

Numbers

The book of Numbers, takes its name from the Greek (Αριθμοι) and Latin (Numeri) titles to the book. The name is based on the two enumerations of census, one at the beginning of the book the other at the end. (Chapters 1 and 26.) Thus there is a census at the time of the giving of the Law and one again just prior to entering the Promised Land. In Hebrew the title is **rKdmb** which means “In the Wilderness,” which is the fourth word in the book and describes the contents of the book more clearly than “Numbers.” At times “**rBdyw**” which means “And he spoke” is used, which is the first word in Hebrew.

The book begins, to a degree, from the time of the end of the book of Exodus and tells the story until the time of the book of Deuteronomy, namely, the arrival at the place where the people of Israel would cross the Jordan and enter the Promised Land.

Scholars have debated the nature and purpose of the five books that form the Pentateuch, or Torah. All are concerned with telling the story of how the promises to Abraham and the establishment of the people of Israel. Each book has a special interest and direction. Genesis ends with the people in Egypt. Exodus concentrates on the deliverance of the people from Egypt, the covenant at Sinai, and the erection of the tabernacle. Leviticus highlights the nature of true worship and holiness. Number focuses on the land of promise and Israel’s journey to it. Deuteronomy presents the final messages of Moses, regarding the laws that have been given and the blessings that will result from faithfulness on the part of the people and the curses, should they disobey God. Each book has its special message. The major message of Numbers, however, is not the census but rather on the movement of people as they move through the wilderness, including examples of disobedience and discontent.

The book speaks of establishing a covenant and giving of the Law, the preparation of the tabernacle, priestly instructions as to how to weed out those who revolt, along with examples of what has happened along the way. The book is not simply a travel log, but speaks openly of the sustaining and protective hand of God, rejection, pardon, restoration of relationships between God and his people. Much of what is written about here is lifted up again in the New Testament to provide a more complete understanding.

The book can be divided as follows:

- I. The people of God prepare to enter the Promised Land (1 – 10:10)
- II From Sinai to Kadesh (10:11 – 12:16)
- III Forty years near Kadesh (13:1 – 19:22)
- IV From Kadesh to the Plains of Moab (20:1 – 22:1)
- V Israel in the Plains of Moab (22:2 – 36:13)

As a whole the Hebrew text is well preserved. The text of ancient poems that are inserted, for example, Numbers 22 – 24, there is a notable measure of textual corruption,

making it difficult to translate. The Dead Sea Scrolls have no complete manuscript but what is available seems to be closer to the Samaritan Pentateuch, which appears to be a different recension. Estimates concerning its date range from the 4 C., .C.E to the 1st C., .C.E. The text of the Samaritan Pentateuch differs from the Hebrew text 6000 times. 1900 of these variants agree with the LXX. The LXX, translated in about the third century B.C.E., does not provide much help in reconstructing difficult Hebrew passages. In some cases the text is longer than the Hebrew text, and on occasion it is shorter.

On those occasions when the verse numbers in Hebrew do not agree with the numbering in English Bibles the difference as found in chapter 16:36” 36 [H.17:1] In Hebrew the 17th verse begins at this point while in the English Bible it continues to verse 50.

Numbers

<CHAPTER 1>

I. Sojourn and Census at Sinai 1:1 – 10:10 ¹

A. Numbering of Secular Tribes and Duties of Levites 1:1 – 54

1. Appointment of Census Takers 1:1 – 10

¹ The Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness ² of Sinai, within the tent of meeting ³ in the first six [days] ⁴ of the second month of the second year after coming out of the land of Egypt. God declared: ² “Calculate the total ⁵ of the entire congregation of the Israelites, by clans and ancestral houses (*or, families*), based on the number of names: every male individually. ³ Adult males from twenty years of age ⁶ and upward: all of whom are fit for military service. You and Aaron are to enroll them, company by company. ⁴ One man from each tribe is to accompany you. Each of these men must be the head of his ancestral house. ⁷ ⁵ These are the names of the men who are to assist you: ⁸

From the tribe of Reuben: Elizur son of Shedeur.

⁶ From the tribe of Simeon, Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai.

⁷ From the tribe of Judah, Nahshon son of Amminadab.

⁸ From the tribe of Issachar, Nethanel son of Zuar.

⁹ From the tribe of Zebulun, Eliab son of Helon.

¹⁰ From the sons of Joseph:

from Ephraim, Elishama son of Ammihud,

from Manasseh, Gamaliel son of Pedahzur.

¹¹ From the tribe of Benjamin, Abidan son of Gideon.

¹² From the tribe of Dan, Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai.

¹³ From the tribe of Asher, Pagiel son of Ochran.

¹⁴ From the tribe of Gad, Eliasaph son of Deuel.

¹⁵ From the tribe of Naphtali, Ahira son of Enan.

¹⁶ These were the consultants who were selected ⁹ from the assembled congregation who were leaders of their ancestral tribes as heads of their clans.

¹⁷ Moses and Aaron took these men who had been named, ¹⁸ and on the first day of the second month they assembled the entire congregation, that they might register themselves, by clans, based on their family ancestry, according to their family names. This was done individually by all men who were twenty years of age or older, thus carrying out

¹ This portion of Numbers is descriptive of the first fifty days in the book of Numbers, as the people of Israel are about to move from Sinai toward the Promised Land. The signal came when the Lord spoke to Moses. When God spoke, the people moved as they were instructed through Moses words.

² Literally: “place for driving,” which would be an area where flocks would need to be driven on to better grazing areas, thus, “desert.” The wilderness was comprised of three different areas: 1. Pastureland, 2. Uninhabited land, 3. Desert.

³ Some translators interpret the word as “the trysting place.” Literally it might possibly be interpreted as “the appointed place.” The date of this event is thought by scholars to be between 1445 and 1290 B.C.E.

⁴ The word “days” is omitted in the MT.

⁵ Literally: “collect a total” or, “take a census.”

⁶ In that day men usually were married prior to the age of twenty. Cf. the exemptions in Deuteronomy 20:7 and 24:5.

⁷ The plan is not one worked out by Moses but was delivered to him by the revelation of God.

⁸ Most of the names are theophoric, i.e. compounds in which the name of God is used. The men listed in verses 5 – 15 are listed again as heads of clans in chapter 7

⁹ The Ketib is “to simmer.” The Qere is “consultants” or “called.”

the order of God which Moses had received. It was in this manner that the men were enrolled while in the wilderness of Sinai.

2. *Numbering the Tribes 20- 46*

20 The descendants of Reuben, the first born of their lineage: 21 forty-six thousand five hundred.¹⁰

22 The descendants of Simeon: 23 fifty-nine thousand three hundred.

24 The descendants of Gad: 25 forty-five thousand six hundred fifty.¹¹

26 The descendants of Judah: 27 seventy-five thousand six hundred.

28 The descendants of Issachar: 29 fifty-four thousand four hundred.

30 The descendants of Zebulun: 31 fifty-seven thousand four hundred.

32 The descendants of Joseph:

The descendants of Ephraim: 33 forty thousand five hundred.

34 The descendants of Manasseh: 35 thirty-two thousand two hundred.

36 The descendants of Benjamin: 37 thirty-five thousand four hundred.

38 The descendants of Dan: 39 sixty-two thousand seven hundred.

40 The descendants of Asher: 41 forty-one-thousand five hundred.

42 The descendants of Naphtali: 43 fifty-three thousand four hundred.

44 These are the totals of those who were enrolled by Moses and Aaron, along with the help of the leaders of Israel: the twelve men who represented their ancestral homes. 45 It was in this way that the census of the people of Israel took place: by ancestral houses – men from the age of twenty and upward every one who was fit for military service in Israel. 46 The total number was six-hundred three thousand five hundred fifty.¹²

3. *Duties of the Levites 1:47 – 54*

47 The Levites, however, were not included in the census, nor were any whose ancestral home was that of the tribe of Levi. 48 This happened because the Lord had spoken to Moses, saying, 49 “You are not to number the tribe of Levi, thus not taking a census of them. All the other people of Israel are to be numbered. 50 Instead appoint the Levites to be over the tabernacle of the covenant (*or, testimony*)¹³ and over all its equipment – everything that belongs to it, for all this is to be carried by them and cared for by them. They are to encamp around the tabernacle. 51 When the tabernacle is to be set up or taken down it is the task of the Levites. Anyone who tries to take part in working with the tabernacle but is not of the tribe of Levi will be put to death. 52 All other Israelites are to camp in the area assigned for their tribe, camping in organized companies, 53 but the Levites are to camp in the immediate vicinity of the tabernacle of the covenant (*or, testimony*) so that no wrath will fall upon the people of the other tribes of Israel. The Levites will also provide guard duty for the tabernacle of the covenant (*or, testimony*).”¹⁴ 54 The Israelites did exactly as God had commanded Moses.

¹⁰ The MT, almost without exception uses the words: “in their clans, to their ancestral houses according to the number of names, individually, every male from twenty years and upward, everyone capable to bear arms. Those enrolled of the tribe of...” Since this is repeated in verses 20 – 43, these words are omitted and only the names of the tribes and the number of men are listed above.

¹¹ Some LXX manuscripts place Gad after verse 37.

¹² Scholars have struggled with the high numbers of population. They have also struggled with the great numbers of years people lived etc. No agreement concerning these questions has been met.

¹³ Literally: “earth.” The Tabernacle previously had been called “the tent of meeting.” Both names are used to describe the same place.

¹⁴ The Levites were to form a cordon around the tabernacle so no one could encroach on the Holy Presence.

<CHAPTER 2>

B. Position of the Tribes on the March and in Camp 2:1 – 31

1 The Lord told Moses and Aaron: 2 The people of Israel will all camp in specific locations, by regiment under the standards (*or, ensigns*) of their ancestral houses. They are all to camp facing, and thereby encompassing, the tent of meeting, facing the tent.¹⁵

3 Those who are to camp on the east side (*or, toward the sun*) will camp where the standards (*or, ensigns*) of their ancestral houses of Judah, [*Isachar and Zebulun*] are to be displayed. The tribe of Judah, with Nahshon the son of Amminadab, as their tribal leader, are to be encamped there. 4 They number 74,600 people. 5 Beside them Issachar with Nethanel son of Zuar, as their tribal leader, are to be encamped. 6 They number 54,400 people. 7 Beside them: Zebulun, with Eliab the son of Helon, as their tribal leader are to be encamped. 8 They number 57,400 people. 9 The entire company of those who were enrolled in the camp of Judah numbered 186,400 people. They will be the first to begin to march.

10 On the south side: the standards (*or, ensigns*) of the ancestral houses of Reuben [*Simeon and Gad*] are to be displayed. The tribe of Reuben, with Elizur the son of Shedeur as their tribal leader, will be encamped there. 11 They number 46,500 people. 12 Beside them is to be the tribe of Simeon, with Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai, as their tribal leader. 13 They number 59,300 people. 14 Beside them is to be the tribe of Gad, with Eliasaph the son of Reuel, as their tribal leader. 15 The number 45,650 people. 16 The entire company of those who were enrolled in the camp of Reuben numbered 151,450 people. They will be the second unit to move.

17 Next the tent of meeting and the camp of the Levites will move from their central location in the midst of the camps. They are to move in the same position as the location when encamped, each in position by their regiments.¹⁶

18 On the west side: the standards (*or, ensigns*) of the ancestral houses of Ephraim, [*Manasseh, and Benjamin*] will be displayed. The tribe of Ephraim, with Elishama son of Ammihud, as their tribal leader, will be encamped there. 19 They number 40,500 people. 20 Beside them is to be the tribe of Manasseh, with Gamaliel son of Pedahzur, as their tribal leader are to be encamped. 21 They number 32,200. 22 Beside them is to be the tribe of Benjamin is to be encamped, Abidan son of Gideon as their tribal leader. 23 They numbered 35,400 people. 24 The entire company of those who were enrolled in the camp of Ephraim numbered 183,100 people. They will be the third to move.

25 On the north side: the standards (*or, ensigns*) of the ancestral houses of Dan, [*Asher and Naphtali*] will be displayed. The tribe of Dan, with Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai as their tribal leader, will be encamped there. 26 They number 62,700 people. 27 Beside them is to be the tribe of Asher, with Pagiel son of Ochran, as their tribal leader is to be encamped. 28 They number 41,500 people. 29 Beside them the tribe of Naphtali, with Ahira son of Enan, as their tribal leader is to be encamped. 30 They number 53,400 people. 31 The entire company of those who were enrolled in the camp of Dan numbered 157,600. They will be the last to move.

¹⁵ Some scholars feel there are later interpolations, from several different sources, in the text of this chapter. The word translated as “standards” might mean “banner” or “flag.” Everyone was to go to a specific location which is assigned, thus giving orderliness when the people were to dismantle their tents and move to a new location. Tradition says that the tribe of Reuben’s banner was a human head, Ephraim, an ox, an eagle for Dan, etc. The basic format for the establishment of the tribes in a designated manner follows the form of Pharaoh Ramses II in the 13th century B.C.E. The implication is that the host is in the center, in this case the Tabernacle, and the company surrounds, and faces the host. It becomes a beautiful picture of dwelling in the wilderness.

¹⁶ Literally: “standard by standard.”

³² This was the enrollment of the Israelites by their ancestral houses. The total enrollment of the people of Israel in their camps, having been numbered by companies was 633,550 people. ³³ In obedience to the command of the Lord to Moses, the Levites were not numbered among the Israelite clans.

³⁴ The Israelites did exactly what the Lord had commanded through Moses. They camped by regiments, and they set out in exactly the same way -- everyone by clans according to their ancestral homes.

<CHAPTER 3>

c. Special Position of the Levites 3:1 – 51

1. Sons of Aaron 3:1 – 4

¹ This is the lineage of Aaron and Moses at the time when the Lord spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai. ¹⁷ ² These are the names of the sons of Aaron: Nadab the first born, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. ¹⁸ ³ These are the names of the sons of Aaron, the anointed priests, whom Moses ordained to minister as priests. ⁴ Nadab and Abihu died before the Lord when they offered an unauthorized ritual (*or, unholy fire*) before the Lord in the wilderness of Sinai. ¹⁹ They had no children so Eleazar and Ithamar served as priests during their father, Aaron's lifetime.

2. Duties of the Levites 3:5 - 10²⁰

⁵ The Lord told Moses: ⁶ "Bring the tribes of Levi near, [*to offer a sacrifice*] ²¹ and to appear in the presence of Aaron the priest that they may minister to the Lord. ⁷ They are to perform guard duties ²² for him and for the entire congregation before the tent of meeting, and doing service at the tabernacle. ⁸ They are entrusted with the responsibility of being in charge of all the furnishings of the tent of meeting, and attend to the duties for the people of Israel as they perform their duties at the tabernacle. ²³ ⁹ You are to give responsibility for the Levites to Aaron [and his sons. They are unreservedly given to him from among the people of Israel.] ²⁴ ¹⁰ Aaron and his sons are to be appointed by you and they will attend to the priesthood. However if anyone else approaches as a priest who has not been consecrated as a priest, that person is to be put to death."

3. Significance of the Levites 3:11 – 13

¹¹ The Lord said to Moses: ¹² "Be assured: I have taken the Levites from among the people of Israel as substitutes for the first born – the ones that open the womb – among the

¹⁷ These verses repeat Exodus 6:23 and Leviticus 10:1 – 2. This is the first of two census of Levites. The work of the priests is clarified so one can learn the concept of how the tent of meeting would be moved when the people of Israel wandered through the desert.

¹⁸ The family of Aaron belonged to the tribe of Levi. They were to be the authoritative teachers and leaders concerning religious practice under Moses.

¹⁹ Cf. Leviticus 10. They were – at that point – not qualified to do the ritual, but did it in spite of the lack of permission. Therefore they did what they wanted, not what God wanted.

²⁰ From this point on the Levites were the religious leaders. All priests were Levites but not all Levites were priests. These are distinguished in this translation as "temple priests" and "teaching priests." This becomes much more clear in the later history of the Levites. This distinction resulted from some Levites having practiced idolatry in the past. One receives the impression that this took place gradually, not by some edict that was given them.

²¹ Implied.

²² This is a clear declaration of one of the ways, other than priestly, that the Levites were called upon to serve.

²³ Among these duties was: a person who is to be put to death. The reason for the death sentence was so that the people be prevented from also carrying out the evil that the one who was to die had done. This was a priestly prerogative. Cf. Exodus 32:20 – 88, Numbers 23:7 – 12.

²⁴ Some scholars feel this is a later interpolation.

people of Israel. The Levites are to be mine.²⁵ 13 All the first born are mine: on the day that I killed all the first born [*males*] in the land of Egypt, I consecrated all the first born to be my own in Israel – including men and animals—they will be mine! I am the Lord!”

4. *Levitical Census Positions, and Duties 3:14 – 39*

14 The Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai: 15 “Prepare a census of the sons of Levi, based on ancestral families: Count every male beginning at one month of age and upward.”²⁶ 16 Moses then had a census of the males among the tribe of Levi according to the word of the Lord²⁷ as had been commanded. 17 The following are the sons of Levi, their names being: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. 18 The names of the sons of Gershon, by clan, are: Libni and Shimei. 19 The sons of Kohath by their clan are: Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel. 20 The sons of Merari by their clan are: Mahli and Mushi. These are the clans of the Levites, based on their ancestral homes.

21 The clans of the Gershonites included the Libnites and the Shimeites; these were the clans of the Gershonites. 22 The entire number of those from age one month and upward numbered 7,500. 24 The clans of the Gershonites were to camp behind the tabernacle on the west, 25 with Eliasaph son of Lael as head of the ancestral house of the Gershonites. 25 The responsibility of these sons of Gershon in the tent of meeting was the tabernacle, the tent, with its coverings, the screen for the entrance to the tent of meeting, 26 the hangings of the court, the screen for the entrance of the court that is around the tabernacle, the altar and its screen,²⁸ —all the service pertaining to these.

27 The clans of the Amramites, the Izharites, the Hebronites, and the Uzzilietes all together comprised the clans of the Kohathites. 28 The entire number of those from age one month and upward numbered 8,600.²⁹ 29 They attended to the duties of the sanctuary. 29 The clans of the Kohathites were to camp on the south side of the tabernacle, 30 with Elizaphan the son of Uzziel as head of the ancestral house of the clans of the Kohathites. 31 Their responsibility was: the ark, the table, the lamp stand, the altars, the vessels of the sanctuary with which the priests minister, and the screen – all the service pertaining to these.³⁰ 32 Eleazar son of Aaron the priest was to be the chief over the leaders of the Levites, and he was to have responsibility for oversight of those who had charge of the sanctuary.

33 The clans of the Mahlites, and Mushites were the clans that belonged to the Merari. 34 With the census counting all males from one month old and older there were 6,200. 35 The head of the ancestral house of the Merari was Zurriel son of Abihail. They were to camp on the north side of the tabernacle. 36 The descendants of Merari had responsibility for the frames of the tabernacle, the bars, the pillars, the bases, and all their accessories – all the service pertaining to these, 37 including the pillars of the court that surrounded the tabernacle with their bases and pegs.

38 Those who were to camp in front of the tabernacle on the east – in front of the tent of meeting toward the east, were Moses, Aaron and Aaron’s sons, having charge of the rites within the sanctuary, whatever had to be done for the Israelites, and any outsider who came as an intruder was to be put to death. 39 The total number of the Levites whom Moses and

²⁵ The first born son was to be redeemed by substitution. Cf.: 34:20 This resulted in the dedication of the children of the Levites to be God’s representatives, leaders, and spokespersons.

²⁶ In this section positions for the Levites are assigned.

²⁷ The vocalization of the MT is not followed but the vocalization of the Samaritan Pentateuch is used.

²⁸ The MT reads: “screen and its cords.” Probably “screen” is the better word. The cords would be used to erect the Tabernacle.

²⁹ So: BHS. The LXX has “8300.” Several Hebrew manuscripts also have “8300.”

³⁰ The meaning possibly is: “all their work tools.”

Aaron³¹ enrolled by clans at the commandment of the Lord, -- all males from one month old and upward was 22,000.

5. Numbers of Israel's First Born 3:40 - 51

⁴⁰ Then the Lord spoke to Moses: "Enroll all the firstborn males of the Israelites, from one month of age and upward, and tally their names. ⁴¹ However you are to accept the Levites for me ³² – I am the Lord! These are to be substitutes for all the firstborn among the Israelites. The livestock of the Levites will also serve as substitutes for the firstborn of the livestock of the Israelites." ⁴² Moses complied, enrolling all the firstborn among the Israelites, as the Lord had commanded. ⁴³ The total number of the firstborn males, one month of age and upward, having counted their names, came to 22,373.

⁴⁴ Then the Lord spoke to Moses: ⁴⁵ "Accept the Levites as substitutes for all the firstborn among the people of Israel, as well as the livestock of the Levites as substitutes for the firstborn livestock of the people of Israel. The Levites will be mine! I am the Lord!" ⁴⁶ As a price of redemption from those 273 Israelites who are above the number of the Levites, ⁴⁷ you are to accept five shekels apiece, based on the shekel of the sanctuary ³³ or 20 gerahs. ³⁴ ⁴⁸ Give the money to Aaron and his sons, the money by which the excess number of them is redeemed." ⁴⁹ Therefore Moses took the redemption money from those who were over and above those redeemed by the Levites; ⁵⁰ from the firstborn of the Israelites: 1,365 shekels, based on the shekel of the sanctuary. ⁵¹ Moses gave the redemption money to Aaron and his sons, according to the word of the Lord, as the Lord had commanded Moses. ³⁵

<CHAPTER 4>

D. Numbers and Duties of the Levites 4:1 – 49

1. The Kohathites 4:1 - 20

¹ The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: ² "Take a [*separate*] census of the sons of Kohath from among the Levites based on their families and their ancestral homes. ³⁶ ³ Those who are to be included in the census are to range from the age of thirty to the age of fifty, ³⁷ who are qualified to enter this service, to do the work in the tent of meeting.

⁴ This is the service which is the responsibility, in the tent of meeting, for the sons of Kohath: ⁵ When the camp is to be moved Aaron and his sons are to go to the tent of meeting

³¹ Some manuscripts add "and Miriam."

³² The thought surely is "for my use."

³³ The shekel was a common amount but the weight of the silver shekel varied. Apparently there was a "sanctuary shekel" the weight of which possibly was slightly different from the basic shekel used in commerce among the nations of the Middle East. The "sanctuary shekel" was the official weight for this substitute of the firstborn.

³⁴ A gerah was .0182 ounces (troy). The standard Shekel (for commercial use) was .364 ounces (troy). The exact weight of the "sanctuary shekel" is uncertain..

³⁵ There is apparently no record of the basis on which one Israelite had to pay the "sanctuary shekel" and another took part in the even exchange of a Levite. The Levites, however, surely watched the priests and the people to make sure that no unauthorized person would enter or avail themselves to items that belonged to the sanctuary – the holy place.

³⁶ The Kohalites were numbered first because they were among the elite of the people of the tribe of Levi. When the tabernacle was to be taken down and moved the Khoathites were the ones who were responsible for moving the most holy items. They were responsible for covering these most holy items and then transporting them. The outer covering, in Hebrew, was called "the Tahash." The KJ transliterates it as "Tabush" and calls it "badger skin." There is some question as to what kind of skin it was. The generally accepted translation today is "dolphin skin." Since the word does not have a clear meaning numerous translations have been suggested. -- among them: goat skin, porpoise skin, badger skin, degong skin, etc.

³⁷ Across the centuries Rabbis began their work at the age of 30, spending the earlier years in preparation for their position. It is interesting to note that Jesus began his ministry at age 30.

to take down the veil that screens off the view of the ark, and cover the ark of the Testimony. 6 These items then are to be covered with a single piece of blue ³⁸ material for each of the objects and attach the carrying poles for each of the larger objects. 7 Among these items which were then to be covered with the blue material were the table of the bread of the Presence, ³⁹ covered with a piece of blue material. In addition, the dishes for incense bowls, jars for drink offering, and regular bread that would be used in connection with the table 8 were to be covered with a piece of scarlet (*or, crimson*) material and then these were to be covered with leather, carrying poles having been put in place. 9 They are to take blue material and cover the lamp-stand ⁴⁰ for the light, along with its lamps, snuffers, trays. ⁴¹ and all the containers for oil with which it is supplied, 10 and these are to be covered with leather, along with all other utensils, and placed on a carrying frame. 11 The golden altar is to be covered with blue material and then an outer cover of leather. The carrying poles are to be put in place. 12 All the remaining utensils used in the service of the tabernacle are to be covered with purple cloth and an outer covering of fine leather, and placed on a carrying frame. 13 The ashes are to be removed from the altar which is used for the service in the tabernacle. The altar is to be covered with purple material; 14 and the utensils that are used with this altar; the fire-pans, forks (*or, flesh hooks*), shovels and basins: all these utensils of the altar are to be spread on fine leather and the carrying poles are to be put in place. 15 When Aaron and his sons have completed the covering of the sanctuary and all its furnishings, as the camp begins to move, it is then that the Kohathites are to carry these items, but they are not to touch the holy things—or they will die. ⁴² These are the things that are the contents of the tent of meeting which the Kohathites are to carry. They are not to touch any of the sacred items on pain of death. These are the things of the tent of meeting which the Kohathites are to carry.

16 Eleazar son of Aaron the priest is to be responsible for the supply of oil for the light, the sweet smelling incense, the regular (*or, daily*) grain offerings, the anointing oil and the oversight of the tabernacle, its contents, its holy place, and all the utensils that are used in the sanctuary.

17 Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: ⁴³ 18 “You must not permit the tribe of the clans of the Kohathites to be wiped out among the Levites. 19 This is the way you must deal with them in order that they will live and not die when they come near the most holy things: Aaron and his sons are to go in and assign each to a particular task or labor. 20 The Kohathites must not look at the sacred things – not even a brief glance: otherwise they will die.” ⁴⁴

2. The Gershonites 4:21 – 28 ⁴⁵

21 The Lord said to Moses: 22 “Take a census of the Gershonites, by their ancestral houses and clans; 23 males, thirty to fifty yeas of age, and qualified to carry out the labor in the tent of meeting, are to be covered in the census. 24 This is to be the service to be done by the sons of Gershon: serving and bearing burdens. 25 They are to carry the curtains of the

³⁸ Some translators use “purple” or “violet.”

³⁹ On this table bread was to be placed in two rows, representing the tribes of Israel. Fresh bread was placed on the table on the Sabbath and the bread that was removed was to be eaten by the priests.

⁴⁰ The lamp-stand had seven branches, a form of menorah. Cf. 25:81 – 90.

⁴¹ Trays were devices to carry coals from the altar to light the lamps.

⁴² The Kohathites were responsible for the contents of the tent of meeting which they were to carry. Aaron and his sons were responsible for personally carrying the incense and the oil for the sanctuary.

⁴³ Verses 17 – 20 are thought by some scholars to be a later interpolation because of a different style of writing in Hebrew.

⁴⁴ TAN: “Do not let the Kohathites go inside and witness the dismantling of the Sanctuary lest they die.”

⁴⁵ The Gershonites had a simple task as compared with the task of the Kohathites. They were to carry the tent coverings.

tabernacle, and the tent of meeting with the covers – the inner and the leather outer cover, along with the screen ⁴⁶ for the entrance of the tent of meeting, ²⁶ the hangings of the courtyard, the screen for the entrance of the gate of the court that surrounds the tabernacle and the altar along with their cords. ⁴⁷ and all the equipment for their service and are to do everything that needs to be done with regard to these items. ²⁷ You are to assign these responsibilities to the Gershonites, that they may carry them out . ²⁸ These are responsibilities solely of the sons of Gershon. They will be under the oversight of Ithamar son of Aaron the priest.”

3. The Merarites 4:29- 33

²⁹ “As for the sons of Merari, you are to take a census by families and by ancestral homes, ³⁰ of all males from thirty to fifty yeas of age who are qualified for service in the tent of meeting. ⁴⁸ ³¹This is what they are to do: as their entire area of service they are to carry the frames of the tabernacle, with its bars, pillars and bases, ³² along with the same parts for the surrounding courtyard, namely, the bases, pillars, pegs and cords, with all the equipment that is needed for their use. You will assign, by name, the objects they are required to carry by those individuals. ³³ This is the service to be carried out by the clans of the Merarites: Their entire responsibility rests with the tent of meeting and they will be under the oversight of Ithamar son of Aaron the priest.”

4. Census of the Levites 4:34 – 49

³⁴ Moses and Aaron and the leaders of the assembled congregation enrolled the Koathites, by clans and their ancestral houses, ³⁵ from thirty to fifty years of age, who were qualified for work in [*and with*] the tent of meeting. ³⁶ This enrollment by clans numbered 2750. ³⁷ This was the total of the enrollment of the families of the Koathites –all who were qualified to serve at the tent of meeting based on the census of Moses and Aaron according to the command given Moses and Aaron by the Lord.

³⁸ The members of the sons of Gershon, by their families and their fathers’ homes, ³⁹ between the ages of thirty and fifty who were qualified to serve in the work of the tent of meeting – ⁴⁰ enrolled by clans and ancestral homes numbered 2630. ⁴¹ This was the total enrollment of the families of the Gershonites – all who were qualified to work in the tent of meeting and enrolled by Moses and Aaron according to the command given Moses and Aaron by the Lord.

⁴² The enrollment of the clans of the Merarites by their families and ancestral houses, ⁴³ between the ages of thirty and fifty who were qualified to serve in the work of the tent of meeting, ⁴⁴ enrolled by clans and ancestral homes numbered 3200. ⁴⁵ This is the total enrollment of the families of the Merarites – all who were qualified to serve at the tent of meeting and enrolled by Moses and Aaron according to the command given Moses and Aaron by the Lord.

⁴⁶ All those who had been enrolled by Moses, Aaron and the leaders of Israel by clans and ancestral homes, ⁴⁷ between the ages of thirty and fifty, who were qualified to serve and work, carrying burdens relative to the tent of meeting, ⁴⁸ came to a total enrollment of 8580. ⁴⁹ Based on the command to Moses from the Lord these were appointed to the variety of tasks of service, or, carrying. This is how the command of the Lord to Moses was fulfilled. ⁴⁹

⁴⁶ The KJV: “hangings.” The MT is not clearly understood.

⁴⁷ The cords must have been used to help erect the tabernacle.

⁴⁸ The Merarites were to be responsible for the transport of all the architectural frames.

⁴⁹ Two great insights were gained in this event. 1. Every member of the tribe of Levi had a position of importance for the welfare of the entire assembly of Israelites. 2. Israel was a theocracy. The Levites were subservient to the priests. The priests were subservient to the Lord

<CHAPTER 5>

E. Miscellaneous Laws and Regulations 5:1 – 6:27

1. Isolation of the Unclean 5:1 – 4

¹ The Lord said to Moses: ² “Command the people of Israel that they expel everyone with an infectious skin disease (*or, leprosy*), and all who have a discharge, and everyone who has had contact with the dead. ⁵⁰ ³ You are to expel both men and women, sending them outside the camp, that they may not defile the camp, for I live in the midst of the camp.” ⁵¹ ⁴ The people of Israel obediently carried out the word of the Lord, driving those from the camp who were afflicted. ⁵²

2. Restoration of Stolen Property 5:5 – 10

⁵ The Lord said to Moses: ⁶ “Tell the people of Israel that when a man or woman commits wrongs by breaking faith with the Lord, that person has incurred guilt which demands reparation. ⁵³ By breaking faith with the Lord, that person is guilty, ⁷ and is to confess having committed the sin. That person must understand that restitution (*or, compensation*) is due. for the wrong that has taken place, which is to be given to the one who was wronged. ⁸ If that one who was injured has no relative ⁵⁴ to whom the restitution (*or, compensation*) is to be given it is to go to the Lord for the priest. ⁵⁵ This was to be paid in addition to the ram of atonement with which atonement is made for the one who was guilty. ⁹ All sacred donations made by the people of Israel, are the property of the Lord, ¹⁰ and every sacred gift that is given to the priests will belong to the priest. This is determined by the donor.

3. Ordeal of Jealousy 5:11 – 31 ⁵⁶

¹¹ The Lord said to Moses: ¹² “Tell the people of Israel: If any man’s wife defiles herself by having sexual intercourse with a man other than her husband ¹³ and was not discovered by her husband as they had sexual relations ⁵⁷ and she was undetected though she defiled herself, not having been caught in the act, ¹⁴ but her husband, in a fit of jealousy, is jealous of her – she who had defiled herself. This fit of jealousy causes him to be exceedingly jealous, even though he has not defiled himself: ¹⁵ he will bring his wife

⁵⁰ TAN: “eruption or drainage.” Cf.: Leviticus 13:15. The uncleanness affects not only the individuals but also their clothes. “The dead” can also refer to supernatural influence by contact with the “soul” or “ghost” of an individual who has died. In the earlier history of Israel it is thought that the understanding was that the corpse is being attended to for some time by the disembodied spirit.

⁵¹ God is holy. The antithesis of this is called “unclean.” Clean is the state between holy and unclean. The promise is that God, the holy one, should not come into contact with the unclean. Those who were deemed to be unclean had to find shelter for themselves, tents, caves, or whatever was available outside the camp. Cf.: Leviticus 13:46; II Kings 7:3. Uncleanness would be considered as coming not only from the problems noted above but also from death, sins, sex, certain bodily conditions which we might class as abnormal and/or defiling the sanctuary.

⁵² There were three kinds of uncleanness: 1. Skin problems including leprosy, psoriasis, eczema, discharges from sores, sexual problems, and seeping wounds. These caused uncleanness until the priests verified that there was no longer any problem. 2. Contact with persons who had died. After 1 week the cleansing ceremony could take place. 3. Contact with dead animals. After 1 day the person washed and was considered to be clean. The fear was that unclean people were a danger to the entire community – thereby infecting the entire community.

⁵³ In verses 6 – 7 the verbs in Hebrew are plural, but in the LXX they are singular.

⁵⁴ Literally: “redeemer.”

⁵⁵ The restitution was to be a repayment of six fifths of the loss. Cf.: Leviticus 6.

⁵⁶ This passage is a supplement to a passage in Leviticus.

⁵⁷ Literally: “had bestowed on her a laying of seed (*or, with an emission of semen*).”

to priest, and bring the offering that is required of him, a tenth of an ephah of barley meal.⁵⁸ He is to pour no oil on it nor any frankincense, for it is a cereal offering, thus it is a grain offering of jealousy, a cereal offering, to bring iniquity into remembrance.

¹⁶ “The priest will bring her near, seating her before the Lord,⁵⁹ ¹⁷ and the priest will take holy water⁶⁰ in a ceramic container, and place some of the dust from the floor of the tabernacle⁶¹ in the water of the container. ¹⁸ The priest is then to set the woman before the Lord, dishevel her hair,⁶² and placing the cereal offering into her hands, an offering of remembrance, for this is the purpose of the cereal offering of remembrance which is also the grain offering of jealousy. The priest will hold, in his hand, the water of bitterness which provides a curse. ¹⁹ The priest is then to have her make an oath, saying: “If you have not had sexual relationship with a man other than your husband, be immune to this water of bitterness that provides a curse.⁶³ ²⁰ However, if you have gone astray, even though you are under your husband’s authority, you will have defiled your self with some man other than your husband with whom you have had intercourse.” ²¹ The priest then has the woman take the oath of the curse⁶⁴ and says to the woman: “The Lord make you an execration and an oath among your people for the Lord will cause your uterus to drop and your womb to discharge;⁶⁵ ²² May this water that brings about a curse enter your bowels and make your womb discharge, and your uterus drop.” The woman is then to reply, “It is fitting and proper.” (*literally, Amen, Amen.*)

²³ The priest will then put these curses into writing and then wash them off with the water of bitterness. ²⁴ The woman is then made to drink the water of bitterness which causes the curse, which, as it enters her, it causes bitter pain. ²⁵ The priest is then to take the cereal offering of jealousy out of the woman’s hand, elevating the grain offering before the Lord, and is to bring it to the altar. ²⁶ The priest is then to take a handful of the grain offering, as its memorial portion, and burn it⁶⁶ on the altar. It is following this that the woman is to be made to drink the water. ²⁷ When the priest has made the woman drink –it is then if she had defiled herself and had been unfaithful to her husband, that the water that brings the curse will enter her, causing bitter pain, and her womb will discharge and her uterus will drop and she will become an execration among her people. ²⁸ However, if

⁵⁸ The Hebrew word “gorban” literally means “which is brought near.” The offering is about 2 quarts of coarsely ground barley. It is the least amount expected to be given in any tabernacle/temple sacrifice.

⁵⁹ This trial by ordeal in verses 16 - 22 might also have been used in other circumstances to determine guilt.

⁶⁰ The available water at the tabernacle would be the laver – a large bronze bowl, the water of which was used for sacred cleansing. The water would be considered holy since it was dedicated. In a sense the water would also be considered holy because it was in a dedicated container that was located in the tabernacle. Some scholars feel the reference is to water from some spring that is thought to be sacred. LXX: “pure living water.” This implies a source that is running (*or, flowing*) water.

⁶¹ This was an area where only priests were to walk. The dust would be considered to be holy since it was in the tabernacle.

⁶² Scholars are at a loss in finding any agreement about the significance to the disheveled hair.

⁶³ The Hebrew is unclear and thus difficult to translate.

⁶⁴ Literally: “these curses.”

⁶⁵ Verse 21 gives the impression that it is a later explanatory gloss. The Hebrew words are surely a euphemism: “your thigh will fall away and your belly will swell.” It is descriptive of the atrophy of the sexual organs so as to make childbearing impossible. Josephus calls this “dropsy.” Some scholars feel it is a miscarriage, others a fake pregnancy or thrombophlebitis.

⁶⁶ Literally: “turn it into smoke.”

she has not defiled herself and is clean. She will be immune and will be able to bear children.

²⁹ This is the law of jealousy, when a wife, while under her husband's authority, goes astray and defiles herself, ³⁰ or when a spirit of jealousy comes upon a man and he is jealous of his wife. Then he will set the woman before the Lord and the priest will apply the entire law to her. ³¹ The man will be free from iniquity, but the woman will bear her iniquity. ⁶⁷

<CHAPTER 6>

4. Regulations for the Nazirites 6:1 - 21

¹ The Lord said to Moses, ² "Say to the people of Israel, When either a man or woman makes a binding vow to be a Nazirite, ⁶⁸ thus separating themselves to the Lord, ³ They will separate themselves (*or, abstain*) from wine and strong drink; they will drink no vinegar made from wine or strong drink. ⁶⁹ They are not to drink the juice ⁷⁰ of grapes, fresh or dried. ⁷¹ ⁴ All their days as Nazirites they are not to eat anything produced by the grape vine, not even the seeds or the skins. ⁷²

⁵ "They are to be separated, as Nazirites, for a razor is not to touch their heads, until the time of the vow in which the persons have separated themselves to serve the Lord is completed, for the Nazirite is to be holy. The locks of hair on their head are to be untrimmed.

⁶ "All the days of their vow they are to separate themselves to the Lord. They are not to go near a corpse. ⁷ In the event that their father, mother, brother or sister, should die they are not to defile themselves, since they are consecrated to God (which is evident by their hair.) ⁷³ ⁸ Throughout the days of their vow they are holy to the Lord.

⁹ "If someone dies near by very suddenly, ⁷⁴ defiling the consecrated Nazirite ⁷⁵ they are to shave their head on the day of their ceremonial cleansing (on the seventh day of the cleansing it is to be shaved). ⁷⁶ ¹⁰ On the eighth day they are to bring two turtle doves or

⁶⁷ No one can be prejudged on the basis of suspicion. Through this ritual of the ordeal by water the woman's body and health were not in danger because of the jealousy of her husband. In that sense it protected the innocent and this might not be considered as an ordeal, when compared, for example, with trial by fire.

⁶⁸ A Nazirite was a person who made a special, binding vow to God. The evidence of that vow was hair that remained uncut, along with food and other requirements found in verses 1 – 8. To have uncut hair as a symbol of having made a vow was not unusual. Other nations had the same practice. These were the monks and nuns of the Israelite religious scene. These vows could be for a limited period of time – or for a lifetime. Nazirite means "a separated one."

⁶⁹ Often a bit of vinegar was added to the drinking water to make it more palatable. Some of Israel's neighbors always drank their water with vinegar. While it was done in Israel that was not always the case.

⁷⁰ A hapax legomenon. The word for grape juice used here is only used here in the Hebrew scriptures.

⁷¹ Raisin cakes were eaten as a part of a feast.

⁷² Literally: "insignificant parts of the grape."

⁷³ Literally: "on their head." In the practice of neighboring nations the head was to be shaved at the time of mourning for a parent. This was not permitted for Nazirites.

⁷⁴ Literally: "in suddenness." The assumption is that as the person dies the Nazirite is so near the deceased that the Nazirite is defiled.

⁷⁵ Literally: "the consecrated head." Cf.: Numbers 19:14 – 16.

⁷⁶ Cf.: Leviticus 5:14 – 16; also chapters 12 – 13.

two young pigeons to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting.⁷⁷ ¹¹ The priest then will take one as a purification (*or, sin*) offering and the other as a burnt offering, resulting in atonement having been made, due to the incurred guilt because of the corpse. The head is also to be sanctified on the same day. ¹² The person who now has been purified, having been a Nazirite, must now again make his vow and separate himself to the Lord for the days as a Nazirite. A male lamb, one year old is to be given as a guilt offering. The time in which the individual had been a Nazirite is void,⁷⁸ because the consecrated head had been defiled.

¹³ “This is the regulation for the Nazirites. When the time of their consecrated vow has been fulfilled, the Nazirite is to be brought to the entrance of the tent of meeting, ¹⁴ and a gift is to be offered to the Lord: a male, one year old lamb without defect, as a sin offering, a ram without defect, as a burnt offering, and a one year old lamb without defect, as a sin offering along with a ram without defect as a peace (*or, recompense*) offering. ¹⁵ In addition a basket of bread made without yeast, along with cakes of choice flour mixed with oil and prepared without yeast. Wafers spread with oil and a cereal offering and drink offering complete the gifts to be brought to the tent of meeting. ¹⁶ The priest is to present these to the Lord, offering the sin (*or, purification*) offering and the whole burnt offering. ¹⁷ The ram is to be offered to the Lord as a sacrifice of well being (*or, peace*) along with the basket of bread made without yeast. Thereafter the priest will make a cereal (*or, grain*) offering and a drink offering.

¹⁸ “The Nazirite will then shave his consecrated head at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and will take the hair of his consecrated head, and place it in the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offering.⁷⁹ ¹⁹ The priest will take the shoulder of the ram which is boiled, and take one cake, baked without yeast, from the basket and place them in the hands⁸⁰ of the Nazirite, after he has shaven the consecrated hair from his head. ²⁰ Then the priest will elevate them⁸¹ as an elevation offering before the Lord for these are a holy portion for the priest, together with the bread that is elevated and the thigh that is elevated. After that the Nazirite can drink wine.

²¹”This is the law of the Nazirites who take a vow. The offering they make to the Lord must be in accordance with the vow of the Nazirites, based on⁸² what they can afford. It must be in accordance with the vow they take. In that way they will be following the law for their consecration as Nazirites.

5. *The Priestly Blessing* 6:22 - 27

²² The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ²³ “Speak to Aaron and his sons. Say: ‘In this way you are to bless the Israelites:

⁷⁷ The first bird is used to purify the sanctuary. The second bird is offered on behalf of the person who has been defiled. Then the one who has been defiled may consider himself purified – but he is no longer a Nazirite. He must begin his vows again. The service of God in the past does not count. It is time for a new beginning. His hair had been cut. Now it must grow again.

⁷⁸ Literally: “but the first days will fail.” The previous period is invalid because the Nazirite was defiled.

⁷⁹ Why the hair was to be cut off at the entrance to the tent of meeting and placed in the fire of the altar is not clear. Perhaps it was still considered to be holy and therefore treated properly.

⁸⁰ Literally: “palm:”

⁸¹ There is presumably a reference to the bread and thigh which are parts designated for priests. The boiled shoulder was the Nazirite’s possession.

⁸² Literally: “apart from.”

- 24 May the Lord bless you and protect you.
 25 May the Lord smile upon you and favor you.
 26 May the Lord befriend you and grant you peace.
 27 “This is the way my name is to be invoked by the Israelites.”⁸³

<CHAPTER 7>

6. *The Priestly Offerings* 7:1- 8:9⁸⁴

1 On the day when Moses had finished setting up the tabernacle and had anointed and consecrated it along with all its furnishings, 2 the leaders of Israel: the heads of all the ancestral houses, along with the tribal leaders, who were over the people of Israel who had been included in the census, 3 voluntarily brought their offerings before the Lord, six covered wagons,⁸⁵ twelve oxen, providing a wagon for every two of the leaders, and for each one an ox. These were all presented as gifts before the tabernacle. 4 Then the Lord said to Moses: 5 “Accept⁸⁶ these donations from them, that they may be used in doing the service of the tent of meeting. And give them to the Levites : to each one based on the nature of their service.” 6 So Moses took the wagons and oxen, giving them to the Levites. 7 Two wagons and four oxen were given to the Gershonites, based on their service; 8 four wagons and eight oxen were given to the Merarites, based on their service; under the direction of⁸⁷ Ithamar son of Aaron the priest. 9 The Kohathies did not receive any wagon or oxen because their responsibility was to carry the holy things that had to be carried on their shoulders.

10 The leaders presented their offerings for the dedication of the altar, doing so at the time of its dedication,⁸⁸ making their presentations before the altar, one leader on each day of the dedication. 11 The Lord said to Moses: “They will present their offerings, one leader each day, for the dedication of the altar.”

12 The one who made the presentation on the first day was Nahshon son of Amminadab, of the tribe of Judah: 13 His offering was one silver plate which weighed 130 shekels , one silver basin which weighed 70 shekels, based on the shekel of the sanctuary. Both containers were filled with choice flour mixed with oil, for a cereal offering; 14 one golden spoon weighing 10 shekels and filled with incense; 15 one young bull, one ram, one male yearling lamb, for a burnt offering; 16 one male goat for a sin offering; 17 and for the sacrifice of wellbeing, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male yearling lambs. This was the offering of Nahshon son of Amminadab.⁸⁹

⁸³ The Mishnah says this prayer was used every day in the temple in Jerusalem with the divine name being pronounced correctly. In Hebrew it is in a poetic form and perhaps one of the oldest prayers in poetic form in the Hebrew Scripture.

⁸⁴ Many scholars feel the chapters 7 – 9 are from the post-exilic period and were included in Numbers by later editors. The date of the bringing of the gifts to the newly completed tabernacle was the 1st day of the 1st month of the second year of the Exodus.

⁸⁵ The Hebrew is unclear. This translation is based on the LXX which reads “covered chariots.” The Peshitta has “readied wagons.”

⁸⁶ Literally: “take from them.”

⁸⁷ Literally: “in the hand of.”

⁸⁸ Literally: “at the time it was anointed.”

⁸⁹ There is some question about the exact size and appearance of the bowls and the spoon. The 1st bowl seems to have been a deep container, the second a wider and flatter container. The golden spoon, literally is the word for “palm.” Some translators translate it as a bowl. Spoon seems to fit the concept of the hollow of one’s hand more readily.

18 On the second day Nethanel son of Zuar, the leader of Issachar, presented the offering. 19 His offering was one silver plate which weighed 130 shekels, one silver basin which weighed 70 shekels, based on the shekel of the sanctuary. Both containers were filled with choice flour mixed with oil, for a cereal offering, 20 one golden spoon weighing 10 shekels and filled with incense, 21 one young bull, one lamb, one male yearling lamb for a burnt offering, 22 one male goat for a sin offering; 23 and for the sacrifice of wellbeing, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male yearling lambs. This was the offering of Nethanel son of Zuar.

24 On the third day Eliab son of Helon, the leader of the Zebulunites, presented the offering. 25 His offering was one silver plate which weighed 130 shekels, one silver basin which weighed 70 shekels, based on the shekel of the sanctuary. Both containers were filled with choice flour mixed with oil, for a cereal offering, 26 one golden spoon weighing 10 shekels and filled with incense, 27 one young bull, one lamb, one male yearling lamb for a burnt offering, 28 one male goat for a sin offering, 29 and for the sacrifice of wellbeing, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male yearling lambs. This was the offering of Eliab son of Helon.

30 On the fourth day Elizur son of Shedeur, the leader of the Reubenites presented the offering. 31 His offering was one silver plate which weighed 130 shekels, one silver basin, which weighed 70 shekels, based on the shekel of the sanctuary. Both containers were filled with choice flour mixed with oil, for a cereal offering, 32 one golden spoon weighing 10 shekels and filled with incense, 33 one young bull, one lamb, one male yearling lamb for a burnt offering, 34 one male goat for a sin offering, 35 and for the sacrifice of wellbeing, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male yearling lambs. This was the offering of Elizur son of Shedeur.

36 On the fifth day Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai, leader of the Simeonites presented the offering. 37 His offering was one silver plate which weighed 130 shekels, one silver basin, which weighed 70 shekels, based on the shekel of the sanctuary. Both containers were filled with choice flour mixed with oil, for a cereal offering, 38 one golden spoon weighing 10 shekels and filled with incense, 39 one young bull, one lamb, one male yearling lamb for a burnt offering, 40 one male goat for a sin offering, 41 and for the sacrifice of wellbeing, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male yearling lambs. This was the offering of Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai.

42 On the sixth day Eliasaph son of Deuel, leader of the Gadites presented the offering. 43 His offering was one silver plate which weighed 130 shekels, one silver basin, which weighed 70 shekels, based on the shekel of the sanctuary. Both containers were filled with choice flour mixed with oil, for a cereal offering, 44 one golden spoon weighing 10 shekels, and filled with incense, 45 one young bull, one lamb, one male yearling lamb for a burnt offering, 46 one male goat for a sin offering, 47 and for the sacrifice of wellbeing, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male yearling lambs. This was the offering of Eliasaph son of Deuel.

48 On the seventh day Elishama son of Ammihud, the leader of the Ephraimites presented his offering. 49 His offering was one silver plate which weighed 130 shekels, one silver basin, which weighed 70 shekels, based on the shekel of the sanctuary. Both containers were filled with choice flour mixed with oil, for a cereal offering, 50 one golden spoon weighing 10 shekels and filled with incense, 51 one young bull, one lamb, one male yearling lamb for a burnt offering, 52 one male goat for a sin offering, 53 and for

the sacrifice of wellbeing, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male yearling lambs. This was the offering of Elishama son of Ammihud.

⁵⁴ On the eighth day Gamaliel son of Pedahzur, the leader of the Manassites presented his offering. ⁵⁵ His offering was one silver plate which weighed 130 shekels, one silver basin, which weighed 70 shekels, based on the shekel of the sanctuary. Both containers were filled with choice flour mixed with oil, for a cereal offering, ⁵⁶ one golden spoon weighing 10 shekels and filled with incense, ⁵⁷ one young bull, one lamb, one male yearling lamb for a burnt offering, ⁵⁸ one male goat for a sin offering, ⁵⁹ and for the sacrifice of wellbeing, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male yearling lambs. This was the offering of Gamaliel son of Pedahzur.

⁶⁰ On the ninth day Abidan son of Gidioni the leader of the Benjaminites presented his offering. ⁶¹ His offering was one silver plate which weighed 130 shekels, one silver basin, which weighed 70 shekels, based on the shekel of the sanctuary. Both containers were filled with choice flour mixed with oil, for a cereal offering, ⁶² one golden spoon weighing 10 shekels and filled with incense, ⁶³ one young bull, one lamb, one male yearling lamb for a burnt offering, ⁶⁴ one male goat for a sin offering, ⁶⁵ and for the sacrifice of wellbeing, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male yearling lambs. This was the offering of Abidan son of Gidioni.

⁶⁶ On the tenth day Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai, the leader of the Danites presented his offering. ⁶⁷ His offering was one silver plate which weighed 130 shekels, one silver basin, which weighed 70 shekels, based on the shekel of the sanctuary. Both containers were filled with choice flour mixed with oil, for a cereal offering, ⁶⁸ one golden spoon weighing 10 shekels and filled with incense, ⁶⁹ one young bull, one lamb, one male yearling lamb for a burnt offering, ⁷⁰ one male goat for a sin offering, ⁷¹ and for the sacrifice of wellbeing, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male yearling lambs. This was the offering of Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai.

⁷² On the eleventh day Pagiel son of Ochran, the leader of the Asherites presented his offering. ⁷³ His offering was one silver plate which weighed 130 shekels, one silver basin, which weighed 70 shekels, based on the shekel of the sanctuary. Both containers were filled with choice flour mixed with oil, for a cereal offering, ⁷⁴ one golden spoon weighing 10 shekels filled with incense, ⁷⁵ one young bull, one lamb, one male yearling lamb for a burnt offering, ⁷⁶ one male goat for a sin offering, ⁷⁷ and for the sacrifice of wellbeing, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male yearling lambs. This was the offering of Pagiel son of Ochran.

⁷⁸ On the twelfth day Ahira son of Enan, the leader of the Naphtalites presented his offering. ⁷⁹ His offering was one silver plate which weighed 130 shekels, one silver basin which weighed 70 shekels, based on the shekel of the sanctuary. Both containers were filled with choice flour mixed with oil, for a cereal offering, ⁸⁰ one golden spoon weighing 10 shekels, filled with incense, ⁸¹ one young bull, one lamb, one male yearling lamb for burnt offering, ⁸² one male goat for sin offering, ⁸³ and for the sacrifice of wellbeing, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male yearling lambs. This was the offering of Ahira son of Enan.

⁸⁴ These were the dedication offerings for the altar, that were given at the time when it was being anointed (*or, dedicated*) by the leaders of Israel: twelve silver plates, twelve silver basins, and twelve golden spoons. ⁸⁵ Each silver plate weighed 130 shekels and each basin 70, so all the silver vessels weighed 2400 shekels based on the shekel of

the sanctuary. ⁸⁶ The twelve golden spoons, filled with incense weighed 10 shekels each based on the shekel of the sanctuary, making all the golden spoons to total 120 shekels in gold.⁸⁷ The total livestock for burnt offerings was 12 bulls, 12 rams, 12 male yearling lambs, with their cereal offering, and 12 male goats for a sin offering. ⁸⁸ The total livestock for the sacrifice of wellbeing was 60 rams, 60 male goats, 60 male yearling male lambs. This was the dedication offering for the altar after it had been anointed.

⁸⁹ When Moses entered the tent of meeting to speak with the Lord, he would hear the voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was located on top of the Ark of the Covenant from between the two cherubim. It was in this way that God spoke to him.

<CHAPTER 8>

G. Miscellaneous Laws and Regulations 8: - 10:10

1. The Golden Lamp Stand 8:1 - 4

¹ The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ² “Speak to Aaron so that he sets up the lamps in such a way that they light the area in front of the lamp stand.” ⁹⁰ ³ Aaron did precisely as he was instructed and the lamps provided light at the proper area as the Lord had commanded. ⁴ (The lamp stand was constructed in the following manner: it was made of hammered gold, from its base to its flowers, using the pattern God had given Moses. It was in this way that the lamp stand was made.)

2. Purification and Presentation of the Levites 8:5 – 22

⁵ The Lord said to Moses: ⁶ “Take the Levites from among the people of Israel and cleanse them.⁷ This is how you are to do it: To cleanse them you are to sprinkle them with water of purification. Have them shave ⁹¹ their entire body with a razor. They are to wash their clothes, thus making themselves clean. ⁸ You are then to let them take a young bull and its cereal offering of choice flour mixed with oil, and you are to have them take another young bull, as a sin offering. ⁹ You are then to present these Levites before the tent of meeting, and gather together the entire congregation of the people of Israel. ¹⁰ When these Levites are presented before the Lord, and the people of Israel, they will place their hands on the Levites heads, ¹¹ and Aaron will present the Levites before the Lord as an uplifted (*or, elevated*) offering before the Lord from the Israelites, that they may do service to the Lord. ¹² The Levites are then to place their hands on the heads of the bulls, the one as a sin offering and the other as a whole burnt offering to the Lord to make atonement for the Levites. ⁹² ¹³ You are to have the Levites stand in the presence of Aaron and his sons, and you are to present them as an uplifted (*or, elevated*) offering to the Lord.

¹⁴ “Thus you will separate the Levites from the other members of the people of Israel, for the Levites are to be mine. ¹⁵ As a result the Levites may enter and be of service within the tent of meeting – once you have cleansed them and presented them as an uplifted (*or, elevated*) offering. ¹⁶ All the firstborn among the Israelites are mine, both

⁹⁰ LXX: “lamp is given to Moses.”

⁹¹ While the Hebrew is not exactly clear it seems to mean: “a close shave.”

⁹² The Levites are to be moved into the sphere of priest and thus, though they felt uneasy, they were granted safety in the presence of the sacred objects in the tabernacle. For this they were cleansed. First by Moses sprinkling them with the water of purification, Then they were to clean themselves bodily as well as cleaning their clothing, and finally through the sacrifice of two bulls, one as a sin offering and the second as a whole burnt offering to the Lord.

people and animals, because on that day, in the land of Egypt, I struck down all the firstborn in the land. I consecrated [*the first born of Israel*] for myself. ¹⁷ All the firstborn of the people of Israel are mine – both people and animals. On the day in which I struck down the firstborn of the Egyptians I consecrated [*the firstborn of Israel*] for myself. ¹⁸ I have taken the firstborn of the Levites in place of the firstborn of the Israelites. ¹⁹ Additionally, I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and his sons from among all the Israelites, to do the service for the Israelites in the tent of meeting, and to make atonement for the Israelites. This is to take place so there might be no plague among the Israelites for coming too close to [*the sacredness*] of the sanctuary.”

²⁰ Moses and Aaron and the entire congregation of the Israelites did exactly as the Lord had commanded through Moses, in their relationship with the Levites. ²¹ The Levites purified themselves from sin, washed their clothes and then were presented by Aaron as an elevation offering before the Lord and Aaron made atonement for them to cleanse them. ²² That having taken place the Levites went in to do their service at the tent of the meeting, carrying out their responsibilities given them by Aaron and his sons. The Levites were obedient to the command Moses had given concerning them.

3. Age Limits for Levites 8:23 – 26

²³ [The Lord said to Moses: ²⁴”This applies to the Levites: At age twenty-five and upward you are to begin your duties in the service of the tent of meeting. ²⁵ You are to be retired from your duties and are no longer to serve at the age of fifty. ²⁶ You may, however, assist your fellow Levites in carrying out their duties, but are not to perform [*official*] services.” This is what is to be done with the Levites in assigning them their duties.] ⁹³

<CHAPTER 9>

4. The Supplementary Passover 9:1 – 14

¹ The Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai on the first month (*Nisan-March/April*) in the second year after the people of Israel had left Egypt, saying: ² “Have the people of Israel keep the Passover at the designated (*or, appointed*) time: ⁹⁴ ³ on the fourteenth day of this month, at dusk, ⁹⁵ that being the appointed time. Keep the Passover in accord with all the statutes and regulations that accompany the event.” ⁴ Moses then told the Israelites that they were to keep the Passover. ⁵ They kept the Passover in the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight. This took place in the wilderness of Sinai, just as the Lord had commanded. Israel obediently carried out the will of Moses. ⁶ However, there were some people who were ceremonially unclean because they had touched a corpse. This rendered them unclean since they had touched a corpse, so they were not permitted to partake of the Passover on that day. They presented themselves before Moses and Aaron, ⁷ telling them, “Even though we are unclean because of having touched a corpse, why must we be excluded from the celebration at the appointed time of the Israelites.” ⁸ Moses replied, “Wait. Be patient for I will receive a ruling from the Lord concerning your situation.”

⁹³ Because of a difference in the age limits scholars feel this is no doubt a later interpolation or its source is a different recension.

⁹⁴ I.e.: at the time which is divinely selected.

⁹⁵ Literally: between the evenings” which would be between sun down and darkness

⁹ The Lord told Moses: ¹⁰ “Speak to the Israelites. Tell them ‘Any one of you or your descendants who is unclean because of touching a corpse, or on a distant journey, is to keep the Passover of the Lord, ¹¹ in the second month (*Iyyar* - - *April/May*) on the fourteenth day, at dusk. ⁹⁶ You are to keep the Passover. With it you are to eat bread made without yeast, and bitter herbs. ¹² You are not to have any leftover food, nor are you to break a single bone, for you are to keep all the statutes for the Passover. These are all to be kept. ¹³ Anyone who is ceremonially clean and not on a distant journey but does not partake in the Passover is to be cut off from the people for not presenting the Lord’s offering at the proper time. That person will need to accept the consequences for his sin. ⁹⁷ ¹⁴ Any resident alien among you who desires to keep the Passover of the Lord is to carry out all the regulations concerning the Passover. There is to be only one rule which pertains to both Israelites and resident aliens.

5. The Fiery Cloud 8:15 - 23

¹⁵ On that day the tabernacle was set up. The cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of covenant, and on that day, from morning to evening the cloud was over the tabernacle, having the appearance of fire. ¹⁶ That is the way it always was. The cloud covered the tabernacle by day ⁹⁸ and had the appearance of fire by night. ¹⁷ Whenever the cloud lifted from being over the tent, the Israelites prepared to move and in the place where the cloud appeared to settle is where the Israelites would camp. They would remain camped at one location when the cloud remained there. ⁹⁹ ¹⁸ This was the command of the Lord that the people of Israel were to camp. As long as the cloud remained over the tabernacle, they would remain in camp. ¹⁹ On those occasions when the cloud remained for a lengthy period of time the Israelites would be obedient to the Lord and would not begin to move. ²⁰ There were times when the cloud would only remain over the tabernacle for a few days, according to the command they would begin to move. ²¹ On some occasions it would only remain from evening until morning, and when the cloud would move in the morning they would set out, or if it continued for a day and a night – when the cloud lifted they would move. ²² What ever length of time the cloud remained over the tabernacle [*two days, a month, or longer*] ¹⁰⁰ Israelites would not move; but when the cloud moved they also moved. ²³ It was at the Lord’s command that they would camp and it was at the command of the Lord that they would move. They remained obedient to the command of the Lord which they received through Moses.

<CHAPTER 10>

6. The Silver Trumpets 10:1 - 10

¹ The Lord said to Moses, ² “Make me two silver trumpets. These are to be made of hammered silver for summoning the congregation and for breaking camp. ³ When both trumpets are blown together in long blasts the congregation is to gather at the entrance of the tent of meeting. ⁴ But if only one trumpet is blown only the leaders of the tribes of Israel are to assemble before you. ⁵ When you blow an alarm, those who were encamped

⁹⁶ cf.: Footnote 95.

⁹⁷ Some scholars felt that disobedience of the Passover regulations would result in death.

⁹⁸ So: LXX, Peshitta, Vulgate and Targums. “By day” Is omitted in the MT. The Hebrew is difficult and unclear.

⁹⁹ Beginning with verse 17 and continuing to verse 23 the Hebrew is almost poetry. It could be called “elevated prose.” The cloud is considered, by the Israelites as a theophany of God.

¹⁰⁰ Literally: “a number of days.” Some translators say, “a year.”

on the east side are to begin moving. ¹⁰¹ 6 When the second alarm is blown those who were encamped on the south side, were to begin their move. An alarm is to be blown as a signal for each camp to begin its move.⁷ When the tribes are to be assembled you are to blow, but not sound the alarm. ¹⁰² 8 (The sons of Aaron the priest are to blow the trumpets: This will be a perpetual responsibility for them throughout all generations.) ⁹ When you engage in war against an opponent in your land, you are to blow the trumpets as an alarm, in order that you will be remembered before the Lord your God and be saved from your enemies. ¹⁰ Additionally: on the days of rejoicing: days that are appointed to be festivals, the beginning of months, you are blow the trumpets, at the times of burnt offerings and peace offerings ¹⁰³ in order that you will be remembered before the Lord your God. I am the Lord your God!

II. March from Sinai to Paran 10:11 - 12:16 ¹⁰⁴

A. Departure from Sinai 10:1 – 11:30

1. Time and Order of Departures 10:11 – 28

¹¹ In the second year, on the second month on the twentieth day of the month, the cloud lifted from over the tabernacle of the covenant. ¹² The people of Israel began moving from the wilderness of Sinai, and the cloud settled down in the wilderness of Paran. ¹⁰⁵ ¹³ They set out in stages for the first time, at the command of the Lord, as had been given through Moses. ¹⁴ The standard of the camp of Judah set out first, company by company, the entire company under the leadership of Nahshon son of Amminadab. ¹⁵ Over the company of the tribe of Issachar was Nethanel son of Zuar, ¹⁶ and Eliab son of Helon was the leader of the tribe of Zebulun.

¹⁷ Then the tabernacle was taken apart and the Gershonites and the Merarites, who carried the tabernacle, began moving. ¹⁸ Next the standard of the camp of the tribe of Reuben began to move, the leader of the entire tribe was Elizur son of Shedeur. ¹⁹ Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai was the leader of the tribe of Simeon, ²⁰ and over the tribe of Gad was Eliasaph son of Deuel.

²¹ Then the Kohathites, who carried the holy things began to move, and the tabernacle was erected before the others arrived. ¹⁰⁶ ²² Next the standard of the tribe of Ephraim began to move, company by company, and the leader over the entire tribe was Elishama son of Ammihud. ²³ The leader of the tribe of Manasseh was Gamaliel son of Pedahzur, ²⁴ and Abidan son of Gideoni was the leader of the tribe of Benjamin.

²⁵ Then the standard of the tribe of Dan which acted as the rear guard of all the tribes began to move, company by company, under the leadership of Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai. ²⁶ Pagiél son of Ocran was the leader of the tribe of Asher, ²⁷ and the leader of the tribe of Naphtali was Ahira son of Enan. ²⁸ This was the order in which the tribes of Israel marched company by company, as they moved out.

¹⁰¹ REB: “when you convene the assembly a trumpet call must be sounded, not a fanfare.”

¹⁰² Trumpet calls were either long blasts or short blasts. A partial list of such trumpet blasts has been found but the list is not sufficient to designate, in each situation, what sort of trumpet blast was used. Cf.: TAN for an attempt to describe the trumpet blasts.

¹⁰³ NIV: “fellowship offerings.”

¹⁰⁴ This passage covers 38 years of wilderness wandering, up to the time when they enter Moab.

¹⁰⁵ The exact location is unknown. Some scholars feel it was the desert of Ettih.

¹⁰⁶ MFT adds (the other Levites used to erect the Dwelling for them.)

2. *Moses Father-In-Law 10:39 – 34*¹⁰⁷

²⁹ Moses told Hobab son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses father-in-law, “We are setting out for a place, about which the Lord told us, saying: ‘I will give it to you’; come with us for we will treat you well. The Lord has promised good to Israel.”¹⁰⁸ ³⁰ Hobab replied: “I will not go, I will return to my own land and my own extended family.”³¹ ³¹ Moses said, “Do not leave us, for you know where we should camp in the wilderness, and you will serve as our guide.”¹⁰⁹ ³² Moreover, what ever way God will bless us, he will also bless you.”

3. *Movements of the Ark 10:33 – 36*

³³ It was in this manner that the people moved away, a three day’s journey,¹¹⁰ from the Mount of the Lord, bearing the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, which preceded them, to discover a suitable resting place for the Israelites.¹¹¹ ³⁴ The cloud of the Lord was over them by day when they set out from the camp.

³⁵ When the Ark of the Lord was moved out, Moses would say:

“Arise. O Lord, let your enemies be scattered,
and let your foes flee from your¹¹² presence.”

³⁶ When ever the Ark of God came to a rest, he would say:

“Return O Lord of ten thousands of Israel.”

<CHAPTER 11>

B. *Various Incidents 11:1 – 35*

1. *Complaints at Taberah 11:1 - 3*

¹ When the people complained about their misfortunes in the presence of the Lord and when the Lord heard it he was incensed, and a fire from the Lord broke out at the outskirts of the camp.¹¹³ ² It was then that the people cried out to Moses who then prayed to the Lord, and the fire abated. ³ Because of this the place was named Taberah,¹¹⁴ because the fire of the Lord burned against them.

2. *Complaints about Manna 11:3 – 10*

⁴ The rabble¹¹⁵ who were among the Israelites had a strong craving¹¹⁶ and the Israelites also joined in, weeping, and said, “If only we had meat to eat! ⁵ We recall the fish we used to eat in Egypt, getting it at no cost. And we remember the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic;¹¹⁷ ⁶ but now our strength is dried up¹¹⁸ and there is nothing but this manna to look at.¹¹⁹”

¹⁰⁷ Some scholars feel verses 29 – 36 are from a different source which was inserted here.

¹⁰⁸ It is worthy of note to realize that Moses, as the leader, does not distance himself from his father-in-law for he no doubt knows the entire territory. Moses did not consider himself to be the only qualified leader.

¹⁰⁹ Literally: “you will be our eyes for us.”

¹¹⁰ In the MT the words, “a three days journey” appear twice in this verse.

¹¹¹ Cf.: ANET p. 236a.

¹¹² MT: “my presence.”

¹¹³ Some scholars feel verses 1 – 7 are a later interpolation from a different source.

¹¹⁴ The name means “to burn.” The location is thought by scholars to be the desert of Et-Tih. This area was much more arid than the area around Sinai.

¹¹⁵ A hapax legomenon. The REB has “A mixed company of strangers” Cf.: ANET p. 471a.

¹¹⁶ Literally: “they craved a craving.”

¹¹⁷ Cf.: ANET p. 471a.

7 (Manna was like coriander seed, and its color was the color of gum resin.) 8 The people went around, gathering it. It was then ground in hand mills or crushed in a mortar. It was then boiled and shaped into patties (*or, cakes*), the taste of which was like cakes made with olive oil. 9 When the dew appeared on the camp during the night, the manna would appear (*or, fall*) with it.

10 Moses heard the people weeping throughout the camp for everyone stood at the door of their tent as their anger became urgent, causing Moses to be troubled.

3. *Moses Expostulation with the Lord 11:11 - 13*

11 Moses spoke to the Lord, saying, ¹²⁰ “Why have you treated me, your servant, so badly? Why have I not found favor in your sight? Why have you laid the burden of these people on me? 12 Am I their mother? Have I brought them into this world? Am I called to carry them in my arms as a nurse might carry an unweaned child close to her breast? Am I to carry them into this land which you have promised them by the vow you made with their ancestors? [13 Where am I going to be able to provide all these people with meat? They pester me, coming to me, weeping and saying, ‘Give us meat to eat.’ 14 I am not able to carry all these people alone! It is too great a task for me! 15 If this is the way you intend to treat me, kill me now. In the event that I have found favor in your sight, do not let me see my misery!”

4. *The Lord’s Reply to Moses 11:16 – 24*

16 The Lord said to Moses: “Gather the seventy elders in my presence. You know them and realize that they are elders and officers over the people. Bring them to the tent of meeting and have them take their place with you there. 17 I will come down and talk with you there; and I will take some of the spirit which is yours and place it on them. Thus they will bear the burden of these people along with you, and you will no longer need to bear this burden alone. 18 Tell the people: ‘Consecrate yourselves! ¹²¹ Tomorrow you will eat meat. You have wailed and the Lord has heard you say, ‘Who will give us meat to eat? We were better off in Egypt. Therefore the Lord will provide you with meat and you will eat. 19 You will eat, not merely one day or two days or five days, or ten days, or twenty days, ²⁰ but you will eat meat for an entire month – until it offends your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you, because you have rejected the Lord who is in your presence and you have wailed before him, saying, ‘Why did we ever leave Egypt?’” 23 Moses said, “The people I am among ¹²² number six hundred thousand on foot, and you say, ‘I will give them meat so they can eat meat for an entire month!’ 22 Are there enough flocks and herds to slaughter for them? Are there enough fish in the sea to catch for them?” 23 The Lord said to Moses, “Is the Lord’s power limited? ¹²³ Now it will be your opportunity to see whether my word comes true or not.”

24 Moses went out and told the people the words that Lord had told him, and he gathered the seventy elders and placed them around the tent of meeting.

¹¹⁸ NIV: “we have lost our appetite.” TAN: “our gullets are shriveled. There is nothing at all: nothing but this manna to look at.” Literally: “now our eyes are only on the manna.” The complaint was not about vegetarianism, but wanting a variety of foods, rather than manna every meal and every day.

¹¹⁹ The word “manna” means, “what is it?” Scholars feel manna was “*tamarix gallica*. It looked like resin. Coriander was about the size of peppercorns.

¹²⁰ Some scholars feel verses 13 – 33 are a later interpolation.

¹²¹ This consecration ritual would be the same ritual used prior to eating a sacrificial meal.

¹²² Literally: “in whose midst I am.”

¹²³ Literally: “Is the Lord’s hand shortened?” The expression is used a number of times in the Scriptures.

5. Eldership and Prophecy 11:25 – 30

²⁵ Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to Moses and took some of the spirit that was on Moses and placed it on the seventy elders, and when the spirit rested on the elders they began to speak ecstatically (*or, prophesy*). However, they did not continue doing so.

²⁶ Two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad and the other named Medad, and the spirit also rested on them. They were both numbered among the elders but did not go to the tent of meeting as instructed by Moses and as a result spoke ecstatically (*or, prophesied*) in the camp. ²⁷ A young man ran to Moses, telling him Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.” ²⁸ Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ assistant, one of his selected assistants ¹²⁴ said, “My lord, Moses, stop them!” ²⁹ Moses replied, “Are you jealous for my sake? How I wish that all people were prophets and that the Lord would place his spirit in them!” ³⁰ Moses and the elders returned to the camp.

6. The Clamor for Flesh 11:31 – 35

³¹ Then a wind of the Lord blew, from the direction of the sea, ¹²⁵ and it brought quails and let them fall near the camp, about a day’s journey on all sides of the camp, about two cubits (*or, 36 inches*) deep on the ground. ¹²⁶ ³² The people worked all that day, that night and all the next day, gathering quails. The smallest amount anyone gathered was ten homers ¹²⁷ which the people spread out on the ground all around the camp for themselves as their personal food supply. ³³ While the meat was not yet between their teeth, before it was swallowed ¹²⁸ the anger of the Lord blazed and the Lord struck the people with a dreadful plague.] ¹²⁹ ³⁴ Because of this the name of that place was called Kibroth-hattaavah (*or, graves of craving*), because there they buried the people who had been craving [*meat*]. ³⁵ From Kibroth-hattaavah the people traveled to Hazeroth.

<CHAPTER 12>

C. Miriam, Aaron, and Moses 12:1 – 16

1. Complaint Against Moses 12:1 – 2

¹ Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses [because he had married a Cushite ¹³⁰ woman, for that is what he had done.] ¹³¹ ² They said, “Has the Lord really just spoken through Moses? Has he not also spoken through us?” This was heard by the Lord.

¹²⁴ This might also be translated: “chosen by Moses in his youth.”

¹²⁵ The reference is to The Gulf of Aquaba.

¹²⁶ Quails took part in a normal migration pattern. The Hebrew is not clear. Possibly it is saying that they were fluttering at a height of about 2 cubits above the surface which would make it simple to have them fly into nets what would be raised by the Israelites.

¹²⁷ The word ‘homer’ was an Akkadian loan word The amount would be about sixty bushels. This was done in Egypt, after they had been salted.

¹²⁸ The Hebrew is uncertain. TAN: “not yet chewed.” MFT: “But as the people were munching their food, before the supply gave out, the anger of the eternal blazed out in fury against them, and he slaughtered them with a terrible plague.”

¹²⁹ Literally: “blow” or “stroke.”

¹³⁰ The words in brackets are thought by some scholars to be a later interpolation. A Cushite usually is thought of as an Ethiopian. Some tribes in the Arabian Peninsula were also considered to be Cushite. The introduction of this objection by Miriam is a smokescreen to hide her challenge of Moses leadership.

¹³¹ Moses had married a Midianite woman, Zipporah, during the time when he had fled from Egypt after having killed an Egyptian. Scholars are not clear as to whether this “Cushite” woman is a second wife or whether Zipporah is called a Cushite here though her nationality was Midianite. This is a serious attack on

2. *The Meekness of Moses 12:3*

³ (Now Moses was very meek, more so than all the other men on the face of the earth.)¹³²

3. *Moses' Vindication 12:1 - 10*

⁴ The Lord immediately¹³³ said to Moses, Aaron and Miriam. "You three, come out! Go to the tent of meeting!" The three obeyed the word of the Lord. ⁵ The Lord came down in a pillar of cloud, and stood at the door of the tent and he called for Moses and Aaron. They both moved forward. ⁶ He said:

"Listen to what I have to say!
If there is a prophet among you
I, the Lord, make myself known
to him through visions.
I speak to him in dreams.¹³⁴
⁷ That is not the case
with my servant Moses.¹³⁵
He is entrusted with my entire house.
⁸ I speak to him face to face:
speaking clearly and not using riddles,
and he sees the presence of the Lord.
Why were you not afraid to speak
against my servant Moses?"

⁹ The anger of the Lord blazed against them, and he departed. ¹⁰ At that instant when the cloud disappeared from the tent, Miriam became leprous: as white as snow. Aaron turned toward Miriam and saw that she was leprous.¹³⁶

4. *Moses' Intercession for Miriam 12:11 - 16*

¹¹ Aaron said to Moses: "O my lord, do not punish us¹³⁷ because we have foolishly sinned.¹³⁸ ¹² Do not let us be like a stillborn whose flesh is half eaten away when it comes out of the womb." ¹³ Moses cried to the Lord: "O God, I plead with you, heal her." ¹⁴ The Lord, however, said to Moses: "If her father had spit in her face¹³⁹ she would have to bear her shame for a week. Let her be excluded from the camp for a week,

Moses. Miriam is described in Exodus 15:20 as a prophetess. Aaron is the High Priest. The accusation about Moses comes from an alliance of two of the three highest religious leaders against the third (Moses). This attack on Moses does not really stem from his marriage, or the racial or national origin of his wife, but is simply a means of beginning, in a somewhat hidden fashion, to openly declare opposition, or envy of the position, before God, of Moses.

¹³² With a slight change in vowels the line could read, "from his youth."

¹³³ The idea with the word 'immediately' is that this came without warning.

¹³⁴ Cf.: ANET pp. 109c and 143b.

¹³⁵ Very few people in the Scriptures are called "my servant." There are 5 in the Hebrew Scriptures and 1 in the New Testament.

¹³⁶ Genuine leprosy (Hansen's Disease) did not arrive in the Middle East until about the time of the New Testament. The problem Miriam had was some other form of skin disease but any questionable skin disease at that time in history was called leprosy.

¹³⁷ Literally: "do not lay sin upon us."

¹³⁸ REB: "My lord, do not make us pay the penalty of sin, foolish and wicked though we have been."

¹³⁹ To be spit at was and insult, a curse, and an expression of contempt. One would publicly bear that shame for seven days.

and after that she may again return to the camp.”¹⁵ Therefore Miriam was kept outside¹⁴⁰ the camp for seven days; and the people did not move from their location until Miriam was returned to the camp.¹⁸ Following that the people set out from Hazeroth and camped in the wilderness of Paran.

<CHAPTER 13>

III. Sojourn in Paran 13:1 – 19:22

A. The Spies 13:1 – 14:45

1. Appointment of Twelve Spies 13:1 - 17

¹ The Lord said to Moses:¹⁴¹ ² “Send men to reconnoiter (*or, spy out*) the territory of Canaan which I am giving to the people of Israel. One person with leadership skills¹⁴² from each of the tribes is to be chosen.¹⁴³ ³ Moses then sent men from the wilderness of Paran, in accordance with the command of the Lord, all of whom were outstanding men among the Israelites.⁴ These were the names:¹⁴⁴

From the tribe of Reuben: Shammua son of Zaccur.

⁵ From the tribe of Simeon: Shaphat son of Hori.

⁶ From the tribe of Judah: Caleb¹⁴⁵ son of Jephunnen.

⁷ From the tribe of Issachar: Igal son of Joseph.

⁸ From the tribe of Epharim: Hoshea son of Nun.

⁹ From the tribe of Benjamin: Palti son of Raphu.

¹⁰ From the tribe of Zebulun: Gaddiel son of Sodi.¹⁴⁶

¹¹ From the tribe of Joseph (that is:
from the tribe of Manasseh) Gaddi son of Susi.

¹² From the tribe of Dan: Ammiel son of Gemalli.

¹³ From the tribe of Asher: Sethur son of Michael.

¹⁴ From the tribe of Naphtali: Nahbi son of Vophsi.

¹⁵ From the tribe of Gad: Geuel on of Machi.

¹⁶ These were the names of the men who were sent out by Moses to reconnoiter (*or, spy out*) the land. Moses changed the name of Hoshea son of Nun to Joshua.¹⁴⁷

¹⁷ Moses sent them to reconnoiter (*or, spy out*) the land of Canaan, and said to them, “Go up there into the Negeb and into the hill country and discover what the land is like.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁰ Literally: “shut up outside the camp.”

¹⁴¹ The Samaritan copies of Numbers introduce this chapter with words from Deuteronomy 1:22 - 23.

¹⁴² REB: “of high rank.”

¹⁴³ The Biblical account says that this selection took place at Paran and also at Kadesh. Possibly the word was given in one location but the choice was not made until the later location where the Israelites had settled.

¹⁴⁴ These names differ from the names in 1:5 – 15. Possibly the leaders in 1:5 – 15 were not fit physically or psychologically to be sent into the land of Canaan and thus were replaced by other leaders who were more suitable.

¹⁴⁵ Caleb was called a Kenizzite in Numbers 32:12 and Joshua 14:5, 14.

¹⁴⁶ BHS lists the names in a somewhat different order. Cf. 1:5 – 15 and compare it with the listing here.

¹⁴⁷ The name Hoshea means “he saved.” The name Joshua means “The Lord saves.”

¹⁴⁸ The area mentioned in v. 17 is the southern portion of the land. The Negeb in Numbers was smaller than the area called the Negeb in modern times.. It included the area east and west of Beersheba and north of Kadesh-Barnea. The Hill County reaches as far north as present day Jerusalem.

2. Briefing of the Spies 13:18 – 20

¹⁸ “Reconnoiter (*or, spy out*) the land. Learn what it is like, whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak; whether they are few or many; ¹⁹ whether the land in which they dwell is fertile or not; whether the towns in which they live are without walls or fortified; ²⁰ whether the land is rich or poor; whether there are groves of trees or not! Be bold! Bring some of the fruit of the land. This is the season for the first ripe grapes.”
¹⁴⁹

3. The Territory Surveyed 113:21 – 24

²¹ They went up and reconnoitered (*or, spied out*) the land, from the wilderness of Zin to Rehob near Lebo-hamath (*or, the Gate of Hamath*). ²² They went to the Negeb and arrived at Hebron: the area of the tribes of Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, ¹⁵⁰ as well as the Anakites. (Hebron was built seven years prior to Zoan in Egypt.) ¹⁵¹ ²³ They then came to the Wadi Eshcol, ¹⁵² and there, from a branch, they cut a cluster of grapes, and transported it on a carrying frame (*or, on a pole between two of them*). They also brought some pomegranates and figs. ²⁴ That place was called the Wadi Eshcol (*or, the Valley of the Cluster*), Because the Israelites had cut a cluster of grapes from that valley. ¹⁵³

4. The Spies Return 13:25 – 31

²⁵ When the allotted time (forty days) was over the spies returned from their reconnoitering of the land. ²⁶ They came to Moses and Aaron and to the entire congregation of the people of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh, bringing back their report to the people. ²⁷ They reported: “We came to the land to which we had been sent: a land flowing with milk and honey and this is an example of the fruit of the land. ²⁸ Nevertheless the people who reside there are formidable, their towns are strongly fortified, and have sizable populations. ¹⁵⁴ Additionally: we saw descendents of Anak there! ²⁹ The Amalekites live in the land of the Negeb; the Hittites, ¹⁵⁵ the Jebusites, and the Amorites ¹⁵⁶ live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live by the sea and along the Jordan.” ¹⁵⁷

³⁰ Caleb, however, stilled the people who were before Moses, saying: “Let us go up immediately and occupy the land for it is easily possible for us to conquer it.” ¹⁵⁸ ³¹ At that time the men who had reconnoitered (*or, spied*) with Caleb said, “We are not able to attack these people, for they are more powerful than we.” ³² Thus an unfavorable report of the land was delivered to the people by those who had reconnoitered (*or, spied out*) the land, for they said, “The land in which we have reconnoitered (*or, spied*) is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it were of huge size. ³³ We saw the Nephilim (the Anakites come from the

¹⁴⁹ This last sentence appears to be a later educational gloss. The time would be mid to late July.

¹⁵⁰ These were small tribes that lived in the region of Hebron.

¹⁵¹ The Egyptian town of Zoan was called Tanis by the Greeks. Cf.: ANET: p. 252d.

¹⁵² This was located north of Hebron though the exact location is unknown.

¹⁵³ Cf.: ANET: p. 19d.

¹⁵⁴ This marked the defeat of the national plan of Moses and the postponement of God’s promise to the patriarchs.

¹⁵⁵ In the 2nd Millennium B.C.E. the Hittites lived in Cappadocia (Asia Minor). The Tel El Amarna letters refer to them living in northern Syria.

¹⁵⁶ The Amorites were nomadic who wandered within the boundary of the land of Canaan.

¹⁵⁷ Where or how would the spies get this information?

¹⁵⁸ Caleb presented the minority report. Cf.: LXX & Samaritan Pentateuch.

Nephilim), and we felt like grasshoppers before them (*or, we felt like grasshoppers, for that is surely how we looked to them*).”¹⁵⁹

<CHAPTER 14>¹⁶⁰

6. Israel's Complaints 14:1 – 2

1 Then the entire congregation raised¹⁶¹ a loud cry, and the people wept that night. 2 The people of Israel all began to murmur against Moses and Aaron and said to them: “If only we would have died in the land of Egypt, or, if we had died in this wilderness! 3 Why does the Lord bring us into this land that we will be killed by the sword? Our wives and our small children will become booty. It would surely have been better in Egypt.”¹⁶²

5 Moses and Aaron fell on their faces¹⁶³ before the assembly of the congregation of the people of Israel. 6 Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had reconnoitered (*or, spied out*) the land tore their clothing, 7 and called the people of Israel. ”The land which we reconnoitered (*or, spied out*) as spies is exceptionally good. 8 If the Lord is delighted by us he will bring us [*through this wilderness*] into this land that is flowing with milk and honey. 9 The important thing is that you do not revolt against the Lord. Have no fear of the people who reside in this land. They are our prey!¹⁶⁴ Their protection has been removed from them and the Lord is with us! Do not be fearful of them!” 10 The entire congregation threatened to stone them.¹⁶⁵

Then the glory¹⁶⁶ of the Lord appeared at the tent of meeting to all the people of Israel. 11 The Lord told Moses, “How long will this nation spurn me? How long will they refuse to believe in me in spite of all the signs I have done on their behalf.¹⁶⁷ 12 I will strike them with pestilence¹⁶⁸ and disinherit them, and I will make you to be a greater and more powerful nation than they.”

¹⁵⁹ This is possibly meiosis, a form of demeaning one thing and increasing the size of the other. The words in parentheses are surely an explanatory gloss and are omitted in the LXX. The sons of Anak were considered almost to be demigods. MFT: “The land over which we had gone as spies: they said, “is a land that starves its inhabitants to death.”

¹⁶⁰ Some scholars rearrange the order of the verses to read: 1 – 7;10, 26 – 38, 13:14 – 39. 14L3 – 4; 13;30 - 57; 14:8 – 25; 39 – 45.

¹⁶¹ Literally: “gave their voice.”

¹⁶² The bitter memories of Egypt had already been dulled. They looked back with wistful feelings.

¹⁶³ This idiom is used 25 times in the Hebrew Scripture and shows the demonstrates a great piety on the part of Moses and Aaron. It is also possible that Moses and Aaron feared for their lives. This action demonstrated that God was supreme, not Moses nor Aaron. They did not fall on their faces as a way to plead for their own lives but as a way to express their awe at the sac-religious blasphemy of the people.

¹⁶⁴ Literally: “as bread for us.”

¹⁶⁵ This is not simply a mob lynching. The congregation had judicial authority to stone for this was the punishment for religious crimes. They felt this was the case for Joshua and Caleb. It was felt to be a judicial action.

¹⁶⁶ This could also be translated as: “wealth” or, “throne.”

¹⁶⁷ These signs include the plagues in Egypt, the Red (*or, Reed*) Sea crossing, manna and water from the rock. Faith means a person to be counted righteous before God, it's absence demeans him.

¹⁶⁸ Literally: “with the pestilence” or “divine judgment.” “Pestilence” was a commonly used word for the sword, famine, plague, or the evidence of God's judgement.

13 Moses said to the Lord: “Then the Egyptians will hear of it, ¹⁶⁹ for you brought these people, through your might, from their midst, ¹⁴ and they will tell the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that you, O Lord, are in the midst of these people, for you, O God are seen, face to face, and your cloud is over them and you move in front of them, in a pillar of cloud by day and as a pillar of fire by night. ¹⁵ Now, however, you will kill these people all at once. Then the nations who have heard a report of you ¹⁷⁰ will say: ¹⁶ ‘It is because the Lord proved to be unable to bring those people into the land he vowed he would give them that the slaughtered in the wilderness.’ ¹⁷ Now, therefore, rather than killing these people as one man, let your power be great in that you will carry out your vow which you declared to their ancestors, saying:

¹⁸ ‘The Lord is slow to anger
and abounding in great covenant loyalty, ¹⁷¹
forgiving the iniquity [*and rebellion*] of the parents
upon their children
to the third and fourth generation.’ ¹⁷²

¹⁹ Forgive the iniquity of these people in accord with the greatness of our steadfast love, just as you have pardoned these people from Egypt until now.”

²⁰ The Lord then replied: “I do forgive, exactly as you have asked; ²¹ nonetheless, as certainly as I am alive, and as certainly as the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord, ²² no one who has seen my glory and experienced the signs I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet has tested me time and again ¹⁷³ and have not obeyed my voice, ²³ and have despised me, will see the land that I vowed to their ancestors that I would give it, -- not a single one will see it. ¹⁷⁴ ²⁴ However, Caleb, my servant, has a different spirit and has followed me completely. I will bring him into the land, into which he went and his ancestors will possess it. ²⁵ Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites live in the valleys, turn tomorrow and set out for the wilderness by way of the Red (*or, Reed*) Sea.” ¹⁷⁵

²⁶ The Lord spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying: ²⁷ “How long will this wicked congregation murmur against me? ¹⁷⁶ I have heard the murmuring of the people of Israel complain against me. ²⁸ Tell them that the Lord says: ‘As certainly as I am alive I will do exactly as I have heard you say. ²⁹ Your corpses ¹⁷⁷ will fall in this wilderness and all those who have been included in the census, from age twenty and older, who have

¹⁶⁹ LXX: “but now all those dwelling in the land will hear.” Verses 13 – 15 are difficult, possibly corrupt.

¹⁷⁰ LXX: “your name.”

¹⁷¹ TAN: “abounding in kindness.” The concept is: This great covenant loyalty of God toward his people includes recognition of iniquity and rebellion but God is one who will never completely leave them unpunished. TAN adds: not remitting all punishment, but visiting the iniquity of fathers upon their children upon the 3rd and 4th generation.”

¹⁷² Many scholars feel that God will never permit them to feel unpunished. Some would translate: “nor remitting all punishment, but visiting the iniquity of fathers upon their children upon the third and fourth generation.”

¹⁷³ Literally: “these ten times.”

¹⁷⁴ Divine forgiveness does not cancel out deserved punishment.

¹⁷⁵ Some scholars feel this verse is out of place and does not fit the text. Other scholars feel this is a later interpolation. Cf.: Exodus 34:6 – 7 concerning the Red (*or, Reed*) Sea.

¹⁷⁶ Literally: “How long will this wicked congregation; while they are murmuring against me,” or: amended: “How long will I forgive this wicked congregation in their murmuring against me?”

¹⁷⁷ The Hebrew word for “corpses” is not specifically ‘human.’ It is a general word. Basically the thought is a “lifeless thing.”

complained about me, -- 30 not a single one will come into the land that I had vowed would be yours as your own settlements. ¹⁷⁸ The exceptions are: Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun. 31 However, I will see to it that your little ones, the ones you were certain would become booty, will be able to enter and will know the land that you have despised. 32 As for you – your dead bodies will fall in the wilderness. 34 Based on the number of days you spent in reconnoitering (*or, spying out*) the land, forty days, for every day spent reconnoitering a year will be your punishment, forty years, and you will know that I am displeased!” ¹⁷⁹ 35 I, the Lord have spoken! This I will do to the wicked congregation that gathered together against me in the wilderness. They will come to a complete end. They will die.”

³⁶ Those men who were sent out by Moses to reconnoiter (*or, spy out*) the land and returned, making the entire congregation complain against God by bringing a bad report about the land,-- ³⁷ Those men who brought the unfavorable report about the land died in a plague before the Lord. ³⁸ Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh were the only ones [*of the spies*] that remained alive from all the men who had reconnoitered the land.

³⁹ When Moses reported this to the people of Israel the people mourned greatly. ¹⁸⁰ ⁴⁰ In the morning they rose and went up to the heights of the hill country, saying, “Here we are! We will go up to the place that the Lord has promised, for we have sinned.” ⁴¹ Moses, however, said: “Why do you continue to disobey the command of the Lord? You will not succeed.” ¹⁸¹ ⁴² Do not go up! The Lord is not with you! Do not let yourselves be killed before your enemies. ¹⁸² ⁴³ The Amalekites and the Canaanites will face you in battle and you will fall by the sword; because you have turned back from following the Lord, The Lord will not be with you!” ⁴⁴ They however presumed ¹⁸³ to go up to the heights of the hill country, even though neither the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord nor Moses had left the camp. ⁴⁵ Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down and defeated them, pursuing them as far as Hormah. ¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁸ Literally: “the land that I lifted up my hand to make you dwell there.” To lift up the hand” means to swear or vow.

¹⁷⁹ LXX: “you will know the passion of my wrath (*or, my frustration.*)” Some scholars feel this is a later interpolation.

¹⁸⁰ The mourning hardly seems like inner sadness or an outer act which demonstrated it. The mourning had no results.

¹⁸¹ The Hebrew word could be translated as “prosper.”

¹⁸² Now the people of Israel compound their sin of rebellion with arrogance and want to try to capture the land on their own. Literally: “do not go before the mouth of the Lord.”

¹⁸³ NIV: “in their presumption.” The Hebrew word is a hapax legomenon. It is only used here in the Hebrew Scriptures. A possible translation might be: “Yet they went up defiantly marching toward the crest of the hill.

¹⁸⁴ The possible location of Hormah is Tell el-Meshash, also called, Kirberael – Meshash, 8 miles south east of Beersheba. This village was apparently on the southern border of Canaan. It is mentioned in Joshua 15:30

<CHAPTER 15> ¹⁸⁵

B. Miscellaneous Laws 15:1 – 41

1. Flour, Oil and Wine for Sacrifices 5:1 – 16 ¹⁸⁶

¹ The Lord said to Moses: ² “Inform the people of Israel saying: When you come into the land you are to inhabit, the land I am giving you, ³ and you make an offering to the Lord from your herd or from the flock, -- either a burnt offering or a sacrifice, to fulfill a solemn promise, or as a spontaneous gift, or at appointed festivals – to make a pleasing odor for the Lord, ¹⁸⁷ ⁴ for then whoever presents such an offering is also to offer a cereal offering which is to be comprised of one-tenth of an ephah ¹⁸⁸ of choice flour, mixed with one-fourth of a hin of oil; ⁵ along with one-fourth hin of wine as a drink offering. You are then to prepare the burnt offering or the sacrifice of each lamb.

⁶ ”In the event that a ram is to be offered and a cereal offering is to be comprised of two-tenths of an ephah of choice flour, mixed with one-third hin of oil, ⁷ along with one-third of a hin of wine for a drink offering as a pleasing offering to the Lord,

⁸ “When offering a bull as burnt offering, or a sacrifice to fulfill a solemn promise, or as a recompense offering, ⁹ along with the bull you are to present a cereal offering of three-tenths of an ephah of choice flour, mixed with half a hin of oil, ¹⁰ along with a half hin of wine, offered as a pleasing odor for the Lord.

¹¹ “This is the way it is to be done for each sacrifice of a bull, or ram, or for each of the male lambs or kids. ¹² Based on the number of animals you offer this procedure should be used for each sacrifice. ¹³ All who are native Israelites are to follow these instructions when presenting a burnt offering as a pleasing odor for the Lord. ¹⁴ Any resident alien who resides with you, or who is a permanent resident in your midst, and wishes to offer a burnt offering as a pleasing odor for the Lord is to do exactly as you. ¹⁵ As for the assembly, these are the instructions not only for you but also for immigrants or resident aliens who reside with you. This is a perpetual statute to be kept by the coming generations. You and aliens are alike before the Lord. ¹⁶ There is to be one law and one ordinance for you and the resident aliens will have the same laws and the same ordinances.”

2. Offering of Coarse Meal 15:17 – 21

¹⁷ The Lord said to Moses: ¹⁸ “Say to the people of Israel: After you come into the land to which I am bringing you, ¹⁹ whenever you eat the bread of the land you are to present a donation (*or, offering*) ¹⁸⁹ to the Lord. ²⁰ From the first batch of dough, ¹⁹⁰ made from ground grain that comes from the first grain, for the year, of the threshing floor, ¹⁹¹ you are to do as follows: ²¹ Throughout every generation you are to give a donation of the first at of your batch of dough to the Lord.” ¹⁹²

¹⁸⁵ Some scholars place this chapter following 21:3. The passage seems to be out of place, though it is possible that people were asking questions and answers were given. There are no explanations concerning the meaning, just details of how they were to proceed.

¹⁸⁶ The laws in 15:1 – 16 can be classified as dealing with supplementary offerings.

¹⁸⁷ Cf.: Genesis 8:21. The thought is that God inhales the odor and is content. Cf.: Ephesians 5:3.

¹⁸⁸ An ephah was .652 bushels. A hin was about one gallon.

¹⁸⁹ The KJV describes this as a “heave offering.” The loaf of bread is to be raised up by a priest or the donor in recognition of the presence and the gifts of God.

¹⁹⁰ LXX: “from the kneading trough.”

¹⁹¹ The Hebrew word literally is: the flat place where grain is threshed. Cf.: BDB and the Mishnah.

¹⁹² After the destruction of the second temple it became the custom within Judaism to throw a handful of dough into the fire as a mini-sacrifice.

3. Offerings for Unknown Sins 15:22 – 31

²² “However, if you mistakenly do not observe all these commands which the Lord had spoken to Moses, ²³ all of which the Lord had commanded to be kept throughout each succeeding generation, ²⁴ if it should happen unintentionally that, without the knowledge of the congregation, it failed to follow the commandment of the Lord, given through Moses, the congregation should then offer a young bull as a burnt offering; a pleasing odor for the Lord, together with the cereal offering and the drink offering of wine in accordance with the ordinance, along with a male goat for a sin offering. ²⁵ The priest then will make atonement for the entire congregation of Israel and they will receive forgiveness, since it was unintentional and they have made atonement by bringing their offerings: an offering by fire to the Lord, and a sin offering before the Lord, for the error they made. ²⁶ The entire congregation of the Israelites will be forgiven, along with the resident aliens in their midst, (because all the people were involved in the error).

²⁷ “In the event that a person sins unintentionally, a yearling female goat is to be offered for a purification (*or, sin*) offering. ²⁸ The priest will make atonement (*or expiation*) before the Lord for that person has committed the error, having sinned inadvertently, thus making atonement for him, and he will be forgiven. ²⁹ This applies for those who are native Israelites and those who are resident aliens. You will both be under the same law as people who act in error. ³⁰ But: whoever acts high-handedly ¹⁹³ whether a native Israelite or a resident alien reviles (*or, affronts*) the Lord and that person will be cut off from among his people. ³¹ This takes place because he has shown contempt for the word of the Lord, and has violated the Lord’s commands. That person will be completely cut off, and he must bear his guilt.”

4. A Sabbath Breaker’s Fate 15:32 – 36

³² During the time the people of Israel were in the wilderness they discovered a man who was gathering wood (*or, twigs*) ¹⁹⁴ on the Sabbath Day. ³³ Those who found him gathering wood (*or, twigs*) took him to Aaron and to the entire congregation. ³⁴ (They placed him in custody since it had not been determined what should be done to him.) ¹⁹⁵ ³⁵ The Lord said to Moses: “This man is to be put to death. The entire congregation is to stone him outside the camp.” ¹⁹⁶ ³⁶ The entire congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him to death with stones as had been commanded by Moses.

5. Wearing Tassels 15:37 - 41

³⁷ The Lord said to Moses: ³⁸ “Speak to the people of Israel and inform them to make tassels ¹⁹⁷ on the corners of their garments. ¹⁹⁸ This is to be done throughout all

¹⁹³ I.e.: sets himself to disobey the Lord by acting in an overbearing or arbitrary manner.

¹⁹⁴ The Hebrew word gives the idea of small pieces of wood: twigs or wood chips. It was not a case of his chopping down a tree and carrying large pieces of wood on the Sabbath.

¹⁹⁵ The keeping of the Sabbath was a constant concern. At this point no commandment had been handed down from the Lord to Moses and then to the Israelites. The procedures for strangers was later included in the Midrash.

¹⁹⁶ Stoning was the penalty for the ox who killed a man, child seducers, those with a spirit of divination, blasphemy, Sabbath breakers, those who induced others to worship other gods, insubordination by a son, adultery and violation of the sacred ban.

¹⁹⁷ Some translate the Hebrew word as “fringe.” Since, within Judaism tassels have been used, this is the word that is used in this translation. The exact color of the cord within the tassel is not clear: blue or violet seem to be the designated color. The colors used in the tent of meeting and later the temple were purple, scarlet, blue or violet. The significance of each color is unknown. Cf.: Deuteronomy 22:12.

generations. A blue (*or, violet*) cord is to be in each tassel. ³⁹ The purpose of the blue cord is to catch your eye and remind you of all the commandments of the Lord, and do them. You are not to follow the lust of your own heart, or of your eyes. ⁴⁰ In this way you will remember to do all my commandments, and you will be holy to your God. ⁴¹ I am the Lord, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the Lord your God!”

<CHAPTER 16>

C. Rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram 16:1 – 17:18

1. The Rebel’s Names 16:1 – 2

¹ Now Korah the son of Levi, along with Dathan and Abiram sons of Eliab and On ¹⁹⁹ the son of Peloth – descendants of Reuben – recruited ²⁰⁰ ² two-hundred fifty men of Israel, leaders of the congregation, chosen from the assembly, well known men; all of whom confronted Moses. ²⁰¹

2. Korah’s Rebellion 16:3 – 11 ²⁰²

³ Korah’s followers assembled in opposition to Moses and Aaron, saying: “You have gone too far! The entire congregation is holy, every one of them. The Lord is among them. Why is it that you exalt yourselves, placing yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?” ⁴ Upon hearing this Moses prostrated himself. ²⁰³ ⁵ Moses then spoke to Korah and all his followers, saying, “In the morning the Lord will make clear who is his, who is holy, and who is allowed to approach him. ⁶ Do this: take the censers (*or, fire pans*). ²⁰⁴ Korah, you and your ²⁰⁵ supporters, ⁷ and tomorrow you are to put glowing embers (*or, fire*) in them and place incense on the embers. As you stand before the Lord, the man who is chosen by the Lord will be the holy one. You Levites have gone too far!” ⁸ Then Moses said to Korah, “Listen now, you Levites! ⁹ Is it due to a feeling of insignificance that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, ¹⁰ thereby allowing you to approach him in order to carry out the duties of the Lord’s tabernacle, and to stand before the congregation of Israel, to serve them? ¹¹ Because of this feeling you have gathered together against the Lord. What is Aaron that you cry out against him?”

¹⁹⁸ The Tallith is still worn by Orthodox Jews. It is a cloth with a hole in the middle to pass over the head and a tassel is at each corner of the garment.

¹⁹⁹ On is not mentioned again in this chapter. The name does appear in Numbers 26:5 – 9.

²⁰⁰ The meaning of “recruited” is uncertain in Hebrew.

²⁰¹ The list of names does not clarify that there are two different groups who oppose Moses. 1. Korah and some of the Levites. 2. Dathan and Abiram, descendants of Reuben. The two rebellions are somewhat intertwined in this chapter. An attempt is made to clarify this through the headings. Cf.: ANET p. 29b.

²⁰² The religious revolt by the Korahites, which were Korah and his followers, was a revolt on the part of the Levites. The Korahites had the responsibility of carrying the most holy items when the people of Israel moved from place to place. This was the highest honor that could be bestowed, with the sole exception being the High Priest.

²⁰³ Literally: “fell on his face.” The Hebrew could also be translated as: “His face fell.”

²⁰⁴ Scholars are divided as to the best meaning for the Hebrew word. Some select “censers” as the most descriptive word. Others hold to “fire pans.”

²⁰⁵ MT: “his.”

3. *The Revolt of Dathan and Abiram 16:12 – 15* ²⁰⁶

12 Moses sent for Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab; but they replied: “We will not come! 13 Isn’t it enough that you have brought us out of the land flowing with milk and honey to take us into this wilderness to kill us? Must you also lord it over us? 14 Is it not obvious that you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, or given us an inheritance of arable land and vineyards? Would you destroy the vision ²⁰⁷ held by those men? We will not come!”

15 Moses was exceedingly angry and said to the Lord, “Pay no attention to their offering. I have not taken so much as one donkey from them, nor have I harmed any individual among them.”

4. *Ordeal of Korah 15:16 - 24*

16 Moses said to Korah, “As for you and all your followers: be present before the Lord tomorrow. ²⁰⁸ You and your followers are to be present along with Aaron. 17 At that time each one of you is to take his censer (*or, fire pan*) ²⁰⁹ and put incense on it and each one is to present his censer before the Lord, two-hundred and fifty censers, along with you and Aaron.” 18 So each man took his censer, placed glowing embers in their censers, and laid incense on them, and they stood at the entrance to the tent of meeting along with Moses and Aaron. 19 Korah then assembled the entire congregation, as opponents to Moses and Aaron, at the entrance of the tent of meeting. At that time the glory of the Lord appeared ²¹⁰ before the entire congregation.

20 The Lord then spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: 21 “Separate yourselves from this congregation so that I will be able to consume them all in a moment.” 22 [*Moses and Aaron*] prostrated themselves ²¹¹ and said, “O God, the God who is over all that is living, will you become angry at the entire congregation because one person has sinned?”

23 The Lord then spoke to Moses, saying: “Inform the congregation: Get away from the dwellings of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.”

5. *Ordeal of Dathan and Abiram 16:25 - 34*

25 Moses then arose and went to Dathan and Abiram; the elders of Israel following him. 26 He told the congregation: “Go away from the tents of these wicked men, and do not touch anything that is their possession, or you will be swept away for all their sins.” 27 So they moved away from the dwellings of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. The families of Dathan and Abiram had come out and stood at the entrance to their tents, along with their wives, children and infants. 28 Moses said, “This is the way in which you will know that the Lord has sent me to do all these works; it has not been something that I have done on my own. 29 If these people die a natural death or some natural fate attacks them, -- then I am not the one the Lord has sent. 30 However, if the Lord establishes

²⁰⁶ The secular revolt by Dathan and Abiram was prompted by lack of satisfaction with the leadership of Moses and Aaron who had promised, but had not yet delivered a land flowing with milk and honey. Dathan and Abiram were not Levites but two of the many in the assembled congregation who led the complaint against Moses and Aaron. It was taking too long for them to bring the people into the land Moses had said God had promised for the people of Israel.

²⁰⁷ Literally: “throw dust into their eyes.” “Those men” is a euphemism for “our men.”

²⁰⁸ Some manuscripts add: “They all stood at the entrance of the tent of meeting. Moses and Aaron....”

²⁰⁹ Cf.: footnote 204.

²¹⁰ Two Hebrew manuscripts add: “to Moses.”

²¹¹ Cf.: footnote 203 God will destroy the entire nation, Moses and Aaron being the exception.

something new,²¹² and the ground opens up²¹³ and engulfs them, and they go, alive, into the place of the dead (*or, the grave*), then you will realize that these men have despised the Lord.”

³¹ As soon as he had completed speaking the ground under them was split apart. ³² The ground burst apart and engulfed them along with their households and all their possessions –everyone who belonged to the clan of Korah and all their personal possessions. ³³ So: they, together with all they owned, went down, alive. into the place of the dead (*or, Sheol*), perishing in the presence of the assembly. ³⁴ The entire congregation of Israel fled at the sound of their outcry, for they said, “The earth is going to swallow us too!”

6. *The Story of Revolt, Continued 16:35 – 50*

³⁵ Fire came out from the Lord and consumed the two-hundred fifty men offering the incense.

³⁶ [H. 17:1] The Lord then spoke to Moses: ³⁷ [H. 2] “Tell Eleazar son of Aaron the priest to gather²¹⁴ the censers out of the blaze, and then scatter the fire far and wide. ³⁸ [H. 3] The censers of these evil doers have become holy at the cost of their lives. Fashion them into hammered plates to become a covering of for the top of the altar,²¹⁵ for they presented them before the Lord and they have become holy. In this way they will be a sign to the people of Israel. ³⁹ [H. 4] Then Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers that had been presented by those who were burned; and they were hammered out as a covering for the altar – ⁴⁰ [H. 5] a reminder to the Israelites that no outsider; who is not of the descendants of Aaron, [*as had been done by Dathan and Abiram*], is to approach to offer incense before the Lord, lest they become like Korah and his followers – just as the Lord had told him through Moses.

⁴¹ [H. 6] On the following day however, the entire congregation of the Israelites rebelled against Moses and against Aaron; saying: “You have killed the people of the Lord.” ⁴² [H. 7] When the congregation had assembled in opposition, Moses and Aaron turned toward the tent of meeting; and the cloud had covered it, for the glory of the Lord appeared.²¹⁶ ⁴³ [H. 8] Then Moses and Aaron came to the front of the tent of meeting, ⁴⁴ H. 9] and the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ⁴⁵ [H. 10] “Get away from this congregation that I can consume them in a moment.” They prostrated themselves. ⁴⁶ [H. 11] Moses said to Aaron, “Take your censer, place fire in it and hurry – carry it to the congregation and make atonement for them. Wrath has gone out from the Lord! The plague has already begun.²¹⁷ ⁴⁷ [H. 12] Aaron did exactly as Moses had said, running into the midst of the congregation where the plague had already begun.²¹⁸ ⁴⁸ [H. 13] He stood between the dead and the living, and the plague stopped. ⁴⁹ [H. 14] fourteen thousand seven hundred died as the result of the

²¹² Literally: “creates a creation.”

²¹³ Literally: “opens up its mouth.”

²¹⁴ Literally: “they took up the censers.”

²¹⁵ Cf.: Ezekiel 19:3. This altar was built of acacia wood, covered with bronze, and used for burnt offerings.

²¹⁶ God’s presence was truly in their midst.

²¹⁷ Events had moved to a tender point. It was important to make atonement for the people in order to avert the wrath of God.

²¹⁸ Aaron had to violate the statue concerning the High Priest’s contact with the dead in order to do his atoning responsibility.

plague,²¹⁹ in addition to those who died as the result of the revolt by Korah.^{50 [H. 15]} When the plague had stopped Aaron returned to Moses at the entrance of the tent of meeting.

<CHAPTER 17>

7. *Sprouting of Aaron's Staff 17:1 – 13*²²⁰

^{1 [H. 16]} The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ^{2 [H. 17]} "Speak to the people of Israel and obtain the staff of the leader of each of the ancestral tribes. Twelve staffs are to be gathered, (representing one from each of the twelve ancestral tribes), each to be inscribed with the owner's name. ^{3 [H. 18]} In addition the staff of Aaron (as the staff of the tribe of Levi), is also to be included and suitably inscribed with his name. ^{4 [H. 19]} Place them in the tent of meeting, before the covenant,²²¹ where I will meet you.²²² ^{5 [H. 20]} The staff of the man I select will sprout. In this manner I will put an end to the continuing complaints that are made against you." ^{6 [H. 21]} Moses spoke to the leaders of the tribes of Israel and each gave him their staff, one from each of the leaders based on their ancestral tribes. The staff of Aaron was also added to the twelve²²³ that had been gathered. ^{7 [H. 22]} That having been done, Moses placed the staffs in the tent of the covenant, in the presence of the Lord.

^{8 [H. 23]} On the following day Moses went into the tent of the covenant and the staff of the tribe of Levi, Aaron's staff, had sprouted. It had produced buds, blossoms, and bore ripe almonds.²²⁴ ^{9 [H. 24]} Moses then brought out the staffs from the presence of the Lord that they might be viewed by the people of Israel. Then each man took his staff. ^{10 [H. 25]} The Lord said to Moses: "Replace the staff of Aaron before the covenant, to be preserved as a warning to those who would rebel,²²⁵ so that you might end their complaints against me. or else they will die." ^{11 [H. 26]} Moses did exactly as God had commanded.²²⁶

^{12 [H. 27]} The Israelites said to Moses: "We assuredly are perishing! It is hopeless! All is lost. ^{13 [H. 28]} Everyone who approaches the tabernacle will surely die. Are we all to perish?"²²⁷

²¹⁹ 2.5% of the people died,

²²⁰ It is uncertain whether the staff was a symbol of authority or whether it was simply a walking staff. The staff of each of the leaders of the tribes marked an element of personal possession or involvement. This is the 3rd of 3 stories to declare that God had given Aaron special priestly powers.

²²¹ The word "covenant" could be translated as "treaty" or "testimony." This would imply: "the ark of the covenant" which was the holiest item within the tent.

²²² The Hebrew could be translated as: "I will meet you by appointment." The word signifies a definite longer or shorter period of time.

²²³ The Vulgate says: "there were twelve rods besides Aaron's rod."

²²⁴ In Hebrew there is a play on words in this verse. The white of the almond blossoms, and the qualities attributed to the almond in those days would give the idea to the people of that day that these qualities were also representative of the qualities in Aaron as the high priest. Aaron's staff not only grew but had all the stages of growth.

²²⁵ MFT: "as an object lesson for rebellious men, and to stop them from wearying me with their grumbling."

²²⁶ The message from God was "an obedience lesson" which Moses had to obey without fail.

²²⁷ ICC: "shall we ever finish dying?" Aaron is pre-eminently shown to be the holy one. The chapter ends with the desperate outcry of terrified people.

<CHAPTER 18>

*D. Dues and Duties of Priests and Levites 18:1 – 32*²²⁸

1. Levites' Duties 1:1 – 7

¹ The Lord said to Aaron, “You and your sons and your ancestral house will bear responsibility and must answer for any guilt connected with the sanctuary.²²⁹ You and your sons will also bear sole responsibility for any offenses connected with the priesthood. ² Therefore bring with you your brothers of your ancestral tribe: Levi, in order that they can be united with you ²³⁰ and serve you while you and your sons are ministering in front of the tent of the covenant. ²³¹ ³ They are to stand guard for you and provide guard duty and services to the entire tent, but they are not to approach the holy equipment: the altar, otherwise both they and you will die. ⁴ It is I who now am taking your brothers, the Levites, and they will be attached to you in order to perform the duties of the tent of meeting. No outsider will approach you. ⁵ You, yourselves will perform the duties of the sanctuary, the duties of the altar along with all its utensils. This is required so that no wrath will ever come upon the Israelites. ⁶ I am the one who is taking your brothers, the Levites, from among the Israelites; they are now like a gift for you, dedicated to you as you conduct your duties with so much occupying your thought, as you attend to the service at the tent of the meeting. ⁷ You and your sons are to perform your duties diligently in the area behind the curtain. I give you the priesthood as a gift. ²³² Any outsider who approaches is to be put to death. ²³³

2. Priestly Duties 17:8 – 20

⁸ The Lord then said to Aaron: “Be assured, I have given you charge of the offerings made to me. I have given all these holy gifts from the people of Israel to you and to your sons as the priestly portion due you for all time. ⁹ This is to be yours, taken from the most holy things, reserved from the fire. Each one of the offerings that is given me is a most holy thing, ²³⁴ having been withheld, ²³⁵ whether an offering that is a sin offering, or a guilt offering – will belong to you and to your sons. ¹⁰ As a most holy thing it is to be eaten by males; (*or, all males are eligible to eat of it*), ²³⁶ it will be holy to you. ¹¹ This is also yours: I have given it to you, along with your daughters and sons, as a perpetual provision, whatever is set aside from the gifts of all the offerings that are lifted up in the presence of the Lord, from the Israelites, everyone in your house who is ceremonially clean may eat. ¹² All the best oil and the best wine, along with the grain: the choice produce that has been presented to the Lord, I have given you. ¹³ The first fruits ²³⁷

²²⁸ To be a priest was regarded as a gift from God. It is a blasphemous assumption for any one to think that one not selected by God could minister as a priest. Such presumption was to be punished by death.

²²⁹ The priests and Levites who are responsible for anyone approaching the altar. Only priests and certain Levites were to do so. The word translated as “sanctuary” might better be translated as “holy things.”

²³⁰ I.e. draw near to you. A portion of the responsibility for the Levites and temple priests was guard duty.

²³¹ This is the same as the “tent of testimony”. The editor selected a different descriptive word for the tent. The latter portion of the sentence is uncertain.

²³² The Hebrew word can be translated either as “service” or “gift.” The last portion of this sentence is difficult to understand and translate.

²³³ God has already provided what the people desire but are not aware.

²³⁴ Literally: “all sacred things of the people of Israel.” Most of the rights of the priest have already been mentioned in Leviticus 1:14 – 17; 6:36; 27:5 – 33.

²³⁵ Literally: “from the fire.”

²³⁶ With other vocalization it can read: “they are unconsecrated for your use .”

²³⁷ “First fruits” is used 17 times in the Hebrew Scriptures.

of the entire land, which are brought to the Lord, are yours. Everyone who is ceremonially clean may eat. ¹⁴ Everything that is dedicated to me in Israel is yours if it is dedicated to me – it will be yours. Everyone who is ceremonially clean may eat thereof. ¹⁵ Everything that is the firstborn from the womb, ²³⁸ human or animal, which is offered to the Lord, will be yours, but your must redeem the firstborn child is to be redeemed ²³⁹ You are also to redeem the firstborn of the unclean animals. ¹⁶ The price of redemption is determined at the age of one month. The price is to be set at five shekels of silver, based on the rate set in the sanctuary (that is twenty gerahs). ²⁴⁰ ¹⁷ The firstborn of a cow, sheep or goat are not to be redeemed. They are holy. You are to dash their blood on the altar and turn their fat into smoke [*on the altar*] as an offering giving forth a pleasant odor to the Lord. ¹⁸ The flesh will be yours, just as in other offerings when the breast is raised in the presence of the Lord, along with the thigh – both are yours. ¹⁹ I have given you, along with your sons and daughters, all the holy offerings presented to the Lord by the people of Israel as a permanent possession, as a covenant of salt ²⁴¹ forever before the Lord, for you and your descendants as well.” ²⁰ The Lord said to Aaron: “You are not to possess any property as your own. I am your property and your possession among the Israelites.” ²⁴²

3. Levites' Dues 18:21 - 24

²¹ “I have given every tithe in Israel to the Levites as their possession, in return for the service they do at the tent of meeting. ²² From now on the Israelites are not to approach the tent of meeting, for in doing so, they possibly will incur guilt and will die. ²³ The Levites will perform the services of the tent of meeting, and they will bear the responsibility for their own offenses.. This will be a perpetual law for all generations. However, in Israel the Levites will have no allotment (*or, land designated as their property*) ²⁴ because I have given them, as their portion, the tithe of the Israelites, which they are to set apart as an offering to the Lord.. In the light of this I have informed them that they will have no allotment [*of property*] among the Israelites.” ²⁴³

4. Priests' Dues from the Levites. 18:25 – 32

²⁵ The Lord said to Moses, ²⁶ “You are to speak to the Levites, telling them: When you receive the tithe from the Israelites which I have given you from them, as your portion, you are to designate, and set aside, an offering from it for the Lord, that is: a tithe of a tithe. ²⁷ Your offering will be considered to be your gift, just as one might make a cereal offering of grain from the threshing floor, and the fullness of the wine press. ²⁸ This is the way in which by you are to set apart an offering to the Lord from the tithes

²³⁸ Literally: “splitter of the womb.”

²³⁹ Whatever was dedicated to the Lord was an irrevocable gift of items given to the Lord. This was done voluntarily and dedicated to the Lord. All firstborn, males – human and animal were so dedicated and needed to be redeemed by 5 shekels of silver.

²⁴⁰ The amount would be 2 ounces of silver, which weighed 20 gerahs. Verse 16 might be a later explanatory gloss.

²⁴¹ It was understood that if people shared salt, i.e. ate a meal together for example, they were declared to be friends and this was to be a lasting friendship that was never to be violated. Cf.: Exodus 30:35.

²⁴² There are two groups of priestly prerequisites: 1. Sacrifices were the Lord's but certain sacrifices were then given to the priests for their (and their family's) use. 2. Other sacrifices were considered to be holy and could be eaten, after having been presented to the Lord, by the family that brought the sacrifice.

²⁴³ Later in Jewish history we know the tithe was not always paid as faithfully as it should have been paid. As a result the Levites were often in poverty. At this point in history 22,000 Levites were to be supported by the tithe which came from 600,000 people. Cf. Deuteronomy 14:22 – 24.

you receive from the Israelites: from that which you receive from them you are to make your offering to the priest, Aaron. ²⁹ In addition, from all the gifts to you, you are to designate every offering that is dedicated to the Lord. The very best of these offerings are the parts to be consecrated. ³⁰ Also state to them, These best parts are to be consecrated, ²⁴⁴ the rest will be considered to belong to the Levites as produce of the threshing floor and as produce from the wine press. ³¹ You and your household may eat it in any place, for this is your payment for your service in the tent of meeting. ³² You are not to feel guilty because of this, provided that you have offered the best of it [*to the Lord*]. But you must remember that you are not to profane the holy gifts of the Israelites on penalty of death. ²⁴⁵

<CHAPTER 19>

E. Purification from Uncleanness from the Dead 19:1 – 22

1. Rite of the Red Cow 19:1 – 10 ²⁴⁶

¹ The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, ² “This is the statute which the Lord has commanded: Inform the people of Israel to bring you a perfect red cow ²⁴⁷ that has never been used for profane purposes. ²⁴⁸ ³ The red cow is to be given to Eleazar ²⁴⁹ the priest, and it will be taken outside the camp, to a ceremonially clean place, and slaughtered in his presence.⁴ Eleazar the priest is to take some of the blood on his fingers and sprinkle (*or, toss*) some of the blood toward the front of the tent of meeting. ²⁵⁰ ⁵ Then the red cow is to be burned within the sight of Eleazar; her skin, flesh, blood, and offal, -- everything is to be burned. ⁶ The priest is to take cedar wood, marjoram ²⁵¹ and crimson material, ²⁵² throwing them into the fire in which the red cow was being burned.⁷ Then the priest will scrub his clothing, bathe with water, and thereafter is permitted to return to the camp, though the priest will remain unclean until evening.

²⁴⁴ The Hebrew is difficult and unclear.

²⁴⁵ This last sentence is unclear in Hebrew. It seems to say nine tenths of the sacrifice are to be kept and one tenth given to the Lord, though the Lord considers himself to have received the additional nine tenths.

²⁴⁶ The Hebrew text uses the word “cow.” The LXX uses the word “heifer.” Traditionally the Greek word has been used by translators. In Numbers 16 the people are informed concerning uncleanness after having touched a corpse, a human bone, or a grave. This would make them to be polluted before God and a cleansing is to take place. In this chapter the regulations for cleansing are presented. There are two kinds of cleansing. 1. The need for cleansing that is the result of rather simple forms of uncleanness is to wash with water and then remain unclean until nightfall, at which time the cleanliness would be complete. 2. The second form demands more ritual. One is unclean for a week and must wash with water on the third and seventh day. If this is done in accordance with the law the individual will be declared clean at the end of the week. Then that person can again return to his/her place in society.

²⁴⁷ The color would be reddish brown, not bright red. The red cow was to have no blemishes.

²⁴⁸ Literally: “has never been yoked.” Since it is to be used for sacred purposes the translation above best sets it apart for that purpose.

²⁴⁹ It is interesting that Eleazar was selected to sacrifice the red cow, not Aaron who served as the High Priest.

²⁵⁰ In this case the procedure is different from other cleansing rituals. The blood (a primary agent in cleansing) is burned, not in the tent of meeting. Some of the blood is thrown toward the entrance to the house of meeting but the blood and ashes together become a powerful combination for purification.

²⁵¹ Most translators use the word “hyssop” but since hyssop was not native to that area and marjoram, being similar, was native, that it became the translation of choice.

²⁵² These items are also used in the purification ceremony for a leper. There is no clue given in the Hebrew Scriptures as to why these items are to be used or what the significance of each item might be.

8 “The person in charge of burning the red cow is to wash his clothes in water and bathe in water. He will remain unclean until evening. 9 That having taken place a person who is clean, ceremonially, is to gather up the ashes of the red cow and deposit the ashes in a clean place outside the camp, for the ashes are to be kept for the congregation of the Israelites, so the ashes and water can be used for cleansing [*rituals*]. It is a purification offering.²⁵³ 10 The one who is to gather the red cow’s ashes is to wash his clothes and is unclean until evening. 10 This [*sacrifice of a red cow*] is to be a perpetual regulation for the people of Israel.”

2. General Procedure for Cleansing 19:11 – 13

11 “Whoever touches the corpse of anyone²⁵⁴ who is deceased, will be unclean for seven days. 12 That person is required to cleanse himself on the third and the seventh day so he might be ceremonially clean,²⁵⁵ but if he does not cleanse himself on the third and seventh day [*using the water of ritual purification*],²⁵⁶ he will not become clean. 13 Whoever touches the corpse of any person who has died, and does not cleanse himself is defying the tabernacle of the Lord. Such a person should be excluded²⁵⁷ from Israel. Since the water of purification was not poured on him, he remains unclean;²⁵⁸ the uncleanness is still with him.”

3. Specific Rules for Cleansing 19:14 – 22

14 “This is the law when someone dies in a tent:²⁵⁹ everyone in the tent at that time is unclean for seven days. 15 Each open container which does not have a sealed lid is also unclean. 16 Whoever touches someone who has been killed by a sword or has died a natural death,²⁶⁰ or human bone, or grave, will be unclean for seven days. 17 The one who is unclean will take some of the ashes of the burnt offering (*or, the red cow*) for purification and naturally flowing water, which are poured together in a container, 18 and a person who is ceremonially clean will take marjoram,²⁶¹ and having dipped it into the water is to sprinkle it on the tent, on all its furnishings, and on all the people who were present in the tent, or touched a human bone, or a grave. 19 The ceremonially clean person will sprinkle those who are unclean on the third and seventh day, thus purifying them on the seventh day. On that evening they will be clean.²⁶² 20 Those who are unclean and do not purified themselves are to be excluded from the assembled people of Israel, for they have defiled the sanctuary of the Lord. This is because the water of purification had not been sprinkled on them. They are unclean.

21 “This is a perpetual statute for the people of Israel! The one who sprinkles the water for cleansing is to wash his clothing and whoever touches the water for cleansing

²⁵³ Literally: “it is a sin offering.” “It is to be an offering for the removal of sin” is a much better phrase to provide understanding of the ritual.

²⁵⁴ Literally: “with regard to any.” In this verse the Hebrew word “nephesh” is used. In Genesis 2:7 it is usually translated as a living soul.

²⁵⁵ To contact the body of one who was deceased was considered to be a grave situation.

²⁵⁶ I.e.: water and ashes from the red cow. Cf.: v. 10. There is to be a double cleansing by applying the water as a mid-cleansing and an end-cleansing.

²⁵⁷ Literally: “cut off.” Here and v. 20.

²⁵⁸ Literally: “he will wrong himself.”

²⁵⁹ Literally: “on the place of the ground.” LXX: “house.” Since at this point in time the people were traveling the word “house” seems inappropriate.

²⁶⁰ The word “natural” is omitted in Hebrew.

²⁶¹ See footnote 251.

²⁶² No priest is needed for this ritual.

will be unclean until evening. 22 Whatever the person who is unclean touches will be unclean, and anyone who touches it will be unclean until evening.”

<CHAPTER 20>

IV. *The March from Kadesh to Moab 20:1 – 22:1* ²⁶³

A. *Sojourn at Kadesh 20:1* ²⁶⁴

¹ The entire congregation of the people of Israel came into the wilderness of Zin ²⁶⁵ in the first month ²⁶⁶..... and the people stayed in Kadesh. It was here that Miriam, Moses’ sister died and was buried. ²⁶⁷

2. *Miracle at Meribah 20:2 – 13* ²⁶⁸

² There was no water for the congregation of the people of Israel. The people gathered in opposition to the leadership of Moses and Aaron. ³ The people engaged in dispute with Moses and said, ²⁶⁹ “If only we had died when our relatives died before the Lord! ⁴ Why did you bring the assembled people of the Lord into this wilderness, along with our livestock so that we might die here? ⁵ Why have you brought us out of the land of Egypt, bringing us to this wretched place? Here there is no grain, no figs, pomegranates, and no water to drink.”

⁶ Moses and Aaron moved away from the presence of the assembled congregation of the people of Israel, going to the door of the tent of meeting, and prostrated themselves. At this time the glory of the Lord appeared to them, ⁷ and the Lord said to Moses: ⁸ “Take your staff, and assemble the congregation before you and your brother Aaron, and tell the rock before you, as they are looking at it, to yield its water. In this manner you will provide water out of the rock, for them. Thus you will give drinking water not only for the congregation but also for the cattle.”

⁹ Moses took his staff from its place before the [*altar of the*] Lord, as he had been commanded. ¹⁰ Moses gathered the assembly together before the rock and said to them, “Listen! You rebels! Should I bring water for you out of this rock?” ¹¹ Moses raised his hand and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out in abundance, sufficient that the entire congregation and all their livestock could be supplied with water. ¹² God then said to Moses, “Because you did not trust in me, to show my holiness (*or, to sanctify me*) ²⁷⁰ in view of these Israelites, therefore you will not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.” ²⁷¹ ¹³ These are the waters of Meribah, ²⁷² where the people quarreled with the Lord, and the Lord demonstrated his holiness.

²⁶³ Some scholars feel chapter 20 should follow 19:13. There is no manuscript evidence but it would be a better read.

²⁶⁴ This marks the second, so called, travel section of Numbers.

²⁶⁵ This area was adjacent to Kadesh which covered much of the northern Negeb.

²⁶⁶ The month would be Nisan (March/April). There is no indication of the year. Scholars feel it is the 40th year after having left Egypt.

²⁶⁷ Cf.: Numbers 34:36 - 37

²⁶⁸ Many scholars feel this is a duplication of the story which had already been told in Exodus 17:1 - 2.

²⁶⁹ Literally: “and said, saying.”

²⁷⁰ There is a play on words in Hebrew with the word translated “sanctify” and the word “Kadesh.”

²⁷¹ Moses not only did not obey God’s order but showed disrespect for God as he spoke to the people. He had been told to “tell the rock” which would give the glory to God. He however struck the rock twice with his staff, thus giving the impression to the assembled crowd that it was by his power that this took place. Not even the appointed leader is free from the sins that hinder the people of God from entering into the promised land.

3. Israel and Edom 20:14 – 21 ²⁷³

¹⁴ Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom, “This is the message of your brother Israel: ²⁷⁴ You are aware of all the adversity that has been experienced by us. ¹⁵ You know about how our ancestors went down to Egypt, and lived in Egypt for a long period of time, and the Egyptians oppressed (*or, enslaved*) us and our ancestors. ¹⁶ When we cried out to (*or, pleaded with*) the Lord, and he heard our pleas, and sent an angel and brought us out of Egypt; and here we are in Kadesh, a town located at the border of your territory. ¹⁷ We now ask permission that we be allowed to pass through your land. We will not pass through fields or vine yards or drink water from your wells, for we will travel on the King’s Highway, ²⁷⁵ not turning to the right or left of the highway until we have gone beyond your territory.”

¹⁸ The reply from Edom was as follows: “You will not pass through! If you attempt that our armies will attack you.” ²⁷⁶ ¹⁹ The Israelites responded, “We will stay on the highway. In the event that we drink your water, -- we or our livestock, -- we will pay for the water. It is not anything major, just let us pass through.” ²⁰ The reply was, “You will not pass through!” Edom attacked the Israelites with a large force, which was heavily armed. ²¹ This was the way Edom refused to provide passage for the Israelites through their territory. The Israelites turned away from Edom. ²⁷⁷

B. En Route for Moab 20:22 – 22:1

1. Aaron’s Death 20:22 – 29

²² The people of Israel traveled from Kadesh and the entire congregation came to Mount Hor. ²⁷⁸ ²³ The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, at Mount Hor, on the border of the land of Edom, ²⁴ “Aaron is to die ²⁷⁹ and will not be permitted to go into the land which I am giving to the Israelites, because you rebelled against my command at Meribah. ²⁵ Take Aaron and his son Eleazar and bring them up to Mount Hor, ²⁶ and there strip ²⁸⁰ Aaron of his vestments ²⁸¹ and place them on his son, Eleazar. Aaron will die there.” ²⁷ Moses did exactly as the Lord commanded. They went up to Mount Hor, within view of the entire congregation. ²⁸ Moses stripped Aaron of his vestments and put them on

²⁷² The word means “quarrel” or “contention.” Kadesh is felt by some scholars to be Ain Quderrat, a very strong spring. Meribah is thought by these same scholars feel that Meribah was Ain Quddek, a spring that was not as strong.

²⁷³ The exact route is not known. The locations of places mentioned in the remainder of this chapter are not certain. The territory of Edom was about 70 miles from north to south and about 15 miles wide.

²⁷⁴ The Edomites were the descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob. Thus the use of the word “Brother” was considered to be a proper way of addressing the king of Edom.

²⁷⁵ The King’s Highway was not at all like the Roman roads. It was a caravan trade route going from Damascus to Arabia. The trade route was already established by 2200 B.C.E. and is referred to in Genesis 14.

²⁷⁶ Literally: “we will come out with the sword against you.” The LXX adds: “In nothing will we turn aside.”

²⁷⁷ Edom had refused to negotiate and Israel did not feel compelled to fight and turned to take a different route to Canaan.

²⁷⁸ LXX: “to the summit of the mountain.” The actual site is unknown.

²⁷⁹ Literally: “be gathered to his fathers.”

²⁸⁰ The Hebrew word “to strip” involves not only removing the clothing but also being stripped of his position with-in Hebrew society. This marks not only his loss of position as High Priest but also degradation because of his disobedience. Aaron is demoted and is about to die. Neither Aaron nor Moses were buried in ancestral graves which was a highly esteemed concept in those days.

²⁸¹ Cf.: Exodus 29:29 – 37.

Aaron's son, Eleazar. Aaron then died in the top of the mountain. ²⁹ When the congregation saw that Aaron had died, all the people of Israel mourned for Aaron for thirty days. ²⁸²

<CHAPTER 21>

2. Defeat and Victory at Hormah 21:1 - 3

¹ When the Canaanite king of Arad, ²⁸³ who lived in the Negeb, heard that Israel was approaching by way of Atharim, he waged war against Israel and captured some warriors. ² Israel then made a vow to the Lord, saying: "If you will really give us these people into our hands (*or, give us power over these people*), we will utterly destroy their towns."²⁸⁴ ³ The Lord was attentive to the voice of Israel, ²⁸⁵ and delivered the Canaanites who then were utterly destroyed – they and their towns, -- and because of this the place was called Hormah. ²⁸⁶

3. The Bronze Serpents 21:4 – 9 ²⁸⁷

⁴ From Mount Hor they set out by way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom. ²⁸⁸ The people became impatient ²⁸⁹ along the way. ⁵ (The people spoke against Moses, asking, "Why have you brought us up out of the land of Egypt into this wilderness? There is no food, no water, and we detest this worthless ²⁹⁰ food. ⁶ Thereupon the Lord sent poisonous ²⁹¹ serpents into the midst of the people, so that many Israelites died. ⁷ The people came to Moses, saying, "We have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you! Pray to the Lord that he takes the serpents away from us." So Moses prayed to the Lord, on behalf of the people. ⁸ The Lord informed Moses: "Make a poisonous serpent out of bronze, attach it to a pole and whenever a person is bitten by a serpent, and the one who then looks at the bronze serpent, that person will live." ²⁹²

²⁸² The normal time for weeping was seven days. Aaron was so highly regarded that the time of weeping was extended. The Bamberg Rabbinic Bible begins Chapter 21 with this verse.

²⁸³ The name was probably intended as a corrective gloss. Scholars agree that the name is an interpolation. There is no information concerning Arad. The name is the name of a small territory which might have had a local chieftain but hardly the person who is mentioned here. The site "Tell el-Arad" is about 12 miles south of Hebron, in the northern Negeb. Scholars do not agree as to who should be named but most agree that it was not a small local ruler, though the one who was mentioned could have taken on the name "Arad." The name is in question by scholars.

²⁸⁴ To vow utter destruction of a town means it was under a ban, and no spoils could be taken by the warriors, for everything would be dedicated to the Lord. Nothing was to belong to the conquerors.

²⁸⁵ So: Samaritan Pentateuch and LXX

²⁸⁶ The name means "destruction."

²⁸⁷ Cf.: John 3:14.

²⁸⁸ Many scholars feel the mention of "the Red Sea" is in error. To go by way of the Red Sea would be an enormously long and out of the way trip. Other scholars place this portion of the chapter after 20:24. This, however, does not solve the problem of the round about way of travel. Possibly this explains the next sentence, however.

²⁸⁹ Literally: "became short."

²⁹⁰ I.e.: "Manna." The word translated as "worthless" is a hapax legomenon. It is only used here in the Hebrew Scriptures.

²⁹¹ Literally: "fiery." Some scholars feel these serpents bite was simply painful, hence "fiery" serpents. Some also feel the serpent Moses had fashioned, and raised up on a pole, was made of copper because that looked "fiery," hence, the expression. Since the comment that many people died, it seems logical that the serpents were poisonous, though that is not clearly stated concerning the serpents – just "fiery."

²⁹² No one is preserved from being bitten. However, looking at the bronze serpent would prevent death. Did the bronze serpent have curative power? No. The people had spoken against God. They expressed

4. On the March 21:10 – 20

¹⁰ The people of Israel set out on their march and encamped at Oboth. ²⁹³ ¹¹ From Oboth they moved on to Iye-abarim, to the wilderness bordering Moab, toward the east. ²⁹⁴ ¹² From there they started out and by evening were in the Valley of Zered. ²⁹⁵ ¹³ They then traveled on and camped on the opposite side of the Arnon, ²⁹⁶ located in the wilderness that extends from the boundary of the Amorites. The Arnon is the boundary of Moab: between Moab and the Amorites. ¹⁴ Because of this it is stated in the Book of the Wars of the Lord: ²⁹⁷

“[We passed through] Waheb in Suphah and the wadis,
the Arnon ¹⁵ and the slopes of the wadis
which extend to the seat of Ar,
and lies along the border of Moab.” ²⁹⁸

¹⁶ They continued from there to Beer, ²⁹⁹ which is the well about which the Lord told Moses, “Gather the people together and I will provide water for them.” ¹⁷ Israel then sang this song:

“Spring up, O well! Sing to it!
¹⁸ The well that our leaders dug,
which the nobles of our people dug,
using scepter and staves.”

They went from the wilderness to Mattanah, ¹⁹ and then from Mattanah to Nahaliel, from Nahaliel to Bamoth, ³⁰⁰ ²⁰ and from Bamoth to the valley of Moab which lay in the region of Moab near the top of Pisgah, that overlooks the waste land. ³⁰¹

5. Defeat of the Amorites 21:21 – 32 ³⁰²

²¹ Then Israel sent messengers to Shion, king of the Amorites [*in order to gain safe passage*] who said; ²² “Let us pass through your land. We will not turn aside and enter your fields or vineyards, nor will we drink water from any of your wells. We will remain on the Kings Highway until we have gotten beyond your territory. ²³ Sihon, however, would not grant Israel permission to pass through his territory. Sihon mustered his army ³⁰³ and they went out to the wilderness, to Jahaz, ³⁰⁴ to attack Israel. ²⁴ Israel did battle against Sihon, striking their opponents down with the sword, taking possession of

opposition to God! To look at what God had told Moses to erect was tantamount to saying, “I accept God and God’s leadership.” Thus they did not die.

²⁹³ So: LXX Codex Vaticanus. The location is uncertain. Scholars feel it was “en Chalgaei.” Some LXX manuscripts have it as “Qeheigal.”

²⁹⁴ Literally: “toward the sunrise.”

²⁹⁵ Cf.: Deuteronomy 2:113 – 14. Some scholars identify this with Wadi el-Ahsa.

²⁹⁶ This is Wadi el-Mojil. This was disputed territory between Israel and Moab for centuries. This phrase is questionable in Hebrew.

²⁹⁷ This book is only mentioned here. It is assumed to have been a collection of ancient popular songs.

²⁹⁸ The text seems fragmented and uncertain.

²⁹⁹ The Hebrew word “Beer” means “well.” The location of this well is uncertain. It is used quite often to designate locations, as for example: “Beer-sheba.” The location of none of the sites that are listed is certain.

³⁰⁰ Mattanah means “gift.” The LXX speaks of it as a well site. Bamoth means “high place” which could be either a place located on the High Moabite Plain or it could be a place of worship.

³⁰¹ It could be translated as “which overlooks Jeshimon.”

³⁰² The Amorites were Canaanites, but separated themselves, forming an independent nation of Canaanites.

³⁰³ Literally: “gathered his people together.”

³⁰⁴ The location is unknown. The spelling is that of the LXX.

the land from the Arnon to the Jabbok, ³⁰⁵ as far as to the Amorites, for that was a strong boundary. ²⁵ Israel took all the towns of the Amorites, in Heshbon, and in all its surrounding villages. ³⁰⁶ ²⁶ (Heshbon had been the city of Sihon, king of the Amorites, who had fought against the king of Moab, capturing all his land as far as the Arnon.) ²⁷ In the light of this the ballad singers say, ³⁰⁷

“Come to Heshbon, let it be built
Let the city of Sihon be established.
²⁸ Fire came out from Heshbon:
flame from the city of Sihon.
It devoured Ar of Moab,
and swallowed ³⁰⁸ up the heights of the Arnon.
²⁹ Woe to you, Moab!
You are destroyed, O people of Chemosh! ³⁰⁹
He has made your sons fugitives,
and your daughters captives,
to an Amorite king Sihon.
³⁰ So: their posterity perished
from Heshbon to Ddibon, ³¹⁰
and it has been destroyed
until fire reached as far as Medeba.” ³¹¹

³¹ It was in this way that the people of Israel were able to settle in the land of the Amorites. ³² Moses sent spies to learn about Jazer and they captured its surrounding villages and dispossessed the Amorites who lived there.

6. Defeat of Og 21:33 - 35

³³ They then turned and took the road to Bashan; and king Og of Bashan, ³¹² and the army he had mustered, came out to attack, intending to do battle at Edrei. ³¹³ ³⁴ The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: “Have no fear of him! I have given him into your hand, along with all his people, and all his land. You are to do to him exactly as you did to king Sihon of the Amorites, who ruled at Heshbon.” ³⁵ Thus he was killed: he and his sons, and all the people, until there were no survivors remaining, and they took possession of the land. ³¹⁴

³⁰⁵ The distance between the Arnon and the Jabbok is almost seventy miles.

³⁰⁶ Literally: “with its daughters.”

³⁰⁷ Verses 27 – 30 are difficult and ambiguous.

³⁰⁸ So: LXX. Hebrew: “and the lords of..”

³⁰⁹ Chemosh was the national god of the Moabites and the Amorites. Among the forms of worship was the sacrifice of children on the altar.

³¹⁰ So: LXX. Hebrew: “we have shot at them; Heshbon has perished.”

³¹¹ Verse 30 appears to be a corrupt text and quite impossible to understand.

³¹² There is no extra-Biblical reference to Bashan.

³¹³ Modern Dera: 23 miles NW of Bozrah.

³¹⁴ This area is known as Trans-Jordan. This was the first area that was settled by the Israelites. It became a sign to the people that the end of their travels was near and their entry into the promised land would be successful.

<CHAPTER 22>

7. *Encampment Opposite Jericho 22:1*

¹ Thus the people of Israel encamped on the plain of Moab, on the opposite side of the Jordan from Jericho. ³¹⁵

V. *The Story of Balaam 22:2 – 24:23*

A. *Balak and Balaam 22:2 – 40*

1. *Moabite Fear of Israel 22:2 – 2 – 4*

² Balak the son of Zippor, ³¹⁶ was aware of all that Israel had done to the Amorites. ³ Moab was seized with great panic due to the Israelites, because the Israelites were so numerous. Moab was overcome with fear because of the people of Israel. ⁴ Moab met with the elders of Midian, saying: “This horde will devour everything that is around us, just as an ox devours the grass of the field.” [Balak the son of Zippor was king of Moab at that time.] ³¹⁷

2. *Balak’s First Embassy 22:5 – 14*

⁵ Moab sent a deputation to Balaam the son of Beor ³¹⁸ at Pethor ³¹⁹ which is near the Euphrates, ³²⁰ in the land of Amaw, ³²¹ to summon him, saying, “A nation has come out of Egypt. They have spread over the face of the earth ³²² and have settled next to my nation. ⁶ Please come at once to assist me by cursing these people (for they are more powerful than I). If that is done, possibly I could defeat them and drive them from the area, for I know that you have the gift and whoever you bless will be blessed and whoever you might curse will be cursed.”

⁷ The ambassadors from Moab and the leaders from Midian were prepared to pay the fee for the divination, which they were carrying, set out and when they came to Balaam they stated Balak’s message. ⁸ He told them, “Spend the night here, and I will bring back the word to you, exactly as the Lord will have informed me,” so they remained with Balaam for the night. ⁹ God appeared to Balak and asked, “Who are these men who are with you?” ¹⁰ Balaam replied to God, saying, “King Balak son of Zippor, has sent messengers. ¹¹ ‘A nation has come out of Egypt, swarming out, so numerous that they hide the earth. Come and curse them for me. If this happens, possibly I will be able to fight against them and drive them out.’ “ ¹² God told Balaam, “You are not to go with them! You are not to curse the people, for they are blessed (*ore, they shall be blessed*).” ¹³ As a result Balaam rose in the morning and said to the ambassadors of Balak, “Return to your own land, for the Lord has refused to permit me to go with you.” ¹⁴ So the ambassadors of Moab rose and went to Balak, saying, “Balaam refused to come with us.”

³¹⁵ Some scholars place this verse after 21:11. Literally: “Jordan of Jericho.”

³¹⁶ Balak means “the one who lays waste.” Zippor means “small bird.”

³¹⁷ Some scholars feel this is a later interpolation.

³¹⁸ Some scholars feel this is the same person as the one mentioned in Genesis 36:32.

³¹⁹ There are two places which might be Pethor: one was located along the Euphrates and another much nearer to northern Moab.

³²⁰ Literally: “the river.”

³²¹ So: Samaritan Hebrew Text & Vulgate. LXX: “to the land of the Amorites.” The Ammonites did not live nearby. Some scholars feel Balaam was from Mesopotamia. This would be far away. Would Balak have known about someone who had the gift of divination who lived at such a great distance?

³²² Literally: “they are so numerous that they hide the earth from view.”

3. Balak's Second Embassy 22:15 – 22

15 Balak then sent more people as his ambassadors in larger numbers with greater importance. 16 They came to Balaam and said, “Balak son of Zippor has spoken as follows: ‘Do not let anything hinder you from coming to me.’ 17 I will surely provide you with great honor! Whatever you tell me—I will obey! Come! Curse these people for me!” 18 Balaam responded to the ambassadors of King Balak, saying, “Even if Balak were to give me a house filled with silver and gold, I could not go beyond the command of the Lord my God to do less or more. 19 Remain here tonight, just as the previous deputation had done, so that I can learn any additional instructions the Lord might give me.” 20 God came to Balaam at night and said to him, “If the men have come to you in order to summon you, get up and go with them, but only do what I tell you.”

4. Balaam and His Donkey 22:21 - 35

21 Balaam therefore rose in the morning and saddled his donkey, and went to Moab with the ambassadors. 22 The anger of God flared because he was going, and the angel of the Lord took its stand in the road as Balaam's adversary. Balaam was riding his donkey and his two servants had accompanied him. 23 The donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road, having a drawn sword in its hand, and turned from the road, going into a field, and Balaam struck the donkey to turn it back to the road. 24 The angel of the Lord then took its place, standing in a narrow path³²³ between two vineyards, the path having walls on both sides.³²⁴ 25 When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, it scraped against the wall, scraping Balaam's foot against the stone wall in the process, so Balaam struck the donkey a second time. 26 Then the angel of the Lord moved ahead and stood in a narrow place, so narrow that there was no room to turn to either the right or left. 27 When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, it lay down under Balaam; and Balaam's anger flared, and he struck the donkey with his staff. 28 The Lord then opened the mouth of the donkey, and it said to Balaam. “What have I done to you that you have struck me three times?” 29 Balaam said to the donkey, “Because you have treated me shabbily (*or, tormented me*)! I wish I had a sword in my hand! I would kill you right now!” 30 The donkey replied, “Am I not your donkey? Haven't you ridden on me all of your life³²⁵ – even until now? Have I ever been in the habit of treating you this way?” Balaam responded, “No.”³²⁶

31 Then the Lord opened Balaam's eyes³²⁷ and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, with its drawn sword in its hand. Balaam bowed and prostrated himself³²⁸ on his face. 32 The angel said to Balaam, “Why did you strike your donkey these three times? Be assured: I have come out as an adversary because your actions have been obnoxious³²⁹ to me, 33 and this donkey saw me and turned away before me three times. If she had not turned aside³³⁰ from me, I certainly would have killed you by now, but I would have spared the donkey.” 34 Then Balaam said to the angel of the Lord, “I

³²³ Literally: “closed in road.” The word is a hapax legomenon.

³²⁴ Cf.: ANET p. 482c.

³²⁵ Literally: “from your beginning.”

³²⁶ Proverbially: donkeys are considered to be dull and obstinate, yet this donkey has more spiritual insight than the people.

³²⁷ Literally: “uncovered the eyes of Balaam.”

³²⁸ Literally: “prostrated himself to his nostrils.”

³²⁹ The Hebrew is rather unclear. Literally: “too steep.”

³³⁰ So: LXX. Hebrew: “perhaps she had not.”

have sinned, for I did not know that you were standing on the road, to oppose me. Now therefore: if my action is displeasing in your sight I will return home.’³⁵ The angel said to Balaam, “Go with the men: but only speak what I tell you to say!” So Balaam went along with the ambassadors of Balak.

5. Balaam’s Visit to Balak 22:36 – 40

³⁶ When Balak heard that Balaam had come, he went out to meet him at Ir-Moab (*or, the city of Moab*), on the border of Moab, at its most distant point, at the Arnon frontier which was the extreme boundary of the region. ³⁷ Balak said to Balaam, “Didn’t I send a summons to call you to come to me? Am I not honorable enough for you?”³³¹ ³⁸ Balaam said to Balak, “Look! I have come to you now but do I have power to speak anything? The word that God places in my mouth is what I must speak.” ³⁹ Then Balaam went with Balak,³³² and they came to Kiriath-huzoth.³³³ ⁴⁰ Balak sent Balaam to be with the ambassadors who had been with him.³³⁴

B. Balaam’s Oracle 22:41 – 24:25

1. First Oracle 22:41 – 23:12

⁴¹ The following day Balak took Balaam, bringing him up to Bamoth-baal, to see the extent (*or, outskirts*)³³⁵ of the people [*of Israel*] from there.³³⁶

<CHAPTER 23>

¹ Then Balaam said to Balak, “Build me seven altars and provide seven bulls and seven rams [*to be sacrificed*].”³³⁷ ² Balak carried out the wish of which Balaam had spoken. Balak and Balaam³³⁸ sacrificed one bull and one ram on each of the altars. ³ Balaam said to Balak, “Stand beside your burnt offerings while I go further. Possibly the Lord will come to meet me and I will tell you whatever he reveals to me.” He then went up to a bare height.³³⁹

⁴ God met Balaam who said, “I have arranged the seven altars and have sacrificed a bull and a ram on each altar.” ⁵ The Lord³⁴⁰ put a word into Balaam’s mouth, saying: “Return to Balak and say what I tell you.” ⁶ Balaam then returned to Balak who was standing next to the altars along with the dignitaries of Moab. Balaam then spoke, as follows:

³³¹ This is a small power struggle. Balak assures Balaam first that if he ignored the first request because he did not supply sufficient gifts to cause Balaam to come, such gifts would be provided. He wants Balaam to know that he is sufficiently wealthy and powerful to supply any request Balaam might have.

³³² The Samaritan Pentateuch & Targum have: “he brought (or, led) him.”

³³³ The name means: “town of streets.” The exact location is uncertain. Possibly it is present day Kiriath-hain.

³³⁴ These sacrifices were a sort of welcome gesture, as well as a thanksgiving that Balaam had come.

³³⁵ Vulgate: “the full extent.” LXX: “some part.”

³³⁶ This location was possibly the same as Bamoth (*the high places of Baal*),

³³⁷ The number seven was a sacred number. The Hebrew name “Elishabe” means: “God is seven.” The Hebrew name “Jehosheba” means “The Lord is seven.” The ritual which would include the sacrifice, by burning, seven bulls and seven rams was elaborate and would be intense.

³³⁸ The LXX only says: “Balak. offered sacrifices”.

³³⁹ The Hebrew is uncertain. Some scholars feel the names Balak and Balaam, in chapter 23 were a later interpolation as an explanatory gloss. Balaam may have thought that being alone might prompt God to give him a message. Some scholars have attempted to use the Hebrew words as a place name. This has not been successful. Where this bare height (*possibly a rock outcropping*), was located is not known. TAN: “he went off alone”.

³⁴⁰ The Samaritan Pentateuch has, “The angel of the Lord.”

“Balak has brought me from Aram,
He is the king of Moab – from the eastern mountains;
saying: ‘Come, curse Israel for me
Come and denounce Israel.’

8 How could I be able to denounce whom God has not cursed?

How can I denounce those
whom the Lord has not denounced?

9 I saw [*Israel*] from the top of the crags,
from the hills I have witnessed it.³⁴¹

This is a nation which lives alone,
and does not even consider itself to be a nation.

10 Who can count the dust³⁴² of Jacob,
or the number of people in the cloud.³⁴³

Permit me to die the death of the upright,
and let my end be like this!”³⁴⁴

11 Balak said to Balaam:³⁴⁵ “What have you done to me? I brought you here to curse my enemies, but you have done nothing but bless them!” 12 Balaam replied: “I must be careful for I can only say what the Lord puts into my mouth.”³⁴⁶

2. *The Second Oracle 23:13 – 26*

13 Balak said to him:³⁴⁷ “Come with me to another place, away from here, a place where you are able to see them. You will see only a portion of them, not all. Then you will surely be able to curse them for me from that location.” 14 Balak then took him to the field of Zophim,³⁴⁸ to the top of Pisgah. He built seven altars, and offered sacrifices of one bull and one ram on each of the altars. 15 Balaam said to Balak, “Stand here beside your burnt offerings, while I meet the Lord over there.”³⁴⁹ 16 The Lord met Balaam and put a message into his mouth, and said, “Return to Balak, and this is what you are to say:” 17 When Balaam came to him, as Balak was standing next to his burnt offerings along with the dignitaries from Moab, Balak said to him: “What has the Lord said?” 18 Then Balaam declared his oracle, saying:

“Rise, Balak and hear.
Listen to me, O son of Zippor!

19 God is not to be confused with a creature,
and for this reason he does not lie.

Nor is he a mortal,
So that he could change his mind.
Is he the sort who makes a promise,

³⁴¹ This oracle is almost a ‘taunt song.’

³⁴² This expression is used ten times in the Hebrew Scriptures.

³⁴³ Alternately it could be translated as, “Who can count even one fourth of the people of Israel?”

³⁴⁴ Balaam’s death is recorded in 31:9, 16. The translation of this verse is a combination of the Hebrew and LXX sources. Neither one, alone, makes a great deal of sense.

³⁴⁵ Balak is furious.

³⁴⁶ Balaam affirms Israel’s unique place in God’s providence and not what Balak wanted to hear.

³⁴⁷ Balak is persistent.

³⁴⁸ TAN has: “Sedenzophim” meaning “look out point.” The location is unknown.

³⁴⁹ Balaam, in his confusion, seems as anxious as Balak to provide a curse on Israel. MT: “I will meet the Lord there.” LXX: “I will go off to meet God.”

and will not do what is promised?
 Is he the sort who will speak and not fulfill?
 20 Now look! I have received a command to bless.
 God has blessed and I can not change that!³⁵⁰

21 “He has not seen misfortune in Jacob.
 nor has he seen trouble in Israel.
 The Lord their God is with them,
 and is acclaimed³⁵¹ as the ruler among them.³⁵²

22 This God who has brought them out of Egypt
 is, for them, like the curving horns of a wild ox.³⁵³

23 “There is surely no magic act
 that has power against Jacob,
 no divination to bring down Israel.
 It will be declared of Jacob and Israel:
 ‘Look what God has done!’

24 You will see a nation rising up like a lioness,
 and rousing itself like a lion!
 It does not rest until it has eaten its prey,
 and drunk the blood of the slain.”³⁵⁴

25 Balak said to Balaam: “Do not curse them, and don’t bless them under any circumstances!”³⁵⁵ 26 Balaam answered: “Did I not tell you; whatever the Lord says, is what I must do’?”³⁵⁶

27 [So Balak said to Balaam, “Now please come for I will take you to a place that is more pleasing in the eyes of God. There you will be enabled to curse them for me.”]³⁵⁷
 28 Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor,³⁵⁸ overlooking the desert (*or, Jeshimom*).³⁵⁹ 29 Balaam said to Balak: “Build seven altars for me here and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me.” 30 Balak did as Balaam had said, and made a burnt offering of a bull and a ram at each of the altars.

³⁵⁰ Balaam cannot be manipulated. He is loyal in his words, but perhaps not too loyal in his actions.

³⁵¹ Literally: “shouted (*or, made noise*).” This was a fundamental teaching

³⁵² A new day was dawning. The old generation would soon be gone and Israel could move forward.

³⁵³ The wild ox was extinct by this time but it was gradually becoming a legend of power and determination.

³⁵⁴ Cf.: ANET p. 482c. Balaam compares Israel with a lion that will not cease hunting until the prey is caught, killed, and devoured.

³⁵⁵ This is Balak’s way of saying “Shut up!” Balaam declares what Balak feared.

³⁵⁶ Some scholars feel inserting 24:25 here would make for better reading.

³⁵⁷ Some scholars feel verse 17 is a later interpolation.

³⁵⁸ Balaam is taken to the top of Mount Peor, overlooking the desert. The exact location is unknown. Balak is seeking a place with the proper source of mystic power that could supersede the power of God.

³⁵⁹ Scholars differ as to whether the Hebrew words should be read as a proper noun and thus the name of a specific location.

<CHAPTER 24>

1 When Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he did not go to the previous locations in search of omens as in the past, but went directly ³⁶⁰ to the wilderness. 2 Balaam looked up and saw Israel living in tribal formation and the spirit of God came upon him. ³⁶¹ 3 He then uttered this oracle, saying:

“The oracle of Balaam son of Beor,
the oracle of a man whose eye us open. ³⁶²
4 The oracle of one who hears the words of God,
who sees the vision of the one who is Almighty. ³⁶³
who falls down, but with uncovered eyes.
5 How far are your tents, O Jacob,
your encampments, O Israel?
6 Like valleys ³⁶⁴ that stretch great distances,
like gardens beside a river,
like aloes that the Lord has planted,
like cedar trees beside the water. ³⁶⁵
7 Waters will flow from his buckets,
and his descendants will have abundant water. ³⁶⁶
His king will be higher than Agag, ³⁶⁷
And his kingdom will be exalted, ³⁶⁸
8 God who brings him out of Egypt;
is, for him, like a horned wild ox.
He will devour the nations who are his adversaries,
crunching their bones,
and pierce them through with his arrows.
9 He crouched, lying down like a lion,
and like a lioness. Who is willing to rouse him?
Blessed is everyone who blesses you!
Cursed is everyone who curses you!”

10 Balak’s wrath was kindled against Balaam, striking his hands together in contempt. Balak said to Balaam, “I called you here to curse my enemies but instead you have blessed them three times! 11 Now then: Go home to your place! I had said, ‘I will give you a generous honorarium’ but the Lord has denied you any reward! 12 Balaam said to Balak, “Did I not tell your messengers when you sent for me; ‘If Balak were to give me his house filled with silver and gold, it would still not be able to go beyond what the

³⁶⁰ Literally: “set his face toward.”

³⁶¹ The mode of God’s coming to Balaam is more spiritual in this oracle.

³⁶² The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain. Possibly it means: “whose eyes see truly.” The word has been translated as “open, closed, perfect.” LXX: “whose eyes are perfect.”

³⁶³ Literally: “Shaddai.” This word was used more extensively in the earlier history of the people of Israel. It is sometimes translated as “mountain or hosts.” El Shaddai = Lord of Hosts.

³⁶⁴ Some scholars make a slight emendation to have the word read: “palm groves.”

³⁶⁵ Since cedar trees normally do not grow along streams, some scholars feel these two lines have been transposed. ‘cedar trees that the Lord has planted, aloes that grow along the river.’

³⁶⁶ LXX: “a man will issue from his seed, and will reside over many nations.” There is no verb in the sentence in the MT.

³⁶⁷ The LXX has “Gog.”

³⁶⁸ The Hebrew is a very difficult verse to understand and to translate.

Lord has told me to say. That is all that I would be able to do. – only what the Lord tells me to say.”

4. Farewell Oracle 24:14 – 25

14 “Be assured” I am going to my people, but let me give you some advice about what this nation will do to your people in the future.”

15 Balaam uttered his oracle, saying:

“The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor,
the oracle of the man whose eye is clear.³⁶⁹

16 This is the oracle of one who hears the words of God,
and knows the knowledge of the Most High;³⁷⁰
who falls down, but with his eyes uncovered.³⁷¹

17 I see³⁷² him, but not now,
I behold³⁷³ him, but not near:
a star will come out of Jacob,
and a scepter³⁷⁴ will rise out of Israel.
It will crush the borders of Moab,
and the territory³⁷⁵ of the Shethites,³⁷⁶

18 ”Edom will become a possession,
and Seir will become a possession of its enemy,
while Israel does valiantly.

19 One from the descendants of Jacob will rule,
and destroy the survivors of it.”³⁷⁷

20 [Then Balaam looked a Amelek, and uttered his oracle:³⁷⁸
“Amelek was first among the nations,
but its end is to perish forever.”

21 Then, upon looking at the Kenites, he uttered this oracle:
“Your dwelling place will endue,
and your nest is set in the rock;”

22 yet Kain is destined to be burned.
How long will Asshur take you away as captives?”³⁷⁹

³⁶⁹ In the previous oracles it seems that Balaam went into a trance. This oracle appears simply to be a statement and thus is vastly different from the previous oracles. It is a forward look which gives the people a kind of opaque look into the future.

³⁷⁰ See foot notes 362 & 363. In Hebrew both the word “El” and the word “Shaddai” are used here.

³⁷¹ Cf.: ANET p. 329b.

³⁷² LXX: “I show him.”

³⁷³ LXX: “I make happy.”

³⁷⁴ LXX: “He will rise.”

³⁷⁵ Meaning uncertain. Literally: “corners of the head.” Balaam is saying a future figure king is coming to destroy Moab.

³⁷⁶ Shethites are “the sons of Seth” which is tantamount to the expression, “the sons of Adam. The Moabites are described in Genesis as being descendants, through Lot, of Seth, Adam’s son.

³⁷⁷ Slightly emended verses 18 - 19 would read: “Edom will be dispossessed, Seir will be dispossessed, when Israel does valiantly. Jacob will rule his enemies, and destroy the survivors of it.” The last word of v.19 in the MT is “Ir.” This means: “donkey colt.” There is no known area at this time in history called “Ir,” hence the emendation.

³⁷⁸ Some scholars feel verses 20 – 24 are a later interpolation.

- 23 He uttered another oracle, saying:
 “Alas! Who will survive when God does this?”³⁸⁰
 24 Ships will come from Kitim (*or, Cyprus*),
 and will afflict³⁸¹ Ashhur and Eber;³⁸²
 and these³⁸³ will also perish forever.”
 25 Then Balaam rose and returned to his place, and Balak went his way.

<CHAPTER 25>

VI. Miscellaneous Laws and Incidents 25:1 – 32:12

A. Physical and Spiritual Wantonness 25:1 – 18

1. Wantonness with Moab 25:1 - 5

¹ While Israel was staying at Shittim,³⁸⁴ the people began to have sexual relations with the women of Moab. ² These invited the people to the sacrifices to their gods, and the people ate and bowed down³⁸⁵ to their gods. ³ In this way Israel yoked itself³⁸⁶ to the Ba'al of Peor, causing the anger of the Lord to become ignited against Israel. ⁴ The Lord declared to Moses: “Take all the ring-leaders³⁸⁷ of the people and hang them in the sun³⁸⁸ before the Lord, for it is in this way that the anger of the Lord may turn away from Israel.” ⁵ [Moses said to the judges of Israel: “Every one of you is to kill any of your tribesmen who have yoked themselves to the Ba'al of Peor.”]³⁸⁹

2. Wantonness with Midian 25:6 – 18

⁶ At just that time one of the Israelites came, bringing a Midianite woman to his family in open defiance of Moses and the entire community of Israel, just as they were weeping at the entrance to the tent of meeting. ⁷ When Phinehas³⁹⁰ son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest saw this he left the congregation and took a spear in his hand, ⁸ and followed the man of Israel into the inner room,³⁹¹ and thrust the spear into the man and woman, pinning them together with his spear.³⁹² As the result of this act the plague was stopped among the people of Israel. ⁹ Nonetheless the number of those who died as the result of the plague was twenty-four thousand.

³⁷⁹ Literally: “she will take you captive.”

³⁸⁰ The MT divides the words differently, thus saying: “a nation will gather from the north.”

³⁸¹ The Hebrew word possibly might mean “humble.”

³⁸² These apparently were small Semite clans. Eber was nomadic. Nothing is known about Ashhur.

³⁸³ Literally: “he.”

³⁸⁴ Meaning: “Acacia Garden” or “Acacia Trees.”

³⁸⁵ To bow down to these gods signifies worship, which was condemned by Moses as being illegitimate.

³⁸⁶ Literally: “to bind the yoke.” This included being initiated into the mysteries of a mystic religion.

³⁸⁷ Literally: “chiefs of the tribes.”

³⁸⁸ The Hebrew is unclear. LXX: “make an example of them.” This was the custom in the Middle East at that time. Those who committed crimes were hung in public places in the presence of the people following their execution. Vulgate: “suspend.” By the time of the New Testament it was important that these corpses be buried as quickly as possible, following execution. REB: “hurl them down.” Peshitta: “make known,” or “expose them.”

³⁸⁹ The method of slaughter is not given.

³⁹⁰ The name is an Egyptian one. It means: “the dark skinned one.”

³⁹¹ The inner room is only mentioned here in the Hebrew Scripture. The exact meaning is unclear. JB: “alcove.” Vulgate: “brothel.” Possibly: the women’s quarters of the tent.

³⁹² The Hebrew is not clearly explicit. It is generally translated as “pierced the man of Israel and the women though their belly.” The MT uses the word “opening” perhaps implying that the spear pierced the genitals of the man and woman.

10 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 11 “Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, has turned back my wrath for the Israelites by manifesting such zeal among the people on my behalf that so that I did not destroy the people of Israel. 12 Therefore inform the people, saying: ‘Be assured! I am giving to him my covenant which is peace, 13 and it will be his, and also his descendants who follow after him. This covenant is a perpetual priesthood, because of his dedication to his God, and made atonement for the people of Israel.’”³⁹³

14 [The name of the man of Israel who was killed along with the Midianite girl was Zimri son of Salu, head of the ancestral tribe of the Simeonites. 15 The name of the Midianite woman who was killed was Cozbi³⁹⁴ daughter of Zur, who was the head of a clan, among the ancestral tribes within Midian.]³⁹⁵

16 The Lord said to Moses: 17 “Oppress the Midianites and slaughter them, 18 for they have harassed you with their trickery with which they deceived you in the the affair of Peor, and the affair of Cozbi, the daughter of a leader of Midian, their sister, for she was killed on the day of the plague that resulted from Peor.

<CHAPTER 26>

b. The Second Census 26:1 – 65

1, Instructions for the Census 26:1 – 4

1 Following the plague the Lord spoke to Moses and to Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest: 2 “Take a census of the entire congregation of the people of Israel, from those twenty years of age and upward, by their ancestral families, -- every one who is able to engage in war.” 3 Moses and Eleazar the priest informed the people while they were on the plains of Moab, near the Jordan, opposite (*or, east of*) Jericho. 4 Their message was: “Take a census of the people³⁹⁶ aged twenty years of age and upward.” This was the command of the Lord which had been received by Moses.³⁹⁷

The Israelites, who came out of the land of Egypt, were:

*2. Census of the Secular Tribes 26:5 – 51*³⁹⁸

5 Reuben, the firstborn of Israel. The descendants of Reuben:³⁹⁹ of Hanoth, the clan of the Hanochites; of Pallu, the clan of the Palluites; 6 of Hezron, the clan of the Hezronites; of Carmi, the clan of the Carmites. 7 These are the clans of the Reubenites, the number of those enrolled was forty-three thousand seven hundred thirty. 8 The descendant of Pallu, Eliab, 9 The descendants of Eliab, Nemuel, Dathan and Abiram. These are the same Dathan and Abiram, chosen from the congregation, who rebelled against Moses and Aaron in the company of Korah, when they rebelled against the Lord, 10 and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up along with Korah, when that

³⁹³ For his devotion to the Lord’s house Phinehas was given perpetual status as a priest.

³⁹⁴ The name means: “my desire.”

³⁹⁵ Some scholars feel this is an explanatory gloss which is a later interpolation. Other scholars feel verses 14 – 18 are a later interpolation.

³⁹⁶ This phrase is missing in Hebrew.

³⁹⁷ BHS ends this verse here.

³⁹⁸ This census was more interested in the founders of the clans rather than the founders of the tribes. The word “son” should be understood as “descendant” rather than “son” in a literal sense.

³⁹⁹ BHS proposes to add “according to their clans.” This is also suggested for v. 12 and other similar places.

company died, when the fire devoured two hundred fifty men. and they became a warning. ¹¹ Notwithstanding, the sons of Korah did not die.

¹² The descendants of Simeon by the clans: of Nemuel, ⁴⁰⁰ the clan of the Nemuelites: of Jamin, ⁴⁰¹ the clan of the Jaminies; of Jachin, the clan of the Jachinites; ¹³ of Zeran, ⁴⁰² the clan of the Zerathites; of Shaul, the clan of the Shaulites. ¹⁴ These are the clans of the Simeonites, twenty-two thousand two hundred.

¹⁵ The children of Gad by their clans; of Zephon, the clan of the Zephonites; of Haggi, the clan of the Haggites; of Shuni, the clan of the Shunites; ⁴⁰³ ¹⁶ of Ozni, the clan of the Oznites; of Eri, the clan of the Erites; ¹⁷ of Arod, the clan of the Arodites; of Areli, the clan of the Arelites. ¹⁸ These are the clans of the Gadites: the number of those enrolled was forty thousand five hundred.

¹⁹ The sons of Judah: Er and Onan; Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan. ²⁰ The descendants of Judah by their clans were: of Shelah, the clan of the Shelanites; of Perez, the clan of the Perezites; of Zerah, the clan of the Zerahites. ²¹ The descendants of Perez were: of Hezron, the clan of the Hezronites; of Hamul, the clan of the Hamulites. ²² These are the clans of Judah: the number of those enrolled was seventy-six thousand five hundred.

²³ The descendants of Issachar by their clans: of Tola, the clan of the Tolaites; of Puvah, the clan of the Punites; ²⁴ of Jashub, the clan of the Jashubites; of Shimron, the clan of the Shimronites. ²⁵ These are the clans of Issachar: sixty-four thousand three hundred enrolled.

²⁶ The descendants of Zebulun by their clans: of Sered, the clan of the Seredites; of Elon, the clan of the Elonites; of Jahleel, the clan of the Jaheelites. ²⁷ These are the clans of the Zebulunites; the number of those enrolled was sixty thousand five hundred.

²⁸ The sons of Joseph by their clans: Manasseh and Ephraim. ²⁹ The descendants of Manasseh: of Machir, the clan of the Machirites; and Machir was the father of Gilead; of Gilead, the clan of the Gileadites. ³⁰ These are the descendants of Gilead: of Iezer, ⁴⁰⁴ the clan of the Iezerites; of Helek, the clan of the Helekites; ³¹ and of Asriel, the clan of the Asrielites; and of Shechem, the clan of the Shechemites; ³² and of Shemida, the clan of the Shemidites, and of Hephher, the clan of the Hephherites. ³³ Now Zelophehad son of Hephher had no sons, but daughters; and the names of the daughters of Zelophehad were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. ³⁴ These are the clans of Manasseh: the number of those enrolled was fifty-two thousand seven hundred.

³⁵ These are the descendants of Ephraim according to their clans: of Shuthelah; the clan of the Shuthelahites: of Becher: the clan of the Becherites; ⁴⁰⁵ of Tahan, the clan of the Tahanites; ³⁶ and these are the descendants of Shuthelah: of Eran, the clan of the Eranites. ³⁷ These are the clans of the Ephraimites: the number of those enrolled was thirty-two thousand five hundred. These are the descendants of Joseph by their clans.

³⁸ The descendants of Benjamin by their clans: of Bela, the clan of the Belaites; of Ashbel, the clan of the Ashbelites; of Ahiram, the clan of the Ahiramites; ³⁹ of

⁴⁰⁰ The Peshitta has "of Jemuel."

⁴⁰¹ In I Chronicles 4:24 the name is Jarob.

⁴⁰² Genesis 4:34 & Exodus 6:15 have Zohar instead of Zeran.

⁴⁰³ The LXX has verses 15 – 18 after verse 27.

⁴⁰⁴ The Samaritan Pentateuch and LXX have "Ahizer" instead of "Iezer." Other LXX manuscripts read "Achiezer."

⁴⁰⁵ The LXX omits this phrase.

Shephuphain, the clan of the Shephamites; of Hupham, the clan of the Huphamites, . 40 and of the sons of Bera were Ard and Naaman, ⁴⁰⁶ of Ard, the clan of the Ardites, of Naaman, the clan of the Naamites. 41 These are the descendants of Benjamin by their clans; the number of those enrolled was forty-five thousand six hundred.

42 These are the descendants of Dan by their clans: of Shuham, the clan of the Shuhamites. These are the clans of Dan by their clans. 43 All the clans of the Shuhmites: sixty-four thousand four hundred enrolled.

44 The descendants of Asher by their families: of Imnah, ⁴⁰⁷ the clan of the Imnites; of Ishvi, the clan of the Ishvites; of Beriah, the clan of the Beriites. 45 Of the descendants of Beriah: of Hechiri; the clan of the Heberites: of Malchief, the clan of the Malchiefites. 46 And the name of the daughter of Asher was Serah. 47 These are the clans of the Asherites: the number of those enrolled was fifty-three thousand four hundred.

48 The descendants of Naphtali by their clans: of Jahzeel; the clan of the Jahzeelites; of Guni, the clan of the Gunites; 49 of Jezer, the clan of the Jezerites; of Shillem, the clan of the Shillemites. 50 These are the Naphtalites ⁴⁰⁸ by their clans: the number of those who enrolled was forty-five thousand four hundred,

51 This was the number of the Israelites enrolled: six hundred and one thousand seven hundred thirty. ⁴⁰⁹

3. Principles of Land Allotment 26:52 - 56

52 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 53 To these the land will be apportioned for inheritance according to the number of names. 54 To a large tribe you are to give a large inheritance, and to a small tribe you are to give a small inheritance: every tribe will be given its inheritance based on its enrollment. 55 The land, however, is to be apportioned by lot: according to the names of their ancestral tribes which is to be the basis for the inheritance. 56 Their inheritance will be apportioned according to lot between the larger and the smaller.

4. Census of the Levites 26:57 - 62

57 This is the enrollment of the Levites and their clans: of Gershon, the clan of the Gershonites; of Kohath, the clan of the Kohathites; of Merari, the clan of the Merarites. 58 These are the clans of the Levi: the clan of the Libnites, the clan of the Hebronites, the clan of the Mahlites, the clan of the Mushites, the clan of the Korahites,. Now Kohath was the father of Amram. 59 The name of Amram's wife was Jochebed daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt; and she gave birth to Amram, Aaron, Moses, and their sister Miriam. 60 To Aaron were born Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. 61 But Nadab and Abihu died when they offered illicit fire before the Lord. ⁴¹⁰ 62 The number of those enrolled was twenty-three thousand, every male one month old and up; for they were not

⁴⁰⁶ The Samaritan Pentateuch omits the first clause of this verse.

⁴⁰⁷ The LXX reads: "Iamin."

⁴⁰⁸ Literally: "clans of Naphtali."

⁴⁰⁹ The five tribes decrease in numbers is: Reuben, 2,770 less; Simeon, 37,100 less; Gad, 5,150 less; Ephraim, 8,000 less; Naphtali, 8,000 less). The total decrease was 61,020. The seven tribes increase in numbers is: (Judah, 1,900 more; Issachar, 9,900 more; Zebulun, 3,100 more; Manasseh, 20,500 more; Benjamin 10,200 more; Dan 1,700 more, Asher, 11,900 more). The total increase was 59,200. The net decrease is 1,820 in spite of the judgment of God on Israel in the period between the two censuses.

⁴¹⁰ The LXX adds: "in the wilderness of Sinai." The two tribes with the greatest loss, Reuben and Simeon, were linked with the support of the revolts by Dathan and Abiram (chapter 16) and Zimri (chapter 25).

enrolled among the Israelites because there was no allotment given to them among the Israelites.

5. *The Last Comment on the Census 26:63 - 65*

⁶³ These were those enrolled by Moses and Eleazar the priest, who enrolled the Israelites on the plains of Moab near the Jordan opposite (*or, east of*) Jericho. ⁶⁴ Among these there was not one of those who had been enrolled by Moses and Aaron the priest, in the wilderness of Sinai. ⁶⁵ The Lord had said to them, ‘They will die in the wilderness.’ Not one of them was left except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun.

<CHAPTER 27>

C. Law of Female Inheritance 27:1 – 11 ⁴¹¹

¹ Then the daughters of Zelophehad came forward. Zelophehad was the son of Hephher son of Gilead son of Machir son of Manasseh son of Joseph, a member of the Manassite clans. The names of the daughters were: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. ² They presented themselves before Moses, Eleazar the priest, and the leadership of the entire congregation, in front of the tent of meeting, saying: ³ “Our father died in the wilderness. He was not a part of ⁴¹² the faction that gathered together against the Lord, the faction led by Korah, but died as an ordinary sinner, ⁴¹³ and he had no sons. ⁴¹⁴ ⁴ Why should the name of our father be erased from his clan because he had no son? Grant us the possession of property among our father’s brothers.”

⁵ Moses presented the case before the Lord: ⁴¹⁵ ⁶ The Lord said ⁴¹⁶ to Moses: ⁷ “The daughters of Zelophehad are correct in their request. You are by all means to let them possess an inheritance among their father’s brothers, and be enabled to pass his inheritance on to his daughters. ⁸ You are also to inform the Israelites: ‘If a man dies, and has no son, you are to pass his inheritance on to his daughter. ⁹ In the event that he has no daughter; then you are to pass his inheritance on to his brothers. ¹⁰ In the event that he has no brothers you are to give his inheritance to his father’s brothers. ¹¹ If, however, his father has no brothers: you are to give his inheritance to the nearest relative of his clan and it is to be his possession. This will be the legislation for the Israelites in accordance with the command give Moses by the Lord.”

D. Appointment of Joshua 27:12- 23

¹² The Lord said to Moses, “Go up into the mountains of the Abarim range, ⁴¹⁷ and see the territory which I have given to the people of Israel. ¹³ When you have seen the area you will join your ancestors, as had also taken place by your brother Aaron. ¹⁴ This is because you rebelled against my word in the wilderness of Zin when the congregation

⁴¹¹ Some scholars feel this is the basis for the book of Ruth.

⁴¹² Literally: “in the midst of.”

⁴¹³ Literally: in his own sin.” The preposition in Hebrew can also cause it to read: “Because of his own sin.”:

⁴¹⁴ Usually daughters did not have a share in their father’s property. The sons inherited the property, the oldest receiving twice the amount that the younger sons received. Daughters received a dowry when they married. This might include clothing, jewelry, furniture, and sometimes slave girls. In this case apparently these girls were not married.

⁴¹⁵ Since this case was without precedent Moses brought the case before the Lord.

⁴¹⁶ Literally: “and the Lord said.”

⁴¹⁷ The name of the range means “yonder.” The specific mountain is not mentioned in this chapter. The specific peak is Mount Nebo.

quarreled with me. ⁴¹⁸ You did not acknowledge ⁴¹⁹ my holiness in their sight at the waters.” (These are the waters of Meribah at Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.) ¹⁵ Moses spoke these words to the Lord: ¹⁶ “Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, ⁴²⁰ appoint someone over the congregation ¹⁷ who will provide leadership (*or, go out before them*), ⁴²¹ and remain closely united to the people so that the congregation of the Lord will not be like sheep without a shepherd.” ¹⁸ The Lord then said to Moses: “Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand on him. ¹⁹ Have him stand before Eleazar the priest, and the entire congregation and you are to commission him in the sight of all the people. ²⁰ You are to give him a portion of your authority, so that the congregation of Israel will realize this and obey. ²¹ He is to stand before Eleazar the priest, who will inquire for him, by means of the decision that comes from the Lord through Urim [*and Thummim*]. ⁴²² Based on the Lord’s word the people are to go out and come in, both he and all Israelites with him: the entire congregation.” ²² Moses then did exactly what the Lord had commanded. He took Joshua and had him stand before Eleazar the priest, and the entire congregation. ²³ Then Moses laid his hands ⁴²³ on Joshua and commissioned him – exactly in accordance with the directions that Moses had received.

<CHAPTER 28> I⁴²⁴

E. Laws of Public Worship 28:1 – 29:10

1. General Introduction 28:1 - 2

¹ The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ² “Give a command to the people of Israel, saying, ‘You are to offer me, at the appointed time, food for my burnt offering which is a soothing fragrance to me.’” ⁴²⁵

2. Daily Offering 28:3 – 8

³ “You are to say to them: ‘This is the burnt offering ⁴²⁶ you are to make to the Lord: two yearling male lambs in perfect condition are to be a regular daily offering on a continuous basis. ⁴ One lamb is to be offered in the morning, and the other, you are to offer at twilight. ⁴²⁷ ⁵ In addition to the lamb you are to offer a tenth of an ephah of fine flour in a cereal offering; mixed with a fourth of a hin of beaten oil. ⁴²⁸ ⁵ [it is to be a continual burnt offering ⁴²⁹ which had been ordained at Mount Sinai to become a

⁴¹⁸ “With me” is not found in the MT.

⁴¹⁹ Literally: “show.”

⁴²⁰ This is used only one other time in the Hebrew Scriptures.

⁴²¹ Literally: “to their faces.”

⁴²² “and Thummim” is not found in the MT. The two, however were always combined when a decision was to be made by the high priest. Exactly what was done to make decisions is not known. Many theories have been advanced but none has been accepted by the majority of readers.

⁴²³ Historically there has been a question whether, with the laying on of hands, one hand should be used or two. Moses, in v. 18, uses one hand and in v. 23 he uses two hands.

⁴²⁴ Chapters 25 – 29 have some overlapping. They become a re-affirmation.

⁴²⁵ This introduction reflects other ancient introductions to ancient rituals and ceremonies.

⁴²⁶ In the BHS the Hebrew word is plural. IN the LXX it is a singular word.

⁴²⁷ Literally: “between the evenings.”

⁴²⁸ One “ephah” was about twenty quarts. One “hin” was about one gallon. The olive oil was to be beaten, not pressed. This would produce the finest oil.

⁴²⁹ Literally: “continual whole burnt offerings.”

soothing fragrance; an offering by fire, to the Lord.]⁴³⁰ 7 This drink offering is to be a fourth of a hin for each lamb; in the sanctuary,⁴³¹ is to be a libation of strong drink⁴³² 8 The other lamb is to be offered at twilight. The procedure for the sacrifice is to be the same as for the morning sacrifice, having a grain offering, and a drink offering, for it is to be offered to the Lord as a soothing fragrance to the Lord.”

3. Sabbath Offerings 28:9 - 10

9 “On the Sabbath Day two yearling male lambs in perfect condition are to be offered along with two-tenths of an ephah of choice flour as a grain offering, mixed with oil, and a drink offering. 10 This is the offering that is to take place every Sabbath, which is in addition to the regular daily burnt and drink offerings.”

4. New Moon Offerings 28:11 - 15

11 “At the beginning of your months you are to offer a burnt offering to the Lord: two young bulls, one ram, seven male yearling lambs in perfect condition. 12 Additionally you are also to offer three-tenths of an ephah of choice flour as a grain offering, mixed with oil, for each bull, and two-tenths of choice flour for a grain offering, mixed with oil, for each ram, 13 and one tenth of choice flour as a grain offering, mixed with oil, for each lamb – as a burnt offering; a soothing fragrance, an offering by fire to the Lord. 15 There will also be a sacrifice of one male goat for a sin offering to the Lord; it will be an offering in addition to the regular burn offerings and drink offerings.”

5. Offerings for the Feast of Unleavened Bread 28:16 – 25

16 “On the fourteenth day of the first month⁴³³ there will be a passover offering to the Lord. 17 On the fifteenth of the same month there is a festival in which for seven days only unleavened bread is to be eaten. 18 On the first day there is to be a holy convocation. You are not to engage in any commercial labor. 19 You are to provide a burnt offering to the Lord: two young bulls, one ram and seven yearling male lambs that are in perfect condition. 20 Additionally there is to be a grain offering of fine flour, mixed with oil; three-tenths of an ephah [of oil] are to be mixed and offered for each bull, two-tenths for a ram, 21 one tenth is to be offered for each of the seven lambs. 22 Also: one male goat is to be offered as a sin offering, to make atonement for you. 23 You are to offer these in addition to the burnt offering in the morning which is a part of the regular burnt offering. 24 In exactly the same way you are to carry out the daily offerings for the entire week: the regular burnt offerings and the regular drink offerings. 25 On the seventh day you are to gather for a wholly convocation. During this time you are not to engage in any commercial labor.”

6. Offerings for the Feast of Weeks 28:26 – 31

26 “On the day of the first fruits when you make your grain offerings of new grain to the Lord at your festival of weeks, you are to have a holy convocation: you are not to engage in any commercial labor. 27 You are to offer as a burnt offering; as a soothing fragrance to the Lord: two young bulls, one ram, and seven yearling lambs. 28 Their grain offering is to be of choice flour mixed with oil mixed in, three-tenths for one ram, 29 one-

⁴³⁰ Some scholars feel this is an explanatory gloss which became a later interpolation. Cf. Exodus 20:38 – 42.

⁴³¹ Literally: “the holy place.”

⁴³² Strong drink would be intoxicating liquor. Some scholars translate the word as “brandy” though brandy had not been developed at that point in history.

⁴³³ The first month in the Hebrew calendar is Nisan which is portions of March/April.

tenth for each of the seven lambs; ³⁰ along with one male goat ⁴³⁴ to make atonement for you. ³¹ In addition to the regular burnt offerings along with its grain offerings, you are to offer them and their drink offering. They are all to be in perfect condition.” ⁴³⁵

<CHAPTER 29>

7. Offerings for the Feast of Trumpets 29:1 – 6

¹ “On the first day of the seventh month you will have a holy convocation: you will do no commercial labor. ⁴³⁶ It is a day in which to blow the trumpets (*or, ram’s horns*). ⁴³⁷ ² You are to offer a burnt offering as a soothing fragrance to the Lord: one young bull, one ram, and seven yearling male lambs in perfect condition. ³ In addition there is to be a grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil, three-tenths of an ephah for a bull, two-tenths for a ram, ⁴ and one-tenth for each of the seven lambs; ⁵ also one male goat for a sin offering, to make atonement for you. ⁶ These offerings are to be in addition to the burnt offerings for the new-moon and its grain offering, and their drink offerings, based on the ordinance for them, as a soothing fragrance to the Lord.”

8. Offerings for the Day of Atonement 29:7 – 11 ⁴³⁸

⁷ “On the tenth day of the seventh month you are to have a holy convocation in which you are to deny yourselves (*or, fast and refrain from work entirely*) as on the sabbath. ⁸ You are to offer a burnt offering to the Lord, as a soothing fragrance: one young bull, one ram, seven yearling male lambs in perfect condition. ⁸ You are also to make a grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil, three-tenths of an ephah for a bull, two-tenths for a ram, ¹⁰ one-tenth for each of the seven lambs; ¹¹ with a male goat for a sin offering to atonement for you. These offerings are in addition to the sin offering of atonement, and the regular burnt offering along with the grain offering and the drink offering.”

9. The Offering for the Feast of Booths 29:12 - 40

¹² “On the fifteenth day of the month you are to have a holy convocation in which you will do no commercial labor: You are to celebrate a festival to the Lord for seven days. ¹³ You are to offer burnt offerings ⁴³⁹ as a soothing fragrance to the Lord: thirteen young bulls, two rams, fourteen yearling male lambs in perfect condition. ¹⁴ Their grain offering will be of choice flour mixed with oil, three-tenths of an ephah for each of the thirteen bulls, two-tenths for each of the two rams, ⁴⁴⁰ ¹⁵ and one-tenth for each of the fourteen lambs: ¹⁶ also one male goat for a sin offering. These sacrificial offerings are in addition to the regular burnt offering, the grain offering and the drink offering.

¹⁷ “On the second day: twelve young bulls, two rams, fourteen male yearling lambs in perfect condition, ¹⁸ along with the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bulls, rams, and lambs, are to be provided in amounts based on their number; ¹⁹ also one male goat for a sin offering. These sacrificial offerings are in addition to the regular burnt offering, the grain offering and the drink offering.

⁴³⁴ The LXX adds: “for a purification offering.”

⁴³⁵ Literally: “they should be for you without blemish.”

⁴³⁶ The first ten days of the seventh month are a penitential season, ending with Yom Kippur (*the Day of Atonement*). Cf.: Leviticus 16 & 24. JB: “not heavy work.”

⁴³⁷ Literally: “a day of feasting.”

⁴³⁸ For a more detailed explanation, Cf.: Leviticus 16.

⁴³⁹ The LXX adds: “on the first day of the week.”

⁴⁴⁰ The drink offering is omitted in this paragraph.

20 “On the third day: eleven bulls, two rams, fourteen yearling male lambs, all in perfect condition, 21 along with the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bulls, rams, and lambs, are to be provided in amounts based on their number, 22 also one male goat for a sin offering. These sacrificial offerings are in addition to the regular burnt offering, the grain offering and the drink offering.

23 “On the fourth day: ten bulls, two rams, fourteen yearling male lambs, all in perfect condition, 24 along with the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bulls, rams, and lambs, are to be provided in amounts based on their number, 25 also one male goat for a sin offering. These sacrificial offerings are in addition to the regular burnt offering, the grain offering and the drink offering.

26 “On the fifth day: nine bulls, two rams, fourteen yearling male lambs, all in perfect condition, 27 along with the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bulls, rams, and lambs, are to be provided in amounts based on their number, 28 also one male goat for a sin offering. These sacrificial offerings are in addition to the regular burnt offering, the grain offering and the drink offering.

29 “On the sixth day: eight bulls, two rams, fourteen yearling male lambs, all in perfect condition, 30 along with the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bulls, rams and lambs, are to be provided in amounts based on their number, 31 also one male goat for a sin offering. These sacrificial offerings are in addition to the regular burnt offering, the grain offering and the drink offering.

32 “On the seventh day: seven bulls, two rams, fourteen yearling male lambs, all in perfect condition, 33 along with the grain offering and the drink offerings for the bulls, rams, and lambs, are to be provided in amounts based on their number, 34 also one male goat for a sin offering. These sacrificial offerings are in addition to the regular burnt offering, the grain offering and the drink offering.

35 “On the eighth day you are to have a holy convocation; at which you are not do any commercial labor. 36 You are to offer a burnt offering; an offering by fire which will provide a soothing fragrance to the Lord. 36 This offering is to consist of one bull, one ram, seven yearling male lambs, all in perfect condition, 37 along with the grain offering, and the drink offerings for the bull, ram and lambs, are to be provided in amounts based on their number, 38 also one male goat for a sin offering. These sacrificial offerings are in addition to the regular burnt offering, the grain offering and the drink offering.

39 “You are to make these offerings to the Lord at your designated festival, all of which are to be given in addition to your votive offerings, free will offerings, your burnt offerings, your grain offerings, and your drink offerings, as well as your offerings of well-being.”

40 [h. 30:1] It was in this way that Moses informed the Israelites of everything, exactly as the Lord had commanded Moses to do.

<CHAPTER 30>

F. The Laws on Women’s Vows 39:1 – 16 ⁴⁴¹

1 [H. 2] Then Moses spoke to the chief leaders of the tribes of the Israelites, saying: “This is what the Lord has commanded: 2 [H. 3] “When a man makes an oath to the Lord, or

⁴⁴¹ This is the only passage dealing with laws that are directed toward women specifically. There are two kinds of vows in Hebrew. The “*nedher*” are general vows of many kinds. The “*’issar*” are vows of abstinence, as for example, the Nazirite vows. Both are considered in this chapter: vows and pledges.

swears an oath, or prohibition, imposing an obligation on himself he is not to break his word but is to do exactly, all that he has spoken⁴⁴² in making his vow.⁴⁴³

³ [H. 4] “When a woman makes a vow to the Lord, or when she binds herself to a pledge (*or, takes an obligation*), while she is residing in her parental home, as a youth, ⁴ [H. 5] and her father hears of this pledge to which she is now obligated, and says nothing to her, her pledge then will remain in effect and she will be obligated to fulfill that pledge. ⁵ [H. 6] However, if, on the day he hears of it, her father disapproves of her binding obligation, no pledge will stand; and the Lord will forgive her of her binding obligation because her father disapproves.⁴⁴⁴

⁶ [H. 7] “In the event that she marries while this binding obligation is in effect, she is obligated to fulfill it, even if it was a thoughtless comment that she has uttered, which became the means of binding her to the fulfillment of the vow. ⁷ [H. 8] If her husband hears of it and says nothing to her, at the time when he first hears of her vow, the vow then will be valid and she is bound to fulfill the vow.⁴⁴⁵ ⁸ [H. 9] If he, however, hears of it and disallows the vow, by which she was obligated, or the thoughtless comment that she has uttered, , which became the means of binding her to the fulfillment of the vow, the Lord will forgive her.⁴⁴⁶ ⁹ [H.10] [But: every vow made by a widow or a divorcee, by which she has bound herself, is binding upon her.]⁴⁴⁷ ¹⁰ [H. 11] If she⁴⁴⁸ made her vow in her husband’s house, or bound herself by a pledge with an oath, ¹¹[H.12] and her husband hears of this pledge and does not express his disapproval to her, all her vows will remain valid and any pledge which binds her will stand. ¹² [H. 13] If her husband expresses disapproval of her vow at the time that he first hears of it, then whatever she said concerning her vows or concerning her pledge of herself, will not stand, for her husband has disallowed them and the Lord will forgive her. ¹³ [H. 14] Any vow or any binding oath intended to deny herself (*or, fast*), her husband can either let it stand, or nullify it. ¹⁴ [H. 15] However, if her husband says nothing from one day to the next, he then has provided validation to her vows, or all her pledges. ¹⁵ [H. 16] If he chooses to nullify these vows at some later date, after he had already heard them, -- then he is to bear her guilt.”

¹⁶ [H. 17] These are the laws that the Lord commanded Moses concerning a husband and his wife; and a father and his daughter when she is still young and living in her parental home.

⁴⁴² Literally: “coming out of his mouth.”

⁴⁴³ Men are bound by any vow they might make. Women, it is assumed, are dependent on fathers and husbands, hence the vows they make are dependent on the approval, or disapproval of their fathers or husbands. As a result the vows of women, if disapproved by fathers or husbands, are forgiven. Therefore the vow of a woman is null and void if there is disapproval by their male counterparts. While women can have their vow forgiven, this is not the case for men. If the male counterpart does not reject the vow of the woman, upon hearing it, this brings about a tacit approval and then the male counterpart, should he reject the vow, is guilty and will receive the punishment that would have rested on the woman, had she broken the vow.

⁴⁴⁴ The control passes from father to husband at the time of marriage.

⁴⁴⁵ The LXX adds: “they will not remain; since the husband has restrained her.”

⁴⁴⁶ To require the fulfillment of the vow in spite of the disapproval of the husband would make something that is intended to be holy to serve an unholy purpose. Under normal conditions it was considered to be a sin for a woman to fail to complete her vow. However, the importance of a united family life is able to countermand the vow and the woman is forgiven by the Lord.

⁴⁴⁷ Some scholars feel this is a later interpolation or gloss.

⁴⁴⁸ The Babylonian Talmud designates the woman as “fully married.”

<CHAPTER 31> ⁴⁴⁹

G. Extermination of the Midianites 31:1 – 54

1. Expeditionary Force 31:1 - 6

¹ The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ² “Cause the Israelites to wreak vengeance on the Midianites. After that takes place you will die.” ³ Moses then said to the people: “Some of you are to arm yourselves for war, so that the warriors may go against Midian, to carry out the Lord’s vengeance on Midian. ⁴ You are to send a thousand from each of the tribes ⁴⁵⁰ of Israel to engage in this war.” ⁵ As a result, out of the thousands of Israel a thousand warriors were conscripted from each of the tribes: twelve thousand who were all armed and ready for battle. ⁶ Moses sent them out to wage war, ⁴⁵¹ a thousand from each of the tribes, along with Phinehas son of Eleazar the priest, with the vessels of the sanctuary and the trumpets for sounding the alarm in his hand.

2. Defeat and Destruction of the Midianites 31:7 - 12

⁷ They attacked the Midianites as the Lord had commanded Moses, and killed every male.⁴⁵² ⁸ They also killed the kings of the Midian: Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian, in addition to others who were killed by them, and they also killed Balaam son of Beor with the sword. ⁴⁵³ ⁹ The Israelites took the women of Midian and their small children captive. They also took all their cattle, their flocks, and all their goods as booty. ¹⁰ All the communities in which they had settled, and all their encampments, were burned, ¹¹ but they took all the spoils of war and booty, including the taking of people as well as animals. ¹² The captives, along with the booty and the spoils were brought to Moses, to Eleazar the priest, and to the congregation of the Israelites, at the camp on the plains of Moab near the Jordan opposite Jericho. ⁴⁵⁴ ⁴⁵⁵

3. Order to Exterminate Midian 31:13 -18

¹³ Moses, Eleazar the priest and all the chief leaders of the congregation went to meet them outside the camp. ¹⁴ Moses became angry with the officers of the army: the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds, who had come from battles in the war. ¹⁵ Moses said to them: “Have you allowed all the women to live? ¹⁶ These women, based on the advice of Balaam, caused the Israelites to act treacherously against the Lord ⁴⁵⁶ in the affair at Peor, so that the disease (*or, plague*) came among the congregation of the Lord. ¹⁷ Now then! Kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has had intercourse with a man. ¹⁸ But you are to spare the lives of all young girls who have never had intercourse with a man. These may be kept for yourselves” ⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁴⁹ Many scholars feel this account is a later interpolation based on a Midrash rather than on an accurate account of history.

⁴⁵⁰ Literally: “one thousand for the tribe.”

⁴⁵¹ So: LXX. Hebrew adds: “to the war.”

⁴⁵² While the verse says that all the male Midianites were killed (an ethnic cleansing), in Judges Gideon wages war against the Midianites. Judges 7:2 – 8:32. The number who are killed is possibly symbolic.

⁴⁵³ Numbers 24:25 states that Balaam ‘went back to his place.’ which was located along the Euphrates River, a great distance from Midian. Cf.: Numbers 22:5.

⁴⁵⁴ Sacking cities and gathering booty was standard procedure in those days.

⁴⁵⁵ This was a brief but furious campaign.

⁴⁵⁶ LXX: “who rebelled and ignored the word of the Lord.”

⁴⁵⁷ In effect this had the appearance of a holy war.

4. Warrior Purification 31:19 - 20

¹⁹ “Whoever among you has killed any person or touched a corpse, along with those who are your captives, is to remain outside the camp for seven days, and on the third and on the seventh day ²⁰ you are to purify ⁴⁵⁸ every garment, every article of skin, everything made of goats’ hair, and every article of wood.”

5. Division of Spoils 31:21 – 54

²¹ Eleazar the priest said to those troops who had engaged in battle: “This is the statute of the law that the Lord had commanded to Moses: ²² ‘All gold, silver, bronze, iron, tin and lead, ²³ everything that can withstand fire, ⁴⁵⁹ is to be passed through fire, and it will be clean. Nonetheless, it will also be purified with water for purification. Anything that cannot withstand fire is to be passed through the water. ²⁴ You must wash your clothing on the seventh day, and you will be clean; after that you are allowed to come back into the camp.; ⁴⁶⁰

²⁵ The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ²⁶ “You, Eleazar the priest and the chief leaders of the tribes of the congregation are to make an inventory of the booty that has been captured: human and animal. ²⁷ Divide the booty into two parts: between the warriors, and the rest of the congregation. ²⁸ From the portion that is to be for the warriors who engaged in battle, set aside as a tribute for the Lord, one item out of every five hundred. This is to be persons, oxen, donkeys, sheep or goats. ²⁹ This is to be taken from the half that is designated for the warriors who engaged in battle and is to be given to Eleazar the priest, as an offering to the Lord. ³⁰ From the half that goes to the Israelites’ half is to be taken out ⁴⁶¹ of every fifty. This is to be persons, oxen, donkeys, sheep, or goats: all the animals, and give them to the Levites who have charge of the tabernacle of the Lord.”

³¹ Then Moses and Eleazar the priest did as the Lord had commanded Moses:

³² The booty remaining from the spoils that the troops had taken totaled six hundred seventy-five thousand sheep, ³³ seventy-two thousand oxen, ³⁴ sixty-one thousand donkeys, ³³ and thirty-two thousand persons in all; women who had not had intercourse with a man.

³⁶ The half-share, the portion of those who had engaged in war, was in number: three hundred thirty-seven thousand five hundred sheep and goats, ³⁷ and the Lord’s tribute of sheep and goats was six hundred seventy-five. ³⁸ The oxen were thirty-six thousand, of which the tribute to the Lord was seventy-two. ³⁹ The donkeys were thirty-thousand five hundred, of which the Lord’s tribute was sixty-one. ⁴⁰ The persons were sixteen thousand, of which the Lord’s tribute was thirty two persons. ⁴⁶² ⁴¹ Moses gave the tribute, the offering for the Lord, to Eleazar the priest, as the Lord had commanded Moses. ⁴⁶³

⁴⁵⁸ This is a Hithpel form. “You will cleanse yourselves.”

⁴⁵⁹ This phrase is omitted in the LXX.

⁴⁶⁰ This paragraph is a departure from the norm, in that Eleazar takes the leadership and reports what Moses has received from the Lord, and based on this gives the order for action from the troops.

⁴⁶¹ The word that is translated as “taken out” is omitted in the LXX

⁴⁶² It is assumed by some scholars that the thirty-two girls became the slaves of priests or were assigned menial tasks in the temple area.

⁴⁶³ Every one was to receive from the booty that had been gathered after the battle. It was divided with a portion going to those who were physically involved in the battle and those who had not been conscripted.

42 Concerning the booty that went to the Israelites which Moses separated from that of the troops, 43 the congregation's half was three hundred thirty-seven thousand five hundred sheep and goats, 44 thirty-six thousand oxen, 45 thirty thousand five hundred donkeys, 46 and sixteen thousand persons. 47 From the Israelites' half Moses took one of every fifty, both of persons and animals, and gave them to the Levites who had charge of the tabernacle of the Lord .as the Lord had commanded Moses.

48 Then those who were officers, having command over thousands in the army, along with the commanders of hundreds approached Moses, 49 saying: "We, your servants, have counted the numbers of soldiers who were under our command, and not a single one of us is missing. 50 We have brought the Lord's offering: what each one of us found: articles of gold, armlets, 464 bracelets, signet rings, earrings, and pendants, to make atonement for ourselves before the Lord." 51 Moses and Eleazar the priest received the gold from them, all in the form of handcrafted golden jewelry. 52 The total amount of gold from these handcrafted golden pieces that were offered to the Lord, from the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds totaled sixteen thousand seven hundred and fifty shekels. 53 (The troops had taken that plunder for themselves.) 465 54 So Moses and Eleazar the priest accepted the gold from the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, bringing it into the tent of meeting, as a memorial before God of the people of Israel. 466

<CHAPTER 32>

H. Settlements in Trans-Jordan 32:1 – 12

1. Request of Gad, and Reuben 32:1 – 5

1 The Reubenites and the Gadites 467 owned very large herds of cattle. When they saw the land of Jazer 468 and the land of Gideon, and saw what good pasture land this would be, 2 the Gadites and the Reubenites came and spoke to Moses, Eleazar the priest, and the chief leaders of the tribes, saying: 3 "Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam, Nebo, and Beon, --- 4 this land which the Lord subdued in the presence of the entire congregation of Israel --- is a land suitable for raising cattle, and we, your servants, have an abundance of cattle." They continued by saying, "If we have found favor with you, 469 let this land be given to us, our servants, for a possession: do not force us to cross the Jordan."

⁴⁶⁴ This translation is an attempt to understand a difficult Hebrew word. Some scholars feel the word means ankle bracelets or ankle fetters.

⁴⁶⁵ Scholars feel this verse is a part of the original text, not a later gloss.

⁴⁶⁶ This chapter presents three problems. 1. All Midianites are killed, yet in Gideon's day (Judges 7 – 8) Gideon wages war against them. 2. No Israelites are killed in this war, which must have been fierce. 3. The number of animals that are taken as booty seems to be exceedingly great.

⁴⁶⁷ The usual word order is "Gadites and Reubenites." Since Reuben was the oldest possibly the writer changed the order at this point and then returned to the usual way of speaking.

⁴⁶⁸ The land of Jazer was the area that surrounded the city of Jazer. It was not a political region or state. The city of Jazer was the present day city Kirbet-azzir, which was located on the table land to the east of the Jordan river. The land is 2500 feet above sea level. This area was not intended to be given to any of the tribes of Israel since that area was to be to the west of the Jordan. Since it was good grazing land the request on the part of the tribes of Reuben and Gad was practical though there were some risks, which were the basis for the inclusion of this chapter in the Book of Numbers.

⁴⁶⁹ Literally: "in your sight."

2. Anger of Moses 32:6 – 15

⁶ Moses informed the Gadites and the Reubenites: “Are your brothers to go to war while you reside here? ⁷ Why do you discourage the hearts of the Israelites, as they are to go over the Jordan into the land that God has given them? ⁸ Your ancestors did exactly that when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land. ⁹ When they went up to the Wadi Eshcol (*or, the valley of the cluster*) ⁴⁷⁰ and saw the land. They brought discouragement to the hearts of the people of Israel so that they did not go into the land which the Lord had given them. ¹⁰ The anger of the Lord was ignited at that time and he vowed, saying: ¹¹ ‘It is definite! None of the people age twenty and over, who came out of the land of Egypt will see the land that I had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, for they do not deserve to have followed me ⁴⁷¹ – ¹² the sole exceptions being Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite, ⁴⁷² and Joshua son of Nun, for they have followed the Lord whole-heartedly.’ ¹³ The anger of the Lord was ignited against Israel, and they were then required to wander about in the wilderness for forty years, until all those who had done evil in the sight of the Lord had died. ¹⁴ Now you, a brood of sinners, ⁴⁷³ have risen up in place of your ancestors, to increase the fierce anger of the Lord against Israel! ¹⁵ If you turn away from the Lord again, he will let you wander in the wilderness, and will destroy (*or, eliminate*) all his people!”

3. Gad’s and Reuben’s Promises 32:16 – 19

¹⁶ Then the Gadites and the Reubenites came to Moses and said, “We will build corrals (*or, sheepfolds*) here for our flocks, and towns for our dependants; ¹⁷ but we will be in battle array, as the vanguard, ahead of the army of the Israelites, until we have brought them into submission. During that time our dependants will stay in the fortified towns because of those who inhabit the land. ¹⁸ We will not return to our homes until all the Israelites have obtained their inheritance. ¹⁹ We will not inherit property in the area on the other side of the Jordan for our inheritance has come to us on this side of the Jordan, on the east side.”

4. Moses’ Permission 32:20 – 37

²⁰ Moses then said to the men: “If this is what you will do, if you will engage in warfare as the vanguard of the Lord in this war, ²¹ and all those of you who bear arms cross the Jordan before the Lord, until he has driven his enemies out from before him, ²² and this land is subdued by the power of the Lord, ⁴⁷⁴ -- then after this is completed you will be permitted to return and you will be freed of the obligation to the Lord and to Israel. Then this land [*on which we now stand*] will willingly be your possession in the eyes of the Lord. ²³ On the other hand, however, in the event that you will not do this, you have sinned against the Lord and you may be certain that the Lord will know about

⁴⁷⁰ Cf.: 13:21 – 23.

⁴⁷¹ Some manuscripts use the Hiphil form so it could be translated as: “he caused them to wander.” The LXX adds a gloss: “these were acquired with good and evil.”

⁴⁷² Cf.: Joshua 14:6, 14; Judges 1:13.

⁴⁷³ The Hebrew word is a hapax legomenon, thus only appearing this one time in Hebrew Scripture and other writing of this time period. The root word means “to become great” and is used here in a pejorative context.

⁴⁷⁴ An alternate translation is: “before the Lord.”

this. ²⁴ Build towns for dependants, and corrals (*or, sheepfolds*) for your flocks, and carry out your promises.” ⁴⁷⁵

²⁵ Then the Gadites and the Reubenites said to Moses: “We, your servants, will do as you, my lord, demands! ²⁶ Our dependants, our wives, our flocks, and all our livestock will remain here in the towns of Gilead; ²⁷ but your people will cross over the Jordan, to do battle for the Lord, just as my lord commands.” ⁴⁷⁶

²⁸ So Moses issued the command to Eleazar the priest, and to Joshua the son of Nun, and the chiefs of the tribes of Israel, concerning them. ²⁹ Moses said to them, “If the Gadites and the Reubenites, all armed for battle before the Lord, will cross over the Jordan with you and if this land is subdued before you, then you should grant them the land of Gilead for a possession; ³⁰ but if they refuse to cross over with you, already armed, they will have possession among you in the land of Canaan.” ⁴⁷⁷ ³¹ The Gadites and the Reubenites replied, “As certainly as the Lord has spoken to your servants, we will obey! ³² We will be armed, in the presence of the Lord, as we cross over, into the land of Canaan, but the possession of our inheritance will remain with us on the other side of the Jordan.”

³³ Moses gave the Gadites, the Reubenites and the half-tribe of Manasseh son of Joseph: the kingdom of King Sihon of the Amorites and the kingdom of King Og of Bashan, the land along with its towns and the outlying territory of the towns.

5. Cities Built by Gad and Reuben 32:34 - 38

³⁴ The Gadites rebuilt Dibon, Ataroth, Aroer, ³⁵ Atroth-shophan, Jazer, Jogbehah, ³⁶ Beth-nimrah, and Beth-haran, fortified cities and corrals for animals. ³⁷ The Reubenites rebuilt Heshbon, Elealeh, Kinathaim, ³⁸ Nebo, and Baal-meon, (some names are altered), ⁴⁷⁸ and Sibmah; and they gave names to the towns that they had rebuilt.

6. Settlements in Gilead 32:39 - 42

³⁹ [The descendants of Machir son of Manasseh went to Gilead, captured it, and ridded it of Amorites who were there; ⁴⁰ thereby causing Moses to give Gilead to Machir son of Manasseh, and he settled there. ⁴¹ Jair son of Manasseh went on to capture their villages, and renamed them Havvoth-jair (*or, villages of Jair*). ⁴² Nobah went of war, capturing Kenath and its surrounding villages, and renamed it Nobah after himself.] ⁴⁷⁹

<CHAPTER 33>

VII. Recapitulation and Appendixes 33:1 – 36:15

A. Israel's Route from Egypt to Canaan 33:1 – 44 ⁴⁸⁰

1. Introduction 33:1 - 4

⁴⁷⁵ The concern of Moses was “national support” since the tribes needed to be a unit in their support for one another. Some scholars feel verses 20 – 24 are an example of a “formula for a covenant.”

⁴⁷⁶ The argument becomes “quid pro quo.”

⁴⁷⁷ The LXX adds: “and you will bring their little ones.”

⁴⁷⁸ This is surely an interpolation of an informative gloss.

⁴⁷⁹ Some scholars feel this is a later interpolation.

⁴⁸⁰ This account is attributed to Moses. It excludes the time spent on the Moab Plain. The movement of the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan is divided into forty stages: eleven from Egypt to Sinai, twenty-one from Sinai to Kadesh, and eight from Kadesh to the high plains of Moab where Canaan was in view. Some of the places mentioned are known locations. Many are not known. This becomes a sort of obituary for Moses as well as a fitting prelude to crossing the Jordan and entering Canaan.

¹ These are the stages by which the Israelites went out of the land of Egypt in military formation under the leadership ⁴⁸¹ of Moses and Aaron. ² Moses wrote down the starting points, stage by stage, ⁴⁸² as commanded by the Lord. These stages are based on their starting places. ³ The people of Israel started from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of that month, this being the first day following Passover. The Israelites began, marching boldly, in the presence of the people of Egypt. ⁴ During this time the Egyptians were busily burying all their firstborn, whom the Lord had struck down from their midst. The Lord carried out his judgment even against their gods.

2. From Rameses to Sinai 33:5 – 15 ⁴⁸³

⁵ The Israelites set out from Rameses, and camped in Succoth. ⁶ They set out from Succoth and camped at Etham, ⁴⁸⁴ which is at the edge of the wilderness. ⁷ They set out from Etham and turned back to Pi-hahiroth, which faces Baal-zephon, and they camped before Migdol. ⁸ They set out from Pi-hahiroth, passing through the sea, into the wilderness, going on a three day journey through the wilderness of Etham, and camped at Marah. ⁹ They set out from Marah, arriving at Elim where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees and they camped there. ¹⁰ They set out from Elim and camped along the Red Sea. ¹¹ They set out from the Red Sea and camped in the wilderness of Sin, ¹² They set out from the wilderness of Sin and camped at Dophkah. ¹³ They set out from Dophkah and camped at Alush. ¹⁴ They set out from Alush and camped at Rephidim, where there was no water for the people to drink. ¹⁵ They set out from Rephidim and camped in the wilderness of Sinai.

3. In the Wilderness 33:16 – 36 ⁴⁸⁵

¹⁶ They set out from the wilderness of Sinai and camped at Kibroth-hattaavah. ¹⁷ They set out from Kibroth-hattaavah and camped at Hazeroth. ¹⁸ They set out from Hazeroth and camped at Rithmah, ¹⁹ They set out from Rithmah and camped at Rimmon-perez, ²⁰ They set out from Rimmon-perez and camped at Libnah. ²¹ They set out from Libnah and camped at Rissah. ²² They set out from Rissah and camped at Kehelathah. ²³ They set out from Kehelathah and camped at Mount Shepher. ²⁴ They set out from Mount Shepher and camped at Haradah. ²⁵ They set out from Haradah and camped at Makheloth. ²⁶ They set out from Makheloth and camped at Tahath. ²⁷ They set out from Tahath and camped at Terah. ²⁸ They set out from Terah and camped at Mithkah. ²⁹ They set out from Mithkah and camped at Hashmonah. ⁴⁸⁶ ³⁰ They set out from Hashmonah and camped at Moseroth. ³¹ They set out from Moseroth and camped at Bene-jaakan. ³² They set out from Bene-jaakan and camped at Hor-haggidgad. ⁴⁸⁷ ³³ They set out from Hor-haggidgad and camped at Jotbathah, ³⁴ They set out from Jotbathah and camped at Abronah. ³⁵ They set out from Abronah and camped at Ezion-geber. ³⁶ They set out from Ezion-geber and camped in the wilderness of Zin (which is located in the region of Kadesh).

⁴⁸¹ Literally: “at the hand of...”

⁴⁸² Literally: “according to their stages.”

⁴⁸³ Cf.: Exodus 12:37 – 19:2. The route is quite clear though the exact details are not to be discovered since a number of stages are unknown.

⁴⁸⁴ Etham is an Egyptian word meaning, “my well.”

⁴⁸⁵ The exact route is nearly definite. The names of several locations are only used here and not elsewhere in Hebrew Scriptures.

⁴⁸⁶ LXX: “Jeimona.” Some scholars feel verses 37 – 42 should be inserted here.

⁴⁸⁷ This name has also been transliterated as “Ghudgodah.”

4. From Kadesh to Moab 33:37 – 49

³⁷ They set out from Kadesh and camped at Mount Hor, on the edge of the land of Edom. ³⁸ Aaron the priest went up to the top of Mount Hor, obedient to the Lord's command. He died there in the fortieth year after the people of Israel had left the land of Egypt, on the first day of the fifth month. ⁴⁸⁸ ³⁹ Aaron attained the age of one hundred twenty-three years when he died on Mount Hor.

⁴⁰ The Canaanite, the king of Arad, who lived in the Negeb in the land of Canaan, heard of the arrival of the Israelites.

⁴¹ They set out from Mount Hor and camped at Zalmonah. ⁴² They set out from Zalmonah and camped at Punon. ⁴⁸⁹ ⁴³ They set out from Punon and camped at Oboth. ⁴⁴ They set out from Oboth and camped at Iye-abarim, which is located in the territory of Moab. ⁴⁵ They set out from Iye-abarim and camped at Dibon-gad. ⁴⁶ They set out from Dibon-gad and camped at Almon-diblathaim. ⁴⁷ They set out from Almon-diblathaim and camped at the mountains of Abarim before Nebo. ⁴⁸ They set out from the mountains of Abarim and camped in the plains of Moab, by the Jordan, at Jericho; ⁴⁹ They camped by the Jordan from Beth-jeshimoth as far as Abel-shittim in the plains of Moab.

B. Israel's Duty in Canaan 33:50 – 56

⁵⁰ In the plains of Moab, beside the Jordan, opposite Jericho, the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ⁵¹ "Speak to the Israelites, informing them: When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, ⁵² you are to drive the inhabitants out of the land ahead of you. Destroy all idols (*or, figured stones*), destroy all their molded images, and shatter all their high places (*of worship*). ⁵³ You are to take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given you this land as your possession. ⁵⁴ You are to divide the land, by lot, according to your clans: a large inheritance to a large clan, a smaller inheritance to a smaller clan. The inherited property will become the property of the one on whom the lot falls. You will inherit based on your ancestral tribe. ⁵⁵ But: if you fail to drive out those who inhabit this land ahead of you, then those who remain will be as splinters ⁴⁹⁰ in your eyes and thorns in your sides. They will bring trouble to you in this land where you are settling. ⁵⁶ I will do to you what I would have done to them."

<CHAPTER 34>

C. Tribal Boundaries 34:1 – 29 ⁴⁹¹

1. Boundaries Fixed 34:1 - 15

¹ The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ² "Command the Israelites and inform them: When you enter into the land of Canaan (this is the land that is to be your inheritance, the land of Canaan, defined by its boundaries). ³ The southern sector will extend from the wilderness of Zin along the border of Edom. Your southern boundary will begin at the Dead (*or, Salt*) Sea on the east. ⁴ Your boundary then will turn south to the ascent of Akrabbim, and cross to Zin, and the outer limit will be south of Kadesh-barnea. From

⁴⁸⁸ Verses 37 - 38 are a repetition of information that is found in 20:22 - 29

⁴⁸⁹ Some translators incorrectly transliterate the name of the place as Pinon.

⁴⁹⁰ The word translated as "splinters" is a hapax-legomenon. It is only used here in the Hebrew Scriptures.

⁴⁹¹ The boundaries are somewhat ideal. For example: Israel never occupied the shore of the Mediterranean Sea until 144 BCE when Simon Maccabaeus fought the Syrians. Cf. I Maccabees 14:5.

there it will extend to Hazaar-addar; then go to Azmon. ⁵ At that point the boundary will turn to the Wadi of Egypt, terminating at the Sea. ⁴⁹²

⁶ "The western boundary will be the Great Sea (*or, Mediterranean Sea*) and its coast line. This will be the western boundary.

⁷ "The northern boundary will reach from the Great Sea, in a straight line to Mount Hor, ⁸ and from there, in a straight line to Lebo-hamath, and the outer limit of the boundary will be Zedad. ⁹ The boundary is then to reach Ziphron, ⁴⁹³ and its end is to be at Hazar-enan. ⁴⁹⁴ This is where the northern boundary of the land is to be.

¹⁰ "Your eastern boundary is to be marked from Hazar-enan to Shepham; ¹¹ and the boundary is to continue down from Shepham to Riblah ⁴⁹⁵ on the east side of Ain; ⁴⁹⁶ and the boundary will then go down, reaching the eastern slope of the sea of Chinneroth (*known in the New Testament as 'The Sea of Galilee'*). ¹² This boundary will continue, reaching the Jordan and then will end at the Salt (*or, Dead*) Sea. This will be your land with its boundaries surrounding it."

¹³ Moses gave a command to the Israelites, saying, "This is the land you will inherit, by lot. The Lord commanded that this land is to be given to the nine tribes and the half-tribe. ¹⁴ The tribe of the Reubenites and their ancestral clans, along with the tribe of Gad with their ancestral clans already have taken their inheritance, along with the half-tribe of Manasseh. ⁴⁹⁷ ¹⁵ These two tribes and the half-tribe tribe [*of Manasseh*] have taken their inheritance on the eastern side of the Jordan at Jericho."

2. Allotment Officers 34:16 – 29

¹⁶ The Lord again spoke to Moses, saying: ¹⁷ "These are the names of the men who are to apportion the land to the people for their inheritance along with the priest Eleazar and Joshua son of Nun. ¹⁸ You are to select one leader from each tribe to apportion the land for the inheritance of the people. ¹⁹ Their names are as follows: Of the tribe of Judah: Caleb son of Jephunneh. ²⁰ Of the tribe of the Simeonites: Shemuel son of Ammihud. ²¹ Out of the tribe of Benjamin: Elidad son of Chislon. ²² Of the tribe of the Danites: a leader: Bukki son of Jogli. ²³ Of the tribe of Josephites, the Manassites, a leader: Hanniel son of Ephod. ²⁴ Of the tribe of the Ephramites a leader: Kemuel son of Shiphtan. ²⁵ Of the tribe of the Zebulunites a leader: Eli-zaphan son of Parnach. ²⁶ Of the tribe of the Issacharies a leader: Paltier son of Azzan. ²⁷ Of the tribe of the Asherites: Ahihud son of Shelomi. ²⁸ Of the tribe of the Naphtalites a leader: Pedahel son of Ammihud." ²⁹ These were the ones whom the Lord commanded to apportion the inheritance of the Israelites in the land of Canaan.

⁴⁹² Cf.: ANET p. 286d.

⁴⁹³ The LXX has "Daphran"

⁴⁹⁴ The LXX has "'Asernain,"

⁴⁹⁵ The LXX has: "Arbela."

⁴⁹⁶ Scholars question whether this is the name of a location or if it is a Hebrew word with an unknown meaning.

⁴⁹⁷ Cf.: Numbers 32:33 – 42.

<CHAPTER 35>

D. Levitical Cities 35:1 – 30

1. Cities of the Levites 35:1 – 8 ⁴⁹⁸

¹ In the plains of Moab, near the Jordan, opposite Jericho, the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ² “Command the Israelites to give a portion of the inheritance which they receive, as they take possession of their towns, as places of residence, for the Levites. You are to provide pasture land for the Levites on the land that immediately surrounds the towns. ³ There are to be places in these towns in which the Levites are to live, and the pasture lands are designated for their cattle, livestock, and any other animals. ⁴ The location of these pasture lands is to be from the wall of the city—extending a thousand cubits ⁴⁹⁹ all around the town. ⁵ You are to measure outside the town: two thousand cubits on the east side, and the same on the south, west and north sides, with the town in the middle. This is to belong to the Levites as their possession, as pasture land for their towns. ⁵⁰⁰

⁶ “The towns that are to be designated for the Levites are to include six cities of refuge, where a person who has killed someone is permitted to flee, and additionally there are to be forty-two towns in which Levites are to live. ⁷ The towns in which the Levites are to live, therefore, will number forty-eight, along with their pasture lands. ⁸ Now as to which towns are to be designated as towns in which Levites might live; you are to give that area from the land to be received by the tribe, as tribal land to be divided, giving more designated land for Levites from the larger tribes, [*and tribal area*], and fewer towns for Levites in the smaller tribes, that the distribution of Levites might be in proportion to the size of the tribes. It is in this way that the distribution is to be made.”

⁴⁹⁸ The distribution of land in Canaan was designated for the secular tribes of the Israelites. For the Levites who had not received any land, space was to be designated in the cities of the Israelite territory, along with pasture land for the members of the tribe responsible for the matters of religion. It is not clear whether the Levites owned the land. The concept was that these religious leaders should live within the cities, thus being in close touch with the citizenry of the city and the larger community. They were given about fifteen square miles of land, distributed across the entire land, or about 0.1% of the land. This resulted in the fact that the Levites were in need of the help from the tribes that received land in order to sustain them in their work. Certain times of giving of offerings were devoted to the Levites. Additional passages dealing with the Levites are found in Exodus 19:5 – 6; Leviticus 10:11; Deuteronomy 33:9 – 10. There were two kinds of Levites with respect to their duties. There were “temple priests” who took turns, based on the Hebrew lunar calendar to minister in the tabernacle/temple. They were divided into ‘courses’ which meant each temple priest would serve at the tabernacle/temple for one lunar month each year. There were also “teaching priests” whose responsibility was teaching in the local communities. The religious tone of the people of Israel was in their hands. “Teaching priests” could apply for, and possibly become a “temple priest” but no one from the other tribes could become a priest. This was solely the responsibility of those who were born in the tribe of Levi.

⁴⁹⁹ A cubit was the distance from the elbow to the finger tip, or about 1 ½ feet. The LXX has: “two thousand cubits.”

⁵⁰⁰ Thus each town which was designated to have Levites living in it was surrounded on all sides by a green area a thousand cubits wide, which was the priest’s pasture land.

2. *Cities of Refuge 35:9 – 15* ⁵⁰¹

9 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 10 “Speak to the Israelites, and tell them: When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, 11 you are to select cities to serve as cities of refuge for your people, so that if a person has caused the death of another, accidentally, that person may flee to a city of refuge. 12 The cities will be places of safety from the one who is to avenge ⁵⁰² the death. The purpose is that the one who has caused the accidental death is not killed by the avenger but has a trial before the congregation.

13”The six cities you are to designate as cities of refuge for the people, 14 three of them are to be located in the cities on the east side of the Jordan, and three in the land of Canaan, as cities of refuge. 15 These six cities are to serve as a refuge for the Israelites, for residents or resident aliens who reside in the land – for any one who accidentally kills a person without intent – to flee to as a place of refuge.

16 “However, if anyone strikes someone with an iron object, ⁵⁰³ which causes death, that person is a murderer, and the murderer is to be put to death. 17 Anyone who strikes someone with a stone object, which causes death, that person is a murderer and the murderer is to be put to death. 18 Anyone who strikes someone with a wooden object, which causes death, that person is a murderer and the murderer is to be put to death. 19 The avenger of blood is the person who is to put the murderer to death when they meet. It is the avenger of blood who is to carry out (*or, execute*) the sentence. 20 In the same manner – if someone pushes a person out of hatred, or throws something at someone while lying in wait, and death ensues, 21 or strikes someone with his hand, and death ensues, then the one who struck the blow is to be put to death, for that person is a murderer, and the avenger of blood is to kill the murderer when they meet.

22 “But: if someone pushes another, not out of enmity, or throws something without lying in wait, 23 or, when handling a stone that could cause death, unintentionally ⁵⁰⁴ drops it on another, thus causing death, though they are not enemies, and no harm was intended, 24 then the congregation is to judge between the slayer and the avenger of blood, in accordance with the law; 25 and the congregation will rescue the slayer from the avenger of blood. Then the congregation will send the slayer to the nearest city of refuge. The slayer is to live in that city until the death of the High Priest who was anointed with holy oil.”

4. *Legal Procedure and Warning 35:26 – 34*

26 “In the event that the slayer should, at any time, leave, going out beyond the city limits of the original city of refuge, 27 and is found by the avenger of blood, outside the limits of the city or refuge, and is killed by the avenger, no blood-guilt will have been incurred. 28 The slayer must remain within the city of refuge until the death of the high priest: but after the death of the high priest the slayer may return to his home.

29 “These things are to become a statute and ordinance for you throughout your generations wherever you live.

⁵⁰¹ Many religions during that time period had places of refuge in central locations so that, should an accidental death occur, the person who caused the accident could flee to, and have, a safe haven and thus be protected from the “*lex talionis*.” The law that is presented is quite clear as to who is eligible. These places of sanctuary were not provided for all, but only for accidental death.

⁵⁰² LXX: “the avenger of blood.”

⁵⁰³ Literally: “tool.” So also in the next two sentences.

⁵⁰⁴ Literally: “without seeing.”

30 “In the event that someone kills another person, the murderer is to be put to death on the evidence of witnesses, but no one will be put to death on the evidence of witnesses; but no one is to put someone to death on the testimony of a single witness. 31 Furthermore you are not to accept a ransom for the life on murderer, who is subject to the death penalty on the testimony of a single witness. 32 You are not to accept any ransom from death penalty which might enable the fugitive to escape and return to his former life of living on his land prior to the death of the high priest. 33 You are not to pollute the land in which you live; for blood pollutes the land, and no expiation can be made for the land, except by the blood of the one who shed it. 34 You are not to defile the land in which you live, for this is the land in which I also reside, for I the Lord reside among the Israelites.”

<CHAPTER 36>

E. Marriage of Heiresses 36:1 – 13

1 The heads of the ancestral houses of the clans of the descendants of Gilead son of Machir son of Manasseh, of the Josephite clans presented themselves in the presence of Moses and spoke to him and the leaders, the chiefs of the ancestral houses of the Israelites; 2 saying, “The Lord commanded my lord to give the land for inheritance by lot to the Israelites, and my lord was commanded by the Lord to give the inheritance of our brother Zelophehad to his daughters. ⁵⁰⁵ 3 However, if they marry ⁵⁰⁶ outside their tribe: to someone from another Israelite tribe, the inheritance would be taken from the inheritance of our ancestors and added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they marry; so it will be taken from the allotted portion of our tribe. 4 When the year of jubilee of the Israelites arrives, their inheritance will then be added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they married, and their inheritance will be taken from the inheritance of our tribal land.”

5 Moses then issued a command to the Israelites, based on the word of the Lord, saying: “The descendants of the tribe of Joseph are right in what they are saying. 6 This is what the Lord commands concerning the daughters of Zelophehad. ‘Let them marry the ones they think to be best. However, they are to marry someone from within their ancestral tribe, 7 for in that way no inheritance of the Israelites will be transferred from one tribe to another. All Israelites are to retain the inheritance of their ancestral tribes. 8 Every daughter who is in possession of an inheritance in any tribe of the Israelites is to marry someone from the clan of her father’s tribe, so that all Israelites may continue to possess their ancestral inheritance. 9 No inheritance is to be transferred from one tribe to another, for each of the tribes of the Israelites is to retain its own inheritance.”

10 The daughters of Zelophehad did exactly as the Lord had commanded Moses. 11 Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Noah, ⁵⁰⁷ the daughters of Zelophehad, married their cousins. ⁵⁰⁸ 12 They were married into the clans of the descendants of Manasseh son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained in the tribe of their father’s clan.

13 These are the commandments and ordinances the Lord commanded to the Israelites through Moses on the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho.

⁵⁰⁵ See: 27:1 – 11.

⁵⁰⁶ The LXX and the Peshitta add: “before Eleazar the priest.”

⁵⁰⁷ In some manuscripts the order of the girl’s names differs.

⁵⁰⁸ Literally: “married sons of their father’s brothers.”

