

EVANGELICAL BIBLE COLLEGE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA



Life of Moses – Part 5
(Preaching and Events on the
Plains of Moab)

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5 April 2014

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INTRODUCTION

It is always important to tie together the New and the Old Testaments and that is what we will do before we enter a study of this chapter, as it forms a bridge between the prophecies of Balaam and the result of his advice to Balak. Balaam and Balak remain the central figures through the action of the next chapters. We wonder by the end of chapter 24 why Balaam is condemned by the scriptures, because he appears to be blessing the children of Israel all the way. It is only by seeing the results of his advice and tying in the chapter before us with the other scriptures about him that we get the full story on this man and why he is so severely judged by God.

2 Peter 2:15-16 records that Balak paid him money, which he would not have done for blessing Israel, and the events that followed his departure tell us what his "advice" to King Balak was. All Peter does is record for us what the traditions of the Jewish people had recorded through the centuries about this man. Moses will explain this later in Numbers 31:1-16.

In Revelation 2:14-16, even more is recorded, and this man's great sin is spelt out fully. Balaam was taken by Balak to four different hills and he kept on blessing the children of Israel. This prophet however left King Balak and headed home as a millionaire. He did so because of the advice that he gave Balak, and this is recorded in the Revelation passage. He told Balak that nothing was going to change the blessing enjoyed by the children of Israel, unless they could be got into sin that would take them out of fellowship and therefore under Judgment from God.

Balaam understood the way a believer receives the blessing of God, and how they come under discipline from God. He knew that the blessing of the Lord would be removed if the Israelites got involved in pagan religion and sexual immorality, and so this is the advice he gave the king. Now read both these New Testament passages and then see the evil genius at work here. Balaam gives truly satanic advice that is still at the heart of Satan's strategy to destroy believers and their ministries today.

The people who were criticized in this passage of Revelation, were the heretical group called "the Nicolaitans", who were into compromise religion that taught that morality didn't matter. This was one of the first of the satanic counterfeit gospels preached in the first century by Nicholas of Antioch, who was an early deacon of the church, but went after Satanic fake religion rather than holding to the truth of the Apostolic Faith.

The evil Nicholas said that it did not matter if you were a playboy, as long as you staggered into church on a Sunday, did the right things there, said the right things there, and put money in the plate. God however makes it clear in Revelation that he hates sin, and hypocrisy such as this, and that you will be judged by God for persistent carnality. As a believer, if you compromise with sin and evil you will be disciplined as per Hebrews 12.

The standard of God for Israel, and for all who would please the Lord, is given in Deuteronomy 7:1 ff. All through human history the Lord says, "Be holy as I am Holy". God dealing with Israel and the church centre in this concept; both Israel and the Church get the benefit of divine blessing only under this concept. The Lord says to us all, "Live according to the high position that I have given you". We have received God's mercy and grace, and we are to live "HOLY" lives (separated from sin and evil so that we might serve Him), in response to the mercy and grace received.

DEGENERATION – WHERE SATAN WANTS MANKIND

The moral degeneration of the pagan people in the land of Canaan was total. Archaeologists have found that both the Moabites and Canaanites religion were very similar. They virtually centred upon sex and fornication. These nations were so morally low that through their persistent fornication most had venereal diseases which had been passed on even to their animals through sex with their animals (bestiality). All that could be done with these people was to wipe them out.

There were few who were pure, and the Lord would ensure that these were saved and delivered. As we will see the most wicked (the harlot – read "sacred priestess of the fertility cult" - Rahab), could be saved and was saved with her entire family group, and so when the Lord destroys the others we need to recall they would not have been so had they had any desire to stand for God at all. Even the smallest positive volition towards their Maker would have saved them! Matthew 13:31, 17:20.

The liberals call God here the "God of Wrath", and they distinguish between the God portrayed here and that revealed in the New Testament, and talk about the evolutionary development of the notion of a god. This is all pagan nonsense! These academics refer to themselves as scientific in their thinking, but they lack the rigor of thinking an issue through that is demanded of us as biblical scholars. There is one God, and the actions of God here are in accord with the holy character of the Creator and Saviour as revealed throughout the scriptures.

The God of love is here recognizing that these people have gone too far. These people were so infected with venereal disease that they, together with the animals in some situations, had to be destroyed. No one was to be left alive of the worst affected populations, because they would infect others. There was no cure for venereal diseases in those days and

this was the only way to keep others safe from infections that would kill, or affect the fertility and health of the adults and children, and infect the next generation with disease also.

There is no hope today for those who want to destroy themselves with evil and degeneracy, unless they turn to the Lord. Only in the grace and mercy of the Lord is there deliverance from the diseases associated with immorality and paganism. We have a similar thing today to what Israel will face in this chapter, in the sexual immorality and drug use caused AIDS epidemic. These practices of drugs and promiscuous sex, have always been a part of satanic policy and from the beginning of paganism he has used these two tools to entice men and women to their deaths.

The answer to both is the Gospel of Salvation, and their spiritual growth in sanctification so that they do not practice activities that will destroy them. It is walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, in the "narrow way" of holiness, that keeps us safe from the terrible evils that Satan continues to use to destroy mankind. Matthew 7:13ff. We must remember that Satan's desire is to destroy man, not to bless man. Only God seeks our blessing. Satan is the ultimate Narcissist and narcissists do not want to lift anyone up close to them. They seek their own exultation alone, and are simply people users. Satan hates mankind and abuses and destroys all who are deceived enough to believe he cares for them!

Why did these people have to be destroyed? The reason is, because God is love, and God does not want the innocent to suffer from the diseases that are spread by the guilty. It is far better for the guilty to suffer and the innocent to be protected for succeeding generations. God's desire was to protect His people for the rest of their time in the land. These pagan people had persisted in evil and did not want to change their behaviours, even when they received direct revelation from the prophet Balaam. Balaam knew this and should have left them, shaking the dust off his sandals as he left. Matthew 10:11-15.

We will find that Balaam advised Balak to send the women of Moab down into the camp of Israel to entice the men to have sex with them, and worship with them in their fertility cult temples and so enter into religious compromise. The women were to put on their best perfume and their most alluring clothes and make sexual contact with the men of Israel. The plan of the evil king was that Israelite men would become immoral, betray their true faith, and the Lord would then judge the entire nation. That is exactly what will happen, but there is repentance by the majority and so the evil alone are slain and the blessing returns to Israel, and judgment to all who advised and took part in such an evil things.

CHAPTER 25

THE EVENTS OF NUMBERS 25

Here we will see the terrible results of Balaam's advice. Here it says the men "joined themselves" with the Moabites. This means that they had sex with them. You cannot compromise with evil especially in areas where evangelism is called for. The men of Israel were enticed in the camp by these beautiful girls, and then they went up to the Moabite fertility temples, and so they had sex with the Moabite girls in their own tents, in the pagan temples, and in the Moabite homes.

This still happens with many believers today, for Satan has not changed his strategy in using sexual temptation, because it is so effective. Unlike many modern sports coaches Satan doesn't change a winning combination! He is focused on using the most powerful urges of mankind and sex remains the most powerful, and immorality the greatest and faster destroyer of the soul and body of the unwary. God's hand is against those who fornicate and unless it is dealt with quickly it will be destructive to the believer who is so enticed by evil.

Most of these beautiful girls were infected with incurable sexual diseases from their own sexual practices earlier and the Israelites did not even think about this. They followed their lust for sex, just as Balaam had followed his lust for money. Lust is always destructive, and unless it is dealt with quickly by confession and life change it will always destroy the person and their witness.

God's judgment is upon those who get involved in immorality. When God says "no", it is for a reason. By having sex with the Moabite women the Israeli men were putting in jeopardy the future of Israel. They were going to destroy their own fertility or bring into the world children infected with venereal diseases. This is why in verse four Moses is told to cut off the head of every man who has been committing adultery with a Moabite. Adultery is having sex with any other person than the one who God has for you. The order was clear and shocking. "You are to find them, behead them and put their heads on poles so that their relatives can understand how terrible a thing like this is".

Adultery is evil. We have no order to do this today, for we are in a different age where the orders we follow differ from the requirements for the holy establishment of the nation Israel here. We need to see however just how evil adultery is, and be protected from sexual sin by walking daily in the filling of the Holy Spirit. It is easy to sin when you are out of fellowship with the Lord, and this is why we are urged to keep short accounts with God regarding any mental attitude sins that may creep in, and walk close to the Lord. We are to take no chances with sin, or it destroys us.

The judges of Israel will be told to kill only their own family members who have fallen into this great evil; taking personal responsibility for their own relatives only. Moses made the situation absolutely clear to them all; If you are a father and you see your son coming back from the temple of Moab, then get your sword out, and kill your own son. This is horrific to us, but no one is an island, and the impact of that son's sin will destroy their entire family over time unless it is dramatically stopped. The evil that this boy has become involved in is fatal. It is not just a small thing, but a series of evil

decisions that prove the individuals degeneracy. There is a limit to counselling and we often do not recognize that and practise "tough love" and put such a son/daughter out, for their evil will destroy their siblings if left unchanged.

Sin has a habit of overflowing anyway, but sexual and religious sin is the most pernicious. Such sin will affect all your relationships, and it will destroy your witness over time also. We can all look into our own lives, and the lives of our friends, and see the truth of this. We should learn from this sad episode in Israel's history, and quickly deal with any sins of ours while they are still a thought, before any sinful thought comes into overt action, and so we will save many from being defiled by our evil. Titus 1:15-16, Hebrews 12:12-15.

You will find many Christians who think that they can do anything they like, and that it will not affect them or influence others, but it does. Phineas, who was to be the next High Priest, took the Word and doctrine of God seriously, and we will see him take a javelin and run a couple through whilst they were having sex. If there is evil we should deal with it quickly, and so sort out the problem within our own heart, before it destroys our family or nation.

Now we note again, in case there are fanatics hearing this, we have today no license to kill fornicators, but bring them the Gospel strongly that they might repent, and if they do not, then we cast them out of the local church so that they do not destroy others by their evil. 1 Corinthians 5:1-13. Having taken definitive action against the fornicator we must not become self righteous, but always be ready to restore that evil person to fellowship if they repent and change their lives for good. 2 Corinthians 2:1-11. No matter how evil someone was, they can always be forgiven if they come to the foot of the Cross of Jesus. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Ephesians 4:17-31.

If you think you are going into a dangerous situation, then firstly be sure that in the filling of the Holy Spirit you need to go, and that this is the Lord's clearly revealed path for you. Secondly, having been assured that this is required, take someone with you, and have others pray for you. Be very scared of being in places of overwhelming temptation to evil.

We should always work quickly when we have any doubts about our path forward, using the sword of the spirit (the Word of God) as the weapon in our hand. If we tie this passage before us in with Revelation 2 we can see that the principles taught here are not cancelled by the New Testament, rather they are strengthened by it. God's policy has not changed. As a Christian you cannot get away with sin, you have to deal with it, or it will eliminate you from the plan of God for blessing in your life.

SOLOMON'S ADVICE REGARDING SEXUAL TEMPTATION IN PROVERBS

Proverbs contains many passages which are very important for youth groups, and the Proverbs build upon the lessons of Numbers 25. Solomon is talking to his sons on the danger of the professional prostitute and the habitual fornicator. It is the same principle for a girl in danger from a playboy, it is just that Solomon was worried about his boys. Christian young people will face the same temptations that the Israelites faced in Moab and as Solomon's sons faced in the night clubs of Jerusalem.

Solomon says to his son, "do not fall for this old trick of Satan". The lipstick the seductress used was made out of honey and tasted beautiful, and her mouth will always be sweet, because she has taken care to make it so, but in the end it is bitterness and death. Sadly Solomon himself will fail to follow through on his own good advice and destroy his life with loving many women. 1 Kings 11:1-10. He did love them, but it was wrong, and his kingdom paid with the loss of all that he had built, all stolen by pharaoh within five years of Solomon's death. 1 Kings 14:22-31.

Read through Proverbs 2:12-22, 3:5-8, 5:1-23, 6:23-35 and see the warnings against sexual immorality, but then look at the next Proverbs noted, for they are called things that "God hates" in addition to immorality. In Proverbs 6:16-19 we see what God hates, and there Solomon lists the seven worst sins. These are the seven so called "deadly sins", and each of them is related to immorality and based in uncontrolled mental attitudes, but sexually immorality isn't mentioned in the list of seven sins, but as we go through them you will see that immorality permeates them all.

Proverbs 6:16-19. *"16. These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:
17. A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,
18. An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,
19. A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren."*

God hates a proud look, a look of self righteousness when people look down on others. God hates lying tongues. God hates hands that shed innocent blood, and eventually immorality tends to lead to murder. Those who shed innocent blood include those who murder children, as abortionists do, and it covers drunken drivers, violent thugs, drug dealers, and the wealthy doctors and lawyers who protect them. God hates lustful thoughts all the time; lust for money, lust for power, lust for sex, full of anger and hatred, jealousy.

The next is described as "feet that are swift to run to mischief". These are people who dwell on things that are wrong and explain all evil things to anyone who will listen to them in great detail. These are voyeurs; people who lack the courage to do things themselves but love to see, or read about, others who wallow in sex. People who look at pornography and buy the evil magazines that fill our book stores are in this category. Notice how often pornography is sold in vehicle garages where you must go to fill your car with petrol. Satan is clever and determined; and if you fall into this trap you will be destroyed. Paul's advice is clear to the church; "Let not even these things be named among you". Ephesians 5:3.

Biblical leadership warns the Lord's people of danger before they fall into it; we do not wait until people fall, we teach them about the plans and strategies of the enemy and try to build their resistance and knowledge of evil, so that they can spot the enemy. Leaders pray for the sinner, but do not dwell on their sins, nor repeat them to others. We must be careful with our testimonies in the local church in this area. No testimony should ever emphasize the evil lives we may have once had. Your testimony should be such that it is what God has done for you that is heard, not what Satan did with you before that you speak about. We can sensationalize sin and evil, and this is not a good testimony.

No believer should be known by their past evil life, but by what the Lord did to them and how the Lord has changed them. God is holy, and so "be ye holy". Do not spend any time with evil, or the discussion of it. Deal with those who meddle in sin, reject false witnesses, and have no place in your life for people who lie to injure the innocent; have no time for the sowers of discord.

As a pastor of a church it is important to minimize the chances of any form of this evil happening. It is important to see all sin from a Biblical viewpoint. God judges sin and we must stand against it in all its forms. If we do not come before Him in holiness we are in danger of judgment as per Hebrews 12. Only as you take your people to God's policies can you protect them from the enemy's attacks and distortions.

You are called to preach and teach so that the people may have no excuse for their sin. We need to face evil squarely with God's Word in the power of the Holy Spirit. We must mentor truth, and that means to teach and live the standard of God's righteousness in our lives. If we fail to teach the truth about morality to our people they will fall into the traps of the enemy, and what Moses writes here he writes to protect us and our sheep!

NUMBERS 25:1-18

25:1 And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. 2 And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. 3 And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel. 4 And the LORD said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel. 5 And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baalpeor. 6 And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 7 And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand; 8 And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel. 9 And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand. 10 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 11 Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy. 12 Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace: 13 And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel. 14 Now the name of the Israelite that was slain, even that was slain with the Midianitish woman, was Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of a chief house among the Simeonites. 15 And the name of the Midianitish woman that was slain was Cozbi, the daughter of Zur; he was head over a people, and of a chief house in Midian. 16 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 17 Vex the Midianites, and smite them: 18 For they vex you with their wives, wherewith they have beguiled you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of a prince of Midian, their sister, which was slain in the day of the plague for Peor's sake.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 -3. The sequence of events was swift and serious. The Israelites were camped for a considerable time at the place called Shittim; a campsite on the plains of Moab opposite Jericho. Moses does not tell us how long they were there, but it was enough time for the work of Balaam to be done and for him to return to his country in the north. As we will find in Numbers 31, the Midianite tribal kings were active in supporting the advice given also, and they will later pay the price for it.

The satanic plan was simple but effective. The most attractive women from Midian and Moab are gathered and sent into the Israelite camp to seduce and have sex with any Israelite men they can find who are willing. The willingness of the women to do this is indicative of their lax morality. They head into the camp and find many young Israelite men who are ready to be seduced by easy sexual pleasure. Having seduced them they then lead them up to their homes/tents in the hills and invite them to worship at the shrines of their gods. These men compromise their faith and do so, worshipping at the shrine of Baal-Peor, the god of sexuality for the Moabites.

Verses 4 – 5. Moses didn't see this attack coming, but records it here for us to be warned, for the enemy does not change his tactics and this one works with many foolish people. Moses is shocked but he responds quickly when he hears about this new turn of events. The coordinated nature of the seduction of so many men indicates that attractive women flood into the camp, and he quickly responds when he realises what is happening. The description of the seduction process indicates that it takes several days for all this to occur, so how is it that Moses does not notice this is happening until many men are involved?

It may be that there was active trade between the two peoples for all the time that Israel was encamped and so the presence of Moabites/Midianites in the camp did not raise suspicion. They were all related and had been ordered not to attack these people, and so many Israelites would have traded goods and food freely with these “relatives”. It may be that the Israelites were trying to be friendly to the Moabites as their distant relatives, and the Midianites as their neighbours for forty years, so that this evil occurred secretly at first.

Whatever the reason, Moses acts as soon as he realizes that men are actually heading into the hills to worship at Moabite or Midianite temples and are having sexual relationships with these women in the camp, without any thought of the holiness of the Lord, or their responsibilities to marry within their nation. The Lord also speaks directly to Moses about this, and Moses calls the elders and judges of the tribes together. This indicates that the evil is happening covertly and there is little open sign of the seductions taking place. The order the Lord gives is severe; all the men are to be beheaded and their heads placed on stakes in the sun before the tabernacle for all to see and be shocked at what evil has been done amongst them.

Verses 6 – 9. The mood of the people is sombre and there are many tears as they see the heads of those slain and realize the terrible evil that has been set loose amongst them through the women of Moab and Midian. At this very point of national mourning an Israelite man brings in a Midianite woman into the camp. He approaches his tent in sight of Moses and the others, and goes into the tent with this young woman to have sex with her. People ruled by lust are blind to consequences, and also do not see that others are watching them and noting their evils.

This is another reminder that the area involved is small, with tens of thousands of people, but not hundreds of thousands. This man is seen by Moses and the Judges as he heads into his tent to have sex with this woman. He is obviously lust filled for he is having sex within seconds of getting her inside the tent. We know this because of Phinehas’ action. He sees what has happened and does not wait for orders from Moses or his father the high priest. He grabs a javelin and runs to the tent, bursts in, and skewers the two fornicators to the floor killing them both instantly. The evil is over with these two deaths.

The total death toll may be anywhere from 24 to 240, but it certainly isn’t 24,000. Remember from our earlier studies that the numbers in our English Bibles are later estimates by the writers of the Septuagint (LXX) in the 3rd century BC and are guesses on the very high side. The word translated “thousand” was “eleph” and meant a small unified group. The words indicate that a small, but significant number of deaths occur. Really large numbers would have indicated that Moses didn’t move fast enough, and as the Lord ordered Moses to act, we can be sure it was quickly, so as to avoid a large catastrophe. Enough died however, to make a real impression upon all present. In pastoral situations where the danger of immorality is present the wise pastor moves very quickly.

Verses 10 – 13. Phinehas, the son of Eleazar is praised by the Lord for his speedy action to express his righteous indignation at a sin that would destroy the people if left unchecked. The Lord speaks directly to Moses about how highly Phinehas is viewed, because his heart is right before the Lord, and the Lord wants all to have his passion for righteousness and his desire to purge the nation of evil. His line is given the promise of blessing in their priesthood, and their blessing will last forever. While no son of Phinehas is serving as a priest now, they will one day be restored, and will serve until the end of time in the Millennial Temple in Jerusalem. 1 Chronicles 6:1-15, Jeremiah 33:14-18, Revelation 21:22.

Verses 14 – 18. The man who was killed was of a chiefly line of the household of the tribe of Simeon. His name is given, and the name of the Midianite princess is also given. His name was Zimri, and her name was Cozbi. God notes those who fornicate and notes also their foolishness. Sin is not faceless or nameless to the Lord; He knows our foolishness and demands our open, speedy and honest repentance.

This man was a prince of his people and he clearly felt very special to have a princess of a foreign power come to him for sex. He got fat headed and lust filled and like all we today call narcissistic, he felt “entitled” to enjoy himself without restrictions. Beware of lust-logic that always has entitlement at its core. Pride is always at the heart of all immorality and it leads to stupid actions. This man was coming into the camp with this woman, so he had already been up to her temple. His sin was brazen, multiple, and thoughtless. This man could have been a leader of his people, but he chose a path whereby he was led to his death by lust for a foreign princess.

Many men and women have left the path of righteousness, responsibility, and true greatness, and gone after the pleasures of sin for a season! A season is always quite short! Hebrews 11:25. God’s path for our life may involve some hardship, but it is always only for a short season also, and if we are obedient, the path of righteousness leads to blessing forever. Galatians 6:9, 1 Peter 1:6ff.

Cozbi’s fathers name is also given. He is Zur, and he is a chief of a people group, or tribe, amongst the Midianites. These people are the Arabs of the Western Arabian Desert and they are tough warriors and live and fight as tribes. This girl was sent by her father to do this “work” to undermine Israel and he will pay the price that Balaam will also pay. Numbers 31:1-8. The Lord now orders the attack upon the Midianites, for they have proved themselves the enemy of Israel and they cannot be left alive in numbers behind the Israelites as they enter the land across Jordan.

Three of the tribes will request land on this side of Jordan and will be granted it, and so the Midianites cannot be left to harass them from the deserts beyond the hills of Moab. God orders the destruction of the Midianite tribes that are behind

the sexual assault on the Israelites. These people will be both militarily a threat, but the Lord identifies that their spiritual danger is more serious. Sexual sin will slay and disable more men than battle will. More men and women have been undone by sexual temptation than by any other attack of the enemy upon the church. Let us teach and preach this truth, but even more importantly, let us set the example of godly living as the Lord's pastors.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Sexual immorality in the church needs to be dealt with quickly and publicly so that all stand amazed at the swiftness of the judgment upon the fornicator. If sexual sin is not exposed, rebuked, and eliminated, it will destroy a church. All who are guilty of sexual immorality need to be shamed and removed from any office they hold. Churches need clear constitutions on this matter or else immorality will undermine the ministry. The Early Church laid such people aside from full fellowship for seven years and required clear repentance and life change before admitting them back into full communion fellowship, and even longer to restore them to any ministry role. We need to be equally careful in ministry. All who serve must be above suspicion of immorality and safe for others to be around. Lust filled ministers are a danger to all.

2. Phinehas was passionate for the Lord and for righteousness. He didn't need any orders to deal with those who mocked God and God's standards. Are we as keen for righteousness as this man was? Let us be known as people who stand for what is right before the world that has lost its way and is happy with satanic compromise. We live in the world of Zimris and Cozbis and they dominate our magazine racks, and they are not condemned by the press or the people; rather their life style is that of the film stars. We are called to stand for the Lord, not for Satan, and in our day Satan's crowd has the media behind him. Let us not be influenced by evil, but be an influence for goodness and righteousness.

3. God is not unfair to these immoral people, for their sin is fatal to marriage, family, religious truth, and national identity. These men had not just had sex with these women, they had worshipped at their shrines and accepted their evils as if they were good. They were men who had prostituted their faith and were prepared to cast aside their responsibilities as leaders of their people for a bit of sexual pleasure. Such men had gone too far and needed to be eliminated from the nation. They entered the "Sin Unto Death". Let us beware of falling this far from the holiness and grace of God.

REFLECTION UPON THE SIN OF ADULTERY

1. Definition - Sexual activity outside of biblical marriage. This includes fornication, homosexuality, incest.
2. Adultery is prohibited by the Word of God. (Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18; Colossians 3:5; 1Thessalonians 4:3).
3. Mental adultery is condemned as it will erode morality and lead to more evil. (Matthew 5:27-28).
4. Adultery destroys the capacity of the soul to relate to a loved one in faithfulness. (Proverbs 6:32).
5. Sexual immorality has a destructive effect on the human body of both male and female. 1Corinthians 6:13-18.
 - a) Male – sexual dysfunctions increase with immorality.
 - b) Female - breakdown of loving sexual response and pleasure in sex with their right man.
 - c) Increased chance of sexually transmitted diseases.
6. Any sexual immorality ultimately leads to further frustration and an unfulfillable search for happiness. (Ephesians 4:19,5:3).
7. Adultery is a bona fide basis for divorce. (Matthew 5:32; 19:9; Luke 16:18). Adultery has a huge impact between husband and wife in both mental (trust) and physical ("one flesh") areas. However, forgiveness and the grace of God can overcome the effects of all sins, but for some this is unable to be moved on from. Divorce is a legitimate option for an offended wife/husband who has been treated disdainfully by their fornicating partner.
8. Adultery or fornication is often used in the Bible to describe apostasy and unfaithfulness to God. (Jeremiah 3:8-10, Ezekiel 16:23-43, 23:24-28; Revelation 17:1-5).

NOTES

CHAPTER 26**INTRODUCTION**

The second census brings in figures that are similar overall to the first one forty years before. The nation has not multiplied in the wilderness years. They have not, as a total nation, been blessed, but judged through this time. The many times they tempted the Lord and received divine judgment have seen a significant number of people die immediately under the Lord's hand, and then the others have not had the children that could have been expected in their wandering years. Some would argue for natural reasons for this.

There are real factors here that may be important; their migratory life style, hard conditions, previous starvation in slavery, and simple diet of Manna, may all have affected the fertility and birth rate of this first generation. This does not add up however, as the conditions in Arabia were not desert in this time, and many migratory people groups have experienced population explosions, and later would invade and destroy Empires as a result. Once in the land they will prosper and grow in numbers to around the one to two million mark by the days of David and Solomon and be significantly larger by the days of the Lord, with over a million in Alexandria alone then, let alone the populations in all the other cities of the Roman and Parthian Empires.

As we will see, there are some tribes that have been blessed and expanded, and others judged. Something is going on here, and it is not a uniform thing. Why the similarity between the population of this first and second generation? It is clearly the Lord's doing, and whatever the mechanics for it, the purpose for it is clear.

This second generation must face a similar faith test than their parents regarding entering the land. Their numbers are roughly the same for their armed forces, and they face the need of God's help to seize any objective, for they cannot do it in their own strength. Even if the army had doubled or quadrupled in size through these years they would have faced far better odds in every battle.

Their initial 6000 man army if grown to 12,000, or 24,000 through these years would have walked over any opposition. Faith would not have been the test then. Alexander the Great in the 300s BC will defeat the entire Persian Empire with an Army of only around 35,000, and will only use half that number to besiege and take major cities that are far bigger than anything in Canaan at this time of Moses.

The census is a message of their need for faith. The census message to us is that one also. We will always appear to be outnumbered, and often feel out manoeuvred by the enemy in our march through this life. Our challenge, like theirs, is to have faith in the Lord, so that we can walk our way through the entrapment we may feel at times. Psalms 27:14, Habakkuk 2:1-4, Romans 4:16-20, 1 Corinthians 10:11-13. At times it feels like we are trapped in prison, and the challenge of faith is to praise God, as if we are living in a palace, for that is our heavenly destiny. Faith takes us from the Prison of fear to the Palace of faith-rest! John 14:1ff, Hebrews 11:1ff.

NUMBERS 26:1-65

26:1 And it came to pass after the plague, that the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, saying, **2** Take the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, from twenty years old and upward, throughout their fathers' house, all that are able to go to war in Israel. **3** And Moses and Eleazar the priest spake with them in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho, saying, **4** Take the sum of the people, from twenty years old and upward; as the LORD commanded Moses and the children of Israel, which went forth out of the land of Egypt. **5** Reuben, the eldest son of Israel: the children of Reuben; Hanoch, of whom cometh the family of the Hanochites: of Pallu, the family of the Palluites: **6** Of Hezron, the family of the Hezronites: of Carmi, the family of the Carmites. **7** These are the families of the Reubenites: and they that were numbered of them were forty and three thousand and seven hundred and thirty. **8** And the sons of Pallu; Eliab. **9** And the sons of Eliab; Nemuel, and Dathan, and Abiram. This is that Dathan and Abiram, which were famous in the congregation, who strove against Moses and against Aaron in the company of Korah, when they strove against the LORD: **10** And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up together with Korah, when that company died, what time the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men: and they became a sign. **11** Notwithstanding the children of Korah died not. **12** The sons of Simeon after their families: of Nemuel, the family of the Nemuelites: of Jamin, the family of the Jaminites: of Jachin, the family of the Jachinites: **13** Of Zerah, the family of the Zarithes: of Shaul, the family of the Shaulites. **14** These are the families of the Simeonites, twenty and two thousand and two hundred. **15** The children of Gad after their families: of Zephon, the family of the Zephonites: of Haggi, the family of the Haggites: of Shuni, the family of the Shunites: **16** Of Ozni, the family of the Oznites: of Eri, the family of the Erites: **17** Of Arod, the family of the Arodites: of Areli, the family of the Arelites. **18** These are the families of the children of Gad according to those that were numbered of them, forty thousand and five hundred. **19** The sons of Judah were Er and Onan: and Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan. **20** And the sons of Judah after their families were; of Shelah, the family of the Shelanites: of Pharez, the family of the Pharezites: of Zerah, the family of the Zarithes. **21** And the sons of Pharez were; of Hezron, the family of the Hezronites: of Hamul, the family of the Hamulites. **22** These are the families of Judah according to those that were numbered of them, threescore and sixteen thousand and five hundred. **23** Of the sons of Issachar after their families: of Tola, the family of the Tolaites: of Pua, the family of the Punites: **24** Of Jashub, the family of the Jashubites: of Shimron, the family of the Shimronites. **25** These are the families of

Issachar according to those that were numbered of them, threescore and four thousand and three hundred. 26 Of the sons of Zebulun after their families: of Sered, the family of the Sardites: of Elon, the family of the Elonites: of Jahleel, the family of the Jahleelites. 27 These are the families of the Zebulunites according to those that were numbered of them, threescore thousand and five hundred. 28 The sons of Joseph after their families were Manasseh and Ephraim. 29 Of the sons of Manasseh: of Machir, the family of the Machirites: and Machir begat Gilead: of Gilead come the family of the Gileadites. 30 These are the sons of Gilead: of Jeezer, the family of the Jeezerites: of Helek, the family of the Helekites: 31 And of Asriel, the family of the Asrielites: and of Shechem, the family of the Shechemites: 32 And of Shemida, the family of the Shemidaites: and of Hopher, the family of the Hopherites. 33 And Zelophehad the son of Hopher had no sons, but daughters: and the names of the daughters of Zelophehad were Mahlah, and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. 34 These are the families of Manasseh, and those that were numbered of them, fifty and two thousand and seven hundred. 35 These are the sons of Ephraim after their families: of Shuthelah, the family of the Shuthalhites: of Becher, the family of the Bachrites: of Tahan, the family of the Tahanites. 36 And these are the sons of Shuthelah: of Eran, the family of the Eranites. 37 These are the families of the sons of Ephraim according to those that were numbered of them, thirty and two thousand and five hundred. These are the sons of Joseph after their families. 38 The sons of Benjamin after their families: of Bela, the family of the Belaites: of Ashbel, the family of the Ashbelites: of Ahiham, the family of the Ahihamites: 39 Of Shupham, the family of the Shuphamites: of Hupham, the family of the Huphamites. 40 And the sons of Bela were Ard and Naaman: of Ard, the family of the Ardites: and of Naaman, the family of the Naamites. 41 These are the sons of Benjamin after their families: and they that were numbered of them were forty and five thousand and six hundred. 42 These are the sons of Dan after their families: of Shuham, the family of the Shuhamites. These are the families of Dan after their families. 43 All the families of the Shuhamites, according to those that were numbered of them, were threescore and four thousand and four hundred. 44 Of the children of Asher after their families: of Jimna, the family of the Jimnites: of Jesui, the family of the Jesuites: of Beriah, the family of the Beriites. 45 Of the sons of Beriah: of Heber, the family of the Heberites: of Malchiel, the family of the Malchielites. 46 And the name of the daughter of Asher was Sarah. 47 These are the families of the sons of Asher according to those that were numbered of them; who were fifty and three thousand and four hundred. 48 Of the sons of Naphtali after their families: of Jahzeel, the family of the Jahzeelites: of Guni, the family of the Gunites: 49 Of Jezer, the family of the Jezerites: of Shillem, the family of the Shillemites. 50 These are the families of Naphtali according to their families: and they that were numbered of them were forty and five thousand and four hundred. 51 These were the numbered of the children of Israel, six hundred thousand and a thousand seven hundred and thirty. 52 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 53 Unto these the land shall be divided for an inheritance according to the number of names. 54 To many thou shalt give the more inheritance, and to few thou shalt give the less inheritance: to every one shall his inheritance be given according to those that were numbered of him. 55 Notwithstanding the land shall be divided by lot: according to the names of the tribes of their fathers they shall inherit. 56 According to the lot shall the possession thereof be divided between many and few. 57 And these are they that were numbered of the Levites after their families: of Gershon, the family of the Gershonites: of Kohath, the family of the Kohathites: of Merari, the family of the Merarites. 58 These are the families of the Levites: the family of the Libnites, the family of the Hebronites, the family of the Mahlites, the family of the Mushites, the family of the Korathites. And Kohath begat Amram. 59 And the name of Amram's wife was Jochebed, the daughter of Levi, whom her mother bare to Levi in Egypt: and she bare unto Amram Aaron and Moses, and Miriam their sister. 60 And unto Aaron was born Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. 61 And Nadab and Abihu died, when they offered strange fire before the LORD. 62 And those that were numbered of them were twenty and three thousand, all males from a month old and upward: for they were not numbered among the children of Israel, because there was no inheritance given them among the children of Israel. 63 These are they that were numbered by Moses and Eleazar the priest, who numbered the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho. 64 But among these there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron the priest numbered, when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai. 65 For the LORD had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness. And there was not left a man of them, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 2. The census is for military purposes and includes only those who are fit to go to war for their nation, from twenty years old and upwards. Older men, unable to fight and march on a campaign, are not counted in the census. There is no age limit set for the Israelite Army, fitness to fight is the only factor. Joshua will lead the army and he is eighty, and their toughest warrior is Caleb, and he also is eighty. Great warriors through history have often been older men who feared nothing and had fitness and experienced weapon handling on their side.

Age is no barrier to anything as long as we are fit. We are to keep ourselves fit and healthy throughout our life as believers. We need to see our body as the temple of the Holy Spirit and train for peak fitness all our life, in order to keep as fit and strong as we can, so that the Lord can use us thoroughly and consistently. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 6:19, 2 Corinthians 6:16.

Verses 3 – 4. The two leaders now speak with the people on the plains of Moab. Their brief to the tribal princes and judges is to assemble their men and identify their army battalion strength in fighting men and bring back a number for Moses, so he can know how many men each battalion has now. They have been fighting their way through to this point, and so Moses must have a rough idea that the Army is about the same size as it was on that first day when they assembled, but the Lord calls for a specific number to be identified. There is not a man alive, other than Joshua and

Caleb, of that first army assembled at Kadesh Barnea. All have died in the wilderness march under the Lord's judgment. Numbers 14:26-37.

Verses 5 – 50. The twelve fighting tribes (minus Levi) are all numbered for battle. Let us compare the numbers and the families with the first list in Numbers chapter 1. Now remember my caution regarding numbers in Chapter One. We are guessing here and that is all. The words explained again below may cover a significant variation of possibilities. I am using a consistent formula here so we can compare the data, but I may be out by a thousand or more, and at this distance I am not concerned about that! My belief is that the numbers in the Army are still around the 6000 mark that we identified as most probable back in the study on Exodus. This remains the total throughout the wandering years, but individual tribes vary in their growth, and in two cases in their significant shrinkage.

REUBEN THEN - Chapter 1:20. And the children of Reuben, Israel's eldest son, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, by their polls, every male from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 21 Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Reuben, were forty and six thousand and five hundred. (Possibly = 465 Family groups, each headed by a warrior over twenty).

NOW – Chapter 26:5-11. There are four clans of this tribe, and their total number of family groups each headed by a warrior appears to be between 430 - 460. Special note is made of the fate of Dathan and Abiram who perished in the rebellion led by Korah. They died but their sons lived on and are numbered in the Army and their battalion has not shrunk, even in spite of the great rebellion their members led.

Remember the word translated “thousand” is eleph. It was the first letter of the alphabet and stood for a family group. Over time it became the first category of numbers – and meant a thousand by the 3rd century BC. We are 1200 years before that point with Moses. The word translated as “hundred” is mayah. It refers to a fraction of the family group and came to mean hundred before the 3rd century. The word translated “thirty” is sheloshah. It meant any multiple of three, and so probably meant thirty, and may refer to the number of men who were over twenty, but were not in any family group. The different use of words should not surprise us. In World War 2 a British Army Division could number 20-40,000 men, whereas the Russian and German Army divisions numbered around 10,000 men.

SIMEON THEN – chapter 1:22. Of the children of Simeon, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, those that were numbered of them, according to the number of the names, by their polls, every male from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 23 Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Simeon, were fifty and nine thousand and three hundred. (Possibly 593 family groups, each headed by a warrior over twenty).

NOW – chapter 26:12-14. There were the five clans of this tribe and their numbers are significantly down over all. They now have twenty two extended family groups, and two smaller family units, with a total of probably around 220-250 warriors. They have been halved through the forty years. It may be that what we are seeing in the figures is the judgment of God upon the tribes. Those which go down in numbers are the ones in which rebellion centred, whereas those that grew were more stable in their beliefs and obedience. All failed that first time at Kadesh Barnea, but the rebels may have been more numerous in the tribes that drop away than in those that prosper.

GAD THEN – Chapter 1:24. Of the children of Gad, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 25 Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Gad, were forty and five thousand six hundred and fifty. (Possibly = 456 Family groups, each headed by a warrior over twenty).

NOW – chapter 26:15-18. There are seven clans of this tribe, and their warrior numbers are now around 450 men. They have not gone down in numbers very much, if at all, over the wandering years.

JUDAH THEN – chapter 1:26. Of the children of Judah, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 27 Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Judah, were threescore and fourteen thousand and six hundred. (Possibly = 746 Family groups, each headed by a warrior over twenty).

NOW chapter 26:19-22. There were six clans of this tribe and a total warrior strength of around 765. This is one of the tribes that actually increased in numbers through this time. It is the start of the blessing of Judah, which will become the centre and backbone of the spiritual nation after the kingdom is split by Jeroboam-Rehoboam following the days of Solomon.

ISSACHAR THEN chapter 1:28. Of the children of Issachar, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 29 Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Issachar, were fifty and four thousand and four hundred. (Possibly = 544 Family groups, each headed by a warrior over twenty).

NOW chapter 26:23-25. There are four clans amongst the tribe of Issachar and their numbers are around 643 warriors. They also have grown through the wilderness years and can field a larger army than before.

ZEBULUN THEN chapter 1:30. Of the children of Zebulun, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 31. Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Zebulun, were fifty and seven thousand and four hundred. (Possibly = 574 Family groups, each headed by a warrior over twenty).

NOW chapter 26:26-27. There are three clans of this tribe and a total warrior strength of around 650 men. They also have grown through the wilderness marches.

JOSEPH THEN chapter 1:32. Of the children of Joseph, namely, of the children of Ephraim, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 33. Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Ephraim, were forty thousand and five hundred. 34. Of the children of Manasseh, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 35. Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Manasseh, were thirty and two thousand and two hundred. (Possibly = 720-770 Family groups, each headed by a warrior over twenty).

NOW Chapter 26:28-37. Of the clans of Manasseh there were around 450 family groups and of the clans of Ephraim there were around 320 groups. Forty years later their tribal strength has gone significantly upwards, with Manasseh to around 527 family groups, and Ephraim stable around 325 family groups. Their total of around 850 warriors makes them the largest group amongst the tribal groups.

BENJAMIN THEN chapter 1:36. Of the children of Benjamin, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 37. Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Benjamin, were thirty and five thousand and four hundred. (Possibly = 354 Family groups, each headed by a warrior over twenty).

NOW chapter 26:38-41. This tribal group appears to have grown also, to around 456 warriors.

DAN THEN chapter 1:38. Of the children of Dan, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 39. Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Dan, were threescore and two thousand and seven hundred. (Possibly = 627 Family groups, each headed by a warrior over twenty).

NOW chapter 26:42-43. The tribe of Dan has also been fairly stable at around 644 warriors.

ASHER THEN chapter 1:40. Of the children of Asher, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 41. Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Asher, were forty and one thousand and five hundred. (Possibly = 415 Family groups, each headed by a warrior over twenty).

NOW chapter 26:44-47. The number of warriors is significantly up at around 534.

NAPHTALI THEN chapter 1:42. Of the children of Naphtali, throughout their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 43. Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Naphtali, were fifty and three thousand and four hundred. (Possibly = 534 Family groups, each headed by a warrior over twenty).

NOW chapter 26:48-50. Their number is now around 455, down significantly from the first census.

There have clearly been winners and losers on the wilderness journey. Now remember the word translated “wilderness” in our Bibles is the word midbar, which means cattle driving range-pastoral lands. It refers to the fact that there are no cities there, not to the desert nature of the country. The climate of Arabia was quite fertile and the land green with pasture at this time, and the animals of the Israelites would have done well there. The tribes that fell in numbers (Simeon and Naphtali) are clearly judged, and others have been blessed, but over all the Army numbers remain the same, and the people require faith to win. They do not have the numbers to “roll over” the Canaanites as the Assyrians later will do.

Verses 51 – 56. The final numbers are transparently wrongly translated in the LXX. To have 600,000 and then 1730 is the clue that the “hundreds of thousands” is wrong, and is likely six thousand. The army is around the 6000-7000 mark, and they will need to be empowered by God to survive and win the battles ahead. The numbers of fighting men at the end of the wilderness journey is to determine the size of the land that each tribe will receive. Those that are small will receive little and those that are larger will receive more. This underlines to me that their shrinkage or growth through the wilderness journey has been a judgment for their rebellion.

The consequences of their actions in the wilderness will carry over into the land itself. This is a key doctrinal principle of life; our actions may be forgiven, but their consequences may flow onwards in time. At times a sin will set in motion a chain of events that cannot be stopped. The cursing of these things can be turned to blessing in the Lord’s path for our life now, but some consequences will be felt through life.

Even though the size of the allotted areas for each tribe will differ the Lord directs Moses to use lots as a means of assigning areas so that none can feel Moses or Joshua are getting at them. Lots will be cast for the areas and then those areas will be made smaller or larger depending on the number of fighting men. It is not total populations that will determine things, but only the fighting men. The land must be held against attack and the tribe that is unable to defend its portion will lose it anyway, so they are urged to accept the process and devote themselves to obedience now, so that they can seize and hold the land.

Verses 57 – 63. The tribe of Levi are now numbered. Once again the numbers are not clear at all at this distance. There would appear to be twenty three extended family groups. If we compare their numbers with those of the other tribes Levi is around the same size as Simeon, probably with around 250 men of military age in total. Levi and Simeon were the leaders in the revolt of Korah and so are the two tribes most decimated by the Lord through the wilderness march. There are enough men to do all the work assigned to them but they have not prospered in the previous forty years.

Verses 64 – 65. The Levites are not to receive any portion of the land, for their portion is their service of the tabernacle. They will be allotted cities within the tribal areas and they will serve the tabernacle by courses through the year and work the land given them by the tribes amongst whom they dwell. They will be at the mercy and under the grace of the other tribes. The rebellion of Korah has consequences for them. Moses is of this tribe and notes clearly that the judgment has fallen upon his people as it has fallen upon the others, and not one man is alive who rebelled against the Lord at Kadesh Barnea.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Forgiveness is full and final and the Lord remembers our sins no more, but the temporal consequences of them may flow onwards. As we walk in the Holy Spirit these consequences of our past life can work out for good, but there may be pain from them. Believers are not to be discouraged by the legacy of their past sins, but rather seek the Lord's way through the problems that flow from them. God can turn cursing into blessing through our obedience.
2. God judges and is fair in all He does. The three tribes that experience declines in numbers are judged by this. They pay for their rebellion in loss of temporal prosperity. When we are restricted or pressured in any circumstances in our life we ought to pray seriously about them. If the Lord is placing pressure on, then there will be a reason, and our task is to seek the way for the most blessing in the process.
3. The more soldiers that fought the bigger the portion of the land they inherited. If we are not ready to work and fight for the Lord, then we ought not to expect the blessing of the Lord. He seeks servants, not chair warmers! Let us seek opportunities to serve the Lord in Holy Spirit power. Let us be sure we are fit and ready to serve the Lord. Let us watch our daily food intake and keep up our exercise!

NOTES

CHAPTER 27**INTRODUCTION**

This is an important chapter for “woman’s rights” in the Biblical record. In this day a daughter had few if any rights in the family’s of the pagan nations, and land ownership for women was rare unless they were the daughters of royalty. This incident before us emerges just after the announcement of the division of the land and Moses explanation as to how it will occur. The warriors of Israel have all just realized that their families have gained or lost their inheritances through their involvement in the rebellions at Kadesh and Meribah, with Korah. The people are told about the way the land will be divided while they are encamped opposite Jericho and one family within Manasseh has a special problem.

There are five daughters in this family, with no sons born before the father dies on the wilderness march. They are not of one of the tribes that led in the rebellions and so fell in numbers dramatically through the forty years and they seek a place for their father’s name in the land of promise.

The girls have no problem with their father’s death, for they know that he was one of the generation that sinned at Kadesh Barnea, and so he dies in the wilderness, but what of them, and their father’s name amongst the sons of Joseph? The sons of Joseph had received a special blessing from Jacob. Genesis 48:15-16, 19-22, 49:22-26. The girls (their ages are not given, but they cannot be too old, as any marriages they had made would already have lost them their father’s name), approach Moses and ask to have their father’s situation clarified. Is he to lose his place in the family of Joseph?

It is fitting that this is the last recorded action of Moses, for straight after this ruling is made, he is asked by the Lord to go up his last mountain and there he will die. This chapter begins with the results that flow from the death of Zelophehad and ends with the leadership transfer that will precede the death of Moses.

NUMBERS 27:1-23

27:1 Then came the daughters of Zelophehad, the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph: and these are the names of his daughters; Mahlah, Noah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Tirzah. **2** And they stood before Moses, and before Eleazar the priest, and before the princes and all the congregation, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying, **3** Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not in the company of them that gathered themselves together against the LORD in the company of Korah; but died in his own sin, and had no sons. **4** Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family, because he hath no son? Give unto us therefore a possession among the brethren of our father. **5** And Moses brought their cause before the LORD. **6** And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, **7** The daughters of Zelophehad speak right: thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father’s brethren; and thou shalt cause the inheritance of their father to pass unto them. **8** And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a man die, and have no son, then ye shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his daughter. **9** And if he have no daughter, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his brethren. **10** And if he have no brethren, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his father’s brethren. **11** And if his father have no brethren, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his kinsman that is next to him of his family, and he shall possess it: and it shall be unto the children of Israel a statute of judgment, as the LORD commanded Moses. **12** And the LORD said unto Moses, Get thee up into this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel. **13** And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered. **14** For ye rebelled against my commandment in the desert of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify me at the water before their eyes: that is the water of Meribah in Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin. **15** And Moses spake unto the LORD, saying, **16** Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, **17** Which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the LORD be not as sheep which have no shepherd. **18** And the LORD said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; **19** And set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. **20** And thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. **21** And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the LORD: at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation. **22** And Moses did as the LORD commanded him: and he took Joshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation: **23** And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 4. These five girls have thought a great deal about their father’s life and death and what it means for them in the Promised Land. Their sons will inherit their husband’s lands, but the share that would have been Joseph’s will be lost to their father’s name forever. These girls believe in the inheritance of the Promised Land and they want their father’s name to be preserved and for him to receive his share through them and their sons. They make it very clear that he was not amongst those who rebelled at the time of Korah’s rebellion, but that like the others of his generation he failed at Kadesh Barnea. He may have been a younger man at that time, for the girls have only good memories of him in his dealings with them, and seek this honour to their father’s name.

This man had failed, like all others of his generation, but he has done his job well with these girls, and he has taught them the promises of God's Word through Moses. He has failed but he wants them to be successes in the spiritual area, and their actions prove they are. They bring their case before Moses at the door of the tabernacle so that the Lord may make a ruling through him. Once again, note the woman's right to stand before the judges of her people and ask for her rights. They didn't need an uncle or male relative to stand with them, they could stand boldly before their leader and ask for a ruling on their rights. Psalms 68:5, Proverbs 3:1-8, Jeremiah 49:11, Galatians 3:26-29, Hebrews 4:16, 13:6.

Verses 5 – 7. Moses realizes that this is an important case with precedent at stake, so that a definitive ruling needs to be made that will be binding for future generations. He takes the matter before the Lord in prayer. The Lord's answer to these girls is that they are absolutely right in their request. Their father has taught his girls the truth, and they are standing in the truth, and will receive inheritance in their father's name in the land. His portion will be theirs divided into five parcels of land.

The first son that each of these girls have will be named for their father, and will be counted as of the tribe of Manasseh, and will receive his land, even if the girl's husband is of another tribe. Any second son will receive the husband's portion of the land of whatever tribal area that he has a right to. Officially the girls first sons will be known as the sons of their grandfather and have his rights in the land. The girls husbands will need to accept this principle at the time of their marriage, for their first son will not be counted as theirs in land ownership, but as a son of Zelophehad.

Verses 8 – 11. The principle is now settled and made law of the Jewish people from this point onwards. If a man has no son then his daughters can inherit his land and call their sons for their father and the land can pass to them and they can stand in their grandfather's place amongst the people. If he has no children then the inheritance passes to his brothers or sisters. If he has no brothers or sisters then the land passes to his uncles, the brothers of his father. If they are dead, then their descendents are to inherit, the closest relative to him being the one to take over the land on his behalf.

The land was not to be lost to the people receiving it. Sadly they will lose the land, but we must wait until we get to Deuteronomy 30ff, or head back to Leviticus 26 to see the reasons for this. This principle of redemption of land by a relative will be important in the case of Ruth and Boaz, and will be central to that story, which will bind together this rule (received on the plains of Moab) and the Moabitess Ruth. Ruth 4:1-17, Jeremiah 32:8.

Verses 12 – 14. The whereabouts of Mountains of Abarim is known, but the actual identity of Mount Nebo amongst them is not. It is described, but was to be a secret place, and not become a place of pilgrimage, for it was the place of death and burial, and the dead were not to be venerated, nor their graves worshipped at. These are pagan habits and are not to be followed by believers. The dead are to be laid, "out of our sight", to await the resurrection at the return of the Lord, but their body's resting place is not to be anything other than that, a grave. We are to focus upon our work in the Lord, not the places of the burial of the dead.

When we die, we are to be buried with those who we wish to stand with in the resurrection, for that is our testimony, but Moses was to die and be buried by the Lord Himself, so that there was no possibility of any worship at the site. Let us learn from this, and while we honour the dead who stood for the Lord, and give the Lord praise for their lives, let us not get into worship at their shrines. We serve a living Saviour, and we need to apply the doctrine of resurrection and that means pour our lives out in service.

Verses 15 – 17. Moses will speak many things to the people as a "farewell address/sermon", and this is the subject of Deuteronomy, which records the content of his teaching through the wilderness years, and the summary of his teaching before his departure to head up Mount Nebo and die. The parallel passage to this one before us is Deuteronomy 32:45-52. He will, after his teaching, bless each of the tribes with a prophetic word, adding to Jacob's blessings that he had recorded in Genesis 49. Deuteronomy 33:6-25. He will then pray for them and pronounce the Lord's blessing upon them, Deuteronomy 33:26-29, and head up the mountain to spend his last moments with the Lord. Deuteronomy 34:1ff.

Moses prays for others as he prepares to head up this final mountain. His concern is that the people may be led by an acknowledged leader. He brings his prayer to God, for a definite word from the Lord for the people concerning Joshua as the new leader. Moses wants to be sure that there is no hesitation in recognition of Joshua, nor any chance for rebellion. He wants the people to know that Joshua is God's sole choice to lead them and for them to commit to following him into the Promised Land. The Lord is the "Shepherd of Israel" and He will ensure that Joshua is the anointed leader in the eyes of the people. There is no doubt about Joshua behind Moses words, but a lot of doubt about the people's ability to commit to their new leader after forty years with Moses.

Verses 18 – 23. Moses is to personally lay hands upon Joshua and then take him before Eleazar the High Priest and he is to be anointed by him. Joshua is to be recognized as leader by both Moses and Eleazar, so that no doubt exists amongst the people that he is the Lord's anointed leader. The only real challenge to his leadership would come from Eleazar or Phinehas, and so this public recognition is vital for Joshua's work.

The laying on of hands was the passing on of the mantle of authority and in Joshua's case he would receive some of Moses "honour" also. This is a way of saying that the Holy Spirit who empowered Moses would also empower Joshua, but that the power that Moses walked in would not be known by Joshua or anyone else, until the Messiah came.

Deuteronomy 34:9-12. This man Moses failed at the last post, and the consequence of that is he fails to enter the land, but he is blessed by God and honoured by Him. When the Lord comes and stands on the Mount of Transfiguration, it is Moses and Elijah who stand with Him. Matthew 17:1ff, Mark 9:1ff.

Eleazar is to be the oracle of God for Joshua and any problem he has is to be taken to Eleazar for the guidance of God through the Urim and Thumim. Moses was spoken to directly by the Lord, but the Lord will speak through His Word, as recorded by Moses, and through the breastplate device that will flash the answer to any question asked of the High Priest by Joshua. This next generation must learn to follow the Lord more closely than the first one who had the fire and cloud and the word of the Lord through Moses.

They stand like the second and subsequent generation of Christians, as we are all, like Joshua's generation, dependent upon direct prayer request and the filling of the Holy Spirit for the direct words of the Lord. Moses as special, and the "face to face" revelation he enjoyed will not come until another prophet arises. 1 Samuel 3:1ff.

As we get to this point the words we read are likely the words of Joshua, rather than of Moses. At some point around here the work is handed over to Joshua, both of leadership and authorship. The charge to Joshua involves both leading the people and also setting down the record of the Lord's future dealings with the people so that subsequent generations can learn the lessons of leadership from both men. Joshua records that Moses follows through on all the Lord has told him to do.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Every leader of the Lord's people needs to be ready to hand over the mantle of leadership to the next generation of Holy Spirit anointed people. We need to be clear in our spirit that the person so anointed is the Lord's choice to lead his people, for a false appointment will destroy a ministry. The Lord has His appointee for every ministry that is meant to continue and our job is to pray until this is clear and then publicly anoint that person into the role. The way a new appointment is made is to be so clear that there is no possibility of rebellion amongst those who believe they know best.
2. The daughters of Zelophehad come boldly before the Lord and they are right to do so. Let us make our requests boldly to the Lord, for He seeks our honest expectation of His answers to our prayers.
3. Moses gives us a lesson in humility and obedience in the face of past failure. He fell into terrible sin before the Lord and failed in his responsibility in striking the rock, Numbers 20, but he repented of his sin and got back to the place of obedience. He also accepted his punishment and continued to serve with dignity and total obedience from that day onwards. He goes to his death with quietness and dies in the arms of the Lord. This is an example of the "Sin Unto Death", but it is a wonderful one.

NOTES

CHAPTER 28**INTRODUCTION**

The instructions here form a summary of the instructions that Moses has seen and heard from the Lord throughout the entire forty years since leaving Egypt. They summarize the instructions in Exodus 23, 29, 31, Leviticus 1-6 and following, and Numbers 25. All these things have been taught and some have been done throughout the wilderness march, with the daily sacrifices a part of life through this period, and the teaching associated with them done well by Moses, but the full celebration of all the feasts will only occur when they enter into the land itself.

Before Moses dies he will re-teach the entire Law and that is what is recorded in our book called Deuteronomy (meaning literally the second reading of the Law). Why does the Lord require Moses to repeat these specific principles here? Repetition is the Lord's way of teaching truth, and we are to be always ready to repeat teaching to consolidate people's hold upon the truth and their application of it. Isaiah 28:9-14. When something is repeated it is the Lord's way of saying, "Hear this carefully, and do it faithfully!"

The instructions for the feasts are also expanded upon here. In Leviticus 23 the basics only are given, but here the actual number and type of sacrifices to be offered are listed. Let us hear the words of the Lord, for these are His last instructions to Moses before his departure from the people, and these will summarize the message of his entire life of service. As we will see, that message is not just content and specifics of sacrifices, but it centres round the person and plan of the One all the sacrifices spoke of – the Lord Jesus Christ.

NUMBERS 28:1-31

28:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, **2** Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, My offering, and my bread for my sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savour unto me, shall ye observe to offer unto me in their due season. **3** And thou shalt say unto them, This is the offering made by fire which ye shall offer unto the LORD; two lambs of the first year without spot day by day, for a continual burnt offering. **4** The one lamb shalt thou offer in the morning, and the other lamb shalt thou offer at even; **5** And a tenth part of an ephah of flour for a meat offering, mingled with the fourth part of an hin of beaten oil. **6** It is a continual burnt offering, which was ordained in mount Sinai for a sweet savour, a sacrifice made by fire unto the LORD. **7** And the drink offering thereof shall be the fourth part of an hin for the one lamb: in the holy place shalt thou cause the strong wine to be poured unto the LORD for a drink offering. **8** And the other lamb shalt thou offer at even: as the meat offering of the morning, and as the drink offering thereof, thou shalt offer it, a sacrifice made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD. **9** And on the Sabbath day two lambs of the first year without spot, and two tenth deals of flour for a meat offering, mingled with oil, and the drink offering thereof: **10** This is the burnt offering of every Sabbath, beside the continual burnt offering, and his drink offering. **11** And in the beginnings of your months ye shall offer a burnt offering unto the LORD; two young bullocks, and one ram, seven lambs of the first year without spot; **12** And three tenth deals of flour for a meat offering, mingled with oil, for one bullock; and two tenth deals of flour for a meat offering, mingled with oil, for one ram; **13** And a several tenth deal of flour mingled with oil for a meat offering unto one lamb; for a burnt offering of a sweet savour, a sacrifice made by fire unto the LORD. **14** And their drink offerings shall be half an hin of wine unto a bullock, and the third part of an hin unto a ram, and a fourth part of an hin unto a lamb: this is the burnt offering of every month throughout the months of the year. **15** And one kid of the goats for a sin offering unto the LORD shall be offered, beside the continual burnt offering, and his drink offering. **16** And in the fourteenth day of the first month is the passover of the LORD. **17** And in the fifteenth day of this month is the feast: seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten. **18** In the first day shall be an holy convocation; ye shall do no manner of servile work therein: **19** But ye shall offer a sacrifice made by fire for a burnt offering unto the LORD; two young bullocks, and one ram, and seven lambs of the first year: they shall be unto you without blemish: **20** And their meat offering shall be of flour mingled with oil: three tenth deals shall ye offer for a bullock, and two tenth deals for a ram; **21** A several tenth deal shalt thou offer for every lamb, throughout the seven lambs: **22** And one goat for a sin offering, to make an atonement for you. **23** Ye shall offer these beside the burnt offering in the morning, which is for a continual burnt offering. **24** After this manner ye shall offer daily, throughout the seven days, the meat of the sacrifice made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD: it shall be offered beside the continual burnt offering, and his drink offering. **25** And on the seventh day ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work. **26** Also in the day of the firstfruits, when ye bring a new meat offering unto the LORD, after your weeks be out, ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work: **27** But ye shall offer the burnt offering for a sweet savour unto the LORD; two young bullocks, one ram, seven lambs of the first year; **28** And their meat offering of flour mingled with oil, three tenth deals unto one bullock, two tenth deals unto one ram, **29** A several tenth deal unto one lamb, throughout the seven lambs; **30** And one kid of the goats, to make an atonement for you. **31** Ye shall offer them beside the continual burnt offering, and his meat offering, (they shall be unto you without blemish) and their drink offerings.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 3. If we are going to receive "last words" to pass on from the Lord, then they are important words, and will be at the heart of our life mission. As we read the instructions of the Lord here, it will quickly become apparent that this is the case with the words Moses is given.

The festival/feasts part of the Law had not been fully applied in the wilderness journey, for they were to be applied in the Promised Land. The daily or special purpose sacrifices (most of which had been used in the wilderness) all pointed to the person and work of the coming Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, but the Feasts of Israel all pointed to a future aspect of the plan of God. The sacrifices prophetically spoke of the person at the centre of God's plan, and the feasts spoke of the sequence and content of the Plan.

The first thing that Moses is urged to remind the Israelites that they must do faithfully, is offer up the daily offerings without fail for all of their national life in the land. These are the "sweet savour" offerings that speak of the person (Meal Offering) and the work of Christ (The Burnt Offering). They are sweet savour because they speak of the perfection of the provision of the Lord for the sinful condition of man. Outside the land they are excused for not offering these things daily, for then they are in judgment and await the Lord's deliverance and restoration, but in the land, the daily sacrifices are their thanksgiving offering, their recognition of God's grace towards them. Ezekiel 46:13-15, John 1:29-36, 1 Peter 1:18-21.

Verses 4 – 6. The morning (9am) and the evening (between 3pm) sacrifices were crucial pointers to the Lord's later work upon the Cross for the nation. These sacrifices will form the time frame when the Lord is upon the Cross. The work of the Cross is the "sweet savour" offering that solves the sin problem of mankind. The fine flour of the Meal Offerings, mixed with beaten oil speaks of the purity of the Lord's humanity (fine flour), the tested nature of His life (beaten oil), and the Holy Spirit empowered nature of His ministry (the Olive Oil).

Verses 7 – 8. In addition to the burnt offering at the morning and evening times, a drink offering was to be poured out upon the earth floor of the tabernacle Holy Place. The quantity is to be a quarter of a "hin". A "hin" is twelve pints, so a quarter is three pints. A pint is 0.567 litres, so the amount to be poured out in litres is 1.7 litres. The wine was to be "old wine", or the best vintage. It was to be the best people had that they had given to the priesthood for this use. Gifts were to be given as free will offerings and they were always to be the best the giver had. When we give to the Lord's work let us make sure that what is given is the best we have. It was to be an abundant drink offering, with joy poured out to the Lord. Do we praise and give in this manner?

Verses 9 – 10. Every Sabbath day the offerings were to be doubled up as a praise offering to the Lord. The meal offering and the drink offering were to be the same as for the daily sacrifices, but two lambs instead of one were to be offered. Exodus 20:8-11, Leviticus 23:3. The Sabbath was not to be a gloomy day, but a day of rejoicing. Legalism is always life killing, whereas God's purpose for the Law was to give life to the people through their keeping of it, and for them to have joy as they reflected upon the grace it spoke of.

We see over time that the Law only brings death, because man cannot keep it in his own strength, but its standards are still the correct ones, and its teaching is still vital to understand, for it all points to Christ. The ultimate sadness about the Mosaic Law was that it was added to and spiritually destroyed by the post-exilic rabbis, and turned into a system of legalism that clouded the picture of the Cross. Psalms 92:1-4, Isaiah 58:13-14, Ezekiel 20:12, Romans 8:1-4, 10:1-4, 2 Corinthians 3:1-11, Hebrews 7:18-25, 9:27-10:14.

Verses 11 – 15. At the new moons of each lunar month there were to be additional sacrifices offered. They were two young bulls, a ram, seven yearling lambs, and a large meal offering to accompany them. For the bullocks the amount of flour was to be 3/10 of a "deal", and for a ram, 2/10 of a "deal". These were significant offerings, that only a portion of was burnt, and the rest eaten in joy by the priesthood. Each Sabbath, and each new moon, was to be a time of feasting and joy.

The only fire that burnt "food" was the altar on the Sabbath, and its smell was a sweet one to the Lord, and for all the people, as they were to remember that the Lord was the God of grace who gave them a weekly rest to reflect upon His provisions for them. Every morning they were to reflect upon the Lord's grace, "New every morning". Psalms 65:6, Lamentations 3:23.

A goat was also to be offered every new month as a sin offering for the entire people. It was to be offered monthly to cover the sins of those who had committed any transgressions that month. It was also accompanied by the meal and drink offerings. The Lord's point to His people was clear; they were to remember every day and especially every new month, that the Lord their God had provided for them in grace, and that they were forgiven through His grace provision for them.

Verses 16 – 25. The Passover is especially mentioned by God to Moses, and taught by Moses to the people again. This second teaching of the Law is given to us as the text of Deuteronomy. This annual feast was to be their national identity "holy day". It was far more than a "holiday" but the start of an eight day holy week, and the beginning of their year, for it remembered the beginning of their nation in God's gracious deliverance of them. Exodus 12:2ff, Leviticus 23:5-14, Deuteronomy 16:1-9.

The entire week of the Feast of Unleavened Bread was the reminder of the Lord's deliverance. It was the perfect picture of the Cross and resurrection of the Lord. The Lord would be the Passover Lamb for His people, and He would be the "First fruits" of the dead in His resurrection. The Passover offering, and the many offerings of the feast of unleavened bread, all spoke of one thing; they spoke of the completed work of the Lord, as the final lamb, to take away all the sin of the world. Matthew 20:28, 2 Corinthians 5:19, Colossians 2:14-15, 1 John 2:2.

Note the many references to their “holy convocations” through this eight day period. These feast days were to be times of national gathering, national reflection and national rejoicing in the grace, mercy and provision of the Lord their God. The completion of the Lord’s work, and its perfect success in dealing with sin, was to be remembered by the lack of any physical work on the holy days of the feasts.

The only ones working on those days were to be the priests who did the sacrifices. They work to minister grace, and that is also today the role of the pastor; we work while others rest to remind all of the grace of God towards all. All offerings were to be “without blemish”, as a reminder of the perfection of the person of the Lord.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. We are to give of our best to the Lord, and we are to pour out our lives, talents, money and all that is required in praise and service to the One who gave His all for us. Have we dedicated all we own to the Lord for His work? Have we placed all we have at His disposal? Let us free ourselves from the greediness towards things that hinders service and dedicate all to the Lord and use our substance all our days to serve our Lord.

2. Grace was the message of the Law through the sacrificial system. Grace was lost in legalism due to the sin and evil of man. Let us be sure that we do not build up a legalistic framework ourselves and distort grace in our own ministries. Let us ensure that the glory of the Lord is praised, and His grace message proclaimed every time we gather with God’s people.

Notes

CHAPTER 29**INTRODUCTION**

The Jewish feasts fall into two groups; the first being those associated with Passover in March-April, (Passover, Firstfruits, Unleavened Bread and Pentecost), and the second beginning with Trumpets in September (Trumpets, Atonement, Tabernacles). These feasts, as we have seen, proclaim the prophetic program of God for Israel and the world's history. The first group have been prophetically fulfilled with the First Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the second group will be fulfilled with the Second Advent of the Lord and his rulership over the entire earth.

In the feasts we have the history of redemption portrayed, with Israel and the church both here. Israel's history is portrayed in advance by the feasts and sacrifices all of which are related to the two advents of Christ, with the Church being inserted by God between the two groups of feasts. Read the parallel passage in Leviticus 23:23-44.

It may be that we are seeing the start of the Feast of Trumpets in our own day, for the nation Israel is back in the land, but they are still in unbelief in their Messiah. However, the prophecies of scripture and the picture of this feast day tell us that the DAY will come when the Lord will blow His trumpet and all His people will rise up and fight as a mighty army, and the remnant of His people will return to the land in spiritual power and living energy. That day we await still, for the people are gathered now in unbelief, and sadly, they await the Great Tribulation in the land, not the blessing of the Millennium at this time.

The Feast of Trumpets speaks of the final recall of all Jewish people to the land by the Lord to share in His rulership of His Millennial Kingdom. Today, there are still almost as many Jews in New York and the Eastern and Western seaboard of the USA as there are in Israel. The final trumpet has not blown yet, but this feast tells us that it will. The spiritual breath will come into the nation Israel in the midst of the Great Tribulation. They will be spiritually restored as a nation, as they are physically restored now as dry bones. Isaiah 11:11-12, Joel 2:15-21, Matthew 24:31 and Zechariah 12:10-13, 13:8-9, 14:1-15.

In the Zechariah passages the prophet tells us that the Jewish people will finally look upon Him who they have pierced. The Jews will eventually accept the Lord Jesus Christ as the One who was sent. They will weep for their ancestors who suffered because of their rejection of their Messiah, but will rejoice in their present deliverance through faith in Him.

The feast of Atonement, as we have seen in Leviticus, is the most holy day in the Jewish calendar. In this day they were to examine themselves before God, and it refers to the day mentioned by Zechariah when they bow before their Saviour seeing who He truly was and accepting Him as their Lord and Saviour. This is related to the nation Israel accepting the Lord just before the end of the Great Tribulation.

This feast marks the day of their acceptance of the Lord as their Messiah at that terrible future time. This is related to the Second Advent of the Messiah, for their prayers are answered in the time following their prayers of repentance, by the Lord's physical return. He does not return to save them until they bow before Him and ask Him to. Atonement refers to their final and full acceptance of Him as their Messiah.

Tabernacles, the final feast speaks of the Millennium, and reminds the Jews not only of the gracious provision of the Lord in the Exodus generation but also that God will do again what He did in the past bringing them into the Promised Land. This tells them that it will be a time of peace and prosperity, and it will last longer than either of their previous Temples; for it will last one thousand years. This final feast, just as the feast of unleavened bread, is of seven days duration. Both of these speak of the perfect work of the Lord in the second and first coming respectively. What the Lord does He always does perfectly.

The feasts should be looked at in the light of Dispensations and Covenants. As the first four were fulfilled literally in the first advent of the Lord, just so the last three will be fulfilled literally in the second advent of the Lord. A pre-millennial view of Scriptures allows the feasts to be viewed literally and this is the only viewpoint that does so. As Christians who take God's Word seriously, we have to recognize, as we study these things, and look at the signs of the coming end of time, just how close we are to the end of time, and so live our life in the spiritual and practical outworking of that truth.

The antagonism between Israel and the Arabs will continue right until the end. Treaties will be signed to bring in the Tribulation period, but they will be satanic deceptions, designed by the enemy of truth to deceive God's people. They will fail to do so, and both Jews and Arabs who love the Lord will enter the new kingdom with the Lord they worship, even though for many their entry into the kingdom will be "through death".

The last great battle, as we see in Zechariah, will be around Israel, and Jerusalem; it is called the campaign of Armageddon. This begins with the invasion from the north by forces allied with Russia. The western army of the old Roman Empire lands on the coast around Megiddo, and so cuts off the supply line of the king of the north, which causes him to turn back to the Valley of Megiddo (Armageddon).

The battle is joined by an eastern army pouring in across the Euphrates River into the Middle East. This is the Biblical scenario. The time for the fulfilment of these things appears to be short, and every day news events remind us that this scenario could be only a few years away. We need to train and teach our people about these things, and call them to

make every day a holy Sabbath to celebrate what the Lord has already done, is doing in the Spirit now, and will do in the future.

NUMBERS 29:1-40

29:1 And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work: it is a day of blowing the trumpets unto you. 2 And ye shall offer a burnt offering for a sweet savour unto the LORD; one young bullock, one ram, and seven lambs of the first year without blemish: 3 And their meat offering shall be of flour mingled with oil, three tenth deals for a bullock, and two tenth deals for a ram, 4 And one tenth deal for one lamb, throughout the seven lambs: 5 And one kid of the goats for a sin offering, to make an atonement for you: 6 Beside the burnt offering of the month, and his meat offering, and the daily burnt offering, and his meat offering, and their drink offerings, according unto their manner, for a sweet savour, a sacrifice made by fire unto the LORD. 7 And ye shall have on the tenth day of this seventh month an holy convocation; and ye shall afflict your souls: ye shall not do any work therein: 8 But ye shall offer a burnt offering unto the LORD for a sweet savour; one young bullock, one ram, and seven lambs of the first year; they shall be unto you without blemish: 9 And their meat offering shall be of flour mingled with oil, three tenth deals to a bullock, and two tenth deals to one ram, 10 A several tenth deal for one lamb, throughout the seven lambs: 11 One kid of the goats for a sin offering; beside the sin offering of atonement, and the continual burnt offering, and the meat offering of it, and their drink offerings. 12 And on the fifteenth day of the seventh month ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work, and ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: 13 And ye shall offer a burnt offering, a sacrifice made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD; thirteen young bullocks, two rams, and fourteen lambs of the first year; they shall be without blemish: 14 And their meat offering shall be of flour mingled with oil, three tenth deals unto every bullock of the thirteen bullocks, two tenth deals to each ram of the two rams, 15 And a several tenth deal to each lamb of the fourteen lambs: 16 And one kid of the goats for a sin offering; beside the continual burnt offering, his meat offering, and his drink offering. 17 And on the second day ye shall offer twelve young bullocks, two rams, fourteen lambs of the first year without spot: 18 And their meat offering and their drink offerings for the bullocks, for the rams, and for the lambs, shall be according to their number, after the manner: 19 And one kid of the goats for a sin offering; beside the continual burnt offering, and the meat offering thereof, and their drink offerings. 20 And on the third day eleven bullocks, two rams, fourteen lambs of the first year without blemish; 21 And their meat offering and their drink offerings for the bullocks, for the rams, and for the lambs, shall be according to their number, after the manner: 22 And one goat for a sin offering; beside the continual burnt offering, and his meat offering, and his drink offering. 23 And on the fourth day ten bullocks, two rams, and fourteen lambs of the first year without blemish: 24 Their meat offering and their drink offerings for the bullocks, for the rams, and for the lambs, shall be according to their number, after the manner: 25 And one kid of the goats for a sin offering; beside the continual burnt offering, his meat offering, and his drink offering. 26 And on the fifth day nine bullocks, two rams, and fourteen lambs of the first year without spot: 27 And their meat offering and their drink offerings for the bullocks, for the rams, and for the lambs, shall be according to their number, after the manner: 28 And one goat for a sin offering; beside the continual burnt offering, and his meat offering, and his drink offering. 29 And on the sixth day eight bullocks, two rams, and fourteen lambs of the first year without blemish: 30 And their meat offering and their drink offerings for the bullocks, for the rams, and for the lambs, shall be according to their number, after the manner: 31 And one goat for a sin offering; beside the continual burnt offering, his meat offering, and his drink offering. 32 And on the seventh day seven bullocks, two rams, and fourteen lambs of the first year without blemish: 33 And their meat offering and their drink offerings for the bullocks, for the rams, and for the lambs, shall be according to their number, after the manner: 34 And one goat for a sin offering; beside the continual burnt offering, his meat offering, and his drink offering. 35 On the eighth day ye shall have a solemn assembly: ye shall do no servile work therein: 36 But ye shall offer a burnt offering, a sacrifice made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD: one bullock, one ram, seven lambs of the first year without blemish: 37 Their meat offering and their drink offerings for the bullock, for the ram, and for the lambs, shall be according to their number, after the manner: 38 And one goat for a sin offering; beside the continual burnt offering, and his meat offering, and his drink offering. 39 These things ye shall do unto the LORD in your set feasts, beside your vows, and your freewill offerings, for your burnt offerings, and for your meat offerings, and for your drink offerings, and for your peace offerings. 40 And Moses told the children of Israel according to all that the LORD commanded Moses.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 6. The Feast of Trumpets comes at the end of the Summer season around the times of the first harvests. When the Lord's Trumpet sounds, the Jewish people awake and return to their land, for judgment, and finally, for blessing. There is rebirth of the land and the nation and its return to full power, but then after a short time, (ten days), there is a day of great sorrow and personal reflection for all the Jewish people. This is the Day of Atonement. Verses 7-11, and Leviticus 23:26-32. After another five days, the feast of Booths/Tabernacles occurs. Verses 12 – 38, and Leviticus 23:33-43. Like the Feast of Unleavened Bread, it also is an eight day feast, with prescribed offerings to be offered up each day.

The Feast of Trumpets had only been introduced in Leviticus, and it is here, at the end of Moses life that the Lord gives him the final details for it's actual celebration. In Leviticus all we have is as follows:

Leviticus 23:24 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation. **25** Ye shall do no servile work therein: but ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD.

The Feast of Trumpets is introduced with few words here in Leviticus. It was to be announced by the blowing of a trumpet (shofar – ram’s horn) as if calling the people to battle. It was to gather all the people for a holy meeting, and all were expected to come. Exodus 23:17, Numbers 29:2-6. All work was halted for a great part of this seventh month, in which would also occur the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles. It was a month which celebrated the culmination of the plan of God for Israel. Ezekiel 37. It was a month which portrayed the final redemption of the people and their entry into millennial blessings.

In this Numbers passage before us now the Lord has revealed to Moses the number of sacrifices to be offered when they enter the land and celebrate this feast for the first time. Note the quantities of animals, drink and meal offerings. A bullock, a ram, and seven lambs were to be sacrificed. Associated with these blood sacrifices there were to be offered up also Meal Offerings, and drink offerings. These were in addition to the normal daily and monthly sacrifices.

So the day started with the standard “Morning Sacrifice” of a yearling lamb with it’s associated meal and drink offerings, then the new month sacrifices were offered, 2 bullocks, one ram and 7 yearling sheep, and then the special feast day offerings, were offered of the bullock, the ram and the 7 sheep, with their meal and drink offerings. The day ended with the standard evening sacrifice. These burnt offerings spoke of the perfection of the person and work of Christ upon the Cross. It was a spectacle of blood and fire and underlined the seriousness of the provision of the Lord for the sins of His people. The people will be re-gathered to reflect upon this and the Day of Atonement speaks of their break through to understanding it all.

Verses 7 – 11. The Feast of Atonement (Yom Kippur) is the most solemn day in the Jewish year today as it always has been since these days of Moses. It is a time for national reflection upon the sin of man and the need for the Lord’s provided atonement, but it will be the day of repentance in that Tribulation time, as foretold by Zechariah. Let us look again at Leviticus 23.

Leviticus 23:26. “And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 27. Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD. 28. And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the LORD your God. 29. For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people. 30. And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people. 31. Ye shall do no manner of work: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. 32. It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath.”

The first day of the seventh month was the feast day of Trumpets, and the tenth day was the Day of Atonement. As we have seen in Leviticus chapter 16, this was the most holy day of the Jewish year. It is a “Feast Day”, yet it begins as a day of greatest sorrow and weeping for personal and national sin. With a number of commentators, I believe the significance of these feast days centres in the days that end this present age, with Trumpets standing for the Rapture of the Church, and the Day of Atonement standing for the day of national repentance of Israel as foretold by the prophet Zechariah. Zechariah 12:10-14. I personally expect this to occur absolutely literally in the Tribulation Period.

On this day, in the midst of the Great Tribulation period, the Jewish people recognize that they missed their Messiah, but in joy they receive Him then, and rest in His coming deliverance of them. Zechariah 13:1ff. The gap of a few days between the feasts tells us that some time period occurs between the various events that are portrayed by them. The Rapture may occur three and a half or more years before the breaking of the Treaty that signifies the start of the Great Tribulation, which will then run for three and one half years. From that point it may be one or two years before the Day of Atonement is fulfilled and the remnant of the nation Israel accept their Messiah. They may have one or more years after that acceptance until He returns to rule.

The Day of Atonement began with the morning sacrifice, and then the special festal sacrifices, but the “kid of the goats” was also offered at that time. The particulars of the two goats used for the sacrifices on this day are not repeated here in Numbers, for they have been already fully described in Leviticus 16:1ff. The repetition of the basics simply underlines the serious nature of this sacrificial day. Now lets get back to the Numbers 29 passage before us.

Verses 12 – 38. The Feast of Tabernacles will take up the rest of this chapter, for there are offerings to be made each and every day of the eight days of the feast and the total population is to be there for these and observe them. The feast begins on day fifteen of the seventh month and goes for another eight days. Each and every day the daily sacrifices are made, and in addition the prescribed list of animals and meal offerings are also offered up.

The abundance of these offerings was to be the picture that was carried away by the people; that the Lord had abundantly provided for them in the past, and would continue to do so throughout all their history, and into the Millennial Kingdom. You will note that the number of bullocks begins at thirteen for the first day, and then goes down by one each day until the seventh day when seven bullocks are offered, to the last day of the feast when only one is offered, which rounds off the feast and re-establishes the monthly cycles again until the next Passover.

Verses 39 – 40. These details were to be applied by the people at the set feast times and were to be done “as unto the Lord” at those times, exactly as detailed in the instructions. Obedience was demanded of the people in the matter of the feasts, for they portrayed a future reality and the detail and precision was important. These feasts were in addition to the other offerings that could be brought from time to time associated with specific sins of individuals and vows taken at different times.

Moses tells the people exactly the details that he is instructed to from the Lord and then records the details here before he will go up the mountain to die. He is to work until the last moment of his departure, and this is the picture for Christian service today also. We are to continue our service until the end of our life without any retirement concept ever entering our mind. We rest in heaven, but until that time we serve the Lord.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. The feasts of Israel are the history of Israel written in advance. The first cycle of feasts has been fulfilled and we are alive in between the two at present. The next prophetic event is the trumpet of God on the day of Trumpets. My suspicion is that this is a reference to the rapture of the Church, as well as the pen-ultimate re-gathering of Israel. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. The nation Israel has come back today, but in unbelief. They remain under God’s protection, which is why they survive in the midst of hatred and malice, but will also remain under judgment until they bow before their Lord and recognize the One who was pierced on their behalf.

2. Do we live in a way that reflects our belief in the prophetic nature of the feasts? Do we have the expectation of the Lord’s return as we ought? The next event is the “trump of God”. Are you expecting this believer? Have you preached this pastor? Will Jewish unbelievers know the truth about the church and their need for their Saviour from your preaching? Let us challenge ourselves with these certainties of the future.

3. God’s abundance is seen in the sacrifices. They were awful to behold, and they were meant to be, with the blood and wine and meal poured out. They were the regular reminder of the cost of the fall of Man and the price that would be paid for the sins of the world. Let us celebrate Communion with abundance of thanksgiving, for in it we remember the plan of God has not finished at the empty tomb, but will be fulfilled when the empty throne is sat in once more! 1 Corinthians 11:26. “Until HE comes!” Amen!

NOTES

CHAPTER 30**INTRODUCTION**

The Lord also requests for Moses to clarify again the position regarding vows being taken. As they near the Land of Promise many will feel spiritually awakened and may take a hasty vow to express their emotional overflow as they see the culmination of their parents and their own dreams coming to fruition. It is important for all the people to be careful of vows, and take them only when the Holy Spirit moves upon them, they know it is the Lord's will for them, and they are able to fulfil the vow.

Women are to be protected from the consequences of not following through on a vow, and also spiritually guarded from the consequences of a father or husband over ruling them and not enabling them to keep the vow. Just as with the daughters of Zelophehad, Numbers 27, so the women here in the matter of any spiritual vow were to be protected and heard. No man was to rob them of their spiritual service, but they were to be protected from "hasty vows" taken under any emotional pressure, be it their own or others.

The Lord wants the leadership of the people to be clear about these things and they are spelt out again by Moses, to the tribal leaders, before he climbs Mount Nebo and dies there. There are no quiet moments for Moses before he climbs the mountain; no personal time for him and his wife, if she is still alive. He is under orders and is to work until the moment he heads up the hill. The time for quiet moments is to be in heavenly blessing.

This is our challenge also. We are here to work for the Lord until the end of our days, and so let us dedicate ourselves to the tasks He has placed before us, and put aside our fears, worries, grief's, and stresses, and press onwards to the prize! Philippians 3:12-17, 4:4-13, 2 Timothy 4:1-8, 2 Peter 3:1-18. Like Moses let us press on to the final tape in the race of life! We are not here to rest but to work for the Lord in joy.

NUMBERS 30:1-16

30:1 And Moses spake unto the heads of the tribes concerning the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded. **2** If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth. **3** If a woman also vow a vow unto the LORD, and bind herself by a bond, being in her father's house in her youth; **4** And her father hear her vow, and her bond wherewith she hath bound her soul, and her father shall hold his peace at her; then all her vows shall stand, and every bond wherewith she hath bound her soul shall stand. **5** But if her father disallow her in the day that he heareth; not any of her vows, or of her bonds wherewith she hath bound her soul, shall stand: and the LORD shall forgive her, because her father disallowed her. **6** And if she had at all an husband, when she vowed, or uttered ought out of her lips, wherewith she bound her soul; **7** And her husband heard it, and held his peace at her in the day that he heard it: then her vows shall stand, and her bonds wherewith she bound her soul shall stand. **8** But if her husband disallowed her on the day that he heard it; then he shall make her vow which she vowed, and that which she uttered with her lips, wherewith she bound her soul, of none effect: and the LORD shall forgive her. **9** But every vow of a widow, and of her that is divorced, wherewith they have bound their souls, shall stand against her. **10** And if she vowed in her husband's house, or bound her soul by a bond with an oath; **11** And her husband heard it, and held his peace at her, and disallowed her not: then all her vows shall stand, and every bond wherewith she bound her soul shall stand. **12** But if her husband hath utterly made them void on the day he heard them; then whatsoever proceeded out of her lips concerning her vows, or concerning the bond of her soul, shall not stand: her husband hath made them void; and the LORD shall forgive her. **13** Every vow, and every binding oath to afflict the soul, her husband may establish it, or her husband may make it void. **14** But if her husband altogether hold his peace at her from day to day; then he establisheth all her vows, or all her bonds, which are upon her: he confirmeth them, because he held his peace at her in the day that he heard them. **15** But if he shall any ways make them void after that he hath heard them; then he shall bear her iniquity. **16** These are the statutes, which the LORD commanded Moses, between a man and his wife, between the father and his daughter, being yet in her youth in her father's house.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 2. The heads of the tribes, including the judges, the seventy, and possibly the war Colonels ("princes") of the tribal regiments, are all called to a final meeting with Moses. He is to make absolutely clear to these men who will rule over matters of Law in this matter of vows. Moses has spelt this out in what becomes our Numbers chapter 6. The main vow taken was the Nazarite Vow and it involved great personal care and sacrifice and great cost to the family who had to provide the final offerings to complete the vow. It had to be a joint or corporate decision and was not to be taken lightly.

In all matters concerning the Law, the Judges, Princes and the Seventy were the ones called to make decisions in individual cases. Moses, and later Joshua, would be the final "court of appeal". Moses wants these men to understand the basic principles involved. At its heart this chapter is about personal responsibility and identifies those who have the right to over rule the decision of a woman in the matter of vows and free her from the hasty promise she has made. For a man there was no way out of a vow, except the payment of heavy penalties, but for a woman there was a way to be released from a hastily taken vow.

Verses 3 – 5. If a woman, still living at home, and of an age when she could take a vow, comes before the Lord and takes a vow before the Lord at the tabernacle, and her father is there, and he hears her words, then he must take responsibility to either approve and support his daughter, or to disapprove and break the vow at its inception. If the man hears the vow, or later hears of the vow being taken, and does not speak up the day he hears it, to say “NO” to the vow, then it stands, and the woman must fulfil it completely.

If the father hears a vow and disallows it, then any other vows the girl has taken are also abrogated and she is free of the guilt of breaking them, and the responsibility and any punishment from the Lord falls upon her father. She is forgiven, but her father bears the responsibility for the vows if he disallows them. This protected the girl from any enthusiastic feelings she had that overflowed her logic and the family’s ability to follow through on.

Today we see the problems caused by emotional young men and women who promise to do things and fail to follow through upon them, and the danger of emotion ruling over the logic of the wallet. Many people will bankrupt themselves making promises they cannot afford to keep. Young women were protected by their fathers in this matter. Young men over twenty had served in the Armed Forces and so were expected to take full personal responsibility for all their decisions from that point. Those under twenty were not allowed to make a vow before the Lord anyway, although later the Rabbis would lower the age of Bar Mitzvah at fourteen and full adult responsibilities began then.

Verses 6 – 8. A married women may make a vow by herself if she was out alone or with friends in the tabernacle, but her husband had the right to weigh up the promise she had made and over rule it in the day he heard of it. The husband had a day to reflect upon his wife’s vow and make his decision to support her or disallow it. If he chose to disallow it, then he was responsible before the Lord, and would carry any punishment from God that was consequent upon breaking the vow. The Lord forgives, for He knows the heart of those who love and try to serve Him. It is the heart that finds acceptance with the Lord, even when the person is not able to follow through on their hearts desire to serve. Psalms 10:6,17, 17:8, 37:4, 51:10-17, 78:26, 95:8, 104:15, 119:112, 139:23.

We all too often despise the “bruised reed” type people, who are controlled by their emotionalism or neuroticism. These are the ones who come forward at every appeal and weep and wail at the front of the church, and they can get tedious to pastoral staff, because you are always saying the same thing to encourage them or stop them from “hasty vows”. God knows that these sort of women need protection from their hasty emotions, and so their fathers or husbands are there, under the Law, to stop them being held responsible for things they cannot follow through on. Matthew 12:20. God sees the heart of emotional people and He does not despise them, and we must not either.

On Sunday I saw one of these ladies come forward yet again and weep and wail before the altar. I myself felt a momentary frustration at a person who I immediately placed into the category of 2 Timothy 3:7, but the Lord challenged me to place her into the category of “bruised reed”. I saw this immediately I did it, for she was an abused woman in her past and is still locked into a seven year old emotional response pattern. The Lord sees her heart, forgives her, and is not frustrated by her tears, for they are real. I learned to rest in the Lord’s assessment not my own! Let us see Moses wonderful heart here as he urges the men to protect these women who otherwise will fall foul of the penal provisions of the Law and be destroyed by them.

Verse 9. The widow or divorced woman is in another category however and expected to have used their sadness as an opportunity for emotional growth and to have stabilized themselves through the grieving process. Those who have not used the reality of divorce or death to stabilize themselves in reality are there after held personally responsible for their actions as independent women. No one can get them out of their vow if they take one, and they must pay the full penalty if they fail to keep it. They are free of the rule of men and so must shoulder the responsibility of their freedom.

Verses 10 – 12. If the husband hears a vow made in the house, rather than the tabernacle, then the same rule applied as above; the woman was held to her vow if the husband said nothing, but was absolved of the vow if he spoke up and dissolved her vow immediately, or later that day. There was one days grace only in all such cases. The woman was protected from her own enthusiasm, or her husband’s negative attitudes. The Lord saw and rewarded her heart’s desire, and forgave her any vow not kept if she was out voted by her husband or father.

Verses 13 – 15. Every binding agreement that she has made, her husband may establish or make it null and void. This principle still applies in Arab countries and many professional western women are surprised when they go to a store in Saudi Arabia and make a VISA purchase and the store phones her husband and asks if he approves or not, for if he disapproves a purchase it cannot be actioned in such countries. If the husband does not respond at all then it is taken as approval and there is no way back for the woman to get out of any agreements she has made.

Verse 16. These are the rules that the Lord made with Moses to apply to fathers and daughters and husbands and wives regarding any vows taken. This is clearly an editorial comment, and as we get to the death of Moses I suspect most of what we now have written before us is written by Joshua and possibly edited later by Samuel, Ezekiel or Ezra.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. Personal responsibility has limitations. Emotional people are to be protected by those who have care and protective responsibility over them. We are to guard our children from over reaching themselves and protect our wives from pressures placed upon them by others to fulfil tasks that may not suit the family's needs. We must over rule at times to ensure there is energy left for marriage and family. Over-stretched church members can destroy their own marriages by their over-commitments, and husbands need to take the responsibility to say "no" to their wives to stop any abusive use of them for work in the church that will take them away from the home too much.

As pastors we must be careful that we do not place our women folk in the "hasty vow" situation by placing pressure to say "yes" to jobs that they really shouldn't be doing when they actually desire to be home with their husband or children!

2. There is the time when we need to exercise personal responsibility without any chance to be bailed out by another. The divorced and widowed women were without any covering for their vows. They had to do what they had said "yes" to. Let us remember that there is a limit to our being able to blame others, or our dysfunctional childhoods, for our non-performance of a promise.

3. At a certain point in our lives we need to actively "forget" our past traumas (have worked through them and they no longer control us in any way) and become the men and women we are called to be before the Lord. That means take personal responsibility for all our actions. Let us stand up and speak up for marriage, the family and also for the work that needs to be done around the church, and make our "vows" on the basis of what can be done and should be done for the Lord, and then follow through and complete what we have promised.

Notes

CHAPTER 31

INTRODUCTION

Moses knows he is to die soon, but as we have seen, the Lord has given him a lot of "house keeping" duties to complete before he goes up Mount Nebo to die, and this chapter records the last major one of them. The Midianites were the main instigators of the plot to destroy Israel by using sexual and religious promiscuity under the leadership of their prophet Balaam. The Moabites were the people with the money who paid for Balaam's services and "consultancy", but it was Midian who apparently provided most of the women for the plan's execution.

The tribes of the Midianites who are involved in this are now close by to where Israel is encamped on the plain of Moab. They do not appear to be closely related to the family of Moses father in law, and may have been active enemies of Israel for some time. Exodus 2:15-22. The land of Midian covers all of what is now Jordan and Saudi Arabia and so there are large numbers of tribes here and it is the local ones that are targeted for judgment here.

It would appear that these hostile Midianites have moved closer to Israel in the last months hoping for the collapse of Israel's morale and the opportunity for plunder. They are now camped in the hill country above Israel's camp on the plains. These tribes are truly bandits of the desert and will kill and steal from Israel, and may have attacked them on their march before. Numbers 20-22. The orders Moses will give are severe towards these people, even to the killing of all the males and all girls who have entered into sexual relationships.

Please reserve judgment upon Moses actions until we get to study these verses. Moses had lived amongst these people for forty years and he understood their culture and their multi-generational blood feuds and vendettas. His orders are the only ones that can be given regarding these people to save the next generation of Israelites from attack or murder in their homes.

NUMBERS 31:1-54

31:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,² Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites: afterward shalt thou be gathered unto thy people. 3 And Moses spake unto the people, saying, Arm some of yourselves unto the war, and let them go against the Midianites, and avenge the LORD of Midian. 4 Of every tribe a thousand, throughout all the tribes of Israel, shall ye send to the war. 5 So there were delivered out of the thousands of Israel, a thousand of every tribe, twelve thousand armed for war. 6 And Moses sent them to the war, a thousand of every tribe, them and Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war, with the holy instruments, and the trumpets to blow in his hand. 7 And they warred against the Midianites, as the LORD commanded Moses; and they slew all the males. 8 And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain; namely, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian: Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword. 9 And the children of Israel took all the women of Midian captives, and their little ones, and took the spoil of all their cattle, and all their flocks, and all their goods. 10 And they burnt all their cities wherein they dwelt, and all their goodly castles, with fire. 11 And they took all the spoil, and all the prey, both of men and of beasts. 12 And they brought the captives, and the prey, and the spoil, unto Moses, and Eleazar the priest, and unto the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the camp at the plains of Moab, which are by Jordan near Jericho. 13 And Moses, and Eleazar the priest, and all the princes of the congregation, went forth to meet them without the camp. 14 And Moses was wroth with the officers of the host, with the captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, which came from the battle. 15 And Moses said unto them, Have ye saved all the women alive? 16 Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD. 17 Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him. 18 But all the women children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves. 19 And do ye abide without the camp seven days: whosoever hath killed any person, and whosoever hath touched any slain, purify both yourselves and your captives on the third day, and on the seventh day. 20 And purify all your raiment, and all that is made of skins, and all work of goats' hair, and all things made of wood. 21 And Eleazar the priest said unto the men of war which went to the battle, This is the ordinance of the law which the LORD commanded Moses; 22 Only the gold, and the silver, the brass, the iron, the tin, and the lead, 23 Every thing that may abide the fire, ye shall make it go through the fire, and it shall be clean: nevertheless it shall be purified with the water of separation: and all that abideth not the fire ye shall make go through the water. 24 And ye shall wash your clothes on the seventh day, and ye shall be clean, and afterward ye shall come into the camp. 25 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 26 Take the sum of the prey that was taken, both of man and of beast, thou, and Eleazar the priest, and the chief fathers of the congregation: 27 And divide the prey into two parts; between them that took the war upon them, who went out to battle, and between all the congregation: 28 And levy a tribute unto the Lord of the men of war which went out to battle: one soul of five hundred, both of the persons, and of the beeves, and of the asses, and of the sheep: 29 Take it of their half, and give it unto Eleazar the priest, for an heave offering of the LORD. 30 And of the children of Israel's half, thou shalt take one portion of fifty, of the persons, of the beeves, of the asses, and of the flocks, of all manner of beasts, and give them unto the Levites, which keep the charge of the tabernacle of the LORD. 31 And Moses and Eleazar the priest did as the LORD commanded Moses. 32 And the booty, being the rest of the prey which the men of war had caught, was six hundred thousand and seventy thousand and five thousand sheep, 33 And threescore and twelve thousand beeves, 34 And threescore and one thousand asses, 35 And thirty and two thousand persons in all, of women that had not known man by lying with him. 36 And the half, which was the portion of them that went out to war, was in number three hundred thousand and seven and thirty thousand and five hundred sheep: 37 And the LORD's tribute of the sheep was six hundred and threescore and fifteen. 38 And the beeves were thirty and six thousand; of which the LORD's tribute was threescore and twelve. 39 And the asses were thirty thousand and five hundred; of which the LORD's tribute was threescore and one. 40 And the persons were sixteen thousand; of which the LORD's tribute was thirty and two persons. 41 And Moses gave the tribute, which was the LORD's heave offering, unto Eleazar the priest, as the LORD commanded Moses. 42 And of the children of Israel's half, which Moses divided from the men that warred, 43 (Now the half that pertained unto the congregation was three hundred thousand and thirty thousand and seven thousand and five hundred sheep, 44 And thirty and six thousand beeves, 45 And thirty thousand asses and five hundred, 46 And sixteen thousand persons: 47 Even of the children of Israel's half, Moses took one portion of fifty, both of man and of beast, and gave them unto the Levites, which kept the charge of the tabernacle of the LORD; as the LORD commanded Moses. 48 And the officers which were over thousands of the host, the captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds, came near unto Moses: 49 And they said unto Moses, Thy servants have taken the sum of the men of war which are under our charge, and there lacketh not one man of us. 50 We have therefore brought an oblation for the LORD, what every man hath gotten, of jewels of gold, chains, and bracelets, rings, earrings, and tablets, to make an atonement for our souls before the LORD. 51 And Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold of them, even all wrought jewels. 52 And all the gold of the offering that they offered up to the LORD, of the captains of thousands, and of the captains of hundreds, was sixteen thousand seven hundred and fifty shekels. 53 (For the men of war had taken spoil, every man for himself.) 54 And Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold of the captains of thousands and of hundreds, and brought it into the tabernacle of the congregation, for a memorial for the children of Israel before the LORD.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 6. Moses responds to the Lord's command immediately and speaks to all the people urging them to arm, and calls to the leaders of the tribes to separate out a small army for a "punitive expedition". Now remember

the numbers here are scrambled by the LXX guesses at the figures that have found their way into our English Bibles. This "strike" army may be twelve hundred men rather than twelve thousand men. It is going to be a small detachment, drawn from all the Israelite tribes, but small enough to infiltrate enemy lines without the alarm being given. The bulk of the Israelite Army is to be left behind and all the men left behind are to be armed at all times in the camp once the expedition leaves camp.

This small punitive army will head out quietly, and secretly and systematically attack the small localized Midianite camps and destroy them, seizing their animals. The rest of the people will remain in their camp, but must be ready to defend the camp from raiders. It is clear to Moses that unless they obey the Lord and strike at the Midianites quickly, secretly, and ruthlessly, that they will be attacked by a combined Midianite-Moabites army that will outnumber their total army. This is the reason for a small, fast moving strike force to hit the enemy camps singly, before they can join together in an overwhelming army. This is why the attack is to annihilate the adults in every camp so that none can warn the next. The force is large enough to overwhelm each individual camp by quickly surrounding them so that none can escape. The attack is launched that day and so they do not give the enemy time to prepare and plan. Delay is often fatal in military matters.

The attack will go forward with spiritual authority, in the presence of the next High Priest Phinehas, who will have the Levites to carry the Ark into the battle area each time, and will personally sound the shofar for the attack in each place and will stand by the Ark in each battle. There will be many small battles for this strike force, and they will lie low between them so as to have surprise in each place.

This is a well led force and they appear to have surrounded each camp initially, with the ram's horn shofar then being blown once, to signal the attack from all sides. It appears that Phinehas, as a proven man of God is the general in charge of this group, not Joshua, who apparently stays behind with the bulk of the Army.

Verses 7 – 16. Phinehas has shown no mercy to the Midianite princess Cozbi and the Israelite she was with, Numbers 25:7-13, but in the battles fought he has shown mercy to the young boys and girls amongst the Midianites and to many of their women. They have been victorious in each battle fought and have destroyed the Midianite strong points (castles) as well as all their settled dwelling places in the hills above the plains of Moab. They have also killed Balaam and seized all the wealth that he had gained by giving the evil advice to Balak. Moses and the leaders of the people head out to greet the returning army group, which comes with a vast number of captives and many animals seized also. They meet the army outside the campsite of Israel, and Moses gets really angry at all the officers in charge of this small army group for their captives.

Moses is angry that the women are there and also the boys are all alive; only the adult males of the Midianites have been all killed. Now to us, these are the normal "rules of War" under the Geneva Convention, that only combatants may be killed, and even if they surrender half way through a battle, they are to be captured alive and not killed afterwards. In the ancient world the rules were different, and once battle was joined all the men were to be killed amongst the enemy and the women and children may also all be killed. These "rules of war" were current from this time right until the 18th century in Europe.

Now God's instructions through Moses differ from these general rules, and in this case Moses reminds the officers as to why they went out to destroy these tribes of Midianites. They were the ones responsible for the evils of Baal-Peor – the sexual religion that led to the deaths of so many Israelites. The women were the key participants and seducers of the men of Israel and they will still follow their paganism if they are allowed to live and enter the camp of Israel, and the evil will start all over again. The other evil that will occur with these people is the mother to son education in their custom of "blood feud".

The Midianites would bring their male children up to avenge the killers of their fathers or great-grandfathers, and would educate them from the youngest age in hatred for the ones who wiped out their villages. This means that to leave alive the older women and boys, was to guarantee that these young men would be brought up to commit murder upon any and all Israelites they could kill when they became of age to carry a weapon. The only way to break this cycle of violence was to eliminate all the males, end their genetic line altogether, and eliminate all the women of sexual maturity, leaving only the youngest girls to enter Israel as their servants and possibly future wives, if they accepted Israelite religion.

This alone would ensure that they did not bring in the evil of pagan religion, nor nurse any blood feud against Israel. To us the orders Moses gives are the height of barbarism, but in his day, they were the only ones to eliminate the threat from these tribes of Midianites. Other tribes will plague Israel later in the days of the Judges but these ones will be eliminated by this action.

Verses 17 – 20. The soldiers are to separate the youngest of the girls from the rest and they will be kept alive and safe away from the rest, who are then all to be slain and buried/piled up in the desert. All the men of the army are to be involved in this and kill every adult woman and male quickly. This would have been a serious and hard thing for all, and they had to believe Moses and act immediately. Then they had to separate themselves for seven days outside the camp to purify themselves from the blood they had shed.

To us this may seem hypocritical, but pause and reflect upon this uncomfortable reality. The Lord has ordered the death of these tribal nations within Midian. The Israelites were to kill all these people, and the deaths were not "wrong", but the people of God were to see that all killing is impure, and is only required as a result of the evil of man. They are not to celebrate it, nor weep over the elimination of this evil people group, but they are to see the killing as requiring time out to

purify their hearts again. There is to be no glorying in the sad necessity to eliminate these people. It is their sin and evil that has led to this order being given against them.

Verses 21 – 24. The loot that they have captured is also to be treated as defiled. They are to take each item and pass it through fire, and any item that cannot be purified by fire is to be washed thoroughly, and they themselves are to wash every garment of theirs and this is to be done at the end of the seven day waiting period before they re-enter the camp. This rule makes them think about pollution from evil people and their items. Nothing is to be seen as neutral in the Angelic Conflict, and any items that have been a part of pagan religion are to be treated as polluted, lest the believer be defiled by connection with them. This is not to say that these items have any spiritual power over God's people, but they are to be seen as tainted.

Any thing associated with paganism is to be treated as polluted. This rule is to be taken seriously by ourselves, with all pagan religious objects/antiques treated as polluted by believers. We may admire artistic pieces of ancient history, but all pagan objects must be treated with caution, as the things Satan has used to enslave people are to be seen for what they are; objects that the enemies of the Gospel used to deceive men and women to their deaths. We are not to destroy all such pieces of cultural-religious art, like the Taleban did in Afghanistan, but we are to be very cautious about owning things that have been associated with satanic religion.

Verses 25 – 29. The division of the "loot" taken is to be a very public event, with Eleazar the High Priest there and all the elders of the people at the front so that they can see the principles for all future division of the spoils of war. This is the first such significant capturing of loot and there will be many through the invasion of the land and the principle here will be followed throughout the invasion of the land. The loot captured is to be divided into two groups. One half will be assigned to those who went out to fight, and one half will be assigned to the people who stayed behind in the camp. The first principle here is that those who go out to fight and those who stay back to keep the home safe are equals in the war. The soldier who fights is equal to the farmer who must remain and keep the animals and the people at home safe.

From the soldiers portion a "tribute" for the tabernacle is to be separated out as a thanks offering for a safe return from the wars without wounds and death. God has preserved them and brought them safely back to enjoy the spoils of war and they are to give a thanks offering (wave offering) before the Lord. The percentage that was the offering of the soldiers was one person, item, or animal for every 500 captured. This was to be given to the Lord and delivered to the High Priest. If the figures here are rightly interpreted as 500, not 50, then this amounts to a tax on booty of 0.2 percent.

This is a very low figure to come back to the tabernacle, and my suspicion is that the actual figure is one in 50, or 2% for the soldiers as a thanks offering, and one in five, or 20% for the people who stayed behind. Either way, and we cannot be sure at this distance in time, the soldiers, who hazarded their life get to keep far more for themselves than those who stayed behind in the campsite, but all get rewarded for their part played in the campaign, be it active or passive.

Verses 30 – 31. Of the half of the spoils of war that was for the people who had remained in the camp the percentage is fixed at 2% (or 20% if the figures have an extra digit in them). This was to be delivered to the High Priest and would be used by the Levites for the service of the tabernacle.

Verses 32 – 47. The actual figures are now given. Now I call you to remember my earlier observations on the numbers here, for they are interpretations of the authors of the Septuagint (LXX) in the 3rd century BC. The old English bible's numbers are clearly inaccurate as they depend on the LXX, yet their precision may give us the clue as to the real numbers. When you capture animals in war they never will round out to the nearest thousand; there will always be an odd number. For example you don't ever capture 20,000, it would always have some hundreds, tens and individual numbers; it would be extremely rare for it to be an even thousand. Even numbers to the nearest ten or hundred indicate that the figures are either "rounded up/down" or are a digit or two out.

The figure for sheep is recorded by the LXX translators as 675,000. Now this number of sheep would not fit into the plains of Moab and would all be dead within a few days of starvation, for to feed this number and look after them would require a lot more land than is available here. This is a ridiculous number to have been captured from the Midianites who kept sheep for wool for themselves and for food and milk, at a few animals per household. The number may be 675 as that is the sort of number that would ring true here.

The word translated as "thousand" (eleph) indicates "units" and so these may be the number of households of the Midianites that were destroyed and from which sheep were captured. The numbers could be anywhere from 675 – 6000, we simply cannot be sure. At a percentage of 0.2% the tabernacle does not get even two animals here, and so my feeling is that the figures all need to have a few zeros removed and the percentage that went to the Lord's work was either 2%, or 20%.

There were 72,000 (72 elephs) "beeves", or oxen and cows. As a rough percentage for pastoral people of this time, with the increased fertility of Arabia, a ratio of 10:1 for sheep to beef would equate to what we know. The ratio here of 675:72 equates to just over 9:1 and so this is evidence that the figures here preserve the ratios of beef to sheep that we would expect from the archaeological evidence. The only thing we lack at this distance is the exact meaning of the terms Moses uses. 61,000 asses gives us a ratio of beef to asses that would equate well in this agricultural economy also, where asses and oxen were both used for pulling ploughs, and the asses for milking and for riding upon.

The number of girls captured at 32,000 once again needs to be lowered significantly. It may be that girls from only 32 households were captured, as the word for thousands means also extended families. Once again we cannot be sure but the numbers are not large of captives. This would be normal in the ancient world as few captives were taken alive after battles where cities were sacked. Jerusalem, when it finally fell in 586 BC, delivered up only 745 survivors. Jeremiah 52:30. There may have been over 100,000 people in the city when the siege started! A low figure for surviving girls from the Midianite camps would be expected.

If the above figures are divided in half then you can see that the two “piles” of booty are significant, but not overwhelming. If the tribute numbers are now looked at, the Lord’s portions are the total numbers that may be correct. The frustration we have here is simply not knowing the meaning of the numerals used by Moses in 1450 BC. By the days of Jeremiah in 586 BC the numbers are easier to identify and the numbers more precise, because their meanings are clear by that stage of history. We have to sit with these things and admit that we do not know!

It is not that the Bible is “wrong” here (which the critics love to argue) for it is not, but that we no longer have the correct meaning of the words used. As noted above, this is evidence that Moses wrote this, for he is working with terms that had different meanings to those used 900 years later, so that even from that time the men of Jeremiah’s day didn’t fully understand some of the words Moses used, but didn’t change them, because they knew that they were Moses words.

Verses 48 – 54. The men have also taken large quantities of gold, silver and jewellery items from the Midianites who carried their wealth with them in the form of jewellery. The men come forward voluntarily and offer these items up to the Lord for the tabernacle. They bring a thanks offering of the spoils to Moses of 16750 shekels weight. Remember we have no idea how much this is, from a few kilos to many kilos of metal).

This is of gold and jewellery set in gold. They have the right to keep these items and just give their percentage to the tabernacle, but they freely give them to the Lord in thanks that they have not lost a man in the battles. Moses uses this situation as a lesson that the gold belongs to the Lord and is to be given over to the Lord. The best is the Lord’s and as He has given them life and success, to Him the gold belongs. These men win any battle over lust for gold here.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. A people group can go too far into evil to be brought back to a place of safety for others around them. At such times in history where this has occurred, these people simply are wiped from the pages of history. To us there is no-one who is beyond help and we believe that all can be changed. This liberal belief is false! The Bible teaches us that there is a point beyond which a people group cannot be recovered. These people reached this place and were eliminated. At the end of time this situation will be reached again and the Lord will deal with all evil men and women and eliminate them from the earth. Remember, from previous studies, the children here are not damned with their parents, even though they may die with them.

2. We face a challenge to our notions of the character of God in this chapter, for we see the Lord’s judgment upon these people and their children. We over emphasize the love of God often to the detriment of the holiness and righteousness of God. The Lord judges here, and a study of the last chapters of Revelation remind us of this fact. When we face an awful event like this one, we must sit and reflect upon it, not just gloss over it. God has ordered the elimination of the gene pool of these people and there is no way around that fact. Sit with it and learn that there are things too hard for us here and we must accept the holiness of the Lord in this matter. Further challenges like this will come up throughout the invasion of the land.

3. God protects the army of Israel and they suffer no casualties in the many battles they fight. This is a testimony to the surprise they achieve at each place and the thoroughness of their attack and elimination of all fighters and ensuring no warning is given to the next site to be attacked. In thankfulness the officers lead their men in giving a thanks offering to the Lord of the best they have gained. “The gold is the Lord’s”. This is the mental attitude of those who want to keep on winning; the best is God’s and the rest is ours, and He will always add to what we have, with whatever we will need.

4. Both the soldiers of the small strike force and the people who stayed behind in the camp are rewarded with the spoils of war, for all have played their assigned part. The soldiers who risked their lives receive more, but all receive something. Those who risk most will receive most, but all are blessed when each does their job “as unto the Lord”. Do not be resentful of others when they receive blessing because of some great thing you may have done. Rejoice that they receive blessing also. Forget about who “deserves” blessing, for we all receive grace from God, and none of us deserve anything but judgment in our own right. Let blessing overflow without resentment to those who appear not to have done as much as yourself. Step back and let others be preferred before you, let others eat before you, and so learn to be the servant of the Lord who can be used in even tougher places for even greater reward.

5. The figures used here are not reliable, not because Moses got things wrong (for he was there!), but simply because we no longer know the precise meaning of the words used. The ratios of sheep to cattle, and asses to beef are correct for the day, and indicate that the figures were meaningful to those of his generation, for whom they were written. We need to identify what we can know and what we cannot, and not do what the liberals do and call these things “errors” in scripture, for they are clearly not.

This is evidence that Moses wrote this and that others later didn't change the figures to make them more accurate for their generation. The liberals argue that the "redactors" made many editorial changes, yet here is a perfect place for one of these men to make changes to help people of their generation understand Moses and they didn't make any changes. The evidence of the Pentateuch to me tells a story of one man as the author, with clear places when others add their observations after Moses words end, but they do not alter his words, so holy was he felt to be as God's special prophet.

CHAPTER 32

INTRODUCTION

The leaders of two of the tribes have been thinking for some time about the fertility of the land stretching from the Yarmuk River through to the Jabbok and down to the Arnon. It is great cattle country and they desire it for themselves straight away. They see it and identify that there cannot be any better land than this for their settlement. Now pause and think here, for they have been told to enter the land of promise and this is apparently not in the land of promise as far as Moses thinks at this point, yet it is covered by the promise to Abraham. Genesis 13:14-15.

This land will be part of Israel for many years, but these tribes will lose their tenure here over time. By Jesus day the area is still known generally as the Vale of Gilead, but in the north it has become by that day the Gentile controlled Decapolis, and in the south, the kingdom of Peraea.

Of all the tribes, only Judah will hold all it's land intact through the years to the Lord's day. All the tribes have lost their tenure since 70AD and the Jewish people live now where-ever they can. In the Millennial Kingdom the boundaries that we will see drawn by the Lord for Joshua and Eleazar to divide, Numbers 34, will be further expanded and redrawn, as detailed in Ezekiel 48, and each tribe will have it's allotted space for the thousand years of plenty at that last glorious age of man upon the earth.

It is of note that in that time the land of promises stretches from north of Damascus to the Sinai, and the Lord's portion (the portion for the Prince) will be the Vale of Gilead that is being asked for here. We will note in Numbers 34 that the boundaries that the Lord sets out for the land are more extensive than Israel ever held, except for the days of David and Solomon.

NUMBERS 32:1-42

32:1 Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of cattle: and when they saw the land of Jazer, and the land of Gilead, that, behold, the place was a place for cattle; **2** The children of Gad and the children of Reuben came and spake unto Moses, and to Eleazar the priest, and unto the princes of the congregation, saying, **3** Ataroth, and Dibon, and Jazer, and Nimrah, and Heshbon, and Elealeh, and Shebam, and Nebo, and Beon, **4** Even the country which the LORD smote before the congregation of Israel, is a land for cattle, and thy servants have cattle: **5** Wherefore, said they, if we have found grace in thy sight, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan. **6** And Moses said unto the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben, Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here? **7** And wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the LORD hath given them? **8** Thus did your fathers, when I sent them from Kadesh Barnea to see the land. **9** For when they went up unto the valley of Eshcol, and saw the land, they discouraged the heart of the children of Israel, that they should not go into the land which the LORD had given them. **10** And the LORD's anger was kindled the same time, and he swore, saying, **11** Surely none of the men that came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I swear unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob; because they have not wholly followed me: **12** Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite, and Joshua the son of Nun: for they have wholly followed the LORD. **13** And the LORD's anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation, that had done evil in the sight of the LORD, was consumed. **14** And, behold, ye are risen up in your fathers' stead, an increase of sinful men, to augment yet the fierce anger of the LORD toward Israel. **15** For if ye turn away from after him, he will yet again leave them in the wilderness; and ye shall destroy all this people. **16** And they came near unto him, and said, We will build sheepfolds here for our cattle, and cities for our little ones: **17** But we ourselves will go ready armed before the children of Israel, until we have brought them unto their place: and our little ones shall dwell in the fenced cities because of the inhabitants of the land. **18** We will not return unto our houses, until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance. **19** For we will not inherit with them on yonder side Jordan, or forward; because our inheritance is fallen to us on this side Jordan eastward. **20** And Moses said unto them, If ye will do this thing, if ye will go armed before the LORD to war, **21** And will go all of you armed over Jordan before the LORD, until he hath driven out his enemies from before him, **22** And the land be subdued before the LORD: then afterward ye shall return, and be guiltless before the LORD, and before Israel; and this land shall be your possession before the LORD. **23** But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out. **24** Build you cities for your little ones, and folds for your sheep; and do that which hath proceeded out of your mouth. **25** And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben spake unto Moses, saying, Thy servants

will do as my lord commandeth. 26 Our little ones, our wives, our flocks, and all our cattle, shall be there in the cities of Gilead: 27 But thy servants will pass over, every man armed for war, before the LORD to battle, as my lord saith. 28 So concerning them Moses commanded Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the chief fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel: 29 And Moses said unto them, If the children of Gad and the children of Reuben will pass with you over Jordan, every man armed to battle, before the LORD, and the land shall be subdued before you; then ye shall give them the land of Gilead for a possession: 30 But if they will not pass over with you armed, they shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan. 31 And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben answered, saying, As the LORD hath said unto thy servants, so will we do. 32 We will pass over armed before the LORD into the land of Canaan, that the possession of our inheritance on this side Jordan may be ours. 33 And Moses gave unto them, even to the children of Gad, and to the children of Reuben, and unto half the tribe of Manasseh the son of Joseph, the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites, and the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, the land, with the cities thereof in the coasts, even the cities of the country round about. 34 And the children of Gad built Dibon, and Ataroth, and Aroer, 35 And Atroth, Shophan, and Jaazer, and Jogbehah, 36 And Bethnimrah, and Bethharan, fenced cities: and folds for sheep. 37 And the children of Reuben built Heshbon, and Elealeh, and Kirjathaim, 38 And Nebo, and Baalmeon, (their names being changed,) and Shibmah: and gave other names unto the cities which they builded. 39 And the children of Machir the son of Manasseh went to Gilead, and took it, and dispossessed the Amorite which was in it. 40 And Moses gave Gilead unto Machir the son of Manasseh; and he dwelt therein. 41 And Jair the son of Manasseh went and took the small towns thereof, and called them Havothjair. 42 And Nobah went and took Kenath, and the villages thereof, and called it Nobah, after his own name.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 5. These tribes had been cattle breeders from before their days in Egypt, and their ancestors had been working in this area of expertise in Egypt, and through the wilderness years. They have amassed a significant herd of cattle in these years. This is further evidence of the fertility of the Arabian Peninsula through this time. It was not desert then, but pastoral land that has enabled these two tribes to build major herds of cattle. Genesis 46:31-34, 47:1-4, 27, Exodus 12:31-36. They clearly felt well able to deal with the Midianites as well as the Moabites on this side of the Jordan, for they ask for towns that are in the area from the Yarmuk to Arnon Rivers. They must be ready to hold this land and its fortified towns and villages by force of arms, and they clearly feel they are able to.

Verses 6 – 12. Moses is immediately suspicious of these men and their motivation and fears the worst with their suggestion. He is concerned that they will desert their fellow tribes in the invasion and stay comfortably on this side of Jordan and leave the fighting to the others. Moses sees in this a sinful and evil laziness. Many, if not most commentators agree with Moses' assessment, and I also did until I studied Ezekiel 48. This area is clearly included in the land promised to Abraham, is settled by them throughout the days of David and Solomon, and becomes their own again in the Millennium. They cannot be wrong in asking for this therefore, but the Lord needs to be consulted and so far Moses has not stopped and prayed about this issue. Moses is being guided by his emotion and that is always an inadequate guide.

Moses wants all the tribes to cross the Jordan River together and all fight for each other's land, so that all feel the kinship bond to support each other. Moses wants to bind the nation together and so he sees this request by these two tribes as an attempt to divide them and take away 1/6th of the army. He immediately sees in their attempt to stay in the Vale of Gilead a repeat performance of their parent's behaviours at Kadesh Barnea. He fears they have lost courage for the attack upon the land itself. The tribal spies of these two tribes led the rebellion that led to the 40 years wandering!

Moses fears that these two tribes not going with them will lead to others losing courage and staying on this side of Jordan. Now his fears are real but groundless, and like too many of us he is jumping to a conclusion without asking the Lord for guidance. He has past reasons and great concerns about them, but in all such situations we must pray, not act on a "hunch". God was angry then with their fathers, but the question remains open as to whether the Lord will be angry with their sons here. Moses has not stopped to ask yet!

Verses 13 – 15. Moses sees this request as the start of potentially the worst challenge to his leadership that he has ever faced, and as he is going to head up Mt Nebo and die within days of these events, he is over wrought with worry about the issues behind their request. He sees this as potentially opening the people of Israel to divine judgment that will end their right to the land itself. Now Moses has really gone beyond the facts here, and there is a wonderful lesson here for us to learn. At all points in our ministry we can fall short of God's standards and conclude something false rather than pray, relax and see what God shows us.

We often jump to a conclusion and are already well down the road of catastrophe with our fears before we pause and pray the matter through. Moses needs a word from the Lord here, and to stop speaking for the Lord when he has not heard the full story from the two tribes. Always get the full facts before concluding – and never take any one sided report as true at all until confirmed from all angles. This land is within the boundaries given to Abraham and so the request is legitimate. The only question here then, is whether this request is approved by God.

Verses 16 – 19. The two tribe's leaders are ready to give the appropriate orders immediately and will march out ahead of the other ten tribes to invade the land, and they will keep fighting until everyone is settled, and only then will they return to this side of the Jordan. They will build (or probably repair) the sheep folds and cattle enclosures of the local

people and place their animals in the pastures and folds, and their people in the fenced cities of the land so that they are safe from the attacks of any of the Amonites or Midianites that might return.

Their army will then be with Joshua, but all their men under twenty and over fifty will be with their settlements ready to hold them until the army returns. They make it clear that they see this land as their inheritance as the others have the far side of Jordan. All this land was seen by Abraham, and so all was promised to him, from the hills to the East of the Vale of Gilead right across to the Mediterranean Sea, from Damascus to Egypt.

Verses 20 – 24. Moses now responds to their promises with calm and clear logic. If they do what they have promised to do then they will receive the blessing of the Lord. Notice the number of times he refers to the Lord's promise and their obligation to the Lord. It is before the Lord that we must answer all questions about our actions and the motives behind them, and resolve all our broken promises. There will be blessing for them if they keep their words, but if they fail to follow through, then Moses has a chilling reminder of God's justice; **BE SURE YOUR SIN WILL FIND YOU OUT!**

Verses 25 – 27. They promise to do exactly as Moses has asked. They will leave their families and their flocks and herds behind and join the battles on the far side of Jordan to ensure all the tribes have their portions of the land. Joshua 1:12-18.

Verses 28 – 32. The grant of the land was to be made finally by Joshua and Eleazar and the elders of the other tribes well after Moses death. Moses grants them the land, but if they fail to follow through and assist the others then that grant of land is to be withdrawn. They have conditional tenure, and it will be confirmed when they have joined their brethren on the other side in the fighting until it is all over and everyone has their allotted areas.

Verses 33 – 42. We now read that part of the tribe of Manasseh also was prepared to stay on this side of the Jordan. They are latecomers to this opportunity and join the other two tribes in their cattle ranching operation. They will all receive the old kingdoms of Sihon and Og and the land between the Jabbok and Arnon Rivers that previously was northern Moab. The "cities" of Gad are noted, although some of these are unknown today, or just small piles of ruins. The term "city" does not mean large area, but a walled and well defended tell, raised up from the surrounding area and able to withstand a siege.

Most of these places were between 1 – 10 acres in area and only capable of holding a few hundred people, which was all they needed. Each tribe is around the 3000 person mark and so nine fortified places with around 400 people in each, with about 80-100 men to hold each was what was required. The main threat was wandering Midianite bands of a few hundred warriors looking for easy plunder and these walled villages/"cities" were well suited to defend against such groups.

Reuben gets six older cities to repair and live in, and later builds a number of others. The half tribe of Manasseh, the descendants of Machir, gets the vale of Gilead proper, but only after they have driven out the Amorites completely. These events will take many weeks/months to achieve and it is in this time frame that Moses is told he is to die and finally will head up the mountain and die.

The camp of Israel is upon the plains of Moab for the best part of a year it would seem. These sons of Manasseh take a number of towns and villages and rename them after themselves. Their self centeredness will come back to bite them later, and we will see in the history of the tribe of Manasseh the danger that this was to them. What people "label" things gives you a clue to what is their heart's desire, and pride/self centeredness will always come back to bite them.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. One of the greatest sins before the Lord is to fail to follow through upon our promises to the Lord to perform a thing. All we do is to be done, "as unto the Lord", and any promises made are to be followed through upon. There are to be no hasty vows! These people promise to assist their fellows and that will mean leaving their loved ones at the mercy of their potential enemies while they are away. They must trust the Lord to protect them while they are away. We must move out to do what is required of us and pray for the protection of our loved ones and walk away from them into action with no concerns, for they are in the Lord's hands.

2. Even though they trust the Lord's protection over their loved ones they make all provision they can for them as well. They make strong places to have their flocks and herds safe from "easy prey" bandits. They ensure the captured cities are rebuilt and are ready to be defended from any band of robbers that might happen by. They take all care and personal responsibility for protecting their loved ones and then leave them in the Lord's care.

We are to take all care over our loved ones and then pray! I see too many stupid believers who have not protected their children from evil men and simply said, "the Lord will protect them". Their children were sexually abused by those evil men that the parents did not check out and protect their children from. When we leave our children or wives, or goods, we are to take the care that these tribes took before we pray and pass them over to the Lord! People who do not lock their doors in the devil's world, are not entitled to pray for the Lord to stop someone entering their house!

3. Much of the land that is now Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, that runs from north of Damascus down the mountain range to the east of the Jordan towards the land of Egypt is all for Israel in the end. The promise of the land to Abraham was for all the land that he saw, and he saw from Damascus to Egypt and from the top of the mountains on the east of

Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea. All of this is Israel's land in the Millennial Kingdom. God's plan will unfold and He will rule over all the earth and the sons of Abraham will inherit their lands and live in them in peace with each other.

REFLECTION UPON THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

1. The Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3) founds the nation of Israel.
2. It is confirmed with Abraham with emphasis on the land (Genesis 13:14-18), the spiritual seed (Genesis 15:1-6), and its everlasting quality. (Genesis 17:6-8).
3. It is an unconditional covenant - God will fulfil it. (God caused Abraham to fall asleep as He ratified the covenant alone. Genesis 15:12-18.)
4. The seven-fold covenant (Genesis 12:1-3) is fulfilled as follows:-
 - a) PROMISE - "And I will make of thee a great nation.
FULFILLMENT Jews (Genesis. 13:16; John 8:37), Arabs (Genesis. 17:20), In Christ (Romans 4:16-17, 9:7-8; Galatians 3:7,29).
 - b) PROMISE - "I will bless thee".
FULFILLMENT To Abraham (Genesis 13:14-17, 15:18-21. 24:35), To believers in Christ (Genesis 15:6; John 8:56)
 - c) PROMISE - "And make thy name great".
FULFILLMENT Abraham is renowned, not only in Christianity but also in Judaism and with the Moslems.
 - d) PROMISE - "And thou shalt be a blessing".
FULFILLMENT With the work of fulfilment of Abraham's seed, Jesus Christ, he was a blessing. (Galatians 3:13,14).
 - e) PROMISE - "And I will bless them that bless thee".
FULFILLMENT This is seen in the rise of many nations eg Britain in the 19th century, the rise of the USA.
 - f) PROMISE - "And curse him that curseth thee".
FULFILLMENT The decline of nations such as the Spanish Empire after the Armada, the fall of Nazi Germany, the fall of the Czars of Russia, the decline of Egypt at the Exodus. Scriptural examples:(Deuteronomy 30:7; Isaiah 14:1-2; Joel 3:1-8; Micah 5:7-9; Haggai 2:22; Zechariah 14. 1-3; Matthew 25:40-46).
 - g) PROMISE - "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.
FULFILLMENT The whole world can be blessed through Jesus, the son of Abraham. (John 8:56-58; Galatians 3:16).
5. It is clear that the we should support the sons of Abraham as it is a sure means of enjoying divine blessing.

NOTES

CHAPTER 33**INTRODUCTION**

Moses was a careful recorder of places and events. As we go through this chapter we will see how few places they camped at through the forty years in the Arabian pastoral lands. The bulk of the place names refer to camping areas, by the events that occur there, or a prominent geographical feature, and a few appear to be old names used by the locals. It appears they were able to stay for several years in most places, moving probably only after negotiation with various Midianite tribes, (be those negotiations with or without swords drawn!).

Once again we are confronted by the fact of a very different climate to that of today, and one which enables them to feed over 100,000 animals around their camp site. As we have seen, the cattle ranching tribes of the previous chapter have actually built up their herds through this period, and they are large and well nourished, well ahead of any additions from the defeated Midianites. Most of the places we will see here in old Midian and old Moab are unable to be identified, as these places are now in desert lands and their temporary settlements from this time are well and truly buried by the sands of time. Their place name meanings will be interesting however.

NUMBERS 33:1-56

33:1 These are the journeys of the children of Israel, which went forth out of the land of Egypt with their armies under the hand of Moses and Aaron. **2** And Moses wrote their goings out according to their journeys by the commandment of the LORD: and these are their journeys according to their goings out. **3** And they departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the morrow after the passover the children of Israel went out with an high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians. **4** For the Egyptians buried all their firstborn, which the LORD had smitten among them: upon their gods also the LORD executed judgments. **5** And the children of Israel removed from Rameses, and pitched in Succoth. **6** And they departed from Succoth, and pitched in Etham, which is in the edge of the wilderness. **7** And they removed from Etham, and turned again unto Pihahiroth, which is before Baalzephon: and they pitched before Migdol. **8** And they departed from before Pihahiroth, and passed through the midst of the sea into the wilderness, and went three days' journey in the wilderness of Etham, and pitched in Marah. **9** And they removed from Marah, and came unto Elim: and in Elim were twelve fountains of water, and threescore and ten palm trees; and they pitched there. **10** And they removed from Elim, and encamped by the Red sea. **11** And they removed from the Red sea, and encamped in the wilderness of Sin. **12** And they took their journey out of the wilderness of Sin, and encamped in Dophkah. **13** And they departed from Dophkah, and encamped in Alush. **14** And they removed from Alush, and encamped at Rephidim, where was no water for the people to drink. **15** And they departed from Rephidim, and pitched in the wilderness of Sinai. **16** And they removed from the desert of Sinai, and pitched at Kibrothhattaavah. **17** And they departed from Kibrothhattaavah, and encamped at Hazeroth. **18** And they departed from Hazeroth, and pitched in Rithmah. **19** And they departed from Rithmah, and pitched at Rimmonparez. **20** And they departed from Rimmonparez, and pitched in Libnah. **21** And they removed from Libnah, and pitched at Rissah. **22** And they journeyed from Rissah, and pitched in Kehelathah. **23** And they went from Kehelathah, and pitched in mount Shapher. **24** And they removed from mount Shapher, and encamped in Haradah. **25** And they removed from Haradah, and pitched in Makheloth. **26** And they removed from Makheloth, and encamped at Tahath. **27** And they departed from Tahath, and pitched at Tarah. **28** And they removed from Tarah, and pitched in Mithcah. **29** And they went from Mithcah, and pitched in Hashmonah. **30** And they departed from Hashmonah, and encamped at Moseroth. **31** And they departed from Moseroth, and pitched in Benejaakan. **32** And they removed from Benejaakan, and encamped at Horhagidgad. **33** And they went from Horhagidgad, and pitched in Jotbathah. **34** And they removed from Jotbathah, and encamped at Ebronah. **35** And they departed from Ebronah, and encamped at Eziongaber. **36** And they removed from Eziongaber, and pitched in the wilderness of Zin, which is Kadesh. **37** And they removed from Kadesh, and pitched in mount Hor, in the edge of the land of Edom. **38** And Aaron the priest went up into mount Hor at the commandment of the LORD, and died there, in the fortieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the first day of the fifth month. **39** And Aaron was an hundred and twenty and three years old when he died in mount Hor. **40** And king Arad the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south in the land of Canaan, heard of the coming of the children of Israel. **41** And they departed from mount Hor, and pitched in Zalmonah. **42** And they departed from Zalmonah, and pitched in Punon. **43** And they departed from Punon, and pitched in Oboth. **44** And they departed from Oboth, and pitched in Ijeabarim, in the border of Moab. **45** And they departed from Ijeabarim, and pitched in Dibongad. **46** And they removed from Dibongad, and encamped in Almondiblathaim. **47** And they removed from Almondiblathaim, and pitched in the mountains of Abarim, before Nebo. **48** And they departed from the mountains of Abarim, and pitched in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho. **49** And they pitched by Jordan, from Bethjesimoth even unto Abeshittim in the plains of Moab. **50** And the LORD spake unto Moses in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho, saying, **51** Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye are passed over Jordan into the land of Canaan; **52** Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places: **53** And ye shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land, and dwell therein: for I have given you the land to possess it. **54** And ye shall divide the land by lot for an inheritance among your families: and to the more ye shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer ye shall give the less inheritance: every man's inheritance shall be in the place where his lot falleth; according to the tribes of your fathers ye shall inherit. **55** But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them

shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell. 56 Moreover it shall come to pass, that I shall do unto you, as I thought to do unto them.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 2. These verses introduce a record that reads as if it has come straight from a journal kept through the wilderness years. It reads in the third person (“they journeyed”) but that does not mean it was written by someone other than Moses or Joshua. Read Joshua’s own ending of his account of the conquest in Joshua 24:2ff. There are many similarities and I suspect that this chapter may have been written by Joshua as a summary of the wilderness march from Moses journal, in which he recorded all these details. It is clearly from another’s written material.

As we go through this chapter I will comment upon the meanings of the place names, but we will be able to identify few of these places. Some however will be useful and will shed some light on the discussion we had in Numbers 20-24 about their route back into the land from the wilderness of Zin around Kadesh back through Moab to the plains opposite Jericho. I suspect it is Joshua editing Moses account, and he pays tribute to Moses and Aaron as the leaders. Both men are all too human in their failings, but they honour the Lord in their work, and both die in the Lord’s arms. Both men remind us, we do not have to be perfect, but we do have to be persistent, dedicated, and obedient or repentant.

Verses 3 – 6. The record here provides some time lines to assist us identify things, and the place names at this point can assist us. Turn back to Exodus and read the following passages and study a Commentary on them. Exodus 12:37, 13:20-22, 14:1-9. Notice the words of this account, for they identify that it was the total chaos in the land of Egypt as the Egyptians were burying their first born (Exodus 12:29-30), that enabled the Israelites to escape completely and get several days journey on their escape, and then organize their campsite on the edge of the desert facing the Egyptian frontier fortresses.

The very recent excavation of one of these fortresses tells us that there was no way through this fortress line unless they attacked them. The Lord had not provided them with weapons and so there was no way through the fortresses by military might, for the Israelites had none. They were ex-slaves living under canvas and barely organized into their tribal groups, not yet functioning as a people, let alone an army. They were in a hopeless place with the desert in front of them, the grieving/angry enemy behind them, and across the desert a line of fortresses between them and the Sinai Peninsula. The only gap in the fortress line was covered by the waters of the Yam Suf (the Reedy Sea).

Verses 7 -10. Read again my earlier commentary on the drama covered by Exodus 14:1-9. God leads them into a place that looks like a total trap. Moses has been a great general for Egypt in his youth and the Lord takes him into ground that he cannot win from without divine deliverance. The place of their camp is only protected by the literal presence of the Lord in the form of the cloudy pillar of fire. They were pitched in their tents right in the midst of the great frontier forts, packed with forces of the Egyptian Army. Pharaoh’s ready reaction force of at least 6000 cavalry and chariot forces were behind them, poised to destroy them.

Every man of the Egyptian Army had lost his oldest son and nursed deep hatred towards the people that had caused the judgments to come upon Egypt. The Egyptians were filled with rage and the desire for vengeance, and the Israelites were without any really powerful/useful weapons to fight, and without the training that would later make them tough warriors. In a wonderful piece of understatement, the record notes, “they passed through the midst of the sea”. God miraculously delivered them and provided for them the weapons of the very army that was trying to destroy them. Exodus 14:23-31.

The three great water tests are covered here also. The work of the Lord upon them through these wanderings was purposive. The Lord led them to places to test their faith in Him and their resolve to follow through with their Lord. To win the prize of the Promised Land they had to build their faith in the Lord to the point where they would trust and obey Him.

At the Yam Suf they faced the “TOO MUCH” water test, and the Lord delivered them through the midst of the waters. At Marah they faced the next water test, but this time the waters were the “WRONG SORT”. They were bitter and unable to be drunk. The Lord again miraculously provided for them and the waters of bitterness were made sweet. Exodus 23-27. Refer to the earlier commentary on this passage and study it again. The third water test was to come at Rephidim, where there was “NO WATER”. Most tests we face as believers are of one of these three sorts. These remain our guide; the Lord will provide for us, and so let us trust in Him!

Notice that the first two water tests come with a time of refreshment following, beside the Red Sea and at Elim where there were wells, lots of fresh water, and palm trees. They had a lovely break from their rigorous march there, and the Lord provides for us on the march through life with pleasant times of refreshment, but we must wait for them, and give thanks when we can rest, for it is only for rebuilding strength for more battle. Our life in this world is lived at the centre of the hurricane; it is the heart of the Angelic Conflict and we need to accept our role as soldiers in the Lord’s battle group.

Verses 11 – 14. From the pleasant camp down by the Red Sea, where their training in military arts would have continued they started their march up into the “wilderness of Zin” and their appointment with destiny at Kadesh Barnea that first time. Moses will not even refer to Kadesh in this list, but refer only to the actual camp sites that they stayed in, not their failure there. Exodus 16:1. The camp sites where the “meribah” incidents occur (Hebrews 3:7 – 4:11) and the Lord graciously gives manna are now listed, but no events there are described. From the shores of the Red Sea they moved inland to two campsites which we have not had mentioned in Exodus, and of which there is no trace today.

1. Dophkah, meaning a desert place, of great adversity.
2. Alush, it may mean, "behold the man".
3. Rephidim, where the next water test was faced. Exodus 17:1ff.

Verses 15 – 38. The events of Exodus 18 – Numbers 20, with the death of Aaron are described now in the list of a further 21 places, taking us from the area around Kadesh (wilderness of Sinai) back there by way of Ezion Geber. It is this reference to Ezion Geber that tells us that most of the places listed here are not in the Sinai Peninsula at all but are in Arabia proper, and their return to the Sinai Peninsula was at that point by the sea, by the Gulf of Aqaba.

Attempts to identify most of these listed places have been flawed by seeking for them within the Sinai Peninsula, when they could be anywhere in the Arabian Peninsula. From the list and the time frame of 37 years, the people appear to move only once every year to eighteen months. Once again this indicates the fertility of the land they were living upon, and possibly the troubles they may have had with the Midianite tribes through this time. The hatred of the Midianites for them, seen in their plan to destroy them by adultery and idolatry, indicates that they were heartily sick of the Israelites living in their land. Numbers 25, 31.

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|-----|-----------------|--|
| 4. | Kibrothhattavah | "the graves of lust" – where they died eating the quail. Numbers 11. |
| 5. | Hazereth | "many yards". |
| 6. | Rithmah | place of the fruiting juniper trees |
| 7. | Rimmonparez | place of the pomegranate |
| 8. | Libnah | place of the white trees – not the place in Palestine itself |
| 9. | Rissah | a ruin – in pieces |
| 10. | Kehelathah | place of meeting or where teaching was received |
| 11. | Mount Shapher | beautiful mountain |
| 12. | Haradah | place of exceeding fear and trembling |
| 13. | Makeloth | place of many assemblies |
| 14. | Tahath | place of a depression - geographical |
| 15. | Tarah | the place of Terah – Abraham's father – Ishmaelite territory |
| 16. | Mithcah | place of a gift – offering – possibly a treaty offering to the local tribe |
| 17. | Hashmonah | fertile place |
| 18. | Moseroth | place of corrections |
| 19. | Benejaakan | wells of the sons of Jaakan - ?Genesis 36:27? |
| 20. | Horhagidgad | the cave of Gidgad |
| 21. | Jotbathah | the place of pleasantness |
| 22. | Ebronah | transitional place – a way station to the Gulf of Aqaba |
| 23. | Ezion Geber | at the head of the gulf of Aqaba |
| 24. | Kadesh Barnea | back to the place of the last water test, Numbers 20. |

Note the place names, some of which are Proto-Arabic or Chaldean in origin. They are clearly old names, as well as names given by the Israelites of this time to the places they stayed, either after a prominent feature of the place, or their activity there. The place names read like a record of pastoral encampments in pleasant and beautiful country, with many varied learning experiences through the years.

The over all impression to me as I read these places and look at the map, is that this is a record of wide spread wandering within the South Western area of the Arabian Peninsula over this time period with a return to Sinai and Kadesh by way of Ezion Geber at the end, and then the return to that same place after the rejection of the Edomites, and the march up the eastern side of the mountains of Edom and Moab. This last march would explain the renewed hatred of the Midianites, who may have harassed them, or been fearful they would return into Arabia.

Verses 39 – 44. Aaron's death is briefly described again. Numbers 20:22-29. The places from there on are in my opinion on the eastern side of the mountains of Edom and Moab. I believe, on the basis of the Ezion Geber start point again, that they follow the line that would be taken last century by the railroad and that they cut in towards the Ammonite area of old Moab by heading down the Arnon River. The writer then refers to the changed names of the area from the Arnon through to the Jabbok to reflect the Israelite capture and permanent seizure of this land.

Verses 45 – 48. The city of Dibon-Gad reflects the request of Gad in the last chapter, and reflects their capture of this city and it's name change to reflect their ownership. The camp is on the plains of Moab opposite Jericho for many months while they await the God ordained time to invade the land proper, for Moses death to occur, and for the three tribes to consolidate their hold over the area they have seized before they join the rest of the people. The camp of Israel covers a considerable area, from Bethjesimoth back from the river to Abelshittim. Check this out in a Bible Atlas and you will see it is strategically set across the main north-south highway; well suited to move north or south to assist the three tribes, as they subdue and settle the cities in this part of the land.

This covers an area of around ten square kilometres and reflects the nine separate tribal groups with their animals around them, and would accord with a population of around 20,000, as the three tribes have now settled in their newly acquired cities by this stage and their animals are in the fields where they have settled. Their camp is 5-10 kilometres from the river Jordan, which gives them a good buffer in case of a sally across the river by any Canaanites. Moses is still thinking well like a good general and the camp is in the right place to support the three tribes and be defended against any Canaanite attack.

Verses 49 – 56.

Moses knows that it is time to die soon, yet the Lord has another teaching task to perform before he goes up Mount Nebo. This mountain looms over the camp and every day Moses chooses to serve the Lord with all his strength, and teach with all his might, not spend the day looking up at the mountain he must climb to die upon. As I reflect upon these last chapters after Moses is told he is to die before the people enter the land, I thought about the Lord's testing of His servant here.

When the time for death draws near many will slow down and withdraw from active service, but the Lord here encourages/challenges Moses to keep on serving at full speed right until the end. Moses rises to the challenge and pours himself out right until the last day. Each day he rises he does not know whether it is the day when all is done and he must ascend the mountain that looms over the campsite. He doesn't focus upon his death, for he leaves it in the Lord's hands, he focuses upon his service that day. Psalm 68:20, 116:15.

It is a picture of our own lives as we age. We are not to slow down in any way our service for the Lord, except as bodily frailty forces us to, and we are not to waste time in nostalgia and thinking upon the day of our death. While we have strength we are to pour our lives out as a drink offering. 2 Timothy 4:6-8. We are to pour out all that is needed every day, without holding back, confident that the Lord will recharge us overnight for whatever the next day brings.

We are not to "save ourselves" for another day, tomorrow, that we do not necessarily have! Believers are to live day by day. Matthew 6:25-34. Every day we are to pour ourselves out in praise and worship and service, with the confidence of one who knows that the days of this life are in the Lord's hands. Psalms 21:4, 23:6, 37:18, 90:1-17.

The instructions given to the people are severe and strong. All the people of the land into which they are entering are to be killed or driven out before them. They can be driven to north or south, but they must be cleared out of the land completely or they will pollute the land and destroy the people of God over time. Moses failed to follow the complete instructions he received at Kadesh that last time, Numbers 20:7-13, and sadly the people will fail to follow through on these instructions also.

The instructions are clear regarding the art objects and all the religious worship places of the Canaanites also. Every vestige of these people's corrupt and evil religion is to be removed. Every image, idol, sculpture, mosaic, picture on plaster or wood, is to be destroyed totally. All that is gold, silver, bronze or copper, is to be melted down and used for the Lord's tabernacle's support, and all that is stone is to be broken, and all that is wooden is to be burned. The "High Places" were groves of trees, or circles of stones, on mountain tops within which the sexualised rituals of the pagan religions were held. They were to be destroyed totally. How clearly do the Lord's people under your teaching care understand this principle? How many play with paganism, not realising what it entails?

The Lord makes it clear to them that these people have lost their tenure of the land due to their paganism and the evil of it. They have polluted the land, and as all the earth is the Lord's, it is His to withdraw from one people group and to give it to another. The land is the Lord's and we are not to question the Lord when one people group loses tenure and another takes over. The Lord solemnly warns the people that if they do not deal severely with the local Canaanites and drive them out or kill them, then these survivors will over time destroy their spiritual life. They will "pierce their eyes" and be thorns in their side. They will destroy their spiritual vision and make life itself uncomfortable for the Israelites. If the Israelites allow themselves to be led astray by these people then what will happen to them is what happens to the Canaanites. Leviticus 26:1ff, Deuteronomy 28-30.

In today's world we have seen the growth of "indigenous people's movements", and while many have rights to land and self determination, others were removed from the land because they lost their tenure before the Lord. When we face this issue, in the distant past as here in Canaan, or in the recent past, we need to look at the spiritual state of the people who were dispossessed in order to decide where the satanic elements were! What led to their defeat and dispossession? If it was evil on their part, or on their invader's part, then the path back to restoration is by spiritual revival.

When people are sold out to religious systems that encourage sexual abuse and centre their lives around rituals that involve evil practices, then the time comes when such groups will lose their divine rights to the land they have inhabited. God decides here and will eliminate such groups from history. If a people group has lost their land, and is asking for justice, then the way back for them is the "narrow way" of the Gospel message. Matthew 7:7-23. Spirituality will always restore what evil lost (be it our own or other people's evil) and do so with interest.

People who are spiritually transformed, and so become superior to their conquerors **will always recover** what they have lost over time, especially if the conquest was of evil origin itself. This is our task as Church and Bible College movements; to empower people to rise up and seize their spiritual inheritance and so bring power back to people groups that have lost their way due to evil, but may recover their lives and land due to their renewed spiritual status before the Lord.

By transforming our spiritual lives, we transform our marriages, our families and our nation. This is why every church is to be a Bible College. Every church is to be a centre of transformation and hope. If a people group has lost its land, but they are alive, there is hope for restoration through spiritual growth and power. Let us move forward in our work to give spiritual hope, for this alone is the door to national hope.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. National hope for reconciliation between warring peoples, and recovery of lost manna and land, centres in and around the spiritual life of people only! The so called “theology of liberation” has produced nothing but corpses in the cemeteries of poor neighbourhoods. The power of the Gospel however transforms the entire community and restores hope and prosperity to a people without filling the cemetery. This is our mission to the world; to preach the genuine Gospel message, and the power of the Holy Spirit always accompanies the genuine Gospel, and people are always transformed by it, and so is their nation. Let us pray for revival in our lands today.

2. We know we are retired when we enter heaven, and until then we serve with all our strength. When our physical strength fails we pray for those who still are able to go out and minister. We stop our service when we enter heaven, and there we begin our worship proper. Moses did not look fearfully up to Mount Nebo every day, he quietly did all that he was ordered until the last day when the Lord said, “today is the day, come up and see the land, and I will take you home to heaven then”. Deuteronomy 32:48-52, 34:1-12. Let us focus on the things to be done each and every day, and not waste time in nostalgia, or in fear of the events of our last day. Let us leave our dying to the grace of God, as we leave each and every day. Psalm 68:20, 116:15.

3. Life today is about “water tests”, just as it was for Israel. We will daily be challenged by the Lord to trust Him in all we do, to provide for us on the journey through this life. All through their journey the Lord provided for Israel, and He will provide for us on our journey through this life. We are not to get too comfortable in the things that don’t matter, but focus upon the will of the Lord that does.

Notes

CHAPTER 34

INTRODUCTION

The borders of the land are now spelt out for Moses and the people to understand the parameters of the task, and attempt to seize the areas referred to. They will fail to do so and most liberal commentators see this failure as evidence that these borders are simply those of the Davidic and Solomonian Empire from 1000-925BC and are therefore simply an interpolation made by the "redactor" of that day. The liberal argues that there was no real "exodus" at all and that Moses is an invention of the days of the kings to explain their conquests of their neighbours and give divine sanction to them. They argue that all the people and places here are fictional or part of a national "mythic history". As we enter this chapter let us realize that the enemy's attacks on these details indicates some serious significance for this chapter. Let us go slowly through a chapter that others will quickly skip through.

I believe Moses wrote this, and that the failure of the Israelites to seize all the land was a factor of their desire for an easy life in Canaan, whereby they settled for what they felt they could hold by military force, rather than seizing it all by faith, and waiting for the Lord to prosper their next generations to fill the land with armed believers. This first generation is not numerous enough to hold the land, but if they have many children the next one will be. They are called to act boldly and so secure the destiny of the next generation.

Do we seize the vision the Lord has given, and take the objectives, without worrying about how we will hold them? The Lord asks us to step out and seize the vision He has given us, and leave the provision of the supplies, and people to hold the land as a matter for prayer, once the objective has been taken. This is the opposite of normal military logic, and it is the faith-rest thinking the Lord calls us to. We are to walk by faith, not by sight! Let us see just how large the "Promised Land" is, for it takes in much of what is now Syria and Jordan.

NUMBERS 34:1-29

34:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, **2** Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land of Canaan; (this is the land that shall fall unto you for an inheritance, even the land of Canaan with the coasts thereof:) **3** Then your south quarter shall be from the wilderness of Zin along by the coast of Edom, and your south border shall be the outmost coast of the salt sea eastward: **4** And your border shall turn from the south to the ascent of Akkrabbim, and pass on to Zin: and the going forth thereof shall be from the south to Kadeshbarnea, and shall go on to Hazaraddar, and pass on to Azmon: **5** And the border shall fetch a compass from Azmon unto the river of Egypt, and the goings out of it shall be at the sea. **6** And as for the western border, ye shall even have the great sea for a border: this shall be your west border. **7** And this shall be your north border: from the great sea ye shall point out for you mount Hor: **8** From mount Hor ye shall point out your border unto the entrance of Hamath; and the goings forth of the border shall be to Zedad: **9** And the border shall go on to Ziphron, and the goings out of it shall be at Hazarenan: this shall be your north border. **10** And ye shall point out your east border from Hazarenan to Shepham: **11** And the coast shall go down from Shepham to Riblah, on the east side of Ain; and the border shall descend, and shall reach unto the side of the sea of Chinnereth eastward: **12** And the border shall go down to Jordan, and the goings out of it shall be at the salt sea: this shall be your land with the coasts thereof round about. **13** And Moses commanded the children of Israel, saying, This is the land which ye shall inherit by lot, which the LORD commanded to give unto the nine tribes, and to the half tribe: **14** For the tribe of the children of Reuben according to the house of their fathers, and the tribe of the children of Gad according to the house of their fathers, have received their inheritance; and half the tribe of Manasseh have received their inheritance: **15** The two tribes and the half tribe have received their inheritance on this side Jordan near Jericho eastward, toward the sunrising. **16** And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, **17** These are the names of the men which shall divide the land unto you: Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun. **18** And ye shall take one prince of every tribe, to divide the land by inheritance. **19** And the names of the men are these: Of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh. **20** And of the tribe of the children of Simeon, Shemuel the son of Ammihud. **21** Of the tribe of Benjamin, Elidad the son of Chislon. **22** And the prince of the tribe of the children of Dan, Bukki the son of Jogli. **23** The prince of the children of Joseph, for the tribe of the children of Manasseh, Hanniel the son of Ephod. **24** And the prince of the tribe of the children of Ephraim, Kemuel the son of Shiphtan. **25** And the prince of the tribe of the children of Zebulun, Elizaphan the son of Parnach. **26** And the prince of the tribe of the children of Issachar, Paltiel the son of Azzan. **27** And the prince of the tribe of the children of Asher, Ahihud the son of Shelomi. **28** And the prince of the tribe of the children of Naphtali, Pedahel the son of Ammihud. **29** These are they whom the LORD commanded to divide the inheritance unto the children of Israel in the land of Canaan.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 2. The land of Canaan is to be their inheritance from the Lord. The Lord tells Moses that the land is to be "given" to them by Himself. The Lord holds tenure of all the lands and He has now given this land to them and He sets their boundaries, not any man. What we will see is that these boundaries are different than those of David and Solomon's day and will differ again from those in Ezekiel 48 which describe the Millennial boundaries. The differences here prove to me these are Moses revelation and are not the work of any "redactor" of the days of the kings.

Verses 3 – 7. The southern and western borders are reasonably easy to identify today, even though a couple of the geographical markers are no longer known with precision. The direction described is from the south to the west, to the north and lastly the east. This is opposite from the way we would describe things, but begins from the Egyptian frontier, as it was their departure from that nation that defined them as a nation. The western boundary is the Mediterranean Sea and so that is easily comprehended, and with these two clear boundaries in place the next compass directions can be drawn in using towns and mountains that were well known in that day.

The southern boundary begins from the Eastern shore of the Dead Sea along to the southern end of the Dead Sea, then along the “Ascent of Akrabbim” (Wadi Fikreh, or Wadi Murreh) towards Kadesh Barnea. From there it heads across the then open pastoral lands, (now desert), to the River of Egypt that enters the Mediterranean 80 kilometres south of Gaza. The towns or places, Hazaraddar (is this Hezron?), and Azmon (is this Adar?) are on the path traced from Kadesh to the sea. The actual identity of these places is in dispute but they will be ruins on the line that is drawn here down the wadi’s/valleys and rivers of the area.

The western boundary is the sea up as far as “Mount Hor”. Now there must be some textual corruption that has crept in at this point, for the Mt Hor we have met already is on the border of Edom and is where Aaron died. Is this a reference to a mountain like Hor, possibly Hermon? Is it “Dor”, close by what is now known as Mt Carmel? We simply do not know at this distance, but the end of the western boundary apparently gets it’s bearing to cut inland from either Carmel or Mt Hermon, and then cuts up the line of the rivers valleys of the Leontes (Litani), and Orontes, to end at the northerly point of Hamath. The area of Phoenicia, now Lebanon is not included in the boundary of the land given to Moses by God, but it will be part of the land when the Millennial Kingdom dawns.

Verses 8 – 9. Having noted above the possible far north point, the northern boundary is far less certain and this uncertainty is, I believe, additional evidence for an older date by at least five centuries from David and Solomon’s day. Had this passage been written or even corrected in Solomon’s day then the “redactor” would have made sure it read as the then “modern” border, thus giving divine sanction to Solomon’s conquests.

No such thing has occurred and we are left with great confusion about the border here and to the east. Even the great commentators Keil and Delitzsch, state, “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”.

What are we left with here then? All the towns and mountains mentioned in these verses would have been known to Moses, and have been mentioned in the tablets Moses received, and from which he wrote Genesis. This is the country that Isaac and Jacob moved through on their journeys to and from Haran. I do not see a problem in the names here, for the Lord can give Moses these names, and that is what he says happened, and he knows them anyway from the early tablets and from his own time as a prince of Egypt. This was frontier country between the Egyptian and Hittite Empires and so each town was known well by the Egyptians, as it was a potential battle field.

So Moses knows the names of places, and would have used the correct names for his day. The problem is that using the names, as we now understand them, to try to work out the borders Moses is given, we are left with a ridiculous border that goes up and down rather than directly in contour lines that geographically makes sense like the other ones do. We would expect borders to follow river valleys or mountain tops, and as we carefully go through these verses we will see that this is possible here, but precision is impossible, possibly due to place name changes through the years.

Later boundaries under the two great Israelite kings shifted with yearly battles and alliances and so there was no fixed national border as we know them today. Borders of all nations in the ancient world were defined by what a nation could hold at the time.

The line of the boundary appears to head inland, either from the outflow of the Leontes River and then follow the Bakaa Valley to Hamath, or goes inland from Mt Carmel (possibly called Mt Dor at this time of Moses) then cuts through the river valleys to Hamath. It is then that we get more confusion. Instead of working west to east, following the direction we are working in, Moses mentions a town in the south east Hazar-enam, and then goes back to the river valley and mentions Riblah. If we draw a line from Riblah to Hazar-enam, then it does look like a reasonable geographical boundary, from which the eastern boundary could head south, and have the Arabian desert (in these days the open pastoral lands of the children of Ishmael) as it’s eastern side.

The clue here is the name “Shepham”, which means “barren spot”, and so is not a prosperous populated area, and this makes such a place most likely to be found on the Eastern frontier with Arabia. This approximate line was conquered by Solomon and held by him. This would include the ancient city of Damascus. There is a natural geographical line from Riblah through Zedad to Hazar-enam, but this would indicate that the land around and south of Hamath was like an inland peninsula running north from this line. It does not make 100% sense, and there may have been other places known by these names that would make sense of it but we don’t now have the information. We will explore this further below.

Verses 10 – 11. All our speculation about the eastern boundary now is undone by these verses. The line now appears to run from Riblah down to the western side of the Sea of Galilee (Chinnereth) and then follow the Jordan River down to the Western coast of the Dead Sea. Ain is a place of fountains and it has been variously identified, but the consensus is that it is close by Riblah.

If this is right, then the Israelites were ordered and authorized to seize a great wedge of land from the borders of Lebanon on the Mediterranean side, across the Bekaa valley and covering the Anti-Lebanon mountains down to Hermon. This may include the Golan and touch the Sea of Galilee around the town later known as Bethsaida. All this is speculation, and they didn't actually achieve this, as we will see in the book of Joshua. We are left with baffling information here and must just recognize that at the distance of 3500 years the land and some place names have changed and what was clear to Moses is not to us now.

Verses 12 – 15. This is the land for the nine tribes, and so Moses allows for the understanding that the boundaries of the three who stay on this East side of Jordan is also to be considered as being in the "Promised land" as Abraham was given it. The borders Moses has just given apply to the nine tribes only. The three cattle ranching tribes have from the Jordan to the mountain tops where the sun rises over the land of Canaan. Mountains, seas, fountains, and rivers define the land on all sides. The land to be given to the nine tribes is to be divided by the casting of lots, and this is to be supervised by the new "princes", who will be the acknowledged leaders of this next generation. Compare these names to those back in Numbers 1:5-16.

Verses 16 – 29. The two leaders are Joshua and Eleazar, replacing Moses and Aaron. Eleazar has had several months to work into the job role with Moses beside him and so he is well accepted by the people by this point. Joshua is the war leader, although Phinehas is there as leader of the expedition against the Midianites and so the people know there are at least two great generals to lead them. The order of the tribes is also different here, with Judah being the prominent one at the head of the others. The liberal critics point out that this is a clear indication of Davidic interference with the text, but I see in this simply Moses recognition that Judah is the tribe that will produce the coming king and from which the Lord's anointed will come – Genesis 49:8-12. The changed order of the tribes may also relate to their sizes now as against their birth order.

The old (Numbers 1) and the new are as follows:

Reuben	Elizur son of Shedeur	<u>now</u>	not mentioned as they have their land
Simeon	Shelumiel son of Zurishaddei		Shemuel son of Ammihud
Judah	Nahshon son of Aminadab		Caleb son of Jephunneh
Issachar	Nethaneel son of Zuar		Paltiel son of Azzan
Zebulun	Eliab son of Helon		Elizaphan son of Parnach
Ephraim	Elishama son of Ammihud		Kemuel son of Shiptan
Manasseh	Gamaliel son of Pedahzur		Hanniel son of Ephod
Benjamin	Abidan son of Gideoni		Eliad son of Chision
Dan	Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai		Bukki son of Jogli
Asher	Pagiel son of Ocran		Ahihud son of Shelomi
Gad	Eliasaph son of Deuel		not mentioned as they have their land
Naphtali	Ahira son of Enan		Pedahel son of Ammihid

Notice that not one of the older princes has brought up his son to be a prince after him. All failed and all were replaced by new men of the Lord's choosing. There were no inherited princes at this point; it was a total meritocracy. Only those with Holy Spirit anointed ability are to lead in God's work. No birth status or educational achievements count for anything unless the person involved has the proven character and the fruit of the Holy Spirit in their life.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. When we come to difficulties with identifying places in Moses record we are called to remember when he wrote these words and expect some difficulties given his distance in time from us. These things do not prove the unreliability of the text, rather the reverse, they prove that the men of five centuries later didn't know the meaning of what Moses had said but they valued his words so highly that they didn't change them.
2. Leadership depends upon character not parents roles in the church or nation. A person who is "born" to rule does not exist, for what we are born with(our genetics) must be trained by life and we must learn tenacity and build character. True rulers and leaders are made by life experiences and formed by character development. Without Holy Spirit anointed character no-one can be a leader of others in the church. Let us walk and grow in the Spirit, for only then can we exercise any of our gifts in the church!

LEADERSHIP CHARACTER – THE FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. The filling of the Holy Spirit produces fruit in the life (love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance). (Galatians 5:22-23) Note that "fruit" is singular - all the characters are produced at the same time in the filling of the Holy Spirit, although they will be at different stages of development in the growing believer.
2. The Fruit of the Spirit is also listed as follows:-
 Romans 14:17 - Righteousness, Peace, Joy
 Colossians 3:12-15 - Compassion, Kindness, Humility, Gentleness, Patience, Forgiveness, Love, Peace, Thankfulness
 1Thessalonians 1:3 - Faith, Love, Endurance, Hope

2. In principle, it is the imitation of God (Ephesians 5:1). The reason we are left on the earth after salvation is to produce fruit. (John 15:16, Philippians 4:17)
3. We produce fruit by hearing the word (Mark 4:20-28) and applying it to our lives. (Hebrews 4:2)
4. Failure to grow and produce fruit means divine discipline even to the point of the believer's early departure from this life. (Luke 13:6-9 John 15:2)
5. Rewards in eternity are distributed on the basis of faithful production. (1 Corinthians 3:10-15, 2 Corinthians 5:10)
6. Fruit is not to be confused with spiritual gifts. These are listed in (Romans 12:6-8; 15:18-19; 1Corinthians 12:8,10; 1Corinthians 12:28-30; Ephesians 4:1) and other places.
7. One can know Christians by their fruit (Matthew 7:16-20; Luke 6:43-45; 1John 3:10 & 11; John 15:8) especially by their love (John 13:35) but not by their gifts, as Satan can imitate them (2Thessalonians 2:9).
8. Three natural fruits represent some of the facets of the fruit of the Spirit: Apples - love, Grapes - Joy, Pomegranates - Peace.
9. In Galatians 5: 22-23 the fruit of the Spirit is divided into three sections:
 - [a] Love, Joy and Peace towards God;
 - [b] Patience, Goodness and Kindness towards others;
 - [c] Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self-control towards oneself.

WALKING IN THE SPIRIT – LIKE MOSES

1. Physical walking is analogous to the faith rest life: step by step. Romans 14:5,6, Ephesians 5:16-18, James 4:13-15.
2. Being regularly filled with the Holy Spirit and feeding on the Word are similar to walking.
3. Attacks on believers occur when they are caught off balance, often as they retreat. Romans 13:13.
4. Walking depicts the pattern and function of the believer's life in time. Philippians 3:18, Ephesians 4:17.
5. It can also represent a backsliding believer who are said to be walking backwards. Ephesians 4:17.
6. We are all told to:
 - a) Walk in the spirit. Galatians 5:16, 25
 - b) Walk in the faith. 2 Corinthians 5:7, Colossians 2:6, 4:5
 - c) Walk in doctrine. 3 John 3.
 - d) Walk in the truth. 2 John 4
7. Walking is a analogy for spirituality
 - a) Walk not after the flesh. (Romans 8:4)
 - b) Walking in Love. (Ephesians 5:2)
 - c) Walking in newness of Life. (Romans 6:4)
 - d) Walking worthy of our vocation. (Ephesians 4:1)
 - e) Walking worthy of the Lord. (Colossians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 2:12)
 - f) Walking honestly as in the day. (Romans 13:13)
 - g) Walking in good works. (Ephesians 2:10)
 - h) Walking in light. (Ephesians 5:8, 1 John 1:7)
 - i) Walking in Christ Jesus. (Colossians 2:6)
 - j) Walking circumspectly. (Ephesians 5:15,16)
 - k) Walking as ye ought. (1 Thessalonians 4:1)

NOTES

CHAPTER 35**INTRODUCTION**

The Levites were to have no inheritance in the land, but they were to be provided for, and while Moses lived he was to remind the people of their obligation towards those who stood before God on their behalf. Numbers 18:20-26. The Levites were to receive towns for dwelling in amongst the people of all the tribes and they were to receive some land around that town to grow their own produce to feed themselves when not on duty in the tabernacle. Moses is called by the Lord to lay down these rules also before he dies.

Moses authority is supreme in the establishment of the system that now bears his name (The Mosaic Law) and the Lord will use him until the last day of his life to lay down exactly what he wants done. This chapter covers the provisions for the Levites and also for the Cities of Refuge, that will be places for those responsible for a death to flee to so that their legal defence case can be heard fairly by a local Levitical Court.

NUMBERS 35:1-34

35:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho, saying, **2** Command the children of Israel, that they give unto the Levites of the inheritance of their possession cities to dwell in; and ye shall give also unto the Levites suburbs for the cities round about them. **3** And the cities shall they have to dwell in; and the suburbs of them shall be for their cattle, and for their goods, and for all their beasts. **4** And the suburbs of the cities, which ye shall give unto the Levites, shall reach from the wall of the city and outward a thousand cubits round about. **5** And ye shall measure from without the city on the east side two thousand cubits, and on the south side two thousand cubits, and on the west side two thousand cubits, and on the north side two thousand cubits; and the city shall be in the midst: this shall be to them the suburbs of the cities. **6** And among the cities which ye shall give unto the Levites there shall be six cities for refuge, which ye shall appoint for the manslayer, that he may flee thither: and to them ye shall add forty and two cities. **7** So all the cities which ye shall give to the Levites shall be forty and eight cities: them shall ye give with their suburbs. **8** And the cities which ye shall give shall be of the possession of the children of Israel: from them that have many ye shall give many; but from them that have few ye shall give few: every one shall give of his cities unto the Levites according to his inheritance which he inheriteth. **9** And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, **10** Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come over Jordan into the land of Canaan; **11** Then ye shall appoint you cities to be cities of refuge for you; that the slayer may flee thither, which killeth any person at unawares. **12** And they shall be unto you cities for refuge from the avenger; that the manslayer die not, until he stand before the congregation in judgment. **13** And of these cities which ye shall give six cities shall ye have for refuge. **14** Ye shall give three cities on this side Jordan, and three cities shall ye give in the land of Canaan, which shall be cities of refuge. **15** These six cities shall be a refuge, both for the children of Israel, and for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them: that every one that killeth any person unawares may flee thither. **16** And if he smite him with an instrument of iron, so that he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. **17** And if he smite him with throwing a stone, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. **18** Or if he smite him with an hand weapon of wood, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. **19** The revenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer: when he meeteth him, he shall slay him. **20** But if he thrust him of hatred, or hurl at him by laying of wait, that he die; **21** Or in enmity smite him with his hand, that he die: he that smote him shall surely be put to death; for he is a murderer: the revenger of blood shall slay the murderer, when he meeteth him. **22** But if he thrust him suddenly without enmity, or have cast upon him any thing without laying of wait, **23** Or with any stone, wherewith a man may die, seeing him not, and cast it upon him, that he die, and was not his enemy, neither sought his harm: **24** Then the congregation shall judge between the slayer and the revenger of blood according to these judgments: **25** And the congregation shall deliver the slayer out of the hand of the revenger of blood, and the congregation shall restore him to the city of his refuge, whither he was fled: and he shall abide in it unto the death of the high priest, which was anointed with the holy oil. **26** But if the slayer shall at any time come without the border of the city of his refuge, whither he was fled; **27** And the revenger of blood find him without the borders of the city of his refuge, and the revenger of blood kill the slayer; he shall not be guilty of blood. **28** Because he should have remained in the city of his refuge until the death of the high priest: but after the death of the high priest the slayer shall return into the land of his possession. **29** So these things shall be for a statute of judgment unto you throughout your generations in all your dwellings. **30** Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die. **31** Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death. **32** And ye shall take no satisfaction for him that is fled to the city of his refuge, that he should come again to dwell in the land, until the death of the priest. **33** So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it. **34** Defile not therefore the land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I dwell: for I the LORD dwell among the children of Israel.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 5. Every tribe is responsible to appoint “cities” (walled villages) for the Levites to dwell in amongst them. These walled villages are to be provided with an assigned area of land that is for the Levites use for their animals and for growing crops for their food. The distance from the wall to the outer limits of the land assigned is to be

1000 cubits (about 1800 feet = about a mile) in all directions. Having used the figure 1000 cubits for the land assigned, the instructions now appear to contradict by stating that it is to be 2000 cubits that is to be measured from each wall around about.

Now the commentators have a field day here trying to reconcile the differences. There are two ways to reconcile these figures. The first is to note that each of the four enclosures at each compass point is to measure at least 1000 x 2000 cubits. The area assigned is not to be a circle, but a giant square. The tribes around them are not to short change the Levites by cutting off the corners of their assigned land. The second way this could be understood is that they are assigned 1000 cubits from their wall as cultivated land, and the next 1000 cubits beyond that as pasture land, but the distances in this are too great and would encroach upon their neighbours, so the first way of seeing this is probably correct.

The areas involved, if the measure is of four areas of 1000 x 2000 cubits, is 2 square miles for each of the four fields. This is 1280 acres for each of the four fields, for a total of 5120 acres for each walled village. This is enough to feed a significant number of people when the land was as fertile as it was in these days.

To feed a family of six a vegetable garden of at least half of an acre is required, and to provide for wheat or barley crops, at least 1-2 acres would be required per family. An acre of grapes will provide wine and grape juice for a year for a family. An acre or two of fruit trees will provide fruit for a family. To graze goats and sheep for family milk and cheese would require another couple of acres. Each family would need around five to ten acres to be comfortable depending on the fertility of the land.

I speak here as someone who has fed his family from the land, and I have seen a family of six be well fed off 2 ½ acres! The assigned area would handle up to 500 families if the land was reasonably fertile. Given the small numbers of Levites the provision is going to be ample, and even in Solomon's day, with a greatly expanded population, it will be sufficient for up to 6000 family groups to live in great comfort, even if only one walled village is provided in each tribal area. As there are four per tribal area (verse 7) there is the allowance here that will provide well for up to 24,000 families of Levites. God's provision is bountiful indeed.

Verses 6 – 8. There were special rules relating to this land assigned to the Levites. It could be sold, (better – leased) but only for very set times, and then it had to return to the Levites, or a Levite could redeem it from the purchaser at any time. Leviticus 25:32-34. These were significant rules which made it very hard to alienate the land from the Levites and meant that they were protected from the avarice of other tribal groups around them. They were the law givers and judges for the people also, and so had to be protected, for they would have to make rulings at times that all would not be happy with.

God lays down firm rules to protect those who will do His work. In Joshua 21 we find that there were ten villages provided for the Levites on the Eastern bank of the Jordan and thirty eight in Canaan proper. The villages of Judah, Simeon and Benjamin were for the priests, while the others were for all the Levite families. Judah and Simeon will provide nine villages each, while most others will provide three or four. The family groups stayed together as far as was possible.

It appears that Eleazar may have been the one to assign the families to their various places for abode and he would have kept the groups of workers spread around for ease in their service to the tabernacle through the year. All the men of one village could not be on duty at the tabernacle at one point, or the work in the fields would suffer. In these early days there may have been only a few families in each place, and some may not have been occupied, given their ruinous state after the conquest. The numbers of Levites were not great at this time, but the provision was there for their future and the provision was sufficient to provide for the next thousand years. Deuteronomy 4:41ff.

Verses 9 – 34. There were to be six cities put aside for "cities of refuge" to which a person who had accidentally slain a neighbour might flee from any family member of the dead man who might chase and kill the person. There were three on the East bank and three on the west bank of the Jordan. They were not "stay out of jail free" places, but waiting places for the Levitical courts to make a decision about the nature of the death and any culpability on the part of the man who had killed his neighbour.

The man who killed was to face a trial and there are basic rules set out here regarding guilt and innocence. If the person died as a result of striking with a metal implement, then it was murder, for such a blow would be deliberate. If the person dies as a result of a stone being thrown, then the thrower was guilty. Both these actions require forethought and deliberate action. It was the deliberation that determined the guilt. If there was a weapon of wood used to strike a man and he died then the murderer was to be executed after this deliberate action was identified. Today we call this the principle of "intention". There was a right of a family member to chase and kill such a man as struck their relative so that he died. If there was intention to harm, then the man who killed was to be killed and justice was to be felt to be done.

Anyone who lay in wait and killed another, or had hatred (principle of motivation to kill) and expressed it in a physical assault, then the "revenger of blood" was to kill the murderer and suffer no penalty himself. Any wound that involved a thrust, or a side ways glancing blow then it was evidence of deliberation and intention to kill. If however the person had not intended to kill, or even injure then the intention to kill was lacking and the evidence had to be heard.

If there was no hatred between the men, and no ambush, or violent argument leading to blows, then the person who struck their neighbour was not guilty of murder. If the object that hit and killed the man was not deliberately thrown, or the

person throwing it did not see the man who was killed, then it was not murder. If there was no deliberate intention to harm then it was not murder. If it was a manslaughter or accidental death, then the man who had killed the other was to stay in the city of refuge until the death of the High Priest.

If that man left the city and its farm limits (1000 cubits from the wall) for any reason, at any time, and the revenger found him, then he could be killed and the revenger was not guilty of any murder. The death of a man was to be revenged and the family feel justice had been done, and even accidents were to be punished by banishment (which was the effect of accidental death here). There was to be no light or easy solutions to the death of a person. It was always to be taken seriously.

In effect these were the "Health and Safety rules" for Israel. If a person built a wall and it collapsed on a person then that person's family could revenge the death! There was a real incentive to be careful in all you did and guard the life of your neighbour, for at very least you could be exiled for many years, but at worst you were killed yourself. The rules of other nations regarding accidental death caused by negligence were harsher than these of the Mosaic Code.

After the death of the High Priest the man who was guilty of causing an accidental death was permitted to return to the city of his family and be accepted by the neighbours who could not now seek any blood judgment upon him. The general principle of evidence, that is ignored today in our courts, is given in verse 30. That is the principle that at least two witnesses must agree on any matter for it to be confirmed and for a death penalty to be carried out. One witness, no matter how reliable in other matters was not to be believed alone in any murder trial.

Once a man was guilty of murder then he was to be put to death. There were no deals to be made, nor any plea bargains entered into. If he was guilty then he was to be executed forthwith. No deals could be entered into either with the man who is forced to stay in the city of refuge until the High Priest dies. He has to stay put until the High Priest dies and wait until then before returning home and this may take many years.

Verses 30 – 34. The issue of sufficient witnesses to ensure every matter was decided "beyond reasonable doubt", is again underlined by Moses. A single witness to a murder was insufficient to lead to execution. At least two witnesses were required to lead to a death penalty. The principle of no "plea bargains" is again stated. If a man was guilty of murder then no deals were to be made with such a man to have a lighter sentence; he was to be taken from the court and killed without any delay. From the Lord's perspective the murderer was guilty of defiling the land and as such he was to be eliminated from the land. Great evil is being done in our modern courts with "plea bargains", whereby evil men and women trade their way out of justice and the victims see that justice isn't done!

Anyone who thinks that they can make deals regarding the life of an innocent dead person is wrong 100% and the Levites are to allow no watering down of the law, lest the nation suffer from lawlessness and there be a despising of the Law and a denigration of the value of human life. The land was not to be defiled by the blood of the innocent, and if an innocent man died then the blood of the guilty was to be shed, to cover it in the land. The death of all people required justice and the land was to be seen as defiled by all murder. The illegitimate death of another person was to be seen as a crime against the person, the community, the land, and their God. Deuteronomy 17:6, 19:15, John 8:17, 2 Corinthians 13:1, Hebrews 10:28.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. God's servants in the ministry are to be provided for with places to live, from where they can serve the people. Just as the ancient Israelites were provided with land, from which to provide for the Levites, just so we are given things to ensure that the pastors are able to be provided for. The Levites were expected to work for their own food and so ought a minister. Lazy men make poor ministers and tending your own garden and feeding your own family is useful for pastors who are able so to do. This is the Pauline principle of the "tent-maker".

2. Crime that goes unpunished pollutes a land. When people lose respect for the Law the land will become the den of robbers and murderers. The Mosaic Law was brutal but effective and when applied it gave the people safety and security. Let us urge our governments to value the Law and protect the innocent by ruthlessly applying godly Laws so that the innocent may safely go about their daily business.

CHAPTER 36**INTRODUCTION**

It is almost as if the coming death of Moses has created a desire amongst the people to resolve all their outstanding issues of Law before he dies. In this last chapter we have the ruling regarding heiresses of property and the importance of the land staying within the tribal areas, without one being dispossessed by the entrepreneurial activities of the others. By marrying an heiress it would be possible for the land to be taken by the husband as the possession of another tribe, by calling his sons as inheritors of the land for his tribe, not that of his wife.

Moses is to make a ruling that will be binding for his time and the days of the Millennium itself. Since the split of the kingdom and the loss of the land area of the northern and Gilead tribes, this ruling has become academic today, but it will be important again in the Millennium when the tribes regain their control over the new areas.

NUMBERS 36:1-13

36:1 And the chief fathers of the families of the children of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of the sons of Joseph, came near, and spake before Moses, and before the princes, the chief fathers of the children of Israel: **2** And they said, The LORD commanded my lord to give the land for an inheritance by lot to the children of Israel: and my lord was commanded by the LORD to give the inheritance of Zelophehad our brother unto his daughters. **3** And if they be married to any of the sons of the other tribes of the children of Israel, then shall their inheritance be taken from the inheritance of our fathers, and shall be put to the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they are received: so shall it be taken from the lot of our inheritance. **4** And when the jubilee of the children of Israel shall be, then shall their inheritance be put unto the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they are received: so shall their inheritance be taken away from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers. **5** And Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of the LORD, saying, The tribe of the sons of Joseph hath said well. **6** This is the thing which the LORD doth command concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, Let them marry to whom they think best; only to the family of the tribe of their father shall they marry. **7** So shall not the inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe: for every one of the children of Israel shall keep himself to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers. **8** And every daughter, that possesseth an inheritance in any tribe of the children of Israel, shall be wife unto one of the family of the tribe of her father, that the children of Israel may enjoy every man the inheritance of his fathers. **9** Neither shall the inheritance remove from one tribe to another tribe; but every one of the tribes of the children of Israel shall keep himself to his own inheritance. **10** Even as the LORD commanded Moses, so did the daughters of Zelophehad: **11** For Mahlah, Tirzah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, were married unto their father's brothers' sons: **12** And they were married into the families of the sons of Manasseh the son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained in the tribe of the family of their father. **13** These are the commandments and the judgments, which the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses unto the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho.

REFLECTIONS

Verses 1 – 3. The heads of the families of the tribe of Manasseh, of the branch of Machir, have been stewing about the implications of the inheritance of Zelophehad possibly passing out of their tribal boundary through the marriage of the girls. Numbers 26:33, 27:1-11. It was just after the question from the daughters of Zelophehad that Moses is told by the Lord that he is to die, and he has been very busy since then, but now, as the work he has been set by the Lord is completed he is approached about the same issue again.

The elders of the tribe of Manasseh are clear that the Lord God has given instruction and they have accepted them, but they have a concern about the inheritance of such land in the next generation. Their concern is that another tribe may inherit land in the midst of Manasseh. This factional concern is a foretaste of things to come.

Sadly the unity of the tribes was tenuous at best and they vied with each other for power and influence. This self centeredness was to be the undoing of the nation in the days of Solomon's son Rehoboam. 2 Chronicles 10:15-19.

Verses 4 – 9. The girls have the land, but it must not be alienated to another tribe. They may marry who ever they wish, as long as he is of the tribe of Manasseh, and not just that, but to a member of their father's extended family. The land must not pass to another, for the Lord's division of the land is to be a lasting one and the tribal boundaries are not to be moved by marriage, alliance, commerce, or by warfare! Capitalism has its boundary firmly set by this decision. What the Lord has given is going to be taken away by the Lord alone, not by the dealings of any man or woman.

Verses 10 – 13. The daughters of Zelophehad accept this ruling of Moses. They have been "dating" their cousins, the sons of their father's brother. At this point the interbreeding between cousins does not cause problems in the gene pool, but in later centuries this becomes a problem in Eastern Europe and several key genetic abnormalities emerge amongst the East European Jews that are present today in Israeli populations. At this point the closeness of the match carried no genetic risk, and was a cause of celebration, for it meant the land remained with the tribe of Manasseh.

The book ends with this incident and the editor's words sum up the decisions of Moses handed down on the plains of Moab while he awaited the call to climb Mt Nebo for the last time. We don't know who the editor of the book was, but he has accurately recorded the events and the words so as to pass the messages of Moses on to the next generation.

This book began by the slopes of one mountain and ends under the shadow of another. It begins by the "Mount of God" and ends 37 years later by Mt Nebo. It begins with the anticipation of the words of the Lord by Horeb, and ends with the anticipation of the death of Moses. He has served well, and failed dramatically and tragically only once. He has lost his right to enter the land, but he is to see it, and he has faithfully led these difficult people, before and after this point and honoured the Lord through his work and words. This is the challenge Moses leaves us from this book – to serve faithfully, and deal with failure by fast and sincere confession, and quick recovery to serve fully again.

PASTORAL AND PERSONAL APPLICATIONS

1. To hold the land was the call for each of the tribes, and not try to take any other tribes land, by marriage, alliance, commercial dealing or by warfare. They were to be content with what the Lord gave them and they were to hold that land for the Lord and serve Him therein. This is our call today. Not to seek the land/role/titles of any other believer, but to serve the Lord in our own place and bring glory to Him there. Philippians 4:6-13. Let us meditate upon our contentment and so relax in the Lord and serve Him where we are called to.