upon the lintel and posts of the

house-doors (or the entrances to the tents), was to be sprinkled upon the altar of burnt-offering; nor is it recorded that this was actually done; but it followed of itself from the altered circumstances, inasmuch as there was not destroying angel to pass through the camp at Sinai and smite the enemies of Israel, whilst there was an altar in existence now upon which all the sacrificial blood was to be poured out, and therefore the blood of the paschal sacrifice also.

**Numbers 9:6–14.** There were certain men who were defiled by human corpses (see Lev. 19:28), and could not eat the Passover on the day appointed. These men came to Moses, and asked, “*Why are we diminished (prevented) from offering the sacrificial gift of Jehovah at its season in the midst of the children of Israel (i.e., in common with the rest of the Israelites)?*” The exclusion of persons defiled from offering the Passover followed from the law, that only clean persons were to participate in a sacrificial meal (Lev. 7:21), and that no one could offer any sacrifice in an unclean state.

**Numbers 9:8.** Moses told them to wait (stand), and he would hear what the Lord, of whom he would inquire, would command.

**Numbers 9:9ff.** Jehovah gave these general instructions: “*Every one who is defiled by a corpse or upon a distant journey, of you and your future families, shall keep the Passover in the second month on the fourteenth, between the two evenings,*” and that in all respects according to the statute of this feast, the three leading points of which—viz., eating the lamb with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, leaving nothing till the next day, and not breaking a bone (Ex. 12:8, 10, 46)—are repeated here. But lest any one should pervert this permission, to celebrate the Passover a month later in case of insuperable difficulties, which had only been given for the purpose of enforcing the obligation to keep the covenant meal upon every member of the nation, into an excuse for postponing it without any necessity and merely from indifference, on the ground that he could make it up afterwards, the threat is held out in

v. 13, that whoever should omit to keep the feast at the legal time, if he was neither unclean nor upon a journey, should be cut off; and in v. 14 the command is repeated with reference to foreigners, that they were also to keep the law and ordinance with the greatest minuteness when they observed the Passover: cf. Ex. 12:48, 49, according to which the stranger was required first of all to let himself be

circumcised. In v. 14*b*, יהִי־יָחִיד stands for תִּהְיֶה־יָחִיד, as in Ex. 12:49; cf. *Ewald*, § 295, *d. וְ... וְ... et ... et*, both ... and.

*Signs and Signals for the March.—Ch. 9:15–10:10.*

**Numbers 9:15–10:10.** With the mustering of the people and the internal organization of the congregation, the preparations for the march from the desert of Sinai to the promised land of Canaan were completed; and when the feast of the Passover was ended, the time for leaving Sinai had arrived. Nothing now remained to be noticed except the required instructions respecting the guidance of the people in their journey through the wilderness, to which the account of the actual departure and march is appended. The account before us describes first of all the manner in which God Himself conducted the march (Numbers 9:15–23); and secondly, instructions are given respecting the signals to be used for regulating the order of the march (Numbers 10:1–10).

**Numbers 9:15–23.** Signs for Removing and Encamping.—On their way through the desert from the border of Egypt to Sinai, Jehovah Himself had undertaken to guide His people by a cloud, as the visible sign and vehicle of His gracious presence (Ex. 13:21, 22). This cloud had come down upon the dwelling when the tabernacle was erected, whilst the glory of the Lord filled the holy of holies (Ex. 40:34–38). In v. 15 the historian refers to this fact, and then describes more fully what had been already briefly alluded to in Ex. 40:36, 37, namely, that



when the cloud rose up from the dwelling of the tabernacle it was a sign for removing, and when it came down upon the dwelling, a sign for encamping. In v. 15a, “on the day of the setting up of the dwelling,” Ex. 40:34, 35, is resumed; and in v. 15b the appearance of the cloud during the night, from evening till morning, is described in accordance with Ex. 40:38. (On the fact itself, see the exposition of Ex. 13:21, 22).

מִשְׁכַּן לְאֹהֶל הָעֵדוּת, “the dwelling of the tent

of witness” (ל used for the genitive to avoid a double construct state: *Ewald*, § 292, a). In the place of *ohel moëd*, “tent of the meeting of Jehovah with His people,” we have here “tent of witness” (or “testimony”), i.e., of the tables with the decalogue which were laid up in the ark of the covenant (Ex. 25:16), because the decalogue formed the basis of the covenant of Jehovah with Israel, and the pledge of the gracious presence of the Lord in the tabernacle. In the place of “dwellings of the tent of witness,” we have “dwelling of witness” (testimony) in Numbers 10:11, and “tent of witness” in Numbers 18:2; 17:22, to denote the whole dwelling, as divided into the holy place and the holy of holies, and not the holy of holies alone. This is unmistakably evident from a comparison of the verse before us with Ex. 40:34, according to which the cloud covered not merely one portion of the tabernacle, but the whole of the tent of meeting (*ohel moëd*). The rendering, “the cloud covered the dwelling at the tent of witness,” i.e., at that part of it in which the witness (or “testimony”) was kept, viz., the holy of holies, which *Rosenmüller* and *Knobel* adopt, cannot be sustained, inasmuch as ל has no such meaning, but simply conveys the idea of motion and passage into a place or condition (cf. *Ewald*, § 217, d); and the dwelling or tabernacle was not first made into the tent of witness through the cloud which covered it.

**Numbers 9:16.** The covering of the dwelling, with the cloud which shone by night as a fiery look, was constant, and not merely a phenomenon which appeared when the

tabernacle was first erected, and then vanished away again.

**Numbers 9:17.** “In accordance with the rising of the cloud from the tent, then afterwards the children of Israel broke up,” i.e., whenever the cloud ascended up from the tent, they always broke up immediately afterwards; “and at the place where the cloud came down, there they

encamped.” The שָׁכַן, or settling down of the cloud, sc., upon the tabernacle, we can only understand in the following manner, as the tabernacle was all taken to pieces during the march: viz., that the cloud visibly descended from the height at which it ordinarily soared above the ark of the covenant, as it was carried in front of the army, for a signal that the tabernacle was to be set up there; and then this had been done, it settled down upon it.

**Numbers 9:18.** As Jehovah was with His people in the cloud, the rising and falling of the cloud was “the command of the Lord” to the Israelites to break up or to pitch the camp. As long, therefore, as the cloud rested upon the dwelling, i.e., remained stationary, they continued their encampment.

**Numbers 9:19ff.** Whether it might rest many days long (הִאָּרְיָה, to lengthen out the resting), or only a few days (Gen. 34:30), or only from evening till morning, and then rise up again in the morning, or for a day and a night, or for two days, or for a month, or for days (*yamim*), i.e., a space of time not precisely determined (cf. Gen. 4:3; 40:4), they encamped without departing. “Kept the charge of the Lord” (vv. 19 and 23), i.e., observed what was to be observed towards

Jehovah (see Lev. 8:35). With וַיִּשְׁאָר, “was it that,” or “did it happen that,” two other possible cases are introduced. After v. 20a, the apodosis, “they kept the charge of the Lord,” is to be repeated in thought from v. 19. The elaboration of the account (vv. 15–23), which abounds with repetitions, is intended to bring out the importance of the fact, and to awaken the consciousness not only of the absolute

dependence of Israel upon the guidance of Jehovah, but also of the gracious care of their God, which was thereby displayed to the Israelites throughout all their journeyings.

### Numbers 10

**Numbers 10:1–10.** The Silver Signal-Trumpets.—Although God Himself appointed the time for removal and encampment by the movement of the cloud of His presence, signals were also requisite for ordering and conducting the march of so numerous a body, by means of which Moses, as commander-in-chief, might make known his commands to the different divisions of the camp. To this end God directed him to prepare two silver trumpets of beaten work (*mikshah*, see Ex. 25:18), which should serve “for the calling of the assembly, and for the breaking up of the camps,” i.e., which were to be used for this purpose. The form of these trumpets is not further described. No doubt they were straight, not curved, as we may infer both from the representation of these trumpets on the triumphal arch of Titus at Rome, and also from the fact, that none but straight trumpets occur on the old Egyptian monuments (see my *Arch.* ii. p. 187). With regard to the use of them for calling the congregation, the following directions are given in vv. 3, 4: “*When they shall blow with them (i.e., with both), the whole congregation (in all its representatives) shall assemble at the door of the tabernacle; if they blow with only one, the princes or heads of the families of Israel shall assemble together.*”

**Numbers 10:5, 6.** To give the signal for breaking up the camp, they were to blow

*תְּרוּעָה*, i.e., a noise or alarm. At the first blast the tribes on the east, i.e., those who were encamped in the front of the tabernacle, were to break up; at the second, those who were encamped on the south; and so on in the order prescribed in Numbers 2, though this is not expressly mentioned here. The alarm was to be blown *לְמַסְעֵיהֶם*, with regard to their breaking up or marching.

**Numbers 10:7.** But to call the congregation together they were to *blow*, not to sound an alarm. *תִּקַּע* signifies blowing in short, sharp tones. *תִּקַּע תְּרוּעָה = הֲרִיעַ*, blowing in a continued peal.

**Numbers 10:8–10.** These trumpets were to be used for the holy purposes of the congregation generally, and therefore not only the making, but the manner of using them was prescribed by God Himself. They were to be blown by the priests alone, and “*to be for an eternal ordinance to the families of Israel,*” i.e., to be preserved and used by them in all future times, according to the appointment of God. The blast of these trumpets was to call Israel to remembrance before Jehovah in time of war and on their feast-days.

**Numbers 10:9.** “*If ye go to war in your land against the enemy who oppresses you, and ye blow the trumpets, ye shall bring yourselves to remembrance before Jehovah, and shall be saved (by Him) from your enemies.*” *בּוֹא מִלְחָמָה*, to come into war, or go to war, is to be distinguished from *בּוֹא לְמִלְחָמָה*, to make ready for war, go out to battle (Numbers 31:21; 32:6).

**Numbers 10:10.** “*And on your joyous day, and your feasts and new moons, he shall blow the trumpets over your burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, that they may be to you for a memorial (remembrance) before your God.*”— *יוֹם*

*הַשְּׂמֵחָה* is any day on which a practical expression was given to their joy, in the form of a sacrifice. The *מוֹעֲדִים* are the feasts enumerated in chs. 28 and 29 and Lev. 23. The “beginnings of the months,” or new-moon days, were not, strictly speaking, feast-days, with the exception of the seventh new moon of the year (see at Numbers 28:11). On the object, viz., “*for a memorial,*” see Ex. 28:29, and the explanation, p. 450. In accordance with this divine

appointment, so full of promise, we find that in after times the trumpets were blown by the priests in war (Numbers 31:6; 2 Chron. 13:12, 14; 20:21, 22, 28) as well as on joyful occasions, such as at the removal of the ark (1 Chron. 15:24; 16:6), at the consecration of Solomon's temple (2 Chron. 5:12; 7:6), the laying of the foundation of the second temple (Ezra 3:10), the consecration of the walls of Jerusalem (Neh. 12:35, 41), and other festivities (2 Chron. 29:27).

## II. JOURNEY FROM SINAI TO THE STEPPES OF MOAB.

### Ch. 10:11–21.

The straight and shortest way from Sinai to Kadesh, on the southern border of Canaan, was only a journey of eleven days (Deut. 1:2). By this road God led His people, whom He had received into the covenant of His grace at Sinai, and placed under the discipline of the law, to the ultimate object of their journey through the desert; so that, a few months after leaving Horeb or Sinai, the Israelites had already arrived at Kadesh, in the desert of Zin, on the southern border of the promised land, and were able to send out men as spies, to survey the inheritance of which they were to take possession. The way from Sinai to the desert of Zin forms the first stage in the history of the guidance of Israel through the wilderness to Canaan.

*From Sinai to Kadesh.—Ch. 10:11–14:45.*

### **Removal of the Camp from the Desert of Sinai.—Ch. 10:11–36.**

**Numbers 10:11, 12.** After all the preparations were completed for the journey of the Israelites from Sinai to Canaan, on the 20th day of the second month, in the second year, the cloud rose up from the tent of witness, and the children of Israel broke up out of the desert of

Sinai, לְמַסְעֵיהֶם, “according to their journeys” (lit., breaking up; see at Gen. 13:3 and Ex. 40:36, 38), i.e., in the order prescribed in Numbers 2:9, 16, 24, 31, and described in vv. 14ff. of this chapter. “*And the cloud rested in the desert of Paran.*” In these words, the whole journey from the desert of Sinai to the desert of Paran is given summarily, or as a heading; and the more minute description follows from v. 14 to Numbers 12:16. The “*desert of Paran*” was not the first station, but the third; and the Israelites did not arrive at it till after they had left Hazeroth (Numbers 12:16). The desert of Sinai is mentioned as the starting-point of the journey through the desert, in contrast with the desert of Paran, in the neighbourhood of Kadesh, whence the spies were sent out to Canaan (Numbers 13:2, 21), the goal and termination of their journey through the desert. That the words, “the cloud rested in the desert of Paran” (v. 12*b*), contain a preliminary statement (like Gen. 27:23; 37:5, as compared with v. 8, and 1 Kings 6:9 as compared with v. 14, etc.), is unmistakeably apparent, from the fact that Moses' negotiations with Hobab, respecting his accompanying the Israelites to Canaan, as a guide who knew the road, are noticed for the first time in vv. 29ff., although they took place before the departure from Sinai, and that after this the account of the breaking-up is resumed in v. 33, and the journey itself described, Hence, although Kurtz (iii. 220) rejects this explanation of v. 12*b* as “forced,” and regards the desert of Paran as a place of encampment between Taberah and Kibroth-hattaavah, even he cannot help identifying the breaking-up described in v. 33 with that mentioned in v. 12; that is to say, regarding v. 12 as a summary of the events which are afterwards more fully described.

The desert of Paran is the large desert plateau which is bounded on the east by the Arabah, the deep valley running from the southern point of the Dead Sea to the Elanitic Gulf, and stretches westwards to the desert of Shur (*Jifar*; see Gen. 16:7; Ex. 15:22), that separates Egypt from Philistia: it reaches southwards to Jebel et Tih,

the foremost spur of the Horeb mountains, and northwards to the mountains of the Amorites, the southern border of Canaan. The origin and etymology of the name are obscure. The opinion that it was derived from פֶּעַר, to open wide, and originally denoted the broad valley of Wady Murreh, between the Hebrew Negeb and the desert of Tih, and was then transferred to the whole district, has very little probability in it (*Knobel*). All that can be regarded as certain is, that the *El-Paran* of Gen. 14:6 is a proof that in the very earliest times the name was applied to the whole of the desert of Tih down to the Elanitic Gulf, and that the *Paran* of the Bible had no historical connection either with the κώμη Φαράν and tribe of Φαρανῖται mentioned by *Ptol.* (v. 17, i. 3), or with the town of Φαράν, of which the remains are still to be seen in the Wady *Feiran* at Serbal, or with the tower of *Faran Ahrun* of *Edrisi*, the modern *Hammân Faraun*, on the Red Sea, to the south of the Wady Gharandel. By the Arabian geographers, *Isztachri*, *Kazwini*, and others, and also by the Bedouins, it is called *et Tih*, i.e., the wandering of the children of Israel, as being the ground upon which the children of Israel wandered about in the wilderness for forty years (or more accurately, thirty-eight). This desert plateau, which is thirty German miles (150 English) long from south to north, and almost as broad, consists, according to Arabian geographers, partly of sand and partly of firm soil, and is intersected through almost its entire length by the *Wady el Arish*, which commences at a short distance from the northern extremity of the southern border mountains of *et Tih*, and runs in nearly a straight line from south to north, only turning in a north-westerly direction towards the Mediterranean Sea, on the north-east of the *Jebel el Helal*. This wady divides the desert of Paran into a western and an eastern half. The western half lies lower than the eastern, and slopes off gradually, without any perceptible natural boundary, into the flat desert of Shur (*Jifar*), on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. The eastern half (between the Arabah and the *Wady el Arish*) consists

throughout of a lofty mountainous country, intersected by larger and smaller wadys, and with extensive table-land between the loftier ranges, which slopes off somewhat in a northerly direction, its southern edge being formed by the eastern spurs of the *Jebel et Tih*. It is intersected by the *Wady el Jerafeh*, which commences at the foot of the northern slope of the mountains of *Tih*, and after proceeding at first in a northerly direction, turns higher up in a north-easterly direction towards the Arabah, but rises in its northern portion to a strong mountain fortress, which is called, from its present inhabitants, the highlands of the *Azazimeh*, and is bounded on both south and north by steep and lofty mountain ranges. The southern boundary is formed by the range which connects the *Araifen Nakba* with the *Jebel el Mukrah* on the east; the northern boundary, by the mountain barrier which stretches along the *Wady Murreh* from west to east, and rises precipitously from it, and of which the following description has been given by *Rowland* and *Williams*, the first of modern travellers to visit this district, who entered the *terra incognita* by proceeding directly south from Hebron, past *Arara* or *Aroër*, and surveyed it from the border of the *Rachmah* plateau, i.e., of the mountains of the Amorites (*Deut.* 1:7, 20, 44), or the southernmost plateau of the mountains of Judah (see at Numbers 14:45):—"A gigantic mountain towered above us in savage grandeur, with masses of naked rock, resembling the bastions of some Cyclopean architecture, the end of which it was impossible for the eye to reach, towards either the west or the east. It extended also a long way towards the south; and with its rugged, broken, and dazzling masses of chalk, which reflected the burning rays of the sun, it looked like an unapproachable furnace, a most fearful desert, without the slightest trace of vegetation. A broad defile, called *Wady Murreh*, ran at the foot of this bulwark, towards the east; and after a course of several miles, on reaching the strangely formed mountain of *Moddera* (*Madurah*), it is divided into two parts, the southern branch still retaining the same name,

and running eastwards to the Arabah, whilst the other was called Wady Fikreh, and ran in a north-easterly direction to the Dead Sea. This mountain barrier proved to us beyond a doubt that we were now standing on the southern boundary of the promised land; and we were confirmed in this opinion by the statement of the guide, that *Kadesh* was only a few hours distant from the point where we were standing" (*Ritter*, xiv. p. 1084). The place of encampment in the desert of Paran is to be sought for at the north-west corner of this lofty mountain range (see at Numbers 12:16).

**Numbers 10:13–28.** In vv. 13–28 the removal of the different camps is more fully described, according to the order of march established in Numbers 2, the order in which the different sections of the Levites drew out and marched being particularly described in this place alone (cf. vv. 17 and 21 with Numbers 2:17). First of all (lit., "at the beginning") the banner of Judah drew out, with Issachar and Zebulun (vv. 14–16; cf. Numbers 2:3–9). The tabernacle was then taken down, and the Gershonites and Merarites broke up, carrying those portions of its which were assigned to them (v. 17; cf. Numbers 4:24ff., and 31ff.), that they might set up the dwelling at the place to be chosen for the next encampment, before the Kohathites arrived with the sacred things (v. 21). The banner of Reuben followed next with Simeon and Gad (vv. 18–21; cf. Numbers 2:10–16), and the Kohathites joined them bearing the sacred things (v. 21). הַמִּקְדָּשׁ (= הַקֹּדֶשׁ, Numbers

7:9, and קֹדֶשׁ הַקִּדְשִׁים, Numbers 4:4)

signifies the sacred things mentioned in Numbers 3:31. In v. 21b the subject is the Gershonites and Merarites, who had broken up before with the component parts of the

dwelling, and set up the dwelling, עֲדִבְיָם, against their (the Kohathites') arrival, so that they might place the holy things at once within it.

**Numbers 10:22–28.** Behind the sacred things came the banners of Ephraim, with Manasseh

and Benjamin (see Numbers 2:18–24), and Dan with Asher and Naphtali (Numbers 2:25–31); so that the camp of Dan was the "collector of all the camps according to their hosts," i.e., formed that division of the army which kept the hosts together.

**Numbers 10:29–32.** The conversation in which Moses persuaded *Hobab* the Midianite, the son of Reguel (see at Ex. 2:16), and his brother-in-law, to go with the Israelites, and being well acquainted with the desert to act as their leader, preceded the departure in order of time; but it is placed between the setting out and the march itself, as being subordinate to the main events. When and why Hobab came into the camp of the Israelites,—whether he came with his father Reguel (or Jethro) when Israel first arrived at Horeb, and so remained behind when Jethro left (Ex. 18:27), or whether he did not come till afterwards,—was left uncertain, because it was a matter of no consequence in relation to what is narrated here. The request addressed to Hobab, that he would go with them to the place which Jehovah had promised to give them, i.e., to Canaan, was supported by the promise that he would do good to them (Hobab and his company), as Jehovah had spoken good concerning Israel, i.e., had promised it prosperity in Canaan. And when Hobab declined the request, and said that he should return into his own land, i.e., to Midian at the south-east of Sinai (see at Ex. 2:15 and 3:1), and to his kindred, Moses repeated the request, "Leave us not, forasmuch as thou knowest our encamping in the desert," i.e., knowest where we can pitch our tents; "therefore be to us as eyes," i.e., be our leader and guide,—and promised at the same time to do him the good that Jehovah would do to them. Although Jehovah led the march of the Israelites in the pillar of cloud, not only giving the sign for them to break up and to encamp, but showing generally the direction they were to take; yet Hobab, who was well acquainted with the desert, would be able to render very important service to the Israelites, if he only pointed out, in those places where the sign to encamp was given by the cloud, the springs,

oases, and plots of pasture which are often buried quite out of sight in the mountains and valleys that overspread the desert. What Hobab ultimately decided to do, we are not told; but "as no further refusal is mentioned, and the departure of Israel is related immediately afterwards, he probably consented" (*Knobel*). This is raised to a certainty by the fact that, at the commencement of the period of the Judges, the sons of the brother-in-law of Moses went into the desert of Judah to the south of Arad along with the sons of Judah (Judg. 1:16), and therefore had entered Canaan with the Israelites, and that they were still living in that neighbourhood in the time of Saul (1 Sam. 15:6; 27:10; 30:29).

**Numbers 10:33–36.** *"And they (the Israelites) departed from the mount of Jehovah (Ex. 3:1) three days' journey; the ark of the covenant of Jehovah going before them, to search out a resting-place for them. And the cloud of Jehovah was over them by day, when they broke up from the camp."* Jehovah still did as He had already done on the way to Sinai (Ex. 13:21, 22): He went before them in the pillar of cloud, according to His promise (Ex. 33:13), on their journey from Sinai to Canaan; with this simple difference, however, that henceforth the cloud that embodied the presence of Jehovah was connected with the ark of the covenant, as the visible throne of His gracious presence which had been appointed by Jehovah Himself. To this end the ark of the covenant was carried separately from the rest of the sacred things, in front of the whole army; so that the cloud which went before them floated above the ark, leading the procession, and regulating its movements in the direction it took in such a manner that the permanent connection between the cloud and the sanctuary might be visibly manifested even during their march. It is true that, in the order observed in the camp and on the march, no mention is made of the ark of the covenant going in front of the whole army; but this omission is no more a proof of any discrepancy between this verse and Numbers 2:17, or of a difference of authorship, than the separation of the different divisions of the

Levites upon the march, which is also not mentioned in Numbers 2:17, although the Gershonites and Merarites actually marched between the banners of Judah and Reuben, and the Kohathites with the holy things between the banners of Reuben and Ephraim (vv. 17 and 21). The words, "the cloud was above them" (the Israelites), and so forth, can be reconciled with this supposition without any difficulty, whether we understand them as signifying that the cloud, which appeared as a guiding column floating above the ark and moved forward along with it, also extended itself along the whole procession, and spread out as a protecting shade over the whole army (as *O. v. Gerlach* and *Baumgarten* suppose), or that "above them" (upon them) is to be regarded as expressive of the fact that it accompanied them as a protection and shade. Nor is Ps. 105:39, which seems, so far as the words are concerned, rather to favour the first explanation, really at variance with this view; for the Psalmist's intention is not so much to give a physical description of the phenomenon, as to describe the sheltering protection of God in poetical words as a spreading out of the cloud above the wandering people of God, in the form of a protection against both heat and rain (cf. Isa. 4:5, 6). Moreover, vv. 33*b* and 34 have a poetical character, answering to the elevated nature of their subject, and are to be interpreted as follows according to the laws of a poetical *parallelism*: The one thought that the ark of the covenant, with the cloud soaring above it, led the way and sheltered those who were marching, is divided into two clauses; in v. 33*b* only the ark of the covenant is mentioned as going in front of the Israelites, and in v. 34 only the cloud as a shelter over them: whereas the carrying of the ark in front of the army could only accomplish the end proposed, viz., to search out a resting-place for them, by Jehovah going above them in the cloud, and showing the bearers of the ark both the way they were to take, and the place where they were to rest. The ark with the tables of the law is not called "the ark of testimony" here, according to its contents, as in Ex. 25:22; 26:33, 34; 30:6, etc.,

but the ark of the covenant of Jehovah, according to its design and signification for Israel, which was the only point, or at any rate the principal point, in consideration here. The resting-place which the ark of the covenant found at the end of three days, is not mentioned in v. 34; it was not Taberah, however (Numbers 11:3), but Kibroth-hattaavah (Numbers 11:34, 35; cf. Numbers 33:16).

**Numbers 10:35, 36.** In vv. 35 and 36, the words which Moses was in the habit of uttering, both when the ark removed and when it came to rest again, are given not only as a proof of the joyous confidence of Moses, but as an encouragement to the congregation to cherish the same believing confidence. When breaking up, he said, *“Rise up, Jehovah! that Thine enemies may be scattered, and they that hate Thee may flee before Thy face;”* and when it rested, *“Return, Jehovah, to the ten thousand thousands of Israel!”* Moses could speak in this way, because he knew that Jehovah and the ark of the covenant were inseparably connected, and saw in the ark of the covenant, as the throne of Jehovah, a material pledge of the gracious presence of the Almighty God. He said this, however, not merely with reference to enemies who might encounter the Israelites in the desert, but with a confident anticipation of the calling of Israel, to strive for the cause of the Lord in this hostile world, and rear His kingdom upon earth. Human power was not sufficient for this; but to accomplish this end, it was necessary that the Almighty God should go before His people, and scatter their foes. The prayer addressed to God to do this, is an expression of bold believing confidence,—a prayer sure of its answer; and to Israel it was the word with which the congregation of God was to carry on the conflict at all times against the powers and authorities of a whole hostile world. It is in this sense that in Ps. 68:2, the words are held up by David before himself and his generation as a banner of victory, *“to arm the Church with confidence, and fortify it against the violent attacks of its foes”*

*(Calvin).* שׁוּבָה is construed with an accusative: **return to the ten thousands of the hosts of Israel, i.e., after having scattered Thine enemies, turn back again to Thy people to dwell among them. The “thousands of Israel,” as in Numbers 1:16. Numbers 11**

**Occurrences at Taberah and Kibroth-Hattaavah.—Ch. 11.**

**Numbers 11:1–3.** After a three days' march the Israelites arrived at a resting-place; but the people began at once to be discontented with their situation. *The people were like those who complain in the ears of Jehovah of something bad;* i.e., they behaved like persons who groan and murmur because of some misfortune that has happened to them. No special occasion is mentioned for the complaint. The words are expressive, no doubt, of the general dissatisfaction and discontent of the people at the difficulties and privations connected with the journey through the wilderness, to which they gave utterance so loudly, that their complaining reached the ears of Jehovah. At this His wrath burned, inasmuch as the complaint was directed against Him and His guidance, *“so that fire of Jehovah burned against*

*them, and ate at the end of the camp.”* בָּעַר בְּֿ signifies here, not to burn a person (Job 1:16), but to burn against. *“Fire of Jehovah:”* a fire sent by Jehovah, but not proceeding directly from Him, or bursting forth from the cloud, as in Lev. 10:2. Whether it was kindled through a flash of lightning, or in some other such way, cannot be more exactly determined. There is not sufficient ground for the supposition that the fire merely seized upon the bushes about the camp and the tents of the people, but not upon human beings (*Ros., Knobel*). All that is plainly taught in the words is, that the fire did not extend over the whole camp, but merely broke out at one end of it, and sank down again, i.e., was extinguished very quickly, at the intercession of Moses; so that in this judgment the Lord merely

manifested His power to destroy the murmurers, that He might infuse into the whole nation a wholesome dread of His holy majesty.

**Numbers 11:3.** From this judgment the place where the fire had burned received the name of “*Taberah*,” i.e., burning, or place of burning. Now, as this spot is distinctly described as the end or outermost edge of the camp, this “place of burning” must not be regarded, as it is by *Knobel* and others, as a different station from the “graves of lust.” “*Taberah* was simply the local name give to a distant part of the whole camp, which received soon after the name of *Kibroth-Hattaavah*, on account of the greater judgment which the people brought upon themselves through their rebellion. This explains not only the omission of the name *Taberah* from the list of encampments in *Numbers 33:16*, but also the circumstance, that nothing is said about any removal from *Taberah* to *Kibroth-Hattaavah*, and that the account of the murmuring of the people, because of the want of those supplies of food to which they had been accustomed in Egypt, is attached, without anything further, to the preceding narrative. There is nothing very surprising either, in the fact that the people should have given utterance to their wish for the luxuries of Egypt, which they had been deprived of so long, immediately after this judgment of God, if we only understand the whole affair as taking place in exact accordance with the words of the texts, viz., that the unbelieving and discontented mass did not discern the chastising hand of God at all in the conflagration which broke out at the end of the camp, because it was not declared to be a punishment from God, and was not preceded by a previous announcement; and therefore that they gave utterance in loud murmurings to the discontent of their hearts respecting the want of flesh, without any regard to what had just befallen them.

**Numbers 11:4–9.** The first impulse to this came from the mob that had come out of Egypt along with the Israelites. “*The mixed multitude:*” see at *Ex. 12:38*. They felt and expressed a

longing for the better food which they had enjoyed in Egypt, and which was not to be had in the desert, and urged on the Israelites to cry out for flesh again, especially for the flesh and the savoury vegetables in which Egypt

abounded. The words “*they wept again*” (שוב) used adverbially, as in *Gen. 26:18*, etc.) point back to the former complaints of the people respecting the absence of flesh in the desert of Sin (*Ex. 16:2ff.*), although there is nothing said about their weeping there. By the flesh which they missed, we are not to understand either the fish which they expressly mention in the following verse (as in *Lev. 11:11*), or merely

oxen, sheep, and goats; but the word בָּשָׂר signifies flesh generally, as being a better kind of food than the bread-like manna. It is true they possessed herds of cattle, but these would not have been sufficient to supply their wants, as cattle could not be bought for slaughtering, and it was necessary to spare what they had. The greedy people also longed for other flesh, and said, “*We remember the fish which we ate in Egypt for nothing.*” Even if fish could not be had for nothing in Egypt, according to the extravagant assertions of the murmurers, it is certain that it could be procured for such nominal prices that even the poorest of the people could eat it. The abundance of the fish in the Nile and the neighbouring waters is attested unanimously by both classical writers (e.g., *Diod. Sic. i. 36, 52; Herod. ii. 93; Strabo, xvii. p. 829*) and modern travellers (cf. *Hengstenberg, Egypt, etc., p. 211 Eng. tr.*). This also applies to the vegetables for which the

Israelites longed in the desert. The קִשְׁאִים, or cucumbers, which are still called *katteh* or *chate* in the present day, are a species differing from the ordinary cucumbers in size and colour, and distinguished for softness and sweet flavour, and are described by *Forskal (Flor. Aeg. p. 168)*, as *fructus in Aegypto omnium vulgatissimus, totis plantatus agris*. אֲבֹתָחִים: water-melons, which are still called *battieh* in



modern Egypt, and are both cultivated in immense quantities and sold so cheaply in the market, that the poor as well as the rich can enjoy their refreshing flesh and cooling juice (see *Sonnini in Hengstenberg, ut sup.* p. 212).

חֲצִיר does not signify grass here, but,

according to the ancient versions, *chives*, from their grass-like appearance; *laudatissimus*

*porrus in Aegypto* (Plin. h. n. 19, 33). בצלִים:

onions, which flourish better in Egypt than elsewhere, and have a mild and pleasant taste. According to *Herod.* ii. 125, they were the ordinary food of the workmen at the pyramids; and, according to *Hasselquist, Sonnini*, and others, they still form almost the only food of the poor, and are also a favourite dish with all classes, either roasted, or boiled as a vegetable,

and eaten with animal food. שׁוּמִים: garlic,

which is still called *tum, tom* in the East (*Seetzen*, iii. p. 234), and is mentioned by *Herodotus* in connection with onions, as forming a leading article of food with the Egyptian workmen. Of all these things, which had been cheap as well as refreshing, not one was to be had in the desert. Hence the people complained still further, "*and now our soul is dried away*," i.e., faint for want of strong and refreshing food, and wanting in fresh vital power (cf. Ps. 22:16; 102:5): "*we have nothing*

(אֵין כֵּל, there is nothing in existence,

equivalent to nothing to be had) *except that our eye (falls) upon this manna*," i.e., we see nothing else before us but the manna, sc., which has no juice, and supplies no vital force. Greediness longs for juicy and savoury food, and in fact, as a rule, for change of food and stimulating flavour. "This is the perverted nature of man, which cannot continue in the quiet enjoyment of what is clean and unmixed, but, from its own inward discord, desires a stimulating admixture of what is sharp and sour" (*Baumgarten*). To point out this inward perversion on the part of the murmuring people, Moses once more described the nature, form, and taste of the

manna, and its mode of preparation, as a pleasant food which God sent down to His people with the dew of heaven (see at Ex. 16:14, 15, and 31). But this sweet bread of heaven wanted "the sharp and sour, which are required to give a stimulating flavour to the food of man, on account of his sinful, restless desires, and the incessant changes of his earthly life." In this respect the manna resembled the spiritual food supplied by the word of God, of which the sinful heart of man may also speedily become weary, and turn to the more piquant productions of the spirit of the world.

**Numbers 11:10-15.** When Moses heard the people weep, "*according to their families, every one before the door of his tent*," i.e., heard complaining in all the families in front of every tent, so that the weeping had become universal throughout the whole nation (cf. Zech. 12:12ff.), and the wrath of the Lord burned on account of it, and the thing displeased Moses also, he brought his complaint to the Lord. The words "*Moses also was displeased*," are introduced as a circumstantial clause, to explain the matter more clearly, and show the reason for the complaint which Moses poured out before the Lord, and do not refer exclusively either to the murmuring of the people or to the wrath of Jehovah, but to both together. This follows evidently from the position in which the clause stands between the two antecedent clauses in v. 10 and the apodosis in v. 11, and still more evidently from the complaint of Moses which follows. For "the whole attitude of Moses shows that his displeasure was excited not merely by the unrestrained rebellion of the people against Jehovah, but also by the unrestrained wrath of Jehovah against the nation" (*Kurtz*). But in what was the wrath of Jehovah manifested? It broke out against the people first of all when they had been satiated with flesh (v. 33). There is no mention of any earlier manifestation. Hence Moses can only have discovered a sign of the burning wrath of Jehovah in the fact that, although the discontent of the people burst forth in loud cries, God did not help, but withdrew with His help, and let the whole storm of the infuriated people burst upon him.

**Numbers 11:11ff.** In Moses' complaint there is an unmistakable discontent arising from the excessive burden of his office. *"Why hast Thou done evil to Thy servant? and why have I not found favour in Thy sight, to lay upon me the burden of all this people?"* The "burden of all this people" is the expression which he uses to denote "the care of governing the people, and providing everything for it" (*C. a. Lap.*). This burden, which God imposed upon him in connection with his office, appeared to him a bad and ungracious treatment on the part of God. This is the language of the discontent of despair, which differs from the murmuring of unbelief, in the fact that it is addressed to God, for the purpose of entreating help and deliverance from Him; whereas unbelief complains of the ways of God, but while complaining of its troubles, does not pray to the Lord its God. *"Have I conceived all this people,"* Moses continues, *"or have I brought it forth, that Thou requirest me to carry it in my bosom, as a nursing father carries the suckling, into the promised land?"* He does not intend by these words to throw off entirely all care for the people, but simply to plead with God that the duty of carrying and providing for Israel rests with Him, the Creator and Father of Israel (Ex. 4:22; Isa. 63:16). Moses, a weak man, was wanting in the omnipotent power which alone could satisfy the crying of the people for flesh.

**יִבְכוּ עָלַי**, *"they weep unto me,"* i.e., they come weeping to ask me to relieve their distress. *"I am not able to carry this burden alone; it is too heavy for me."*

**Numbers 11:15.** *"If Thou deal thus with me, then kill me quite* (**הָרַג** *inf. abs.*, expressive of the uninterrupted process of killing; see *Ewald*, § 280, *b.*), *if I have found favour in Thine eyes* (i.e., if Thou wilt show me favour), *and let me not see my misfortune."* "My misfortune:" i.e., the calamity to which I must eventually succumb.

**Numbers 11:16–23.** There was good ground for his complaint. The burden of the office laid upon the shoulders of Moses was really too heavy for one man; and even the discontent

which broke out in the complaint was nothing more than an outpouring of zeal for the office assigned him by God, under the burden of which his strength would eventually break down, unless he received some support. He was not tired of the office, but would stake his life for it if God did not relieve him in some way, as office and life were really one in him. Jehovah therefore relieved him in the distress of which he complained, without blaming the words of His servant, which bordered on despair. *"Gather unto Me,"* He said to Moses (vv. 16, 17), *"seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest as elders and officers (shoterim, see Ex. 5:6) of the people, and bring them unto the tabernacle, that they may place themselves there with thee. I will come down (see at v. 25) and speak with thee there, and will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them, that they may bear the burden of the people with thee."*

**Numbers 11:18ff.** Jehovah would also relieve the complaining of the people, and that in such a way that the murmurers should experience at the same time the holiness of His judgments. The people were to sanctify themselves for the next day, and were then to eat flesh (receive

flesh to eat). **הִתְקַדֵּשׁ** (as in Ex. 19:10), to prepare themselves by purifications for the revelation of the glory of God in the miraculous gift of flesh. Jehovah would give them flesh, so that they should eat it not one day, or two, or five, or ten, or twenty, but a whole month long (of "days," as in Gen. 29:14; 41:1), *"till it come out of your nostrils, and become loathsome unto you,"* as a punishment for having despised Jehovah in the midst of them, in their contempt of the manna given by God, and for having shown their regret at leaving the land of Egypt in their longing for the provisions of that land.

**Numbers 11:21ff.** When Moses thereupon expressed his amazement at the promise of God to provide flesh for 600,000 men for a whole month long even to satiety, and said, *"Shall flocks and herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them?"* he was

answered by the words, "Is the arm of Jehovah too short (i.e., does it not reach far enough; is it too weak and powerless)? Thou shalt see now whether My word shall come to pass unto thee or not."

**Numbers 11:24–30.** After receiving from the Lord this reply to his complaint. Moses went out (sc., "of the tabernacle," where he had laid his complaint before the Lord) into the camp; and having made known to the people the will of God, gathered together seventy men of the elders of the people, and directed them to station themselves around the tabernacle. "Around the tabernacle," does not signify in this passage on all four sides, but in a semicircle around the front of the tabernacle; the verb is used in this sense in Numbers 21:4, when it is applied to the march round Edom.

**Numbers 11:25.** Jehovah then came down in the cloud, which soared on high above the tabernacle, and now came down to the door of it (Numbers 12:5; Ex. 33:9; Deut. 31:15). The statement in Numbers 9:18ff., and Ex. 40:37, 38, that the cloud dwelt (שָׁכַן) above the dwelling of the tabernacle during the time of encampment, can be reconciled with this without any difficulty; since the only idea that we can form of this "dwelling upon it" is, that the cloud stood still, soaring in quietness above the tabernacle, without moving to and fro like a cloud driven by the wind. There is no such discrepancy, therefore, as *Knobel* finds in these statements. When Jehovah had come down, He spoke to Moses, sc., to explain to him and to the elders what was about to be done, and then laid upon the seventy elders of the Spirit which was upon him. We are not to understand this as implying, that the fulness of the Spirit possessed by Moses was diminished in consequence; still less to regard it, with *Calvin*, as *signum indignationis*, or *nota ignominiae*, which God intended to stamp upon him. For the Spirit of God is not something material, which is diminished by being divided, but resembles a flame of fire, which does not decrease in intensity, but increases rather by extension. As

*Theodoret* observed, "Just as a person who kindles a thousand flames from one, does not lessen the first, whilst he communicates light to the others, so God did not diminish the grace imparted to Moses by the fact that He communicated of it to the seventy." God did this to show to Moses, as well as to the whole nation, that the Spirit which Moses had received was perfectly sufficient for the performance of the duties of his office, and that no supernatural increase of that Spirit was needed, but simply a strengthening of the natural powers of Moses by the support of men who, when endowed with the power of the Spirit that was taken from him, would help him to bear the burden of his office. We have no description of the way in which this transference took place; it is therefore impossible to determine whether it was effected by a sign which would strike the outward senses, or passed altogether within the sphere of the Spirit's life, in a manner which corresponded to the nature of the Spirit itself. In any case, however, it must have been effected in such a way, that Moses and the elders received a convincing proof of the reality of the affair. When the Spirit descended upon the elders, "they prophesied, and did not add;" i.e., they did not repeat the prophesying any further. וְלֹא יָסְפוּ is rendered correctly by the LXX, καὶ οὐκ ἔτι προσέθεντο; the rendering supported by the *Vulgate* and *Onkelos*, nec ultero cessaverunt ("and ceased not"), is incorrect.

הִתְנַבֵּא, "to prophesy," is to be understood generally, and especially here, not as the foretelling of future things, but as speaking in an ecstatic and elevated state of mind, under the impulse and inspiration of the Spirit of God, just like the "speaking with tongues," which frequently followed the gift of the Holy Ghost in the days of the apostles. But we are not to infer from the fact, that the prophesying was not repeated, that the Spirit therefore departed from them after this one extraordinary manifestation. This miraculous manifestation of the Spirit was intended simply to give to the

whole nation the visible proof that God had endowed them with His Spirit, as helpers of Moses, and had given them the authority required for the exercise of their calling.

**Numbers 11:26.** But in order to prove to the whole congregation that the Spirit of the Lord was working there, the Spirit came not only upon the elders assembled round Moses, and in front of the tabernacle, but also upon two of the persons who had been chosen, viz., Eldad and Medad, who had remained behind in the camp, for some reason that is not reported, so that they also prophesied. “*Them that were written, conscripti*, for “called,” because the calling of the elders generally took place in writing, from which we may see how thoroughly the Israelites had acquired the art of writing in Egypt.

**Numbers 11:27, 28.** This phenomenon in the camp itself produced such excitement, that a boy (הַנֶּעֱר, הַנֶּעֱר), with the article like הַפְּלִיט in Gen. 14:13) reported the thing to Moses, whereupon Joshua requested Moses to prohibit the two from prophesying. Joshua felt himself warranted in doing this, because he had been Moses’ servant from his youth up (see at Ex. 17:9), and in this capacity he regarded the prophesying of these men in the camp as detracting from the authority of his lord, since they had not received this gift from Moses, at least not through his mediation. Joshua was jealous for the honour of Moses, just as the disciples of Jesus, in Mark 9:38, 39, were for the honour of their Lord; and he was reproved by Moses, as the latter afterwards were by Christ.

**Numbers 11:29.** Moses replied, “*Art thou jealous for me? Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, that Jehovah would put His Spirit upon them!*” As a true servant of God, who sought not his own glory, but the glory of his God, and the spread of His kingdom, Moses rejoiced in this manifestation of the Spirit of God in the midst of the nation, and desired that all might become partakers of this grace.

**Numbers 11:30.** Moses returned with the elders into the camp, sc., from the tabernacle,

which stood upon an open space in the midst of the camp, at some distance from the tents of the Levites and the rest of the tribes of Israel, which were pitched around it, so that whoever wished to go to it, had first of all to go out of his tent.

No account has been handed down of the further action of this committee of elders. It is impossible to determine, therefore, in what way they assisted Moses in bearing the burden of governing the people. All that can be regarded as following unquestionably from the purpose given here is, that they did not form a permanent body, which continued from the time of Moses to the Captivity, and after the Captivity was revived again in the Sanhedrim, as Talmudists, Rabbins, and many of the earlier theologians suppose (see *Selden de Synedriis*, l. i. c. 14, ii. c. 4; *Jo. Marckii sylloge dissertatt. phil. theol. ad V. T. exercit.* 12, pp. 343ff.). On the opposite side vid., *Relandi Antiquitates*, ss. ii. 7, 3; *Carpz. apparatus*, pp. 573f., etc.

**Numbers 11:31–34.** As soon as Moses had returned with the elders into the camp, God fulfilled His second promise. “*A wind arose from Jehovah, and brought quails (salvim, see Ex. 16:13) over from the sea, and threw them over the camp about a day’s journey wide from here and there (i.e., on both sides), in the neighbourhood of the camp, and about two cubits above the surface.*” The wind was a south-east wind (Ps. 78:26), which blew from the Arabian Gulf and brought the quails—which fly northwards in the spring from the interior of Africa in very great numbers (see p. 364)—

from the sea to the Israelites. זָנַח, which only occurs here and in the Psalm of Moses (Ps. 90:10), signifies to drive over, in Arabic and Syriac to pass over, not “to cut off,” as the Rabbins suppose: the wind cut off the quails

from the sea. נָטַח, to throw them scattered about (Ex. 29:5; 31:12; 32:4). The idea is not that the wind caused the flock of quails to spread itself out as much as two days’ journey over the camp, and to fly about two cubits above the surface of the ground; so that, being exhausted with their flight across the sea, they

fell partly into the hands of the Israelites and partly upon the ground, as *Knobel* follows the *Vulgate* (*volabant in aëre duobus cubitis altitudine super terram*) and many of the

Rabbins in supposing: for נָטַשׁ עַל הַמַּחֲנֶה does not mean to cause to fly or spread out over the camp, but to throw over or upon the camp. The words cannot therefore be understood in any other way than they are in Ps. 78:27, 28, viz., that the wind threw them about over the camp, so that they fell upon the ground a day's journey on either side of it, and that in such numbers that they lay, of course not for the whole distance mentioned, but in places about the camp, as much as two cubits deep. It is only in this sense of the words, that the people could possibly gather quails the whole of that day, the whole night, and the whole of the next day, in such quantities that he who had gathered but little had collected ten homers. A *homer*, the largest measure of capacity among the Hebrews, which contained ten ephahs, held, according to the lower reckoning of *Thenius*, 10,143 Parisian inches, or about two bushels Dresden measure. By this enormous quantity, which so immensely surpassed the natural size of the flocks of quails, God purposed to show the people His power, to give them flesh not for one day or several days, but for a whole month, both to put to shame their unbelief, and also to punish their greediness. As they could not eat this quantity all at once, they spread them round the camp to dry in the sun, in the same manner in which the Egyptians are in the habit of drying fish (*Herod.* ii. 77).

**Numbers 11:33.** But while the flesh was still between their teeth, and before it was ground, i.e., masticated, the wrath of the Lord burned against them, and produced among the people a very great destruction. This catastrophe is not to be regarded as "the effect of the excessive quantity of quails that they had eaten, on account of the quails feeding upon things which are injurious to man, so that eating the flesh of quails produces convulsions and giddiness (for proofs, see *Bochart, Hieroz.* ii. pp. 657ff.)," as *Knobel* supposes, but as an extraordinary

judgment inflicted by God upon the greedy people, by which a great multitude of people were suddenly swept away.

**Numbers 11:34.** From this judgment the place of encampment received the name *Kibroth-hattaavah*, i.e., graves of greediness, because there the people found their graves while giving vent to their greedy desires.

**Numbers 11:35.** From the graves of greediness the people removed to *Hazereth*, and there they remained (הִלָּה as in Ex. 24:12). The situation of these two places of encampment is altogether unknown. *Hazereth*, it is true, has been regarded by many since *Burckhardt* (*Syr.* p. 808) as identical with the modern *Hadhra* (in *Robinson's Pal. Ain el Hudhera*), eighteen hours to the north-east of Sinai, partly because of the resemblance in the name, and partly because there are not only low palm-trees and bushes there, but also a spring, of which *Robinson* says (*Pal. i. p. 223*) that it is the only spring in the neighbourhood, and yields tolerably good water, though somewhat brackish, the whole year round. But *Hadhra* does not answer to the

Hebrew הִצֵּר, to shut in, from which *Hazereth* (enclosures) is derived; and there are springs in many other places in the desert of *et Tih* with both drinkable and brackish water. Moreover, the situation of this well does not point to *Hadhra*, which is only two days' journey from Sinai, so that the Israelites might at any rate have pitched their tents by this well after their first journey of three days (*Numbers* 10:33), whereas they took three days to reach the graves of lust, and then marched from thence to *Hazereth*. Consequently they would only have come to *Hadhra* on the supposition that they had been about to take the road to the sea, and intended to march along the coast to the *Arabah*, and so on through the *Arabah* to the *Dead Sea* (*Robinson*, p. 223); in which case, however, they would not have arrived at *Kadesh*. The conjecture that *Kibroth-hattaavah* is the same as *Di-Sahab* (*Deut.* 1:1), the modern *Dahab* (*Mersa Dahab, Minna el Dahab*), to the east of Sinai, on the *Elanitic Gulf*, is still more

untenable. For what end could be answered by such a circuitous route, which, instead of bringing the Israelites nearer to the end of their journey, would have taken them to Mecca rather than to Canaan? As the Israelites proceeded from Hazeroth to Kadesh in the desert of Paran (Numbers 13:3 and 26), they must have marched from Sinai to Canaan by the most direct route, through the midst of the great desert of et Tih, most probably by the desert road which leads from the *Wady es Sheikh* into the *Wady ez-Zuranuk*, which breaks through the southern border mountains of et Tih, and passes on through the *Wady ez-Zalakah* over *el Ain* to *Bir-et-Themmed*, and then due north past *Jebel Araif* to the Hebron road. By this route they could go from Horeb to Kadesh Barnea in eleven days (Deut. 1:2), and it is here that we are to seek for the two stations in question. *Hazeroth* is probably to be found, as *Fries* and *Kurtz* suppose, in *Bir-et-Themmed*, and *Kibroth-hattaavah* in the neighbourhood of the southern border mountains of *et Tih*.

## Numbers 12

### *Rebellion of Miriam and Aaron Against Moses.*—Ch. 12.

**Numbers 12:1–3.** All the rebellions of the people hitherto had arisen from dissatisfaction with the privations of the desert march, and had been directed against Jehovah rather than against Moses. And if, in the case of the last one, at *Kibroth-hattaavah*, even Moses was about to lose heart under the heavy burden of his office; the faithful covenant God had given the whole nation a practical proof, in the manner in which He provided him support in the seventy elders, that He had not only laid the burden of the whole nation upon His servant Moses, but had also communicated to him the power of His Spirit, which was requisite to enable him to carry this burden. Thus not only was his heart filled with new courage when about to despair, but his official position in relation to all the Israelites was greatly exalted. This elevation of Moses excited envy on the part of his brother

and sister, whom God had also richly endowed and placed so high, that Miriam was distinguished as a prophetess above all the women of Israel, whilst Aaron had been raised by his investiture with the high-priesthood into the spiritual head of the whole nation. But the pride of the natural heart was not satisfied with this. They would dispute with their brother Moses the pre-eminence of his special calling and his exclusive position, which they might possibly regard themselves as entitled to contest with him not only as his brother and sister, but also as the nearest supporters of his vocation. Miriam was the instigator of the open rebellion, as we may see both from the fact that her name stands before that of Aaron, and also

from the use of the feminine verb **תִּדְבֶר** in v. 1.

Aaron followed her, being no more able to resist the suggestions of his sister, than he had formerly been to resist the desire of the people for a golden idol (Ex. 32). Miriam found an occasion for the manifestation of her discontent in the Cushite wife whom Moses had taken. This wife cannot have been Zipporah the Midianite: for even though Miriam might possibly have called her a Cushite, whether because the Cushite tribes dwelt in Arabia, or in a contemptuous sense as a Moor or Hamite, the author would certainly not have confirmed this at all events inaccurate, if not contemptuous epithet, by adding, “*for he had taken a Cushite wife;*” to say nothing of the improbability of Miriam having made the marriage which her brother had contracted when he was a fugitive in a foreign land, long before he was called by God, the occasion of reproach so many years afterwards. It would be quite different if, a short time before, probably after the death of Zipporah, he had contracted a second marriage with a Cushite woman, who either sprang from the Cushites dwelling in Arabia, or from the foreigners who had come out of Egypt along with the Israelites. This marriage would not have been wrong in itself, as God had merely forbidden the Israelites to marry the daughters of Canaan (Ex. 34:16), even if Moses had not contracted it “with the deliberate intention of

setting forth through this marriage with a Hamite woman the fellowship between Israel and the heathen, so far as it could exist under the law; and thus practically exemplifying in his own person that equality between the foreigners and Israel which the law demanded in various ways" (*Baumgarten*), or of "prefiguring by this example the future union of Israel with the most remote of the heathen," as *O. v. Gerlach* and many of the fathers suppose. In the taunt of the brother and sister, however, we meet with that carnal exaggeration of the Israelitish nationality which forms so all-pervading a characteristic of this nation, and is the more reprehensible the more it rests upon the ground of nature rather than upon the spiritual calling of Israel (*Kurtz*).

**Numbers 12:2.** Miriam and Aaron said, "*Hath Jehovah then spoken only by Moses, and not also by us?*" Are not we—the high priest Aaron, who brings the rights of the congregation before Jehovah in the Urim and Thummim (Ex. 28:30), and the prophetess Miriam (Ex. 15:20)—also organs and mediators of divine revelation? "They are proud of the prophetic gift, which ought rather to have fostered modesty in them. But such is the depravity of human nature, that they not only abuse the gifts of God towards the brother whom they despise, but by an ungodly and sacrilegious glorification extol the gifts themselves in such a manner as to hide the Author of the gifts" (*Calvin*).—"And Jehovah heard." This is stated for the purpose of preparing the way for the judicial interposition of God. When God hears what is wrong, He must proceed to stop it by punishment. Moses might also have heard what they said, but "*the man Moses was very meek* (*πραύς*, LXX, *mitis*, Vulg.; not 'plagued,' *geplagt*, as *Luther* renders it), *more than all men upon the earth.*" No one approached Moses in meekness, because no one was raised so high by God as he was. The higher the position which a man occupies among his fellow-men, the harder is it for the natural man to bear attacks upon himself with meekness, especially if they are directed against his official rank and honour. This remark as to the character of Moses serves to

bring out to view the position of the person attacked, and points out the reason why Moses not only abstained from all self-defence, but did not even cry to God for vengeance on account of the injury that had been done to him. Because he was the meekest of all men, he could calmly leave this attack upon himself to the all-wise and righteous Judge, who had both called and qualified him for his office. "For this is the idea of the eulogium of his meekness. It is as if Moses had said that he had swallowed the injury in silence, inasmuch as he had imposed a law of patience upon himself because of his meekness" (*Calvin*).

The self-praise on the part of Moses, which many have discovered in this description of his character, and on account of which some even of the earlier expositors regarded this verse as a later gloss, whilst more recent critics have used it as an argument against the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, is not an expression of vain self-display, or a glorification of his own gifts and excellences, which he prided himself upon possessing above all others. It is simply a statement, which was indispensable to a full and correct interpretation of all the circumstances, and which was made quite objectively, with reference to the character which Moses had not given to himself but had acquired through the grace of God, and which he never falsified from the very time of his calling until the day of his death, either at the rebellion of the people at Kibroth-hattaavah (Numbers 11), or at the water of strife (at Kadesh (Numbers 20). His despondency under the heavy burden of his office in the former case (Numbers 11) speaks rather for than against the meekness of his character; and the sin at Kadesh (Numbers 20) consisted simply in the fact, that he suffered himself to be brought to doubt either the omnipotence of God, or the possibility of divine help, in account of the unbelief of the people. No doubt it was only such a man as Moses who could speak of himself in such a way,—a man who had so entirely sacrificed his own personality to the office assigned him by the Lord, that he was ready at any moment to stake

his life for the cause and glory of the Lord (cf. Numbers 11:15, and Ex. 32:32), and of whom *Calmet* observes with as much truth as force, “As he praises himself here without pride, so he will blame himself elsewhere with humility,”—a man or God whose character is not to be measured by the standard of ordinary men (cf. *Hengstenberg, Dissertations*, vol. ii. pp. 141ff.).

**Numbers 12:4–10.** Jehovah summoned the opponents of His servant to come at once before His judgment-seat. He commanded Moses, Aaron, and Miriam suddenly to come out of the camp (see at Numbers 11:30) to the tabernacle. Then He Himself came down in a pillar of cloud to the door of the tabernacle, i.e., to the entrance to the court, not to the dwelling itself, and called Aaron and Miriam out, i.e., commanded them to come out of the court, and said to them (vv. 6ff.): “*If there is a prophet of Jehovah to you (i.e., if you have one), I make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in*

*a dream* (בִּדְאוֹ, lit., “in him,” inasmuch as a revelation in a dream fell within the inner sphere of the soul-life). *Not so My servant Moses: he is approved in My whole house; mouth to mouth I speak to him, and as an appearance, and that not in enigmas; and he sees the form of Jehovah. Why are ye not afraid to speak against My servant, against Moses?*” נְבִיאָכֶם = נְבִיאָ לְכֶם

לְכֶם, the suffix used with the noun instead of the separate pronoun in the dative, as in Gen. 39:21, Lev. 15:3, etc. The noun *Jehovah* is in all probability to be taken as a genitive, in

connection with the word נְבִיאָכֶם (“a prophet to you”), as it is in the LXX and *Vulg.*, and not to be construed with the words which follow (“*I Jehovah will make Myself known*”). The position of *Jehovah* at the head of the clause without a

preceding אֲנֹכִי (I) would be much more remarkable than the separation of the dependent noun from the governing noun by the suffix, which occurs in other cases also (e.g., Lev. 6:3; 26:42, etc.); moreover, it would be by

no means suited to the sense, as no such emphasis is laid upon the fact that it was *Jehovah* who made Himself known, as to require or even justify such a construction. The “*whole house of Jehovah*” (v. 7) is not “primarily His dwelling, the holy tent” (*Baumgarten*),—for, in that case, the word “whole” would be quite superfluous,—but the whole house of Israel, or the covenant nation regarded as a kingdom, to the administration and government of which Moses had been called: as a matter of fact, therefore, the whole economy of the Old Testament, having its central point in the holy tent, which Jehovah had caused to be built as the dwelling-place of His name. It did not terminate, however, in the service of the sanctuary, as we may see from the fact that God did not make the priests who were entrusted with the duties of the sanctuary the organs of His saving revelation, but raised up and called prophets after Moses for that purpose. Compare the expression in Heb. 3:6, “Whose

house we are.” נֶאֱמָרְךָ with בְּ does not mean to be, or become, entrusted with anything (*Baumgarten, Knobel*), but simply to be lasting, firm, constant, in a local or temporal sense (Deut. 28:59; 1 Sam. 2:35; 2 Sam. 7:16, etc.); in a historical sense, to prove or attest one’s self (Gen. 42:20); and in an ethical sense, to be found proof, trustworthy, true (Ps. 78:8; 1 Sam. 3:20; 22:14: see *Delitzsch* on Heb. 3:2). In the participle, therefore, it signifies proved, faithful, πιστός (LXX). “*Mouth to mouth*” answers to the “face to face” in Ex. 33:11 (cf. Deut. 34:10), i.e., without any mediation or reserve, but with the same closeness and freedom with which friends converse together (Ex. 33:11). This is still further strengthened and elucidated by the words in apposition, “*in the form of seeing (appearance), and not in riddles,*” i.e., visibly, and not in a dark, hidden, enigmatical way.

מְרֵאָה is an accusative defining the mode, and signifies here not vision, as in v. 6, but *aspectus*, view, sight; for it forms an antithesis to בְּמֵרֵאָה in v. 6. “*The form (Eng. similitude)*



of Jehovah" was not the essential nature of God, His unveiled glory,—for this no mortal man can see (vid., Ex. 33:18ff.),—but a form which manifested the invisible God to the eye of man in a clearly discernible mode, and which was essentially different, not only from the visionary sight of God in the form of a man (Ezek. 1:26; Dan. 7:9 and 13), but also from the appearances of God in the outward world of the senses, in the person and form of the angel of Jehovah, and stood in the same relation to these two forms of revelation, so far as directness and clearness were concerned, as the sight of a person in a dream to that of the actual figure of the person himself. God talked with Moses without figure, in the clear distinctness of a spiritual communication, whereas to the prophets He only revealed Himself through the medium of ecstasy or dream.

Through this utterance on the part of Jehovah, Moses is placed above all the prophets, in relation to God and also to the whole nation. The divine revelation to the prophets is thereby restricted to the two forms of inward intuition (vision and dream). It follows from this, that it had always a visionary character, though it might vary in intensity; and therefore that it had always more or less obscurity about it, because the clearness of self-consciousness and the distinct perception of an external world, both receded before the inward intuition, in a dream as well as in a vision. The prophets were consequently simply organs, through whom Jehovah made known His counsel and will at certain times, and in relation to special circumstances and features in the development of His kingdom. It was not so with Moses. Jehovah had placed him over all His house, had called him to be the founder and organizer of the kingdom established in Israel through his mediatorial service, and had found him faithful in His service. With this servant (θεράπων, LXX) of His, He spake mouth to mouth, without a figure or figurative cloak, with the distinctness of a human interchange of thought; so that at any time he could inquire of God and wait for the divine reply. Hence Moses was not a prophet of Jehovah, like many others, not even

merely the first and highest prophet, *primus inter pares*, but stood above all the prophets, as the founder of the theocracy, and mediator of the Old Covenant. Upon this unparalleled relation of Moses to God and the theocracy, so clearly expressed in the verses before us, the Rabbins have justly founded their view as to the higher grade of inspiration in the *Thorah*. This view is fully confirmed through the history of the Old Testament kingdom of God, and the relation in which the writings of the prophets stand to those of Moses. The prophets subsequent to Moses simply continued to build upon the foundation which Moses laid. And if Moses stood in this unparalleled relation to the Lord, Miriam and Aaron sinned grievously against him, when speaking as they did. V. 9. After this address, "*the wrath of Jehovah burned against them, and He went.*" As a judge, withdrawing from the judgment-seat when he has pronounced his sentence, so Jehovah went, by the cloud in which He had come down withdrawing from the tabernacle, and ascending up on high. And at the same moment, Miriam, the instigator of the rebellion against her brother Moses, was covered with leprosy, and became white as snow.

**Numbers 12:11–16.** When Aaron saw his sister smitten in this way, he said to Moses, "*Alas! my lord, I beseech thee, lay not this sin upon us, for we have done foolishly;*" i.e., let us not bear its punishment. "*Let her (Miriam) not be as the dead thing, on whose coming out of its mother's womb half its flesh is consumed;*" i.e., like a still-born child, which comes into the world half decomposed. His reason for making this comparison was, that leprosy produces decomposition in the living body.

**Numbers 12:13.** Moses, with his mildness, took compassion upon his sister, upon whom this punishment had fallen, and cried to the Lord, "*O God, I beseech Thee, heal her.*" The connection of the particle אֲנִי with אֱלֹהִים is certainly unusual, but yet it is analogous to the construction with such exclamations as אֱלֹהִים

(Jer. 4:31; 45:3) and הִנֵּה (Gen. 12:11; 16:2, etc.); since אֵל in the vocative is to be regarded as equivalent to an exclamation; whereas the alteration into אֵלָּא, as proposed by *J. D.*

*Michaelis* and *Knobel*, does not even give a fitting sense, apart altogether from the fact, that the repetition of אֵלָּא after the verb, with אֵלָּא before it, would be altogether unexampled.

**Numbers 12:14, 15.** Jehovah hearkened to His servant's prayer, though not without inflicting deep humiliation upon Miriam. "If her father had but spit in her face, would she not be ashamed seven days?" i.e., keep herself hidden from Me out of pure shame. She was to be shut outside the camp, to be excluded from the congregation as a leprous person for seven days, and then to be received in again. Thus restoration and purification from her leprosy were promised to her after the endurance of seven days' punishment. Leprosy was the just punishment for her sin. In her haughty exaggeration of the worth of her own prophetic gift, she had placed herself on a par with Moses, the divinely appointed head of the whole nation, and exalted herself above the congregation of the Lord. For this she was afflicted with a disease which shut her out of the number of the members of the people of God, and thus actually excluded from the camp; so that she could only be received back again after she had been healed, and by a formal purification. The latter followed as a matter of course, from Lev. 13 and 14, and did not need to be specially referred to here.

**Numbers 12:15b, 16.** The people did not proceed any farther till the restoration of Miriam. After this they departed from Hazeroth, and encamped in the desert of *Paran*, namely at Kadesh, on the southern boundary of Canaan. This is evident from Numbers 13, more especially v. 26, as compared with Deut. 1:19ff., where it is stated not merely that the spies, who were sent out from this place of encampment to Canaan, returned to the congregation at

Kadesh, but that they set out from Kadesh-Barnea for Canaan, because there the Israelites had come to the mountains of the Amorites, which God had promised them for an inheritance.

With regard to the situation of *Kadesh*, it has already been observed at Gen. 14:7, that it is probably to be sought for in the neighbourhood of the fountain of *Ain Kades*, which was discovered by *Rowland*, to the south of *Bir Seba* and *Khalasa*, on the heights of *Jebel Helal*, i.e., at the north-west corner of the mountain land of *Azazimeh*, which is more closely described at Numbers 10:12 (see pp. 688, 689), where the western slopes of this highland region sink gently down into the undulating surface of the desert, which stretches thence to *El Arish*, with a breadth of about six hours' journey, and keeps the way open between Arabia Petraea and the south of Palestine. "In the northern third of this western slope, the mountains recede so as to leave a free space for a plain of about an hour's journey in breadth, which comes towards the east, and to which access is obtained through one or more of the larger wadys that are to be seen here (such as *Retemat*, *Kusaimeh*, *el Ain*, *Muweileh*)." At the north-eastern background of this plain, which forms almost a rectangular figure of nine miles by five, or ten by six, stretching from west to east, large enough to receive the camp of a wandering people, and about twelve miles to the E.S.E. of *Muweileh*, there rises, like a large solitary mass, at the edge of the mountains which run on towards the north, a bare rock, at the foot of which there is a copious spring, falling in ornamental cascades into the bed of a brook, which is lost in the sand about 300 or 400 yards to the west. This place still bears the ancient name of *Kudēs*. There can be no doubt as to the identity of this *Kudēs* and the biblical *Kadesh*. The situation agrees with all the statements in the Bible concerning *Kadesh*: for example, that Israel had then reached the border of the promised land; also that the spies who were sent out from *Kadesh* returned thither by coming from *Hebron* to the wilderness of *Paran* (Numbers 13:26); and lastly, according to the assertions of

the Bedouins, as quoted by *Rowland*, this Kudes was ten or eleven days' journey from Sinai (in perfect harmony with Deut. 1:2), and was connected by passable wadys with Mount Hor. The Israelites proceeded, no doubt, through the wady *Retemat*, i.e., *Rithmah* (see at Numbers 33:18), into the plain of Kadesh. (On the town of Kadesh, see at Numbers 20:16.)

### Numbers 13

#### *Spies Sent Out. Murmuring of the People, and Their Punishment.*—Ch. 13 and 14.

**Numbers 13–14.** When they had arrived at Kadesh, in the desert of Paran (Numbers 13:26), Moses sent out spies by the command of God, and according to the wishes of the people, to explore the way by which they could enter into Canaan, and also the nature of the land, of its cities, and of its population (Numbers 13:1–20). The men who were sent out passed through the land, from the south to the northern frontier, and on their return reported that the land was no doubt one of pre-eminent goodness, but that it was inhabited by a strong people, who had giants among them, and were in possession of very large fortified towns (vv. 21–29); whereupon Caleb declared that it was quite possible to conquer it, whilst the others despaired of overcoming the Canaanites, and spread an evil report among the people concerning the land (vv. 30–33). The congregation then raised a loud lamentation, and went so far in their murmuring against Moses and Aaron, as to speak without reserve or secrecy of deposing Moses, and returning to Egypt under another leader: they even wanted to stone Joshua and Caleb, who tried to calm the excited multitude, and urged them to trust in the Lord. But suddenly the glory of the Lord interposed with a special manifestation of judgment (Numbers 14:1–10). Jehovah made known to Moses His resolution to destroy the rebellious nation, but suffered Himself to be moved by the intercession of Moses so far as to promise that He would preserve the nation, though He would exclude the murmuring

multitude from the promised land (vv. 11–25). He then directed Moses and Aaron to proclaim to the people the following punishment for their repeated rebellion: that they should bear their iniquity for forty years in the wilderness; that the whole nation that had come out of Egypt should die there, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua; and that only their children should enter the promised land (vv. 26–39). The people were shocked at this announcement, and resolved to force a way into Canaan; but, as Moses predicted, they were beaten by the Canaanites and Amalekites, and driven back to Hormah (vv. 40–45).

These events form a grand turning-point in the history of Israel, in which the whole of the future history of the covenant nation is typically reflected. The constantly repeated unfaithfulness of the nation could not destroy the faithfulness of God, or alter His purposes of salvation. In wrath Jehovah remembered mercy; through judgment He carried out His plan of salvation, that all the world might know that no flesh was righteous before Him, and that the unbelief and unfaithfulness of men could not overturn the truth of God.

**Numbers 13:1–20.** Despatch of the Spies of Canaan.—Vv. 1ff. The command of Jehovah, to send out men to spy out the land of Canaan, was occasioned, according to the account given by Moses in Deut. 1:22ff., by a proposal of the congregation, which pleased Moses, so that he laid the matter before the Lord, who then commanded him to send out for this purpose, “*of every tribe of their fathers a man, every one a ruler among them*, i.e., none but men who were princes in their tribes, who held the prominent position of princes, i.e., distinguished persons of rank; or, as it is stated in v. 3, “*heads of the children of Israel*,” i.e., not the tribe-princes of the twelve tribes, but those men, out of the total number of the heads of the tribes and families of Israel, who were the most suitable for such a mission, though the selection was to be made in such a manner that every tribe should be represented by one of its own chiefs. That there were none of the twelve tribe-princes among

them is apparent from a comparison of their names (vv. 4–15) with the (totally different) names of the tribe-princes (Numbers 1:3ff., 7:12ff.). Caleb and Joshua are the only spies that are known. The order, in which the tribes are placed in the list of the names in vv. 4–15, differs from that in Numbers 1:5–15 only in the fact that in v. 10 Zebulun is separated from the other sons of Leah, and in v. 11 Manasseh is separated from Ephraim. The expression “of the tribe of Joseph,” in v. 11, stands for “of the children of Joseph,” in Numbers 1:10; 34:23. At the close of the list it is still further stated, that Moses called *Hoshea* (i.e., help), the son of Nun, *Jehoshua*, contracted into *Joshua* (i.e., Jehovah-help, equivalent to, whose help is Jehovah). This statement does not present any such discrepancy, when compared with Ex. 17:9, 13; 24:13; 32:17; 33:11, and Numbers 11:28, where Joshua bears this name as the servant of Moses at a still earlier period, as to point to any diversity of authorship. As there is nothing of a genealogical character in any of these passages, so as to warrant us in expecting to find the family name of Joshua in them, the name Joshua, by which Hosea had become best known in history, could be used proleptically in them all. On the other hand, however, it is not distinctly stated in the verse before us, that this was the occasion on which Moses gave Hosea the new name of Joshua. As the *Vav consec.* frequently points out merely the order of thought, the words may be understood without hesitation in the following sense: These are the names borne by the heads of the tribes to be sent out as spies, as they stand in the family registers according to their descent; Hosea, however, was named Joshua by Moses; which would not by any means imply that the alteration in the name had not been made till then. It is very probable that Moses may have given him the new name either before or after the defeat of the Amalekites (Ex. 17:9ff.), or when he took him into his service, though it has not been mentioned before; whilst here the circumstances themselves required that it should be stated that Hosea, as he was called in the list prepared and entered in the

documentary record according to the genealogical tables of the tribes, had received from Moses the name of Joshua. In vv. 17–20 Moses gives them the necessary instructions, defining more clearly the motive which the congregation had assigned for sending them out, namely, that they might search out the way into the land and to its towns (Deut. 1:22). “*Get you up there* (הַרְיָ in the south country, and go up to the mountain.” *Negeb*, i.e., south country, lit., dryness, aridity, from נֹגֵב, to be dry or arid (in *Syr., Chald., and Samar.*). Hence the dry, parched land, in contrast to the well-watered country (Josh. 15:19; Judg. 1:15), was the name given to the southern district of Canaan, which forms the transition from the desert to the strictly cultivated land, and bears for the most part the character of a steppe, in which tracts of sand and heath are intermixed with shrubs, grass, and vegetables, whilst here and there corn is also cultivated; a district therefore which was better fitted for grazing than for agriculture, though it contained a number of towns and villages (see at Josh. 15:21–32). “*The mountain*” is the mountainous part of Palestine, which was inhabited by Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites (v. 29), and was called the mountains of the Amorites, on account of their being the strongest of the Canaanitish tribes (Deut. 1:7, 19ff.). It is not to be restricted, as *Knobel* supposes, to the limits of the so-called mountains of Judah (Josh. 15:48–62), but included the mountains of Israel or Ephraim also (Josh. 11:21; 20:7), and formed, according to Deut. 1:7, the backbone of the whole land of Canaan up to Lebanon.

**Numbers 13:18.** They were to see the land, “what it was,” i.e., what was its character, and the people that dwelt in it, whether they were strong, i.e., courageous and brave, or weak, i.e., spiritless and timid, and whether they were little or great, i.e., numerically; (v. 19) what the land was, whether good or bad, sc., with regard to climate and cultivation, and whether the towns were camps, i.e., open villages and hamlets, or fortified places; also (v. 20) whether

the land was fat or lean, i.e., whether it had a fertile soil or not, and whether there were trees in it or not. All this they were to search out

courageously (הִתְחַזֵּק, to show one's self courageous in any occupation), and to fetch (some) of the fruits of the land, as it was the time of the first-ripe grapes. In Palestine the first grapes ripen as early as August, and sometimes even in July (vid., *Robinson*, ii. 100, ii. 611), whilst the vintage takes place in September and October.

**Numbers 13:21–33.** Journey of the Spies; Their Return, and Report.—V. 21. In accordance with the instructions they had received, the men who had been sent out passed through the land, from the desert of Zin to Rehob, in the neighbourhood of Hamath, i.e., in its entire extent from south to north. The “*Desert of Zin*” (which occurs not only here, but in Numbers 20:1; 27:14; 33:36; 34:3, 4; Deut. 32:51, and Josh. 15:1, 3) was the name given to the northern edge of the great desert of Paran, viz., the broad ravine of Wady *Murreh* (see p. 689), which separates the lofty and precipitous northern border of the table-land of the Azazimeh from the southern border of the Rakhma plateau, i.e., of the southernmost plateau of the mountains of the Amorites (or the mountains of Judah), and runs from Jebel *Madarah* (*Moddera*) on the east, to the plain of Kadesh, which forms part of the desert of Zin (cf. Numbers 27:14; 33:36; Deut. 32:51), on the west. The south frontier of Canaan passed through this from the southern end of the Dead Sea, along the Wady *el Murreh* to the Wady *el Arish* (Numbers 34:3).—“*Rehob, to come (coming) to Hamath,*” i.e., where you enter the province of Hamath, on the northern boundary of Canaan, is hardly one of the two Rehobs in the tribe of Asher (Josh. 19:28 and 30), but most likely *Beth-Rehob* in the tribe of Naphtali, which was in the neighbourhood of *Dan Lais*, the modern *Tell el Kadhy* (Judg. 18:28), and which *Robinson* imagined that he had identified in the ruins of the castle of *Hunin* or *Honin*, in the village of the same name, to the south-west of *Tell el Kadhy*, on the range of mountains

which bound the plain towards the west above Lake *Huleh* (*Bibl. Researches*, p. 371). In support of this conjecture, he laid the principal stress upon the fact that the direct road to Hamath through the Wady *et Teim* and the *Bekaa* commences here. The only circumstance which it is hard to reconcile with this conjecture is, that Beth-Rehob is never mentioned in the Old Testament, with the exception of Judg. 18:28, either among the fortified towns of the Canaanites or in the wars of the Israelites with the Syrians and Assyrians, and therefore does not appear to have been a place of such importance as we should naturally be led to suppose from the character of this castle, the very situation of which points to a bold, commanding fortress (see Lynch's Expedition), and where there are still remains of its original foundations built of large square stones, hewn and grooved, and reminding one of the antique and ornamental edifices of Solomon's times (cf. *Ritter, Erdkunde*, xv. pp. 242ff.).—*Hamath* is *Epiphania* on the *Orontes*, now *Hamah* (see at Gen. 10:18).

After the general statement, that the spies went through the whole land from the southern to the northern frontier, two facts are mentioned in vv. 22–24, which occurred in connection with their mission, and were of great importance to the whole congregation. These single incidents are linked on, however, in a truly Hebrew style, to what precedes, viz., by an *imperfect* with *Vav consec.*, just in the same manner in which, in 1 Kings 6:9, 15, the detailed account of the building of the temple is linked on to the previous statement, that Solomon built the temple and finished it; so that the true rendering would be, “now they ascended in the south country and came to Hebron (וַיָּבֹאוּ) is

apparently an error in writing for וַיָּבֹאוּ), and

there were יְלִידֵי הָעֵנָק, the children of Anak,” three of whom are mentioned by name. These three, who were afterwards expelled by Caleb, when the land was divided and the city of Hebron was given to him for an inheritance

(Josh. 15:14; Judg. 1:20), were descendants of *Arbah*, the lord of Hebron, from whom the city received its name of *Kirjath-Arbah*, or city of Arbah, and who is described in Josh. 14:15 as “the great (i.e., the greatest) man among the Anakim,” and in Josh. 15:13 as the “father of Anak,” i.e., the founder of the Anakite family there. For it is evident enough that **הַעֲנָק** (*Anak*) is not the proper name of a man in these passages, but the name of a family or tribe, from the fact that in v. 33, where Anak’s sons are spoken of in a general and indefinite manner, **בְּנֵי עֲנָק** has not the article; also from the fact that the three Anakites who lived in Hebron are almost always called **יְלִידֵי הַעֲנָק**, Anak’s born (vv. 22, 28), and that **בְּנֵי הַעֲנָק** (sons of Anak), in Josh. 15:14, is still further defined by the phrase **יְלִידֵי הַעֲנָק** (children of Anak); and lastly, from the fact that in the place of “sons of Anak,” we find “sons of the Anakim” in Deut. 1:28 and 9:2, and the “Anakim” in Deut. 2:10; 11:21; Josh. 14:12, etc. *Anak* is supposed to signify long-necked; but this does not preclude the possibility of the founder of the tribe having borne this name. The origin of the *Anakites* is involved in obscurity. In Deut. 2:10, 11, they are classed with the *Emim* and *Rephaim* on account of their gigantic stature, and probably reckoned as belonging to the pre-Canaanitish inhabitants of the land, of whom it is impossible to decide whether they were of Semitic origin or descendants of Ham (see p. 130). It is also doubtful, whether the names found here in vv. 21, 28, and in Josh. 15:14, are the names of individuals, i.e., of chiefs of the Anakites, or the names of Anakite tribes. The latter supposition is favoured by the circumstance, that the same names occur even after the capture of Hebron by Caleb, or at least fifty years after the event referred to here. With regard to Hebron, it is still further observed in v. 22b, that it was built seven years before *Zoan* in Egypt. *Zoan*—the Tanis of the Greeks and

Romans, the *San* of the Arabs, which is called *Jani, Jane* in Coptic writings—was situated upon the eastern side of the Tanitic arm of the Nile, not far from its mouth (see *Ges. Thes.* p. 1177), and was the residence of Pharaoh in the time of Moses (see p. 337). The date of its erection is unknown; but Hebron was in existence as early as Abraham’s time (Gen. 13:18; 23:2ff.).

**Numbers 13:23.** The spies also came into the valley of *Eshcol*, where they gathered pomegranates and figs, and also cut down a vine-branch with grapes upon it, which two persons carried upon a pole, most likely on account of its extraordinary size. Bunches of grapes are still met with in Palestine, weighing as much as eight, ten, or twelve pounds, the grapes themselves being as large as our smaller plums (cf. *Tobler Denkblätter*, pp. 111, 112). The grapes of Hebron are especially celebrated. To the north of this city, on the way to Jerusalem, you pass through a valley with vineyards on the hills on both sides, containing the largest and finest grapes in the land, and with pomegranates, figs, and other fruits in great profusion (*Robinson, Palestine*, i. 316, compared with i. 314 and ii. 442). This valley is supposed, and not without good ground, to be the *Eshcol* of this chapter, which received its name of *Eshcol* (cluster of grapes), according to v. 24, from the bunch of grapes which was cut down there by the spies. This statement, of course, applies to the Israelites, and would therefore still hold good, even if the conjecture were a well-founded one, that this valley received its name originally from the *Eshcol* mentioned in Gen. 14:13, 24, as the terebinth grove did from *Mamre* the brother of *Eshcol*.

**Numbers 13:25ff.** In forty days the spies returned to the camp at Kadesh (see at Numbers 16:6), and reported the great fertility of the land (“it floweth with milk and honey,” see at Ex. 3:8), pointing, at the same time, to the fruit they had brought with them;

“nevertheless,” they added (**אָפֶס כִּי**, “only that”), “the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are fortified, very large: and,

moreover, we saw the children of Anak there." Amalekites dwelt in the south (see at Gen. 36:12); Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites in the mountains (see at Gen. 10:15, 16); and Canaanites by the (Mediterranean) Sea and on the side of the Jordan, i.e., in the Arabah or Ghor (see at Gen. 13:7 and 10:15–18).

**Numbers 13:30.** As these tidings respecting the towns and inhabitants of Canaan were of a character to excite the people, Caleb calmed them before Moses by saying, "*We will go up and take it; for we shall overcome it.*" The fact that Caleb only is mentioned, though, according to Numbers 14:6, Joshua also stood by his side, may be explained on the simple ground, that at first Caleb was the only one to speak and maintain the possibility of conquering Canaan.

**Numbers 13:31.** But his companions were of an opposite opinion, and declared that the people in Canaan were stronger than the Israelites, and therefore it was impossible to go up to it.

**Numbers 13:32.** Thus they spread an evil report of the land among the Israelites, by exaggerating the difficulties of the conquest in their unbelieving despair, and describing Canaan as a land which "*ate up its inhabitants.*" Their meaning certainly was not "that the wretched inhabitants were worn out by the laborious task of cultivating it, or that the land was pestilential on account of the inclemency of the weather, or that the cultivation of the land was difficult, and attended with many evils," as Calvin maintains. Their only wish was to lay stress upon the difficulties and dangers connected with the conquest and maintenance of the land, on account of the tribes inhabiting and surrounding it: the land was an apple of discord, because of its fruitfulness and situation; and as the different nations strove for its possession, its inhabitants wasted away (Cler., Ros., O. v. Gerlach). The people, they

added, are אֲנָשֵׁי מְדוֹת, "*men of measures,*" i.e., of tall stature (cf. Isa. 45:14), "*and there we saw the Nephilim, i.e., primeval tyrants* (see at Gen. 6:4), *Anak's sons, giants of Nephilim, and we*

*seemed to ourselves and to them as small as grasshoppers.*"

## Numbers 14

**Numbers 14:1–10.** Uproar among the People.—Vv. 1–4. This appalling description of Canaan had so depressing an influence upon the whole congregation (cf. Deut. 1:28: they "made their heart melt," i.e., threw them into utter despair), that they raised a loud cry, and wept in the night in consequence. The whole nation murmured against Moses and Aaron their two leaders, saying "*Would that we had died in Egypt or in this wilderness! Why will Jehovah bring us into this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should become a prey* (be made slaves by the enemy; cf. Deut. 1:27, 28)? *Let us rather return into Egypt! We will appoint a captain, they said one to another, and go back to Egypt.*"

**Numbers 14:5–9.** At this murmuring, which was growing into open rebellion, Moses and Aaron fell upon their faces before the whole of the assembled congregation, namely, to pour out their distress before the Lord, and move Him to interpose; that is to say, after they had made an unsuccessful attempt, as we may supply from Deut. 1:29–31, to cheer up the people, by pointing them to the help they had thus far received from God. "In such distress, nothing remained but to pour out their desires before God; offering their prayer in public, however, and in the sight of all the people, in the hope of turning their minds" (Calvin). Joshua and Caleb, who had gone with the others to explore the land, also rent their clothes, as a sign of their deep distress at the rebellious attitude of the people (see at Lev. 10:6), and tried to convince them of the goodness and glory of the land they had travelled through, and to incite them to trust in the Lord. "*If Jehovah take pleasure in us;*" they said, "*He will bring us into this land. Only rebel not ye against Jehovah, neither fear ye that people of the land; for they are our food;*" i.e., we can and shall swallow them up, or easily destroy them (cf. Numbers 22:4; 24:8; Deut. 7:16; Ps. 14:4). "*Their shadow is departed from them, and*

*Jehovah is with us: fear them not!*" "Their shadow" is the shelter and protection of God (cf. Ps. 91, 121:5). The shadow, which defends from the burning heat of the sun, was a very natural figure in the sultry East, to describe defence from injury, a refuge from danger and destruction (Isa. 30:2). The protection of God had departed from the Canaanites, because God had determined to destroy them when the measure of their iniquity was full (Gen. 15:16; cf. Ex. 34:24; Lev. 18:25; 20:23). But the excited people resolved to stone them, when Jehovah interposed with His judgment, and His glory appeared in the tabernacle to all the Israelites; that is to say, the majesty of God flashed out before the eyes of the people in a light which suddenly burst forth from the tabernacle (see at Ex. 16:10).

**Numbers 14:11–25.** Intercession of Moses.—Vv. 11, 12. Jehovah resented the conduct of the people as base contempt of His deity, and as utter mistrust of Him, notwithstanding all the signs which He had wrought in the midst of the nation; and declared that He would smite the rebellious people with pestilence, and destroy them, and make of Moses a greater and still mightier people. This was just what He had done before, when the rebellion took place at Sinai (Ex. 32:10). But Moses, as a servant who was faithful over the whole house of God, and therefore sought not his own honour, but the honour of his God alone, stood in the breach on this occasion also (Ps. 106:23), with a similar intercessory prayer to that which he had presented at Horeb, except that on this occasion he pleaded the honour of God among the heathen, and the glorious revelation of the divine nature with which he had been favoured at Sinai, as a motive for sparing the rebellious nation (vv. 13–19; cf. Ex. 32:11–13, and 34:6, 7). The first he expressed in these words (vv. 13ff.): "Not only have the Egyptians heard that Thou hast brought out this people from among them with Thy might; they have also told it to the inhabitants of this land. They (the Egyptians and the other nations) have heard that Thou, Jehovah, art in the midst of this people; that Thou, Jehovah, appearest eye to eye, and Thy

cloud stands over them, and Thou goest before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Now, if Thou shouldst slay this people as one man, the nations which have heard the tidings of Thee would say, Because Jehovah was not able to bring this people into the land which He swore to them, He has slain them in the desert." In that case God would be regarded by the heathen as powerless, and His honour would be impaired (cf. Deut. 32:27; Josh. 7:9). It was for the sake of His own honour that God, at a later time, did not allow the Israelites to perish in exile (cf. Isa. 48:9, 11; 52:5; Ezek.

36:22, 23).—וְשָׁמְעוּ ... וְאָמְרוּ (vv. 13, 14), *et*

*audierunt et dixerunt; וְ—וְ = et—et, both—and.*

The inhabitants of this land (v. 13) were not merely the Arabians, but, according to Ex. 15:14ff., the tribes dwelling in and round Arabia, the Philistines, Edomites, Moabites, and Canaanites, to whom the tidings had been brought of the miracles of God in Egypt and at the Dead Sea. שָׁמְעוּ, in v. 14, can neither stand

for כִּי שָׁמְעוּ (dixerunt) *se audivisse*, nor for

אֲשֶׁר שָׁמְעוּ, *qui audierunt*. They are neither of them grammatically admissible, as the relative pronoun cannot be readily omitted in prose; and neither of them would give a really suitable meaning. It is rather a rhetorical

resumption of the שָׁמְעוּ in v. 13, and the subject of the verb is not only "the Egyptians," but also "the inhabitants of this land" who held communication with the Egyptians, or "the nations" who had heard the report of Jehovah (v. 15), i.e., all that God had hitherto done for and among the Israelites in Egypt, and on the journey through the desert. "Eye to eye:" i.e., Thou hast appeared to them in the closest proximity. On the pillar of cloud and fire, see at Ex. 13:21, 22. "As one man," equivalent to "with a stroke" (Judg. 6:16).—In vv. 17, 18, Moses adduces a second argument, viz., the word in which God Himself had revealed His inmost



being to him at Sinai (Ex. 34:6, 7). The words, “*Let the power be great,*” equivalent to “show Thyself great in power,” are not to be connected with what precedes, but with what follows; viz., “*show Thyself mighty by verifying Thy word, ‘Jehovah, long-suffering and great in mercy,’ etc.; forgive, I beseech Thee, this people according to the greatness of Thy mercy, and as Thou hast forgiven this people from Egypt even until now.*”

נִשְׂאָ (v. 19) = נִשְׂאָ עוֹן (v. 18).

**Numbers 14:20.** In answer to this importunate prayer, the Lord promised forgiveness, namely, the preservation of the nation, but not the remission of the well-merited punishment. At the rebellion at Sinai, He had postponed the punishment “till the day of His visitation” (Ex. 32:34). And that day had now arrived, as the people had carried their continued rebellion against the Lord to the furthest extreme, even to an open declaration of their intention to depose Moses, and return to Egypt under another leader, and thus had filled up the measure of their sins. “*Nevertheless,*” added the Lord (vv. 21, 22), “*as truly as I live, and the glory of Jehovah will fill the whole earth, all the men who have seen My glory and My miracles ... shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers.*” The clause, “all the earth,” etc., forms an apposition to “as I live.” Jehovah proves Himself to be living, by the fact that His glory fills the whole earth. But this was to take place, not, as *Knobel*, who mistakes the true connection of the different clauses, erroneously supposes, by the destruction of the whole of that generation, which would be talked of by all the world, but rather by the fact that, notwithstanding the sin and opposition of these men, He would still carry out His work of

salvation to a glorious victory. The כִּי in v. 22 introduces the substance of the oath, as in Isa. 49:18; 1 Sam. 14:39; 20:3; and according to the ordinary form of an oath, אֲנִי in v. 23 signifies “*not.*”—“They have tempted Me now ten times.” Ten is used as the number of completeness and full measure; and this answered to the actual

fact, if we follow the Rabbins, and add to the murmuring (1) at the Red Sea, Ex. 14:11, 12; (2) at Marah, Ex. 15:23; (3) in the wilderness of Sin, Ex. 16:2; (4) at Rephidim, Ex. 17:1; (5) at Horeb, Ex. 32; (6) at Tabeerah, Numbers 11:1; (7) at the graves of lust, Numbers 11:4ff.; and (8) here again at Kadesh, the *twofold* rebellion of certain individuals against the commandments of God at the giving of the manna (Ex. 16:20 and 27). The despisers of God should none of them see the promised land.

**Numbers 14:24.** But because there was another spirit in Caleb,—i.e., not the unbelieving, despairing, yet proud and rebellious spirit of the great mass of the people, but the spirit of obedience and believing trust, so that “he followed Jehovah fully” (lit., “fulfilled to walk behind Jehovah”), followed Him with unwavering fidelity,—God would bring him into the land into which he had gone, and his

seed should possess it. מְלֵא אֶרֶץ here, and at Numbers 32:11, 12; Deut. 1:36; Josh. 14:8, 9; 1 Kings 11:6, is a *constructio praeagnans* for מְלֵא לְלֶכֶת אֶרֶץ; cf. 2 Chron. 34:31.)

According to the context, the reference is not to Hebron particularly, but to Canaan generally, which God had sworn unto the fathers (v. 23, and Deut. 1:36, comp. with v. 35); although, when the land was divided, Caleb received Hebron for his possession, because, according to his own statement in Josh. 14:6ff., Moses had sworn that he would give it to him. But this is not mentioned here; just as Joshua also is not mentioned in this place, as he is at vv. 30 and 38, but Caleb only, who opposed the exaggerated accounts of the other spies at the very first, and endeavoured to quiet the excitement of the people by declaring that they were well able to overcome the Canaanites (Numbers 13:30). This first revelation of God to Moses is restricted to the main fact; the particulars are given afterwards in the sentence of God, as intended for communication to the people (vv. 26–38).

**Numbers 14:25.** The divine reply to the intercession of Moses terminated with a

command to the people to turn on the morrow, and go to the wilderness to the Red Sea, as the Amalekites and Canaanites dwelt in the valley. “*The Amalekites,*” etc.: this clause furnishes the reason for the command which follows. On the Amalekites, see at Gen. 36:12, and Ex. 17:8ff. The term Canaanites is a general epithet applied to all the inhabitants of Canaan, instead of the Amorites mentioned in Deut. 1:44, who held the southern mountains of Canaan. “The valley” is no doubt the broad *Wady Murreh* (see at Numbers 13:21), including a portion of the *Negeb*, in which the Amalekites led a nomad life, whilst the Canaanites really dwelt upon the mountains (v. 45), close up to the *Wady Murreh*.

**Numbers 14:26–38.** Sentence upon the Murmuring Congregation.—After the Lord had thus declared to Moses in general terms His resolution to punish the incorrigible people, and not suffer them to come to Canaan, He proceeded to tell him what announcement he was to make to the people.

**Numbers 14:27.** This announcement commences in a tone of anger, with an *aposiopesis*, “*How long this evil congregation*” (sc., “shall I forgive it,” the simplest plan being to supply **נִשְׁכַּח**, as *Rosenmüller* suggests, from v. 18), “*that they murmur against Me?*”

**Numbers 14:28–31.** Jehovah swore that it should happen to the murmurers as they had spoken. Their corpses should fall in the desert, even all who had been numbered, from twenty years old and upwards: they should not see the land into which Jehovah had lifted up His hand (see at Ex. 6:8) to lead them, with the sole exception of Caleb and Joshua. But their children, who, as they said, would be a prey (v. 3), them Jehovah would bring, and they should learn to know the land which the others had despised.

**Numbers 14:32, 33.** “*As for you, your carcasses will fall in this wilderness. But your sons will be pasturing* (i.e., will lead a restless shepherd life) *in the desert forty years, and bear your whoredom* (i.e., endure the consequences of your faithless apostasy; see Ex. 34:16), *until*

*your corpses are finished in the desert,*” i.e., till you have all passed away.

**Numbers 14:34.** “*After the number of the forty days that he have searched the land, shall ye bear your iniquity, (reckoning) a day for a year, and know My turning away from you,*” or

**תְּנוּאָה**, *abalienatio*, from **נָאָה** (Numbers 32:7).

**Numbers 14:35.** As surely as Jehovah had spoken this, would He do it to that evil congregation, to those who had allied

themselves against Him (**נִוְעַד**, to bind

themselves together, to conspire; Numbers 16:11; 27:3). There is no ground whatever for questioning the correctness of the statement, that the spies had travelled through Canaan for forty days, or regarding this as a so-called round number—that is to say, as unhistorical. And if this number is firmly established, there is also no ground for disputing the forty years’ sojourn of the people in the wilderness, although the period during which the rebellious generation, consisting of those who were numbered at Sinai, died out, was actually thirty-eight years, reaching from the autumn of the second year after their departure from Egypt to the middle of the fortieth year of their wanderings, and terminating with the fresh numbering (Numbers 26) that was undertaken after the death of Aaron, and took place on the first of the fifth month of the fortieth year (Numbers 20:23ff., compared with Numbers 33:38). Instead of these thirty-eight years, the forty years of the sojourn in the desert are placed in connection with the forty days of the spies, because the people had frequently fallen away from God, and been punished in consequence, even during the year and a half before their rejection; and in this respect the year and a half could be combined with the thirty-eight years which followed into one continuous period, during which they bore their iniquity, to set distinctly before the minds of the disobedient people the contrast between that peaceful dwelling in the promised land which they had forfeited, and the restless wandering in the desert, which had been

imposed upon them as a punishment, and to impress upon them the causal connection between sin and suffering. "Every year that passed, and was deducted from the forty years of punishment, was a new and solemn exhortation to repent, as it called to mind the occasion of their rejection" (*Kurtz*). When *Knobel* observes, on the other hand, that "it is utterly improbable that all who came out of Egypt (that is to say, all who were twenty years old and upward when they came out) should have fallen in the desert, with the exception of two, and that there should have been no men found among the Israelites when they entered Canaan who were more than sixty years of age," the express statement, that on the second numbering there was not a man among those that were numbered who had been included in the numbering at Sinai, except Joshua and Caleb (*Numbers* 26:64ff.), is amply sufficient to overthrow this "improbability" as an unfounded fancy. Nor is this statement rendered at all questionable by the fact, that "Aaron's son Eleazar, who entered Canaan with Joshua" (*Josh.* 14:1, etc.), was most likely more than twenty years old at the time of his consecration at Sinai, as the Levites were not qualified for service till their thirtieth or twenty-fifth year. For, in the first place, the regulation concerning the Levites' age of service is not to be applied without reserve to the priests also, so that we could infer from this that the sons of Aaron must have been at least twenty-five or thirty years old when they were consecrated; and besides this, the priests do not enter into the question at all, for the tribe of Levi was excepted from the numbering in *Numbers* 1, and therefore Aaron's sons were not included among the persons numbered, who were sentenced to die in the wilderness. Still less does it follow from *Josh.* 24:7 and *Judg.* 2:7, where it is stated that, after the conquest of Canaan, there were many still alive who had been eye-witnesses of the wonders of God in Egypt, that they must have been more than twenty years old when they came out of Egypt; for youths from ten to nineteen years of age would certainly have been able to remember

such miracles as these, even after the lapse of forty or fifty years.

**Numbers 14:36–38.** But for the purpose of giving to the whole congregation a practical proof of the solemnity of the divine threatening of punishment, the spies who had induced the congregation to revolt, through their evil report concerning the inhabitants of Canaan, were smitten by a "stroke before Jehovah," i.e., by a sudden death, which proceeded in a visible manner from Jehovah Himself, whilst Joshua and Caleb remained alive.

**Numbers 14:39–45** (cf. *Deut.* 1:41–44). The announcement of the sentence plunged the people into deep mourning. But instead of bending penitentially under the judgment of God, they resolved to atone for their error, by preparing the next morning to go to the top of the mountain and press forward into Canaan. And they would not even suffer themselves to be dissuaded from their enterprise by the entreaties of Moses, who denounced it as a transgression of the word of God which could not succeed, and predicted their overthrow before their enemies, but went presumptuously

(*יַעֲפֹלוּ לְעֻלוֹת*) up without the ark of the covenant and without Moses, who did not depart out of the midst of the camp, and were smitten by the Amalekites and Canaanites, who drove them back as far as Hormah. Whereas at first they had refused to enter upon the conflict with the Canaanites, through their unbelief in the might of the promise of God, now, through unbelief in the severity of the judgment of God, they resolved to engage in this conflict by their own power, and without the help of God, and to cancel the old sin of unbelieving despair through the new sin of presumptuous self-confidence,—an attempt which could never succeed, but was sure to plunge deeper and deeper into misery. Where "*the top* (or height) *of the mountain*" to which the Israelites advanced was, cannot be precisely determined, as we have no minute information concerning the nature of the ground in the neighbourhood of Kadesh. No doubt the allusion is to some

plateau on the northern border of the valley mentioned in v. 25, viz., the Wady *Murreh*, which formed the southernmost spur of the mountains of the Amorites, from which the Canaanites and Amalekites came against them, and drove them back. In Deut. 1:44, Moses mentions the Amorites instead of the Amalekites and Canaanites, using the name in a broader sense for all the Canaanites, and contenting himself with naming the leading foes with whom the Amalekites who wandered about in the *Negeb* had allied themselves, as Bedouins thirsting for booty. These tribes came down (v. 45) from the height of the mountain to the lower plateau or saddle, which the Israelites had ascended, and smote them and יִכְתּוּם

(from כָּתַת, with the reduplication of the second radical anticipated in the first: see *Ewald*, § 193, c.), “discomfited them, as far as Hormah,” or as Moses expressed it in Deut. 1:44, They “chased you, as bees do” (which pursue with great ferocity any one who attacks or disturbs them), “and destroyed you in Seir, even unto Hormah.” There is not sufficient ground for altering “in Seir” into “from Seir,” as the LXX, *Syriac*, and *Vulgate* have done. But

בְּשֵׁעִיר might signify “into Seir, as far as Hormah.” As the Edomites had extended their territory at that time across the Arabah towards the west, and taken possession of a portion of the mountainous country which bounded the desert of Paran towards the north (see at Numbers 34:3), the Israelites, when driven back by them, might easily be chased into the territory of the Edomites. *Hormah* (i.e., the ban-place) is used here proleptically (see at Numbers 21:3).

### Numbers 15

*Various Laws of Sacrifice. Punishment of a Sabbath-Breaker. Command to Wear Tassels Upon the Clothes.—Ch. 15.*

**Numbers 15:1–31.** Regulations concerning Sacrifices.—Vv. 1–16. For the purpose of reviving the hopes of the new generation that was growing up, and directing their minds to the promised land, during the mournful and barren time when judgment was being executed upon the race that had been condemned, Jehovah communicated various laws through Moses concerning the presentation of sacrifices in the land that He would give them (vv. 1 and 2), whereby the former laws of sacrifice were supplemented and completed. The *first* of these laws had reference to the connection between meat-offerings and drink-offerings on the one hand, and burnt-offerings and slain-offerings on the other.

**Numbers 15:3ff.** In the land of Canaan, every burnt and slain-offering, whether prepared in fulfilment of a vow, or spontaneously, or on feast-days (cf. Lev. 7:16; 22:18, and 23:38), was to be associated with a meat-offering of fine flour mixed with oil, and a drink-offering of wine,—the quantity to be regulated according to the kind of animal that was slain in sacrifice. (See Lev. 23:18, where this connection is already mentioned in the case of the festal

sacrifices.) For a lamb (כֶּבֶדֶשׁ, i.e., either sheep or goat, cf. v. 11), they were to take the tenth of an ephah of fine flour, mixed with the quarter of a hin of oil and the quarter of a hin of wine, as a drink-offering. In v. 5, the construction changes from the third to the second person. עָשָׂה, to prepare, as in Ex. 29:38.

**Numbers 15:6, 7.** For a ram, they were to take two tenths of fine flour, with the third of a hin of oil and the third of a hin of wine.

**Numbers 15:8ff.** For an ox, three tenths of fine flour, with half a hin of oil and half a hin of wine. The הִקְרִיב (3rd person) in v. 9, between תַּעֲשֶׂה in v. 8, and תִּקְרִיב in v. 10, is certainly striking and unusual, but no so offensive as to render it necessary to alter it into וְתִקְרִיב.

**Numbers 15:11, 12.** The quantities mentioned were to be offered with every ox, or ram, or lamb, of either sheep or goat, and therefore the number of the appointed quantities of meat and drink-offerings was to correspond to the number of sacrificial animals.

**Numbers 15:13–16.** These rules were to apply not only to the sacrifices of those that were born in Israel, but also to those of the strangers living among them. By “these things,” in v. 13, we are to understand the meat and drink-offerings already appointed.

**Numbers 15:15.** “As for the assembly, there shall be one law for the Israelite and the stranger, ... an eternal ordinance ... before

*Jehovah.*” הַקְהָלִי, which is construed absolutely, refers to the assembling of the nation before Jehovah, or to the congregation viewed in its attitude with regard to God.

A *second* law (vv. 17–21) appoints, on the ground of the general regulations in Ex. 22:28 and 23:19, the presentation of a heave-offering from the bread which they would eat in the land of Canaan, viz., a first-fruit of groat-meal

(רֵאשִׁית עֲרִיסֹת) baked as cake (חֻלֵּה).

*Arisoth*, which is only used in connection with the gift of first-fruits, in Ezek. 44:30, Neh. 10:38, and the passage before us, signifies most probably groats, or meal coarsely bruised, like

the talmudical עֲרִסָן, *contusum, mola, far*, and indeed *far hordei*. This cake of the groats of first-fruits they were to offer “as a heave-offering of the threshing-floor,” i.e., as a heave-offering of the bruised corn, in the same manner as this (therefore, in addition to it, and along with it); and that “according to your generations” (see Ex. 12:14), that is to say, for all time, to consecrate a gift of first-fruits to the Lord, not only of the grains of corn, but also of the bread made from the corn, and “to cause a blessing to rest upon his house” (Ezek. 44:30). Like all the gifts of first-fruits, this cake also fell to the portion of the priests (see Ezek. and Neh. *ut sup.*).

To these there are added, in vv. 22, 31, laws relating to *sin-offerings*, the first of which, in vv. 22–26, is distinguished from the case referred to in Lev. 4:13–21, by the fact that the sin is not described here, as it is there, as “doing one of the commandments of Jehovah which ought not to be done,” but as “not doing all that Jehovah had spoken through Moses.” Consequently, the allusion here is not to sins of commission, but to sins of omission, not following the law of God, “even (as is afterwards explained in v. 23) all that the Lord hath commanded you by the hand of Moses from the day that the Lord hath commanded, and thenceforward according to your generations,” i.e., since the first beginning of the giving of the law, and during the whole of the time following (*Knobel*). These words apparently point to a complete falling away of the congregation from the whole of the law. Only the further stipulation in v. 24, “if it occur away from the eyes of the congregation through error” (in oversight), cannot be easily reconciled with this, as it seems hardly conceivable that an apostasy from the entire law should have remained hidden from the congregation. This “not doing all the commandments of Jehovah,” of which the congregation is supposed to incur the guilt without perceiving it, might consist either in the fact that, in particular instances, whether from oversight or negligence, the whole congregation omitted to fulfil the commandments of God, i.e., certain precepts of the law, sc., in the fact that they neglected the true and proper fulfilment of the whole law, either, as *Outram* supposes, “by retaining to a certain extent the national rites, and following the worship of the true God, and yet at the same time acting unconsciously in opposition to the law, through having been led astray by some common errors;” or by allowing the evil example of godless rulers to seduce them to neglect their religious duties, or to adopt and join in certain customs and usages of the heathen, which appeared to be reconcilable with the law of Jehovah, though they really led to contempt and neglect of the commandments of the Lord. But as a disregard or neglect of the

commandments of God had to be expiated, a burnt-offering was to be added to the sin-offering, that the separation of the congregation from the Lord, which had arisen from the sin of omission, might be entirely removed. The

apodosis commences with **וְהָיָה** in v. 24, but is interrupted by **אִם מֵעַי**, and resumed again

with **וְעָשׂוּ**, “it shall be, if ... the whole congregation shall prepare,” etc. The burnt-offering, being the principal sacrifice, is mentioned as usual before the sin-offering, although, when presented, it followed the latter, on account of its being necessary that the sin should be expiated before the congregation could sanctify its life and efforts afresh to the Lord in the burnt-offering. “One kid of the

goats:” see Lev. 4:23. **כַּמִּשְׁפֵּט** (as in Lev. 5:10; 9:16, etc.) refers to the right established in vv. 8, 9, concerning the combination of the meat and drink-offering with the burnt-offering. The sin-offering was to be treated according to the rule laid down in Lev. 4:14ff.

**Numbers 15:26.** This law was to apply not only to the children of Israel, but also to the stranger among them, “for (sc., it has happened) to the whole nation in mistake.” As the sin extended to the whole nation, in which the foreigners were also included, the atonement was also to apply to the whole.

**Numbers 15:27–31.** In the same way, again, there was one law for the native and the stranger, in relation to sins of omission on the part of single individuals. The law laid down in Lev. 5:6 (cf. Lev. 4:27ff.) for the Israelites, is repeated here in vv. 27, 28, and in v. 28 it is raised into general validity for foreigners also.

In v. 29, **הָאֲזָרָח** is written absolutely for

**לְאֲזָרָח**.

**Numbers 15:30, 31.** But it was only sins committed by mistake (see at Lev. 4:2) that could be expiated by sin-offerings. Whoever, on the other hand, whether a native or a foreigner,

committed a sin “with a high hand,”— i.e., so that he raised his hand, as it were, against Jehovah, or acted in open rebellion against Him,—blasphemed God, and was to be cut off (see Gen. 17:14); for he had despised the word of Jehovah, and broken His commandment, and

was to atone for it with his life. **עֲוֹנָה בָּהּ**, “its crime upon it;” i.e., it shall come upon such a soul in the punishment which it shall endure.

**Numbers 15:32–36.** The History of the Sabbath-Breaker is no doubt inserted here as a practical illustration of sinning “with a high hand.” It shows, too, at the same time, how the nation, as a whole, was impressed with the inviolable sanctity of the Lord’s day. From the words with which it is introduced, “and the children of Israel were in the wilderness,” all that can be gathered is, that the occurrence took place at the time when Israel was condemned to wander about in the wilderness for forty years. They found a man gathering sticks in the desert on the Sabbath, and brought him as an open transgressor of the law of the Sabbath before Moses and Aaron and the whole congregation, i.e., the college of elders, as the judicial authorities of the congregation (Ex. 18:25ff.). They kept him in custody, like the blasphemer in Lev. 24:12, because it had not yet been determined what was to be done to him. It is true that it had already been laid down in Ex. 31:14, 15, and 35:2, that any breach of the law of the Sabbath should be punished by death and extermination, but the mode had not yet been prescribed. This was done now, and Jehovah commanded stoning (see Lev. 20:2), which was executed upon the criminal without delay.

**Numbers 15:37–41** (cf. Deut. 22:12). The command to wear Tassels on the Edge of the Upper Garment appears to have been occasioned by the incident just described. The

Israelites were to wear **צִיצִית**, tassels, on the wings of their upper garments, or, according to Deut. 22:12, at the four corners of the upper garment. **בְּסוֹת**, the covering in which a man

wraps himself, synonymous with **בִּגְדוֹ**, was the upper garment, consisting of a four-cornered cloth or piece of stuff, which was thrown over the body-coat (see my *Bibl. Archäol.* ii. pp. 36, 37), and is not to be referred, as *Schultz* supposes, to the bed-coverings also, although this garment was actually used as a counterpane by the poor (see Ex. 22:25, 26). “*And upon the tassel of the wing they shall put a string of hyacinth-blue,*” namely, to fasten the tassel to the edge of the garment. **צִיצִית** (*fem.*, from **צִיץ**, the glittering, the bloom or flower) signifies something flowery or bloom-like, and is used in Ezek. 8:3 for a lock of hair; here it is applied to a tassel, as being made of twisted threads: LXX *κράσπεδα*; Matt. 23:5, “*borders.*” The size of these tassels is not prescribed. The Pharisees liked to make them large, to exhibit openly their punctilious fulfilment of the law. For the Rabbinical directions how to make them, see *Carpzov. apparat.* pp. 197ff.; and *Bodenschatz, kirchliche Verfassung der heutigen Juden*, iv. pp. 11ff.

**Numbers 15:39.** “*And it shall be to you for a tassel,*” i.e., the fastening of the tassel with the dark blue thread to the corners of your garments shall be to you a tassel, “*that ye, when ye see it, may remember all the commandments of Jehovah, and do them; and ye shall not stray after your hearts and your eyes, after which ye go a whoring.*” The zizith on the sky-blue thread was to serve as a memorial sign to the Israelites, to remind them of the commandments of God, that they might have them constantly before their eyes and follow them, and not direct their heart and eyes to the things of this world, which turn away from the word of God, and lead astray to idolatry (cf. Prov. 4:25, 26). Another reason for these instructions, as is afterwards added in v. 40, was to remind Israel of all the commandments of the Lord, that they might do them and be holy to their God, and sanctify their daily life to Him who had brought them out of Egypt, to be their God, i.e., to show Himself as God to them.

## Numbers 16

*Rebellion of Korah's Company.—Ch. 16–17:5.*

**Numbers 16:1–17:5.** The sedition of Korah and his company, with the renewed sanction of the Aaronic priesthood on the part of God which it occasioned, is the only important occurrence recorded in connection with the thirty-seven years' wandering in the wilderness. The time and place are not recorded. The fact that the departure from Kadesh is not mentioned in Numbers 14, whilst, according to Deut. 1:46, Israel remained there many days, is not sufficient to warrant the conclusion that it took place in Kadesh. The departure from Kadesh is not mentioned even after the rebellion of Korah; and yet we read, in Numbers 20:1, that the whole congregation came again into the desert of Zin to Kadesh at the beginning of the fortieth year, and therefore must previously have gone away. All that can be laid down as probable is, that it occurred in one of the earliest of the thirty-seven years of punishment, though we have no firm ground even for this conjecture.

**Numbers 16:1–3.** The authors of the rebellion were *Korah* the Levite, a descendant of the Kohathite Izhar, who was a brother of Amram, an ancestor (not the father) of Aaron and Moses (see at Ex. 6:18), and three Reubenites, viz., *Dathan* and *Abiram*, sons of Eliab, of the Reubenitish family of Pallu (Numbers 26:8, 9), and *On*, the son of Peleth, a Reubenite, not mentioned again. The last of these (*On*) is not referred to again in the further course of this event, either because he played altogether a subordinate part in the affair, or because he had drawn back before the conspiracy came to a head. The persons named took (**יָקַח**), i.e., gained over to their plan, or persuaded to join them, 250 distinguished men of the other tribes, and rose up with them against Moses and Aaron. On the construction **וַיִּקְוּמוּ ... וַיִּקַּח** (vv. 1 and 2), *Gesenius* correctly observes in his

*Thesaurus* (p. 760), "There is an *anakolouthon* rather than an ellipsis, and not merely a copyist's error, in these words, 'and Korah, ... and Dathan and Abiram, took and rose up against Moses with 250 men,' for they took 250 men, and rose up with them against Moses," etc. He also points to the analogous construction in 2 Sam. 18:18. Consequently there is no

necessity either to force a meaning upon לָקַח, which is altogether foreign to it, or to attempt an emendation of the text. "They rose up before Moses:" this does not mean, "they stood up in front of his tent," as *Knobel* explains it, for the purpose of bringing v. 2 into contradiction with v. 3, but they created an uproar before his eyes; and with this the expression in v. 3, "and they gathered themselves together against Moses and Aaron," may be very simply and easily combined. The 250 men of the children of Israel who joined the rebels no doubt belonged to the other tribes, as is indirectly implied in the statement in Numbers 27:3, that Zelophehad the Manassite was not in the company of Korah. These men were "princes of the congregation," i.e., heads of the tribes, or of large divisions of the tribes, "called men of the congregation," i.e., members of the council of the nation which administered the affairs of the congregation (cf. 1:16), "men of name" (אֲנָשֵׁי שֵׁם, see Gen. 6:4).

The leader was Korah; and the rebels are called in consequence "Korah's company" (vv. 5, 6, Numbers 26:9; 27:3). He laid claim to the high-priesthood, or at least to an equality with Aaron (v. 17). Among his associates were the Reubenites, Dathan and Abiram, who, no doubt, were unable to get over the fact that the birthright had been taken away from their ancestor, and with it the headship of the house of Israel (i.e., of the whole nation). Apparently their present intention was to seize upon the government of the nation under a self-elected high priest, and to force Moses and Aaron out of the post assigned to them by God,—that is to say, to overthrow the constitution which God had given to His people.

**Numbers 16:3.** רַב-לְכֶם, "enough for you!"

(רַב, as in Gen. 45:28), they said to Moses and Aaron, i.e., "let the past suffice you" (*Knobel*); ye have held the priesthood and the government quite long enough. It must now come to an end; "for the whole congregation, all of them (i.e., all the members of the nation), are holy, and Jehovah is in the midst of them. Wherefore lift ye yourselves above the congregation of Jehovah?"

The distinction between עֵדָה and קְהָל is the following: עֵדָה signifies *conventus*, the congregation according to its natural organization; קְהָל signifies *convocatio*, the congregation according to its divine calling and theocratic purpose. The use of the two words in the same verse upsets the theory that עֵדָה

יְהוָה belongs to the style of the original work,

and קְהָל יְהוָה to that of the Jehovist. The rebels appeal to the calling of all Israel to be the holy nation of Jehovah (Ex. 19:5, 6), and infer from this the equal right of all to hold the priesthood, "leaving entirely out of sight, as blind selfishness is accustomed to do, the transition of the universal priesthood into the special mediatorial office and priesthood of Moses and Aaron, which had their foundation in fact" (*Baumgarten*); or altogether overlooking the fact that God Himself had chosen Moses and Aaron, and appointed them as mediators between Himself and the congregation, to educate the sinful nation into a holy nation, and train it to the fulfilment of its proper vocation. The rebels, on the contrary, thought that they were holy already, because God had called them to be a holy nation, and in their carnal self-righteousness forgot the condition attached to their calling, "If ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant" (Ex. 19:5).

**Numbers 16:4–17.** When Moses heard these words of the rebels, he fell upon his face, to



complain of the matter to the Lord, as in Numbers 14:5. He then said to Korah and his company, *"To-morrow Jehovah will show who is His and holy, and will let him come near to Him, and he whom He chooseth will draw near to*

*Him."* The meaning of אֲשֶׁר לוֹ is evident from

אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר בּוֹ. He is Jehovah's, whom He chooses, so that He belongs to Him with his whole life. The reference is to the priestly rank, to which God had chosen Aaron and his sons out of the whole nation, and sanctified them by a special consecration (Ex. 28:1; 29:1; Lev. 8:12, 30), and by which they became the persons "standing near to Him" (Lev. 10:3), and were qualified to appear before Him in the sanctuary, and present to Him the sacrifices of the nation.

**Numbers 16:6-14.** To leave the decision of this to the Lord, Korah and his company, who laid claim to this prerogative, were to take censers, and bring lighted incense before Jehovah. He whom the Lord should choose was to be the sanctified one. This was to satisfy them. With

the expression רַב־לְכֶם in v. 7, Moses gives the rebels back their own words in v. 3. The divine decision was connected with the offering of incense, because this was the holiest function of the priestly service, which brought the priest into the immediate presence of God, and in connection with which Jehovah had already shown to the whole congregation how He sanctified Himself, by a penal judgment on those who took this office upon themselves without a divine call (Lev. 10:1-3). Vv. 8ff. He then set before them the wickedness of their enterprise, to lead them to search themselves, and avert the judgment which threatened them. In doing this, he made a distinction between Korah the Levite, and Dathan and Abiram the Reubenites, according to the difference in the motives which prompted their rebellion, and the claims which they asserted. He first of all (vv. 8-11) reminded Korah the Levite of the way in which God had distinguished his tribe, by separating the Levites from the rest of the congregation, to attend to the service of the

sanctuary (Numbers 3:5ff., 8:6ff.), and asked him, *"Is this too little for you? The God of Israel (this epithet is used emphatically for Jehovah) has brought thee near to Himself, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee, and ye strive after the priesthood also. Therefore ... thou and thy company, who have leagued themselves against Jehovah: ... and Aaron, what is he, that he murmur against him?"* These last words, as an expression of wrath, are elliptical, or rather an *aposiopesis*, and are to be filled up in the following manner: "Therefore, ... as Jehovah has distinguished you in this manner, ... what do ye want? Ye rebel against Jehovah! why do ye murmur against Aaron? He has not seized upon the priesthood of his own accord, but Jehovah has called him to it, and he is only a feeble servant of God" (cf. Ex. 16:7). Moses then (vv. 12-14) sent for Dathan and Abiram, who, as is tacitly assumed, had gone back to their tents during the warning given to Korah. But they

replied, *"We shall not come up."* עָלָה, to go up, is used either with reference to the tabernacle, as being in a spiritual sense the culminating point of the entire camp, or with reference to appearance before Moses, the head and ruler of the nation. *"Is it too little that thou hast brought us out of a land flowing with milk and honey (they apply this expression in bitter irony to Egypt), to kill us in the wilderness (deliver us up to death), that thou wilt be always playing the lord over us?"* The idea of continuance, which is implied in the *inf. abs.*, הִשְׁתַּרַר, from שָׁרַר, to exalt one's self as ruler (*Ges.* § 131, 36), is here still further intensified by גַּם. *"Moreover, thou hast not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, or given us fields and vineyards for an inheritance (i.e., thou hast not kept thy promise, Ex. 4:30 compared with Numbers 3:7ff.). Wilt thou put out the eyes of these people?"* i.e., wilt thou blind them as to thy doings and designs?

**Numbers 16:15.** Moses was so disturbed by these scornful reproaches, that he entreated the Lord, with an assertion of his own unselfishness, not to have respect to their gift,

i.e., not to accept the sacrifice which they should bring (cf. Gen. 4:4). *"I have not taken one ass from them, nor done harm to one of them,"* i.e., I have not treated them as a ruler, who demands tribute of his subjects, and oppresses them (cf. 1 Sam. 12:3).

**Numbers 16:16, 17.** In conclusion, he summoned Korah and his associates once more, to present themselves the following day before Jehovah with censers and incense.

**Numbers 16:18–35.** The next day the rebels presented themselves with censers before the tabernacle, along with Moses and Aaron; and the whole congregation also assembled there at the instigation of Korah. The Lord then interposed in judgment. Appearing in His glory to the whole congregation (just as in Numbers 14:10), He said to Moses and Aaron, *"Separate yourselves from this congregation; I will destroy them in a moment."* By assembling in front of the tabernacle, the whole congregation had made common cause with the rebels. God threatened them, therefore, with sudden destruction. But the two men of God, who ere so despised by the rebellious faction, fell on their faces, interceding with God, and praying, *"God, Thou God of the spirits of all flesh! this one man (i.e., Korah, the author of the conspiracy) hath sinned, and wilt Thou be wrathful with all the congregation?"* i.e., let Thine anger fall upon the whole congregation. The Creator and Preserver of all beings, who has given and still gives life and breath to all flesh, is God of the spirits of all flesh. As the author of the spirit of life in all perishable flesh, God cannot destroy His own creatures in wrath; this would be opposed to His own paternal love and mercy. In this epithet, as applied to God, therefore, Moses appeals "to the universal blessing of creation. It is of little consequence whether these words are to be understood as relating to all the animal kingdom, or to the human race alone; because Moses simply prayed, that as God was the creator and architect of the world, He would not destroy the men whom He had created, but rather have mercy upon the works of His own hands" (*Calvin*). The intercession of the prophet

Isaiah, in Isa. 64:8, is similar to this, though that is founded upon the special relation in which God stood to Israel.

**Numbers 16:23ff.** Jehovah then instructed Moses, that the congregation was to remove away (עָלָה, to get up and away) from about the dwelling-place of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and, as we may supply from the context, the congregation fell back from Korah's tent, whilst Dathan and Abiram, possibly at the very first appearance of the divine glory, drew back into their tents. Moses therefore betook himself to the tents of Dathan and Abiram, with the elders following him, and there also commanded the congregation to depart from the tents of these wicked men, and not touch anything they possessed, that they might not be swept away in all their sins.

**Numbers 16:27.** The congregation obeyed; but Dathan and Abiram came and placed themselves in front of the tents, along with their wives and children, to see what Moses would do. Moses then announced the sentence: *"By this shall he know that Jehovah hath sent me to do all these works, that not out of my own heart (i.e., that I do not act of my own accord). If these men die like all men (i.e., if these wicked men die a natural death like other men), and the oversight of all men take place over them (i.e., if the same providence watches over them as over all other men, and preserves them from sudden death), Jehovah hath not sent me. But if Jehovah create a creation (בָּרָא בְרִיאָה, i.e., work an extraordinary miracle), and the earth open its mouth and swallow them up, with all that belongs to them, so that they go down alive into hell, ye shall perceive that these men have despised Jehovah."*

**Numbers 16:31–33.** And immediately the earth clave asunder, and swallowed them up, with their families and all their possessions, and closed above them, so that they perished without a trace from the congregation. אֲתָם refers to the three ringleaders. *"Their houses;"*

i.e., their families, not their tents, as in Numbers 18:31, Ex. 12:3. "All the men belonging to Korah" were his servants; for, according to Numbers 26:11, his sons did not perish with him, but perpetuated his family (Numbers 26:58), to which the celebrated Korahite singers of David's time belonged (1 Chron. 6:18–22; 9:19).

**Numbers 16:34.** This fearful destruction of the ringleaders, through which Jehovah glorified Moses afresh as His servant in a miraculous way, filled all the Israelites round about with

such terror, that they fled לְקִלְמֹתַי, "at their noise," i.e., at the commotion with which the wicked men went down into the abyss which opened beneath their feet, lest, as they said, the earth should swallow them up also.

**Numbers 16:35.** The other 250 rebels, who were probably still in front of the tabernacle, were then destroyed by fire which proceeded from Jehovah, as Nadab and Abihu had been before (Lev. 10:2).

**Numbers 16:36–40** (or 17:1–5). After the destruction of the sinners, the Lord commanded that Eleazar should take up the censers "from between the burning," i.e., from the midst of the men that had been burned, and scatter the fire (the burning coals in the pans) far away, that it might not be used any more. "For they (the censers) are holy;" that is to say, they had become holy through being brought before Jehovah (v. 39); and therefore, when the men who brought them were slain, they fell as banned articles to the Lord (Lev. 27:28). "The censers of these sinners against their souls" (i.e., the men who have forfeited their lives through their sin: cf. Prov. 20:2, Hab. 2:10), "let them make into broad plates for a covering to the altar" (of burnt-offering). Through this application of them they became a sign, or, according to v. 39, a memorial to all who drew near to the sanctuary, which was to remind them continually of this judgment of God, and warn the congregation of grasping at the

priestly prerogatives. The words, וְלֹא יִהְיֶה, in v. 40, introduce the predicate in the form of an

apodosis to the subject, which is written absolutely, and consists of an entire sentence.

יִהְיֶה with הֵאֱחָזֵק signifies, "to experience the same fate as" another.

*Punishment of the Murmuring Congregation, and Confirmation of the High-Priesthood of Aaron.—Ch. 16:41–17:13 (or Numbers 17:6–28).*

**Numbers 16:41–50.** Punishment of the Murmuring Congregation.—The judgment upon the company of Korah had filled the people round about with terror and dismay, but it had produced no change of heart in the congregation that had risen up against its leaders. The next morning the whole congregation began to murmur against Moses and Aaron, and to charge them with having slain the people of Jehovah. They referred to Korah and his company, but especially to the 250 chiefs of renown, whom they regarded as the kernel of the nation, and called "the people of Jehovah." They would have made Moses and Aaron responsible for their death, because in their opinion it was they who had brought the judgment upon their leaders; whereas it was through the intercession of Moses (Numbers 16:22) that the whole congregation was saved from the destruction which threatened it. To such an extent does the folly of the proud heart of man proceed, and the obduracy of a race already exposed to the judgment of God.

### Numbers 17

**Numbers 17:7.** When the congregation assembled together, Moses and Aaron turned to the tabernacle, and saw how the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared. As the cloud rested continually above the tabernacle during the time of encampment (Numbers 9:18ff.; Ex. 40:38), we must suppose that at this time the cloud covered it in a fuller and much more conspicuous sense, just as it had done when the tabernacle was first erected (Numbers 9:15; Ex. 40:34), and that at the same

time the glory of God burst forth from the dark cloud in a miraculous splendour.

**Numbers 17:8ff.** Thereupon they both went into the court of (אֶל פְּנֵי, as in Lev. 9:5) the tabernacle, and God commanded them to rise up (הִרְמוּ, Niph'al of רָמוּ = רוּם; see *Ges.* § 65, Anm. 5) out of this congregation, which He would immediately destroy. But they fell upon their faces in prayer, as in Numbers 16:21, 22. This time, however, they could not avert the bursting forth of the wrathful judgment, as they had done the day before (Numbers 16:22). The plague had already commenced, when Moses told Aaron to take the censer quickly into the midst of the congregation, with coals and incense (הוֹלִיף, *imper. Hiph.*), to make expiation for it with an incense-offering. And when this was done, and Aaron placed himself between the dead and the living, the plague, which had already destroyed 14,700 men, was stayed. The plague consisted apparently of a sudden death, as in the case of a pestilence raging with extreme violence, though we cannot regard it as an actual pestilence.

The means resorted to by Moses to stay the plague showed afresh how the faithful servant of God bore the rescue of his people upon his heart. All the motives which he had hitherto pleaded, in his repeated intercession that this evil congregation might be spared, were now exhausted. He could not stake his life for the nation, as at Horeb (Ex. 32:32), for the nation had rejected him. He could no longer appeal to the honour of Jehovah among the heathen, seeing that the Lord, even when sentencing the rebellious race to fall in the desert, had assured him that the whole earth should be filled with His glory (Numbers 14:20ff.). Still less could he pray to God that He would not be wrathful with all for the sake of one or a few sinners, as in Numbers 16:22, seeing that the whole congregation had taken part with the rebels. In this condition of things there was but one way left of averting the threatened destruction of the whole nation, namely, to adopt the means

which the Lord Himself had given to His congregation, in the high-priestly office, to wipe away their sins, and recover the divine grace which they had forfeited through sin,—viz., the offering of incense which embodied the high-priestly prayer, and the strength and operation of which were not dependent upon the sincerity and earnestness of subjective faith, but had a firm and immovable foundation in the objective force of the divine appointment. This was the means adopted by the faithful servant of the Lord, and the judgment of wrath was averted in its course; the plague was averted.—The effectual operation of the incense-offering of the high priest also served to furnish the people with a practical proof of the power and operation of the true and divinely appointed priesthood. “The priesthood which the company of Korah had so wickedly usurped, had brought down death and destruction upon himself, through his offering of incense; but the divinely appointed priesthood of Aaron averted death and destruction from the whole congregation when incense was offered by him, and stayed the well-merited judgment, which had broken forth upon it” (*Kurtz*).

**Numbers 17:1–13** (or Numbers 17:16–28). Confirmation of the High-Priesthood of Aaron.—Whilst the Lord had thus given a practical proof to the people, that Aaron was the high priest appointed by Him for His congregation, by allowing the high-priestly incense offered by Aaron to expiate His wrath, and by removing the plague; He also gave them a still further confirmation of His priesthood, by a miracle which was well adapted to put to silence all the murmuring of the congregation.

**Numbers 17:16–20.** He commanded Moses to take twelve rods of the tribe-princes of Israel, one for the fathers' house of each of their tribes, and to write upon each the name of the tribe; but upon that of the tribe of Levi he was to write Aaron's name, because each rod was to stand for the head of their fathers' houses, i.e., for the existing head of the tribe; and in the case of Levi, the tribe-head was Aaron. As only twelve rods were taken for all the tribes of

Israel, and Levi was included among them, Ephraim and Manasseh must have been reckoned as the one tribe of Joseph, as in Deut. 27:12. These rods were to be laid by Moses in the tabernacle before the testimony, or ark of the covenant (Ex. 25:21; 29:42). And there the rod of the man whom Jehovah chose, i.e., entrusted with the priesthood (see Numbers 16:5), would put forth shoots, to quiet the murmuring of the people. שָׁבַד, *Hiph.*, to cause

to sink, to bring to rest, construed with מַעַל in a pregnant signification, to quiet in such a way that it will not rise again.

**Numbers 17:6-9.** Moses carried out this command. And when he went into the tabernacle the following morning, behold Aaron's rod of the house of Levi had sprouted, and put forth shoots, and had borne blossoms and matured almonds. And Moses brought all the rods out of the sanctuary, and gave every man his own; the rest, as we may gather from the context, being all unchanged, so that the whole nation could satisfy itself that God had chosen Aaron. Thus was the word fulfilled which Moses had spoken at the commencement of the rebellion of the company of Korah (Numbers 16:5), and that in a way which could not fail to accredit him before the whole congregation as sent of God.

So far as the occurrence itself is concerned, there can hardly be any need to remark, that the natural interpretation which has lately been attempted by *Ewald*, viz., that Moses had laid several almond rods in the holy place, which had just been freshly cut off, that he might see the next day which of them would flower the best during the night, is directly at variance with the words of the text, and also with the fact, that a rod even freshly cut off, when laid in a dry place, would not bear ripe fruit in a single night. The miracle which God wrought here as the Creator of nature, was at the same time a significant symbol of the nature and meaning of the priesthood. The choice of the rods had also a bearing upon the object in question. A man's rod was the sign of his position as ruler in the

house and congregation; with a prince the rod becomes a sceptre, the insignia of rule (Gen. 49:10). As a severed branch, the rod could not put forth shoots and blossom in a natural way. But God could impart new vital powers even to the dry rod. And so Aaron had naturally no pre-eminence above the heads of the other tribes. But the priesthood was founded not upon natural qualifications and gifts, but upon the power of the Spirit, which God communicates according to the choice of His wisdom, and which He had imparted to Aaron through his consecration with holy anointing oil. It was this which the Lord intended to show to the people, by causing Aaron's rod to put forth branches, blossom, and fruit, through a miracle of His omnipotence; whereas the rods of the other heads of the tribes remained as barren as before. In this way, therefore, it was not without deep significance that Aaron's rod not only put forth shoots, by which the divine election might be recognised, but bore even blossom and ripe fruit. This showed that Aaron was not only qualified for his calling, but administered his office in the full power of the Spirit, and bore the fruit expected of him. The almond rod was especially adapted to exhibit this, as an almond-tree flowers and bears fruit the earliest of all the trees, and has received its name of שָׁקֵד, "awake," from this very fact (cf. Jer. 1:11).

God then commanded (vv. 10, 11) that Aaron's rod should be taken back into the sanctuary, and preserved before the testimony, "*for a sign for the rebellious, that thou puttest an end to their murmuring, and they die not.*" The preservation of the rod before the ark of the covenant, in the immediate presence of the Lord, was a pledge to Aaron of the continuance of his election, and the permanent duration of his priesthood; though we have no need to assume, that through a perpetual miracle the staff continued green and blossoming. In this way the staff became a sign to the rebellious, which could not fail to stop their murmuring.

**Numbers 17:12, 13.** This miracle awakened a salutary terror in all the people, so that they cried out to Moses in mortal anguish, “*behold, we die, we perish, we all perish! Every one who comes near to the dwelling of Jehovah dies; are we all to die?*” Even if this fear of death was no fruit of faith, it was fitted for all that to prevent any fresh outbreaks of rebellion on the part of the rejected generation.

*Service and Revenues of the Priests and Levites.—Ch. 18.*

**Numbers 18.** The practical confirmation of the priesthood of Aaron and his family, on the part of God, is very appropriately followed by the legal regulations concerning the official duties of the priest and Levites (vv. 1–7), and the revenues to be assigned them for their services (vv. 8–32), as the laws hitherto given upon this subject, although they contain many isolated stipulations, have not laid down any complete and comprehensive arrangement. The instructions relating to this subject were addressed by Jehovah directly to Aaron (see vv. 1 and 8), up to the law, that out of the tenths which the Levites were to collect from the people, they were to pay a tenth again to the priests; and this was addressed to Moses (v. 25), as the head of all Israel.

### Numbers 18

**Numbers 18:1–7.** The Official Duties and Rights of the Priests and Levites.—V. 1. To impress upon the minds of the priests and Levites the holiness and responsibility of their office, the service of Aaron, of his sons, and of his father’s house, i.e., of the family of the Kohathites, is described as “bearing the iniquity of the sanctuary,” and the service which was peculiar to the Aaronides, as “bearing the iniquity of their priesthood.” “*To bear the iniquity of the sanctuary*” signifies not only “to have to make expiation for all that offended against the laws of the priests and the holy things, i.e., the desecration of these” (*Knobel*), but “iniquity or transgression at the sanctuary,”

i.e., the defilement of it by the sin of those who drew near to the sanctuary; not only of the priests and Levites, but of the whole people who defiled the sanctuary in the midst of them with its holy vessels, not only by their sins (Lev. 16:6), but even by their holy gifts (Ex. 28:38), and thus brought guilt upon the whole congregation, which the priests were to bear, i.e., to take upon themselves and expunge, by virtue of the holiness and sanctifying power communicated to their office (see at Ex. 28:38). The “iniquity of the priesthood,” however, not only embraced every offence against the priesthood, every neglect of the most scrupulous and conscientious fulfilment of duty in connection with their office, but extended to all the sin which attached to the official acts of the priests, on account of the sinfulness of their nature. It was to wipe out these sins and defilements, that the annual expiation of the holy things on the day of atonement had been appointed (Lev. 16:16ff.). The father’s house of Aaron, i.e., the Levitical family of Kohath, was also to join in bearing the iniquity of the sanctuary, because the oversight of the holy vessels of the sanctuary devolved upon it (Numbers 4:4ff.).

**Numbers 18:2–4.** Aaron was also to bring his (other) brethren (sc., to the sanctuary), viz., the tribe of Levi, that is to say, the Gershonites and Merarites, that they might attach themselves to

him and serve him, both him (אֲהָרֹן) and his sons, before the tent of testimony, and discharge the duties that were binding upon them, according to Numbers 4:24ff., 31ff. (cf. Numbers 3:6, 7; 8:26). Only they were not to come near to the holy vessels and the altar, for that would bring death both upon them and the priests (see at Numbers 4:15). On v. 4, cf. Numbers 1:53 and 3:7.

**Numbers 18:5–7.** The charge of the sanctuary (i.e., the dwelling) and the altar (of burnt-offering) devolved upon Aaron and his sons, that the wrath of God might not come again upon the children of Israel (see Numbers 8:19),—namely, through such illegal acts as

Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:2), and the company of Korah (Numbers 16:35), had committed. To this end God had handed over the Levites to them as a gift, to be their assistants (see at Numbers 3:9 and 8:16, 19). But Aaron and his sons were to attend to the priesthood “with regard to everything of the altar and within the veil” (i.e., of the most holy place, see Lev. 16:12). The allusion is to all the priestly duties from the altar of burnt-offering to the most holy place, including the holy place which lay between. This office, which brought them into the closest fellowship with the Lord, was a favour accorded to them by the grace of God. This is expressed in the words, “as a service of gift (a service with which I present you) I give you the priesthood.” The last words in v. 7 are the same as in Numbers 1:51; and “stranger” (*zar*), as in Lev. 22:10.

**Numbers 18:8–20.** The Revenues of the Priests.—These are summed up in v. 8 in these words, “I give thee the keeping of My heave-offerings in all holy gifts for a portion, as an eternal statute.” The notion of *מִשְׁמֶרֶת*, keeping, as in Ex. 12:6; 16:23, 32, is defined in the second parallel clause as *מְשָׁחָה*, a portion (see at Lev. 7:35). The priests were to keep all the heave-offerings, as the portion which belonged to them, out of the sacrificial gifts that the children of Israel offered to the Lord.

*תְּרוּמַת*, heave-offerings (see at Ex. 25:2, and Lev. 2:9), is used here in the broadest sense, as including all the holy gifts (*kodashim*, see Lev. 21:22) which the Israelites lifted off from their possessions and presented to the Lord (as in Numbers 5:9). Among these, for example, were, first of all, the most holy gifts in the meat-offerings, sin-offerings, and trespass-offerings (vv. 9, 10; see at Lev. 2:3). The burnt-offerings are not mentioned, because the whole of the flesh of these was burned upon the altar, and the skin alone fell to the portion of the priest (Lev. 7:8). “From the fire,” sc., of the altar. *אֵשׁ*,

fire, is equivalent to *אֵשׁ*, firing (see Lev. 1:9).

These gifts they were to eat, as most holy, in a most holy place, i.e., in the court of the tabernacle (see Lev. 6:9, 19; 7:6), which is called “most holy” here, to lay a stronger emphasis upon the precept. In the second place, these gifts included also “the holy gifts;” viz., (a) (v. 11) the heave-offering of their gifts in all wave-offerings (*tenuphoth*), i.e., the wave-breast and heave-leg of the peace-offerings, and whatever else was waved in connection with the sacrifices (see at Lev. 7:33): these might be eaten by both the male and female members of the priestly families, provided they were legally clean (Lev. 22:3ff.); (b) (v. 12) the gifts of first-fruits: “all the fat (i.e., the best, as in Gen. 45:18) of oil, new wine, and corn,” viz., *רְאִישֵׁיָם*, “the

first of them,” the *בְּכוֹרִים*, “the first-grown fruits” of the land, and that of all the fruit of the ground (Deut. 26:2, 10; Prov. 3:9; Ezek. 44:30), corn, wine, oil, honey, and tree-fruit (Deut. 8:8, compared with Lev. 19:23, 24), which were offered, according to 2 Chron. 31:5, Neh. 10:36, 38, Tob. 1:6, as first-fruits every year (see *Mishnah, Bikkur*, i. 3, 10, where the first-fruits are specified according to the productions mentioned in Deut. 8:8; the law prescribed nothing in relation to the quantity of the different first-fruits, but left this entirely to the offerer himself); (c) (v. 14) everything placed under a ban (see at Lev. 27:28); and (d) (vv. 15–18) the first-born of man and beast. The first-born of men and of unclean beasts were redeemed according to Numbers 3:47, Ex. 13:12, 13, and Lev. 27:6, 27; but such as were fit for sacrifice were actually offered, the blood being swung against the altar, and the fat portions burned upon it, whilst the whole of the flesh fell to the portion of the priests. So far as the redemption of human beings was concerned (v. 16), they were “to redeem from the monthly child,” i.e., the first-born child as soon as it was a month old.

**Numbers 18:19.** “All the holy heave-offerings” are not the thank-offerings (*Knobel*), but, as in

v. 8, all the holy gifts enumerated in vv. 9–18. Jehovah gives these to the priests as an eternal claim. “*An eternal covenant of salt is this before Jehovah,*” for Aaron and his descendants. A “covenant of salt;” equivalent to an indissoluble covenant, or inviolable contract (see at Lev. 2:13).

**Numbers 18:20.** For this reason, Aaron was to receive no inheritance in the land among the children of Israel. Aaron, as the head of the priests, represents the whole priesthood; and with regard to the possession, the whole tribe of Levi is placed, in v. 23, on an equality with the priests. The Levites were to receive no portion of the land as an inheritance in Canaan (cf. Numbers 26:62; Deut. 12:12; 14:27; Josh. 14:3). Jehovah was the portion and inheritance, not only of Aaron and his sons, but of the whole tribe of Levi (cf. Deut. 10:9; 18:2; Josh. 13:33); or, as it is expressed in Josh. 18:7, “the priesthood of Jehovah was their inheritance,” though not in the sense that *Knobel* supposes viz., “the priesthood with its revenues,” which would make the expression “Jehovah, the God of Israel” (Josh. 13:33), to be metonymical for “sacrificial gifts, first-fruits, and tenths.” The possession of the priests and Levites did not consist in the revenues assigned to them by God, but in the possession of Jehovah, the God of Israel. In the same sense in which the tribe of Levi was the peculiar possession of Jehovah out of the whole of the people of possession, was Jehovah also the peculiar possession of Levi; and just as the other tribes were to live upon what was afforded by the land assigned them as a possession, Levi was to live upon what Jehovah bestowed upon it. And inasmuch as not only the whole land of the twelve tribes, with which Jehovah had enfeoffed them, but the whole earth, belonged to Jehovah (Ex. 19:5), He was necessarily to be regarded as the greatest possession of all, beyond which nothing greater is conceivable, and in comparison with which every other possession is to be regarded as nothing. Hence it was evidently the greatest privilege and highest honour to have Him for a portion and possession (*Bähr, Symbolik*, ii. p. 44). “For truly,” as *Masius* writes (Com. on

Josh.), “he who possesses God possesses all things; and the worship (*cultus*) of Him is infinitely fuller of delight, and far more productive, than the cultivation (*cultus*) of any soil.”

**Numbers 18:21–24.** Revenues of the

Levites.—For (לְהִלְכָה, instead of, for) their service at the tabernacle God assigns them “*every tenth in Israel as an inheritance.*” On the tenth, see at Lev. 27:30–33. The institution and description of their service in vv. 22 and 23 is the same as that in Numbers 1:53 and 8:19. “Lest they bear sin:” see at Lev. 19:17.

**Numbers 18:25–32.** *Appropriation of the Tithe.*—Vv. 26ff. When the Levites took (received) from the people the tithe assigned them by Jehovah, they were to lift off from it a heave-offering for Jehovah, a tithe of the tithe for Aaron the priest (i.e., for the priesthood; see at v. 20). “*Your heave-offering shall be reckoned to you as the corn of the threshing-floor, and the fulness (see Ex. 22:28) of the wine-press,*” i.e., according to v. 30, as the revenue of the threshing-floor and wine-press; that is to say, as corn and wine which they had reaped themselves.

**Numbers 18:29.** The whole of this heave-offering of Jehovah, i.e., the tithe of the tithe, they were to lift off from all their gifts, from all the tithes of the people which they received; “*of all the fat of it,*” i.e., of all the best of the heave-offering they received, they were to lift off

אֶת־מִקְדָּשׁוֹ, “*its holy,*” i.e., the holy part, which was to be dedicated to Jehovah.

**Numbers 18:30.** They might eat it (the tithe they had received, after taking off the priests’ tithe) in any place with their families, as it was the reward for their service at the tabernacle.

**Numbers 18:32.** They would load no sin upon themselves by so doing (see Lev. 19:17), if they only lifted off the best as tithe (for the priest), and did not desecrate the holy gifts, sc., by eating in all kinds of places, which was not allowed, according to v. 10, with regard to the most holy gifts.



These regulations concerning the revenues of the priests and Levites were in perfect accordance with the true idea of the Israelitish kingdom of God. Whereas in heathen states, where there was an hereditary priestly caste, that caste was generally a rich one, and held a firm possession in the soil (in Egypt, for example; see at Gen. 47:22), the Levites received no hereditary landed property in the land of Israel, but only towns to dwell in among the other tribes, with pasturage for their cattle (Numbers 35), because Jehovah, the God of Israel, would be their inheritance. In this way their earthly existence as based upon the spiritual ground and soil of faith, in accordance with the calling assigned them to be the guardians and promoters of the commandments, statutes, and rights of Jehovah; and their authority and influence among the people were bound up with their unreserved surrender of themselves to the Lord, and their firm reliance upon the possession of their God. Now, whilst this position was to be a constant incitement to the Levites to surrender themselves entirely to the Lord and His service, it was also to become to the whole nation a constant admonition, inasmuch as it was a prerogative conferred upon them by the Lord, to seek the highest of all good in the possession of the Lord, as its portion and inheritance.—The revenue itself, however, which the Lord assigned to the Levites and priests, as His servants, consisting of the tenths and first-fruits, as well as certain portions of the different sacrificial gifts that were offered to Him, appears to have been a very considerable one, especially if we adopt the computation of *J. D. Michaelis* (*Mos. Recht.* i. § 52) with reference to the tithes. “A tribe,” he says, “which had only 22,000 males in it (23,000 afterwards), and therefore could hardly have numbered more than 12,000 grown-up men, received the tithes of 600,000 Israelites; consequently one single Levite, without the slightest necessity for sowing, and without any of the expenses of agriculture, reaped or received from the produce of the flocks and herds as much as five of the other Israelites.” But this leaves out of

sight the fact that tithes are never paid so exactly as this, and that no doubt there was as little conscientiousness in the matter then as there is at the present day, when those who are entitled to receive a tenth often receive even less than a twentieth. Moreover, the revenue of the tribe, which the Lord had chosen as His own peculiar possession, was not intended to be a miserable and beggarly one; but it was hardly equal, at any time, to the revenues which the priestly castes of other nations derived from their endowments. Again, the Levites had to give up the tenth of all the tithes they received to the priests; and the priests were to offer to Jehovah upon the altar a portion of the first-fruits, heave-offerings, and wave-offerings that were assigned to them. Consequently, as the whole nation was to make a practical acknowledgment, in the presentation of the tithe and first-fruits, that it had received its hereditary property as a fief from the Lord its God, so the Levites, by their payment of the tenth to the priests, and the priests, by presenting a portion of their revenues upon the altar, were to make a practical confession that they had received all their revenues from the Lord their God, and owed Him praise and adoration in return (see *Bähr, Symbolik*, ii. pp. 43ff.).

### Numbers 19

*The Law Concerning Purification from the Uncleaness of Death.—Ch. 19.*

**Numbers 19.** In order that a consciousness of the continuance of the covenant relation might be kept alive during the dying out of the race that had fallen under the judgment of God, after the severe stroke with which the Lord had visited the whole nation in consequence of the rebellion of the company of Korah, He gave the law concerning purification from the uncleanness of death, in which first of all the preparation of a sprinkling water is commanded for the removal of this uncleanness (vv. 1–10a); and then, secondly, the use of this purifying water enjoined as an eternal statute

(vv. 10b-22). The thought that death, and the putrefaction of death, as being the embodiment of sin, defiled and excluded from fellowship with the holy God, was a view of the fall and its consequences which had been handed down from the primeval age (see p. 558), and which was not only shared by the Israelites with many of the nations of antiquity, but presupposed by the laws given on Sinai as a truth well known in Israel; and at the same time confirmed, both in the prohibition of the priests from defiling themselves with the dead, except in the case of their nearest blood-relations (Lev. 21:1-6, 10-12), and in the command, that every one who was defiled by a corpse should be removed out of the camp (Numbers 5:2-4). Now, so long as the mortality within the congregation did not exceed the natural limits, the traditional modes of purification would be quite sufficient. But when it prevailed to a hitherto unheard-of extent, in consequence of the sentence pronounced by God, the defilements would necessarily be so crowded together, that the whole congregation would be in danger of being infected with the defilement of death, and of forfeiting its vocation to be the holy nation of Jehovah, unless God provided it with the means of cleansing itself from this uncleanness, without losing the fellowship of His covenant of grace. The law which follows furnished the means. In v. 2 this law is called **חֻקַּת הַתּוֹרָה**, a "statute of instruction," or law-statute. This combination of the two words commonly used for law and statute, which is only met with again in Numbers 31:21, and there, as here, in connection with a rule relating to purification from the uncleanness of death, is probably intended to give emphasis to the design of the law about to be given, to point it out as one of great importance, but not as *decretum absque ulla ratione*, a decree without any reason, as the Rabbins suppose.

**Numbers 19:2-10a.** Preparation of the Purifying Water.—As water is the ordinary means by which all kinds of uncleanness are removed, it was also to be employed in the removal of the uncleanness of death. But as this

uncleanness was the strongest of all religious defilements, fresh water alone was not sufficient to remove it; and consequently a certain kind of sprinkling-water was appointed, which was strengthened by the ashes of a sin-offering, and thus formed into a holy alkali. The main point in the law which follows, therefore, was the preparation of the ashes, and these had to be obtained by the *sacrifice of a red heifer*.

**Numbers 19:2ff.** The sons of Israel were to bring to Moses a red heifer, entirely without blemish, and to give it to Eleazar the priest, that he might have it slaughtered in his presence

outside the camp. **פָּרָה** is not a cow generally, but a young cow, a heifer, **δάμαλις** (LXX), *juvenca*, between the calf and the full-grown cow. **אֲדָמָה**, of a red colour, is not to be

connected with **תְּמִימָה** in the sense of "quite

red," as the Rabbins interpret it; but **תְּמִימָה**, *integra*, is to be taken by itself, and the words which follow, "wherein is no blemish," to be regarded as defining it still more precisely (see Lev. 22:19, 20). The slaying of this heifer is

called **חֹטְאֵת**, a sin-offering, in vv. 9 and 17. To

remind the congregation that death was the wages of sin, the antidote to the defilement of death was to be taken from a sin-offering. But as the object was not to remove and wipe away sin as such, but simply to cleanse the congregation from the uncleanness which proceeded from death, the curse of sin, it was necessary that the sin-offering should be modified in a peculiar manner to accord with this special design. The sacrificial animal was not to be a bullock, as in the case of the ordinary sin-offerings of the congregation (Lev. 4:14), but a female, because the female sex is

the bearer of life (Gen. 3:20), a **פָּרָה**, i.e., lit., the fruit-bringing; and of a red colour, not because the blood-red colour points to sin (as *Hengstenberg* follows the Rabbins and earlier theologians in supposing), but as the colour of

the most “intensive life,” which has its seat in the blood, and shows itself in the red colour of the face (the cheeks and lips); and one “upon which no yoke had ever come,” i.e., whose vital energy had not yet been crippled by labour under the yoke. Lastly, like all the sacrificial animals, it was to be uninjured, and free from faults, inasmuch as the idea of representation, which lay at the foundation of all the sacrifices, but more especially of the sin-offerings, demanded natural sinlessness and original purity, quite as much as imputed sin and transferred uncleanness. Whilst the last-mentioned prerequisite showed that the victim was well fitted for bearing sin, the other attributes indicated the fulness of life and power in their highest forms, and qualified it to form a powerful antidote to death. As thus appointed to furnish a reagent against death and mortal corruption, the sacrificial animal was to possess throughout, viz., in colour, in sex, and in the character of its body, the fulness of life in its greatest freshness and vigour.

**Numbers 19:3.** The sacrifice itself was to be superintended by Eleazar the priest, the eldest son of the high priest, and his presumptive successor in office; because Aaron, or the high priest, whose duty it was to present the sin-offerings for the congregation (Lev. 4:16), could not, according to his official position, which required him to avoid all uncleanness of death (Lev. 21:11, 12), perform such an act as this, which stood in the closest relation to death and the uncleanness of death, and for that very reason had to be performed outside the camp. The subject, to “bring her forth” and “slay her,” is indefinite; since it was not the duty of the priest to slay the sacrificial animal, but of the offerer himself, or in the case before us, of the congregation, which would appoint one of its own number for the purpose. All that the priest had to do was to sprinkle the blood; at the same time the slaying was to take place לְפָנָיו, before him, i.e., before his eyes. Eleazar was to sprinkle some of the blood seven times “towards the opposite,” i.e., toward the front of the tabernacle (*seven times*, as in Lev. 4:17).

Through this sprinkling of the blood the slaying became a sacrifice, being brought thereby into relation to Jehovah and the sanctuary; whilst the life, which was sacrificed for the sin of the congregation, was given up to the Lord, and offered up in the only way in which a sacrifice, prepared like this, outside the sanctuary, could possibly be offered.

**Numbers 19:5, 6.** After this (vv. 5, 6), they were to burn the cow, with the skin, flesh, blood, and dung, before his (Eleazar’s) eyes, and he was to throw cedar-wood, hyssop, and scarlet wool into the fire. The burning of the sacrificial animal outside the camp took place in the case of every sin-offering for the whole congregation, for the reasons expounded on p. 525. But in the case before us, the whole of the sacrificial act had to be performed outside the camp, i.e., outside the sphere of the theocracy; because the design of this sin-offering was not that the congregation might thereby be received through the expiation of its sin into the fellowship of the God and Lord who was present at the altar and in the sanctuary, but simply that an antidote to the infection of death might be provided for the congregation, which had become infected through fellowship with death; and consequently, the victim was to represent, not the living congregation as still associated with the God who was present in His earthly kingdom, but those members of the congregation who had fallen victims to temporal death as the wages of sin, and, as such, were separated from the earthly theocracy (see my *Archaeology*, i. p. 283). In this sacrifice, the blood, which was generally poured out at the foot of the altar, was burned along with the rest, and the ashes to be obtained were impregnated with the substance thereof. But in order still further to increase the strength of these ashes, which were already well fitted to serve as a powerful antidote to the corruption of death, as being the incorruptible residuum of the sin-offering which had not been destroyed by the fire, cedar-wood was thrown into the fire, as the symbol of the incorruptible continuance of life; and hyssop, as the symbol of purification from the corruption

of death; and scarlet wool, the deep red of which shadowed forth the strongest vital energy (see at Lev. 14:6),—so that the ashes might be regarded “as the quintessence of all that purified and strengthened life, refined and sublimated by the fire” (*Leyrer*).

**Numbers 19:7–10a**, etc. The persons who took part in this—viz., the priest, the man who attended to the burning, and the clean man who gathered the ashes together, and deposited them in a clean place for subsequent use—became unclean till the evening in consequence; not from the fact that they had officiated for unclean persons, and, in a certain sense, had participated in their uncleanness (*Knobel*), but through the uncleanness of sin and death, which had passed over to the sin-offering; just as the man who led into the wilderness the goat which had been rendered unclean through the imposition of sin, became himself unclean in consequence (Lev. 16:26). Even the sprinkling water prepared from the ashes defiled every one who touched it (v. 21). But when the ashes were regarded in relation to their appointment as the means of purification, they were to be treated as clean. Not only were they to be collected together by a clean man; but they were to be kept for use in a clean place, just as the ashes of the sacrifices that were taken away from the altar were to be carried to a clean place outside the camp (Lev. 6:4). These defilements, like every other which only lasted till the evening, were to be removed by washing (see pp. 569, 570). The ashes thus collected were to serve the congregation לְמִי

נְדָה, i.e., literally as water of uncleanness; in other words, as water by which uncleanness was to be removed. “*Water of uncleanness*” is analogous to “water of sin” in Numbers 8:7.

**Numbers 19:10–22.** *Use of the Water of Purification.*—The words in v. 10b, “*And it shall be to the children of Israel, and to the stranger in the midst of them, for an everlasting statute,*” relate to the preparation and application of the sprinkling water, and connect the foregoing instructions with those which follow.—Vv. 1–

13 contain the general rules for the use of the water; vv. 14–22 a more detailed description of the execution of those rules.

**Numbers 19:11ff.** Whoever touched a corpse, “with regard to all the souls of men,” i.e., the corpse of a person, of whatever age or sex, was unclean for seven days, and on the third and seventh day he was to cleanse himself

(הִתְחַטֵּא), as in Numbers 8:21) with the water

(בּוֹ) refers, so far as the sense is concerned, to the water of purification). If he neglected this cleansing, he did not become clean, and he defiled the dwelling of Jehovah (see at Lev. 15:31). Such a man was to be cut off from Israel (vid., at Gen. 17:14).

**Numbers 19:14–16.** Special instructions concerning the defilement. If a man died in a tent, every one who entered it, or who was there at the time, became unclean for seven days. So also did every “open vessel upon which there was not a covering, a string,” i.e., that had not a covering fastened by a string, to prevent the smell of the corpse from penetrating it.

פְּתִיל, a string, is in apposition to צֶמֶד, a band, or binding (see *Ges.* § 113; *Ewald*, § 287, e.). This also applied to any one in the open field, who touched a man who had either been slain by the sword or had died a natural death, or even a bone (skeleton), or a grave.

**Numbers 19:17–19.** *Ceremony of purification.* They were to take for the unclean person some of the dust of the burning of the cow, i.e., some of the ashes obtained by burning the cow, and put living, i.e., fresh water (see Lev. 14:5), upon it in a vessel. A clean man was then to take a bunch of hyssop (see Ex. 12:22), on account of its inherent purifying power, and dip it in the water, on the third and seventh day after the defilement had taken place, and to sprinkle the tent, with the vessels and persons in it, as well as every one who had touched a corpse, whether a person slain, or one who had died a natural death, or a grave; after which the persons were to wash their clothes and bathe,

that they might be clean in the evening. As the uncleanness in question is held up as the highest grade of uncleanness, by its duration being fixed at seven days, i.e., an entire week, so the appointment of a double purification with the sprinkling water shows the force of the uncleanness to be removed; whilst the selection of the third and seventh days was simply determined by the significance of the numbers themselves. In v. 20, the threat of punishment for the neglect of purification is repeated from v. 13, for the purpose of making it most emphatic.

**Numbers 19:21, 22.** This also was to be an everlasting statute, that he who sprinkled the water of purification, or even touched it (see at vv. 7ff.), and he who was touched by a person defiled (by a corpse), and also the person who touched him, should be unclean till the evening,—a rule which also applied to other forms of uncleanness.

### Numbers 20

*Israel's Last Journey from Kadesh to the Heights of Pisgah in the Fields of Moab.—Ch. 20 and 21.*

**Numbers 20–21.** In the first month of the fortieth year, the whole congregation of Israel assembled again at Kadesh, in the desert of Zin, to commence the march to Canaan. In Kadesh, Miriam died (Numbers 20:1), and the people murmured against Moses and Aaron on account of the want of water. The Lord relieved this want, by pouring water from the rock; but Moses sinned on this occasion, so that he was not allowed to enter Canaan (vv. 2–13). From Kadesh, Moses sent messengers to the king of Edom, to ask permission for the Israelites to pass peaceably through his land; but this was refused by the king of Edom (vv. 14–21). In the meantime, the Israelites marched from Kadesh to Mount Hor, on the borders of the land of Edom; and there Aaron died, and Eleazar was invested with the high-priesthood in his stead (vv. 22–29). On this march they were attacked by the Canaanitish king of Arad; but they gained

a complete victory, and laid his cities under the ban (Numbers 19:1–3). As the king of Edom opposed their passing through his land, they were compelled to go from Mount Hor to the Red Sea, and round the land of Edom. On the way the murmuring people were bitten by poisonous serpents; but the penitent among them were healed of the bite of the serpent, by looking at the brazen serpent which Moses set up at the command of God (vv. 4–9). After going round the Moabitish mountains, they turned to the north, and went along the eastern side of the Edomitish and Moabitish territory, as far as the Arnon, on the border of the Amoritish kingdom of Sihon, with the intention of going through to the Jordan, and so entering Canaan (vv. 10–20). But as Sihon would not allow the Israelites to pass through his land, and made a hostile demonstration against them, they smote him and conquered his land, and also the northern Amoritish kingdom of Og, king of Bashan (vv. 21–35), and forced their way through the Amoritish territory to the heights of Pisgah, for the purpose of going forward thence into the steppes of Moab by the Jordan (Numbers 22:1). These marches formed the *third* stage in the guidance of Israel through the desert to Canaan.

*Death of Miriam. Water Out of the Rock. Refusal of a Passage Through Edom. Aaron's Death. Conquest Over the King of Arad.—Ch. 20–21:3.*

**Numbers 20:1–21:3.** The events mentioned in the heading, which took place either in Kadesh or on the march thence to the mountain of Hor are grouped together in Numbers 20:1–21:3, rather in a classified order than in one that is strictly chronological. The death of Miriam took place during the time when the people were collected at Kadesh-Barnea in the desert of Zin (v. 21). But when the whole nation assembled together in this desert there was a deficiency of water, which caused the people to murmur against Moses, until God relieved the want by a miracle (vv. 2–13). It was from Kadesh that messengers were sent to the king of Edom (vv.

14ff.); but instead of waiting at Kadesh till the messengers returned, Moses appears to have proceeded with the people in the meantime into the Arabah. When and where the messengers returned to Moses, we are not informed. So much is certain, however, that the Edomites did not come with an army against the Israelites (vv. 20, 21), until they approached their land with the intention of passing through. For it was in the Arabah, at Mount Hor, that Israel first turned to go round the land of Edom (Numbers 21:4). The attack of the Canaanites of Arad (Numbers 21:1–3) who attempted to prevent the Israelites from advancing into the desert of Zin, occurred in the interval between the departure from Kadesh and the arrival in the Arabah at Mount Hor; so that if a chronological arrangement were adopted, this event would be placed in Numbers 20:22, between the first and second clauses of this verse. The words *“and came to Mount Hor”* (v. 22b) are anticipatory, and introduce the most important event of all that period, viz., the death of Aaron at Mount Hor (vv. 23–29).

**Numbers 20:1.** Assembling of the Congregation at Kadesh.—In the first month the children of Israel came into the desert of Zin, i.e., in the fortieth year of their wanderings, at the commencement of which “the whole congregation” assembled together once more in the very same place where the sentence had been passed thirty-seven years and a half before, that they should remain in the desert for forty years, until the rebellious generation had died out. The year is not mentioned in v. 1, but, according to Numbers 14:32ff., it can only be the year with which the forty years of the sentence that they should die out in the wilderness came to an end, that is to say, the fortieth year of their wandering. This is put beyond all doubt by what follows. For the whole congregation proceeds from Kadesh in the desert of Zin to Mount Hor, where Aaron died, and that, according to Numbers 33:38, in the fifth month of the fortieth year after the exodus from Egypt. Miriam died during the

time that the people were staying (יָשָׁבוּ) in Kadesh, and there she was buried.

**Numbers 20:2–13.** Sin of Moses and Aaron at the Water of Strife at Kadesh.—In the arid desert the congregation was in want of water, and the people quarrelled with Moses in consequence. In connection with the first stay in Kadesh there is nothing said about any deficiency of water. But as the name Kadesh embraces a large district of the desert of Zin, and is not confined to one particular spot, there might easily be a want of water in this place or the other. In their faithless discontent, the people wished that they had died when their brethren died before Jehovah. The allusion is not to Korah’s company, as *Knobel* supposes,

and the word יָנַח, “to expire,” would be altogether inapplicable to their destruction; but the reference is to those who had died one by one during the thirty-seven years. *“Why,”* they murmured once more against Moses and Aaron, *“have ye brought the congregation of God into this desert, to perish there with their cattle? Why have ye brought it out of Egypt into this evil land, where there is no seed, no fig-trees and pomegranates, no vines, and no water to drink?”*

**Numbers 20:6.** Moses and Aaron then turned to the tabernacle, to ask for the help of the Lord; and the glory of the Lord immediately appeared (see at Numbers 17:7 and 14:10).

**Numbers 20:7, 8.** The Lord relieved the want of water. Moses was to take the staff, and with Aaron to gather together the congregation, and speak to the rock before their eyes, when it would give forth water for the congregation and their cattle to drink.

**Numbers 20:9–11.** Moses then took the rod “from before Jehovah,”—i.e., the rod with which he had performed miracles in Egypt (Ex. 17:5), and which was laid up in the sanctuary, not Aaron’s rod which blossomed (Numbers 17:25),—and collected the congregation together before the rock, and said to them, *“Hear, ye rebels, shall we fetch you water out of this rock?”* He then smote the rock twice with

his rod, whereupon much water came out, so that the congregation and their cattle had water to drink.

**Numbers 20:12.** The Lord then said to both of them, both Moses and Aaron, *“Because ye have not trusted firmly in Me, to sanctify Me before the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.”* The want of belief or firm confidence in the Lord, through which both of them had sinned, was not actual unbelief or distrust in the omnipotence and grace of God, as if God could not relieve the want of water or extend His help to the murmuring people; for the Lord had promised His help to Moses, and Moses did what the Lord had commanded him. It was simply the want of full believing confidence, a momentary wavering of that immovable assurance, which the two heads of the nation ought to have shown to the congregation, but did not show. Moses did even more than God had commanded him. Instead of speaking to the rock with the rod of God in his hand, as God directed him, he spoke to the congregation, and in these inconsiderate words, *“Shall we fetch you water out of the rock?”* words which, if they did not express any doubt in the help of the Lord, were certainly fitted to strengthen the people in their unbelief, and are therefore described in Ps. 106:33 as prating (speaking unadvisedly) with the lips (cf. Lev. 5:4). He then struck the rock twice with the rod, *“as if it depended upon human exertion, and not upon the power of God alone,”* or as if the promise of God *“would not have been fulfilled without all the smiting on his part”* (*Knobel*). In the ill-will expressed in these words the weakness of faith was manifested, by which the faithful servant of God, worn out with the numerous temptations, allowed himself to be overcome, so that he stumbled, and did not sanctify the Lord before the eyes of the people, as he ought to have done. Aaron also wavered along with Moses, inasmuch as he did nothing to prevent Moses’ fall. But their sin became a grievous one, from the fact that they acted unworthily of their office. God punished them, therefore, by withdrawing their office from

them before they had finished the work entrusted to them. They were not to conduct the congregation into the promised land, and therefore were not to enter in themselves (cf. Numbers 27:12–13; Deut. 32:48ff.). The rock, from which water issued, is distinguished by

the article הַסֵּלֶעַ, not as being already known, or mentioned before, but simply as a particular rock in that neighbourhood; though the situation is not described, so as to render it possible to search for it now.

**Numbers 20:13.** The account closes with the words, *“This is the water of strife, about which the children of Israel strove with Jehovah, and He sanctified Himself on them.”* This does not imply that the scene of this occurrence received the name of *“strife-water,”* but simply that the water which God brought out of the rock for the Israelites received that name. But God sanctified Himself on them, by the fact that, on the one hand, He put their unbelief to shame by the miraculous gift of water, and on the other hand punished Moses and Aaron for the weakness of their faith.

**Numbers 20:14–21.** Message of the Israelites to the King of Edom.—As Israel was about to start from Kadesh upon its march to Canaan, but wished to enter it from the east across the Jordan, and not from the south, where the steep and lofty mountain ranges presented obstacles which would have been difficult to overcome, if not quite insuperable, Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom, to solicit from the kindred nation a friendly and unimpeded passage through their land. He reminded the king of the relationship of Israel, of their being brought down to Egypt, of the oppression they had endured there, and their deliverance out of the land, and promised him that they would not pass through fields and vineyards, nor drink the water of their wells, but keep to the king’s way, without turning to the right hand or the left, and thus would do no injury whatever to the land (vv. 14–16). By the *“angel”* who led Israel out of Egypt we are naturally to understand not the pillar of cloud and fire (*Knobel*), but the

angel of the Lord, the visible revealer of the invisible God, whom the messengers describe indefinitely as “an angel,” when addressing the Edomites. *Kadesh* is represented in v. 16 as a city on the border of the Edomitish territory. The reference is to *Kadesh-Barnea* (Numbers 32:8; 34:4; Deut. 1:2, 19; 2:14; 9:23; Josh. 10:41; 14:6, 7; 15:3). This city was no doubt situated quite in the neighbourhood of *Ain Kudes*, the well of Kadesh, discovered by Rowland. This well was called *En-Mishpat*, the fountain of judgment, in Abraham’s time (Gen. 14:7); and the name *Kadesh* occurs first of all on the first arrival of the Israelites in that region, in the account of the events which took place there, as being the central point of the place of encampment, the “desert of Paran,” or “desert of Zin” (cf. Numbers 13:26 with v. 21, and Numbers 12:16). And even on the second arrival of the congregation in that locality, it is not mentioned till after the desert of Zin (Numbers 20:1); whilst the full name *Kadesh-Barnea* is used by Moses for the first time in Numbers 32:8, when reminding the people of those mournful occurrences in Kadesh in Numbers 13 and 14. The conjecture is therefore a very natural one, that the place in question received the name of *Kadesh* first of all from that tragical occurrence (Numbers 14), or possibly from the murmuring of the congregation on account of the want of water, which led Moses and Aaron to sin, so that the Lord sanctified (שׁוֹדֵד) Himself upon them by a judgment, because they had not sanctified Him before the children of Israel (vv. 12 and 13); that *Barnea* was the older or original name of the town, which was situated in the neighbourhood of the “water of strife,” and that this name was afterwards united with *Kadesh*, and formed into a composite noun. If this conjecture is a correct one, the name *Kadesh* is used proleptically, not only in Gen. 14:7, as a more precise definition of *En-Mishpat*, but also in Gen. 16:14; 20:1; and Numbers 13:26, and 20:1; and there is no lack of analogies for this. It is in this too that we are probably to seek for an explanation of the fact, that in the list of

stations in Numbers 33 the name *Kadesh* does not occur in connection with the first arrival of the congregation in the desert of Zin, but only in connection with their second arrival (v. 36), and that the place of encampment on their first arrival is called *Rithmah*, and not *Barnea*, because the headquarters of the camp were in the Wady *Retemath*, not at the town of *Barnea*, which was farther on in the desert of Zin. The expression “*town of the end of thy territory*” is not to be understood as signifying that the town belonged to the Edomites, but simply affirms that it was situated on the border of the Edomitish territory. The supposition that *Barnea* was an Edomitish town is opposed by the circumstance that, in Numbers 34:4, and Josh. 15:3, it is reckoned as part of the land of Canaan; that in Josh. 10:41 it is mentioned as the southernmost town, where Joshua smote the Canaanites and conquered their land; and lastly, that in Josh. 15:23 it is probably classed among the towns allotted to the tribe of Judah, from which it seems to follow that it must have belonged to the Amorites. “The end of the territory” of the king of Edom is to be distinguished from “the territory of the land of Edom” in v. 23. The land of Edom extended westwards only as far as the Arabah, the low-lying plain, which runs from the southern point of the Dead Sea to the head of the Elanitic Gulf. At that time, however, the Edomites had spread out beyond the Arabah, and taken possession of a portion of the desert of Paran belonging to the peninsula of Sinai, which was bounded on the north by the desert of Zin (see at Numbers 34:3). By their not drinking of the water of the wells (v. 17), we are to understand, according to v. 19, their not making use of the wells of the Edomites either by violence or without compensation. The “king’s way” is the public high road, which was probably made at the cost of the state, and kept up for the king and his armies to travel upon, and is synonymous with the “sultan-road” (*Derb es Sultan*) or “emperor road,” as the open, broad, old military roads are still called in the East (cf. *Robinson*, Pal. ii. 340; *Seetzen*, i. pp. 61, 132, ii. pp. 336, etc.).



This military road led, no doubt, as *Leake* has conjectured (*Burckhardt*, Syr. pp. 21, 22), through the broad *Wady el Ghuweir*, which not only forms a direct and easy passage to the level country through the very steep mountains that fall down into the Arabah, but also a convenient road through the land of Edom (*Robinson*, ii. pp. 552, 583, 610), and is celebrated for its splendid meadows, which are traceable to its many springs (*Burckhardt*, pp. 688, 689); for the broad *Wady Murreh* runs from the northern border of the mountain-land of Azazimeh, not only as far as the mountain of Moddera (Madurah), where it is divided, but in its southern half as far as the Arabah (see pp. 689f.). This is very likely the "great route through broad wadys," which the Bedouins who accompanied *Rowland* assured him "was very good, and led direct to Mount Hor, but with which no European traveller was acquainted" (*Ritter's Erdk.* xiv. p. 1088). It probably opens into the Arabah at the *Wady el Weibeh*, opposite to the *Wady Ghuweir*.

**Numbers 20:18, 19.** The Edomites refused the visit of the Israelites in a most unbrotherly manner, and threatened to come out against them with the sword, without paying the least attention to the repeated assurance of the Israelitish messengers, that they would only march upon the high road, and would pay for water for themselves and their cattle. רַק

אֵין־דָּבָר, lit., "it is nothing at all; I will go through with my feet:" i.e., we want no great thing; we will only make use of the high road.

**Numbers 20:20.** To give emphasis to his refusal, Edom went against Israel "with much people and with a strong hand," sc., when they approached its borders. This statement, as well as the one in v. 21, that Israel turned away before Edom, anticipates the historical order; for, as a matter of course, the Edomites cannot have come at once with an army on the track of the messengers, for the purpose of blocking up the road through the *Wady Murreh*, which runs along the border of its territory to the west of the Arabah.

**Numbers 20:22–29.** Death of Aaron at Mount Hor.—The Israelites left Kadesh, and passed along the road just mentioned to Mount *Hor*. This mountain, which was situated, according to Numbers 33:37, on the border of the land of Edom, is placed by *Josephus* (Ant. iv. 4, 7) in the neighbourhood of *Petra*; so also by *Eusebius* and *Jerome*: "Or mons, in quo mortuus est Aaron, juxta civitatem Petram." According to modern travellers, it is Mount *Harun*, on the north-western side of *Wady Musa (Petra)*, which is described by *Robinson* (vol. ii. p. 508) as "a cone irregularly truncated, having three ragged points or peaks, of which that upon the north-east is the highest, and has upon it the Muhammedan Wely, or tomb of Aaron," from which the mountain has received its name "*Harun*," i.e., *Aaron* (vid., *Burckhardt*, Syr. pp. 715, 716; v. *Schubert*, *Reise*, ii. pp. 419ff.; *Ritter*, *Erdkunde*, xiv. pp. 1127ff.). There can be no doubt as to the general correctness of this tradition; for even if the Mohammedan tradition concerning Aaron's grave is not well accredited, the situation of this mountain is in perfect harmony with the statement in v. 23 and Numbers 33:37, viz., that the Israelites had then reached the border of the land of Edom. The place where the people encamped is called *Mosera* in Deut. 10:6, and *Moseroth* in the list of stations in Numbers 33:30, and is at all events to be sought for in the Arabah, in the neighbourhood of Mount *Hor*, though it is altogether unknown to us. The camp of 600,000 men, with their wives, children, and flocks, would certainly require a space miles wide, and might therefore easily stretch from the mouths of the *Wady el Weibeh* and *Wady Ghuweir*, in the Arabah, to the neighbourhood of Mount *Harun*. The place of encampment is called after this mountain, *Hor*, both here and in Numbers 33:37ff., because it was there that Aaron died and was buried. The Lord foretold his death to Moses, and directed him to take off Aaron's priestly robes, and put them upon Eleazar his son, as Aaron was not to enter the promised land, because they (Aaron and Moses) had opposed the command of Jehovah at the water

of strife (see at v. 12). "Gathered to his people," like the patriarchs (Gen. 25:8, 17; 35:29; 49:33).

**Numbers 20:27, 28.** Moses executed this command, and Aaron died upon the top of the mountain, according to Numbers 33:37, 38, on the first day of the fifth month, in the fortieth year after the exodus from Egypt, at the age of 123 years (which agrees with Ex. 7:7), and was mourned by all Israel for thirty days.

### Numbers 21

**Numbers 21:1-3.** Victory of Israel over the Canaanitish King of Arad.—When this Canaanitish king, who dwelt in the Negeb, i.e., the south of Palestine (vid., Numbers 13:17), heard that Israel was coming the way of the spies, he made war upon the Israelites, and took some of them prisoners. *Arad* is mentioned both here and in the parallel passage, Numbers 33:40, and also by the side of *Hormah*, in Josh. 12:14, as the seat of a Canaanitish king (cf. Judg. 1:16, 17). According to *Eusebius* and *Jerome* in the *Onomast.*, it was twenty Roman miles to the south of Hebron, and has been preserved in the ruins of *Tell Arad*, which *v. Schubert* (ii. pp. 457ff.) and *Robinson* (ii. pp. 473, 620, and 624) saw in the distance; and, according to *Roth* in *Petermann's* geographische Mittheilungen (1858, p. 269), it was situated to the south-east of Kurmul (Carmel), in an undulating plain, without trees or shrubs, with isolated hills and ranges of hills in all directions, among which was *Tell Arad*.

The meaning of **דֶּרֶךְ הָאֲתָרִים** is uncertain.

The LXX, *Saad.*, and others, take the word *Atharim* as the proper name of a place not mentioned again; but the *Chaldee*, *Samar.*, and *Syr.* render it with much greater probability as an appellative noun formed from **אֲתָר** with **א**

*prosthet.*, and synonymous with **הַתָּרִים**, the spies (Numbers 14:6). The way of the spies was the way through the desert of Zin, which the Israelitish spies had previously taken to Canaan (Numbers 13:21). The territory of the king of Arad extended to the southern frontier of

Canaan, to the desert of Zin, through which the Israelites went from Kadesh to Mount Hor. The Canaanites attacked them when upon their march, and made some of them prisoners.

**Numbers 21:2, 3.** The Israelites then vowed to the Lord, that if He would give this people into their hands, they would "ban" their cities; and the Lord hearkened to the request, and delivered up the Canaanites, so that they put them and their cities under the ban. (On the ban, see at Lev. 27:28). "*And they called the place Hormah*," i.e., banning, ban-place. "The place" can only mean the spot where the Canaanites were defeated by the Israelites. If the town of Zephath, or the capital of Arad, had been specially intended, it would no doubt have been also mentioned, as in Judg. 1:17. As it was not the intention of Moses to press into Canaan from the south, across the steep and difficult mountains, for the purpose of effecting its conquest, the Israelites could very well content themselves for the present with the defeat inflicted upon the Canaanites, and defer the complete execution of their vow until the time when they had gained a firm footing in Canaan. The banning of the Canaanites of Arad and its cities necessarily presupposed the immediate conquest of the whole territory, and the laying of all its cities in ashes. And so, again, the introduction of a king of *Hormah*, i.e., *Zephath*, among the kings defeated by Joshua (Josh. 12:14), is no proof that Zephath was conquered and called Hormah in the time of Moses. Zephath may be called Hormah proleptically both there and in Josh. 19:4, as being the southernmost border town of the kingdom of Arad, in consequence of the ban suspended by Moses over the territory of the king of Arad, and may not have received this name till after its conquest by the Judaeans and Simeonites. At the same time, it is quite conceivable that Zephath may have been captured in the time of Joshua, along with the other towns of the south, and called Hormah at that time, but that the Israelites could not hold it then; and therefore, after the departure of the Israelitish army, the old name was restored by the Canaanites, or rather only retained, until the city was retaken

and permanently held by the Israelites after Joshua's death (Judg. 1:16, 17), and received the new name once for all. The allusion to Hormah here, and in Numbers 14:45, does not warrant the opinion in any case, that it was subsequently to the death of Moses and the conquest of Canaan under Joshua that the war with the Canaanites of Arad and their overthrow occurred.

*March Round the Land of Edom and Moab. Conquest of Sihon and Og, Kings of the Amorites.—Ch. 21:4–35.*

**Numbers 21:4–9.** March of Israel through the Arabah. Plague of Serpents, and Brazen Serpent.—V. 4. As the Edomites refused a passage through their land when the Israelites left Mount Hor, they were obliged to take the way to the Red Sea, in order to go round the land of Edom, that is to say, to go down the Arabah to the head of the Elanitic Gulf.

**Numbers 21:5, 6.** As they went along this road the people became impatient (“the soul of the people was much discouraged,” see Ex. 6:9), and they began once more to murmur against God and Moses, because they had neither bread nor water (cf. Numbers 20:4ff.), and were tired of the loose, i.e., poor, food of manna (קִלְקֵל

קִלְקֵל). The low-lying plain of the Arabah, which runs between steep mountain walls from the Dead Sea to the Red Sea, would be most likely to furnish the Israelites with very little food, except the manna which God gave them; for although it is not altogether destitute of vegetation, especially at the mouths of the wadys and winter torrents from the hills, yet on the whole it is a horrible desert, with a loose sandy soil, and drifts of granite and other stones, where terrible sand-storms sometimes arise from the neighbourhood of the Red Sea (see v. *Schubert*, R. ii. pp. 396ff., and *Ritter*, *Erdk.* xiv. pp. 1013ff.); and the want of food might very frequently be accompanied by the absence of drinkable water. The people rebelled in

consequence, and were punished by the Lord with fiery serpents, the bite of which caused many to die. נִחְשֵׁים שָׂרְפִים, lit., burning snakes, so called from their burning, i.e., inflammatory bite, which filled with heat and poison, just as many of the snakes were called by the Greeks, e.g., the *διψᾶδ πρηστῆρες*, and *καύσωνες* (*Dioscor.* vii. 13: *Aelian. nat. anim.* vi. 51), not from the skin of these snakes with fiery red spots, which are frequently found in the Arabah, and are very poisonous.

**Numbers 21:7.** This punishment brought the people to reflection. They confessed their sin to Moses, and entreated him to deliver them from the plague through his intercession with the Lord. And the Lord helped them; in such a way, however, that the reception of help was made to depend upon the faith of the people.

**Numbers 21:8, 9.** At the command of God, Moses made a *brazen serpent*, and put it upon a standard. Whoever then of the persons bitten by the poisonous serpents looked at the brazen serpent with faith in the promise of God, lived, i.e., recovered from the serpent's bite. The serpent was to be made of brass or copper, because the colour of this metal, when the sun was shining upon it, was most like the appearance of the fiery serpents; and thus the symbol would be more like the thing itself.

Even in the book of Wisdom (Numbers 16:6, 7), the brazen serpent is called “a symbol of salvation; for he that turned himself toward it was not saved by the thing that he saw, but by Thee, that art the Saviour of all.” It was not merely intended, however, as *Ewald* supposes (*Gesch.* ii. p. 228), as a “sign that just as this serpent hung suspended in the air, bound and rendered harmless by the command of Jehovah, so every one who looked at this with faith in the redeeming power of Jehovah, was secured against the evil,—a figurative sign, therefore, like that of St. George and the Dragon among ourselves;” for, according to this, there would be no internal causal link between the fiery serpents and the brazen image of a serpent. It was rather intended as a figurative

representation of the poisonous serpents, rendered harmless by the mercy of God. For God did not cause a real serpent to be taken, but the image of a serpent, in which the fiery serpent was stiffened, as it were, into dead brass, as a sign that the deadly poison of the fiery serpents was overcome in this brazen serpent. This is not to be regarded as a symbol of the divine healing power; nor is the selection of such a symbol to be deduced and explained, as it is by *Winer, Kurtz, Knobel*, and others, from the symbolical view that was common to all the heathen religions of antiquity, that the serpent was a beneficent and health-bringing power, which led to its being exalted into a symbol of the healing power, and a representation of the gods of healing. This heathen view is not only foreign to the Old Testament, and without any foundation in the fact that, in the time of Hezekiah, the people paid a superstitious worship to the brazen serpent erected by Moses (2 Kings 18:4); but it is irreconcilably opposed to the biblical view of the serpent, as the representative of evil, which was founded upon Gen. 3:15, and is only traceable to the magical art of serpent-charming, which the Old Testament abhorred as an idolatrous abomination. To this we may add, that the thought which lies at the foundation of this explanation, viz., that poison is to be cured by poison, has no support in Hos. 13:4, but is altogether foreign to the Scriptures. God punishes sin, it is true, by sin; but He neither cures sin by sin, nor death by death. On the contrary, to conquer sin it was necessary that the Redeemer should be without sin; and to take away its power from death, it was requisite that Christ, the Prince of life, who had life in Himself, should rise again from death and the grave (John 5:26; 11:25; Acts 3:15; 2 Tim. 1:10).

The brazen serpent became a symbol of salvation on the three grounds which *Luther* pointed out. In the *first* place, the serpent which Moses was to make by the command of God was to be of brass or copper, that is to say, of a reddish colour, and (although without poison) altogether like the persons who were red and

burning with heat because of the bite of the fiery serpents. In the *second* place, the brazen serpent was to be set up upon a pole for a sign. And in the *third* place, those who desired to recover from the fiery serpent's bite and live, were to look at the brazen serpent upon the pole, otherwise they could not recover or live (*Luther's Sermon on John 3:1-15*). It was in these three points, as *Luther* has also clearly shown, that the typical character of this symbol lay, to which Christ referred in His conversation with Nicodemus (John 3:14). The brazen serpent had the form of a real serpent, but was "without poison, and altogether harmless." So God sent His Son in the form of sinful flesh, and yet without sin (Rom. 8:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:22-24).—2. In the lifting up of the serpent as a standard. This was a δειγματίζειν ἐν παρρησίᾳ, a θριαμβεύειν (a "showing openly," or "triumphing"), a triumphal exhibition of the poisonous serpents as put to death in the brazen image, just as the lifting up of Christ upon the cross was a public triumph over the evil principalities and powers below the sky (Col. 2:14, 15).—3. In the cure effected through looking at the image of the serpent. Just as the Israelites had to turn their eyes to the brazen serpent in believing obedience to the word of the Lord, in order to be cured of the bite of the poisonous serpents, so much we look with faith at the Son of man lifted up upon the cross, if we would be delivered from the bite of the old serpent, from sin, death, the devil, and hell. "Christ is the antitype of the serpent, inasmuch as He took upon Himself the most pernicious of all pernicious potencies, viz., sin, and made a vicarious atonement for it" (*Hengstenberg* on John 3:14). The brazen image of the serpent was taken by the Israelites to Canaan, and preserved till the time of Hezekiah, who had it broken in pieces, because the idolatrous people had presented incense-offerings to this holy relic (2 Kings 18:4).

**Numbers 21:10-20.** March of Israel round Edom and Moab, to the Heights of Pisgah in the Field of Moab (cf. Numbers 33:41-47).—V. 10. From the camp in the Arabah, which is not more particularly described, where the

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murmuring people were punished by fiery serpents, Israel removed to *Oboth*. According to the list of stations in Numbers 33:41ff., they went from Hor to *Zalmonah*, the situation of which has not been determined; for C. v. Raumer's conjecture (*der Zug der Israeliten*, p. 45), that it was the same place as the modern *Maan*, has no firm basis in the fact that *Maan* is a station of the Syrian pilgrim caravans. From *Zalmonah* they went to *Phunon*, and only then to *Oboth*. The name *Phunon* is no doubt the same as *Phinon*, a tribe-seat of the Edomitish Phylarch (Gen. 34:41); and according to *Jerome* (*Onom. s. v. Fenon*), it was "a little village in the desert, where copper was dug up by condemned criminals (see at Gen. 36:41), between Petra and Zoar." This statement suits very well, provided we imagine the situation of *Phunon* to have been not in a straight line between Petra and Zoar, but more to the east, between the mountains on the edge of the desert. For the Israelites unquestionably went from the southern end of the Arabah to the eastern side of Idumaea, through the Wady *el Ithm* (*Getum*), which opens into the Arabah from the east, a few hours to the north of Akaba and the ancient Ezion-geber. They had then gone round the mountains of Edom, and begun to "turn to the north" (Deut. 2:3), so that they now proceeded farther northwards, on the eastern side of the mountains of Edom, "through the territory of the sons of Esau," no doubt by the same road which is taken in the present day by the caravans which go from Gaza to Maan, through the Ghor. "This runs upon a grassy ridge, forming the western border of the coast of Arabia, and the eastern border of the cultivated land, which stretches from the land of Edom to the sources of the Jordan, on the eastern side of the Ghor" (v. Raumer, *Zug*, p. 45). On the western side of their mountains the Edomites had refused permission to the Israelites to pass through their land (Numbers 20:18ff.), as the mountains of Seir terminate towards the Ghor (the Arabah) in steep and lofty precipices, and there are only two or three narrow wadys which intersect them from west to east; and of these

the Wady Ghuweir is the only one which is practicable for an army, and even this could be held so securely by a moderate army, that no enemy could force its way into the heart of the country (see *Leake* in *Burckhardt*, pp. 21, 22; and *Robinson*, ii. p. 583). It was different on the eastern side, where the mountains slope off into a wide extent of table-land, which is only slightly elevated above the desert of Arabia. Here, on the weaker side of their frontier, the Edomites lost the heart to make any attack upon the Israelites, who would now have been able to requite their hostilities. But the Lord had commanded Israel not to make war upon the sons of Esau; but when passing through their territory, to purchase food and water from them for money (Deut. 2:4-6). The Edomites submitted to the necessity, and endeavoured to take advantage of it, by selling provisions, "in the same way in which, at the present day, the caravan from Mecca is supplied with provisions by the inhabitants of the mountains along the pilgrim road" (*Leake* in *Burckhardt*, p. 24). The situation of *Oboth* cannot be determined.

**Numbers 21:11.** The next encampment was "*Ije-Abarim* in the desert, which lies before Moab towards the sun-rising," i.e., on the eastern border of Moabitis (Numbers 33:44). As the Wady *el Ahsy*, which runs into the Dead Sea, in a deep and narrow rocky bed, from the south-east, and is called *el Kerahy* in its lower part (*Burckhardt*, *Syr.* pp. 673-4), separates Idumaea from Moabitis; *Ije-Abarim* (i.e., ruins of the crossings over) must be sought for on the border of Moab to the north of this wady, but is hardly to be found, as *Knobel* supposes, on the range of hills called *el Tarfuye*, which is known by the name of *Orokaraye*, still farther to the south, and terminates on the south-west of *Kerek*, whilst towards the north it is continued in the range of hills called *el Ghoweithe* and the mountain range of *el Zoble*; even supposing that the term *Abarim*, "the passages or sides," is to be understood as referring to these ranges of hills and mountains which skirt the land of the Amorites and Moabites, and form the enclosing sides. For the boundary line between the hills of *el-Tarfuye* and those of *el-Ghoweithe* is so near

to the Arnon, that there is not the necessary space between it and the Arnon for the encampment at the brook Zared (v. 12). *Ije-Abarim* or *Jim* cannot have been far from the northern shore of the *el Ahsy*, and was probably in the neighbourhood of *Kalaat el Hassa* (Ahsa), the source of the *Ahsy*, and a station for the pilgrim caravans (*Burckhardt*, p. 1035). As the Moabites were also not to be attacked by the Israelites (Deut. 2:9ff.), they passed along the eastern border of Moabitis as far as the brook *Zared* (v. 12). This can hardly have been the *Wady el-Ahsy* (*Robinson*, ii. p. 555; *Ewald*, *Gesch.* ii. p. 259; *Ritter*, *Erdk.* xv. p. 689); for that must already have been crossed when they came to the border of Moab (v. 11). Nor can it well have been “the brook *Zaide*, which runs from the south-east, passes between the mountain ranges of *Ghoweithe* and *Tarfuye*, and enters the Arnon, of which it forms the leading source,”—the view adopted by *Knobel*, on the very questionable ground that the name is a corruption of *Zared*. In all probability it was the *Wady Kerek*, in the upper part of its course, not far from *Katrane*, on the pilgrim road (v. *Raumer*, *Zug*, p. 47; *Kurtz*, and others).

**Numbers 21:13.** The next encampment was “*beyond* (i.e., by the side of) *the Arnon*, which is in the desert, and that cometh out of the territory of the Amorites.” The *Arnon*, i.e., the present *Wady Mojeb*, is formed by the union of the *Seyl* (i.e., brook or river) *Saide*, which comes from the south-east, not far from *Katrane*, on the pilgrim road, and the *Lejum* from the north-east, which receives the small rivers *el Makhreys* and *Balua*, the latter flowing from the pilgrim station *Kalaat Balua*, and then continues its course to the Dead Sea, through a deep and narrow valley, shut in by very steep and lofty cliffs, and covered with blocks of stone, that have been brought down from the loftier ground (*Burckhardt*, pp. 633ff.), so that there are only a few places where it is passable; and consequently a wandering people like the Israelites could not have crossed the *Mojeb* itself to force an entrance into the territory of the hostile Amorites. For the Arnon formed the boundary between Moab and the country of the

Amorites. The spot where Israel encamped on the Arnon must be sought for in the upper part of its course, where it is still flowing “in the desert;” not at *Wady Zaide*, however, although *Burckhardt* calls this the main source of the *Mojeb*, but at the *Balua*, which flows into the *Lejum*. In all probability these streams, of which the *Lejum* came from the north, already bore the name of *Arnon*; as we may gather from the expression, “that cometh out of the coasts of the Amorites.” The place of Israel’s encampment, “*beyond the Arnon in the desert*,” is to be sought for, therefore, in the neighbourhood of *Kalaat Balua*, and on the south side of the *Arnon* (*Balua*). This is evident enough from Deut. 2:24, 26ff., where the Israelites are represented as entering the territory of the Amoritish king *Sihon*, when they crossed the Arnon, having first of all sent a deputation, with a peaceable request for permission to pass through his land (cf. vv. 21ff.). Although this took place, according to Deut. 2:26, “out of the wilderness of *Kedemoth*,” an Amoritish town, it by no means follows that the Israelites had already crossed the Arnon and entered the territory of the Amorites, but only that they were standing on the border of it, and in the desert which took its name from *Kedemoth*, and ran up to this, the most easterly town, as the name seems to imply, of the country of the Amorites. After the conquest of the country, *Kedemoth* was allotted to the *Reubenites* (Josh. 13:18), and made into a Levitical city (Josh. 21:37; 1 Chron. 6:64).

The Israelites now received instructions from the Lord, to cross the river Arnon, and make war upon the Amoritish king *Sihon* of *Heshbon*, and take possession of his land, with the assurance that the Lord had given *Sihon* into the hand of Israel, and would fill all nations before them with fear and trembling (Deut. 2:24, 25). This summons, with its attendant promises, not only filled the Israelites with courage and strength to enter upon the conflict with the mightiest of all the tribes of the Canaanites, but inspired poets in the midst of them to commemorate in odes the wars of *Jehovah*, and His victories over His foes. A few verses are given here out of one of these odes

(vv. 14ff.), not for the purpose of verifying the geographical statement, that the Arnon touches the border of Moabitis, or that the Israelites had only arrived at the border of the Moabite and Amorite territory, but as an evidence that there, on the borders of Moab, the Israelites had been inspired through the divine promises with the firm assurance that they should be able to conquer the land of the Amorites which lay before them.

**Numbers 21:14, 15.** "Therefore," sc., because the Lord had thus given king Sihon, with all his land, into the hand of Israel, "it is written in the book of the wars of the Lord: *Vaheb* (Jehovah takes) in storm, and the brooks of Arnon and the valley of the brooks, which turns to the dwelling of Ar, and leans upon the border of Moab." The book of the wars of Jehovah is neither an Amoritish book of the conflicts of Baal, in which the warlike feats performed by Sihon and other Amoritish heroes with the help of Baal were celebrated in verse, as *G. Unruh* fabulously asserts in his *Zug der Isr. aus Aeg. nach Canaan* (p. 130), nor a work "dating from the time of Jehoshaphat, containing the early history of the Israelites, from the Hebrew patriarchs till past the time of Joshua, with the law interwoven," which is the character that *Knobel's* critical fancy would stamp upon it, but a collection of odes of the time of Moses himself, in celebration of the glorious acts of the Lord to and for the Israelites; and "the quotation bears the same relation to the history itself, as the verses of *Körner* would bear to the writings of any historian of the wars of freedom, who had himself taken part in these wars, and introduced the verses into his own historical work" (*Hengstenberg*). The strophe selected from the ode has neither subject nor verb in it, as the ode was well known to the contemporaries, and what had to be supplied could easily be gathered from the title, "Wars of Jehovah." *Vaheb* is no doubt the proper name of an Amoritish fortress; and **בְּסוּפָה**, "in storm," is to be explained according to Nah. 1:3, "The Lord, in the storm is His way." "Advancing in storm, He took *Vaheb* and the brooks of Arnon,"

i.e., the different wadys, valleys cut by brooks, which open into the Arnon. **אֲשַׁד הַנְּחָלִים**, lit., pouring of the brooks, from **אֲשַׁד**, *effusio*, the pouring, then the place where brooks pour down, the slope of mountains or hills, for which the term **אֲשַׁדָּה** is generally used in the plural, particularly to denote the slopes of the mountains of Pisgah (Deut. 3:17; 4:49; Josh. 12:3; 13:20), and the hilly region of Palestine, which formed the transition from the mountains to the plain (Josh. 10:40 and 12:8).

**שֶׁבֶת**, the dwelling, used poetically for the dwelling-place, as in 2 Sam. 23:7 and Obad. 3.

**עַר** (*Ar*), the antiquated form for **עִיר**, a city, is the same as *Ar Moab* in v. 28 and Isa. 15:1, "the city of Moab, on the border of the Arnon, which is at the end of the (Moabitish) territory" (Numbers 22:36). It was called *Areopolis* by the Greeks, and was near to *Aroër* (Deut. 2:36 and Josh. 13:9), probably standing at the confluence of the *Lejum* and *Mojeb*, in the "fine green pasture land, in the midst of which there is a hill with some ruins," and not far away the ruin of a small castle, with a heap of broken columns (*Burckhardt*, *Syr.* p. 636). This *Ar* is not to be identified with the modern *Rabba*, in the midst of the land of the Moabites, six hours to the south of *Lejum*, to which the name *Areopolis* was transferred in the patristic age, probably after the destruction of *Ar*, the ancient *Areopolis*, by an earthquake, of which *Jerome* gives an account in connection with his own childhood (see his *Com. on Isa. 15*), possibly the earthquake which occurred in the year A.D. 342, and by which many cities of the East were destroyed, and among others *Nicomedia* (cf. *Hengstenberg*, *Balaam*, pp. 525–528; *Ritter*, *Erdkunde*, xv. pp. 1212ff.; and v. *Raumer*, *Palästina*, pp. 270, 271, Ed. 4).

**Numbers 21:16–18.** They proceeded thence to *Beer* (a well), a place of encampment which received its name from the fact that here God gave the people water, not as before by a

miraculous supply from a rock, but by commanding wells to be dug. This is evident from the ode with which the congregation commemorated this divine gift of grace. *“Then Israel sang this song: Spring up, O well! Sing ye to it! Well which princes dug, which the nobles of the people hollowed out, with the sceptre, with their staves.”* עֲנָה, as in Ex. 15:21 and 32:18.

מַחֲקֵק, ruler’s staff, cf. Gen. 49:10. *Beer*, probably the same as *Beer Elim* (Isa. 15:8), on the north-east of Moab, was in the desert; for the Israelites proceeded thence *“from the desert to Mattanah”* (v. 18), thence to Nahaliel, and thence to Bamoth. According to *Eusebius* (cf. *Reland, Pal. ill.* p. 495), *Mattanah* (Μαθθανέμ) was by the valley of the Arnon, twelve Roman miles to the east (or more properly south-east or south) of *Medabah*, and is probably to be seen in *Tedun*, a place now lying in ruins, near the source of the *Lejum* (*Burckhardt*, pp. 635, 636; *Hengstenberg, Balaam*, p. 530; *Knobel*, and others). The name of *Nahaliel* is still retained in the form *Encheileh*. This is the name given to the *Lejum*, after it has been joined by the *Balua*, until its junction with the *Saide* (*Burckhardt*, p. 635). Consequently the Israelites went from *Beer* in the desert, in a north-westerly direction to *Tedun*, then westwards to the northern bank of the *Encheileh*, and then still farther in a north-westerly and northerly direction to *Bamoth*. There can be no doubt that *Bamoth* is identical with *Bamoth Baal*, i.e., heights of Baal (Numbers 22:4). According to Josh. 13:17 (cf. Isa. 15:2), *Bamoth* was near to *Dibon* (*Dibân*), between the Wady Wale and Wady Mojeb, and also to *Beth-Baal Meon*, i.e., *Myun*, half a German mile (2 1/2 English) to the south of Heshbon; and, according to Numbers 22:41, you could see *Bamoth Baal* from the extremity of the Israelitish camp in the steppes of Moab. Consequently *Bamoth* cannot be the mountain to the south of Wady Wale, upon the top of which *Burckhardt* says there is a very beautiful plain (p. 632; see *Hengstenberg, Balaam*, p. 532); because the steppes of Moab cannot be seen at all from this plain, as they are covered

by the *Jebel Attarus*. It is rather a height upon the long mountain *Attarus*, which runs along the southern shore of the *Zerka Maein*, and may possibly be a spot upon the summit of the *Jebel Attarus*, “the highest point in the neighbourhood,” upon which, according to *Burckhardt* (p. 630), there is “a heap of stones overshadowed by a very large pistachio-tree.” A little farther down to the south-west of this lies the fallen town *Kereijat* (called *Körriat* by *Seetzen*, ii. p. 342), i.e., *Kerioth*, Jer. 48:24; Amos 2:2.

**Numbers 21:20.** From *Bamoth* they proceeded *“to the valley, which (is) in the field of Moab, upon the top of Pisgah, and looks across the face of the desert.”* ראש הפסגה, head, or height of the *Pisgah*, is in apposition to the field of Moab. The *“field of Moab”* was a portion of the tableland which stretches from *Rabbath Ammân* to the Arnon, which “is perfectly treeless for an immense distance in one part (viz., the neighbourhood of *Eleale*), but covered over with the ruins of towns that have been destroyed,” and which “extends to the desert of Arabia towards the east, and slopes off to the Jordan and the Dead Sea towards the west” (v. *Raumer, Pal.* p. 71). It is identical with “the whole plain from *Medeba* to *Dibon*” (Josh. 13:9), and “the whole plain by *Medeba*” (v. 16), in which Heshbon and its cities were situated (v. 17; cf. v. 21 and Deut. 3:10). The valley in this tableland was upon the height of *Pisgah*, i.e., the northern part of the mountains of *Abarim*, and looked across the surface of the desert. *Jeshimon*, the desert, is the plain of *Ghor el Belka*, i.e., the valley of desolation on the north-eastern border of the Dead Sea, which stretches from the *Wady Menshalla* or *Wady Ghuweir* (*el Guer*) to the small brook *el Szuême* (*Wady es Suweimeh* on *Van de Velde’s* map) at the Dead Sea, and narrows it more and more at the northern extremity on this side. *“Ghor el Belka* consists in part of a barren, salt, and stony soil; though there are some portions which can be cultivated. To the north of the brook *el Szuême*, the great plain of the Jordan begins, which is utterly without fertility till you reach the *Nahr*



*Heshbân*, about two hours distant, and produces nothing but bitter, salt herbs for camels" (*Seetzen*, ii. pp. 373, 374), and which was probably reckoned as part of *Jeshimon*, since *Beth-Jeshimoth* was situated within it (see at Numbers 23:28). The valley in which the Israelites were encamped in the field of Moab upon the top of Pisgah, is therefore to be sought for to the west of Heshbon, on the mountain range of Abarim, which slopes off into the Ghor el Belka. From this the Israelites advanced into the *Arboth Moab* (see Numbers 22:1).

If we compare the places of encampment named in vv. 11–20 with the list of stations in Numbers 33:41–49, we find, instead of the seven places, mentioned here between *Ijje Abarim* and the *Arboth Moab*,—viz., Brook Zared, on the other side of the Arnon in the desert, Beer, Mattana, Nahaliel, Bamoth, and the valley in the field of Moab upon the top of Pisgah,—only three places given, viz., *Dibon* of Gad, *Almon Diblathaim*, and Mount *Abarim* before *Nebo*. That the last of these is only another name for the valley in the field of Moab upon the top of Pisgah, is undoubtedly proved by the fact that, according to Deut. 34:1 (cf. Numbers 3:27), Mount Nebo was a peak of *Pisgah*, and that it was situated, according to Deut. 32:49, upon the mountains of *Abarim*, from which it is evident at once that the *Pisgah* was a portion of the mountains of *Abarim*, and in fact the northern portion opposite to Jericho (see at Numbers 27:12). The two other differences in the names may be explained from the circumstance that the space occupied by the encampment of the Israelites, an army of 600,000 men, with their wives, children, and cattle, when once they reached the inhabited country with its towns and villages, where every spot had its own fixed name, must have extended over several places, so that the very same encampment might be called by one or other of the places upon which it touched. If *Dibon Gad* (Numbers 33:45) was the *Dibon* built (i.e., rebuilt or fortified) by the Gadites after the conquest of the land (Numbers 32:3, 34), and allotted to the Reubenites (Josh. 13:9, 17), which is still traceable in the ruins of

*Dibân*, an hour to the north of the Arnon (v. *Raumer, Pal.* p. 261), (and there is no reason to doubt it), then the place of encampment, *Nahaliel* (*Encheile*), was identical with *Dibon* of Gad, and was placed after this town in Numbers 33:45, because the camp of the Israelites extended as far as *Dibon* along the northern bank of that river. *Almon Diblathaim* also stands in the same relation to *Bamoth*. The two places do not appear to have been far from one another; for *Almon Diblathaim* is probably identical with *Beth Diblathaim*, which is mentioned in Jer. 48:22 along with *Dibon, Nebo*, and other Moabite towns, and is to be sought for to the north or north-west of *Dibon*. For, according to *Jerome* (*Onom. s. v. Jassa*), *Jahza* was between *Medaba* and *Deblatai*, for which *Eusebius* has written  $\Delta\eta\beta\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  by mistake for  $\Delta\iota\beta\acute{\omega}\nu$ ; *Eusebius* having determined the relative position of *Jahza* according to a more southerly place, *Jerome* according to one farther north. The camp of the Israelites therefore may easily have extended from *Almon* or *Beth-Diblathaim* to *Bamoth*, and might very well take its name from either place.

**Numbers 21:21–35.** Defeat of the Amorite Kings, *Sihon* of Heshbon and *Og* of Bashan, and Conquest of their Kingdoms.

**Numbers 21:21–23.** When the Israelites reached the eastern border of the kingdom of the Amorite king *Sihon* (see at v. 13), they sent messengers to him, as they had previously done to the king of Edom, to ask permission to pass peaceably through his territory upon the high road (cf. v. 22 and Numbers 20:17); and *Sihon* refused this request, just as the king of Edom had done, and marched with all his people against the Israelites. But whereas the Lord forbade the Israelites to make war upon their kinsmen the Edomites, He now commanded them to make war upon the Amorite king, and take possession of his land (Deut. 2:24, 25); for the Amorites belonged to the Canaanitish tribes which were ripe for the judgment of extermination (Gen. 15:16). And if, notwithstanding this, the Israelites sent to him with words of peace (Deut. 2:26), this was

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simply done to leave the decision of his fate in his own hand (see at Deut. 2:24). Sihon came out against the Israelites into the desert as far as *Jahza*, where a battle was fought, in which he was defeated. The accounts of the *Onom.* concerning *Jahza*, which was situated, according to *Eusebius*, between *Medamon* (*Medaba*) and *Debous* (*Dibon*, see above), and according to Jerome, between *Medaba* and *Deblatai*, may be reconciled with the statement that it was in the desert, provided we assume that it was not in a straight line between the places named, but in a more easterly direction on the edge of the desert, near to the commencement of the *Wady Wale*, a conclusion to which the juxtaposition of *Jahza* and *Mephaot* in Josh. 13:18; 21:37, and Jer. 48:21, also points (see at Josh. 13:18).

**Numbers 21:24.** Israel smote him with the edge of the sword, i.e., without quarter (see Gen. 34:26), and took possession of his land "from Arnon (Mojob) to the Jabbok, unto the children of Ammon," i.e., to the upper Jabbok, the modern *Nahr* or *Moiet Ammân*. The *Jabbok*, now called *Zerka*, i.e., the blue, does not take its rise, as *Seetzen* supposed, on the pilgrim-road by the castle of *Zerka*; but its source, according to *Abulfeda* (*tab. Syr.* p. 91) and *Buckingham*, is the *Nahr Ammân*, which flowed down from the ancient capital of the Ammonites, and was called the *upper Jabbok*, and formed the western border of the Ammonites towards the kingdom of Sihon, and subsequently towards Gad (Deut. 2:37; 3:16; Josh. 12:2). "For the border of the Ammonites was strong" (firm), i.e., strongly fortified; "for which reason Sihon had only been able to push his conquests to the upper Jabbok, not into the territory of the Ammonites." This explanation of *Knobel's* is perfectly correct; since the reason why the Israelites did not press forward into the country of the Ammonites, was not the strength of their frontier, but the word of the Lord, "Make not war upon them, for I shall give thee no possession of the land of the children of Ammon" (Deut. 2:19). God had only promised the patriarchs, on behalf of their posterity, that He would give them the land of Canaan, which

was bounded towards the east by the Jordan (Numbers 34:2–12; compared with Gen. 10:19 and 15:19–21); and the Israelites would have received no settlement at all on the eastern side of the Jordan, had not the Canaanitish branch of the Amorites extended itself to that side in the time of Moses, and conquered a large portion of the possessions of the Moabites, and also (according to Josh. 13:25, as compared with Judg. 11:13) of the Ammonites, driving back the Moabites as far as the Arnon, and the Ammonites behind the *Nahr Ammân*. With the defeat of the Amorites, all the land that they had conquered passed into the possession of the Israelites, who took possession of these towns (cf. Deut. 2:34–36). The statement in v. 25, that Israel settled in all the towns of the Amorites, is somewhat anticipatory of the history itself, as the settlement did not occur till Moses gave the conquered land to the tribes of Reuben and Gad for a possession (Numbers 32). The only places mentioned here are *Heshbon* and her daughters, i.e., the smaller towns belonging to it (cf. Josh. 13:17), which are enumerated singly in Numbers 32:34–38, and Josh. 13:15–28. In explanation of the expression, "Heshbon and her daughters," it is added in v. 26, that Heshbon was the city, i.e., the capital of the Amorite king Sihon, who had made war upon the former king of Moab, and taken away all his land as far as the Arnon. Consequently, even down to the time of the predecessor of Balak, the king of the Moabites at that time, the land to the north of the Arnon, and probably even as far as the lower Jabbok, to which point the kingdom of Sihon extended (see Deut. 3:12, 13; Josh. 12:5), belonged to the Moabites. And in accordance with this, the country where the Israelites encamped opposite to Jericho, before crossing the Jordan, is reckoned as part of the land of Moab (Deut. 1:5; 28:69; 32:49; 34:5, 6), and called *Arboth Moab* (see Numbers 22:1); whilst the women who seduced the Israelites to join in the idolatrous worship of Baal Peor are called daughters of Moab (Numbers 25:1).

**Numbers 21:27–30.** The glorious conquest and destruction of the capital of the powerful

king of the Amorites, in the might of the Lord their God, inspired certain composers of proverbs (מְשָׁלִים *denom.* from מָשַׁל) to write songs in commemoration of the victory. Three strophes are given from a song of this kind, and introduced with the words “therefore,” sc., because Heshbon had fallen in this manner, “the composers of proverbs say.” The first strophe (vv. 27b and 28) runs thus: “Come to Heshbon: Built and restored be the city of Sihon! For fire went out of Heshbon; flames from the city of Sihon. It devoured Ar Moab, the lords of the heights of Arnon.” The summons to come to Heshbon and build this ruined city up again, was not addressed to the Israelites, but to the conquered Amorites, and is to be interpreted as ironical (F. v. Meyer; Ewald, *Gesch.* ii. pp. 267, 268): “Come to Heshbon, ye victorious Amorites, and build your royal city up again, which we have laid in ruins! A fire has gone out of it, and burned up Ar Moab, and the lords of the heights of the Arnon.” The reference is to the war-fire, which the victorious Amorites kindled from Heshbon in the land of Moab under the former king of Moab; that is to say, the war in which they subjugated Ar Moab and the possessors of the heights of Arnon. Ar Moab (see at v. 15) appears to have been formerly the capital of all Moabites, or at least of that portion of it which was situated upon the northern side of the Arnon; and the prominence given to it in Deut. 2:9, 18, 29, is in harmony with this. The heights of Arnon are mentioned as the limits to which Sihon had carried his victorious supremacy over Moab. The “lords” of these heights are the Moabites.

**Numbers 21:29.** *Second strophe:* “Woe to thee, Moab! Thou art lost, people of Chemosh! He has given up his sons as fugitives, and his daughters into captivity—To Sihon, king of the Amorites.” The poet here turns to Moab, and announces its overthrow. Chemosh (כְּמוֹשׁ, from כָּמַשׁ =

כָּבַשׁ, *subactor, domitor*) was the leading deity of the Moabites (Jer. 48:7) as well as of the Ammonites (Judg. 11:24), and related not only

to *Milcom*, a god of the Ammonites, but also to the early Canaanitish deity *Baal* and *Moloch*. According to a statement of Jerome (on Isa. 15), it was only another name for *Baal Peor*, probably a god of the sun, which was worshipped as the king of his nation and the god of war. He is found in this character upon the coins of *Areopolis*, standing upon a column, with a sword in his right hand and a lance and shield in the left, and with two fire-torches by his side (cf. *Ekhel doctr. numm. vet.* iii. p. 504), and was appeased by the sacrifice of children in times of great distress (2 Kings 3:27). Further information, and to some extent a different view, are found in the article by J. G. Müller in

*Herzog's Cyclopaedia*. The subject to נָתַן is neither Moab nor Jehovah, but Chemosh. The thought is this: as Chemosh, the god of Moab, could not deliver his people from the Amorite king; so now that Israel has conquered the latter, Moab is utterly lost. In the triumph which Israel celebrated over Moab through conquering its conquerors, there is a forewarning expressed of the ultimate subjection of Moab under the sceptre of Israel.

**Numbers 21:30.** *Third strophe*, in which the woe evoked upon Moab is justified: “We cast them down: Heshbon is lost even to Dibon; and we laid it waste even to Nophah, with fire to

Medeba.” וַנִּירֶם is the first pers. pl. imperf. Kal of יָרָה with the suffix ׀- for ׀- (as in Ex.

29:30). יָרָה, to cast arrows, to shoot down (Ex. 19:13): figuratively to throw to the ground (Ex. 15:4). נָשִׂים for נָשִׂים, first pers. pl. imperf. Hiph.

of נָשָׂה, synonymous with נָצָה, Jer. 4:7. The suffixes of both verbs refer to the Moabites as the inhabitants of the cities named. Accordingly *Heshbon* also is construed as a masculine, because it was not the town as such, but the inhabitants, that were referred to. *Heshbon*, the residence of king Sihon, stood pretty nearly in the centre between the Arnon and the Jabbok

(according to the *Onom.* twenty Roman miles from the Jordan, opposite to Jericho), and still exists in extensive ruins with deep bricked wells, under the old name of *Heshbân* (cf. v. *Raumer*, Pal. p. 262). On *Dibon* in the south, not more than an hour from Arnon, see p. 288. *Nophach* is probably the same as *Nobach*, Judg. 8:11, but not the same as *Kenath*, which was altered into *Nobach* (Numbers 32:42).

According to Judg. 8:11, it was near Jogbeha, not far from the eastern desert; and in all probability it still exists in the ruined place called *Nowakis* (*Burckhardt*, p. 619; *Buckingham*, ii. p. 46; *Robinson*, App. p. 188), to the north-west of *Ammân* (*Rabbath-Ammon*). *Nophach*, therefore, is referred to as a north-eastern town or fortress, and contrasted with *Dibon*, which was in the south. The words

which follow, אֲשֶׁר עַד מֵדָבָה, "which to Medeba," yield no intelligible meaning. The Seventy give πυρ ἐπὶ Μ. (fire upon Medeba), and seem to

have adopted the reading אֲשֶׁר עַד. In the

Masoretic punctuation also, the ך in אֲשֶׁר is marked as suspicious by a *punct. extraord.*

Apparently, therefore, אֲשֶׁר was a copyist's

error of old standing for אֵשׁ, and is to be

construed as governed by the verb נִשְׂפָּתוּ, "with fire to Medeba." The city was about two hours to the south-east of Heshbon, and is still to be seen in ruins bearing the name of *Medaba*, upon the top of a hill of about half-an-hour's journey in circumference (*Burckhardt*, p. 625; v. *Raumer*, Pal. pp. 264–5).

**Numbers 21:31, 32.** When Israel was sitting, i.e., encamped, in the land of the Amorites, Moses reconnoitred *Jaezer*, after which the Israelites took "its daughters," i.e., the smaller places dependent upon *Jaezer*, and destroyed the Amorites who dwelt in them. It is evident from Numbers 32:35, that *Jaezer* was not only conquered, but destroyed. This city, which was situated, according to the *Onom.* (s. v. *Jazer*), ten

Roman miles to the west of *Philadelphia* (*Rabbath-Ammon*), and fifteen Roman miles to the north of Heshbon, is most probably to be sought for (as *Seetzen* supposes, i. pp. 397, 406, iv. p. 216) in the ruins of *es Szîr*, at the source of the *Nahr Szîr*, in the neighbourhood of which *Seetzen* found some pools, which are probably the remains of "the sea of Jazer," mentioned in Jer. 48:32. There is less probability in *Burckhardt's* conjecture (p. 609), that it is to be found in the ruins of *Ain Hazir*, near *Kherbet el Suk*, to the south-west of *es Salt*; though v. *Raumer* (Pal. p. 262) decides in its favour (see my Commentary on Josh. 13:25).

**Numbers 21:33–35.** The Israelites then turned towards the north, and took the road to Bashan, where king Og came against them with his people, to battle at *Edrei*. From what point it was that the Israelites entered upon the expedition against Bashan, is not stated either here or in Deut. 3:1ff., where Moses recapitulates these events, and gives a more detailed account of the conquests than he does here, simply because it was of no importance in relation to the main object of the history. We have probably to picture the conquest of the kingdoms of Sihon and Og as taking place in the following manner: namely, that after Sihon had been defeated at *Jahza*, and his capital had been speedily taken in consequence of this victory, Moses sent detachments of his army from the places of encampment mentioned in vv. 16, 18–20, into the different divisions of his kingdom, for the purpose of taking possession of their towns. After the conquest of the whole of the territory of Sihon, the main army advanced to Bashan and defeated king Og in a great battle at *Edrei*, whereupon certain detachments of the army were again despatched, under courageous generals, to secure the conquest of the different parts of his kingdom (cf. Numbers 32:39, 41, 42). The kingdom of Og embraced the northern half of Gilead, i.e., the country between the *Jabbok* and the *Mandhur* (Deut. 3:13; Josh. 12:5), the modern *Jebel Ajlun*, and "all Bashan," or "all the region of *Argob*" (Deut. 3:4, 13, 14), the modern plain of *Jaulan* and *Hauran*, which extended eastwards to *Salcah*, north-eastwards

to *Edrei* (Deut. 3:10), and northwards to *Geshur* and *Maacha* (Josh. 12:5). For further remarks, see Deut. 3:10. There were two towns in Bashan of the name of *Edrei*. One of them, which is mentioned in Deut. 1:4 and Josh. 12:4, along with *Ashtaroth*, as a second residence of king Og, is described in the *Onom.* (s. v. *Ashtaroth* and *Edrei*) as six Roman miles, i.e., fully two hours, from *Ashtaroth*, and twenty-four or twenty-five miles from *Bostra*, and called *Adraa* or *Adara*. This is the modern *Derà* or *Draà* (in *Burckhardt*, p. 385; *Seetzen*, i. pp. 363, 364), and *Draah*, *Idderat* (in *Buckingham*, *Syr.* ii. p. 146), a place which still exists, consisting of a number of miserable houses, built for the most part of basalt, and standing upon a small elevation in a treeless, hilly region, with the ruins of an old church and other smaller buildings, supposed to belong to the time when *Draa*, *Adraa* (as *urbs Arabiae*), was an episcopal see, on the east of the pilgrim-road between *Remtha* and *Mezareib*, by the side of a small wady (see *Ritter*, *Erdk.* xv. pp. 838ff.). The other *Edrei*, which is mentioned in Deut. 3:10 as the north-western frontier of Bashan, was farther towards the north, and is still to be seen in the ruins of *Zorah* or *Ethra* (see at Deut. 3:10). In the present instance the southern town is intended, which was not far from the south-west frontier of Bashan, as Og certainly did not allow the Israelites to advance to the northern frontier of his kingdom before he gave them battle.

**Numbers 21:34, 35.** Just as in the case of *Sihon*, the Lord had also promised the Israelites a victory over *Og*, and had given him into their power, so that they smote him, with his sons and all his people, without leaving any remnant, and executed the ban, according to Deut. 2:34, upon both the kings. (See the notes on Deut. 3).

### Numbers 22

III. OCCURRENCES IN THE STEPPES OF MOAB, WITH INSTRUCTIONS RELATING TO THE CONQUEST AND DISTRIBUTION OF THE LAND OF CANAAN.

### Ch. 22–36.

**Numbers 22:1.** After the defeat of the two Amorite kings, *Sihon* and *Og*, and the conquest of their kingdoms in Gilead and Bashan, the Israelites removed from the height of *Pisgah*, on the mountains of *Abarim* before *Nebo* (see at Numbers 21:20), and encamped in the “*Arboth Moab* (the steppes of Moab), on the other side of the Jordan of Jericho,” i.e., that part of the Jordan which skirted the province of Jericho. *Arboth Moab* was the name given to that portion of the Arabah, or large plain of the Jordan, the present *Ghor* (see at Deut. 1:1), which belonged to the territory of the Moabites previous to the spread of the Amorites under *Sihon* in the land to the east of the Jordan, and which probably reached from the Dead Sea to the mouth of the *Jabbok*. The site of the Israelitish camp is therefore defined with greater minuteness by the clause “beyond the Jordan of Jericho.” This place of encampment, which is frequently alluded to (Numbers 26:3, 63; 31:12; 33:48, 50; 35:1; 36:13; Josh. 13:32), extended, according to Numbers 33:49, from *Beth-Jeshimoth* to *Abel-Shittim*. *Beth-Jeshimoth* (i.e., house of wastes), on the north-eastern desert border (*Jeishimon*, Numbers 21:20) of the Dead Sea, a town allotted to the tribe of *Reuben* (Josh. 12:3; 13:20), was situated, according to the *Onom.* (s. v. Βηθασιμουθ, *Bethsimuth*), ten Roman miles, or four hours, to the south (S.E.) of *Jericho*, on the Dead Sea; according to *Josephus* (*bell. jud.* iv. 7, 6), it was to the south of *Julias* (*Livias*), i.e., *Beth-Haram*, or *Rameh*, on the northern edge of the Wady *Hesban* (see at Numbers 32:36), or in the *Ghor el Seisabân*, on the northern coast of the Dead Sea, and the southern end of the plain of the Jordan. *Abel Shittim* (אָבֵל הַשִּׁטִּים), i.e., the acacia-meadow, or, in its briefer form, *Shittim* (Numbers 35:1), was situated, according to *Josephus* (*Ant.* iv. 8, 1), on the same spot as the later town of *Abila*, in a locality rich in date-palms, sixty stadia from the Jordan, probably by the Wady *Eshtah* to the north of the Wady *Hesban*; even if *Knobel's* supposition that the

name is connected with  $\text{הַטָּשָׁן} = \text{הַטָּש}$  with

$\text{שָׁטָן}$  *prost.* should not be a tenable one. From

*Shittim* or *Sittim* the Israelites advanced, under Joshua, to the Jordan, to effect the conquest of Canaan (Josh. 3:1).

In the steppes of Moab the Israelites encamped upon the border of the promised land, from which they were only separated by the Jordan. But before this boundary line could be passed, there were many preparations that had to be made. In the first place, the whole congregation was to pass through a trial of great importance to all future generations, as bearing upon the relation in which it stood to the heathen world; and in the second place, it was here that Moses, who was not to enter Canaan because of his sin at the water of strife, was to bring the work of legislation to a close before his death, and not only to issue the requisite instructions concerning the conquest of the promised inheritance, and the division of it among the tribes of Israel, but to impress once more upon the hearts of the whole congregation the essential contents of the whole law, with all that the Lord had done for Israel, that they might be confirmed in their fidelity to the Lord, and preserved from the danger of apostasy. This last work of the faithful servant of God, with which he brought his mediatorial work to a close, is described in the book of Deuteronomy; whilst the laws relating to the conquest and partition of Canaan, with the experience of Israel in the steppes of Moab, fill up the latter portion of the present book.

*Balaam and His Prophecies.*—Ch. 22:2–24:25.

**Numbers 22:2–24:25.** The rapid defeat of the two mighty kings of the Amorites filled the Moabites with such alarm at the irresistible might of Israel, that Balak their king, with the princes of Midian, sought to bring the powers of heathen magic to bear against the nation of God; and to this end he sent messengers with presents to Balaam, the celebrated soothsayer,

in Mesopotamia, who had the reputation of being able both to bless and curse with great success, to entreat him to come, and so to weaken the Israelites with his magical curses, that he might be able to smite them, and drive them out of his land (Numbers 22:1–7). At first Balaam declined this invitation, in consequence of divine instructions (vv. 8–14); but when a second and still more imposing embassy of Moabite princes appeared before him, God gave him permission to go with them, but on this condition, that he should do nothing but what Jehovah should tell him (vv. 15–21). When on the way, he was warned again by the miraculous opposition of the angel of the Lord, to say nothing but what God should say to him (vv. 22–35). When Balak, therefore, came to meet him, on his arrival at the border of his kingdom, to give him a grand reception, Balaam explained to him, that he could only speak the word which Jehovah would put into his mouth (vv. 36–40), and then proclaimed, in *four* different utterances, what God inspired him to declare. First of all, as he stood upon the height of Bamoth-Baal, from which he could see the end of the Israelitish camp, he declared that it was impossible for him to curse this matchless, numerous, and righteous people, because they had not been cursed by their God (Numbers 22:41–23:10). He then went to the head of Pisgah, where he could see all Israel, and announced that Jehovah would bless this people, because He saw no unrighteousness in them, and that He would dwell among them as their King, making known His word to them, and endowing them with activity and lion-like power (Numbers 23:11–24). And lastly, upon the top of Peor, where he could see Israel encamped according to its tribes, he predicted, in two more utterances, the spread and powerful development of Israel in its inheritance, under the blessing of God (Numbers 23:25–24:9), the rise of a star out of Jacob in the far distant future, and the appearance of a ruler in Israel, who would break to pieces all its foes (Numbers 24:10–24); and upon this Balak sent him away (v. 25).

From the very earliest times opinions have been divided as to the character of Balaam. Some (e.g., *Philo*, *Ambrose*, and *Augustine*) have regarded him as a wizard and false prophet, devoted to the worship of idols, who was destitute of any susceptibility for the true religion, and was compelled by God, against his will, to give utterance to blessings upon Israel instead of curses. Others (e.g., *Tertullian* and *Jerome*) have supposed him to be a genuine and true prophet, who simply fell through covetousness and ambition. But these views are both of them untenable in this exclusive form. *Witsius* (*Miscell. ss. i. lib. i. c. 16, § 33ff.*), *Hengstenberg* (Balaam and his Prophecies), and *Kurtz* (History of the Old Covenant), have all of them clearly demonstrated this. The name

בַּלְעָם (LXX Βαλαάμ) is not to be derived, as

*Gesenius* suggests, from בַּל and עָם, *non*

*populus*, not a people, but either from בַּלְעַ and

עָם (dropping one ע), devourer of the people (*Simonis* and *Hengstenberg*), or more probably

from בַּלְעַ, with the terminal syllable ׁ, devourer, destroyer (*Fürst*, *Dietrich*), which would lead to the conclusion, that “he bore the name as a dreaded wizard and conjurer; whether he received it at his birth, as a member of a family in which this occupation was hereditary, and then afterwards actually became in public opinion what the giving of the name expressed as an expectation and desire; or whether the name was given to him at a later period, according to Oriental custom, when the fact indicated by the name had actually made its appearance” (*Hengstenberg*). In its true meaning, the name is related to that of his

father, Beor. בְּעוֹר, from בָּעַר, to burn, eat off, destroy: so called on account of the destructive power attributed to his curses (*Hengstenberg*). It is very probable, therefore, that Balaam belonged to a family in which the mantic character, or magical art, was hereditary. These

names at once warrant the conjecture that Balaam was a heathen conjurer or soothsayer.

Moreover, he is never called נְבִיא, a prophet,

or חֹזֶה, a seer, but הַקִּסִּים, the soothsayer

(Josh. 13:22), a title which is never used in

connection with the true prophets. For קִסְם,

soothsaying, is forbidden to the Israelites in Deut. 18:10ff., as an abomination in the sight of Jehovah, and is spoken of everywhere not only as a grievous sin (1 Sam. 15:23; Ezek. 13:23; 2 Kings 17:17), but as the mark of a false prophet (Ezek. 13:9; 22:28, Jer. 14:14, and even in Isa.

3:2, where קִסְם forms the antithesis to נְבִיא).

Again, Balaam resorts to auguries, just like a heathen soothsayer (Numbers 24:1, compared with Numbers 23:3, 5), for the purpose of obtaining revelations; from which we may see that he was accustomed to adopt this as his ordinary mode of soothsaying.

On the other hand, Balaam was not without a certain measure of the true knowledge of God, and not without susceptibility for such revelations of the true God as he actually received; so that, without being really a prophet, he was able to give utterance to true prophecies from Jehovah. He not only knew Jehovah, but he confessed Jehovah, even in the presence of Balak, as well as of the Moabitish messengers. He asked His will, and followed it (Numbers 22:8, 13, 18, 19, 28; 23:12), and would not go with the messengers of Balak, therefore, till God had given him permission (Numbers 22:20). If he had been altogether destitute of the fear of God, he would have complied at once with Balak’s request. And again, although at the outset it is only *Elohim* who makes known His will (Numbers 22:9, 20), and even when he first of all goes out in search of oracles, it is *Elohim* who comes to him (Numbers 23:4); yet not only does the angel of *Jehovah* meet him by the way (Numbers 22:22ff.), but *Jehovah* also puts words into his mouth, which he announces to the king of the Moabites (Numbers 23:5, 12, 16), so that all his

prophecies are actually uttered from a mind moved and governed by the Spirit of God, and that not from any physical constraint exerted upon him by God, but in such a manner that he enters into them with all his heart and soul, and heartily desires to die the death of these righteous, i.e., of the people of Israel (Numbers 23:10); and when he finds that it pleases Jehovah to bless Israel, he leaves off resorting any longer to auguries (Numbers 24:1), and eventually declares to the enraged monarch, that he cannot transgress the command of Jehovah, even if the king should give him his house full of silver and gold (Numbers 24:13). This double-sidedness and ambiguity of the religious and prophetic character of Balaam may be explained on the supposition that, being endowed with a predisposition to divination and prophecy, he practised soothsaying and divination as a trade; and for the purpose of bringing this art to the greatest possible perfection, brought not only the traditions of the different nations, but all the phenomena of his own times, within the range of his observations. In this way he may have derived the first elements of the true knowledge of God from different echoes of the tradition of the primeval age, which was then not quite extinct, and may possibly have heard in his own native land some notes of the patriarchal revelations out of the home of the tribe-fathers of Israel. But these traditions are not sufficient of themselves to explain his attitude towards Jehovah, and his utterances concerning Israel. Balaam's peculiar knowledge of Jehovah, the God of Israel, and of all that He had done to His people, and his intimate acquaintance with the promises made to the patriarchs, which strike us in his prophecies (comp. Numbers 23:10 with Gen. 13:16; 23:24; Numbers 24:9 with Gen. 49:9; and Numbers 24:17 with Gen. 49:10), can only be explained from the fact that the report of the great things which God had done to and for Israel in Egypt and at the Dead Sea, had not only spread among all the neighbouring tribes, as was foretold in Ex. 15:14, and is attested by Jethro, Ex. 18:1ff., and Rahab the Canaanites, Josh. 2:9ff., but had even

penetrated into Mesopotamia, as the countries of the Euphrates had maintained a steady commercial intercourse from the very earliest times with Hither Asia and the land Egypt. Through these tidings Balaam was no doubt induced not only to procure more exact information concerning the events themselves, that he might make a profitable use of it in connection with his own occupation, but also to dedicate himself to the service of Jehovah, "in the hope of being able to participate in the new powers conferred upon the human race; so that henceforth he called Jehovah his God, and appeared as a prophet in His name" (*Hengstenberg*). In this respect Balaam resembles the Jewish exorcists, who cast out demons in the name of Jesus without following Christ (Mark 9:38, 39; Luke 9:49), but more especially Simon Magus, his "New Testament antitype," who was also so powerfully attracted by the new divine powers of Christianity that he became a believer, and submitted to baptism, because he saw the signs and great miracles that were done (Acts 8:13). And from the very time when Balaam sought Jehovah, the fame of his prophetic art appears to have spread. It was no doubt the report that he stood in close connection with the God of Israel, which induced Balak, according to Numbers 22:6, to hire him to oppose the Israelites; as the heathen king shared the belief, which was common to all the heathen, that Balaam was able to work upon the God he served, and to determine and regulate His will. God had probably given to the soothsayer a few isolated but memorable glimpses of the unseen, to prepare him for the service of His kingdom. But "Balaam's heart was not right with God," and "he loved the wages of unrighteousness" (Acts 8:21; 2 Pet. 2:15). His thirst for honour and wealth was not so overcome by the revelations of the true God, that he could bring himself to give up his soothsaying, and serve the living God with an undivided heart. Thus it came to pass, that through the appeal addressed to him by Balak, he was brought into a situation in which, although he did not venture to attempt anything in opposition to the will of Jehovah,



his heart was never thoroughly changed; so that, whilst he refused the honours and rewards that were promised him by Balak, and pronounced blessings upon Israel in the strength of the Spirit of God that came upon him, he was overcome immediately afterwards by the might of the sin of his own unbroken heart, fell back into the old heathen spirit, and advised the Midianites to entice the Israelites to join in the licentious worship of Baal Peor (Numbers 31:16), and was eventually put to death by the Israelites when they conquered these their foes (Numbers 31:8).

**Numbers 22:2–21.** Balaam Hired by Balak to Curse Israel.—Vv. 2–4. As the Israelites passed by the eastern border of the land of Moab, the Moabites did not venture to make any attack upon them; on the contrary, they supplied them with bread and water for money (Deut. 2:29). At that time they no doubt cherished the hope that Sihon, their own terrible conqueror, would be able with perfect ease either to annihilate this new foe, or to drive them back into the desert from which they had come. But when they saw this hope frustrated, and the Israelites had overthrown the two kings of the Amorites with victorious power, and had conquered their kingdoms, and pressed forward through what was formerly Moabitish territory, even to the banks of the Jordan, the close proximity of so powerful a people filled Balak, their king, with terror and dismay, so that he began to think of the best means of destroying them. There was no ground for such alarm, as the Israelites, in consequence of divine instructions (Deut. 2:9), had offered no hostilities to the Moabites, but had conscientiously spared their territory and property; and even after the defeat of the Amorites, had not turned their arms against them, but had advanced to the Jordan to take possession of the land of Canaan. But the supernatural might of the people of God was a source of such discomfort to the king of the Moabites, that a horror of the Israelites came upon him. Feeling too weak to attack them with force of arms, he took counsel with the elders of Midian. With these words, *“This crowd will now lick up all our environs, as the ox licketh up the*

*green of the field,”* i.e., entirely consume all our possessions, he called their attention to the danger which the proximity of Israel would bring upon him and his territory, to induce them to unite with him in some common measures against this dangerous foe. This intention is implied in his words, and clearly follows from the sequel of the history.

According to v. 7, the elders of Midian went to Balaam with the elders of Moab; and there is no doubt that the Midianitish elders advised Balak to send for Balaam with whom they had become acquainted upon their trading journeys (cf. Gen. 37), to come and curse the Israelites. Another circumstance also points to an intimate connection between Balaam and the Midianites, namely, the fact that, after he had been obliged to bless the Israelites in spite of the inclination of his own natural heart, he went to the Midianites and advised them to make the Israelites harmless, by seducing them to idolatry (Numbers 31:16). The Midianites, who are referred to here, must be distinguished from the branch of the same tribe which dwelt in the peninsula of Sinai (Numbers 10:29, 30; Ex. 2:15, 16; 3:1). They had been settled for a long time (cf. Gen. 36:35) on the eastern border of the Moabitish and Amoritish territory, in a grassy but treeless steppe-land, where many ruins and wells are still to be found belonging to very ancient times (*Buckingham, Syr.* ii. pp. 79ff., 95ff.), and lived by grazing (Numbers 31:32ff.) and the caravan trade. They were not very warlike, and were not only defeated by the Edomites (Gen. 36:35), but were also subdued and rendered tributary by Sihon, king of the Amorites (see at Numbers 31:8). In the time of the Judges, indeed, they once invaded the land of Israel in company with the Amalekites and the sons of the East, but they were beaten by Gideon, and entirely repulsed (Judg. 6 and 7), and from that time forth they disappear entirely from history. The *“elders of Midian”* are heads of tribes, who administered the general affairs of the people, who, like the Israelites, lived under a patriarchal constitution. The most powerful of them bore the title of *“kings”* (Numbers 31:8) or *“princes”* (Josh. 13:21). The

clause, “and Balak, the son of Zippor, was king of the Moabites at that time,” is added as a supplementary note to explain the relation of Balak to the Moabites.

**Numbers 22:5, 6.** Balak sent messengers to Balaam to *Pethor* in Mesopotamia. The town of *Pethor*, or *Pethora* (Φαθοῦρα, LXX), is unknown. There is something very uncertain in *Knobel's* supposition, that it is connected with Φαθοῦσαι, a place to the south of *Circessium* (*Zozim.* iii. 14), and with the Βέθαννα mentioned by *Ptolemy*, v. 18, 6, and that these are the same as *Anah*, Ἀναθῶ, “*Anatha* (*Ammian. Marcell.* xxiv. 1, 6). And the conjecture that the name is derived from פִּתְרָה, to interpret dreams (*Gen.* 41:8), and marks the place as a seat of the possessors of secret arts, is also more than doubtful, since

פִּשְׁרָה corresponds to פִּתְרָה in Aramaean;

although there can be no doubt that *Pethor* may have been a noted seat of Babylonian magi, since these wise men were accustomed to congregate in particular localities (cf. *Strabo*, xvi. 1, § 6, and *Münter Relig. der Babyl.* p. 86). Balak desired Balaam to come and curse the people of Israel, who had come out of Egypt, and were so numerous that they covered the eye of the earth (see *Ex.* 10:5), i.e., the whole face of the land, and sat down (were encamped) opposite to him; that he might then perhaps be able to smite them and drive them out of the

land. On אָרַר for אָרָה, the imperative of אָרַר, see *Ewald*, § 228, b.—“For I know that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed.” Balak believed, in common with the whole of the ancient world, in the real power and operation of the curses, anathemas, and incantations pronounced by priests, soothsayers, and *goetae*. And there was a truth at the foundation of this belief, however it may have been perverted by heathenism into phantasy and superstition. When God endows a man with supernatural powers of His word and Spirit, he also confers upon him the power of working upon others in a supernatural way. Man, in fact, by virtue of the real connection

between his spirit and the higher spiritual world, is able to appropriate to himself supernatural powers, and make them subservient to the purpose of sin and wickedness, so as to practise magic and witchcraft with them, arts which we cannot pronounce either mere delusion or pure superstition, since the scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments speak of witchcraft, and condemn it as a real power of evil and of the kingdom of darkness (see p. 309). Even in the narrative itself, the power of Balaam to bless and to curse is admitted; and, in addition to this, it is frequently celebrated as a great favour displayed towards Israel, that the Lord did not hearken to Balaam, but turned the curse into a blessing (*Deut.* 23:5; *Josh.* 24:10; *Micah* 6:3; *Neh.* 13:2). This power of Balaam is not therefore traced, it is true, to the might of heathen deities, but to the might of Jehovah, whose name Balaam confessed; but yet the possibility is assumed of his curse doing actual, and not merely imaginary, harm to the Israelites. Moreover, the course of the history shows that in his heart Balaam was very much inclined to fulfil the desire of the king of the Moabites, and that this subjective inclination of his was overpowered by the objective might of the Spirit of Jehovah.

**Numbers 22:7-14.** When the elders of Moab and Midian came to him with wages of divination in their hand, he did not send them away, but told them to spend the night at his house, that he might bring them word what

Jehovah would say to him. קִסְמִים, from קָסַם, soothsaying, signifies here that which has been wrought or won by soothsaying—the

soothsayer's wages; just as בְּשֵׂרָה, which signifies literally glad tidings, is used in 2 Sam.

4:10 for the wages of glad tidings; and פְּעֹלָה,

פְּעֹלָה, which signifies work, is frequently used for that which is wrought, the thing acquired, or the wages. If Balaam had been a true prophet and a faithful servant of Jehovah, he would at

once have sent the messengers away and refused their request, as he must then have known that God would not curse His chosen people. But Balaam loved the wages of unrighteousness. This corruptness of his heart obscured his mind, so that he turned to God not as a mere form, but with the intention and in the hope of obtaining the consent of God to his undertaking. And God came to him in the night, and made known His will. Whether it was through the medium of a dream or of a vision, is not recorded, as this was of no moment in relation to the subject in hand. The question of God in v. 9, "*Who are these men with thee?*" not only served to introduce the conversation (*Knobel*), but was intended to awaken "the slumbering conscience of Balaam, to lead him to reflect upon the proposal which the men had made, and to break the force of his sinful inclination" (*Hengstenberg*).

**Numbers 22:12.** God then expressly forbade him to go with the messengers to curse the Israelites, as the people was blessed; and Balaam was compelled to send back the messengers without attaining their object, because Jehovah had refused him permission to go with them. קָבַלְהֶם לִי, v. 11, imper. of נָקַב =

נָקַב (see at Lev. 24:11).

**Numbers 22:15–21.** The answer with which Balaam had sent the Moabitish messengers away, encouraged Balak to cherish the hope of gaining over the celebrated soothsayer to his purpose notwithstanding, and to send an embassy "of princes more numerous and more honourable than those," and to make the attempt to overcome his former resistance by more splendid promises; whether he regarded it, as is very probable, "as the remains of a weakly fear of God, or simply as a *ruse* adopted for the purpose of obtaining better conditions" (*Hengstenberg*). As a genuine heathen, who saw nothing more in the God of Israel than a national god of that people, he thought that it would be possible to render not only men, but gods also, favourable to his purpose, by means of splendid honours and rich rewards.

**Numbers 22:18, 19.** But Balaam replied to the proposals of these ambassadors: "*If Balak gave me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot transgress the mouth (command) of Jehovah, my God, to do little or great,*" i.e., to attempt anything in opposition to the will of the Lord (cf. 1 Sam. 20:2; 22:15; 25:36). The inability flowed from moral awe of God and dread of His punishment. "From beginning to end this fact was firmly established in Balaam's mind, viz., that in the work to which Balak summoned him he could do nothing at all except through Jehovah. This knowledge he had acquired by virtue of his natural gifts as seer, and his previous experience. But this clear knowledge of Jehovah was completely obscured again by the love for the wages which ruled in his heart. Because he loved Balak, the enemy of Israel, for the sake of the wages, whereas Jehovah loved Israel for His own name's sake; Balaam was opposed to Jehovah in his inmost nature and will, though he knew himself to be in unison with Him by virtue of his natural gift. Consequently he fell into the same blindness of contradiction to which Balak was in bondage" (*Baumgarten*). And in this blindness he hoped to be able to turn Jehovah round to oppose Israel, and favour the wishes of his own and Balak's heart. He therefore told the messengers to wait again, that he might ask Jehovah a second time (v. 19). And this time (v. 20) God allowed him to go with them, but only on the condition that he should do nothing but what He said to him. The apparent contradiction in His first of all prohibiting Balaam from going (v. 12), then permitting it (v. 20), and then again, when Balaam set out in consequence of this permission, burning with anger against him (v. 22), does not indicate any variableness in the counsels of God, but vanishes at once when we take into account the pedagogical purpose of the divine consent. When the first messengers came and Balaam asked God whether he might go with them and curse Israel, God forbade him to go and curse. But since Balaam obeyed this command with inward repugnance, when he asked a second time on the arrival of the second embassy, God permitted him to go, but on the

condition already mentioned, namely, that he was forbidden to curse. God did this not merely because it was His own intention to put blessings instead of curses into the prophet's mouth,—and “the blessings of the celebrated prophet might serve as means of encouraging Israel and discouraging their foes, even though He did not actually stand in need of them” (*Knobel*),—but primarily and principally for the sake of Balaam himself, viz., to manifest to this soothsayer, who had so little susceptibility for higher influences, both His own omnipotence and true deity, and also the divine election of Israel, in a manner so powerful as to compel him to decide either for or against the God of Israel and his salvation. To this end God permitted him to go to Balak, though not without once more warning him most powerfully by the way of the danger to which his avarice and ambition would expose him. This immediate intention in the guidance of Balaam, by which God would have rescued him if possible from the way of destruction, into which he had been led by the sin which ruled in his heart, does not at all preclude the much further-reaching design of God, which was manifested in Balaam's blessings, namely, to glorify His own name among the heathen and in Israel, through the medium of this far-famed soothsayer.

**Numbers 22:22–35.** Balaam's Speaking Ass.—V. 22. “*And the anger of God burned, that he was going* (הוֹלֵךְ הוּא): *and the angel of Jehovah placed himself in the way, as an adversary to him.*” From the use of the participle הוֹלֵךְ

instead of the imperfect, with which it is not interchangeable, it is evident, on the one hand, that the anger of God was not excited by the fact that Balaam went with the elders of Moab, but by his behaviour wither on setting out or upon the journey; and, on the other hand, that the occurrence which followed did not take place at the commencement, but rather towards the close of, the journey. As it was a longing for wages and honour that had induced the soothsayer to undertake the journey, the

nearer he came to his destination, under the guidance of the distinguished Moabitish ambassadors, the more was his mind occupied with the honours and riches in prospect; and so completely did they take possession of his heart, that he was in danger of casting to the winds the condition which had been imposed upon him by God. The wrath of God was kindled against this dangerous enemy of his soul; and as he was riding upon his ass with two attendants, the angel of the Lord stood in his

way לְשֹׂטֵן לוֹ, “*as an adversary to him,*” i.e., to restrain him from advancing farther on a road that would inevitably lead him headlong into destruction (cf. v. 32). This visible manifestation of God (on the angel of the Lord, see pp. 118ff.) was seen by the ass; but Balaam the seer was so blinded, that it was entirely hidden from his eye, darkened as it was by sinful lust; and this happened three times before Jehovah brought him to his senses by the speaking of the dumb animal, and thus opened his eyes. The “drawn sword” in the angel's hand was a manifestation of the wrath of God. The ass turned from the road into the field before the threatening sight, and was smitten by Balaam in consequence to turn her or guide her back into the road.

**Numbers 22:24, 25.** The angel then stationed himself in a pass of the vineyards where walls (גְּדֵרֵי, vineyard walls, Isa. 5:5) were on both sides, so that the animal, terrified by the angel, pressed against the wall, and squeezed Balaam's foot against the wall, for which Balaam smote her again.

**Numbers 22:26, 27.** The angel moved still farther, and stationed himself in front of him, in so narrow a pass, that there was no room to move either to the right or to the left. As the ass could neither turn aside nor go past this time, she threw herself down. Balaam was still more enraged at this, and smote her with the stick

(בַּמִּקְלָה, which he carried; see Gen. 38:18).

**Numbers 22:28ff.** “Then Jehovah opened the mouth of the ass, and she said to Balaam, What have I done to thee, that thou hast smitten me now three times?” But Balaam, enraged at the refractoriness of his ass, replied, “Because thou hast played me ill (הִתְעַלְלָהּ, see Ex. 10:2): if there were only a sword in my hand, verily I should now have killed thee.” But the ass replied, that she had been ridden by him from a long time back, and had never been accustomed to act in this way towards him. These words of the irrational beast, the truth of which Balaam was obliged to admit, made an impression upon him, and awakened him out of his blindness, so that God could now open his eyes, and he saw the angel of the Lord.

In this miraculous occurrence, which scoffers at the Bible constantly bring forward as a weapon of attack upon the truth of the word of God, the circumstance that the ass perceived the appearance of the angel of the Lord sooner than Balaam did, does not present the slightest difficulty; for it is a well-known fact, that irrational animals have a much keener instinctive presentiment of many natural phenomena, such as earthquakes, storms, etc., than man has with the five senses of his mind. And the fact is equally undeniable, that many animals, e.g., horses and cows, see the so-called second sight, and are terrified in consequence. The rock of offence in this narrative is to be found in the rational words of an irrational and speechless ass. It is true, that in the actual meaning of the words there is nothing beyond the sensations and feelings to which animals constantly give utterance in gestures and inarticulate sounds, when subjected to cruel treatment. But in this instance the feelings were expressed in the rational words of human language, which an animal does not possess; and hence the question arises. Are we to understand this miracle as being a purely internal fact of an ecstatic nature, or a fact that actually came under the cognizance of the senses? If we examine the arguments which *Hengstenberg* has adduced in favour of the former, and *Kurtz* in support of the latter, there

is nothing at all in the circumstance, that the narrative itself says nothing about Balaam being in an ecstasy, nor in the statement that “Jehovah opened the mouth of the ass,” nor lastly, in the words of 2 Pet. 2:16, “The dumb ass, speaking with man’s voice, forbade the madness of the prophet,” to furnish conclusive, not to say irresistible, proofs of the assertion, that “as the ass was corporeally and externally visible, its speaking must have been externally and corporeally audible” (*Kurtz*). All that is contained in the two scriptural testimonies is, that the ass spoke in a way that was perceptible to Balaam, and that this speaking was effected by Jehovah as something altogether extraordinary. But whether Balaam heard the words of the animal with the outward, i.e., the bodily ear, or with an inward spiritual ear, is not decided by them. On the other hand, neither the fact that Balaam expressed no astonishment at the ass speaking, nor the circumstance that Balaam’s companions—viz., his two servants (v. 22) and the Moabitish messengers, who were also present, according to v. 35—did not see the angel or hear the ass speaking, leads with certainty to the conclusion, that the whole affair must have been a purely internal one, which Balaam alone experienced in a state of ecstasy, since *argumenta e silentio* confessedly prove but very little. With regard to Balaam, we may say with *Augustine* (*quaest.* 50 in Numbers), “he was so carried away by his cupidity, that he was not terrified by this marvellous miracle, and replied just as if he had been speaking to a man, when God, although He did not change the nature of the ass into that of a rational being, made it give utterance to whatever He pleased, for the purpose of restraining his madness.” But with regard to the Moabitish messengers, it is very doubtful whether they were eye-witnesses and auditors of the affair. It is quite possible that they had gone some distance in advance, or were some distance behind, when Balaam had the vision. On the other hand, there was no necessity to mention particularly that they saw the appearance of the angel, and heard the speaking of the animal, as this circumstance was not of the least importance in connection

with the main purpose of the narrative. And still less can it be said that "the ass's speaking, if transferred to the sphere of outward reality, would obviously break through the eternal boundary-line which has been drawn in Gen. 1 between the human and the animal world." The only thing that would have broken through this boundary, would have been for the words of the ass to have surpassed the feelings and sensations of an animal; that is to say, for the ass to have given utterance to truths that were essentially human, and only comprehensible by human reason. Now that was not the case. All that the ass said was quite within the sphere of the psychical life of an animal.

The true explanation lies between the notion that the whole occurrence was purely internal, and consisted exclusively in ecstasy brought by God upon Balaam, and the grossly realistic reduction of the whole affair into the sphere of the senses and the outward material world. The angel who met the soothsayer in the road, as he was riding upon his ass, and who was seen at once by the ass, though he was not seen by Balaam till Jehovah had opened his eyes, did really appear upon the road, in the outward world of the senses. But the form in which he appeared was not a grossly sensuous or material form, like the bodily frame of an ordinary visible being; for in that case Balaam would inevitably have seen him, when his beast became alarmed and restive again and again and refused to go forward, since it is not stated anywhere that God had smitten him with blindness, like the men of Sodom (Gen. 19:11), or the people in 2 Kings 6:18. It rather resembled the appearance of a spirit, which cannot be seen by every one who has healthy bodily eyes, but only by those who have their senses awakened for visions from the spirit-world. Thus, for example, the men who went to Damascus with Paul, saw no one, when the Lord appeared to him in a miraculous light from heaven, and spoke to him, although they also heard the voice (Acts 9:7). Balaam wanted the spiritual sense to discern the angel of the Lord, because his spirit's eye was blinded by his thirst for wealth and honour. This blindness

increased to such an extent, with the inward excitement caused by the repeated insubordination of his beast, that he lost all self-control. As the ass had never been so restive before, if he had only been calm and thoughtful himself, he would have looked about to discover the cause of this remarkable change, and would then, no doubt, have discovered the presence of the angel. But as he lost all his thoughtfulness, God was obliged to open the mouth of the dumb and irrational animal, to show a seer by profession his own blindness. "He might have reproved him by the words of the angel; but because the rebuke would not have been sufficiently severe without some deep humiliation, He made the beast his teacher" (*Calvin*). The ass's speaking was produced by the omnipotence of God; but it is impossible to decide whether the modulation was miraculously communicated to the animal's voice, so that it actually gave utterance to the human words which fell upon Balaam's ears (*Kurtz*), or whether the cries of the animal were formed into rational discourse in Balaam's soul, by the direct operation of God, so that he alone heard and understood the speech of the animal, whereas the servants who were present heard nothing more than unintelligible cries. In either case Balaam received a deeply humiliating admonition from the mouth of the irrational beast, and that not only to put him to shame, but also to call him to his senses, and render him capable of hearing the voice of God. The seer, who prided himself upon having eyes for divine revelations, was so blind, that he could not discern the appearance of the angel, which even the irrational beast had been able to see. By this he was taught, that even a beast is more capable of discerning things from the higher world, than a man blinded by sinful desires. It was not till after this humiliation that God opened his eyes, so that he saw the angel of the Lord with a drawn sword standing in his road, and fell upon his face before this fearful sight.

**Numbers 22:32-34.** To humble him deeply and inwardly, the Lord help up before him the injustice of his cruel treatment of the ass, and

told him at the same time that it had saved his life by turning out of the way. *"I have come out,"* said the angel of the Lord, *"as an adversary; for the way leads headlong into destruction before me;"* i.e., the way which thou art going is leading thee, in my eyes, in my view, into destruction.

יִרְט, to plunge, sc., into destruction, both here, and also in Job 16:11, the only other passage in which it occurs.

**Numbers 22:33.** The angel of the Lord sought to preserve Balaam from the destruction which threatened him, by standing in his way; but he did not see him, though his ass did. אֹלֵי

וְגוֹ', נִטְתָּהּ וְגוֹ', *"perhaps it turned out before me; for otherwise I should surely have killed thee, and let her live."* The first clause is to be regarded, as *Hengstenberg* supposes, as an aposiopesis. The angel does not state positively what was the reason why perhaps the ass had turned out of the way: he merely hints at it lightly, and leaves it to Balaam to gather from the hint, that the faithful animal had turned away from affection to its master, with a dim foreboding of the danger which threatened him, and yet for that very reason, as it were as a reward for its service of love, had been ill-treated by him. The traditional rendering, *"if the ass had not turned aside, surely,"* etc., cannot be defended according to the rules of the language; and there is not sufficient ground for any such alteration of the text as *Knobel* suggests, viz., into לֹלֵי. These words made an impression, and Balaam made this acknowledgment (v. 34): *"I have sinned, for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me; and now, if it displease thee, I will get me back again."* The angel of the Lord replied, however (v. 35): *"Go with the men; but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that shalt you speak."* This was sufficient to show him, that it was not the journey in itself that was displeasing to God, but the feelings and intentions with which he had entered upon it. The whole procedure was intended to sharpen his conscience and sober his mind, that

he might pay attention to the word which the Lord would speak to him. At the same time the impression which the appearance and words of the angel of the Lord made upon his heart, enveloped in mist as it was by the thirst for gold and honour, was not a deep one, nor one that led him to a thorough knowledge of his own heart; otherwise, after such a warning, he would never have continued his journey.

**Numbers 22:36-41.** Reception of Balaam by the King of the Moabites.—Vv. 36, 37. As soon as Balak heard of Balaam's coming, he went to meet him at a city on the border of the Arnon, which flowed at the extreme (north) boundary (of the Moabitish territory), viz., at *Areopolis* (see at Numbers 21:15), probably the capital of the kingdom at one time, but now reduced to a frontier town, since Sihon the Amorite had taken all the land as far as the Arnon; whilst *Rabbah*, which was farther south, had been selected as the residence of the king. By coming as far as the frontier of his kingdom to meet the celebrated soothsayer, Balak intended to do him special honour. But he would not help receiving him with a gentle reproof for not having come at his first invitation, as if he, the king, had not been in a condition to honour him according to his merits.

**Numbers 22:38.** But Balaam, being still mindful of the warning which he had just received from God, replied, *"Lo, I am come unto thee now: have I then any power to speak anything (sc., of my own accord)? 'The word which God puts into my mouth, that will I speak.'"* With this reply he sought, at the very outset, to soften down the expectations of Balak, inasmuch as he concluded at once that his coming was a proof of his willingness to curse (*Hengstenberg*). As a matter of fact, Balaam did not say anything different to the king from what he had explained to his messengers at the very first (cf. v. 18). But just as he had not told them the whole truth, but had concealed the fact that Jehovah, his God, had forbidden the journey at first, on the ground that he was not to curse the nation that was blessed (v. 12), so he could not address the king in open, unambiguous words.

**Numbers 22:39, 40.** He then went with Balak to *Kirjath-Chuzoth*, where the king had oxen and sheep slaughtered in sacrifice, and sent flesh to Balaam as well as to the princes that were with him for a sacrificial meal, to do honour to the soothsayer thereby. The sacrifices were not so much thank-offerings for Balaam's happy arrival, as supplicatory offerings for the success of the undertaking before them. "This is evident," as *Hengstenberg* correctly observes, "from the place and time of their presentation; for the place was not that where Balak first met with Balaam, and they were only presented on the eve of the great event." Moreover, they were offered unquestionably not to the Moabitish idols, from which Balak expected no help, but to Jehovah, whom Balak wished to draw away, in connection with Balaam, from His own people (Israel), that he might secure His favour to the Moabites. The situation of *Kirjath-Chuzoth*, which is only mentioned here, cannot be determined with absolute certainty. As Balak went with Balaam to Bamoth-Baal on the morning following the sacrificial meal, which was celebrated there, *Kirjath-Chuzoth* cannot have been very far distant. *Knobel* conjectures, with some probability, that it may have been the same as *Kerioth* (Jer. 48:24), i.e., *Kereijat* or *Körriat*, at the foot of *Jebel Attarus*, at the top of which Bamoth-Baal was situated (see at Numbers 21:19).

**Numbers 22:41.** But Balak conducted the soothsayer to *Bamoth-Baal*, not because it was consecrated to Baal, but because it was the first height on the way to the steppes of Moab, from which they could see the camp of Israel, or at all events, "the end of the people," i.e., the outermost portion of the camp. For "Balak started with the supposition, that Balaam must necessarily have the Israelites in view if his curse was to take effect" (*Hengstenberg*).

### Numbers 23

**Numbers 23:1-24.** Balaam's First Words.—Vv. 1-3. *Preparations* for the first act, which was performed at Bamoth-Baal. At Balaam's command Balak built seven altars, and then

selected seven bullocks and seven rams, which they immediately sacrificed, namely, one bullock and one ram upon each altar. The nations of antiquity generally accompanied all their more important undertakings with sacrifices, to make sure of the protection and help of the gods; but this was especially the case with their ceremonies of adjuration. According to *Diod. Sic. ii. 29*, the Chaldeans sought to avert calamity and secure prosperity by sacrifices and adjurations. The same thing is also related of other nations (see *Hengstenberg, Balaam*, p. 392). Accordingly, Balaam also did everything that appeared necessary, according to his own religious notions, to ensure the success of Balak's undertaking, and bring about the desired result. The erection of *seven* altars, and the sacrifice of *seven* animals of each kind, are to be explained from the sacredness acquired by this number, through the creation of the world in seven days, as being the stamp of work that was well-pleasing to God. The sacrifices were burnt-offerings, and were offered by themselves to Jehovah, whom Balaam acknowledged as his God.

**Numbers 23:3, 4.** After the offering of the sacrifices, Balaam directed the king to stand by his burnt-offering, i.e., by the sacrifices that had been offered for him upon the seven altars, that he might go out for auguries. The meaning of the words, "*I will go, peradventure Jehovah will come to meet me,*" is apparent from Numbers 24:1: and "*he went no more to meet with the auguries*" (נְהַשִּׁים, see at Lev. 19:26). Balaam went out to look for a manifestation of Jehovah in the significant phenomena of nature. The word which Jehovah should show to him, he would report to Balak. We have here what is just as characteristic in relation to Balaam's religious stand-point, as it is significant in its bearing upon the genuine historical character of the narrative, namely, an admixture of the religious ideas of both the Israelites and the heathen, inasmuch as Balaam hoped to receive or discover, in the phenomena of nature, a revelation from Jehovah. Because heathenism had no "sure word of prophecy," it sought to



discover the will and counsel of God, which are displayed in the events of human history, through various signs that were discernible in natural phenomena, or, as *Chryssipus* the Stoic expresses it in *Cicero de divin.* ii. 63, "*Signa quae a Diis hominibus portendantur.*" To look for a word of Jehovah in this way, Balaam betook himself to a "*bald height.*" This is the only

meaning of שָׁפִי, from שָׁפָה, to rub, to scrape, to make bare, which is supported by the usage of the language; it is also in perfect harmony with the context, as the heathen augurs were always accustomed to select elevated places for their auspices, with an extensive prospect, especially the towering and barren summits of mountains that were rarely visited by men (see *Hengstenberg, ut sup.*). *Ewald*, however, proposes the meaning "alone," or "to spy," for which there is not the slightest grammatical foundation.

**Numbers 23:4.** "*And God came to meet Balaam,*" who thought it necessary, as a true *hariolus*, to call the attention of God to the altars which had been built for Him, and the sacrifices that had been offered upon them. And God made known His will to him, though not in a natural sign of doubtful signification. He put a very distinct and unmistakable word into his mouth, and commanded him to make it known to the king.

**Numbers 23:7-10.** Balaam's *first* saying.— Having come back to the burnt-offering, Balaam commenced his utterance before the king and the assembled princes. מִשָּׁל, lit., a simile, then a proverb, because the latter consists of comparisons and figures, and lastly a sentence or saying. The application of this term to the announcements made by Balaam (vv. 7, 18, 24:3, 15, 20), whereas it is never used of the prophecies of the true prophets of Jehovah, but only of certain songs and similes inserted in them (cf. Isa. 14:4; Ezek. 17:2; 24:3; Micah 2:4), is to be accounted for not merely from the poetic form of Balaam's utterances, the predominance of poetical imagery, the sustained *parallelism*, the construction of the

whole discourse in brief pointed sentences, and other peculiarities of poetic language (e.g., בָּנוּ, Numbers 24:3, 15), but it points at the same time to the difference which actually exists between these utterances and the predictions of the true prophets. The latter are orations addressed to the congregation, which deduce from the general and peculiar relation of Israel to the Lord and to His law, the conduct of the Lord towards His people either in their own or in future times, proclaiming judgment upon the ungodly and salvation to the righteous.

"Balaam's mental eye," on the contrary, as *Hengstenberg* correctly observes, "was simply fixed upon what he saw; and this he reproduced without any regard to the impression that it was intended to make upon those who heard it." But the very first utterance was of such a character as to deprive Balak of all hope that his wishes would be fulfilled.

**Numbers 23:7.** "*Balak, the king of Moab, fetches me from Aram, from the mountains of the East,*" i.e., of Mesopotamia, which was described, as far back as Gen. 29:1, as the land of the sons of the East (cf. Numbers 22:5). Balaam mentions the mountains of his home in contradistinction to the mountains of the land of the Moabites upon which he was then standing. "*Come, curse me Jacob, and come threaten Israel.*" Balak had sent for him for this purpose (see Numbers

22:11, 17). זַעֲמָה, for זַעֲמָה, imperative (see *Ewald*, § 228, b.). זַעַם, to be angry, here to give utterance to the wrath of God, synonymous with נָקַב or קָבַב, to curse. *Jacob*: a poetical name for the nation, equivalent to *Israel*.

**Numbers 23:8.** "*How shall I curse whom God does not curse, and how threaten whom Jehovah does not threaten?*" Balak imagined, like all the heathen, that Balaam, as a *goetes* and magician, could distribute blessings and curses according to his own will, and put such constraint upon his God as to make Him subservient to his own will (see at Numbers 22:6). The seer opposes this delusion: The God of Israel does not curse

His people, and therefore His servant cannot curse them. The following verses (vv. 9 and 10) give the reason why: *“For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him. Lo, it is a people that dwelleth apart, and is not numbered among the heathen. Who determines the dust of Jacob, and in number the fourth part of Israel? Let my soul die the death of the righteous, and my end be like his?”* There were two reasons which rendered it impossible for Balaam to curse Israel: (1) Because they were a people both outwardly and inwardly different from other nations, and (2) because they were a people richly blessed and highly favoured by God. From the top of the mountains Balaam looked down upon the people of Israel. The outward and earthly height upon which he stood was the substratum of the spiritual height upon which the Spirit of God had placed him, and had so enlightened his mental sight, that he was able to discern all the peculiarities and the true nature of Israel. In this respect the first thing that met his view was the fact that this people dwelt alone. Dwelling alone does not denote a quiet and safe retirement, as many commentators have inferred from Deut. 33:28, Jer. 49:31, and Micah 7:14; but, according to the parallel clause, “it is not reckoned among the nations,” it expresses the separation of Israel from the rest of the nations. This separation was manifested outwardly to the seer’s eye in the fact that “the host of Israel dwelt by itself in a separate encampment upon the plain. In this his spirit discerned the inward and essential separation of Israel from all the heathen” (*Baumgarten*). This outward “dwelling alone” was a symbol of their inward separation from the heathen world, by virtue of which Israel was not only saved from the fate of the heathen world, but could not be overcome by the heathen; of course only so long as they themselves should inwardly maintain this separation from the heathen, and faithfully continue in covenant with the Lord their God, who had separated them from among the nations to be His own possession. As soon as Israel lost itself in heathen ways, it also lost its own external independence. This rule applies to

the Israel of the New Testament as well as the Israel of the Old, to the congregation or Church of God of all ages. **לֹא יִתְחַשֵּׁב**, “it does not reckon itself among the heathen nations,” i.e., it does not share the lot of the other nations, because it has a different God and protector from the heathen (cf. Deut. 4:8; 33:29). The truth of this has been so marvellously realized in the history of the Israelites, notwithstanding their falling short of the idea of their divine calling, “that whereas all the mightier kingdoms of the ancient world, Egypt, Assyria, Babel, etc., have perished without a trace, Israel, after being rescued from so many dangers which threatened utter destruction under the Old Testament, still flourishes in the Church of the New Testament, and continues also to exist in that part which, though rejected now, is destined one day to be restored” (*Hengstenberg*).

In this state of separation from the other nations, Israel rejoiced in the blessing of its God, which was already visible in the innumerable multitude into which it had grown. *“Who has ever determined the dust of Jacob?”* As the dust cannot be numbered, so is the multitude of Israel innumerable. These words point back to the promise in Gen. 13:16, and applied quite as much to the existing state as to the future of Israel. The beginning of the miraculous fulfilment of the promise given to the patriarchs of an innumerable posterity, was already before their eyes (cf. Deut. 10:22). Even now the fourth part of Israel is not to be reckoned. Balaam speaks of the fourth part with reference to the division of the nation into four camps (Numbers 2), of which he could see only one from his point of view (Numbers 22:41), and therefore only the fourth part of the nation. **מִסְפָּר** is an accusative of definition, and the subject and verb are to be repeated from the first clause; so that there is no necessity to alter **מִסְפָּר** into **מִי סְפָר**.—But Israel was not only visibly blessed by God with an innumerable increase; it was also inwardly

exalted into a people of יִשְׁרָיִם, righteous or honourable men. The predicate יִשְׁרָיִם is applied to Israel on account of its divine calling, because it had a God who was just and right, a God of truth and without iniquity (Deut. 32:4), or because the God of Israel was holy, and sanctified His people (Lev. 20:7, 8; Ex. 31:13) and made them into a *Jeshurun* (Deut. 32:15; 33:5, 26). Righteousness, probity, is the idea and destination of this people, which has never entirely lost it, though it has never fully realized it. Even in times of general apostasy from the Lord, there was always an *ἐκλογή* in the nation, of which probity and righteousness could truly be predicated (cf. 1 Kings 19:18). The righteousness of the Israelites was “a product of the institutions which God had established among them, of the revelation of His holy will which He had given them in His law, of the forgiveness of sins which He had linked on to the offering of sacrifices, and of the communication of His Spirit, which was ever living and at work in His Church, and in it alone” (*Hengstenberg*). Such a people Balaam could not curse; he could only wish that the end of his own life might resemble the end of these righteous men. Death is introduced here as the end and completion of life. “Balaam desires for himself the entire, full, indestructible, and inalienable blessedness of the Israelite, of which death is both the close and completion, and also the seal and attestation” (*Kurtz*). This desire did not involve the certain hope of a blessed life beyond the grave, which the Israelites themselves did not then possess; it simply expressed the thought that the death of a pious Israelite was a desirable good. And this it was, whether viewed in the light of the past, the present, or the future. In the hour of death the pious Israelite could look back with blessed satisfaction to a long life, rich “in traces of the beneficent, forgiving, delivering, and saving grace of God;” he could comfort himself with the delightful hope of living on in his children and his children’s children, and in them of participating in the future fulfilment of the

divine promises of grace; and lastly, when dying in possession of the love and grace of God, he could depart hence with the joyful confidence of being gathered to his fathers in Sheol (Gen. 25:8).

**Numbers 23:11–17.** Balak reproached Balaam for this utterance, which announced blessings to the Israelites instead of curses. But he met his reproaches with the remark, that he was bound by the command of Jehovah. The

infinitive absolute, בִּרְךָ, after the finite verb, expresses the fact that Balaam had continued to give utterance to nothing but blessings. שָׁמַר

לְדַבֵּר, to observe to speak; שָׁמַר, to notice carefully, as in Deut. 5:1, 29, etc. But Balak thought that the reason might be found in the unfavourable locality; he therefore led the seer to “*the field of the watchers, upon the top of Pisgah,*” whence he could see the whole of the people of Israel. The words אֲשֶׁר תִּרְאֶנּוּ וְגו’

(v. 13) are to be rendered, “*whence thou wilt see it (Israel); thou seest only the end of it, but not the whole of it*” (sc., here upon Bamoth-Baal). This is required by a comparison of the verse before us with Numbers 22:41, where it is most unquestionably stated, that upon the top of Bamoth-Baal Balaam only saw “the end of the people.” For this reason Balak regarded that place as unfavourable, and wished to lead the seer to a place from which he could see the people, without any limitation whatever. Consequently, notwithstanding the omission of

כִּי (for), the words אֲפֹס קִצְהוּ can only be intended to assign the reason why Balak supposed the first utterances of Balaam to have

been unfavourable. קִצְהוּ הָעַם = קִצְהוּ, the end of the people (Numbers 22:41), cannot possibly signify the whole nation, or, as *Marck, de Geer, Gesenius,* and *Kurtz* suppose, “the people from one end to the other,” in which

case קִצְהוּ הָעַם (the end of the people) would

signify the very opposite of קִצְהוּ (the end of it); for קִצְהוּ הָעָם is not interchangeable, or to be identified, with כָּל-הָעָם מִקְצֵהָ (Gen. 19:4), “the whole people, from the end or extremity of it,” or from its last man; in other words, “to the very last man.” Still less does אֶפְסוֹ קִצְהוּ הָעָם signify “the uttermost end of the whole people, the end of the entire people,” notwithstanding the fact that Kurtz regards the expression, “the end of the end of the people,” as an intolerable tautology. קִבְּנוּ, imperative with *nun epenth.*, from קִבְּבָ. The “field of the watchers,” or “spies (*zophim*), upon the top of *Pisgah*,” corresponds, no doubt, to “the field of Moab, upon the top of *Pisgah*,” on the west of Heshbon (see at Numbers 21:20). Mount *Nebo*, from which Moses surveyed the land of Canaan in all its length and breadth, was one summit, and possibly *the* summit of *Pisgah* (see Deut. 3:27; 34:1). The field of the spies was very probably a tract of table-land upon *Nebo*; and so called either because watchers were stationed there in times of disturbance, to keep a look-out all round, or possibly because it was a place where augurs made their observations of the heavens and of birds (*Knobel*). The locality has not been thoroughly explored by travellers; but from the spot alluded to, it must have been possible to overlook a very large portion of the *Arboth Moab*. Still farther to the north, and nearer to the camp of the Israelites in these *Arboth*, was the summit of *Peor*, to which Balak afterwards conducted Balaam (v. 28), and where he not only saw the whole of the people, but could see distinctly the camps of the different tribes (Numbers 24:2).

**Numbers 23:14–17.** Upon *Pisgah*, Balak and Balaam made the same preparations for a fresh revelation from God as upon *Bamoth-Baal* (vv.

1–6). כֹּה in v. 15 does not mean “here” or “yonder,” but “so” or “thus,” as in every other

case. The thought is this: “Do thou stay (sc., as thou art), and I will go and meet thus” (sc., in the manner required). אֶקְרָה (I will go and meet) is a technical term here for going out for auguries (Numbers 24:1), or for a divine revelation.

**Numbers 23:18–24.** The *second* saying.—“Up, Balak, and hear! Harken to me, son of Zippor!”

קוּם, “stand up,” is a call to mental elevation, to the perception of the word of God; for Balak was standing by his sacrifice (v. 17). הִאֲזִין

with עַד, as in Job 32:11, signifies a hearing which presses forward to the speaker, i.e., in keen and minute attention (*Hengstenberg*). בְּנוּ,

with the antiquated union vowel for בָּ; see at Gen. 1:24.

**Numbers 23:19.** “God is not a man, that He should lie; nor a son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and should He not do it? and spoken, and should not carry it out?”

**Numbers 23:20.** “Behold, I have received to bless: and He hath blessed; and I cannot turn it.” Balaam meets Balak’s expectation that he will take back the blessing that he has uttered, with the declaration, that God does not alter His purposes like changeable and fickle men, but keeps His word unalterably, and carries it into execution. The unchangeableness of the divine purposes is a necessary consequence of the unchangeableness of the divine nature. With regard to His own counsels, God repents of nothing; but this does not prevent the repentance of God, understood as an anthropopathic expression, denoting the pain experienced by the love of God, on account of the destruction of its creatures (see at Gen. 6:6, and Ex. 32:14). The ה before הוּא v. 19) is the

interrogative ה (see Ges. § 100, 4). The two clauses of v. 19b, “Hath He spoken,” etc., taken by themselves, are no doubt of universal

application; but taken in connection with the context, they relate specially to what God had spoken through Balaam, in his first utterance with reference to Israel, as we may see from the more precise explanation in v. 20, "Behold, I

have received to bless' (לָקַח, taken, accepted),

etc. הִשִּׁיב, to lead back, to make a thing

retrograde (Isa. 43:13). Samuel afterwards refused Saul's request in these words of Balaam (v. 19a), when he entreated him to revoke his rejection on the part of God (1 Sam. 15:29).

**Numbers 23:21.** After this decided reversal of Balak's expectations, Balaam carried out still more fully the blessing which had been only briefly indicated in his first utterance. "He beholds not wickedness in Jacob, and sees not suffering in Israel: Jehovah his God is with him, and the shout (jubilation) of a king in the midst of him." The subject in the first sentence is God

(see Hab. 1:3, 13). God sees not אָוֶן,

worthlessness, wickedness, and עֲמָל,

tribulation, misery, as the consequence of sin, and therefore discovers no reason for cursing the nation. That this applied to the people solely by virtue of their calling as the holy nation of Jehovah, and consequently that there is no denial of the sin of individuals, is evident from the second hemistich, which expresses the thought of the first in a positive form: so that the words, "Jehovah his God is with him," correspond to the words, "He beholds not wickedness;" and "the shout of a king in the midst of it," to His not seeing suffering. Israel therefore rejoiced in the blessing of God only so long as it remained faithful to the idea of its divine calling, and continued in covenant fellowship with the Lord. So long the power of the world could do it no harm. The "shout of a king" in Israel is the rejoicing of Israel at the fact that Jehovah dwells and rules as King in the midst of it (cf. Ex. 15:18; Deut. 33:5). Jehovah had manifested Himself as King, by leading them out of Egypt.

**Numbers 23:22.** "God brings them out of Egypt; his strength is like that of a buffalo." אֱלֹ is God

as the strong, or mighty one. The participle

מוֹצִיאִם is not used for the preterite, but

designates the leading out as still going on, and lasting till the introduction into Canaan. The

plural suffix, םֹ, is used *ad sensum*, with

reference to Israel as a people. Because God leads them, they go forward with the strength

of a buffalo. תוֹעֲפֹת, from יָעַף, to weary,

signifies that which causes weariness, exertion, the putting forth of power; hence the fulness of strength, ability to make or bear exertions.

רֵאִים is the buffalo or wild ox, an indomitable animal, which is especially fearful on account of its horns (Job 39:9-11; Deut. 33:17; Ps. 22:22).

**Numbers 23:23.** The fellowship of its God, in which Israel rejoiced, and to which it owed its strength, was an actual truth. "For there is no augury in Jacob, and no divination in Israel. At the time it is spoken to Jacob, and to Israel what

God doeth." כִּי does not mean, "so that, as an

introduction to the sequel," as *Knobel* supposes, but "for," as a causal particle. The fact that Israel was not directed, like other nations, to the uncertain and deceitful instrumentality of augury and divination, but enjoyed in all its concerns the immediate revelation of its God, furnished the proof that it had its God in the midst of it, and was guided and endowed with

power by God Himself. נְחָשׁ and קְסָם,

οἰωνισμός and μαντεία, *augurium et divinatio* (LXX, *Vulg.*), were the two means employed by the heathen for looking into futurity. The former (see at Lev. 19:26) was the unfolding of the future from signs in the phenomena of nature, and inexplicable occurrences in animal and human life; the latter, prophesying from a pretended or supposed revelation of the Deity

within the human mind. כַּעֲתָ, "according to the

time," i.e., at the right time, God revealed His acts, His counsel, and His will to Israel in His word, which He had spoken at first to the patriarchs, and afterwards through Moses and the prophets. In this He revealed to His people in truth, and in a way that could not deceive, what the heathen attempted in vain to discover through augury and divination (cf. Deut. 18:14–19).

**Numbers 23:24.** Through the power of its God, Israel was invincible, and would crush all its foes. *"Behold, it rises up, a people like the lioness, and lifts itself up like the lion. It lies not down till it eats dust, and drinks the blood of the slain."* What the patriarch Jacob prophesied of Judah, the ruler among his brethren, in Gen. 49:9, Balaam here transfers to the whole nation, to put to shame all the hopes indulged by the Moabitish king of the conquest and destruction of Israel.

**Numbers 23:25–24:25.** Balaam's Last Words.—Vv. 25–30. Balak was not deterred, however, from making another attempt. At first, indeed, he exclaimed in indignation at these second sayings of Balaam: *"Thou shalt neither curse it, nor even bless."* The double כִּלְאִי with לֹא signifies "neither—nor;" and the rendering, "if thou do not curse it, thou shalt not bless it," must be rejected as untenable. In his vexation at the second failure, he did not want to hear anything more from Balaam. But when he replied again, that he had told him at the very outset that he could do nothing but what God should say to him (cf. Numbers 22:38), he altered his mind, and resolved to conduct Balaam to another place with this hope: *"peradventure it will please God that thou mayest curse me them from thence."* Clericus observes upon this passage, "It was the opinion of the heathen, that what was not obtained through the first, second, or third victim, might nevertheless be secured through a fourth;" and he adduces proofs from *Suetonius, Curtius, Gellius*, and others.

**Numbers 23:29.** He takes the seer *"to the top of Peor, which looks over the face of the desert"*

(*Jeshimon*: see at Numbers 21:20), and therefore was nearer to the camp of the Israelites. Mount *Peor* was one peak of the northern part of the mountains of Abarim by the town of *Beth-peor*, which afterwards belonged to the Reubenites (Josh. 13:20), and opposite to which the Israelites were encamped in the steppes of Moab (Deut. 3:29; 4:46). According to *Eusebius (Onom. s. v. Φογώρ)*, *Peor* was above *Libias* (i.e., *Bethharam*), which was situated in the valley of the Jordan; and according to the account given under *Arboth Moab*, it was close by the *Arboth Moab*, opposite to Jericho, on the way from *Libias* to *Heshbon*. *Peor* was about seven Roman miles from *Heshbon*, according to the account given *s. v. Danaba*; and *Beth-peor (s. v. Bethphozor)* was near Mount *Peor*, opposite to Jericho, six Roman miles higher than *Libias*, i.e., to the east of it (see *Hengstenberg, Balaam*, p. 538).

**Numbers 23:29, 30.** The sacrifices offered in preparation for this fresh transaction were the same as in the former cases (v. 14, and vv. 1, 2).

#### Numbers 24

**Numbers 24:1–9.** The *third* saying.—Vv. 1 and 2. From the two revelations which he had received before, Balaam, saw, i.e., perceived, that it pleased Jehovah to bless Israel. This induced him not to go out for auguries, as on the previous occasions. כִּפְּעִים בְּפַעַם, "as time after time," i.e., as at former times (Numbers 23:3 and 15). He therefore turned his face to the desert, i.e., to the steppes of Moab, where Israel was encamped (Numbers 22:1). And when he lifted up his eyes, *"he saw Israel encamping according to its tribes; and the Spirit of God came over him."* The impression made upon him by the sight of the tribes of Israel, served as the subjective preparation for the reception of the Spirit of God to inspire him. Of both the earlier utterances it is stated that "Jehovah put a word into his mouth" (Numbers 23:5 and 16); but of this third it is affirmed that "the Spirit of God came over him." The former were communicated to him, when he went out for a divine revelation, without his being

thrown into an ecstatic state; he heard the voice of God within him telling him what he was to say. But this time, like the prophets in their prophesyings, he was placed by the Spirit of God in a state of ecstatic sight; so that, with his eyes closed as in clairvoyance, he saw the substance of the revelation from God with his inward mental eye, which had been opened by the Spirit of God. Thus not only does he himself describe his own condition in vv. 3 and 4, but his description is in harmony with the announcement itself, which is manifestly the result both in form and substance of the intuition effected within him by the Spirit of God.

**Numbers 24:3, 4.** Vv. 3 and 4 contain the preface to the prophecy: *“The divine saying of Balaam the son of Beor, the divine saying of the man with closed eye, the divine saying of the hearer of divine words, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down and with opened eyes.”*

For the participial noun **נֹאֵם** the meaning divine saying (*effatum*, not *inspiratum*, *Domini*) is undoubtedly established by the expression **נֹאֵם יְהוָה**, which recurs in Numbers 14:28 and Gen. 22:16, and is of constant use in the predictions of the prophets; and this applies even to the few passages where a human author is mentioned instead of Jehovah, such as vv. 3, 4, and 15, 16; also 2 Sam. 23:1; Prov. 30:1; and Ps. 36:2, where a **נֹאֵם** is ascribed to the personified wickedness. Hence, when Balaam calls the following prophecy a **נֹאֵם**, this is done for the purpose of designating it as a divine revelation received from the Spirit of God. He had received it, and now proclaimed it as a man **שָׂתַם הָעֵינַי**, with closed eye. **שָׂתַם** does not mean to open, a meaning in support of which only one passage of the *Mishnah* can be adduced, but to close, like **סָתַם** in Dan. 8:26, and **שָׂתַם** in Lam. 3:8, with the **ש** softened into

**ס** or **ש** (see *Roediger* in *Ges. thes.*, and *Dietrich's* Hebrew Lexicon). “Balaam describes himself as the man with closed eye with reference to his state of ecstasy, in which the closing of the outer senses went hand in hand with the opening of the inner” (*Hengstenberg*). The cessation of all perception by means of the outer senses, so far as self-conscious reflection is concerned, was a feature that was common to both the vision and the dream, the two forms in which the prophetic gift manifested itself (Numbers 12:6), and followed from the very nature of the inward intuition. In the case of prophets whose spiritual life was far advanced, inspiration might take place without any closing of the outward senses. But upon men like Balaam, whose inner religious life was still very impure and undeveloped, the Spirit of God could only operate by closing their outward senses to impressions from the lower earthly world, and raising them up to visions of the higher and spiritual world. What Balaam heard in this ecstatic condition was **אִמְרֵי אֱלֹהִים**, the sayings of God, and what he saw **מַחְזֵה שְׂדֵי**, the vision of the Almighty. The Spirit of God came upon him with such power that he fell down (**נָפַל**), like Saul in 1 Sam. 19:24; not merely “prostrating himself with reverential awe at seeing and hearing the things of God” (*Knobel*), but thrown to the ground by the Spirit of God, who “came like an armed man upon the seer,” and that in such a way that as he fell his (spirit's) eyes were opened. This introduction to his prophecy is not an utterance of boasting vanity; but, as *Calvin* correctly observes, “the whole preface has no other tendency than to prove that he was a true prophet of God, and had received the blessing which he uttered from a celestial oracle.”

The blessing itself in vv. 5ff. contains two thoughts: (1) the glorious prosperity of Israel, and the exaltation of its kingdom (vv. 5–7); (2) the terrible power, so fatal to all its foes, of the

people which was set to be a curse or a blessing to all the nations (vv. 8, 9).

**Numbers 24:5-7.** *“How beautiful are thy tents, O Jacob! thy dwellings, O Israel! Like valleys are they spread out, like gardens by the stream, like aloes which Jehovah has planted, like cedars by the waters. Water will flow out of his buckets, and his seed is by many waters. And loftier than Agag be his king, and his kingdom will be exalted.”* What Balaam had seen before his ecstasy with his bodily eyes, formed the substratum for his inward vision, in which the dwellings of Israel came before his mental eye adorned with the richest blessing from the Lord. The description starts, it is true, from the time then present, but it embraces the whole future of Israel. In the blessed land of Canaan the dwellings of Israel will spread out like

valleys. **נְחָלִים** does not mean brooks here, but

valleys watered by brooks. **נָטָה**, to extend oneself, to stretch or spread out far and wide. Yea, “like gardens by the stream,” which are still more lovely than the grassy and flowery valleys with brooks. This thought is carried out still

further in the two following figures. **אֲהָלִים** are aloe-trees, which grow in the East Indies, in Siam, in Cochin China, and upon the Moluccas, and from which the aloe-wood was obtained, that was so highly valued in the preparation of incense, on account of its fragrance. As the aloes were valued for their fragrant smell, so the cedars were valued on account of their lofty and luxuriant growth, and the durability of their wood. The predicate, “which Jehovah hath planted,” corresponds, so far as the actual

meaning is concerned, to **עַלֵי מַיִם**, “by water;” for this was “an expression used to designate trees that, on account of their peculiar excellence, were superior to ordinary trees” (*Calvin*; cf. Ps. 104:16).

**Numbers 24:7.** And not only its dwellings, but Israel itself would also prosper abundantly. It would have an abundance of water, that leading source of all blessing and prosperity in the

burning East. The nation is personified as a man carrying two pails overflowing with water.

**דְּלִי** is the dual **דְּלִיִּם**. The dual is generally used in connection with objects which are arranged in pairs, either naturally or artificially (Ges. § 88, 2). “His seed” (i.e., his posterity, not his sowing corn, the introduction of which, in this connection, would, to say the least, be very feeble here) “is,” i.e., grows up, “by many waters,” that is to say, enjoys the richest blessings (comp. Deut. 8:7 and 11:10 with Isa.

44:4; 65:23). **יָרָם** (optative), “his king be high

before (higher than) Agag.” Agag (**אֶגְגִּי**, the fiery) is not the proper name of the Amalekite king defeated by Saul (1 Sam. 15:8), but the title (*nomen dignitatis*) of the Amalekite kings in general, just as all the Egyptian kings had the common name of *Pharaoh*, and the Philistine kings the name of *Abimelech*. The reason for mentioning the king of the Amalekites was, that he was selected as the impersonation of the enmity of the world against the kingdom of God, which culminated in the kings of the heathen; the Amalekites having been the first heathen tribe that attacked the Israelites on their journey to Canaan (Ex. 17:8). The introduction of one particular king would have been neither in keeping with the context, nor reconcilable with the general character of Balaam’s utterances. Both before and afterward, Balaam predicts in great general outlines the good that would come to Israel; and how is it likely that he would suddenly break off in the midst to compare the kingdom of Israel with the greatness of one particular king of the Amalekites? Even his fourth and last prophecy merely announces in great general terms the destruction of the different nations that rose up in hostility against Israel, without entering into special details, which, like the conquest of the Amalekites by Saul, had no material or permanent influence upon the attitude of the heathen towards the people of God; for after the defeat inflicted upon this tribe by Saul, they very speedily invaded the



Israelitish territory again, and proceeded to plunder and lay it waste in just the same manner as before (cf. 1 Sam. 27:8; 30:1ff.; 2 Sam. 8:12). מַלְכוֹ, his king, is not any one particular king of Israel, but quite generally the king whom the Israelites would afterwards receive. For מַלְכוֹ is substantially the same as the parallel מַלְכֻתוֹ, the kingdom of Israel, which had already been promised to the patriarchs (Gen. 17:6; 35:11), and in which the Israelites were first of all to obtain that full development of power which corresponded to its divine appointment; just as, in fact, the development of any people generally culminates in an organized kingdom.—The king of Israel, whose greatness was celebrated by Balaam, was therefore neither the Messiah exclusively, nor the earthly kingdom without the Messiah, but the kingdom of Israel that was established by David, and was exalted in the Messiah into an everlasting kingdom, the enemies of which would all be made its footstool (Ps. 2 and 110).

**Numbers 24:8–9.** In vv. 8 and 9, Balaam proclaims still further: *“God leads him out of Egypt; his strength is as that of a buffalo: he will devour nations his enemies, and crush their bones, and dash them in pieces with his arrows. He has encamped, he lies down like a lion, and like a lioness: who can drive him up? Blessed be they who bless thee, and cursed they who curse thee!”* The fulness of power that dwelt in the people of Israel was apparent in the force and prowess with which their God brought them out of Egypt. This fact Balaam repeats from the previous saying (Numbers 23:22), for the purpose of linking on to it the still further announcement of the manner in which the power of the nation would show itself upon its foes in time to come. The words, “he will devour nations,” call up the image of a lion, which is employed in v. 9 to depict the indomitable heroic power of Israel, in words taken from Jacob’s blessing in Gen. 49:9. The

*Piel* גָּרַם is a *denom.* verb from גָּרַם, with the meaning to destroy, crush the bones, like שִׁרַשׁ, to root out (cf. *Ges.* § 52, 2; *Ewald*, § 120, e.). מִחָץ is not the object to יִמְחֵץ; for מִחָץ, to dash to pieces, does not apply to arrows, which may be broken in pieces, but not dashed to pieces; and the singular suffix in חָצִיּוֹ can only apply to the singular idea in the verse, i.e., to Israel, and not to its enemies, who are spoken of in the plural. *Arrows* are singled out as representing weapons in general. Balaam closes this utterance, as he had done the previous one, with a quotation from Jacob’s blessing, which he introduces to show to Balak, that, according to words addressed by Jehovah to the Israelites through their own tribe-father, they were to overcome their foes so thoroughly, that none of them should venture to rise up against them again. To this he also links on the words with which Isaac had transferred to Jacob in Gen. 27:29 the blessing of Abraham in Gen. 12:3, for the purpose of warning Balak to desist from his enmity against the chosen people of God.

**Numbers 24:10–14.** This repeated blessing of Israel threw Balak into such a violent rage, that he smote his hands together, and advised Balaam to fly to his house: adding, *“I said, I will honour thee greatly (cf. 22:17 and 37); but, behold, Jehovah has kept thee back from honour.”* “Smiting the hands together” was either a sign of horror (Lam. 2:15) or of violent rage; it is in the latter sense that it occurs both here and in Job 27:33. In the words, “Jehovah hath kept thee back from honour,” the irony with which Balak scoffs at Balaam’s confidence in Jehovah is unmistakeable.

**Numbers 24:12.** But Balaam reminds him, on the other hand, of the declaration which he made to the messengers at the very outset (Numbers 22:18), that he could not on any account speak in opposition to the command of Jehovah, and then adds, *“And now, behold, I go to my people. Come, I will tell thee advisedly what this people will do to thy people at the end*

of the days.” יַעַץ, to advise; here it denotes an announcement, which includes advice. The announcement of what Israel would do to the Moabites in the future, contains the advice to Balak, what attitude he should assume towards Israel, if this people was to bring a blessing upon his own people and not a curse. On “the end of the days,” see at Gen. 49:1.

**Numbers 24:15–24.** Balaam’s fourth and last prophecy is distinguished from the previous ones by the fact that, according to the announcement in v. 14, it is occupied exclusively with the future, and foretells the victorious supremacy of Israel over all its foes, and the destruction of all the powers of the world. This prophecy is divided into four different prophecies by the fourfold repetition of the words, “he took up his parable” (vv. 15, 20, 21, and 23). The first of these refers to the two nations that were related to Israel, viz., Edom and Moab (vv. 17–19); the second to Amalek, the arch-enemy of Israel (v. 20); the third to the Kenites, who were allied to Israel (vv. 21 and 22); and the fourth proclaims the overthrow of the great powers of the world (vv. 23 and 24).—The introduction in vv. 15 and 16 is the same as that of the previous prophecy in vv. 3 and 4, except that the words, “he which knew the knowledge of the Most High,” are added to the expression, “he that heard the words of God,” to show that Balaam possessed the knowledge of the Most High, i.e., that the word of God about to be announced had already been communicated to him, and was not made known to him now for the first time; though without implying that he had received the divine revelation about to be uttered at the same time as those which he had uttered before.

**Numbers 24:17.** The prophecy itself commences with a picture from the “end of the days,” which rises up before the mental eye of the seer. “I see Him, yet not now; I behold Him, but not nigh. A star appears out of Jacob, and a sceptre rises out of Israel, and dashes Moab in pieces on both sides, and destroys all the sons of

confusion.” The suffixes to אֲרָאֲנֹו and עֲשׂוּרְנֹו refer to the star which is mentioned afterwards, and which Balaam sees in spirit, but “not now,” i.e., not as having already appeared, and “not nigh,” i.e., not to appear immediately, but to come forth out of Israel in the far distant future. “A star is so natural an image and symbol of imperial greatness and splendour, that it has been employed in this sense in almost every nation. And the fact that this figure and symbol are so natural, may serve to explain the belief of the ancient world, that the birth and accession of great kings was announced by the appearance of stars” (*Hengstenberg*, who cites *Justini hist.* xxxvii. 2; *Plinii h. n.* ii. 23; *Sueton. Jul. Caes.* c. 78; and *Dio Cass.* xlv. p. 273). If, however, there could be any doubt that the rising star represented the appearance of a glorious ruler or king, it would be entirely removed by the parallel, “a sceptre arises out of Israel.” The sceptre, which was introduced as a symbol of dominion even in Jacob’s blessing (Gen. 49:10), is employed here as the figurative representation and symbol of the future ruler in Israel. This ruler would destroy all the enemies of Israel. *Moab* and (v. 18) *Edom* are the first of these that are mentioned, viz., the two nations that were related to Israel by descent, but had risen up in hostility against it at that time. Moab stands in the foremost rank, not merely because Balaam was about to announce to the king of Moab what Israel would do to his people in the future, but also because the hostility of the heathen to the people of God had appeared most strongly in Balak’s desire to curse the Israelites. פְּאֲתָי

מוֹאָב, “the two corners or sides of Moab,” equivalent to Moab on both sides, from one end to the other. For קִרְקֵר, the *inf. Pilp.* of קוֹר or קִיר, the meaning to destroy is fully established by the parallel מְחַץ, and by Isa. 22:5, whatever may be thought of its etymology and primary

meaning. And neither the Samaritan text nor the passage in Isaiah (Isa. 48:45), which is based upon this prophecy, at all warrants an alteration of the reading קִרְקָר into קִדְקִד (the crown of the head), since Jeremiah almost invariably uses earlier writing in this free manner, viz., by altering the expressions employed, and substituting in the place of unusual words with more common ones, or such as are similar in sound (cf. *Küper, Jerem. libror, ss. interpretes atque vindex*, pp. xii. ff. and p. 43).—כָּל־בְּנֵי־שֵׁת does not mean “all the sons of Seth,” i.e., all mankind, as the human race is never called by the name of Seth; and the idea that the ruler to arise out of Israel would destroy all men, would be altogether unsuitable. It signifies rather “all the sons of confusion,” by which, according to the analogy of Jacob and Israel (v. 17), Edom and Seir (v. 18), the Moabites are to be understood as being men of wild, warlike confusion. שֵׁת is a contraction of שֵׂאֵת (Lam. 3:47), and derived from שָׂאָה; and in Jer. 48:45 it is correctly rendered בְּנֵי שָׂאוֹן.

In the announcement of destruction which is to fall upon the enemies of Israel through the star and sceptre out of the midst of it, Moab is followed by “its southern neighbour Edom.”

**Numbers 24:18.** “And Edom becomes a possession, and Seir becomes a possession, its enemies; but Israel acquires power.” Whose possession Edom and Seir are to become, is not expressly stated; but it is evident from the context, and from אֹיְבָיו (its enemies), which is not a genitive dependent upon *Seir*, but is in apposition to *Edom* and *Seir*, just as צָרִיו in v. 8 is in apposition to גּוֹיִם. Edom and Seir were his, i.e., Israel’s enemies; therefore they were to be taken by the ruler who was to arise out of

Israel. *Edom* is the name of the people, *Seir* of the country, just as in Gen. 32:4; so that *Seir* is not to be understood as relating to the prae-Edomitish population of the land, which had been subjugated by the descendants of Esau, and had lost all its independence a long time before. In Moses’ days the Israelites were not allowed to fight with the Edomites, even when they refused to allow them to pass peaceably through their territory (see Numbers 20:21), but were commanded to leave them in their possessions as a brother nation (Deut. 2:4, 5). In the future, however, their relation to one another was to be a very different one; because the hostility of Edom, already in existence, grew more and more into obstinate and daring enmity, which broke up all the ties of affection that Israel was to regard as holy, and thus brought about the destruction of the Edomites.—The fulfilment of this prophecy commenced with the subjugation of the Edomites by David (2 Sam. 8:14; 1 Kings 11:15, 16; 1 Chron. 18:12, 13), but it will not be completed till “the end of the days,” when all the enemies of God and His Church will be made the footstool of Christ (Ps. 110:1ff.). That David did not complete the subjugation of Edom is evident, on the one hand, from the fact that the Edomites revolted again under Solomon, though without success (1 Kings 11:14ff.); that they shook off the yoke imposed upon them under Joram (2 Kings 8:20); and notwithstanding their defeat by Amaziah (2 Kings 14:7; 2 Chron. 25:11) and Uzziah (2 Kings 14:22; 2 Chron. 26:2), invaded Judah a second time under Ahaz (2 Chron. 28:17), and afterwards availed themselves of every opportunity to manifest their hostility to the kingdom of Judah and the Jews generally,—as for example at the conquest of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans (Ezek. 35:15; 36:5; Obad. 10 and 13), and in the wars between the Maccabees and the Syrians (1 Macc. 5:3, 65; 2 Macc. 10:15; 12:38ff.),—until they were eventually conquered by John Hyrcanus in the year B.C. 129, and compelled to submit to circumcision, and incorporated in the Jewish state (*Josephus, Ant. xiii. 9, 1, xv. 7, 9; Wars of the Jews, iv. 5, 5*).

But notwithstanding this, they got the government over the Jews into their own hands through *Antipater* and *Herod* (*Josephus*, Ant. xiv. 8, 5), and only disappeared from the stage of history with the destruction of the Jewish state by the Romans. On the other hand, the declarations of the prophets (Amos 9:12; Obad. 17ff.), which foretell, with an unmistakable allusion to this prophecy, the possession of the remnant of Edom by the kingdom of Israel, and the announcements in Isa. 34 and 63:1–6, Jer. 49:7ff., Ezek. 25:12ff. and 35, comp. with Ps. 137:7 and Lam. 4:21, 22, prove still more clearly that Edom, as the leading foe of the kingdom of God, will only be utterly destroyed when the victory of the latter over the hostile power of the world has been fully and finally secured.—Whilst Edom falls, Israel will acquire

power. עֲשָׂה חֵיל, to acquire ability or power (Deut. 8:17, 18; Ruth 4:11), not merely to show itself brave or strong. It is rendered correctly by *Onkelos*, “*prosperabitur in opibus*,” and *Jonathan*, “*praevalerunt in opibus et possidebunt eos*.”

**Numbers 24:19.** “*And a ruler shall come out of Jacob, and destroy what is left out of cities.*” The subject to יִרְדֵּי is indefinite, and to be supplied from the verb itself. We have to think of the ruler foretold as star and sceptre. The abbreviated form יִרְדֵּי is not used for the future יִרְדֶּה, but is jussive in its force. One out of Jacob shall rule. מֵעִיר is employed in a collected and general sense, as in Ps. 72:16. Out of every city in which there is a remnant of Edom, it shall be destroyed. שָׂרִיד is equivalent to שְׂאֲרֵית אֲדוֹם (Amos 9:12). The explanation, “destroy the remnant out of the city, namely, out of the holy city of Jerusalem” (*Ewald* and *Baur*), is forced, and cannot be sustained from the parallelism.

**Numbers 24:20.** The *second* saying in this prophecy relates to the *Amalekites*. Balaam sees them, not with the eyes of his body, but in a state of ecstasy, like the star out of Jacob. “*Beginning of the heathen is Amalek, and its end is destruction.*” Amalek is called the beginning of the nations, not “as belonging to the most distinguished and foremost of the nations in age, power, and celebrity” (*Knobel*),—for in all these respects this Bedouin tribe, which descended from a grandson of Esau, was surpassed by many other nations,—but as the first heathen nation which opened the conflict of the heathen nations against Israel as the people of God (see at Ex. 17:8ff.). As its beginning had been enmity against Israel, its end would be “even to the perishing” ( עֲדֵי )

( אֲבִיד ), i.e., reaching the position of one who was perishing, falling into destruction, which commenced under Saul and was completed under Hezekiah (see p. 208).

**Numbers 24:21, 22.** The third *saying* relates to the *Kenites*, whose origin is involved in obscurity (see at Gen. 15:19), as there are no other Kenites mentioned in the whole of the Old Testament, with the exception of Gen. 15:19, than the Kenites who went to Canaan with Hobab the brother-in-law of Moses (Numbers 10:29ff.: see Judg. 1:16; 4:11; 1 Sam. 15:6; 27:10; 30:29); so that there are not sufficient grounds for the distinction between Canaanitish and Midianitish Kenites, as *Michaelis*, *Hengstenberg*, and others suppose. The hypothesis that Balaam is speaking of Canaanitish Kenites, or of the Kenites as representatives of the Canaanites, is as unfounded as the hypothesis that by the Kenites we are to understand the Midianites, or that the Kenites mentioned here and in Gen. 15:19 are a branch of the supposed aboriginal Amalekites (*Ewald*). The saying concerning the Kenites runs thus: “*Durable is thy dwelling-place, and thy nest laid upon the rock; for should Kain be destroyed until Asshur shall carry thee captive?*” This saying “applies to friends and not to foes of Israel” (*v. Hofmann*), so that it is

perfectly applicable to the Kenites, who were friendly with Israel. The antithetical association of the Amalekites and Kenites answers perfectly to the attitude assumed at Horeb towards Israel, on the one hand by the Amalekites, and on the other hand by the Kenites, in the person of Jethro the leader of their tribe (see Ex. 17:8ff., 18, and p. 375). The dwelling-place of the Kenites was of lasting duration, because its nest was laid upon a rock

(**סִי** is a passive participle, as in 2 Sam. 13:32, and Obad. 4). This description of the dwelling-place of the Kenites cannot be taken literally, because it cannot be shown that either the Kenites or the Midianites dwelt in inaccessible mountains, as the Edomites are said to have done in Obad. 3, 4; Jer. 49:16. The words are to be interpreted figuratively, and in all probability the figure is taken from the rocky mountains of Horeb, in the neighbourhood of which the Kenites led a nomade life before their association with Israel (see at Ex. 3:1). As v. Hofmann correctly observes: "Kain, which had left its inaccessible mountain home in Horeb, enclosed as it was by the desert, to join a people who were only wandering in search of a home, by that very act really placed its rest upon a still safer rock." This is sustained in v. 22 by the statement that Kain would not be given up to destruction till Asshur carried it away into

captivity. **כִּי אֲנִי** does not mean "nevertheless."

It signifies "unless" after a negative clause, whether the negation be expressed directly by

**לֹא**, or indirectly by a question; and "only"

where it is not preceded by either a direct or an indirect negation, as in Gen. 40:14; Job 42:8.

The latter meaning, however, is not applicable

here, because it is unsuitable to the **עַד־מָה**

(until) which follows. Consequently **אֲנִי** can only be understood in the sense of "is it that," as in 1 Kings 1:27, Isa. 29:16, Job 31:16, etc., and as introducing an indirect query in a negative sense: "For is it (the case) that Kain shall fall

into destruction until ... ?"—equivalent to "Kain shall not be exterminated until Asshur shall carry him away into captivity;" Kain will only be overthrown by the Assyrian imperial power. *Kain*, the tribe-father, is used poetically for *the Kenite*, the tribe of which he was the founder.

**בְּעֵר**, to exterminate, the sense in which it frequently occurs, as in Deut. 13:6; 17:7, etc. (cf. 2 Sam. 4:11; 1 Kings 22:47).—For the fulfilment of this prophecy we are not to look merely to the fact that one branch of the Kenites, which separated itself, according to Judg. 4:11, from its comrades in the south of Judah, and settled in Naphtali near Kadesh, was probably carried away into captivity by Tiglath-Pileser along with the population of Galilee (2 Kings 15:29); but the name Asshur, as the name of the first great kingdom of the world, which rose up from the east against the theocracy, is employed, as we may clearly see from v. 24, to designate all the powers of the world which took their rise in Asshur, and proceeded forth from it (see also Ezra 6:22, where the Persian king is still called king of *Asshur* or Assyria). Balaam did not foretell that this worldly power would oppress Israel also, and lead it into captivity, because the oppression of the Israelites was simply a transitory judgment, which served to refine the nation of God and not to destroy it, and which was even appointed according to the counsel of God to open and prepare the way for the conquest of the kingdoms of the world by the kingdom of God. To the Kenites only did the captivity become a judgment of destruction; because, although on terms of friendship with the people of Israel, and outwardly associated with them, yet, as is clearly shown by 1 Sam. 15:6, they never entered inwardly into fellowship with Israel and Jehovah's covenant of grace, but sought to maintain their own independence side by side with Israel, and thus forfeited the blessing of God which rested upon Israel.

**Numbers 24:23, 24.** The *fourth* saying applies to *Asshur*, and is introduced by an exclamation of woe: "Woe! who will live, when God sets this! and ships (come) from the side of Chittim, and

press Asshur, and press Eber, and he also perishes." The words "Woe, who will live," point to the fearfulness of the following judgment, which went deep to the heart of the seer, because it would fall upon the sons of his own people (see at Numbers 22:5). The meaning is, "Who will preserve his life in the universal catastrophe that is coming?" (*Hengstenberg*).

מִשְׁמוֹ, either "since the setting of it," equivalent to "from the time when God sets (determines) this" (ὅταν θῆ ταῦτα ὁ Θεός, *quando faciet ista Deus; LXX, Vulg.*), or "on account of the setting of it," i.e., because God determines this. שׁוּם, to set, applied to that which God establishes, ordains, or brings to pass, as in Isa. 44:7; Hab. 1:12. The suffix in שׁוּמוֹ is not to be referred to *Asshur*, as *Knobel* supposes, because the prophecy relates not to *Asshur* "as the mighty power by which everything was crushed and overthrown," but to a power that would come from the far west and crush *Asshur* itself. The suffix refers rather to the substance of the prophecy that follows, and is to be understood in a neuter sense. אֱלֹ is

"God," and not an abbreviation of אֱלֹהִים, which is always written with the article in the Pentateuch (הָאֱלֹ, Gen. 19:8, 25; 26:3, 4; Lev. 18:27; Deut. 4:42; 7:22; 19:11), and only occurs once without the article, viz., in 1 Chron. 20:8.

צִים, from צִי (Isa. 33:21), signifies ships, like

צִיִּים in the passage in Dan. 11:30, which is

founded upon the prophecy before us. מִיַּד, from the side, as in Ex. 2:5, Deut. 2:37, etc.

כִּתְיִים is Cyprus with the capital *Citium* (see at Gen. 10:4), which is mentioned as intervening between Greece and Phoenicia, and the principal station for the maritime commerce of Phoenicia, so that all the fleets passing from the

west to the east necessarily took Cyprus in their way (Isa. 23:1). The nations that would come across the sea from the side of Cyprus to humble *Asshur*, are not mentioned by name, because this lay beyond the range of *Balaam's* vision. He simply gives utterance to the thought, "A power comes from *Chittim* over the sea, to which *Asshur* and *Eber*, the eastern and the western *Shem*, will both succumb" (v. *Hofmann*). *Eber* neither refers to the Israelites merely as Hebrews (*LXX, Vulg.*), nor to the races beyond the Euphrates, as *Onkelos* and others suppose, but, like "all the sons of *Eber*" in Gen. 10:21, to the posterity of *Abraham* who descended from *Eber* through *Peleg*, and also to the descendants of *Eber* through *Joktan*: so that *Asshur*, as the representative of the *Shemites* who dwelt in the far east, included *Elam* within itself; whilst *Eber*, on the other hand, represented the western *Shemites*, the peoples that sprang from *Arphaxad*, *Lud*, and *Aram* (Gen. 10:21). "And he also shall perish for ever:" these words cannot relate to *Asshur* and *Eber*, for their fate is already announced in the word

עָנִי (afflict, press), but only to the new western power that was to come over the sea, and to which the others were to succumb. "Whatever powers might rise up in the world of peoples, the heathen prophet of *Jehovah* sees them all fall, one through another, and one after another; for at last he loses in the distance the power to discern whence it is that the last which he sees rise up is to receive its fatal blow" (v. *Hofmann*, p. 520). The overthrow of this last power of the world, concerning which the prophet *Daniel* was the first to receive and proclaim new revelations, belongs to "the end of the days," in which the star out of *Jacob* is to rise upon *Israel* as a "bright morning star" (Rev. 22:16).

Now if according to this the fact is firmly established, that in this last prophecy of *Balaam*, "the judgment of history even upon the imperial powers of the *West*, and the final victory of the King of the kingdom of *God* were proclaimed, though in fading outlines, more than a thousand years before the events

themselves," as *Tholuck* has expressed it in his *Propheten und ihre Weissagung*; the announcement of the star out of Jacob, and the sceptre out of Israel, i.e., of the King and Ruler of the kingdom of God, who was to dash Moab to pieces and take possession of Edom, cannot have received its complete fulfilment in the victories of David over these enemies of Israel; but will only be fully accomplished in the future overthrow of all the enemies of the kingdom of God. By the "end of days," both here and everywhere else, we are to understand the Messianic era, and that not merely at its commencement, but in its entire development, until the final completion of the kingdom of God at the return of our Lord to judgment. In the "star out of Jacob," Balaam beholds not David as the one king of Israel, but the Messiah, in whom the royalty of Israel promised to the patriarchs (Gen. 17:6, 16; 35:11) attains its fullest realization. The star and sceptre are symbols not of "Israel's royalty personified" (*Hengstenberg*), but of the real King in a concrete form, as He was to arise out of Israel at a future day. It is true that Israel received the promised King in David, who conquered and subjugated the Moabites, Edomites, and other neighbouring nations that were hostile to Israel. But in the person of David and his rule the kingly government of Israel was only realized in its first and imperfect beginnings. Its completion was not attained till the coming of the second David (Hos. 3:5; Jer. 30:9; Ezek. 34:24; 37:24, 25), the Messiah Himself, who breaks in pieces all the enemies of Israel, and founds an everlasting kingdom, to which all the kingdoms and powers of this world are to be brought into subjection (2 Sam. 7:12-16; Ps. 2, 72, and 110).

If, however, the star out of Jacob first rose upon the world in Christ, the star which showed the wise men from the east the way to the newborn "King of the Jews," and went before them, till it stood above the manger at Bethlehem (Matt. 2:1-11), is intimately related to our prophecy. Only we must not understand the allusion as being so direct, that Balaam beheld the very star which appeared to the wise men,

and made known to them the birth of the Saviour of the world. The star of the wise men was rather an embodiment of the star seen by Balaam, which announced to them the fulfilment of Balaam's prophecy,—a visible sign by which God revealed to them the fact, that the appearance of the star which Balaam beheld in the far distant future had been realized at Bethlehem in the birth of Christ, the King of the Jews.—The "wise men from the east," who had been made acquainted with the revelations of God to Israel by the Jews of the *diaspora*, might feel themselves specially attracted in their search for the salvation of the world by the predictions of Balaam, from the fact that this seer belonged to their own country, and came "out of the mountains of the east" (Numbers 23:7); so that they made his sayings the centre of their expectations of salvation, and were also conducted through them to the Saviour of all nations by means of supernatural illumination. "God unfolded to their minds, which were already filled with a longing for the 'star out of Jacob' foretold by Balaam, the meaning of the star which proclaimed the fulfilment of Balaam's prophecy; He revealed to them, that is to say, the fact that it announced the birth of the 'King of the Jews.' And just as Balaam had joyously exclaimed, 'I see Him,' and 'I behold Him,' they also could say, 'We have seen His star'" (*Hengstenberg*).

If, in conclusion, we compare Balaam's prophecy of the star that would come out of Jacob, and the sceptre that would rise out of Israel, with the prediction of the patriarch Jacob, of the sceptre that should not depart from Judah, till the *Shiloh* came whom the nations would obey (Gen. 49:10), it is easy to observe that Balaam not only foretold more clearly the attitude of Israel to the nations of the world, and the victory of the kingdom of God over every hostile kingdom of the world; but that he also proclaimed the Bringer of Peace expected by Jacob at the end of the days to be a mighty ruler, whose sceptre would break in pieces and destroy all the enemies of the nation of God. The tribes of Israel stood before the mental eye of the patriarch in their

full development into the nation in which all the families of the earth were to be blessed. From this point of view, the salvation that was to blossom in the future for the children of Israel culminated in the peaceful kingdom of the *Shiloh*, in whom the dominion of the victorious lion out of Judah was to attain its fullest perfection. But the eye of Balaam, the seer, which had been opened by the Spirit of God, beheld the nation of Israel encamped, according to its tribes, in the face of its foes, the nations of this world. They were endeavouring to destroy Israel; but according to the counsel of the Almighty God and Lord of the whole world, in their warfare against the nation that was blessed of Jehovah, they were to succumb one after the other, and be destroyed by the king that was to arise out of Israel. This determinate counsel of the living God was to be proclaimed by Balaam, the heathen seer out of Mesopotamia the centre of the national development of the ancient world: and, first of all, to the existing representatives of the nations of the world that were hostile to Israel, that they might see what would at all times tend to their peace—might see, that is to say, that in their hostility to Israel they were rebelling against the Almighty God of heaven and earth, and that they would assuredly perish in the conflict, since life and salvation were only to be found with the people of Israel, whom God had blessed. And even though Balaam had to make known the purpose of the Lord concerning His people primarily, and in fact solely, to the Moabites and their neighbours, who were like-minded with them, his announcement was also intended for Israel itself, and was to be a pledge to the congregation of Israel for all time of the certain fulfilment of the promises of God; and so to fill them with strength and courage, that in all their conflicts with the powers of this world, they should rely upon the Lord their God with the firmest confidence of faith, should strive with unswerving fidelity after the end of their divine calling, and should build up the kingdom of God on earth, which is to outlast all the kingdoms of the world.—In what manner the Israelites

became acquainted with the prophecies of Balaam, so that Moses could incorporate them into the *Thorah*, we are nowhere told, but we can infer it with tolerable certainty from the subsequent fate of Balaam himself.

**Numbers 24:25.** At the close of this announcement Balaam and Balak departed from one another. “*Balaam rose up, and went and turned towards his place*” (i.e., set out on the way to his house); “*and king Balak also went his way.*” יָשַׁב לְמִקְמוֹתָיו does not mean, “he returned to his place,” into his home beyond the Euphrates (equivalent to אָל-מִקְמוֹתָיו), but merely “he turned towards his place” (both here and in Gen. 18:33). That he really returned home, is not implied in the words themselves; and the question, whether he did so, must be determined from other circumstances. In the further course of the history, we learn that Balaam went to the Midianites, and advised them to seduce the Israelites to unfaithfulness to Jehovah, by tempting them to join in the worship of Peor (Numbers 31:16). He was still with them at the time when the Israelites engaged in the war of vengeance against that people, and was slain by the Israelites along with the five princes of Midian (Numbers 31:8; Josh. 13:22). At the time when he fell into the hands of the Israelites, he no doubt made a full communication to the Israelitish general, or to Phinehas, who accompanied the army as priest, concerning his blessings and prophecies, probably in the hope of saving his life; though he failed to accomplish his end. **Numbers 25**

*Whoredom of Israel, and Zeal of Phinehas.—Ch. 25.*

**Numbers 25:1–5.** The Lord had defended His people Israel from Balaam’s curse; but the Israelites themselves, instead of keeping the covenant of their God, fell into the snares of heathen seduction (vv. 1, 2). Whilst encamped at Shittim, in the steppes of Moab, the people



began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab: they accepted the invitations of the latter to a sacrificial festival of their gods, took part in their sacrificial meals, and even worshipped the gods of the Moabites, and indulged in the licentious worship of *Baal-Peor*. As the princes of Midian, who were allied to Moab, had been the advisers and assistants of the Moabitish king in the attempt to destroy the Israelites by a curse of God; so now, after the failure of that plan, they were the soul of the new undertaking to weaken Israel and render it harmless, by seducing it to idolatry, and thus leading it into apostasy from its God. But it was Balaam, as is afterwards casually observed in Numbers 31:16, who first of all gave this advice. This is passed over here, because the point of chief importance in relation to the object of the narrative, was not Balaam's share in the proposal, but the carrying out of the proposal itself. The daughters of Moab, however, also took part in carrying it out, by forming friendly associations with the Israelites, and then inviting them to their sacrificial festival. They only are mentioned in vv. 1, 2, as being the daughters of the land. The participation of the Midianites appears first of all in the shameless licentiousness of *Cozbi*, the daughter of the Midianitish prince, from which we not only see that the princes of Midian performed their part, but obtain an explanation of the reason why the judgment upon the crafty destroyers of Israel was to be executed upon the Midianites. *Shittim*, an abbreviation of *Abel-Shittim* (see at Numbers 22:1), to which the camp of the Israelites in the steppes of Moab reached (Numbers 33:49), is mentioned here instead of *Arboth-Moab*, because it was at this northern point of the camp that the Israelites came into contact with the Moabites, and that the latter invited them to take part in their sacrificial meals; and in Josh. 2:1 and 3:1, because it was from this spot that the Israelites commenced the journey to Canaan, as being the nearest to the place where they were to pass through the Jordan. זָנָה, construed with אֶל, as in Ezek. 16:28, signifies to incline to a person, to attach

one's self to him, so as to commit fornication. The word applies to carnal and spiritual whoredom. The lust of the flesh induced the Israelites to approach the daughters of Moab, and form acquaintances and friendships with them, in consequence of which they were invited by them "to the slain-offerings of their gods," i.e., to the sacrificial festivals and sacrificial meals, in connection with which they also "adored their gods," i.e., took part in the idolatrous worship connected with the sacrificial festival. These sacrificial meals were celebrated in honour of the Moabitish god *Baal-Peor*, so that the Israelites joined themselves to him. זָמַד, in the *Niphal*, to bind one's self to a person. *Baal-Peor* is the *Baal of Peor*, who was worshipped in the city of *Beth-Peor* (Deut. 3:29; 4:46; see at Numbers 23:28), a Moabitish *Priapus*, in honour of whom women and virgins prostituted themselves. As the god of war, he was called *Chemosh* (see at Numbers 21:29). **Numbers 25:3-5.** And the anger of the Lord burned against the people, so that Jehovah commanded Moses to fetch the heads of the people, i.e., to assemble them together, and to "hang up" the men who had joined themselves to Baal-Peor "before the Lord against the sun," that the anger of God might turn away from Israel. The burning of the wrath of God, which was to be turned away from the people by the punishment of the guilty, as enjoined upon Moses, consisted, as we may see from vv. 8, 9, in a plague inflicted upon the nation, which carried off a great number of the people, a sudden death, as in Numbers 14:37; 17:11.

הוֹקִיעַ, from יָקַע, to be torn apart or torn away (*Ges., Winer*), refers to the punishment of crucifixion, a mode of capital punishment which was adopted by most of the nations of antiquity (see *Winer, bibl. R. W.* i. p. 680), and was carried out sometimes by driving a stake into the body, and so impaling them (ἀνασκολοπιζειν), the mode practised by the Assyrians and Persians (*Herod.* iii. 159, and *Layard's Nineveh and its Remains*, vol. ii. p. 374, and plate on p. 369), at other times by fastening them to a stake or

nailing them to a cross (ἀνασταυροῦν). In the instance before us, however, the idolaters were not impaled or crucified alive, but, as we may

see from the word **הִרְגִּי** in v. 5, and in

accordance with the custom frequently adopted by other nations (see *Herzog's Encyclopaedia*), they were first of all put to death, and then impaled upon a stake or fastened upon a cross, so that the impaling or crucifixion was only an aggravation of the capital punishment, like the

burning in Lev. 20:14, and the hanging (**הִלְקִי**)

in Deut. 21:22. The rendering adopted by the LXX and *Vulgate* is παραδειγματίζειν, *suspendere*, in this passage, and in 2 Sam. 21:6, 9, ἐξηλιάζειν (to expose to the sun), and

*crucifigere*. **לְיְהוָה**, for Jehovah, as satisfaction

for Him, i.e., to appease His wrath. **אוֹתָם**

(*them*) does not refer to the heads of the nation, but to the guilty persons, upon whom the heads of the nation were to pronounce sentence.

**Numbers 25:5.** The judges were to put to death every one his men, i.e., such of the evil-doers as belonged to his forum, according to the judicial arrangements instituted in Ex. 18. This command of Moses to the judges was not carried out, however, because the matter took a different turn.

**Numbers 25:6–9.** Whilst the heads of the people were deliberating on the subject, and the whole congregation was assembled before the tabernacle, weeping on account of the divine wrath, there came an Israelite, a prince of the tribe of Simeon, who brought a Midianitish woman, the daughter of a Midianitish chief (v. 14), to his brethren, i.e., into the camp of the Israelites, before the eyes of Moses and all the congregation, to commit adultery with her in his tent. This shameless wickedness, in which the depth of the corruption that had penetrated into the congregation came to light, inflamed the zeal of *Phinehas*, the son of Eleazar the high priest, to such an extent, that he seized a spear, and rushing into the tent of the adulterer, pierced

both of them through in the very act. **הִקְבִּי**, lit., the arched, or arch, is applied here to the inner or hinder division of the tent, the sleeping-room and women's room in the larger tents of the upper classes.

**Numbers 25:8, 9.** Through this judgment, which was executed by Phinehas with holy zeal upon the daring sinners, the plague was restrained, so that it came to an end. The example which Phinehas had made of these sinners was an act of intercession, by which the high priest appeased the wrath of God, and averted the judgment of destruction from the whole congregation ("he was zealous for his

God," **וַיִּכְפֹּר**, v. 13). The thought upon which this expression is founded is, that the punishment which was inflicted as a purifying chastisement served as a "covering" against the exterminating judgment (see *Herzog's Cyclopaedia*).

**Numbers 25:9.** Twenty-four thousand men were killed by this plague. The Apostle Paul deviates from this statement in 1 Cor. 10:8, and gives the number of those that fell as twenty-three thousand, probably from a traditional interpretation of the schools of the scribes, according to which a thousand were deducted from the twenty-four thousand who perished, as being the number of those who were hanged by the judges, so that only twenty-three thousand would be killed by the plague; and it is to these alone that Paul refers.

**Numbers 25:10–15.** For this act of divine zeal the eternal possession of the priesthood was promised to Phinehas and his posterity as

Jehovah's covenant of peace. **בְּקִנְאוֹ**, by displaying my zeal in the midst of them (viz., the Israelites). **קִנְאֹתִי** is not "zeal for me," but "my zeal," the zeal of Jehovah with which Phinehas was filled, and impelled to put the daring sinners to death. By doing this he had averted destruction from the Israelites, and restrained the working of Jehovah's zeal, which

had manifested itself in the plague. "I gave him my covenant of peace" (the suffix is attached to the governing noun, as in Lev. 6:3). נָתַן בְּרִית, as in Gen. 17:2, to give, i.e., to fulfil the covenant, to grant what was promised in the covenant. The covenant granted to Phinehas consisted in the fact, that an "eternal priesthood" (i.e., the eternal possession of the priesthood) was secured to him, not for himself alone, but for his descendants also, as a covenant, i.e., in a covenant, or irrevocable form, since God never breaks a covenant that He has made. In accordance with this promise, the high-priesthood which passed from Eleazar to Phinehas (Judg. 20:28) continued in his family, with the exception of a brief interruption in Eli's days (see at 1 Sam. 1-3 and 14:3), until the time of the last gradual dissolution of the Jewish state through the tyranny of Herod and his successors (see my *Archäologie*, § 38).—In vv. 14, 15, the names of the two daring sinners are given. The father of Cozbi, the Midianitish princess, was named *Zur*, and is described here as "head of the tribes (אֲמוֹת, see at Gen. 25:16) of a father's house in Midian," i.e., as the head of several of the Midianitish tribes that were descended from one tribe-father; in Numbers 31:8, however, he is described as a king, and classed among the five kings of Midian who were slain by the Israelites.

**Numbers 25:16-18.** The Lord now commanded Moses to show hostility (צָרַר to the Midianites, and smite them, on account of the stratagem which they had practised upon the Israelites by tempting them to idolatry, "in order that the practical zeal of Phinehas against sin, by which expiation had been made for the guilt, might be adopted by all the nation" (*Baumgarten*). The *inf. abs.* צָרוֹר, instead of the *imperative*, as in Ex. 20:8, etc. עַל-דְּבַר פִּי, in consideration of *Peor*, and indeed, or especially, in consideration of *Cozbi*. The repetition is

emphatic. The wickedness of the Midianites culminated in the shameless wantonness of Cozbi the Midianitish princess. "Their sister," i.e., one of the members of their tribe.—The 19th verse belongs to the following chapter, and forms the introduction to Numbers 26:1.

*Mustering of Israel in the Steppes of Moab.—Ch. 26.*

**Numbers 26.** Before taking vengeance upon the Midianites, as they had been commanded, the Israelites were to be mustered as the army of Jehovah, by means of a fresh numbering, since the generation that was mustered at Sinai (Numbers 1-4) had died out in the wilderness, with the sole exception of Caleb and Joshua (vv. 64, 65). On this ground the command of God was issued, "after the plague," for a fresh census and muster. For with the plague the last of those who came out of Egypt, and were not to enter Canaan, had been swept away, and thus the sentence had been completely executed.—The object of the fresh numbering, however, was not merely to muster Israel for the war with the Midianites, and in the approaching conquest of the promised land with the Canaanites also, but was intended to serve at the same time as a preparation for their settlement in Canaan, viz., for the division of the conquered land among the tribes and families of Israel. For this reason (Numbers 26) the families of the different tribes are enumerated here, which was not the case in Numbers 1; and generally instructions are also given in vv. 52-56, with reference to the division of Canaan.—The numbering was simply extended, as before, to the male population of the age of 20 years and upwards, and was no doubt carried out, like the previous census at Sinai, by Moses and the high priest (Eleazar), with the assistance of the heads of the tribes, although the latter are not expressly mentioned here.—The names of the families correspond—with very few exceptions, which have been already noticed in pp. 239, 240—to the grandsons and great-grandsons of Jacob mentioned in Gen. 46.—

With regard to the total number of the people, and the number of the different tribes, compare the remarks at pp. 651ff.

### Numbers 26

**Numbers 26:1–51.** Mustering of the Twelve Tribes.—Vv. 1–4. The command of God to Moses and Eleazar is the same as in Numbers 1, 2, and 3, except that it does not enter so much into details.

**Numbers 26:3.** “*And Moses and Eleazar the*

*priest spake with them*” (דְּבַרְךָ with the

accusative, as in Gen. 37:4). The pronoun refers to “the children of Israel,” or more correctly, to the heads of the nation as the representatives of the congregation, who were to carry out the numbering. On the *Arboth-Moab*, see at Numbers 22:1. Only the leading point in their words is mentioned, viz., “from twenty years old and upwards” (sc., shall ye take the number of the children of Israel), since it was very simple to supply the words “take the sum” from v. 2.—The words from “the children of Israel” in v. 4 onwards form the introduction to the enumeration of the different tribes (vv. 5ff.), and the verb וְהָיָה (were) must be supplied.

“*And the children of Israel, who went forth out of Egypt, were Reuben,*” etc.

**Numbers 26:5–11.** The families of *Reuben* tally with Gen. 46:9, Ex. 6:14, and 1 Chron. 5:3. The

plural בָּנָי (sons), in v. 8, where only one son is mentioned, is to be explained from the fact, that several sons of this particular son (i.e., grandsons) are mentioned afterwards. On *Dathan* and *Abiram*, see at Numbers 16:1 and 32ff. See also the remark made here in vv. 10b and 11, viz., that those who were destroyed

with the company of *Korah* were for a sign (וַיִּזְכָּר, here a warning); but that the sons of *Korah* were not destroyed along with their father.

**Numbers 26:12–14.** The *Simeonites* counted only five families, as *Ohad* (Gen. 46:10) left no family. *Nemuel* is called *Jemuel* there, as *yod* and *nun* are often interchanged (cf. *Ges. thes.* pp.

833 and 557); and *Zerach* is another name of the same signification for *Zohar* (*Zerach*, the rising of the sun; *Zohar*, candor, splendour).

**Numbers 26:15–18.** The *Gadites* are the same as in Gen. 46:16, except that *Ozni* is called *Ezbon* there.

**Numbers 26:19–22.** The sons and families of *Judah* agree with Gen. 46:12 (cf. Gen. 38:6ff.); also with 1 Chron. 2:3–5.

**Numbers 26:23–25.** The families of *Issachar* correspond to the sons mentioned in Gen. 46:13, except that the name *Job* occurs there instead of *Jashub*. The two names have the same signification, as *Job* is derived from an Arabic word which signifies to return.

**Numbers 26:26, 27.** The families of *Zebulun* correspond to the sons named in Gen. 46:14.

**Numbers 26:28–37.** The descendants of *Joseph* were classified in two leading families, according to his two sons *Manasseh* and *Ephraim*, who were born before the removal of *Israel* to *Egypt*, and were raised into founders of tribes in consequence of the patriarch *Israel* having adopted them as his own sons (Gen. 48).

**Numbers 26:29–34.** *Eight families descended from Manasseh*: viz., one from his son *Machir*, the second from *Machir*'s son or *Manasseh*'s grandson *Gilead*, and the other six from the six sons of *Gilead*. The genealogical accounts in Numbers 27:1; 36:1, and Josh 17:1ff., fully harmonize with this, except that *Iezer* (v. 30) is called *Abiezer* in Josh. 17:2; whereas only a part of the names mentioned here occur in the genealogical fragments in 1 Chron. 2:21–24, and 7:14–29. In v. 33, a son of *Hepher*, named *Zelophehad*, is mentioned. He had no sons, but only daughters, whose names are given here to prepare the way for the legal regulations mentioned in Numbers 27 and 39, to which this fact gave rise.

**Numbers 26:35–37.** There were four families descended from *Ephraim*; three from his sons, and one from his grandson. Of the descendants of *Sutelah* several links are given in 1 Chron. 7:20ff.

**Numbers 26:38–41.** The children of *Benjamin* formed *seven* families, five of whom were founded by his sons, and two by grandsons. (On the differences which occur between the names given here and those in Gen. 46:21, see pp. 239, 240.) Some of the sons and grandsons of Benjamin mentioned here are also found in the genealogical fragments in 1 Chron. 7:6–18, and 8:1ff.

**Numbers 26:42, 43.** The descendants of *Dan* formed only *one* family, named from a son of Dan, who is called *Shuham* here, but *Hushim* in Gen. 46:23; though this family no doubt branched out into several smaller families, which are not named here, simply because this list contains only the leading families into which the tribes were divided.

**Numbers 26:44–47.** The families of *Asher* agree with the sons of Asher mentioned in Gen. 46:17 and 1 Chron. 7:30, except that *Ishuah* is omitted here, because he founded no family.

**Numbers 26:48–50.** The families of *Naphtali* tally with the sons of Naphtali in Gen. 46:24 and 1 Chron. 7:30.

**Numbers 26:51.** The total number of the persons mustered was 601,730.

**Numbers 26:52–56.** Instructions concerning the Distribution of the Land.—In vv. 53, 54, the command is given to distribute the land as an inheritance among the twelve tribes (“unto these”), according to the number of the names (Numbers 1:2–18), i.e., to the tribes and families that contained only a few persons, they were to make it small; to every one according to the measure of its mustered persons (יָמָוֶה must be

repeated before וְשֵׁמֶה). In vv. 55, 56, it is still further commanded that the distribution should take place by lot. “According to the names of their paternal tribes shall they (the children of Israel) receive it (the land) for an inheritance.” The meaning of these words can only be, that every tribe was to receive a province of its own for an inheritance, which should be called by its name for ever. The other regulation in v. 56, “according to the measure of

*the lot shall its inheritance* (the inheritance of every tribe) *be divided between the numerous and the small* (tribe),” is no doubt to be understood as signifying, that in the division of the tribe territories, according to the comparative sizes of the different tribes, they were to adhere to that portion of land which fell to every tribe in the casting of the lots. The magnitude and limits of the possessions of the different tribes could not be determined by the lot according to the magnitude of the tribes themselves: all that could possibly be determined was the situation to be occupied by the tribe; so that *R. Bechai* is quite correct in observing that “the casting of the lot took place for the more convenient distribution of the different portions, whether of better or inferior condition, that there might be no occasion for strife and covetousness,” though the motive assigned is too partial in its character. The lot was to determine the portion of every tribe, not merely to prevent all occasion for dissatisfaction and complaining, but in order that every tribe might receive with gratitude the possession that fell to its lot as the inheritance assigned it by God, the result of the lot being regarded by almost all nations as determined by God Himself (cf. Prov. 16:33; 18:18). On this ground not only was the lot resorted to by the Greeks and Romans in the distribution of conquered lands (see the proofs in *Clericus*, *Rosenmüller*, and *Knobel*), but it is still employed in the division of lands. (For further remarks, see at Josh 14:1ff.).

**Numbers 26:57–62.** Mustering of the Levites.—The enumeration of the different Levitical families into which the three leading families of Levi, that were founded by his three sons Gershon, Kohath, and Merari, were divided, is not complete, but is broken off in v. 58 after the notice of five different families, for the purpose of tracing once more the descent of Moses and Aaron, the heads not of this tribe only, but of the whole nation, and also of giving the names of the sons of the latter (vv. 59–61). And after this the whole is concluded with a notice of the total number of those who were mustered of the tribe of Levi (v. 62).—Of the

different families mentioned, *Libni* belonged to Gershon (cf. Numbers 3:21), *Hebroni* to Kohath (Numbers 3:27), *Machli* and *Mushi* to Merari (Numbers 3:33), and *Korchi*, i.e., the family of Korah (according to Numbers 16:1; cf. Ex. 6:21 and 24), to Kohath. Moses and Aaron were descendants of Kohath (see at Ex. 6:20 and 2:1). Some difficulty is caused by the relative clause, “whom (one) had born to Levi in Egypt” (v. 59), on account of the subject being left indefinite. It cannot be Levi’s wife, as *Jarchi*, *Abenezra*, and others suppose; for *Jochebed*, the mother of Moses, was not a daughter of Levi in the strict sense of the word, but only a Levitess or descendant of Levi, who lived about 300 years after Levi; just as her husband *Amram* was not actually the son of Amram, who bore that name (Ex. 6:18), but a later descendant of this older Amram (see pp. 305ff.). The missing subject must be derived from the verb itself, viz., either

הַיְלֵדָה or אִמָּהּ (her mother), as in 1 Kings

1:6, another passage in which “his mother” is to be supplied (cf. *Ewald*, § 294, b.).

**Numbers 26:60, 61.** *Sons of Aaron:* cf. Numbers 3:2 and 4; Ex. 6:23; Lev. 10:1, 2.

**Numbers 26:62.** The Levites were not mustered along with the rest of the tribes of Israel, because the mustering took place with especial reference to the conquest of Canaan, and the Levites were not to receive any territory as a tribe (see at Numbers 18:20).

**Numbers 26:63–65.** Concluding formula with the remark in v. 65, that the penal sentence which God had pronounced in Numbers 14:29 and 38 upon the generation which came out of Egypt, had been completely carried out.

### Numbers 27

*The Daughters of Zelophehad Claim to Inherit. The Death of Moses Foretold: Consecration of Joshua as His Successor.—Ch. 27.*

**Numbers 27:1–11.** Claims of Zelophehad’s Daughters to an Inheritance in the Promised Land.—Vv. 1–4. The divine instructions which

were given at the mustering of the tribes, to the effect that the land was to be divided among the tribes in proportion to the larger or smaller number of their families (Numbers 26:52–56), induced the daughters of *Zelophehad* the Manassite of the family of Gilead, the son of *Machir*, to appear before the princes of the congregation, who were assembled with Moses and Eleazar at the tabernacle, with a request that they would assign them an inheritance in the family of the father, as he had died in the desert without leaving any sons, and had not taken part in the rebellion of the company of Korah, which might have occasioned his exclusion from any participation in the promised land, but had simply died “through his (own) sin,” i.e., on account of such a sin as every one commits, and such as all who died in the wilderness had committed as well as he. “Why should the name of our father be cut off (cease) from the midst of his family?” This would have been the case, for example, if no inheritance had been assigned him in the land because he left no son. In that case his family would have become extinct, if his daughters had married into other families or tribes. On the other hand, if his daughters received a possession of their own among the brethren of their father, the name of their father would be preserved by it, since they could then marry husbands who would enter upon their landed property, and their father’s name and possession would be perpetuated through their children. This wish on the part of the daughters was founded upon an assumption which rested no doubt upon an ancient custom, namely, that in the case of marriages where the wives had brought landed property as their dowry, the sons who inherited the maternal property were received through this inheritance into the family of their mother, i.e., of their grandfather on the mother’s side. We have an example of this in the case of *Jarha*, who belonged to the pre-Mosaic times (1 Chron. 2:34, 35). In all probability this took place in every instance in which daughters received a portion of the paternal possessions as their dowry, even though there might be sons alive. This would

explain the introduction of *Jair* among the Manassites in Numbers 32:41, Deut. 3:14. His father *Segub* was the son of *Hezron* of the tribe of Judah, but his mother was the daughter of *Machir* the Manassite (1 Chron. 2:21, 22). We find another similar instance in Ezra 2:61 and Neh. 7:63, where the sons of a priest who had married one of the daughters of *Barzillai* the rich Gileadite, are called sons of *Barzillai*.

**Numbers 27:5–7.** This question of right (*Mishpat*) Moses brought before God, and received instructions in reply to give the daughters of Zelophehad an inheritance among the brethren of their father, as they had spoken right. Further instructions were added afterwards in Numbers 36 in relation to the marriage of heiresses.

**Numbers 27:8–11.** On this occasion God issued a general law of inheritance, which was to apply to all cases as “a statute of judgment” (or right), i.e., a statute determining right. If any one died without leaving a son, his landed property was to pass to his daughter (or daughters); in default of daughters, to his brothers; in the absence of brothers, to his paternal uncles; and if there were none of them, to his next of kin.—On the intention of this law, see my *Archaeol.* § 142 (ii. pp. 212, 213); and on the law of inheritance generally, see *J. Selden, de success. ad leges Hebr. in bona defunctorum, Fkft. a. O.* 1695.

**Numbers 27:12–14.** The Death of Moses Foretold.—After these instructions concerning the division of the land, the Lord announced to Moses his approaching end. From the mountains of Abarim he was to see the land which the Israelites would receive, and then like Aaron to be gathered to his people, because like him he also had sinned at the water of strife at Kadesh. This announcement was made, “that he might go forward to his death with the fullest consciousness, and might set his house in order, that is to say, might finish as much as he could while still alive, and provide as much as possible what would make up after his death for the absence of his own person, upon which the whole house of Israel was now so

dependent” (*Baumgarten*). The fulfilment of this announcement is described in Deut. 32:48–52. The particular spot upon the mountains of Abarim from which Moses saw the land of Canaan, is also minutely described there. It was Mount *Nebo*, upon which he also died. The mountains of *Abarim* (cf. Numbers 33:47) are the mountain range forming the Moabitish table-land, which slope off into the steppes of Moab. It is upon this range, the northern portion of which opposite to Jericho bore the name of Pisgah, that we are to look for Mount *Nebo*, which is sometimes described as one of the mountains of *Abarim* (Deut. 32:49), and at other times as the top of *Pisgah* (Deut. 3:27; 34:1; see at Numbers 21:20). *Nebo* is not to be identified with *Jebel Attarus*, but to be sought for much farther to the north, since, according to *Eusebius* (s. v. Αβαρείμ), it was opposite to Jericho, between *Livias*, which was in the valley of the Jordan nearly opposite to Jericho, and *Heshbon*; consequently very near to the point which is marked as the “*Heights of Nebo*” on *Van de Velde’s* map. The prospect from the heights of *Nebo* must have been a very extensive one. According to *Burckhardt* (*Syr.* ii. pp. 106–7), “even the city of *Heshbon* (*Hhuzban*) itself stood upon so commanding an eminence, that the view extended at least thirty English miles in all directions, and towards the south probably as far as sixty miles.” On the expression, “gathered unto thy people,” see at Gen. 25:8, and on Aaron’s death see Numbers

20:28. כָּאֲשֶׁר מְרִיתָם: “as ye transgressed My commandment.” By the double use of כָּאֲשֶׁר (*quomodo*, “as”), the death of Aaron, and also that of Moses, are placed in a definite relation to the sin of these two heads of Israel. As they both sinned at Kadesh against the commandment of the Lord, so they were both of them to die without entering the land of Canaan. On the sin, see at Numbers 20:12, 13, and on the desert of Zin, at Numbers 13:21.

**Numbers 27:15–23.** Consecration of Joshua as the Successor of Moses.—Vv. 15–17. The announcement thus made to Moses led him to

entreat the Lord to appoint a leader of His people, that the congregation might not be like a flock without a shepherd. As “God of the spirits of all flesh,” i.e., as the giver of life and breath to all creatures (see at Numbers 16:22), he asks Jehovah to appoint a man over the congregation, who should go out and in before them, and should lead them out and in, i.e., preside over and direct them in all their affairs.

**צֵאת וְבוֹא** (“go out,” and “go in”) is a description of the conduct of men in every-day life (Deut. 28:6; 31:2; Josh. 14:11). **הוֹצִיא**

**וְהִבִּיֵא** (“lead out,” and “bring in”) signifies the superintendence of the affairs of the nation, and is founded upon the figure of a shepherd.

**Numbers 27:18–21.** The Lord then appointed Joshua to this office as a man “who had spirit.”

**רוּחַ** (*spirit*) does not mean “insight and wisdom” (*Knobel*), but the higher power inspired by God into the soul, which quickens the moral and religious life, and determines its development; in this case, therefore, it was the spiritual endowment requisite for the office he was called to fill. Moses was to consecrate him for entering upon this office by the laying on of hands, or, as is more fully explained in vv. 19 and 20, he was to set him before Eleazar the high priest and the congregation, to command (**צִוָּהוּ**) him, i.e., instruct him with regard to his office before their eyes, and to lay of his

eminence (**הוֹד**) upon him, i.e., to transfer a portion of his own dignity and majesty to him by the imposition of hands, that the whole congregation might hearken to him, or trust to his guidance. The object to **יִשְׁמְעוּ** (hearken)

must be supplied from the context, viz., **אֵלָיו**

(to him), as Deut. 34:9 clearly shows. The **מִן** (of) in v. 20 is partitive, as in Gen. 4:4, etc. The eminence and authority of Moses were not to

be entirely transferred to Joshua, for they were bound up with his own person alone (cf. Numbers 12:6–8), but only so much of it as he needed for the discharge of the duties of his office. Joshua was to be neither the lawgiver nor the absolute governor of Israel, but to be placed under the judgment of the *Urim*, with which Eleazar was entrusted, so far as the supreme decision of the affairs of Israel was concerned. This is the meaning of v. 21:

*“Eleazar shall ask to him (for him) the judgment of the Urim before Jehovah.”* *Urim* is an abbreviation for *Urim and Thummim* (Ex. 28:30), and denotes the means with which the high priest was entrusted of ascertaining the divine will and counsel in all the important business of the congregation. *“After his mouth”* (i.e., according to the decision of the high priest, by virtue of the right of *Urim and Thummim* entrusted to him), Joshua and the whole congregation were to go out and in, i.e., to regulate their conduct and decide upon their undertakings. *“All the congregation,”* in distinction from ‘all the children of Israel,’ denotes the whole body of heads of the people, or the college of elders, which represented the congregation and administered its affairs.

**Numbers 27:22, 23.** Execution of the divine command.

### Numbers 28

*Order of the Daily and Festal Offerings of the Congregation.—Ch. 28 and 29.*

**Numbers 28–29.** When Israel was prepared for the conquest of the promised land by the fresh numbering and mustering of its men, and by the appointment of Joshua as commander, its relation to the Lord was regulated by a law which determined the sacrifices through which it was to maintain its fellowship with its God from day to day, and serve Him as His people (Numbers 28 and 29). Through this order of sacrifice, the object of which was to form and sanctify the whole life of the congregation into a continuous worship, the sacrificial and festal



laws already given in Ex. 23:14–17; 29:38–42; 31:12–17, Lev. 23, and Numbers 25:1–12, were completed and arranged into a united and well-ordered whole. “It was very fitting that this law should be issued a short time before the advance into Canaan; for it was there first that the Israelites were in a position to carry out the sacrificial worship in all its full extent, and to observe all the sacrificial and festal laws” (*Knobel*). The law commences with the daily morning and evening burnt-offering (vv. 3–8), which was instituted at Sinai at the dedication of the altar. It is not merely for the sake of completeness that it is introduced here, or for the purpose of including all the national sacrifices that were to be offered during the whole year in one general survey; but also for an internal reason, viz., that the daily sacrifice was also to be offered on the Sabbaths and feast-days, to accompany the general and special festal sacrifices, and to form the common substratum for the whole of these. Then follow in vv. 9–15 the sacrifices to be offered on the Sabbath and at the new moon; and in v. 16–Numbers 29:38 the general sacrifices for the different yearly feasts, which were to be added to the sacrifices that were peculiar to each particular festival, having been appointed at the time of its first institution, and being specially adapted to give expression to its specific character, so that, at the yearly feasts, the congregation had to offer their different kinds of sacrifices: (a) the daily morning and evening sacrifice; (b) the general sacrifices that were offered on every feast-day; and (c) the festal sacrifices that were peculiar to each particular feast. This cumulative arrangement is to be explained from the significance of the daily and of the festal sacrifices. In the daily burnt-offering the congregation of Israel, as a congregation of Jehovah, was to sanctify its life, body, soul, and spirit, to the Lord its God; and on the Lord’s feast-days it was to give expression to this sanctification in an intensified form. This stronger practical exhibition of the sanctification of the life was embodied in the worship by the elevation and graduation of the daily sacrifice, through the

addition of a second and much more considerable burnt-offering, meat-offering, and drink-offering. The graduation was regulated by the significance of the festivals. On the Sabbaths the daily sacrifice was doubled, by the presentation of a burnt-offering consisting of two lambs. On the other feast-days it was increased by a burnt-offering composed of oxen, rams, and yearling lambs, which was always preceded by a sin-offering.—As the seventh day of the week, being a Sabbath, was distinguished above the other days of the week, as a day that was sanctified to the Lord in a higher degree than the rest, by an enlarged burnt-offering, meat-offering, and drink-offering; so the seventh month, being a Sabbath-month, was raised above the other months of the year, and sanctified as a festal month, by the fact that, in addition to the ordinary new moon sacrifices of two bullocks, one ram, and seven yearling lambs, a special festal sacrifice was also offered, consisting of one bullock, one ram, and seven yearling lambs (Numbers 29:2), which was also repeated on the day of atonement, and at the close of the feast of Tabernacles (Numbers 29:8, 36); and also that the feast of Tabernacles, which fell in this month, was to be celebrated by a much larger number of burnt-offerings, as the largest and holiest feast of the congregation of Israel. All the feasts of the whole year, for example, formed a cycle of feast-days, arranged according to the number seven, which had its starting-point and centre in the Sabbath, and was regulated according to the division of time established at the creation, into weeks, months, years, and periods of years, ascending from the weekly Sabbath to the monthly Sabbath, the sabbatical year, and the year of jubilee. In this cycle of holy periods, regulated as it was by the number seven, and ever expanding into larger and larger circles, there was embodied the whole revolution of annually recurring festivals, established to commemorate the mighty works of the Lord for the preservation and inspiration of His people. And this was done in the following manner: in the *first* place, the number of yearly feasts amounted to

exactly *seven*, of which the two leading feasts (*Mazzoth* and the feast of *Tabernacles*) lasted *seven* days; in the *second* place, in all the feasts, some of which were of only one day's duration, whilst others lasted seven days, there were only *seven* days that were to be observed with sabbatical rest and a holy meeting; and in the *third* place, the seven feasts were formed into two large festal circles, each of which consisted of an introductory feast, the main feast of *seven* days, and a closing feast of one day. The *first* of these festal circles was commemorative of the elevation of Israel into the nation of God, and its subsequent preservation. It commenced on the 14th Abib (Nisan) with the Passover, which was appointed to commemorate the deliverance of Israel from the destroying angel who smote the first-born of Egypt, as the introductory festival. It culminated in the *seven* days' feast of unleavened bread, as the feast of the deliverance of Israel from bondage, and its elevation into the nation of God; and closed with the feast of Weeks, Pentecost, or the feast of Harvest, which was kept *seven* weeks after the offering of the sheaf of first-fruits, on the second day of *Mazzoth*. This festal circle contained only three days that were to be kept with sabbatical rest and a holy meeting (viz., the first and seventh days of *Mazzoth* and the day of Pentecost). The *second* festal circle fell entirely in the seventh month, and its main object was to inspire the Israelites in their enjoyment of the blessings of their God: for this reason it was celebrated by the presentation of a large number of burnt-offerings. This festal circle opened with the day of atonement, which was appointed for the tenth day of the seventh month, as the introductory feast, culminated in the *seven* days' feast of *Tabernacles*, and closed with the eighth day, which was added to the seven feast-days as the octave of this festive circle, or the solemn close of all the feasts of the year. This also included only three days that were to be commemorated with sabbatical rest and a holy meeting (the 10th, 15th, and 22nd of the month); but to these we have to add the day of trumpets, with which the month commenced, which was also a Sabbath of rest with a holy

meeting; and this completes the seven days of rest (see my *Archaeologie*, i. § 76).

**Numbers 28:2.** V. 2 contains the general instruction to offer to the Lord His sacrificial gift "at the time appointed by Him." On *corban*, see at Lev. 1:2 (p. 510, comp. with p. 503); on "*the bread of Jehovah*," at Lev. 3:11; on the "*sacrifice made by fire*," and "*a sweet savour*," at Lev. 1:9; and on "*moed*," at Lev. 23:2, 4.

**Numbers 28:3-8.** "*The daily sacrifice*:" as it had already been instituted at Sinai (Ex. 29:38-42).

**Numbers 28:7.** "*In the sanctuary*," i.e., περί τὸν βωμόν (round about the altar), as *Josephus* paraphrases it (Ant. iii. 10); not "with (in) holy vessels," as *Jonathan* and others interpret it.

"*Pour out a drink-offering, as שֵׁכָר for Jehovah.*"

*Shecar* does not mean intoxicating drink here (see at Lev. 10:9), but *strong drink*, in distinction from water as simple drink. The drink-offering consisted of wine only (see at Numbers 15:5ff.); and hence *Onkelos* paraphrases it, "of old wine."

**Numbers 28:9, 10.** The *Sabbath-offering*, which was to be added to the daily sacrifice

(עֹל, upon it), consisted of two yearling lambs as a burnt-offering, with the corresponding meat-offering and drink-offering, according to the general rule laid down in Numbers 15:3ff., and is appointed here for the first time; whereas the sabbatical feast had already been instituted at Ex. 20:8-11 and Lev. 23:3. "*The burnt-offering of the Sabbath on its Sabbath*," i.e., as often as the Sabbath occurred, every Sabbath.

**Numbers 28:11-15.** At the beginnings of the month, i.e., at the *new moons*, a larger burnt-offering was to be added to the daily or continual burnt-offering, consisting of two bullocks (young oxen), one ram, and seven yearling lambs, with the corresponding meat and drink-offerings, as the "month's burnt-offering in its (i.e., every) month with regard to the months of the year," i.e., corresponding to them. To this there was also to be added a sin-offering of a shaggy goat (see at Lev. 4:23). The

custom of distinguishing the beginnings of the months of new moon's days by a peculiar festal sacrifice, without their being, strictly speaking, festal days, with sabbatical rest and a holy meeting, arose from the relation in which the month stood to the single day. "If the congregation was to sanctify its life and labour to the Lord every day by a burnt-offering, it could not well be omitted at the commencement of the larger division of time formed by the month; on the contrary, it was only right that the commencement of a new month should be sanctified by a special sacrifice. Whilst, then, a burnt-offering, in which the idea of expiation was subordinate to that of consecrating surrender to the Lord, was sufficient for the single day; for the whole month it was necessary that, in consideration of the sins that had been committed in the course of the past month, and had remained without expiation, a special sin-offering should be offered for their expiation, in order that, upon the ground of the forgiveness and reconciliation with God which had been thereby obtained, the lives of the people might be sanctified afresh to the Lord in the burnt-offering. This significance of the new moon sacrifice was still further intensified by the fact, that during the presentation of the sacrifice the priests sounded the silver trumpets, in order that it might be to the congregation for a memorial before God (Numbers 10:10). The trumpet blast was intended to bring before God the prayers of the congregation embodied in the sacrifice, that God might remember them in mercy, granting them the forgiveness of their sins and power for sanctification, and quickening them again in the fellowship of His saving grace" (see my *Archaeologie*, i. p. 369).

**Numbers 28:16–25.** The same number of sacrifices as at the new moon were to be offered on every one of the seven days of the feast of unleavened bread (*Mazzoth*), from the 15th to the 21st of the month, whereas there was no general festal offering on the day of the Passover, or the 14th of the month (Ex. 12:3–14). With regard to the feast of *Mazzoth*, the rule is repeated from Ex. 12:15–20 and Lev.

23:6–8, that on the first and seventh day there was to be a Sabbath rest and holy meeting.

**Numbers 28:23, 24.** The festal sacrifices of the seven days were to be prepared "in addition to the morning burnt-offering, which served as the continual burnt-offering." This implies that the festal sacrifices commanded were to be prepared and offered every day after the morning sacrifice.

**Numbers 28:26–31.** The same number of sacrifices is appointed for the day of the first-fruits, i.e., for the *feast of Weeks* or *Harvest feast* (cf. Lev. 23:15–22). The festal burnt-offering and sin-offering of this one day was independent of the supplementary burnt-offering and sin-offering of the wave-loaves appointed in Lev. 23:18, and was to be offered before these and after the daily morning sacrifice.

### Numbers 29

**Numbers 29:1–6.** The festal sacrifice for the *new moon of the seventh month* consisted of a burnt-offering of one bullock, one ram, and seven yearling lambs, with the corresponding meat-offerings and drink-offerings, and a sin-offering of a he-goat, "besides" (i.e., in addition to) the monthly and daily burnt-offering, meat-offering, and drink-offering. Consequently the sacrifices presented on the seventh new moon's day were, (1) a yearling lamb in the morning and evening, with their meat-offering and drink-offering; (2) in the morning, after the daily sacrifice, the ordinary new moon's sacrifice, consisting of two bullocks, one ram, and seven yearling lambs, with their corresponding meat-offerings and drink-offerings (see at v. 11); (3) the sin-offering of the he-goat, together with the burnt-offering of one bullock, one ram, and seven yearling lambs, with their proper meat-offerings and drink-offerings, the meaning of which has been pointed out at Lev. 23:23ff.

**Numbers 29:7–11.** On the *day of atonement*, on the tenth of the seventh month, a similar festal sacrifice was to be offered to the one presented on the seventh new moon's day (a burnt-

offering and sin-offering), in addition to the sin-offering of atonement prescribed at Lev. 16, and the daily burnt-offerings. For a more minute description of this festival, see at Lev. 16 and 23:26–32.

**Numbers 29:12–34.** The *feast of Tabernacles*, the special regulations for the celebration of which are contained in Lev. 23:34–36 and 39–43, was distinguished above all the other feasts of the year by the great number of burnt-offerings, which raised it into the greatest festival of joy. On the seven feast-days, the first of which was to be celebrated with sabbatical rest and a holy meeting, there were to be offered, in addition to the daily burnt-offering, every day a he-goat for a sin-offering, and seventy oxen in all for a burnt-offering during the seven days, as well as every day two rams and fourteen yearling lambs, with the requisite meat-offerings and drink-offerings. Whilst, therefore, the number of rams and lambs was double the number offered at the Passover and feast of Pentecost, the number of oxen was fivefold; for, instead of fourteen, there were seventy offered during the seven days. This multiplication of the oxen was distributed in such a way, that instead of there being ten offered every day, there were thirteen on the first day, twelve on the second, and so on, deducting one every day, so that on the seventh day there were exactly seven offered; the arrangement being probably made for the purpose of securing the holy number seven for this last day, and indicating at the same time, through the gradual diminution in the number of sacrificial oxen, the gradual decrease in the festal character of the seven festal days. The reason for this multiplication in the number of burnt-offerings is to be sought for in the nature of the feast itself. Their living in booths had already visibly represented to the people the defence and blessing of their God; and the foliage of these booths pointed out the glorious advantages of the inheritance received from the Lord. But this festival followed the completion of the ingathering of the fruits of the orchard and vineyard, and therefore was still more adapted, on account of the rich harvest of

splendid and costly fruits which their inheritance had yielded, and which they were about to enjoy in peace now that the labour of agriculture was over, to fill their hearts with the greatest joy and gratitude towards the Lord and Giver of them all, and to make this festival a speaking representation of the blessedness of the people of God when resting from their labours. This blessedness which the Lord had prepared for His people, was also expressed in the numerous burnt-offerings that were sacrificed on every one of the seven days, and in which the congregation presented itself soul and body to the Lord, upon the basis of a sin-offering, as a living and holy sacrifice, to be more and more sanctified, transformed, and perfected by the fire of His holy love (see my *Archäol.* i. p. 416).

**Numbers 29:35–38.** The *eighth* day was to be *azereth*, a closing feast, and only belonged to the feast of Tabernacles so far as the Sabbath rest and a holy meeting of the seventh feast-day were transferred to it; whilst, so far as its sacrifices were concerned, it resembled the seventh new moon's day and the day of atonement, and was thus shown to be the octave or close of the second festal circle (see at Lev. 23:36).

**Numbers 29:39.** The sacrifices already mentioned were to be presented to the Lord on the part of the congregation, in addition to the burnt-offerings, meat-offerings, drink-offerings, and peace-offerings which individuals or families might desire to offer either spontaneously or in consequence of vows. On the vowing of burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, see Numbers 15:3, 8; Lev. 22:18, 21.

**Numbers 29:40.** V. 40 forms the conclusion of the list of sacrifices in Numbers 28 and 29.

### Numbers 30

*Instructions as to the Force of Vows.—Ch. 30.*

**Numbers 30.** The rules by which vows were to be legally regulated, so far as their objects and their discharge were concerned, has been

already laid down in Lev. 27; but the chapter before us contains instructions with reference to the force of vows and renunciations. These are so far in place in connection with the general rules of sacrifice, that vows related for the most part to the presentation of sacrifices; and even vows of renunciation partook of the character of worship. The instructions in question were addressed (v. 1) to “the heads of the tribes,” because they entered into the sphere of civil rights, namely, into that of family life.

**Numbers 30:2.** At the head there stands the general rule, “If any one vow a vow to Jehovah, or swear an oath, to bind his soul to abstinence, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that has gone out of his mouth:” i.e., he shall keep or fulfil the vow, and the promise of abstinence, in perfect accordance

with his word. נָדָר is a positive vow, or promise to give or sanctify any part of one’s property to the Lord. אָסַר, from אָסַר, to bind or fetter, the negative vow, or vow of

abstinence. אָסַר אֶל-נַפְשׁוֹ, to take an abstinence upon his soul. In what such abstinence consisted is not explained, because it was well understood from traditional customs; in all probability it consisted chiefly in fasting and other similar abstinence from lawful things. The Nazarite’s vow, which is generally reckoned among the vows of abstinence, is called *neder* in Numbers 6:2ff., not *issar*, because it consisted not merely in abstinence from the fruit of the vine, but also in the positive act of permitting the hair to grow freely in honour of the Lord. The expression “swear an oath” (v. 2; cf. v. 13) shows that, as a rule, they bound themselves to abstinence by an oath. The *inf. constr.*, הִשָּׁבַע, is used here, as in other places, for the *inf. abs.* (cf. *Ges.* § 131, 4, note 2). יָחַל, from חָלַל, for יָחַל, as in Ezek. 39:7 (cf. *Ges.* § 67, note 8), to desecrate (his word), i.e., to leave it unfulfilled or break it.

**Numbers 30:3–15.** Vv. 3–15 contain the rules relating to positive and negative vows made by a woman, and four different examples are given. The first case (vv. 3–5) is that of a woman in her youth, while still unmarried, and living in her father’s house. If she made a vow of performance or abstinence, and her father heard of it and remained silent, it was to stand, i.e., to remain in force. But if her father held her back when he heard of it, i.e., forbade her fulfilling it, it was not to stand or remain in force, and Jehovah would forgive her because of her father’s refusal. Obedience to a father stood higher than a self-imposed religious service.—The *second* case (vv. 6–8) was that of a vow of performance or abstinence, made by a woman before her marriage, and brought along with her (עָלֶיהָ, “upon herself”) into her marriage.

In such a case the husband had to decide as to its validity, in the same way as the father before her marriage. In the day when he heard of it he could hold back his wife, i.e., dissolve her vow; but if he did not do this at once, he could not

hinder its fulfilment afterwards. מְבַטֵּא

שִׁפְתֶיהָ, gossip of her lips, that which is uttered thoughtlessly or without reflection (cf. Lev. 5:4). This expression implies that vows of abstinence were often made by unmarried women without thought or reflection.—The *third* case (v. 9) was that of a vow made by a widow or divorced woman. Such a vow had full force, because the woman was not dependent upon a husband.—The *fourth* case (vv. 10–12) was that of a vow made by a wife in her married state. Such a vow was to remain in force if her husband remained silent when he heard of it, and did not restrain her. On the other hand, it was to have no force if her husband dissolved it at once. After this there follows the general statement (vv. 13–16), that a husband could establish or dissolve every vow of performance or abstinence made by his wife. If, however, he remained silent “from day to day,” he confirmed it by his silence; and if afterwards he should declare it void, he was to

bear his wife's iniquity. **עֲוֹנָהּ**, the sin which the wife would have had to bear if she had broken the vow of her own accord. This consisted either in a sin-offering to expiate her sin (Lev. 5:4ff.); or if this was omitted, in the punishment which God suspended over the sin (Lev. 5:1).

**Numbers 30:16.** v. 16, concluding formula.

### Numbers 31

*War of Revenge Against the Midianites.—Ch. 31.*

**Numbers 31:1–12.** The *Campaign*.—After the people of Israel had been mustered as the army of Jehovah, and their future relation to the Lord had been firmly established by the order of sacrifice that was given to them immediately afterwards, the Lord commanded Moses to carry out that hostility to the Midianites which had already been commanded in Numbers 25:16–18. Moses was to revenge (i.e., to execute) the revenge of the children of Israel upon the Midianites, and then to be gathered to his people, i.e., to die, as had already been revealed to him (Numbers 27:13). “The revenge of the children of Israel” was revenge for the wickedness which the tribes of the Midianites who dwelt on the east of Moab (see at Numbers 22:4) had practised upon the Israelites, by seducing them to the idolatrous worship of Baal Peor. This revenge is called the “revenge of Jehovah” in v. 3, because the seduction had violated the divinity and honour of Jehovah. The daughters of Moab had also taken part in the seduction (Numbers 25:1, 2); but they had done so at the instigation of the Midianites (see p. 790), and not of their own accord, and therefore the Midianites only were to atone for the wickedness.

**Numbers 31:3–6.** To carry out this revenge, Moses had 1000 men of each tribe delivered

(**יְמָסְרוּ**, see at v. 16) from the families

(*alaphim*, see Numbers 1:16) of the tribes, and equipped for war; and these he sent to the army (into the war) along with Phinehas the son of

Eleazar the high priest, who carried the holy vessels, viz., the alarm-trumpets, in his hand. *Phinehas* was attached to the army, not as the leader of the soldiers, but as the high priest with the holy trumpets (Numbers 10:9), because the war was a holy war of the congregation against the enemies of themselves and their God. *Phinehas* had so distinguished himself by the zeal which he had displayed against the idolaters (Numbers 25:7), that it was impossible to find any other man in all the priesthood to attach to the army, who would equal him in holy zeal, or be equally qualified to inspire the army with zeal for the holy conflict. “The holy vessels” cannot mean the ark of the covenant on account of the plural, which would be inapplicable to it; nor the Urim and Thummim, because *Phinehas* was not yet high

priest, and the expression **כָּלִי** would also be unsuitable to these. The allusion can only be to the trumpets mentioned immediately

afterwards, the **ו** before **הַצְּרוֹת** being the **ו** *explic.*, “and in fact.” *Phinehas* took these in his hand, because the Lord had assigned them to His congregation, to bring them into remembrance before Him in time of war, and to ensure His aid (Numbers 10:9).

**Numbers 31:7–10.** Of the campaign itself, the results are all that is recorded. No doubt it terminated with a great battle, in which the Midianites were taken unawares and completely routed. As it was a war of vengeance of Jehovah, the victors slew all the males, i.e., all the adult males, as the sequel shows, without quarter; and “upon those that were slain,” i.e., in addition to them, the five Midianitish kings and Balaam, who first advised the Midianites, according to v. 16, to tempt the Israelites to idolatry. The five kings were chiefs of the larger or more powerful of the Midianitish tribes, as *Zur* is expressly said to have been in Numbers 25:15. In Josh. 13:21 they are called “vassals of Sihon,” because Sihon had subjugated them and made them tributary when he first conquered the land. The women and children of the Midianites were led away prisoners; and their

cattle (*behemah*, beasts of draft and burden, as in Ex. 20:10), and their flocks, and their goods taken away as spoil. The towns in their dwellings, and all their villages (*tiroth*, tent-villages, as in Gen. 25:16), were burnt down. The expression “towns in their dwellings” leads to the conclusion that the towns were not the property of the Midianites themselves, who were a nomad people, but that they originally belonged in all probability to the Moabites, and had been taken possession of by the Amorites under Sihon. This is confirmed by Josh. 13:21, according to which these five Midianitish vassals of Sihon dwelt in the land, i.e., in the kingdom of Sihon. This also serves to explain why the conquest of their country is not mentioned in the account before us, although it is stated in Joshua (*l.c.*), that it was allotted to the Reubenites with the kingdom of Sihon.

**Numbers 31:11, 12.** All this booty (*shalal*, booty in goods), and all the prey in man and beast (*malkoach*), was brought by the conquerors to Moses and Eleazar and the congregation, into the camp in the steppes of Moab. In v. 12, שְׁבִי applies to the women and

children who were taken prisoners, מִלְקוֹחַ to the cattle taken as booty, and שְׁלָל to the rest of the prey.

**Numbers 31:13–18.** *Treatment of the Prisoners.*—When Moses went out to the front of the camp with Eleazar and the princes of the congregation to meet the returning warriors, he was angry with the commanders, because they had left all the women alive, since it was they who had been the cause, at Balaam’s instigation, of the falling away of the Israelites from Jehovah to worship Peor; and he commanded all the male children to be slain, and every woman who had lain with a man, and only the young girls who had hitherto had no connection with a man to be left alive. פְּקוּדֵי

הַחֵיל, lit., the appointed persons, i.e., the officers of the army, who were then divided

into princes (captains) over thousands and hundreds.—“Which came from the battle,” i.e., who had returned. The question in v. 15, “Have ye left all the women alive?” is an expression of dissatisfaction, and reproof for their having

done this. הָיוּ לְמַסְר־מַעַל ... הָיוּ, “they have become to the Israelites to work unfaithfulness towards Jehovah,” i.e., they have induced them to commit an act of unfaithfulness towards

Jehovah. The word מָסַר, which only occurs in this chapter, viz., in vv. 5 and 16, appears to be used in the sense of giving, delivering, and then,

like נָתַן, doing, making, effecting. On the fact itself, see Numbers 25:6ff. The object of the command to put all the male children to death, was to exterminate the whole nation, as it could not be perpetuated in the women. Of the female sex, all were to be put to death who had known the lying with a man, and therefore might possibly have been engaged in the licentious worship of Peor (Numbers 25:2), to preserve the congregation from all contamination from that abominable idolatry.

**Numbers 31:19–24.** *Purification of the Warriors, the Prisoners, and the Booty.*—Moses commanded the men of war to remain for seven days outside the camp of the congregation, to carry out upon the third and seventh day the legal purification of such persons and things as had been rendered unclean through contact with dead bodies. Every one who had slain a soul (person), or touched one who had been slain, was to be purified, whether he were a warrior or a prisoner. And so also were all the clothes, articles of leather, materials of goats’ hair, and all wooden things.

**Numbers 31:21–24.** To this end Eleazar, whose duty it was as high priest to see that the laws of purification were properly observed, issued fuller instructions with reference to the purification of the different articles, in accordance with the law in Numbers 19.

הַבָּאִים לְמַלְחָמָה, those who came to the war, i.e., who went into the battle (see at

Numbers 10:9). “The ordinance of the law:” as in Numbers 19:2. The metal (gold, silver, copper, tin, lead), all that usually comes into the fire, i.e., that will bear the fire, was to be drawn through the fire, that it might become clean, and was then to be sprinkled with water of purification (Numbers 19:9); but everything that would not bear the fire was to be drawn through water.—The washing of clothes on the seventh day was according to the rule laid down in Numbers 19:19.

**Numbers 31:25–47.** *Distribution of the Booty.*—God directed Moses, with Eleazar and the heads of the fathers’ houses (“fathers” for “fathers’ houses:” see at Ex. 6:14) of the congregation, to take the whole of the booty in men and cattle, and divide it into two halves:

one for the men of war (תַּפְּשֵׁי הַמִּלְחָמָה, those who grasped at war, who engaged in war), the other for the congregation, and to levy

a tribute upon it (מִכְסָּה = מְכַסָּה, *computatio*, a certain amount: see Ex. 12:4) for Jehovah. Of the half that came to the warriors, one person and one head of cattle were to be handed over to Eleazar the priest out of every 500 (i.e., one-fifth per cent.), as a heave-offering for Jehovah; and of the other half that was set apart for the children of Israel, i.e., for the congregation, one out of every fifty (i.e., 2 per cent.) was to be

taken for the Levites. אָחֶזְקָה, laid hold of, i.e., snatched out of the whole number during the process of counting; not seized or touched by the lot, as in 1 Chron. 24:6, as there was no reason for resorting to the lot in this instance. The division of the booty into two equal halves, one of which was given to the warriors, and the other to the congregation that had taken no part in the war, was perfectly reasonable and just. As the 12,000 warriors had been chosen out of the whole congregation to carry on the war on their behalf, the congregation itself could properly lay claim to its share of the booty. But as the 12,000 had had all the trouble, hardships, and dangers of the war, they could very properly reckon upon some reward for

their service; and this was granted them by their receiving quite as much as the whole of the congregation which had taken no part in the war,—in fact, more, because the warriors only gave one-fifth per cent. of their share as a thank-offering for the victory that had been granted them, whilst those who remained at home had to give 2 per cent. of their share to Jehovah for the benefit of the priests and Levites. The arrangement, however, was only made for this particular case, and not as a law for all times, although it was a general rule that those who remained at home received a share of the booty brought back by the warriors (cf. Josh. 22:8; 1 Sam. 30:24, 25; 2 Macc. 8:28, 30).

**Numbers 31:31ff.** The booty, viz., “the rest of the booty, which the men of war had taken,” i.e., all the persons taken prisoners that had not been put to death, and all the cattle taken as booty that had not been consumed during the march home, amounted to 675,000 head of small cattle, 72,000 oxen, 61,000 asses, and 32,000 maidens. Each half, therefore, consisted of 337,500 head of small cattle, 36,000 oxen, 30,500 asses, and 16,000 maidens (vv. 36 and 43–46). Of the one half the priests received 675 head of small cattle, 72 oxen, 61 asses, and 32 maidens for Jehovah; and these Moses handed over to Eleazar, in all probability for the maintenance of the priests, in the same manner as the tithes (Numbers 18:26–28, and Lev. 27:30–33), so that they might put the cattle into their own flocks (Numbers 35:3), and slay oxen or sheep as they required them, whilst they sold the asses, and made slaves of the gifts; and not in the character of a vow, in which case the clean animals would have had to be sacrificed, and the unclean animals, as well as the human beings, to be redeemed (Lev. 27:2–13). Of the other half, the Levites received the fiftieth part (vv. 43–47), that is to say, 6750 head of small cattle, 720 oxen, 610 asses, and 320 girls. The

מִחְצִית וְגו' (“the half,” etc.), in v. 42, is

resumed in v. 47, and the enumeration of the component parts of this half in vv. 43–46 is to be regarded as parenthetical.



**Numbers 31:48–54.** *Sacred Oblations of the Officers.*—When the officers reviewed the men of war who were “in their hand,” i.e., who had fought the battle under their command, and found not a single man missing, they felt constrained to give a practical expression to their gratitude for this miraculous preservation of the whole of the men, by presenting a sacrificial gift to Jehovah; they therefore brought all the golden articles that they had received as booty, and offered them to the Lord “for the expiation of their souls” (see at Lev. 1:4), namely, with the feeling that they were not worthy of any such grace, and not “because they had done wrong in failing to destroy all the enemies of Jehovah” (*Knobel*). This gift, which was offered as a heave-offering for Jehovah, consisted of the following articles of gold:

הַצָּעֲדָא, “arm-rings,” according to 2 Sam. 1:10 (LXX χελιδῶνα; *Suidas*: χελιδόνα κοσμοὶ περὶ

τοὺς βραχιόνασ̄ καλοῦνται δὲ βραχιάλια); צָמִיד, *bands*, generally *armlets* (Gen. 24:22, etc.);

טַבַּעֲתֵי, *signet-rings*; עֲגִילֵי, *hoops*,—according

to Ezek. 16:12, *ear-rings*; and כּוֹמָז, *gold balls* (Ex. 35:22). They amounted in all to 16,750 shekels; and the men of war had received their own booty in addition to this. This gift, presented on the part of the officers, was brought into the tabernacle “as a memorial of the children of Israel before Jehovah” (cf. Ex. 30:16); that is to say, it was placed in the treasury of the sanctuary.

The fact that the Israelites did not lose a single man in the battle, is certainly a striking proof of the protection of God; but it is not so marvellous as to furnish any good ground for calling in question the correctness of the narrative. The Midianites were a nomad tribe, who lived by rearing flocks and herds, and therefore were not a warlike people. Moreover, they were probably attacked quite unawares, and being unprepared, were completely routed and cut down without quarter. The quantity of booty brought home is also not so great as to

appear incredible. Judging from the 32,000 females who had never lain with a man, the tribes governed by the five kings may have numbered about 130,000 or 150,000, and therefore not have contained much more than 35,000 fighting men, who might easily have been surprised by 12,000 brave warriors, and entirely destroyed. And again, there is nothing in the statement that 675,000 sheep and goats, 72,000 oxen, and 61,000 asses were taken as booty from these tribes, to astonish any one who has formed correct notions of the wealth of nomad tribes in flocks and herds. The only thing that could appear surprising is, that there are no camels mentioned. But it is questionable, in the first place, whether the Midianites were in the habit of rearing camels; and, in the second place, if they did possess them, it is still questionable whether the Israelitish army took them away, and did not rather put to death all that they found, as being of no value to the Israelites in their existing circumstances. Lastly, the quantity of jewellery seized as booty is quite in harmony with the well-known love of nomads, and even of barbarous tribes, for ornaments of this kind; and the peculiar liking of the Midianites for such things is confirmed by the account in Judg. 8:26, according to which Gideon took as much as 1700 shekels in weight of golden rings from the Midianites alone, beside ornaments of other kinds. If we take the golden shekel at 10 thalers (30 shillings: see p. 484), the value of the ornaments taken by the officers under Moses would be about 167,500 thalers (L.25,125). It is quite possible that the kings and other chiefs, together with their wives, may have possessed as much as this.

### Numbers 32

*Division of the Conquered Land Beyond the Jordan Among the Tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Half-Manasseh.—Ch. 32.*

**Numbers 32:1–5.** The Reubenites and Gadites, who had very large flocks and herds, petitioned Moses, Eleazar, and the princes of the congregation, to give them the conquered land

of Gilead for a possession, as a land that was peculiarly adapted for flocks, and not to make them pass over the Jordan. עֲצוּם מְאֹד, “very strong,” is an apposition introduced at the close of the sentence to give emphasis to the רֶב. The land which they wished for, they called the “land of *Jaëzer* (see Numbers 21:32), and the land of *Gilead*.” They put *Jaëzer* first, probably because this district was especially rich in excellent pasture land. *Gilead* was the land to the south and north of the *Jabbok* (see at Deut. 3:10), the modern provinces of *Belka* in the south between the *Jabbok* and the *Arnon*, and *Jebel Ajlun* to the north of the *Jabbok*, as far as the *Mandhur*. Ancient *Gilead* still shows numerous traces of great fertility even in its present desolation, covered over as it is with hundreds of ruins of old towns and hamlets. *Belka* is mountainous towards the north, but in the south as far as the *Arnon* it is for the most part table-land; and in the mountains, as *Buckingham* says, “we find on every hand a pleasant shade from fine oaks and wild pistachio-trees, whilst the whole landscape has more of a European character. The pasturage in *Belka* is much better than it is anywhere else throughout the whole of southern Syria, so that the Bedouins say, ‘You can find no country like *Belka*.’ The oxen and sheep of this district are considered the very best” (see v. *Raumer*, Pal. p. 82). The mountains of *Gilead* on both sides of the *Jabbok* are covered for the most part with glorious forests of oak. “*Jebel Ajlun*,” says *Robinson* (Pal. App. 162), “presents the most charming rural scenery that I have seen in Syria. A continued forest of noble trees, chiefly the evergreen oak (*Sindiân*), covers a large part of it, while the ground beneath is covered with luxuriant grass, which we found a foot or more in height, and decked with a rich variety of flowers” (see v. *Raumer*, ut sup.). This also applies to the ancient *Basan*, which included the modern plains of *Jaulan* and *Hauran*, that were also covered over with ruins of former towns and hamlets. The plain of *Hauran*, though perfectly treeless, is for all that very fertile, rich

in corn, and covered in some places with such luxuriant grass that horses have great difficulty in making their way through it; for which reason it is a favourite resort of the Bedouins (*Burckhardt*, p. 393). “The whole of *Hauran*,” says *Ritter* (*Erdkunde*, xv. pp. 988, 989), “stretches out as a splendid, boundless plain, between *Hermon* on the west, *Jebel Hauran* on the east, and *Jebel Ajlun* to the south; but there is not a single river in which there is water throughout the whole of the summer. It is covered, however, with a large number of villages, every one of which has its cisterns, its ponds, or its *birket*; and these are filled in the rainy season, and by the winter torrents from the snowy *Jebel Hauran*. Wherever the soil, which is everywhere black, deep, dark brown, or ochre-coloured, and remarkably fertile, is properly cultivated, and you find illimitable corn-fields, and chiefly golden fields of wheat, which furnish Syria in all directions with its principal food. By far the larger part of this plain, which was a luxuriant garden in the time of the Romans, is now uncultivated, waste, and without inhabitants, and therefore furnishes the Bedouins of the neighbourhood with the desired paradise for themselves and their flocks.” On its western slope *Jebel Hauran* is covered with splendid forests of oak, and rich in meadow land for flocks (*Burckhardt*, pp. 152, 169, 170, 173, 358; *Wetstein*, *Reiseber.* pp. 39ff. and 88). On the nature of the soil of *Hauran*, see at Deut. 3:4. The plain of *Jaulan* appears in the distance like the continuation of *Hauran* (*Robinson*, App. 162); it has much bush-land in it, but the climate is not so healthy as in *Hauran* (*Seetzen*, i. pp. 353, 130, 131). “In general, *Hauran*, *Jaulan*, *el Botthin*, *el Belka*, and *Ejlun*, are the paradise of nomads, and in all their wanderings eastwards they find no pasture like it” (*Seetzen*, i. p. 364). מְקוֹם, a locality, or

district. אֶרֶץ מְקִנָּה = מְאֹם מְקִנָּה (v. 4), a district adapted for grazing.

**Numbers 32:3.** In v. 3 the country is more distinctly defined by the introduction of the names of a number of important towns, whilst

the clause "the country which the Lord smote before the congregation of Israel," in which the defeat of Sihon is referred to, describes it as one that was without a ruler, and therefore could easily be taken possession of. For more minute remarks as to the towns themselves, see at vv.

34ff. On the construction **יָתֵן אֶת**, see at Gen.

4:18.—The words, "let us not go over the Jordan," may be understood as expressing nothing more than the desire of the speakers not to receive their inheritance on the western side of the Jordan, without their having any intention of withdrawing their help from the other tribes in connection with the conquest of Canaan, according to their subsequent declaration (vv. 16ff.); but they may also be understood as expressing a wish to settle at once in the land to the east of the Jordan, and leave the other tribes to conquer Canaan alone. Moses understood them in the latter sense (vv. 6ff.), and it is probable that this was their meaning, as, when Moses reproved them, the speakers did not reply that they had not cherished the intention attributed to them, but simply restricted themselves to the promise of co-operation in the conquest of Canaan. But even in this sense their request did not manifest "a shamelessness that would hardly be historically true" (*Knobel*). It may very well be explained from the opinion which they cherished, and which is perfectly intelligible after the rapid and easy defeat of the two mighty kings of the Amorites, Sihon and Og, that the remaining tribes were quite strong enough to conquer the land of Canaan on the west of the Jordan. But for all that, the request of the Reubenites and Gadites did indicate an utter want of brotherly feeling, and complete indifference to the common interests of the whole nation, so that they thoroughly deserved the reproof which they received from Moses.

**Numbers 32:6–15.** Moses first of all blames their want of brotherly feeling: "Shall your brethren go into the war, and ye sit here?" He then calls their attention to the fact, that by their disinclination they would take away the courage and inclination of the other tribes to

cross over the Jordan and conquer the land, and would bring the wrath of God upon Israel even more than their fathers who were sent from Kadesh to spy out the land, and who led away the heart of the people into rebellion through their unfavourable account of the inhabitants of Canaan, and brought so severe a judgment

upon the congregation. **הִנִּיא אֶת־לֵב מִן**, to hold away the heart, i.e., render a person averse

to anything. The Keri **הִנִּיאֹן**, as in v. 9, is

unquestionably to be preferred to the Kal

**הִנִּיאֹן**, in the *Kethib* of v. 7.—In vv. 8–13,

Moses reminds them of the occurrences described in Numbers 13 and 14. On the expression, "wholly followed Jehovah," cf. Numbers 14:24. The words, "He drove them about in the desert," caused them to wander backwards and forwards in it for forty years, point back to Numbers 14:33–35.

**Numbers 32:14.** "Behold, ye rise up instead of your fathers," i.e., ye take their place, "an

increase (**תַּרְבוֹת**, from **רָבָה**; equivalent to a brood) of sinners, to augment yet the burning of the wrath of Jehovah against Israel." **סָפָה עַל**, to add to, or increase.

**Numbers 32:15.** "If ye draw back behind Him," i.e., resist the fulfilment of the will of God, to bring Israel to Canaan, "He will leave it (Israel) still longer in the desert, and ye prepare destruction for all this nation."

**Numbers 32:16–27.** The persons thus reproved came near to Moses, and replied, "We will build sheep-folds here for our flocks, and towns for our children; but we will equip

ourselves hastily (**חָשִׁים**, part. pass. hastening) before the children of Israel, till we bring them to their place" (i.e., to Canaan). **גִּדְרֹת צֹאן**, folds or pens for flocks, that were built of stones piled up one upon another (1 Sam. 24:4). By the building of towns, we are to understand the

rebuilding and fortification of them. טַף, the children, including the women, and such other defenceless members of the family as were in need of protection (see at Ex. 12:37). When their families were secured in fortified towns against the inhabitants of the land, the men who could bear arms would not return to their houses till the children of Israel, i.e., the rest of the tribes, had all received their inheritance: for they did not wish for an inheritance on the

other side of Jordan and farther on, if (כִּי) their inheritance was assigned them on this side Jordan towards the east. The application of the expression מֵעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן to the land on the east of the Jordan, as well as to that on the west, points to a time when the Israelites had not yet obtained a firm footing in Canaan. At that time the land to the west of the river could very naturally be spoken of as *"beyond the Jordan,"* from the subjective stand-point of the historian, who was then on the east of the river; whereas, according to the objective and geographical usage, the land *"beyond Jordan"* signifies the country to the east of the river. But in order to prevent misunderstanding, in this particular instance the expression עֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן is defined more precisely as מִזְרְחָהּ, *"towards the east,"* when it is intended to apply to the land on the east of the Jordan.

**Numbers 32:20-24.** Upon this declaration Moses absolves them from all guilt, and promises them the desired land for a possession, on condition that they fulfil their promise; but he reminds them again of the sin that they will commit, and will have to atone for, if their promise is not fulfilled, and closes with the admonition to build towns for their families and pens for their flocks, and to do what they have promised. Upon this they promise again (vv. 25-27), through their spokesman (as the singular וַיֹּאמֶר in v. 25, and

the suffix in אֲדֹנָי in v. 27, clearly show), that they will fulfil his command. The use of the expression *"before Jehovah,"* in the words, *"go armed before Jehovah to war,"* in v. 20 and 21, may be explained from the fact, that in the war which they waged at the command of their God, the Israelites were the army of Jehovah, with Jehovah in the midst. Hence the ark of the covenant was taken into the war, as the vehicle and substratum of the presence of Jehovah; whereas it remained behind in the camp, when the people wanted to press forward into Canaan of their own accord (Numbers 14:44). But if this is the meaning of the expression *"before Jehovah,"* we may easily understand why the Reubenites and Gadites do not make use of it in v. 17, namely, because they only promise to go equipped *"before the children of Israel,"* i.e., to help their brethren to conquer Canaan. In v. 32 they also adopt the expression, after hearing it from the mouth of Moses (v.

20). נִקְיִים, innocent, *"free from guilt before Jehovah and before Israel."* By drawing back from participation in the war against the Canaanites, they would not only sin against Jehovah, who had promised Canaan to all Israel, and commanded them to take it, but also against Israel itself, i.e., against the rest of the tribes, as is more fully stated in vv. 7-15. In v. 22b, *"before Jehovah"* signifies according to the judgment of Jehovah, with divine approval.

וַיִּדְעוּ חַטָּאתְכֶם, *"ye will know your sin,"* which will overtake (מִצָּא) or smite you, i.e., ye will have to make atonement for them.

**Numbers 32:28-33.** Moses thereupon commanded Eleazar, Joshua, and the heads of the tribes of Israel, i.e., the persons entrusted in Numbers 34:17ff. with the division of the land of Canaan, to give the Gadites and Reubenites the land of Gilead for a possession, after the conquest of Canaan, if they should go along with them across the Jordan equipped for battle. But if they should not do this, they were

to be made possessors (i.e., to be settled; יָרְשׁוּ in a passive sense, whereas in Gen. 34:10; 47:27, it is reflective, to fix oneself firmly, to settle) in the land of Canaan along with the other tribes. In the latter case, therefore, they were not only to receive no possession in the land to the east of the Jordan, but were to be compelled to go over the Jordan with their wives and children, and to receive an inheritance there for the purpose of preventing a schism of the nation.

**Numbers 32:31.** The Gadites and Reubenites repeated their promise once more (v. 25), and added still further (v. 32): “*We will pass over armed before Jehovah into the land of Canaan, and let our inheritance be with us (i.e., remain to us) beyond the Jordan.*”

**Numbers 32:33.** Moses then gave to the sons of Gad and Reuben, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, namely, “*the land according to its towns, in (its) districts, (namely) the towns of the land round about,*” i.e., the whole of the land with its towns and the districts belonging to them, or surrounding the towns. It appears strange that the half-tribe of Manasseh is included here for the first time at the close of the negotiations, whereas it is not mentioned at all in connection with the negotiations themselves. This striking fact may easily be explained, however, on the supposition that it was by the two tribes of Reuben and Gad alone that the request was made for the land of Gilead as a possession; but that when Moses granted this request, he did not overlook the fact, that some of the families of Manasseh had conquered various portions of Gilead and Bashan (v. 39), and therefore gave these families, at the same time, the districts which they had conquered, for their inheritance, that the whole of the conquered land might be distributed at once. As *O. v. Gerlach* observes, “the participation of this half-tribe in the possession is accounted for in v. 39.” Moses restricted himself, however, to a general conveyance of the land that had been

taken on the east of the Jordan to these two and a half tribes for their inheritance, without sharing it amongst them, or fixing the boundaries of the territory of each particular tribe. That was left to the representatives of the nation mentioned in v. 28, and was probably not carried out till the return of the fighting men belonging to these tribes, who went with the others over the Jordan. In the verses which follow, we find only those towns mentioned which were fortified by the tribes of Gad and Reuben, and in which they constructed sheep-folds (vv. 34–38), and the districts which the families of Manasseh had taken and received as their possession (vv. 39–42).

**Numbers 32:34–36.** The *Gadites* built, i.e., restored and fortified, the following places. *Dibon*, also called *Dibon Gad*, an hour’s journey to the north of the central Arnon (see p. 752). *Ataroth*, probably preserved in the extensive ruins of *Attarus*, on *Jebel Attarus*, between *el Kōriath* (*Kureyat*) and *Makur*, i.e., *Machaerus* (see *Seetzen*, ii. p. 342). *Aroer*, not the *Aroer* before *Rabbah*, which was allotted to the *Gadites* (*Josh.* 13:25), as *v. Raumer* supposes; but the *Aroer of Reuben* in the centre of the valley of the Arnon (*Josh.* 12:2; 13:9, 16), which is still to be seen in the ruins of *Araayr*, on the edge of the lofty rocky wall which bounds the *Modjeb* (*Burckhardt*, p. 633). *Atroth Shopan*: only mentioned here; situation unknown. *Jaezer*: probably to be sought for in the ruins of *es Szir*, to the west of *Ammān* (see at *Numbers* 21:32). *Jogbehah*: only mentioned again in *Judg.* 8:11, and preserved in the ruins of *Jebeiha*, about two hours to the north-west of *Ammān* (*Burckhardt*, p. 618; *Robinson*, App. p. 168). *Beth-Nimrah*, contracted into *Nimrah* (v. 3), according to *Josh.* 13:27, in the valley of the Jordan, and according to the *Onomast.* (s. v. Βηθναβράν) *Beth-amnaram*, five Roman miles to the north of *Libias* (*Bethharam*), now to be seen in the ruins of *Nimrein* or *Nemrin*, where the *Wady Shaib* enters the Jordan (*Burckhardt*, pp. 609, 661; *Robinson*, ii. p. 279), in a site abounding in water and pasturage (*Seetzen*, ii. pp. 318, 716). *Beth-Haran*, or *Beth-Haram* (*Josh.* 13:27): *Beth-ramphtha*, according to *Josephus*,

Ant. 18:2, 1, which was called *Julias*, in honour of the wife of Augustus. According to the *Onomast.* it was called *Beth-Ramtha* by the

Syrians (בֵּית רַמְתָּא, the form of the Aramaean *stat. emphat.*), and was named *Livias* by Herod Antipas, in honour of *Livia*, the wife of Augustus. It has been preserved in the ruins of *Rameh*, not far from the mouth of the Wady *Hesbân* (*Burckhardt*, p. 661, and *Robinson*, ii.

305). The words עָרֵי מְבָצָר וּגְוֹ in v. 36 are

governed by וַיְבָנֵנוּ in v. 34: “they built them as fortified cities and folds for flocks,” i.e., they fortified them, and built folds in them.

**Numbers 32:37, 38.** The *Reubenites* built *Heshbon*, the capital of king *Sihon* (see *Numbers* 21:16), which was allotted to the tribe of *Reuben* (*Josh.* 13:17), but relinquished to the *Gadites*, because it was situated upon the border of their territory, and given up by them to the *Levites* (*Josh.* 21:39; *1 Chron.* 6:66). It stood almost in the centre between the *Arnon* and *Jabbok*, opposite to *Jericho*, and, according to the *Onomast.*, twenty Roman miles from the *Jordan*, where the ruins of a large town of about a mile in circumference are still to be seen, with deep bricked wells, and a large reservoir, bearing the ancient name of *Hesban* or *Hüsban* (*Seetzen*; *Burckhardt*, p. 623; *Robinson*, Pal. ii. 278; cf. v. *Raumer*, Pal. p. 262; and *Ritter's Erdkunde*, xv. p. 1176).—*Elealeh*: half-an-hour's journey to the north-east of *Heshbon*, now called *el Aal*, i.e., the height, upon the top of a hill, from which you can see the whole of southern *Belka*; it is now in ruins with many cisterns, pieces of wall, and foundations of houses (*Burckhardt*, p. 523).—*Kirjathaim*, probably to the south-west of *Medeba*, where the ruins of *el Teym* are not to be found (see at *Gen.* 14:5). *Nebo*, on Mount *Nebo* (see at *Numbers* 27:12). The *Onomast.* places the town eight Roman miles to the south of *Heshbon*, whilst the mountain is six Roman miles to the west of that town. *Baal-Meon*, called *Beon* in v. 3, *Beth-Meon* in *Jer.* 48:23, and more fully *Beth-Baal-Meon* in *Josh.* 13:17, is probably to be

found, not in the ruins of *Maein* discovered by *Seetzen* and *Legh*, an hour's journey to the south-west of *Tueme* (*Teim*), and the same distance to the north of *Habbis*, on the north-east of *Jebel Attarus*, and nine Roman miles to the south of *Heshbon*, as most of the modern commentators from *Rosenmüller* to *Knobel* suppose; but in the ruins of *Myun*, mentioned by *Burckhardt* (p. 624), three-quarters of an hour to the south-east of *Heshbon*, where we find it marked upon *Kiepert's* and *Van de Velde's* maps.

*Shibmah* (v. 3, *Shebam*), which was only 500 paces from *Heshbon*, according to *Jerome* (on *Isa.* 14:8), has apparently disappeared, without leaving a trace behind. Thus all the places built by the *Reubenites* were but a short distance from *Heshbon*, and surrounded this capita; whereas those built by the *Gadites* were some of them to the south of it, on the *Arnon*, and others to the north, towards *Rabbath-Ammon*. It is perfectly obvious from this, that the restoration of these towns took place before the distribution of the land among these tribes, without any regard to their possession afterwards. In the distribution, therefore, the southernmost of the towns built by the *Gadites*, viz., *Aroer*, *Dibon*, and *Ataroth*, fell to the tribe of *Reuben*; and *Heshbon*, which was built by the *Reubenites*, fell to the tribe of *Gad*. The words

מוֹסַבְתָּ שֵׁם, “changed of name,” are governed

by וַיְבָנֵנוּ: “they built the towns with an alteration

of their names,” *mutatis nominibus* (for סָבַב, in the sense of changing, see *Zech.* 14:10). There is not sufficient ground for altering the text, שֵׁם

into שׁוּר (*Knobel*), according to the

περικυκλωμένας of the LXX, or the περιτετευχισμένας of *Symmachus*. The Masoretic text is to be found not only in the *Chaldee*, the *Syriac*, the *Vulgate*, and the *Saadie* versions, but also in the *Samaritan*. The expression itself, too, cannot be justly described as “awkward,” nor is it a valid objection that the naming is

mentioned afterwards; for altering the name of a town and giving it a new name are not tautological. The insertion of the words, "their names being changed," before Shibmah, is an indication that the latter place did not receive any other name. Moreover, the new names which the builders gave to these towns did not continue in use long, but were soon pressed out by the old ones again. "And they called by names the names of the towns:" this is a roundabout way of saying, they called the towns by (other, or new) names: cf. 1 Chron. 6:50.

**Numbers 32:39–42.** Moses gave the *Manassites* the land which was conquered by them; in fact, the whole of the kingdom of *Bashan*, including not only the province of *Bashan*, but the northern half of Gilead (see at Numbers 21:33, 34). Of this the *sons of Machir* received Gilead, the modern *Jebel Ajlun*, between the *Jabbok (Zerka)* and the *Mandhur (Hieromax, Jarmuk)*, because they had taken it and driven out the Amorites and destroyed them (see Deut. 3:13). The imperfects in v. 39 are to be understood in the sense of pluperfects, the different parts being linked together by  $\text{וַ$  *consec.* according to the simple style of the Semitic historical writings explained in the note on Gen. 2:19, and the leading thought being preceded by the clauses which explain it, instead of their being logically subordinated to it. "*The sons of Machir went to Gilead and took it ... and Moses gave,*" etc., instead of "Moses gave Gilead to the sons of Machir, who had gone thither and taken it ..."

The words  $\text{וַיֵּשְׁבוּ בָהּ}$ , "Machir dwelt therein (in Gilead)," do not point to a later period than the time of Moses, but simply state that the Machirites took possession of Gilead. As soon as Moses had given them the conquered land for their possession, they no doubt brought their families, like the Gadites and Reubenites, and settled them in fortified towns, that they might dwell there in safety, whilst the fighting men helped the other tribes to conquer Canaan.

$\text{יָשַׁב}$  signifies not merely "to dwell," but literally to place oneself, or settle down (e.g., Gen. 36:8, etc.), and is even applied to the temporary sojourn of the Israelites in particular encampments (Numbers 20:1).—*Machir* (v. 40): for the sons of Machir, or Machirites (Numbers 26:29). But as *Gilead* does not mean the whole of the land with this name, but only the northern half, so the sons of Machir are not the whole of his posterity, but simply those who formed the family of Machirites which bore its father's name (Numbers 26:29), i.e., the seven fathers' houses or divisions of the family, the heads of which are named in 1 Chron. 5:24. The other descendants of *Machir* through Gilead, who formed the six families of Gilead mentioned in Numbers 26:29–33, and Josh. 17:2, received their inheritance in Canaan proper (Josh 17).

**Numbers 32:41.** The family of Manasseh named after Machir included "*Jair* the son (i.e., descendant) of Manasseh." *Jair*, that is to say, was the grandson of a daughter of Machir the son of Manasseh, and therefore a great-grandson of Manasseh on the mother's side. His father *Segub* was the son of *Hezron* of the tribe of Judah, who had married a daughter of Manasseh (1 Chron 2:21, 22); so that *Jair*, or rather *Segub*, had gone over with his descendants into the maternal tribe, contrary to the ordinary rule, and probably because Machir had portioned his daughter with a rich dowry like an heiress. *Jair* took possession of the whole of the province of *Argob* in Bashan, i.e., in the plain of *Jaulan* and *Hauran* (Deut. 3:4 and 14), and gave the conquered towns the name of *Havvoth Jair*, i.e., *Jair's-lives* (see at Deut. 3:14).

**Numbers 32:42.** *Nobah*, whose family is never referred to, but who probably belonged, like *Jair*, to one of the families of Machirites, took the town of *Kenath* and its daughters, i.e., the smaller towns dependent upon it (see Numbers 21:25), and gave it his own name *Nobah*. The name has not been preserved, and is not to be sought, as *Kurtz* supposes, in the village of *Nowa (Newe)*, in *Jotan*, which is mentioned by

*Burckhardt* (p. 443), and was once a town of half an hour's journey in circumference. For *Kenath*, which is only mentioned again in 1 Chron. 2:23 as having been taken from the Israelites by Gesur and Aram, is Κάναθα, which *Josephus* (*de bell. Jud.* i. 19, 2), and *Ptolemy* speak of as belonging to Coelesyria, and *Pliny* (h. n. 5, 16) to Decapolis, and which was situated, according to *Jerome*, "in the region of Trachonitis, near to Bostra." The ruins are very extensive even now, being no less than 2 1/2 or 3 miles in circumference, and containing magnificent remains of palaces from the times of Trajan and Hadrian. It is on the western slope of Jebel Hauran, and is only inhabited by a few families of Druses. The present name is *Kanuat*. (For description, see *Seetzen*, i. pp. 78ff.; *Burckhardt*, pp. 157ff.; cf. *Ritter, Erdk.*)

### Numbers 33

*List of Israel's Encampments.—Ch. 33:1–49.*

**Numbers 33:1–49.** As the Israelites had ended their wanderings through the desert, when they arrived in the steppes of Moab by the Jordan opposite to Jericho (Numbers 22:1), and as they began to take possession when the conquered land beyond Jordan was portioned out (Numbers 32), the history of the desert wandering closes with a list of the stations which they had left behind them. This list was written out by Moses "at the command of Jehovah" (v. 2), as a permanent memorial for after ages, as every station which Israel left behind on the journey from Egypt to Canaan "through the great and terrible desert," was a memorial of the grace and faithfulness with which the Lord led His people safely "in the desert land and in the waste howling wilderness, and kept him as the apple of His eye, as an eagle fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings" (Ex. 19:4; Deut. 32:10ff.).

**Numbers 33:1–15.** The first and second verses form the heading: "These are the marches of the

*children of Israel, which they marched out,"* i.e., the marches which they made from one place to another, on going out of Egypt. מַסְעַ does not mean a station, but the breaking up of a camp, and then a train, or march (see at Ex. 12:37, and Gen. 13:3). לְצַבְאוֹתֵם (see Ex. 7:4). בִּיד, under the guidance, as in Numbers 4:28, and Ex.

38:21. מוֹצְאֵיהֶם לְמַסְעֵיהֶם, "their goings out (properly, their places of departure) according to their marches," is really equivalent to the clause which follows: "their marches according to their places of departure." The march of the people is not described by the stations, or places of encampment, but by the particular spots from which they set out. Hence the

constant repetition of the word וַיִּסְעוּ, "and they broke up." In vv. 3–5, the departure is described according to Ex. 12:17, 37–41. On the judgments of Jehovah upon the gods of Egypt, see at Ex. 12:12. "With an high hand:" as in Ex. 14:8.—The places of encampment from *Succoth* to the *desert of Sinai* (vv. 5–15) agree with those in the historical account, except that the stations at the *Red Sea* (v. 10) and those at *Dophkah* and *Alush* (vv. 13 and 14) are passed over there. For *Raemeses*, see at Ex. 12:37. *Succoth* and *Etham* (Ex. 13:20). *Pihahiroth* (Ex. 14:2). "The wilderness" (v. 8) is the desert of *Shur*, according to Ex. 15:22. *Marah*, see Ex. 15:23. *Elim* (Ex. 15:27). For the *Red Sea* and the *wilderness of Sin*, see Ex. 16:1. For *Dophkah*, *Alush*, and *Rephidim*, see Ex. 17:1; and for the *wilderness of Sinai*, Ex. 19:2.

**Numbers 33:16–36.** In vv. 16–36 there follow twenty-one names of places where the Israelites encamped from the time that they left the *wilderness of Sinai* till they encamped in the *wilderness of Zin*, i.e., *Kadesh*. The description of the latter as "the wilderness of Zin, which is *Kadesh*," which agrees almost word for word with Numbers 20:1, and still more the agreement of the places mentioned in vv. 37–49, as the encampments of Israel after leaving *Kadesh* till their arrival in the steppes of Moab,



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with the march of the people in the fortieth year as described in Numbers 20:22–22:1, put it beyond all doubt that the encampment in the wilderness of Zin, i.e., Kadesh (v. 36), is to be understood as referring to the second arrival in Kadesh after the expiration of the thirty-eight years of wandering in the desert to which the congregation had been condemned. Consequently the twenty-one names in vv. 16–36 contain not only the places of encampment at which the Israelites encamped in the second year of their march from Sinai to the desert of *Paran* at Kadesh, whence the spies were despatched into Canaan, but also those in which they encamped for a longer period during the thirty-eight years of punishment in the wilderness. This view is still further confirmed by the fact that the two first of the stations named after the departure from the wilderness of Sinai, viz., *Kibroth-hattaavah* and *Hazeroth*, agree with those named in the historical account in Numbers 11:34 and 35. Now if, according to Numbers 12:16, when the people left *Hazeroth*, they encamped in the desert of *Paran*, and despatched the spies thence out of the desert of *Zin* (Numbers 13:21), who returned to the congregation after forty days “into the desert of *Paran* to *Kadesh*” (Numbers 13:26), it is as natural as it well can be to seek for this place of encampment in the desert of *Paran* or *Zin* at *Kadesh* under the name of *Rithmah*, which follows *Hazeroth* in the present list (v. 18). This natural supposition reaches the highest degree of probability, from the fact that, in the historical account, the place of encampment, from which the sending out of the spies took place, is described in so indefinite a manner as the “desert of *Paran*,” since this name does not belong to a small desert, just capable of holding the camp of the Israelites, but embraces the whole of the large desert plateau which stretches from the central mountains of Horeb in the south to the mountains of the Amorites, which really form part of Canaan, and contains no less than 400 (? 10,000 English) square miles (see pp. 688, 689). In this desert the Israelites could only pitch their camp in one particular spot, which is

called *Rithmah* in the list before us; whereas in the historical account the passage is described, according to what the Israelites performed and experienced in this encampment, as near to the southern border of Canaan, and is thus pointed out with sufficient clearness for the purpose of the historical account. To this we may add the coincidence of the name *Rithmah* with the *Wady Abu Retemat*, which is not very far to the south of *Kadesh*, “a wide plain with shrubs and *retem*,” i.e., broom (*Robinson*, i. p. 279), in the neighbourhood of which, and behind the chalk formation which bounds it towards the east, there is a copious spring of sweet water called *Ain el Kudeirât*. This spot was well adapted for a place of encampment for Israel, which was so numerous that it might easily stretch into the desert of *Zin*, and as far as *Kadesh*.

The seventeen places of encampment, therefore, that are mentioned in vv. 19–36 between *Rithmah* and *Kadesh*, are the places at which Israel set up in the desert, from their return from *Kadesh* into the “desert of the way to the Red Sea” (Numbers 14:25), till the reassembling of the whole congregation in the desert of *Zin* at *Kadesh* (Numbers 20:1). Of all the seventeen places not a single one is known, or can be pointed out with certainty, except *Eziongaber*. Only the four mentioned in vv. 30–33, *Moseroth*, *Bene-Jaakan*, *Hor-hagidgad*, and *Jotbathah*, are referred to again, viz., in Deut. 10:6, 7, where Moses refers to the divine protection enjoyed by the Israelites in their wandering in the desert, in these words: “And the children of Israel took their journey from *Beeroth-bene-Jaakan* to *Mosera*; there Aaron died, and there he was buried ... From thence they journeyed unto *Gudgodah*, and from *Gudgodah* to *Jotbathah*, a land of water-brooks.” Of the identity of the places mentioned in the two passages there can be no doubt whatever. *Bene Jaakan* is simply an abbreviation of *Beeroth-bene-Jaakan*, wells of the children of *Jaakan*. Now if the children of *Jaakan* were the same as the Horite family of *Kanan* mentioned in Gen. 36:27, —and the reading יַעֲקֹב for יַעֲקֹב in 1 Chron. 1:42 seems to favour this,—the

wells of *Jaakan* would have to be sought for on the mountains that bound the *Arabah* on either the east or west.

*Gudgodah* is only a slightly altered and abbreviated form of *Hor-hagidgad*, the cave of *Gidgad* or *Gudgodah*; and lastly, *Moseroth* is simply the plural form of *Mosera*. But notwithstanding the identity of these four places, the two passages relate to different journeys. Deut. 10:6 and 7 refers to the march in the fortieth year, when the Israelites went from Kadesh through the Wady *Murreh* into the Arabah to Mount *Hor*, and encamped in the Arabah first of all at the wells of the children, and then at *Mosera*, where Aaron died upon Mount *Hor*, which was in the neighbourhood, and whence they travelled still farther southwards to *Gudgodah* and *Jotbathah*. In the historical account in Numbers 20 and 21 the three places of encampment, *Bene-Jaakan*, *Gudgodah*, and *Jotbathah*, are not mentioned, because nothing worthy of note occurred there. *Gudgodah* was perhaps the place of encampment mentioned in Numbers 21:4, the name of which is not given, where the people were punished with fiery serpents; and *Jotbathah* is probably to be placed before *Zalmonah* (v. 41). The clause, "a land of water-brooks" (Deut. 10:7), points to a spot in or near the southern part of the Arabah, where some wady, or valley with a stream flowing through it, opened into the Arabah from either the eastern or western mountains, and formed a green oasis through its copious supply of water in the midst of the arid steppe. But the Israelites had encamped at the very same places once before, namely, during their thirty-seven years of wandering, in which the people, after returning from Kadesh to the Red Sea through the centre of the great desert of *et Tih*, after wandering about for some time in the broad desert plateau, went through the Wady *el Jerafeh* into the Arabah as far as the eastern border of it on the slopes of Mount *Hor*, and there encamped at *Mosera* (*Moseroth*) somewhere near *Ain et Taiyibeh* (on *Robinson's* map), and then crossed over to *Bene-Jaakan*, which was probably on the western border of

the Arabah, somewhere near *Ain el Ghamr* (*Robinson*), and then turning southwards passed along the Wady *el Jeib* by *Hor-gidgad* (*Gudgodah*), *Jotbathah*, and *Abronah* to *Eziongeber* on the Red Sea; for there can be no doubt whatever that the *Eziongeber* in vv. 35, 36, and that in Deut. 2:8, are one and the same town, viz., the well-known port at the northern extremity of the Elanitic Gulf, where the Israelites in the time of Solomon and Jehoshaphat built a fleet to sail to *Ophir* (1 Kings 9:26; 22:49). It was not far from *Elath* (i.e., *Akaba*), and is supposed to have been "the large and beautiful town of *Asziun*," which formerly stood, according to *Makrizi*, near to *Aila*, where there were many dates, fields, and fruit-trees, though it has now long since entirely disappeared.

Consequently the Israelites passed twice through a portion of the Arabah in a southerly direction towards the Red Sea, the second time from Wady *Murreh* by Mount *Hor*, to go round the land of Edom, not quite to the head of the gulf, but only to the Wady *el Ithm*, through which they crossed to the eastern side of Edomitis (p. 747); the first time during the thirty-seven years of wandering from Wady *el Jerafeh* to *Moseroth* and *Bene Jaakan*, and thence to *Eziongeber*.

**Numbers 33:36.** "And they removed from *Eziongeber*, and encamped in the desert of *Zin*, that is *Kadesh*:" the return to *Kadesh* towards the end of the thirty-ninth year is referred to here. The fact that no places of encampment are given between *Eziongeber* and *Kadesh*, is not to be attributed to the "plan of the author, to avoid mentioning the same places of encampment a second time," for any such plan is a mere conjecture; but it may be simply and perfectly explained from the fact, that on this return route—which the whole of the people, with their wives, children, and flocks, could accomplish without any very great exertion in ten or fourteen days, as the distance from *Aila* to *Kadesh* through the desert of *Paran* is only about a forty hours' journey upon camels, and *Robinson* travelled from *Akabah* to the Wady

Retemath, near Kadesh, in four days and a half—no formal camp was pitched at all, probably because the time of penal wandering came to an end at Eziongeber, and the time had arrived when the congregation was to assemble again at Kadesh, and set out thence upon its journey to Canaan.—Hence the eleven names given in vv. 19–30, between *Rithmah* and *Moseroth*, can only refer to those stations at which the congregation pitched their camp for a longer or shorter period during the thirty-seven years of punishment, on their slow return from Kadesh to the Red Sea, and previous to their entering the Arabah and encamping at Moseroth.

This number of stations, which is very small for thirty-seven years (only seventeen from Rithmah or Kadesh to Eziongeber), is a sufficient proof that the congregation of Israel was not constantly wandering about during the whole of that time, but may have remained in many of the places of encampment, probably those which furnished an abundant supply of water and pasturage, not only for weeks and months, but even for years, the people scattering themselves in all directions round about the place where the tabernacle was set up, and making use of such means of support as the desert afforded, and assembling together again when this was all gone, for the purpose of travelling farther and seeking somewhere else a suitable spot for a fresh encampment. Moreover, the words of Deut. 1:46, “ye abode in Kadesh many days,” when compared with Numbers 2:1, “then we turned, and took our journey into the wilderness of the way to the Red Sea,” show most distinctly, that after the sentence passed upon the people in Kadesh (Numbers 14), they did not begin to travel back at once, but remained for a considerable time in Kadesh before going southwards into the desert.

With regard to the direction which they took, all that can be said, so long as none of the places of encampment mentioned in vv. 19–29 are discovered, is that they made their way by a

very circuitous route, and with many a wide detour, to Eziongeber, on the Red Sea.

**Numbers 33:37–49.** The places of encampment on the journey of the fortieth year from Kadesh to Mount Hor, and round Edom and Moab into the steppes of Moab, have been discussed at Numbers 20 and 21. On Mount Hor, and Aaron’s death there, see at Numbers 20:22. For the remark in v. 40 concerning the Canaanites of Arad, see at Numbers 21:1. On *Zalmonah*, *Phunon*, and *Oboth*, see at Numbers 21:10; on *Ijje Abarim*, at Numbers 21:11; on *Dibon Gad*, *Almon Diblathaim*, and the mountains of *Abarim*, before *Nebo*, Numbers 21:16–20 (see p. 752). On *Arboth Moab*, see Numbers 22:1.

*Instructions Concerning the Conquest and Distribution of Canaan.—Ch. 33:50–36:13.*

**Numbers 33:50–36:13.** These instructions, with which the eyes of the Israelites were directed to the end of all their wandering, viz., the possession of the promised land, are arranged in two sections by longer introductory formulas (Numbers 33:50 and 35:1). The *former* contains the divine commands (*a*) with regard to the extermination of the Canaanites and their idolatry, and the division of the land among the tribes of Israel (Numbers 33:50–56); (*b*) concerning the boundaries of Canaan (Numbers 34:1–15); (*c*) concerning the men who were to divide the land (Numbers 34:16–29). The second contains commands (*a*) respecting the towns to be given up to the Levites (Numbers 35:1–8); (*b*) as to the setting apart of cities of refuge for unintentional manslaughter, and the course to be adopted in relation to such manslaughter (Numbers 35:9–34); and (*c*) a law concerning the marrying of heiresses within their own tribes (Numbers 36).—The careful dovetailing of all these legal regulations by separate introductory formulas, is a distinct proof that the section Numbers 33:50–56 is not to be regarded, as *Baumgarten*, *Knobel*, and others suppose, in accordance with the traditional division of the chapters, as an

appendix or admonitory conclusion to the list of stations, but as the general legal foundation for the more minute instructions in Numbers 34–36.

**Numbers 33:50–56.** Command to Exterminate the Canaanites, and Divide their Land among the Families of Israel.

**Numbers 33:51–53.** When the Israelites passed through the Jordan into the land of Canaan, they were to exterminate all the inhabitants of the land, and to destroy all the memorials of their idolatry; to take possession of the land and well therein, for Jehovah had given it to them for a possession. הוֹרִישׁ, to take possession of (vv. 53, etc.), then to drive out of their possession, to exterminate (v. 52; cf. Numbers 14:12, etc.). On v. 52, see Ex. 34:13.

מִשְׁבֵּית, an idol of stone (cf. Lev. 26:1). צֵלְמִי

מִסֶּכֶת, idols cast from brass. *Massecah*, see at Ex. 32:4. *Bamoth*, altars of the Canaanites upon high places (see Lev. 26:30).

**Numbers 33:54.** The command to divide the land by lot among the families is partly a verbal repetition of Numbers 26:53–56. אֶל-אֲשֶׁר

יֵצֵא לוֹ וּגְוֹ: literally, “into that, whither the lot comes out to him, shall be to him” (i.e., to each family); in other words, it is to receive that portion of land to which the lot that comes out of the urn shall point it. “According to the tribes of your fathers:” see at Numbers 26:55.—The command closes in vv. 55, 56, with the threat, that if they did not exterminate the Canaanites, not only would such as were left become “thorns in their eyes and stings in their sides,” i.e., inflict the most painful injuries upon them, and make war upon them in the land; but Jehovah would also do the very same things to the Israelites that He had intended to do to the Canaanites, i.e., drive them out of the land and destroy them. This threat is repeated by Joshua in his last address to the assembled congregation (Josh. 23:13).

## Numbers 34

**Numbers 34:1–15.** Boundaries of the Land of Canaan.—V. 2. “When ye come into the land of Canaan, this shall be the land which will fall to you as an inheritance, the land of Canaan according to its boundaries:” i.e., ye shall receive the land of Canaan for an inheritance, within the following limits.

**Numbers 34:3–5.** The southern boundary is the same as that given in Josh. 15:2–4 as the boundary of the territory of the tribe of Judah. We have first the general description, “The south side shall be to you from the desert of Zin on the sides of Edom onwards,” i.e., the land was to extend towards the south as far as the desert of Zin on the sides of Edom. עַל-יַדֵּי, “on the

sides,” differs in this respect from עַל-יָד, “on the side” (Ex. 2:5; Josh. 15:46; 2 Sam. 15:2), that the latter is used to designate contact at a single point or along a short line; the former, contact for a long distance or throughout the whole

extent (= כָּל-יָד, Deut. 2:37). “On the sides of Edom” signifies, therefore, that the desert of Zin stretched along the side of Edom, and Canaan was separated from Edom by the desert of Zin. From this it follows still further, that Edom in this passage is not the mountains of Edom, which had their western boundary on the Arabah, but the country to the south of the desert of Zin or Wady Murreh (see p. 709), viz., the mountain land of the Azazimeh, which still bears the name of *Seir* or *Serr* among the Arabs (see *Seetzen* and *Rowland* in *Ritter’s Erdk.* xiv. pp. 840 and 1087). The statement in Josh. 15:1 also agrees with this, viz., that Judah’s inheritance was “to the territory of Edom, the desert of Zin towards the south,” according to which the desert of Zin was also to divide the territory of Edom from that of the tribe of Judah (see the remarks on Numbers 14:45). With v. 3b the more minute description of the southern boundary line commences: “The south border shall be from the end of the Salt Sea eastward,” i.e., start from “the tongue which turns to the

south" (Josh. 15:2), from the southern point of the Dead Sea, where there is now a salt marsh with the salt mountain at the south-west border

of the lake. "And turn to the south side (מִנְּגִבָּה) of the ascent of Akrabbim" (*ascensus scorpionum*), i.e., hardly "the steep pass of *es Sufah*, 1434 feet in height, which leads in a south-westerly direction from the Dead Sea along the northern side of *Wady Fikreh*, a wady three-quarters of an hour's journey in breadth, and over which the road from Petra to Heshbon passes," as *Knobel* maintains; for the expression

נָסַב (turn), in v. 4, according to which the southern border turned at the height of Akrabbim, that is to say, did not go any farther in the direction from N.E. to S.W. than from the southern extremity of the Salt Sea to this point, and was then continued in a straight line from east to west, is not at all applicable to the position of this pass, since there would be no bend whatever in the boundary line at the pass of *es Sufah*, if it ran from the Arabah through *Wady Fikreh*, and so across to *Kadesh*. The "height of *Akrabbim*," from which the country round was afterwards called *Akrabattine*, *Akrabatene* (1 Macc. 5:4; *Josephus*, Ant. 12:8, 1), is most probably the lofty row of "white cliffs" of sixty or eighty feet in height, which run obliquely across the Arabah at a distance of about eight miles below the Dead Sea and, as seen from the south-west point of the Dead Sea, appear to shut in the Ghor, and which form the dividing line between the two sides of the great valley, which is called *el Ghor* on one side, and *el Araba* on the other (*Robinson*, ii. 489, 494, 502). Consequently it was not the *Wady Fikreh*, but a wady which opened into the Arabah somewhat farther to the south, possibly the southern branch of the *Wady Murreh* itself, which formed the actual boundary.

"And shall pass over to *Zin*" (i.e., the desert of *Zin*, the great *Wady Murreh*, see at Numbers 14:21), "and its going forth shall be to the south of *Kadesh-Barnea*," at the western extremity of the desert of *Zin* (see at Numbers 20:16). From

this point the boundary went farther out (יֵצֵא)

"to *Hazar-Addar*, and over (עָבַר) to *Azmon*."

According to Josh. 15:3, 4, it went to the south of *Kadesh-Barnea* over (עָבַר) to *Hezron*, and

ascended (עָלָה) to *Addar*, and then turned to *Karkaa*, and went over to *Azmon*. Consequently *Hazar-Addar* corresponds to *Hezron* and *Addar* (in *Joshua*); probably the two places were so close to each other that they could be joined together. Neither of them has been discovered yet. This also applies to *Karkaa* and *Azmon*. The latter name reminds us of the Bedouin tribe *Azazimeh*, inhabiting the mountains in the southern part of the desert of *Zin* (*Robinson*, i. pp. 274, 283, 287; *Seetzen*, iii. pp. 45, 47). *Azmon* is probably to be sought for near the *Wady el Ain*, to the west of the *Hebron* road, and not far from its entrance into the *Wady el Arish*; for this is "the river (brook) of *Egypt*," to which the boundary turned from *Azmon*, and through which it had "its outgoings at the sea," i.e., terminated at the *Mediterranean Sea*. The "brook of *Egypt*," therefore, is frequently spoken of as the southern boundary of the land of *Israel* (1 Kings 8:65, 2 Kings 24:7, 2 Chron. 7:8, and Isa. 27:12, where the LXX express the name by Πινοκοροῦρα). Hence the southern boundary ran, throughout its whole length, from the Arabah on the east to the *Mediterranean* on the west, along valleys which form a natural division, and constitute more or less the boundary line between the desert and the cultivated land.

**Numbers 34:6.** The western boundary was to be "the great sea and its territory," i.e., the *Mediterranean Sea* with its territory or coast (cf. Deut. 3:16, 17; Josh. 13:23, 27; 15:47).

**Numbers 34:7-9.** The northern boundary cannot be determined with certainty. "From the great sea, mark out to you (תִּתְּאוּרָה, from תָּאָרָה =

תָּוֵרָה, to mark or point out), i.e., fix, *Mount Hor* as the boundary"—from thence "to come to

*Hamath; and let the goings forth of the boundary be to Zedad. And the boundary shall go out to Ziphron, and its goings out be at Hazar-enan.*" Of all these places, *Hamath*, the modern *Hamah*, or the *Epiphania* of the Greeks and Romans on the Orontes (see at Numbers 13:21, and Gen. 10:18), is the only one whose situation is well known; but the geographical description of the northern boundary of the land of Israel לְבָאֵל

חַמַּתְּ (Numbers 13:21; Josh. 13:5; Judg. 3:3; 1 Kings 8:65; 2 Kings 14:25; 1 Chron. 13:5; 2 Chron. 7:8; Amos 6:14; Ezek. 47:15, 20; 48:1) is so indefinite, that the boundary line cannot be determined with exactness. For no proof can be needed in the present day that לְבָאֵל חַמַּתְּ cannot mean "to Hamath" (*Ges. thes.* i. p. 185; *Studer* on Judg. 3:3, and *Baur* on Amos 6:2), in such a sense as would make the town of

Hamath the border town, and לְבָאֵל a perfectly superfluous pleonasm. In all the passages mentioned, *Hamath* refers, not to the town of that name (*Epiphania* on the Orontes), but to the kingdom of *Hamath*, which was named after its capital, as is proved beyond all doubt by 2 Chron. 8:4, where Solomon is said to have built store cities "in Hamath." The city of Hamath never belonged to the kingdom of Israel, not even under David and Solomon, and was not reconquered by Jeroboam II, as *Baur* supposes (see my Commentary on the Books of Kings, and *Thenius* on 2 Kings 14:25). How far the territory of the kingdom of Hamath extended towards the south in the time of Moses, and how much of it was conquered by Solomon (2 Chron. 8:4), we are nowhere informed. We simply learn from 2 Kings 25:21, that Riblah (whether the same Riblah as is mentioned in v. 11 as a town upon the eastern boundary, is very doubtful) was situated in the land of Hamath in the time of the Chaldeans. Now if this Riblah has been preserved in the modern *Ribleh*, a miserable village on the Orontes, in the northern part of the *Bekaa*, ten or twelve hours' journey to the south-west of *Hums*, and

fourteen hours to the north of *Baalbek* (*Robinson*, iii. p. 461, App. 176, and *Bibl. Researches*, p. 544), the land of Canaan would have reached a little farther northwards, and almost to *Hums* (*Emesa*). *Knobel* moves the boundary still farther to the north. He supposes Mount *Hor* to be *Mons Casius*, to the south-west of Antioch, on the Orontes, and agrees with *Robinson* (iii. 461) in identifying *Zedad*, in the large village of *Zadad* (*Sudud* in *Rob.*), which is inhabited exclusively by Syriac Christians, who still speak Syriac according to *Seetzen* (i. 32 and 279), a town containing about 3000 inhabitants (*Wetstein, Reiseber.* p. 88), to the south-east of *Hums*, on the east of the road from Damascus to Hunes, a short day's journey to the north of *Nebk*, and four (or, according to *Van de Velde's* memoir, from ten to twelve) hours' journey to the south of *Hasya* (*Robinson*, iii. p. 461; *Ritter, Erdk.* xvii. pp. 1443–4).

*Ziphron*, which was situated upon the border of the territory of Hamath and Damascus, if it is the same as the one mentioned in Ezek. 47:16, is supposed by *Knobel* and *Wetstein* (p. 88) to be preserved in the ruins of *Zifran*, which in all probability have never been visited by any European, fourteen hours to the north-east of Damascus, near to the road from Palmyra. Lastly, *Hazar-enan* (equivalent to fountain-court) is supposed to be the station called *Centum Putea* (Πούτεια in *Ptol.* v. 15, 24), mentioned in the *Tabul. Peuting.* x. 3, on the road from *Apamia* to *Palmyra*, twenty-seven miles, or about eleven hours, to the north-west of Palmyra.—But we may say with certainty that all these conclusions are incorrect, because they are irreconcilable with the eastern boundary described in vv. 10, 11. For example, according to vv. 10, 11, the Israelites were to draw (fix) the eastern boundary "from *Hazar-enan* to *Shepham*," which, as *Knobel* observes, "cannot be determined with exactness, but was farther south than *Hazar-enan*, as it was a point on the eastern boundary which is traced here from north to south, and also farther west, as we may infer from the allusion to Riblah, probably at the northern end of *Antilibanus*" (?). From *Shepham* the boundary was "to go

down to Riblah," which Knobel finds in the Riblah mentioned above. Now, if we endeavour to fix the situation of these places according to the latest and most trustworthy maps, the incorrectness of the conclusions referred to becomes at once apparent. From Zadad (*Sudad*) to Zifran, the line of the northern boundary would not have gone from west to east, but from north to south, or rather towards the south-west, and from Zifran to Centum Putea still more decidedly in a south-westerly direction. Consequently the northern boundary would have described a complete semicircle, commencing in the north-west and terminating in the south-east. But if even in itself this appears very incredible, it becomes perfectly impossible when we take the eastern boundary into consideration. For if this went down to the south-west from Hazar-enan to Shepham according to Knobel's conclusions, instead of going down (v. 11) from Shepham to Riblah, it would have gone up six or seven geographical miles from south to north, and then have gone down again from north to south along the eastern coast of the Lake of Gennesareth. Now it is impossible that Moses should have fixed such a boundary to the land of Israel on the north-east, and equally impossible that a later Hebrew, acquainted with the geography of his country, should have described it in this way. If, in order to obtain a more accurate view of the extent of the land towards the north and north-east, we compare the statements of the book of Joshua concerning the conquered land with the districts which still remained to be taken at the time of the distribution; Joshua had taken the land "from the bald mountain which ascends towards Seir," i.e., probably the northern ridge of the Azazimeh mountains, with its white masses of chalk (*Fries, ut sup.* p. 76; see also at Josh. 11:17), "to Baal-Gad, in the valley of Lebanon, below Mount Hermon" (Josh. 11:17; cf. Numbers 12:7). But Baal-Gad in the valley (בְּקֵעָה) of Lebanon is not Heliopolis (now Baalbek in the Bekaa, or Coelesyria), as many, from Iken and J. D. Michaelis down to Knobel, suppose; for "the Bekaa is not under the

Hermon," and "there is no proof, or even probability, that Joshua's conquests reached so far, or that Baalbek was ever regarded as the northern boundary of Palestine, nor even that the adjoining portion of Anti-Lebanon was ever called Hermon" (*Robinson, Biblical Researches*, p. 409). Baal-Gad, which is called Baal-Hermon in Judg. 3:3 and 1 Chron. 5:23, was the later Paneas or Caesarea Philippi, the modern Banias, at the foot of the Hermon (cf. v. Raumer, Pal. p. 245; *Rob. Bibl. Res.* pp. 408-9, Pal. iii. pp. 347ff.). This is placed beyond all doubt by 1 Chron. 5:23, according to which the Manassites, who were increasing in numbers, dwelt "from Bashan to Baal-Hermon, and Senir, and the mountains of Hermon," since this statement proves that Baal-Hermon was between Bashan and the mountains of Hermon. In harmony with this, the following places in the north of Canaan are mentioned in Josh. 13:4, 5, and Judg. 3:3, as being left unconquered by Joshua:—(1.) "All the land of the Canaanites (i.e., of the Phoenicians who dwelt on the coast), and the cave of the Sidonians to Aphek;" מְעָרָה, probably the spelunca inexpugnabilis in territorio Sidoniensi, quae vulgo dicitur cavea de Tyrum (*Wilh. Tyr.* xix. 11), the present Mughr Jezzín, i.e., caves of Jezzín, to the east of Sidon upon Lebanon (*Ritter, Erdk.* xvii. pp. 99, 100); and Aphek, probably the modern Afka, to the north-east of Beirut (*Robinson, Bibl. Res.*). (2.) "The land of the Giblites," i.e., the territory of Byblos, and "all Lebanon towards the east, from Baal-Gad below Hermon, till you come to Hamath," i.e., not Antilibanus, but Lebanon, which lies to the east of the land of the Giblites. The land of the Giblites, or territory of Gebal, which is cited here as the northernmost district of the unconquered land, so that its northern boundary must have coincided with the northern boundary of Canaan, can hardly have extended to the latitude of Tripoli, but probably only reached to the cedar grove at Bjerreh, in the neighbourhood of which the highest peaks of the Lebanon are found. The territory of the tribes of Asher and Naphtali (Josh. 19:24-39) did not reach farther up than this. From all

these accounts, we must not push the northern boundary of Canaan as far as the *Eleutherus*, *Nahr el Kebir*, but must draw it farther to the south, across the northern portion of the Lebanon; so that we may look for *Hazar-enan* (fountain-court), which is mentioned as the end of the northern boundary, and the starting-point of the eastern, near the fountain of *Lebweh*. This fountain forms the water-shed in the Bekaa, between the Orontes, which flows to the north, and the Leontes, which flows to the south (cf. *Robinson*, *Bibl. Res.* p. 531), and is not only a very large fountain of the finest clear water, springing at different points from underneath a broad piece of coarse gravel, which lies to the west of a vein of limestone, but the whole of the soil is of such a character, that "you have only to dig in the gravel, to get as many springs as you please." The quantity of water which is found here is probably even greater than that at the *Anjar*. In addition to the four principal streams, there are three or four smaller ones (*Robinson*, *Bibl. Res.* p. 532), so that this place might be called, with perfect justice, by the name of *fountain-court*. The probability of this conjecture is also considerably increased by the fact, that the *Ain*, mentioned in v. 11 as a point upon the eastern boundary, can also be identified without any difficulty (see at v. 11).

**Numbers 34:10–12.** The *Eastern Boundary*.—If we endeavour to trace the upper line of the eastern boundary from the fountain-place just mentioned, it ran from *Hazar-enan* to *Shepham*, the site of which is unknown, and "from *Shepham* it was to go down to *Riblah*, on the east of *Ain*" (the fountain). The article הַרְבֵּלָה, and still more the precise description, "to the east of *Ain*, the fountain, or fountain locality" (*Knobel*), show plainly that this *Riblah* is to be distinguished from the *Riblah* in the land of Hamath (2 Kings 23:33; 25:21; Jer. 39:9; 52:27), with which it is mostly identified. *Ain* is supposed to be "the great fountain of *Neba Anjar*, at the foot of Antilibanus, which is often called *Birket Anjar*, on account of its taking its rise in a small reservoir or pool" (*Robinson*,

*Bibl. Res.* p. 498), and near to which *Mej-del-Anjar* is to be seen, consisting of "the ruins of the walls and towers of a fortified town, or rather of a large citadel" (*Robinson*, p. 496; cf. *Ritter*, xvii. pp. 181ff.). From this point the boundary went farther down, and pressed

(מְחֵה) "upon the shoulder of the lake of *Chinnereth* towards the east," i.e., upon the north-east shore of the Sea of Galilee (see Josh. 19:35). Hence it ran down along the Jordan to the Salt Sea (Dead Sea). According to these statements, therefore, the eastern boundary went from Bekaa along the western slopes of Antilibanus, over or past *Rasbeya* and *Banyas*, at the foot of Hermon, along the edge of the mountains which bound the *Huleh* basin towards the east, down to the north-east corner of the Sea of Galilee; so that *Hermon* itself (*Jebel es Sheikh*) did not belong to the land of Israel.

**Numbers 34:13–15.** This land, according to the boundaries thus described, the Israelites were to distribute by lot (Numbers 26:56), to give it to the nine tribes and a half, as the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half Manasseh had already received their inheritance on the other side of the Jordan (Numbers 32:33ff.).

**Numbers 34:16–29.** List of the Men Appointed to Distribute the Land.—In addition to Eleazar and Joshua, the former of whom was to stand at the head as high priest, in accordance with the divine appointment in Numbers 27:21, and the latter to occupy the second place as commander of the army, a prince was selected from each of the ten tribes who were interested in the distribution, as Reuben and Gad had nothing to do with it. Of these princes, namely heads of fathers' houses of the tribes (Josh. 14:1), not heads of tribes (see at Numbers 13:2), Caleb, who is well known from Numbers 13, is the only one whose name is known. The others are not mentioned anywhere else. The list of tribes, in the enumeration of their princes, corresponds, with some exceptions, to the situation of the territory which the tribes received in Canaan, reckoning from south to north, and deviates considerably from the order



in which the lots came out for the different tribes, as described in Josh. 15–19. נָחַל in the *Kal*, in vv. 17 and 18, signifies to give for an inheritance, just as in Ex. 34:8, to put into possession. There is not sufficient ground for altering the *Kal* into *Piel*, especially as the *Piel* in v. 29 is construed with the accusative of the person, and with the thing governed by ב; whereas in v. 17 the *Kal* is construed with the person governed by ל, and the accusative of the thing.

### Numbers 35

**Numbers 35:1–8.** Appointment of Towns for the Levites.—As the Levites were to receive no inheritance of their own, i.e., no separate tribe-territory, in the land of Canaan (Numbers 18:20 and 23), Moses commanded the children of Israel, i.e., the rest of the tribes, in accordance with the divine instructions, to give (vacate) towns to the Levites to dwell in of the inheritance that fell to them for a possession, with pasturage by the cities round about them for their cattle. “Towns to dwell in,” i.e., not the whole of the towns as their own property, but as many houses in the towns as sufficed for the necessities of the Levites as their hereditary possession, which could be redeemed, if sold at any time, and which reverted to them without compensation in the year of jubilee, even if not redeemed before (Lev. 25:32, 33); but any portion of the towns which was not taken possession of by them, together with the fields and villages, continued the property of those tribes to which they had been assigned by lot (cf. Josh. 21:12, and my commentary on this passage: also *Bähr*, *Symbolik*, ii. p. 50; *Ewald*, *Gesch.* ii. p. 403). They were also to give them

מִגְרָשׁ (from גָּרַשׁ, to drive, drive out),

pasturage or fields, to feed their flocks upon, all round the cities; and according to Lev. 25:34, this was not to be sold, but to remain the

eternal possession of the Levites. לְבֵהֶמְתָּם,

for their oxen and beasts of burden, and

לְרִכּוּשָׁם, for their (remaining) possessions in flocks (sheep and goats), which are generally described in other cases as *Mikneh*, in distinction from *behemah* (e.g., Numbers 32:26;

Gen. 34:23; 36:6). לְכָל-חַיְתָּם, and for all their animals, is merely a generalizing summary signifying all the animals which they possessed.

**Numbers 35:4.** The pasture lands of the different towns were to measure “from the town wall outwards a thousand cubits round about,” i.e., on each of the four sides. “And measure from without the city, the east side 2000 cubits, and the south side 2000 cubits, and the west side 2000 cubits, and the north side 2000 cubits, and the city in the middle,” i.e., so that the town stood in the middle of the measured lines, and the space which they occupied was not included in the 2000 cubits. The meaning of these instructions, which have caused great perplexity to commentators, and have latterly been explained by *Saalschütz* (*Mos. R.* pp. 100, 101) in a marvellously erroneous manner, was correctly expounded by *J. D. Michaelis* in the notes to his translation. We must picture the towns and the surrounding fields as squares, the pasturage as stretching 1000 cubits from the city wall in every direction, as the accompanying figures show, and the length of each outer side as 2000 cubits, apart from the length of the city wall: so that, if the town itself occupied a square of 1000 cubits (see fig. *a*), the outer side of the town fields would measure 2000 + 1000 cubits in every direction; but if each side of the city wall was only 500 cubits long (see fig. *b*), the outer side of the town fields would measure 2000 + 500 cubits in every direction. (2) See figs *a* and *b*.

**Numbers 35:6–8.** Of these cities which were given up to the Levites, six were to serve as cities of refuge (see at v. 12) for manslayers, and in addition to these (עָלֵיהֶם, over upon them) the Israelites were to give of their possessions forty-two others, that is to say, forty-eight in all; and they were to do this,

giving much from every tribe that had much, and little from the one which had little (Numbers 26:54). With the accusatives אֵת (Numbers 26:54). With the accusatives אֵת הָעָרִים and יַעַת שֵׁשׁ עָרֵי (v. 6), the writer has already in his mind the verbs תִּרְבּוּ and תִּמְעִיטוּ of v. 8, where he takes up the object again in the word וְהָעָרִים. According to Josh. 21, the Levites received nine cities in the territory of Judah and Simeon, four in the territory of each of the other tribes, with the exception of Naphtali, in which there were only three, that is to say, ten in the land to the east of the Jordan, and thirty-eight in Canaan proper, of which the thirteen given up by Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin were assigned to the families of the priests, and the other thirty-five to the three Levitical families. This distribution of the Levites among all the tribes—by which the curse of division and dispersion in Israel, which had been pronounced upon Levi in Jacob's blessing (Gen. 49:7), was changed into a blessing both for the Levites themselves and also for all Israel—was in perfect accordance with the election and destination of this tribe. Called out of the whole nation to be the peculiar possession of Jehovah, to watch over His covenant, and teach Israel His rights and His law (Deut. 33:9, 10; Lev. 10:11; Deut. 31:9–13), the Levites were to form and set forth among all the tribes the ἐκλογία of the nation of Jehovah's possession, and by their walk as well as by their calling to remind the Israelites continually of their own divine calling; to foster and preserve the law and testimony of the Lord in Israel, and to awaken and spread the fear of God and piety among all the tribes. Whilst their distribution among all the tribes corresponded to this appointment, the fact that they were not scattered in all the towns and villages of the other tribes, but were congregated together in separate towns among the different tribes, preserved them from the disadvantages of standing alone, and defended them from the

danger of moral and spiritual declension. Lastly, in the number forty-eight, the quadrupling of the number of the tribes (twelve) is unmistakeable. Now, as the number four is the seal of the kingdom of God in the world, the idea of the kingdom of God is also represented in the four times twelve towns (cf. *Bähr, Symbolik*, ii. pp. 50, 51).

**Numbers 35:9–34.** Selection and Appointment of Cities of Refuge for Unpremeditated Manslayers.—Vv. 10, 11. When the Israelites had come into the land of Canaan, they were to choose towns conveniently situated as cities of refuge, to which the manslayer, who had slain a person (*nephesh*) by accident (בְּשִׁגְגָה) see at

Lev. 4:2), might flee. הִקְרָה, from קָרָה, to hit, *occurrit*, as well as *accidit*; signifies here to give or make, i.e., to choose something suitable (*Dietrich*), but not “to build or complete”

(*Knobel*), in the sense of קָרָה, as the only meaning which this word has is *contignare*, to join with beams or rafters; and this is obviously unsuitable here. Through these directions, which are repeated and still further expanded in Deut. 19:1–13, God fulfilled the promise which He gave in Ex. 21:13: that He would appoint a place for the man who should unintentionally slay his neighbour, to which he might flee from the avenger of blood.

**Numbers 35:12–15.** These towns were to serve for a refuge from the avenger of blood, that the manslayer might not die before he had taken his trial in the presence of the congregation. The number of cities was fixed at six, three on the other side of the Jordan, and three on this side in the land of Canaan, to which both the children of Israel, and also the foreigners and settlers who were dwelling among them, might flee. In Deut. 19:2ff., Moses advises the congregation to prepare (הִכִּין) the way to these cities, and to divide the territory of the land which Jehovah would give them into three parts (שְׁלִישׁ), i.e., to set apart a free city

in every third of the land, that every manslayer might flee thither, i.e., might be able to reach the free city without being detained by length of distance or badness of road, lest, as is added in v. 6, the avenger of blood pursue the slayer while his heart is hot (יָחַם, imperf. Kal of

חָמַם), and overtake him because the way is

long, and slay him (הִכָּה גִּפְשׁוֹ, as in Gen. 37:21), whereas he was not worthy of death (i.e., there was no just ground for putting him to death), "because he had not done it out of hatred." The three cities of refuge on the other side were selected by Moses himself (Deut. 4:41-43); the three in Canaan were not appointed till the land was distributed among the nine tribes and a half (Josh. 20:7). Levitical or priests' towns were selected for all six, not only because it was to the priests and Levites that they would first of all look for an administration of justice (*Schultz* on Deut. 19:3), but also on the ground that these cities were the property of Jehovah, in a higher sense than the rest of the land, and for this reason answered the idea of cities of refuge, where the manslayer, when once received, was placed under the protection of divine grace, better than any other places possibly could.

The establishment of cities of refuge presupposed the custom and right of revenge. The custom itself goes back to the very earliest times of the human race (Gen. 4:15, 24; 27:45); it prevailed among the Israelites, as well as the other nations of antiquity, and still continues among the Arabs in unlimited force (cf. *Niebuhr*, Arab. pp. 32ff.; *Burckhardt*, Beduinen, 119, 251ff.). "Revenge of blood prevailed almost everywhere, so long as there was no national life generated, or it was still in the first stages of its development; and consequently the expiation of any personal violation of justice was left to private revenge, and more especially to family zeal" (*Oehler* in *Herzog's B. Cycl.*, where the proofs may be seen). The warrant for this was the principle of retribution, the *jus talionis*, which lay at the foundation of the

divine order of the world in general, and the Mosaic law in particular, and which was sanctioned by God, so far as murder was concerned, even in the time of Noah, by the command, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood," etc. (Gen. 9:5, 6). This warrant, however, or rather obligation to avenge murder, was subordinated to the essential principle of the theocracy, under the Mosaic law. Whilst God Himself would avenge the blood that was shed, not only upon men, but upon animals also (Gen. 9:5), and commanded blood-revenge, He withdrew the execution of it from subjective caprice, and restricted it to cases of premeditated slaying or murder, by appointing cities of refuge, which were to protect the manslayer from the avenger, until he took his trial before the

congregation. גֹּאֵל, redeemer, is "that particular relative whose special duty it was to restore the violated family integrity, who had to redeem not only landed property that had been alienated from the family (Lev. 25:25ff.), or a member of the family that had fallen into slavery (Lev. 25:47ff.), but also the blood that had been taken away from the family by murder" (*Oehler*). In the latter respect he was called גֹּאֵל הַדָּם, (vv. 19, 21, 24ff.; Deut. 19:6, 12). From 2 Sam. 14:7, we may see that it was the duty of the whole family to take care that blood-revenge was carried out. The performance of the duty itself, however, was probably regulated by the closeness of the relationship, and corresponded to the duty of redeeming from bondage (Lev. 25:49), and to the right of inheritance (Numbers 27:8ff.). What standing before the congregation was to consist of, is defined more fully in what follows (vv. 24, 25). If we compare with this Josh. 20:4ff., the manslayer, who fled from the avenger of blood into a free city, was to stand before the gates of the city, and state his cause before the elders. They were then to receive him into the city, and give him a place that he might dwell among them, and were not to deliver him up to the avenger of blood till he had stood before the congregation for judgment. Consequently, if the

slayer of a man presented himself with the request to be received, the elders of the free city had to make a provisional inquiry into his case, to decide whether they should grant him protection in the city; and then if the avenger of blood appeared, they were not to deliver up the person whom they had received, but to hand him over, on the charge of the avenger of blood, to the congregation to whom he belonged, or among whom the act had taken place, that they might investigate the case, and judge whether the deed itself was wilful or accidental.

**Numbers 35:16–28.** Special instructions are given in vv. 16–28, with reference to the judicial procedure. First of all (vv. 16–21), with regard to qualified slaying or murder. If any person has struck another with an *iron instrument* (an axe, hatchet, hammer, etc.), or “*with a stone of the hand, from which one dies,*” i.e., with a stone which filled the hand,—a large stone, therefore, with which it was possible to kill,—or “*with a wooden instrument of the hand, from which one dies,*” i.e., with a thick club, or a large, strong wooden instrument, and he then died (so that he died in consequence), he was a murderer, who was to be put to death. “For the suspicion would rest upon any one who had used an instrument, that endangered life and therefore was not generally used in striking, that he had intended to take life away” (*Knobel*).

**Numbers 35:19.** The avenger of blood could put him to death, when he hit upon him, i.e., whenever and wherever he met with him.

**Numbers 35:20.** And so also the man who hit another in hatred, or threw at him by lying in wait, or struck him with the hand in enmity, so that he died. And if a murderer of this kind fled into a free city, the elders of his city were to have him fetched out and delivered up to the avenger of blood (Deut. 19:11, 12). Then follow, in vv. 22–28, the proceedings to be taken with an unintentional manslayer, viz., if any one hit another “in the moment,” i.e., suddenly, unawares (Numbers 6:9), without enmity, or by throwing anything upon him, without lying in wait, or by letting a stone, by which a man might be killed, fall upon him without seeing

him, so that he died in consequence, but without being his enemy, or watching to do him harm. In using the expression **בְּכֹל-אֲבֹן**, the writer had probably **הַשְּׁלִיךְ** still in his mind;

but he dropped this word, and wrote **וַיִּפֹּל** in the form of a fresh sentence. The thing intended is explained still more clearly in Deut. 19:4, 5.

Instead of **בְּפִתְעָא**, we find there **בְּבִלְי-דַעַת**, without knowing unintentionally. The words, “without being his enemy,” are paraphrased there by, “without hating him from yesterday and the day before yesterday” (i.e., previously), and are explained by an example taken from the life: “*When a man goeth into the wood with his neighbour to hew wood, and his hand fetcheth a stroke with the axe to cut down the tree, and the iron slippeth (שָׁלַל Niph of שָׁלַל) from the wood (handle), and lighteth upon his neighbour.*”

**Numbers 35:24, 25.** In such a case as this, the congregation was to judge between the slayer and the avenger of blood, according to the judgments before them. They were to rescue the innocent man from the avenger of blood, to bring him back to his (i.e., the nearest) city of refuge to which he had fled, that he might dwell there till the death of the high priest, who had been anointed with the holy oil.

**Numbers 35:26–28.** If he left the city of refuge before this, and the avenger of blood got hold of him, and slew him outside the borders (precincts) of the city, it was not to be reckoned to him as blood (**אֵין לוֹ דָּמִים**, like **אֵין לוֹ דָּם**, Ex. 22:1). But after the death of the high priest he might return “into the land of his possession,” i.e., his hereditary possession (cf. Lev. 27:22), sc., without the avenger of blood being allowed to pursue him any longer.

In these regulations “all the rigour of the divine justice is manifested in the most beautiful concord with His compassionate mercy. Through the destruction of life, even when not

wilful, human blood had been shed, and demanded expiation. Yet this expiation did not consist in the death of the offender himself, because he had not sinned wilfully." Hence an asylum was provided for him in the free city, to which he might escape, and where he would lie concealed. This sojourn in the free city was not to be regarded as banishment, although separation from house, home, and family was certainly a punishment; but it was a concealment under "the protection of the mercy of God, which opened places of escape in the cities of refuge from the carnal ardour of the avenger of blood, where the slayer remained concealed until his sin was expiated by the death of the high priest." For the fact, that the death of the high priest was hereby regarded as expiatory, as many of the Rabbins, fathers, and earlier commentators maintain (see my Comm. on Joshua, p. 448), is unmistakably evident from the addition of the clause, "who has been anointed with the holy oil," which would appear unmeaning and superfluous on any other view. This clause points to the inward connection between the return of the slayer and the death of the high priest. "The anointing with the holy oil was a symbol of the communication of the Holy Ghost, by which the high priest was empowered to act as mediator and representative of the nation before God, so that he alone could carry out the yearly and general expiation for the whole nation, on the great day of atonement. But as his life and work acquired a representative signification through this anointing with the Holy Ghost, his death might also be regarded as a death for the sins of the people, by virtue of the Holy Ghost imparted to him, through which the unintentional manslayer received the benefits of the propitiation for his sin before God, so that he could return cleansed to his native town, without further exposure to the vengeance of the avenger of blood" (Comm. on Joshua, p. 448). But inasmuch as, according to this view, the death of the high priest had the same result in a certain sense, in relation to his time of office, as his function on the day of atonement had had every year, "the death of the earthly

high priest became thereby a type of that of the heavenly One, who, through the eternal (holy) Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, that we might be redeemed from our transgressions, and receive the promised eternal inheritance (Heb. 9:14, 15). Just as the blood of Christ wrought out eternal redemption, only because through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot to God, so the death of the high priest of the Old Testament secured the complete deliverance of the manslayer from his sin, only because he had been anointed with the holy oil, the symbol of the Holy Ghost" (p. 449).

**Numbers 35:29-34.** If, therefore, the confinement of the unintentional manslayer in the city of refuge was neither an ordinary exile nor merely a means of rescuing him from the revenge of the enraged *goel*, but an appointment of the just and merciful God for the expiation of human blood even though not wilfully shed, that, whilst there was no violation of judicial righteousness, a barrier might be set to the unrighteousness of family revenge; it was necessary to guard against any such abuse of this gracious provision of the righteous God, as that into which the heathen right of asylum had degenerated. The instructions which follow in vv. 29-34 were intended to secure this object. In v. 29, there is first of all the general law, that these instructions (those given in vv. 11-28) were to be for a statute of judgment (see Numbers 27:11) for all future ages ("throughout your generations," see Ex. 12:14, 20). Then, in v. 30, a just judgment is enforced in the treatment of murder. "*Whoso killeth any person* (these words are construed absolutely), *at the mouth* (the testimony) *of witnesses shall the murderer be put to death; and one witness shall not answer* (give evidence) *against a person to die;*" i.e., if the taking of life were in question, capital punishment was not to be inflicted upon the testimony of one person only, but upon that of a plurality of witnesses. One witness could not only be more easily mistaken than several, but would be more likely to be partial than several persons who were unanimous in bearing witness to one and the

same thing. The number of witnesses was afterwards fixed at two witnesses, at least, in the case of capital crimes (Deut. 17:6), and two or three in the case of every crime (Deut. 19:15; cf. John 8:17, 2 Cor. 13:1, Heb. 10:28).—Lastly (vv. 31ff.), the command is given not to take redemption money, either for the life of the murderer, who was a wicked man to die, i.e., deserving of death (such a man was to be put to death); nor “for fleeing into the city of refuge, to return to dwell in the land till the death of the high priest:” that is to say, they were neither to allow the wilful murderer to come to terms with the relative of the man who had been put to death, by the payment of a redemption fee, and so to save his life, as is not unfrequently the case in the East at the present day (cf. *Robinson*, Pal. i. p. 209, and *Lane’s Manners and Customs*); nor even to allow the unintentional murderer to purchase permission to return home from the city of refuge before the death of the high priest, by the payment of a money compensation.

**Numbers 35:33.** The Israelites were not to desecrate their land by sparing the murderer; as blood, i.e., bloodshed or murder, desecrated the land, and there was no expiation (יְכַפֵּר) to the land for the blood that was shed in it, except through the blood of the man who had shed it, i.e., through the execution of the murderer, by which justice would be satisfied.

**Numbers 35:34.** And they were not to desecrate the land in which they dwelt by tolerating murderers, because Jehovah, the Holy One, dwelt in it, among the children of Israel (cf. Lev. 18:25ff.).

### Numbers 36

*Law Concerning the Marriage of Heiresses.*—Ch. 36.

**Numbers 36:1–4.** The occasion for this law was a representation made to Moses and the princes of the congregation by the heads of the

fathers’ houses (בְּיַתֵּי־הָאָבוֹת for הָאָבוֹת) as in Ex. 6:25, etc.) of the family of Gilead the Manassite, to which *Zelophehad* (Numbers 26:33) belonged, to the effect that, by allotting an hereditary possession to the daughters of Zelophehad, the tribe-territory assigned to the Manassites would be diminished if they should marry into another tribe. They founded their appeal upon the command of Jehovah, that the land was to be distributed by lot among the Israelites for an inheritance (v. 2 compared with Numbers 26:55, 56, and 33:54); and although it is not expressly stated, yet on the ground of the promise of the everlasting possession of Canaan (Gen. 17:8), and the provision made by the law, that an inheritance was not to be alienated (Lev. 25:10, 13, 23ff.), they understood it as signifying that the portion assigned to each tribe was to continue unchanged to all generations. (The singular pronoun, *my Lord*, in v. 2, refers to the speaker, as in Numbers 32:27.) Now, as the inheritance of their brother, i.e., their tribe-mate Zelophehad, had been given to his daughters (Numbers 27:1), if they should be chosen as wives by any of the children of the (other) tribes of Israel, i.e., should marry into another tribe, their inheritance would be taken away from the tribe-territory of Manasseh, and would be added to that of the tribe into which they were received. The suffix לָהֶם (v. 3) refers

*ad sensum* to מִטָּה, the tribe regarded according to its members.

**Numbers 36:4.** And when the year of jubilee came round (see Lev. 25:10), their inheritance would be entirely withdrawn from the tribe of Manasseh. Strictly speaking, the hereditary property would pass at once, when the marriage took place, to the tribe into which an heiress married, and not merely at the year of jubilee. But up to the year of jubilee it was always possible that the hereditary property might revert to the tribe of Manasseh, either through the marriage being childless, or through the purchase of the inheritance. But in

the year of jubilee all landed property that had been alienated was to return to its original proprietor or his heir (Lev. 25:33ff.). In this way the transfer of an inheritance from one tribe to another, which took place in consequence of a marriage, would be established in perpetuity. And it was in this sense that the elders of the tribe of Manasseh meant that a portion of the inheritance which had fallen to them by lot would be taken away from their tribe at the year of jubilee.

**Numbers 36:5–9.** Moses declared that what they had affirmed was right (כִּי), and then, by command of Jehovah, he told the daughters of Zelophehad that they might marry whoever pleased them (the suffix אִתָּם, attached to בְּעֵינַי, for אִתָּן, as in Ex. 1:21, Gen. 31:9, etc.), but that he must belong to the family of their father's tribe, that is to say, must be a Manassite. For (v. 7) the inheritance was not to turn away the Israelites from one tribe to another (not to be transferred from one to another), but every Israelite was to keep to the inheritance of his father's tribe, and no one was to enter upon the possession of another tribe by marrying an heiress belonging to that tribe. This is afterwards extended, in vv. 8 and 9, into a general law for every heiress in Israel.

**Numbers 36:10–12.** In vv. 10–12 it is related that, in accordance with these instructions, the five daughters of Zelophehad, whose names are repeated from Numbers 26:33 and 27:1 (see also Josh. 17:3), married husbands from the families of the Manassites, namely, sons of their cousins (? uncles), and thus their inheritance remained in their father's tribe (הָיָה עִלָּיו, to be and remain upon anything).

**Numbers 36:13.** The conclusion refers not merely to the laws and rights contained in Numbers 33:50–36:13, but includes the rest of the laws given in the steppes of Moab (Numbers 25–30), and forms the conclusion to the whole book, which places the lawgiving in the steppes of Moab by the side of the lawgiving at Mount Sinai (Lev. 26:46; 27:34) and bring it to a close, though without in any way implying that the explanation (בְּאֵר, Deut. 1:5), further development, and hortatory enforcement of the law and its testimonies, statutes, and judgments (Deut. 1:5; 4:44ff., 12:1ff.), which follow in *Deuteronomy*, are not of Mosaic origin.