

Numbers

Organizing the Census of the Israelites

1:1¹ Now the LORD² spoke³ to Moses in the tent of meeting⁴ in the

1 sn The book of Numbers is the fourth book of the Pentateuch, traditionally called the Law of Moses. It provides a record of the experience of the Israelites during the wilderness wanderings, and records the laws for the camp as they traveled from place to place. The book focuses on the difficulties of the Israelites due to their lack of faith, rebellion, and apostasy. It also records God's protection of his people from opposition without. The book makes a fitting contribution to the collection of holy writings as it shows the spiritual and physical progression of the company of the redeemed toward the promised land. The book has to be studied in conjunction with the other books of the Pentateuch. It builds on the promises made to Abraham in Genesis and the redemption from bondage in Exodus; it completes the cultic instructions for Israel that were laid down in Leviticus, and it concerns the worship in and the movement of the tabernacle that was built in Exodus. But the information here, both legal and historical, was not the major concern in those books. The book gets its title in English (following the Greek tradition) from the two censuses taken of the people, one at the beginning of the wanderings and the other at the end (although the Hebrew title is taken from the beginning of the book, בְּמִדְבָּר [bammidbar], "in the wilderness"). In these lists particular emphasis is given to the leaders of the clans, a theme that will continue in the book as the focus is on how the leaders function in all the trials and temptations of the journey. The material in this book is essentially a theological interpretation of historical events, and as such it stands as an integral part of the revelation of God. In the study of the book of Numbers, when these issues of the nature of the text are significant to the interpretation and acceptance of the text, the notes will comment on them briefly. The indication at the outset of the book is that Moses had a good number of people who were able to help him compile the statistics and the facts of the wandering community. In Num 11:16-18 there is a group of leaders known as שׁוֹטְרִים (*shotrim*). This term was used in Exod 5:16-19 to describe the officers or foremen of the Israelites. They were appointed supervisors of the clans by Moses, and by the time of Joshua (Josh 1:10) they were a literary guild. The Hebrew word, cognate with Akkadian *sataru*, means "to write." These people were to Israel what the scribes and chroniclers were to the pagan nations. They assisted Moses and the priests in their keeping of records. So no matter what they were called from time to time, there was a group of literate people who could keep the records and preserve the information from the very beginning. Their work matches the activities of scribes in the ancient world who used all the literary devices to preserve the material. There is no reason to doubt that the events recorded were attested to and preserved by such eyewitnesses. But their work would have been essentially to serve the leader, Moses. The book essentially follows the order of the events chronologically, more or less. Where it departs from that order it does so for literary or theological reasons. At the center of the theological concern is the tabernacle, its significance to the faith, and therefore the care in using it and in moving it. Its importance explains the presence and the arrangement of the ritual laws. With the records and statistics

provided for him, Moses could then introduce into the record the great events in the wilderness experience of Israel, which were to become warnings and encouragements for all time. Most of this material comes from the two years at the beginning of the experience and the two years at the end. But this itself may be a literary device (*merism*) to show the nature of the wanderings throughout. The Hebrew text of the book of Numbers has been preserved fairly well. It has not been preserved as well as Leviticus, which was most important to the ministry of the priests and Levites. But in comparison with some of the prophetic writings, Numbers represents a well-preserved text. The problems will be discussed in the relevant passages. So Numbers is essentially a part of the unfolding revelation of the Torah, the Law. It shows God's faithfulness to his covenant plan and to his covenant people, but it also shows the problems incurred by the people's lack of faith and obedience. The book focuses frequently on the nature of the holy LORD God, for at the center of all this material is the person and the works of the LORD. This provided the standard for the faith and practice of the people. For more information on chapter one, see W. F. Albright, "The Administrative Divisions of Israel and Judah," *JPOS* 5 (1925): 17-54; A. Cody, *A History of Old Testament Priesthood*; A. Lucas, "The Number of the Israelites at the Time of the Exodus," *PEQ* 76 (1944): 351-64; G. E. Mendenhall, "The Census Lists of Numbers 1 and 26," *JBL* 77 (1958): 52-66; E. Nielsen, "The Levites in the Old Testament," *ASTJ* 3 (1964): 16-27; L. A. Snijders, "The Meaning of נֹר in the Old Testament: An Exegetical Study," *OTS* 10 (1954): 1-154; and J. W. Wenham, "Large Numbers in the Old Testament," *TynBul* 18 (1967): 19-53.

2 sn The holy name is "Yahweh." This is the ancient name for the God of the covenant community. The name was explained or interpreted by Moses for the Israelites by the etymological connection to the verb "to be." God said that its significance was "I AM that I AM" (אֲנִי הָאֵלֶּיךָ אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי, *'ehyeh 'aser 'ehyeh*) using the first person of the verb; the name, the third person of the verb, would therefore mean "He is." The name indicates that God is the sovereign LORD of creation, the eternal God, the covenant Lord; he is sovereignly independent of all creation, but he is intimately involved with all his people. Most English translations do not use it, but follow the Jewish custom of using substitute words for the holy name, such as "the LORD," "the Eternal One," etc.

3 tn The book begins with the *vav* (ו) consecutive and the preterite, "and he spoke." This does not indicate that the book is a continuation of the previous material, for in that case certain other books in the canon would have to be linked with the writings of other people just because they followed them. This form is simply the narrative verb; the conjunction need not be translated. The verb should not be limited to a literary formula, but does indicate the divine source of the command for Moses. God was speaking to Moses throughout the wilderness wanderings from the tent, and so the ideas are from him, and not from the "will of man."

4 sn This was one of several names by which the tabernacle was known. This was the tent with its furnishings that the Israelites built according to the book of Exodus. While that tabernacle was being built, the LORD met with Moses in a tent of meeting nearby (Exod 33:7), but when the project was finished, the title was transferred to the tabernacle. It may be that the expression "tent of meeting" refers to the inner tabernacle where God revealed himself to Moses and Aaron, and the word "tabernacle" refers to the whole shrine, the curtained structure with all its contents. This would mean that God addressed Moses from between the cherubim in the

wilderness⁴ of Sinai² on the first day of the second month of the second year after³ the Israelites⁴ departed from the land of Egypt.⁵ He said:⁶ **1:2** “Take a census⁷ of the entire⁸ Israelite community⁹ by their clans and families,¹⁰ counting the name of every individual male.¹¹ **1:3** You and Aaron are to number¹² all in Israel who can serve in the army,¹³

holy of holies (see R. A. Cole, *Exodus* [TOTC], 191). The point is clear, though – the shrine was functioning as the sign of God’s actual presence and leadership among his people.

1 sn The English word “wilderness” is workable for the Hebrew term, because it describes land that is wild. The term “desert” works if one thinks of land deserted by people. But to many modern readers “desert” suggests the idea of an arid land without growth. The word must not be pressed to mean only sand dunes; it describes land that has rocks, canyons, oases, shrubs and trees occasionally, some animal life, and of course sand.

2 sn The exact location of Mount Sinai has been debated for some time. The traditional view from very early times is that it is located in the south, Jebel Musa, south of the monastery of St. Catherine. The other plausible suggestion is Ras es-Safsafah, which is on the other end of the valley near the monastery. The mountain is also called Horeb in the Bible. The wilderness of Sinai would refer to the large plain that is at the base of the mountain. See further G. E. Wright, *IDB* 4:376-78; and G. I. Davies, *The Way of the Wilderness*.

3 tn The construction uses the infinitive construct of יָצָא (*yatsa*, “to go out”), with a suffix serving as the subjective genitive, and the *lamed* preposition providing the temporal indication: “according to the going out of them.” The Israelites are clearly intended as the subject.

4 tn Heb “they”; the referent (the Israelites) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

5 sn This means that the Israelites had spent nine months at Sinai, because they had arrived there in the third month following the exodus. This account does not follow a strict chronology (see Num 9:1). The difference of one month in the narrative is not a critical difference, but a literary general reference. Here begins a new section of major importance to the future of the nation – the numbering for war and for settlement.

6 tn Heb “saying.” A new sentence was started here in the English translation for stylistic reasons.

7 tn The construction is literally “lift up the head[s],” (שָׂאוּ אֶת־רִאשֵׁי, *s’u* ‘et-ro’sh). This idiom for taking a census occurs elsewhere (e.g., Exod 30:12; Num 26:2). The idea is simply that of counting heads to arrive at the base for the standing army. This is a different event than the one recorded in Exod 30:11-16, which was taken for a different purpose altogether. The verb is plural, indicating that Moses had help in taking the census.

8 tc Smr lacks the Hebrew word “all” here.

9 tn Heb “the congregation of Israel.”

10 tn The tribe (בְּמִטָּה, *matteh* or שֵׁבֶט, *shevet*) is the main category. The family groups or clans (מִשְׁפָּחֹת, *mishp’khot*) and the households or families (בֵּית אָבוֹת, *bet avot*) were sub-divisions of the tribe.

11 tn This clause simply has “in/with the number of the names of every male with respect to their skulls [individual-ly].” Counting heads, or every skull, simply meant that each person was to be numbered in the census. Except for the Levites, no male was exempt from the count.

12 tn The verb (פָּקַד, *paqad*) means “to visit, appoint, muster, number.” The word is a common one in scripture. It has as its basic meaning the idea of “determining the destiny” of someone, by appointing, mustering, or visiting. When God “visits,” it is a divine intervention for either blessing or cursing. Here it is the taking of a census for war (see G. André, *Determining the Destiny* [ConBOT], 16).

13 tn The construction uses the participle “going out” followed by the noun “army.” It describes everyone “going out in a military group,” meaning serving in the army. It was the duty of every able-bodied Israelite to serve in this “peoples”

those who are¹⁴ twenty years old or older,¹⁵ by their divisions.¹⁶ **1:4** And to help you¹⁷ there is to be a man from each¹⁸ tribe, each man¹⁹ the head²⁰ of his family.²¹ **1:5** Now these are the names of the men who are to help²² you:

from²³ Reuben, Elizur son of Shedeur;
1:6 from Simeon, Shelumiel son of Zuri-shaddai;²⁴

1:7 from Judah, Nahshon²⁵ son of Amminadab;

1:8 from Issachar, Nethanel son of Zuar;

1:9 from Zebulun, Eliab son of Helon;

1:10 from the sons of Joseph:
from Ephraim, Elishama son of Ammi-

hud;
from Manasseh, Gamaliel son of Pedah-

zur;
1:11 from Benjamin, Abidan son of

Gideoni;
1:12 from Dan, Ahiezer son of Ammis-

haddai;
1:13 from Asher, Pagiel son of Ocran;

1:14 from Gad, Eliasaph son of Deuel;²⁶

1:15 from Naphtali, Ahira son of Enan.”

army. There were probably exemptions for the infirm or the crippled, but every male over twenty was chosen. For a discussion of warfare, see P. C. Craigie, *The Problem of War in the Old Testament*, and P. D. Miller, “The Divine Council and the Prophetic Call to War,” *VT* 18 (1968): 100-107.

14 tn The text simply has “from twenty years old and higher.”

15 tn Heb “and you.”

16 tn The noun (צְבָא, *tsava*) means “army” or “military group.” But the word can also be used for nonmilitary divisions of labor (Num 4:3).

17 tn Heb “and with you.”

18 tn The construction uses the noun in a distributive sense: “a man, a man for a tribe,” meaning a man for each tribe.

19 tn The clause expresses a distributive function, “a man” means “each man.”

20 sn See J. R. Bartlett, “The Use of the Word רִאשֵׁ as a Title in the Old Testament,” *VT* 19 (1969): 1-10.

21 tn Heb “the house of his fathers.”

22 tn The verb is עָמַד (*amad*, “to stand”). It literally then is, “who will stand with you.” They will help in the count, but they will also serve as leaders as the camp moves from place to place.

23 tn The preposition *lamed* (ל) prefixed to the name could be taken in the sense of “from,” but could also be “with regard to” (specification).

24 sn This name and the name Ammishaddai below have the theophoric element (שֹׁדַי, *shaday*, “the Almighty”). It would mean “the Almighty is my rock”; the later name means “the Almighty is my kinsman.” Other theophoric elements in the passage are “father,” “brother,” and “God.”

25 sn Nahshon was an ancestor of Boaz and David, and therefore of Christ (Luke 3:32-33).

26 tc There is a textual difficulty with this verb. The Greek form uses *r* and not *d*, giving the name Ra’oul. There is even some variation in the Hebrew traditions, but *BHS* (following the Leningrad codex of A.D. 1008) has preferred the name Deuel.

The Census of the Tribes

1:16 These were the ones chosen¹ from the community, leaders² of their ancestral tribes.³ They were the heads of the thousands⁴ of Israel.

1:17 So Moses and Aaron took these men who had been mentioned specifically by name, **1:18** and they assembled⁵ the entire community together on the first day of the second month.⁶ Then the people recorded their ancestry⁷ by their clans and families, and the men who were twenty years old or older were listed⁸ by name individually, **1:19** just as the LORD had commanded Moses. And so he numbered them in the wilderness of Sinai.

1:20 And they were as follows:

The descendants of Reuben, the firstborn son of Israel: According to the records of their clans and families, all the males twenty years old or older who could serve in the army were listed by name individually. **1:21** Those of them who were numbered⁹ from the tribe of Reuben were 46,500.¹⁰

¹ **tc** The form has a *Kethib-Qere* problem, but the sentence calls for the *Qere*, the passive participle in the construct – “the called of....” These men were God’s choice, and not Moses’, or their own choice. He announced who they would be, and then named them. So they were truly “called” (קָרָא, *qara*). The other reading is probably due to a copyist’s error.

² **tn** The word is נָשִׂיאַ (nāsī’, “exalted one, prince, leader”). Cf. KJV, ASV, NAB “princes.” These were men apparently revered or respected in their tribes, and so the clear choice to assist Moses with the leadership. See further, E. A. Speiser, “Background and Function of the Biblical nāsī’,” *CBQ* 25 (1963): 111-17.

³ **tn** Heb “exalted ones of the tribes of their fathers.” The earlier group of elders was chosen by Moses at the advice of his father-in-law. This group represents the few leaders of the tribes that were chosen by God, a more literate group apparently, who were the forerunners of the שְׂרָפִים (*shot’rim*).

⁴ **tc** The Hebrew text has אֲלֵפֵי (*alfey*, “thousands of”). There is some question over this reading in the MT, however. The community groups that have these leaders were larger tribes, but there is little certainty about the size of the divisions.

⁵ **tn** The verb is the Hiphil of the root קָהַל (*qahal*), meaning “to call, assemble”; the related noun is an “assembly.”

⁶ **tc** The LXX adds “of the second year.”

⁷ **tn** The verb is the Hitpaël preterite form וַיִּתְּקֶדוּ (*vayit’qudu*). The cognate noun תְּקֵדוּת (*tol’dot*) is the word that means “genealogies, family records, records of ancestry.” The root is יָקַד (*yalad*, “to bear, give birth to”). Here they were recording their family connections, and not, of course, producing children. The verbal stem seems to be both declarative and reflexive.

⁸ **tn** The verb is supplied. The Hebrew text simply has “in/with the number of names of those who are twenty years old and higher according to their skulls.”

⁹ **tn** Heb “those numbered of them.” The form is פְּקֻדֵיהֶם (*p’qudehem*), the passive participle with the pronominal suffix. This indicates that the number came to 46,500, but it specifically refers to “those numbered.” This expression occurs frequently throughout the book of Numbers.

¹⁰ **sn** There has been much discussion about the numbers in the Israelite wilderness experience. The immediate difficulty for even the casual reader is the enormous number of the population. If indeed there were 603,550 men twenty years of age and older who could fight, the total population of the exodus community counting women and children would have been well over a million, or even two million as calculated by some. This is not a figure that the Bible ever gives, but given the sizes of families the estimate would not be far off. This is a staggering number to have cross the Sea, drink from the oases, or assemble in the plain by Sinai. It is not a question of

whether or not God could provide for such a number; it is rather a problem of logistics for a population of that size in that period of time. The problem is not with the text itself, but with the interpretation of the word אֲלֵפֵי (*elep*), traditionally translated “thousand.” The word certainly can be taken as “thousand,” and most often is. But in view of the problem of the large number here, some scholars have chosen one of the other meanings attested in literature for this word, perhaps “troop,” or “family,” or “tent group,” even though a word for “family” has already been used (see A. H. McNeile, *Numbers*, 7; J. Garstang, *Joshua-Judges*, 120; J. Bright, *History of Israel*, 144). Another suggestion is to take the word as a “chief” or “captain” based on Ugaritic usage (see R. E. D. Clarke, “The Large Numbers of the Old Testament,” *JTV* 87 [1955]: 82-92; and J. W. Wenham, “Large Numbers in the Old Testament,” *TynBul* 18 [1967]: 19-53). This interpretation would reduce the size of the Israelite army to about 18,000 men from a population of about 72,000 people. That is a radical change from the traditional reading and may be too arbitrary an estimate. A more unlikely calculation following the idea of a new meaning would attempt to divide the numbers and use the first part to refer to the units and the second the measurement (e.g., 65 thousand and four hundred would become 65 units of four hundred). Another approach has been to study the numbers rhetorically, analyzing the numerical values of letters and words. But this method, known as *gematria*, came in much later than the biblical period (see for it G. Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 184; and A. Noordzij, *Numbers* [BSC], 24). On this system the numbers for “the sons of Israel” would be 603. But the number of the people in the MT is 603,550. Another rhetorical approach is that which says the text used exaggerations in the numbers on an epic scale to make the point of God’s blessing. R. B. Allen’s view that the numbers have been magnified by a factor of ten (“Numbers,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 2:688-91), which would mean the army was only 60,000 men, seems every bit as arbitrary as Wenham’s view to get down to 18,000. Moreover, such views cannot be harmonized with the instructions in the chapter for them to count every individual skull – that seems very clear. This is not the same kind of general expression one finds in “Saul has killed his thousands, David his ten thousands” (1 Sam 18:7). There one expects the bragging and the exaggerations. But in a text of numbering each male, to argue that the numbers have been inflated ten-fold to form the rhetoric of praise for the way God has blessed the nation demands a much more convincing argument than has typically been given. On the surface it seems satisfactory, but it raises a lot of questions. Everything in Exodus and Numbers attests to the fact that the Israelites were in a population explosion, that their numbers were greater than their Egyptian overlords. Pharaoh had attempted to counter their growth by killing males from the ranks. That only two midwives are named must be taken to mean that they were heads of the guilds, for two could not service a population – even of the smaller estimate given above. But even though the size had to have been great and seen as a threat, we are at a loss to know exactly how to determine it. There is clearly a problem with the word “thousand” here and in many places in the OT, as the literature will show, but the problem cannot really be solved without additional information. The suggestions proposed so far seem to be rather arbitrary attempts to reduce the number to a less-embarrassing total, one that would seem more workable in the light of contemporary populations and armies, as well as space and time for the people’s movement in the wilderness. An army of 10,000 or 20,000 men in those days would have been a large army; an army of 600,000 (albeit a people’s army, which may mean that only a portion of the males would actually fight at any time – as was true at Ai) is large even by today’s standards. But the count appears to have been literal, and the totals calculated accordingly, totals which match other passages in the text. If some formula is used to reduce the thousands in this army, then there is the problem of knowing what to do when a battle has only five thousand, or three thousand men. One can only conclude that on the basis of what we know the word should be left with the translation “thousand,” no matter what difficul-

1:22 From the descendants of Simeon: According to the records of their clans and families, all the males numbered of them¹ twenty years old or older who could serve in the army were listed by name individually. **1:23** Those of them who were numbered from the tribe of Simeon were 59,300.

1:24² From the descendants of Gad: According to the records of their clans and families, all the males twenty years old or older who could serve in the army were listed by name. **1:25** Those of them who were numbered from the tribe of Gad were 45,650.

1:26 From the descendants of Judah: According to the records of their clans and families, all the males twenty years old or older who could serve in the army were listed by name. **1:27** Those of them who were numbered from the tribe of Judah were 74,600.

1:28 From the descendants of Issachar: According to the records of their clans and families, all the males twenty years old or older who could serve in the army were listed by name. **1:29** Those of them who were numbered from the tribe of Issachar were 54,400.

1:30 From the descendants of Zebulun: According to the records of their clans and families, all the males twenty years old or older who could serve in the army were listed by name. **1:31** Those of them who were numbered from the tribe of Zebulun were 57,400.

1:32 From the sons of Joseph:

From the descendants of Ephraim: According to the records of their clans and families, all the males twenty years old or older who could serve in the army were listed by name. **1:33** Those of them who were numbered from the tribe of Ephraim were 40,500. **1:34** From the descendants of Manasseh: According to the records of their clans and families, all the males twenty years old or older who could serve in the army were listed by name. **1:35** Those of them

who were numbered from the tribe of Manasseh were 32,200.

1:36 From the descendants of Benjamin: According to the records of their clans and families, all the males twenty years old or older who could serve in the army were listed by name. **1:37** Those of them who were numbered from the tribe of Benjamin were 35,400.

1:38 From the descendants of Dan: According to the records of their clans and families, all the males twenty years old or older who could serve in the army were listed by name. **1:39** Those of them who were numbered from the tribe of Dan were 62,700.

1:40 From the descendants of Asher: According to the records of their clans and families, all the males twenty years old or older who could serve in the army were listed by name. **1:41** Those of them who were numbered from the tribe of Asher were 41,500.

1:42 From³ the descendants of Naphtali: According to the records of their clans and families, all the males twenty years old or older who could serve in the army were listed by name. **1:43** Those of them who were numbered from the tribe of Naphtali were 53,400.

1:44 These were the men whom Moses and Aaron numbered⁴ along with the twelve leaders of Israel, each of whom⁵ was from his own family. **1:45** All the Israelites who were twenty years old or older, who could serve in Israel's army, were numbered⁶ according to their families. **1:46** And all those numbered totaled 603,550.

The Exemption of the Levites

1:47 But⁷ the Levites, according to the tribe of their fathers,⁸ were not numbered⁹ among them. **1:48** The LORD had said to Moses,¹⁰

ties this might suggest to the reader. One should be cautious, though, in speaking of a population of two million, knowing that there are serious problems with the calculation of that number, if not with the word "thousand" itself. It is very doubtful that the population of the wilderness community was in the neighborhood of two million. Nevertheless, until a more convincing explanation of the word "thousand" or the calculation of the numbers is provided, one should retain the reading of the MT but note the difficulty with the large numbers.

¹ **tc** Some witnesses have omitted "those that were numbered of them," to preserve the literary pattern of the text. The omission is supported by the absence of the expression in the Greek as well as in some MT mss. Most modern commentators follow this.

² **tc** The LXX has vv. 24-35 after v. 37.

³ **tc** The verse does not have the preposition, only "the descendants of Naphtali."

⁴ **tn** The construction uses both the passive participle הַפְּקִידִים (*happ^equdim*) and the verb פָּקַד (*paqad*), giving a literal translation of "these were the numbered ones, whom Moses and Aaron numbered."

⁵ **tn** *Heb* "they were one man for the house of his fathers."

⁶ **tn** Literally the text has, "and all the numbered of the Israelites were according to their families." The verb in the sentence is actually without a complement (see v. 46).

⁷ **tn** The vav (ו) on this word indicates a disjunction with the previous sequence of reports. It may be taken as a contrastive clause, translated "but" or "however."

⁸ **tn** The construction is unexpected, for Levites would be from the tribe of Levi. The note seems more likely to express that all these people were organized by tribal lineage, and so too the Levites, according to the tribe of their fathers – individual families of Levites.

⁹ **tc** The form in the text is הֹתִיקְדוּ (*hotpaq^edu*); if this is correct, then it is an isolated instance of the reflexive of the Qal of פָּקַד (*paqad*). Some, however, explain the form as the Hitpael without the doubling of the middle letter and with a compensatory lengthening of the vowel before it (G. B. Gray, *Numbers* [ICC], 10).

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* "had spoken to Moses, saying." The infinitive construct of אָמַר (*amar*), sometimes rendered "saying" in older English translations, does not need to be translated, but can be taken simply as the indicator of direct discourse. Most re-

1:49 “Only the tribe of Levi¹ you must not number² or count³ with⁴ the other Israelites. 1:50 But appoint⁵ the Levites over the tabernacle of the testimony,⁶ over all its furnishings and over everything in it. They must carry⁷ the tabernacle and all its furnishings; and they⁸ must attend to it and camp around it.⁹ 1:51 Whenever the tabernacle is to move,¹⁰ the Levites must take it down, and whenever the tabernacle is to be reassembled,¹¹ the Levites must set it up.¹² Any unauthorized person¹³ who approaches it must be killed.

1:52 “The Israelites will camp according to their divisions, each man in his camp, and each man by his standard. 1:53 But the Levites must camp around the tabernacle of the testimony, so

that the LORD’s anger¹⁴ will not fall on the Israelite community. The Levites are responsible for the care¹⁵ of the tabernacle of the testimony.”

1:54 The Israelites did according to all that the LORD commanded Moses¹⁶ – that is what they did.

The Arrangement of the Tribes

2:1¹⁷ The LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron: 2:2 “Every one¹⁸ of the Israelites must camp¹⁹ under his standard with the emblems of his family;²⁰ they must camp at some distance²¹ around the tent of meeting.²²

The Tribes on the East

2:3 “Now those who will be camping²³ on the east, toward the sunrise,²⁴ are the divisions²⁵ of the camp of Judah under their standard. The

cent English translations, including the present one, leave the form untranslated for stylistic reasons to avoid redundancy.

1 sn From the giving of the Law on the priesthood comes the prerogative of the tribe of Levi. There were, however, members of other tribes who served as priests from time to time (see Judg 17:5).

2 tn The construction has literally, “only the tribe of Levi you shall not number.” The Greek text rendered the particle אַךְ (*akh*) forcefully with “see to it that” or “take care that.” For the uses of this form, see R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 65, §388-89.

3 tn Heb “lift up their head.”

4 tn Heb “in the midst of the sons of Israel.”

5 tn The same verb translated “number” (פָּקַד, *paqad*) is now used to mean “appoint” (הִפְקִיד, *hafqad*), which focuses more on the purpose of the verbal action of numbering people. Here the idea is that the Levites were appointed to take care of the tabernacle. On the use of this verb with the Levites’ appointment, see M. Gertner, “The Masorah and the Levites,” *VT* 10 (1960): 252.

6 tn The Hebrew name used here is מִשְׁכַּן הָעֵדוּת (*mishkan ha’edut*). The tabernacle or dwelling place of the LORD was given this name because it was here that the tablets of the Law were kept. The whole shrine was therefore a reminder (הַעֲדוּת, a “warning sign” or “testimony”) of the stipulations of the covenant. For the ancient Near Eastern customs of storing the code in the sanctuaries, see M. G. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King*, 14-19, and idem, *The Structure of Biblical Authority*, 35-36. Other items were in the ark in the beginning, but by the days of Solomon only the tablets were there (1 Kgs 8:9).

7 tn The imperfect tense here is an obligatory imperfect telling that they are bound to do this since they are appointed for this specific task.

8 tn The addition of the pronoun before the verb is emphatic – they are the ones who are to attend to the tabernacle. The verb used is שָׂרַת (*sharat*) in the Piel, indicating that they are to serve, minister to, attend to all the details about this shrine.

9 tn Heb “the tabernacle.” The pronoun (“it”) was used in the translation here for stylistic reasons.

10 tn The construction uses the infinitive construct with the temporal preposition; the “tabernacle” is then the following genitive. Literally it is “and in the moving of the tabernacle,” meaning, “when the tabernacle is supposed to be moved,” i.e., when people are supposed to move it. The verb נָסַח (*nasa*) means “pull up the tent pegs and move,” or more simply, “journey.”

11 tn Here we have the parallel construction using the infinitive construct in a temporal adverbial clause.

12 tn Heb “raise it up.”

13 tn The word used here is זָר (*zar*), normally translated “stranger” or “outsider.” It is most often used for a foreigner, an outsider, who does not belong in Israel, or who, although allowed in the land, may be viewed with suspicion. But here it seems to include even Israelites other than the tribe of Levi.

14 tc Instead of “wrath” the Greek text has “sin,” focusing the emphasis on the human error and not on the wrath of God. This may have been a conscious change to explain the divine wrath.

tn Heb “so that there be no wrath on.” In context this is clearly the divine anger, so “the LORD’s” has been supplied in the translation for clarity.

15 tn The main verb of the clause is the perfect tense with *vav* (ו) consecutive, וְשָׁמְרוּ (*sham’ru*) meaning they “shall guard, protect, watch over, care for.” It may carry the same obligatory nuance as the preceding verbs because of the sequence. The object used with this is the cognate noun מִשְׁכַּת (mishmeret): “The Levites must care for the care of the tabernacle.” The cognate intensifies the construction to stress that they are responsible for this care.

16 tc The LXX adds “and Aaron.”

17 sn For this chapter, see C. E. Douglas, “The Twelve Houses of Israel,” *JTS* 37 (1936): 49-56; C. C. Roach, “The Camp in the Wilderness: A Sermon on Numbers 2:2,” *Int* 13 (1959): 49-54; and G. St. Clair, “Israel in Camp: A Study,” *JTS* 8 (1907): 185-217.

18 tn Heb “a man by his own standard.”

19 tn The imperfect tense is to be taken in the nuance of instruction.

20 tn Heb “of/for the house of their fathers.”

21 tn The Hebrew expression מִנְּגֵד (*minneged*) means “from before” or “opposite; facing” and “at some distance” or “away from the front of” (see BDB 617 s.v. נָגַד 2.c.a.; *DCH* 5:603-4 s.v. 3.b).

22 sn The Israelites were camping as a military camp, each tribe with the standards and emblems of the family. The standard was the symbol fastened to the end of a pole and carried to battle. It served to rally the tribe to the battle. The Bible nowhere describes these, although the serpent emblem of Numbers 21:8-9 may give a clue. But they probably did not have shapes of animals in view of the prohibition in the Decalogue. The standards may have been smaller for the families than the ones for the tribes. See further K. A. Kitchen, “Some Egyptian Background to the Old Testament,” *TynBul* 5 (1960): 11; and T. W. Mann, *Divine Presence and Guidance in Israelite Tradition*, 169-73.

23 tn The sentence begins with a *vav* (ו) on a word that is not a finite verb, indicating a new section begins here. The verbal form is a participle with the article used substantively, with the meaning “and/nor those camping.” Many English versions employ a finite verb; cf. KJV “on the east side...shall they of the standard of the camp of Judah pitch.”

24 tc The two synonyms might seem to be tautological, but this is fairly common and therefore acceptable in Hebrew prose (cf. Exod 26:18; 38:13; etc.).

25 tn The sentence actually has “[those camping...are] the standard of the camp of Judah according to their divisions.”

leader of the people of Judah is¹ Nahshon son of Amminadab. **2:4** Those numbered in his division² are 74,600. **2:5** Those who will be camping next to them³ are the tribe of Issachar. The leader of the people of Issachar is Nethanel son of Zuar. **2:6** Those numbered in his division are 54,400. **2:7** Next will be⁴ the tribe of Zebulun. The leader of the people of Zebulun is Eliab son of Helon. **2:8** Those numbered in his division are 57,400. **2:9** All those numbered of the camp of Judah, according to their divisions, are 186,400. They will travel⁵ at the front.

The Tribes on the South

2:10 “On the south will be the divisions of the camp of Reuben under their standard.⁶ The leader of the people of Reuben is Elizur son of Shedeur. **2:11** Those numbered in his division are 46,500. **2:12** Those who will be camping next to them are the tribe of Simeon. The leader of the people of Simeon is Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai. **2:13** Those numbered in his division are 59,300. **2:14** Next will be⁷ the tribe of Gad. The leader of the people of Gad is Eliasaph son of Deuel.⁸ **2:15** Those numbered in his division are 45,650. **2:16** All those numbered of the camp of Reuben, according to their divisions, are 151,450. They will travel second.

The Tribe in the Center

2:17 “Then the tent of meeting with the camp of the Levites will travel in the middle of the camps. They will travel in the same order as they camped, each in his own place⁹ under his standard.

The Tribes on the West

2:18 “On the west will be the divisions of the camp of Ephraim under their standard. The leader of the people of Ephraim is Elishama son of Ammihud. **2:19** Those numbered in his division are 40,500. **2:20** Next to them will be the tribe of

Manasseh. The leader of the people of Manasseh is Gamaliel son of Pedahzur. **2:21** Those numbered in his division are 32,200. **2:22** Next will be¹⁰ the tribe of Benjamin. The leader of the people of Benjamin is Abidan son of Gideoni. **2:23** Those numbered in his division are 35,400. **2:24** All those numbered of the camp of Ephraim, according to their divisions, are 108,100. They will travel third.

The Tribes on the North

2:25 “On the north will be the divisions of the camp of Dan, under their standards. The leader of the people of Dan is Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai. **2:26** Those numbered in his division are 62,700. **2:27** Those who will be camping next to them are the tribe of Asher. The leader of the people of Asher is Pagiel son of Ocran. **2:28** Those numbered in his division are 41,500. **2:29** Next will be¹¹ the tribe of Naphtali. The leader of the people of Naphtali is Ahira son of Enan. **2:30** Those numbered in his division are 53,400. **2:31** All those numbered of the camp of Dan are 157,600. They will travel last, under their standards.”

Summary

2:32 These are the Israelites, numbered according to their families.¹² All those numbered in the camps, by their divisions, are 603,550. **2:33** But the Levites were not numbered among the other Israelites, as the LORD commanded Moses.

2:34 So the Israelites did according to all that the LORD commanded Moses; that is the way¹³ they camped under their standards, and that is the way they traveled, each with his clan and family.

¹ tn Or “will be.”

² tc The expression “and his divisions and those numbered of them” is somewhat tautological. The words are synonyms used for statistical purposes, and so neither should be simply deleted.

³ tn Heb “by him” [i.e., Judah].

⁴ tn This part has been supplied; the text simply has “the tribe of Zebulun.”

⁵ tn The verb is נָסַע (*nasa'*): “to journey, travel, set out,” and here, “to move camp.” Judah will go first, or, literally, at the head of the nation, when they begin to travel.

⁶ tn Here and throughout the line is literally “[under] the standard of the camp of Reuben...according to their divisions.”

⁷ tn The Hebrew text simply has “and the tribe of Gad.”

⁸ tc The Leningrad codex, upon which BHS is based, has “Reuel” here. In reading “Deuel” the translation presented above follows many medieval Hebrew manuscripts, Smr, and the Latin Vulgate. Cf. Num 1:14.

⁹ tn The Hebrew expression is יָדוֹ (‘*al-yado*, “upon his hand”). This clearly refers to a specifically designated place for each man.

¹⁰ tn Here too the Hebrew text simply has “and the tribe of Benjamin.”

¹¹ tn The Hebrew text has “and the tribe of Naphtali.”

¹² tn Heb “the house of their fathers.” So also in v. 34.

¹³ tn The Hebrew word is כֵּן (*ken*, “thus, so”).

The Sons of Aaron

3:1¹ Now these are the records² of Aaron and Moses when³ the LORD spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai. **3:2** These are the names of the sons of Aaron: Nadab, the firstborn, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. **3:3** These are the names of the sons of Aaron, the anointed⁴ priests, whom he consecrated⁵ to minister as priests.⁶

3:4 Nadab and Abihu died⁷ before the LORD⁸ when they offered⁹ strange¹⁰ fire¹¹ before the

¹ **sn** For significant literature for this chapter, see M. Aberbach and L. Smolar, "Aaron, Jeroboam, and their Golden Calves," *JBL* 86 (1967): 129-40; G. Brin, "The First-born in Israel in the Biblical Period" (Ph.D. diss., University of Tel Aviv, 1971); S. H. Hooke, "Theory and Practice of Substitution," *VT* 2 (1952): 2-17; and J. Morgenstern, "A Chapter in the History of the High Priesthood," *AJSL* 55 (1938): 1-24.

² **tn** The construction is *וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹתָם* (*v^e elleh tol^odot*), which was traditionally translated "now these are the generations," much as it was translated throughout the book of Genesis. The noun can refer to records, stories, genealogies, names, and accounts of people. Here it is the recorded genealogical list with assigned posts included. Like Genesis, it is a heading of a section, and not a colophon as some have suggested. It is here similar to Exodus: "these are the names of." R. K. Harrison, *Numbers* (WEC), 62, insists that it is a colophon and should end chapter 2, but if that is followed in the Pentateuch, it creates difficulty throughout the narratives. See the discussion by A. P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 69-74.

³ **tn** The expression in the Hebrew text ("in the day of") is idiomatic for "when."

⁴ **tn** The verb *מָשַׁח* (*mashakh*) means "to anoint"; here the form modifies the "priests." The service of consecration was carried out with anointing oil (Exod 30:30). The verb is used for the anointing of kings as well as priests in the OT, and so out of that derived the technical title "Messiah" for the coming ideal king – the "Anointed One."

⁵ **tn** In this verse the expression is in a relative clause: "who he filled their hand" means "whose hands he filled," or "whom he consecrated." The idiomatic expression used here is from Lev 8; it literally is "he filled their hand" (*מָלַא יָדָם*, *milla yadam*). In the ordination service Moses placed some of the meat from the sacrifice in the hand of the ordinand, and this signified what he was going to be about – having his hand full, or being consecrated to the priesthood. There is some evidence that this practice or expression was also known in Mesopotamia. In modern ordination services a NT or a Bible may be placed in the ordinand's hand – it is what the ministry will be about.

⁶ **tn** The form is an infinitival construction for the word for the priest, showing the purpose for the filling of the hands.

⁷ **tn** The verb form is the preterite with *vav* (ו) consecutive, literally "and Nadab died." Some commentators wish to make the verb a past perfect, rendering it "and Nadab had died," but this is not necessary. In tracing through the line from Aaron it simply reports that the first two sons died. The reference is to the event recorded in Lev 10 where the sons brought "strange" or foreign fire to the sanctuary.

⁸ **tc** This initial clause is omitted in one Hebrew ms, Smr, and the Vulgate.

⁹ **tn** The form *בְּהִקְרִיבָם* (*b^ehaqrivam*) is the Hiphil infinitive construct functioning as a temporal clause: "when they brought near," meaning, "when they offered." The verb *קָרַב* (*qarav*) is familiar to students of the NT because of "corban" in Mark 7:11.

¹⁰ **tn** Or "prohibited." See HALOT 279 s.v. קָרַב.

¹¹ **tn** The expression *אֵשׁ זָרָה* (*esh zarah*, "strange fire") seems imprecise and has been interpreted numerous ways (see the helpful summary in J. E. Hartley, *Leviticus* [WBC 4], 132-33). The infraction may have involved any of the following or a combination thereof: (1) using coals from some place other than the burnt offering altar (i.e., "unauthorized coals" according to J. Milgrom, *Leviticus* [AB], 1:598; cf. Lev 16:12

LORD in the wilderness of Sinai, and they had no children.¹² So Eleazar and Ithamar ministered as priests¹³ in the presence of¹⁴ Aaron their father.

The Assignment of the Levites

3:5 The LORD spoke to Moses: **3:6** "Bring the tribe of Levi near,¹⁵ and present¹⁶ them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him.¹⁷

3:7 They are responsible for his needs¹⁸ and the needs of the whole community before the tent of meeting, by attending¹⁹ to the service of the tab-

and cf. "unauthorized person" *אִישׁ זָר* [*ish zar*] in Num 16:40 [17:5 HT], NASB "layman"), (2) using the wrong kind of incense (cf. the Exod 30:9 regulation against "strange incense" *קִבְרֵת זָרָה*, *qⁱtoret zarah*) on the incense altar and the possible connection to Exod 30:34-38), (3) performing an incense offering at an unprescribed time (B. A. Levine, *Leviticus* [JPSTC], 59), or (4) entering the Holy of Holies at an inappropriate time (Lev 16:1-2).

sn This event is narrated in Lev 10:1-7.

¹² **sn** The two young priests had been cut down before they had children; the ranks of the family of Aaron were thereby cut in half in one judgment from God. The significance of the act of judgment was to show that the priests had to sanctify the LORD before the people – they were to be examples that the sanctuary and its contents were distinct.

¹³ **tn** The verb is the Piel preterite from the root *כָּהַן* (*kahan*): "to function as a priest" or "to minister."

¹⁴ **tn** The expression "in the presence of" can also mean "during the lifetime of" (see Gen 11:28; see also BDB 818 s.v. *כָּהַן* II.7.a; cf. NASB, NIV, NCV, NRSV, TEV).

¹⁵ **sn** The use of the verb *קָרַב* (*qarav*) forms an interesting wordplay in the passage. The act of making an offering is described by this verb, as was the reference to the priests' offering of strange fire. Now the ceremonial presentation of the priests is expressed by the same word – they are being offered to God.

¹⁶ **tn** The verb literally means "make it [the tribe] stand" (*וַיִּשְׁמַדְתָּ אוֹתוֹ*, *vⁱshaamadta oto*). The verb is the Hiphil perfect with a *vav* (ו) consecutive; it will take the same imperative nuance as the form before it, but follow in sequence ("and then"). This refers to the ceremonial presentation in which the tribe would take its place before Aaron, that is, stand before him and await their assignments. The Levites will function more like a sacred guard than anything else, for they had to protect and care for the sanctuary when it was erected and when it was transported (see J. Milgrom, *Studies in Levitical Terminology*, 8-10).

¹⁷ **tn** The verb *וַיִּשְׁרַעְתוּ* (*vⁱsher^etu*) is the Piel perfect with a *vav* (ו) consecutive; it carries the same volitional force as the preceding verb forms, but may here be subordinated in the sequence to express the purpose or result of the preceding action.

¹⁸ **tn** The Hebrew text uses the perfect tense of *שָׁמַר* (*shamar*) with a *vav* (ו) consecutive to continue the instruction of the preceding verse. It may be translated "and they shall keep" or "they must/are to keep," but in this context it refers to their appointed duties. The verb is followed by its cognate accusative – "they are to keep his keeping," or as it is often translated, "his charge." This would mean whatever Aaron needed them to do. But the noun is also used for the people in the next phrase, and so "charge" cannot be the meaning here. The verse is explaining that the Levites will have duties to perform to meet the needs of Aaron and the congregation.

¹⁹ **tn** The form is the Qal infinitive construct from *אָוַד* (*avad*, "to serve, to work"); it is taken here as a verbal noun and means "by (or in) serving" (see R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 36, §195). This explains the verb "keep [his charge]." Here too the form is followed by a cognate accusative; they will be there to "serve the service" or "work the work."

ernacle. **3:8** And they are responsible for all the furnishings of the tent of meeting, and for the needs of the Israelites, as they serve¹ in the tabernacle. **3:9** You are to assign² the Levites to Aaron and his sons; they will be assigned exclusively³ to him out of all⁴ the Israelites. **3:10** So you are to appoint Aaron and his sons, and they will be responsible for their priesthood,⁵ but the unauthorized person⁶ who comes near must be put to death.”

3:11 Then the LORD spoke to Moses: **3:12** “Look,⁷ I myself have taken the Levites from among the Israelites instead of⁸ every firstborn who opens the womb among the Israelites. So the Levites belong to me, **3:13** because all the firstborn are mine. When I destroyed⁹ all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I set apart for myself all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast. They belong to me. I am the LORD.”¹⁰

¹ **tn** The construction uses the infinitive construct (epexegetically) followed by its cognate accusative. It would convey “to serve the service of the tabernacle,” but more simply it may be rendered as “serving.” Their spiritual and practical service is to serve.

² **sn** The Levites had the duty of taking care of all the tabernacle and its furnishings, especially in times when it was to be moved. But they were also appointed to be gate-keepers (2 Kgs 22:4; 1 Chr 9:19) in order to safeguard the purity of the place and the activities that went on there. Their offices seem to have then become hereditary in time (1 Sam 1:3); they even took on more priestly functions, such as pronouncing the benediction (Deut 10:8). See further R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 348-49.

³ **tn** The verb נתתה (v^e*natattah*) is normally “give.” Here, though, the context refers to the assignment of the Levites to the priests for their duties. The form is the perfect tense with vav (ו) consecutive, continuing the sequence for the imperfect of instruction.

⁴ **tn** This emphasis is derived from the simple repetition of the passive participle, נתונים נתונים (*n^enumim n^enumim*). See GKC 396 §123.e. The forms serve as the predicate with the subject pronoun.

⁵ **tn** The Hebrew text simply has the preposition, “from the Israelites.”

⁶ **tc** The LXX includes the following words here: “and all things pertaining to the altar and within the veil.” Cf. Num 18:7.

⁷ **tn** The word is זָר (*zar*), usually rendered “stranger, foreigner, pagan.” But in this context it simply refers to anyone who is not a Levite or a priest, an unauthorized person or intruder in the tabernacle. That person would be put to death.

⁸ **tn** The particle הִנֵּה (*hinneh*) here carries its deictic force, calling attention to the fact that is being declared. It is underscoring the fact that the LORD himself chose Levi.

⁹ **tn** Literally “in the place of.”

¹⁰ **tn** The form חָבַטִי (*hakkoti*) is the Hiphil infinitive construct of the verb חָבַט (*nakhah*, “to strike, smite, attack”). Here, after the idiomatic “in the day of,” the form functions in an adverbial clause of time – “when I destroyed.”

¹¹ **sn** In the Exodus event of the Passover night the principle of substitution was presented. The firstborn child was redeemed by the blood of the Lamb and so belonged to God, but then God chose the Levites to serve in the place of the firstborn. The ritual of consecrating the firstborn son to the LORD was nevertheless carried out, even with Jesus, the firstborn son of Mary (Luke 2:22-23).

The Numbering of the Levites

3:14 Then the LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai: **3:15** “Number the Levites by their clans¹¹ and their families; every male from a month old and upward you are to number.”¹² **3:16** So Moses numbered them according to the word¹³ of the LORD, just as he had been commanded.¹⁴

The Summary of Families

3:17 These were the sons¹⁵ of Levi by their names: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

3:18 These are the names of the sons of Gershon by their families: Libni and Shimei. **3:19** The sons of Kohath by their families were: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. **3:20** The sons of Merari by their families were Mahli and Mushi. These are the families of the Levites by their clans.

The Numbering of the Gershonites

3:21 From Gershon came the family of the Libnites and the family of the Shimeites; these were the families of the Gershonites. **3:22** Those of them who were numbered, counting every male from a month old and upward, were 7,500. **3:23** The families of the Gershonites were to camp behind the tabernacle toward the west. **3:24** Now the leader¹⁶ of the clan¹⁷ of the Gershonites was Eliasaph son of Lael.

3:25 And¹⁸ the responsibilities of the Gershonites in the tent of meeting included the tabernacle, the tent with its covering, the curtain at the entrance of the tent of meeting, **3:26** the hangings of the courtyard,¹⁹ the curtain at the entrance to the courtyard that surrounded the tabernacle and the altar, and their ropes, plus all the service connected with these things.²⁰

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “the house of their fathers.” So also in v. 20.

¹² **tn** *Heb* “you are to/shall number them.”

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “at the mouth of the LORD.”

¹⁴ **tn** The Pual perfect may be given the past perfect translation in this sentence because the act of commanding preceded the act of numbering.

¹⁵ **tn** The word “sons of” does at the outset refer to the sons of Levi. But as the listing continues the expression refers more to the family groups of the various descendants.

¹⁶ **tn** The vav (ו) disjunctive on the noun at the beginning of the verse here signals a greater emphasis on the individual rather than another item in the numbering of the clans.

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* “a father’s house.” So also in vv. 30, 35.

¹⁸ **tn** The disjunctive vav (ו) here introduces a new section, listing the various duties of the clan in the sanctuary. The Gershonites had a long tradition of service here. In the days of David Asaph and his family were prominent as musicians. Others in the clan controlled the Temple treasuries. But in the wilderness they had specific oversight concerning the tent structure, which included the holy place and the holy of holies.

¹⁹ **tc** The phrases in this verse seem to be direct objects without verbs. *BHS* suggests deleting the sign of the accusative (for which see P. P. Saydon, “Meanings and Uses of the Particle הַסֵּ,” *VT* 14 [1964]: 263-75).

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* “for all the service of it [them].”

The Numbering of the Kohathites

3:27 From Kohath came the family of the Amramites, the family of the Izharites, the family of the Hebronites, and the family of the Uzzielites; these were the families of the Kohathites.⁴ **3:28** Counting every male from a month old and upward, there were 8,600. They were responsible for the care² of the sanctuary. **3:29** The families of the Kohathites were to camp on the south side of the tabernacle. **3:30** Now the leader of the clan of the families of the Kohathites was Elizaphan son of Uzziel.

3:31 Their responsibilities included the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, and the utensils of the sanctuary with which they ministered,³ the curtain, and all their service.⁴ **3:32** Now the head of all the Levitical leaders⁵ was Eleazar son of Aaron the priest. He was appointed over those who were responsible⁶ for the sanctuary.

The Numbering of Merari

3:33 From Merari came the family of the Mahlites and the family of the Mushites; these were⁷ the families of Merari. **3:34** Those of them who were numbered, counting every male from a month old and upward, were 6,200. **3:35** Now the leader of the clan of the families of Merari was Zuriel son of Abihail. These were to camp on the north side of the tabernacle.

3:36 The appointed responsibilities of the Merarites included the frames of the tabernacle, its crossbars, its posts, its sockets, its utensils,

plus all the service connected with these things,⁸ **3:37** and the pillars of the courtyard all around, with their sockets, their pegs, and their ropes.

3:38 But those who were to camp in front of the tabernacle on the east, in front of the tent of meeting, were Moses, Aaron,⁹ and his sons. They were responsible for the needs¹⁰ of the sanctuary and for the needs of the Israelites, but the unauthorized person who approached was to be put to death. **3:39** All who were numbered of the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron numbered by the word¹¹ of the LORD, according to their families, every male from a month old and upward, were 22,000.¹²

The Substitution for the Firstborn

3:40 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Number all the firstborn males of the Israelites from a month old and upward, and take¹³ the number of their names. **3:41** And take¹⁴ the Levites for me – I am the LORD – instead of all the firstborn males among the Israelites, and the livestock of the Levites instead of all the firstborn of the livestock of the Israelites.” **3:42** So Moses numbered all the firstborn males among the Israelites, as the LORD had commanded him. **3:43** And all the firstborn males, by the number of the names from a month old and upward, totaled 22,273.

3:44 Then the LORD spoke to Moses: **3:45** “Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn males among the Israelites, and the livestock of the Levites instead of their livestock. And the Levites will be mine. I am the LORD. **3:46** And for the redemption of the 273 firstborn males of the Israelites who exceed the number of the Levites, **3:47** collect¹⁵ five shekels for each¹⁶ one

¹ **sn** Both Moses and Aaron came from this line (6:16-20). During the Hebrew monarchy this branch of the line of Levi was exemplary in music (1 Chr 6:33-48). They were also helpful to Hezekiah in his reforms (1 Chr 29:12-14).

² **tn** The construction here is a little different. The Hebrew text uses the participle in construct plural: שֹׁמְרֵי (shom'rey, literally “keepers of”). The form specifies the duties of the 8,600 Kohathites. The genitive that follows this participle is the cognate מִשְׁמֶרֶת (mishmeret) that has been used before. So the expression indicates that they were responsible for the care of this part of the cult center. There is no reason to delete one of the forms (as does J. A. Paterson, *Numbers*, 42), for the repetition stresses the central importance of their work.

³ **tn** The verb is יָשָׁרוּ (y'shar'u, “they will serve/minister”). The imperfect tense in this place, however, probably describes what the priests would do, what they used to do. The verb is in a relative clause: “which they would serve with them,” which should be changed to read “with which they would serve.”

⁴ **tn** The word is literally “its [their] service.” It describes all the implements that were there for the maintenance of these things.

⁵ **tn** The Hebrew construction has “the leader of the leaders of” (וְנִשְׂאֵי וְנִשְׂאֵי, un'si' n'si'ey).

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “the keepers of the responsibility” (שֹׁמְרֵי מִשְׁמֶרֶת, shom'rey mishmeret). The participle is a genitive specifying the duty to which he was appointed (thing possessed); its cognate genitive emphasizes that their responsibility was over the holy place.

⁷ **tn** The Hebrew text has “these they the families of Merari.” The independent personal pronoun has an anaphoric use, somewhat equivalent to the copula “and” (see R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 23, §115).

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “and all their service.” This could possibly be a hendiadys: “and all their working tools.” However, the parallel with v. 26 suggests this is a separate phrase.

⁹ **tc** In some Hebrew mss and Smr “and Aaron” is not in the verse. The omission arose probably by scribal error with such repetitious material that could easily give rise to variant traditions.

¹⁰ **tn** Here again the verb and its cognate noun are used: keeping the keep, or keeping charge over, or taking responsibility for the care of, or the like.

¹¹ **tn** Here again the Hebrew has “at the mouth of,” meaning in accordance with what the LORD said. So also in v. 51.

¹² **tn** The total is a rounded off number; it does not duplicate the precise total of 22,300. Some modern scholars try to explain it by positing an error in v. 28, suggesting that “six” should be read as “three” (שֶׁשׁ [shesh] as שְׁלוֹשִׁי [shaloshi]).

¹³ **tn** The verb נָסַף (nasa', “take”) has here the sense of collect, take a census, or register the names.

¹⁴ **tn** The verb is the perfect tense with *vav* (ו) consecutive; it carries forward the instructions from the preceding verse. The verb “take” now has the sense of appointing or designating the Levites.

¹⁵ **tn** The verb again is the perfect tense in sequence; the meaning of “take” may be interpreted here with the sense of “collect.”

¹⁶ **tn** The idea is expressed simply by repetition: “take five, five, shekels according to the skull.” They were to collect five shekels for each individual.

individually; you are to collect¹ this amount² in the currency of the sanctuary shekel (this shekel is twenty gerahs).³ **3:48** And give the money for the redemption of the excess number of them to Aaron and his sons.”

3:49 So Moses took the redemption money⁴ from those who were in excess of those redeemed by the Levites. **3:50** From the firstborn males of the Israelites he collected the money, 1,365 shekels, according to the sanctuary shekel. **3:51** Moses gave the redemption money to Aaron and his sons, according to the word of the LORD, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

The Service of the Kohathites

4:1⁵ Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron: **4:2** “Take a census⁶ of the Kohathites from among the Levites, by their families and by their clans, **4:3** from thirty years old and upward to fifty years old, all who enter the company⁷ to do the work in the tent of meeting. **4:4** This is the service of the Kohathites in the tent of meeting, relating to the most holy things.⁸ **4:5** When it is time for the camp to journey,⁹ Aaron and his sons must come and take down the screening

¹ **tn** The verb form now is the imperfect of instruction or legislation.

² **tn** *Heb* “them,” referring to the five shekels.

³ **sn** The sanctuary shekel was first mentioned in Exod 30:13. The half-shekel of Exod 38:26 would then be 10 gerahs. Consequently, the calculations would indicate that five shekels was about two ounces of silver for each person. See R. B. Y. Scott, “Weights and Measures of the Bible,” *BA* 22 (1951): 22-40, and “The Scale-Weights from Ophel, 1963-1964,” *PEQ* 97 (1965): 128-39.

⁴ **sn** The word used is “silver.” Coins were not in existence until after 700 B.C. (starting with Lydia).

⁵ **sn** The chapter has four main parts to it: Kohathites (1-20), Gershonites (21-28), Merarites (29-33) and the census of the Levites (34-49).

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “lift up the head.” The form *נָסַח* (*naso*) is the Qal infinitive absolute functioning here as a pure verb form. This serves to emphasize the basic verbal root idea (see GKC 346 §113.bb).

⁷ **sn** The census of chapter 3 was to register all male Levites from a month old and up. It arranged the general duties of each of the tribes. The second census of Levites now will focus on those between 30 and 50 years of age, those who were actually in service. These are the working Levites. The duties here will be more specific for each of the families. The Kohathites, although part of the ordinary ministry of Levites, were a special group chosen to handle the most holy furnishings. J. Milgrom shows three aspects of their service: (1) skilled labor (*בְּלִיָּאָה*, *m²la/khah*) or “work,” (2) physical labor (*בְּבִיָּה*, “*avodah*) or “service,” and (3) assisting the priests (*שָׂרָה*, *shareh*) or “ministering” (see his *Studies in Levitical Terminology*, 1:60-70).

⁷ **tn** The word “company” is literally “host, army” (*צְבָא*, *tsava*). The repetition of similar expressions makes the translation difficult: *Heb* “all [who] come to the host to do work in the tent.”

⁸ **tn** The Hebrew text simply has “the holy of holies,” or “the holy of the holy things” (*קֹדֶשׁ הַקֳּדָשִׁים*, *qodesh haqqodashim*). The context indicates that this refers to all the sacred furnishings.

⁹ **tn** The Hebrew text uses the infinitive construct in an adverbial clause of time; literally it says “in the journeying of the camp.” The genitive in such constructions is usually the subject. Here the implication is that people would be preparing to transport the camp and its equipment.

curtain and cover the ark of the testimony with it. **4:6** Then they must put over it a covering of fine leather¹⁰ and spread over that a cloth entirely of blue, and then they must insert its poles.

4:7 “On the table of the presence¹¹ they must spread a blue¹² cloth, and put on it the dishes, the pans, the bowls, and the pitchers for pouring, and the Bread of the Presence must be on it continually. **4:8** They must spread over them a scarlet cloth, and cover the same with a covering of fine leather; and they must insert its poles.

4:9 “They must take a blue cloth and cover the lampstand of the light, with its lamps, its wick-trimmers, its trays, and all its oil vessels, with which they service it. **4:10** Then they must put it with all its utensils in a covering of fine leather, and put it on a carrying beam.¹³

4:11 “They must spread a blue cloth on the gold altar, and cover it with a covering of fine leather; and they must insert its poles. **4:12** Then they must take all the utensils of the service, with which they serve in the sanctuary, put them in a blue cloth, cover them with a covering of fine leather, and put them on a carrying beam. **4:13** Also, they must take away the ashes from the altar¹⁴ and spread a purple cloth over it. **4:14** Then they must place on it all its implements with which they serve there – the trays, the meat forks, the shovels, the basins, and all the utensils of the altar – and they must spread on it a covering of fine leather, and then insert its poles.¹⁵

¹⁰ **tn** The exact meaning of the Hebrew word here is difficult to determine. The term *תַּהַשׁ* (*takhash*) has been translated “badgers’ [skins]” by KJV. ASV has “sealskin” while RSV uses “goatskin”; NEB and NASB have “porpoise skin,” and NIV has “hides of sea cows.” This is close to “porpoise,” and seems influenced by the Arabic. The evidence is not strong for any of these meanings, and some of the suggestions would be problematic. It is possible the word is simply used for “fine leather,” based on the Egyptian *ts*. This has been followed by NRSV (“fine leather”) and NLT (“fine goatskin leather”) along with the present translation. See further *HALOT* 1720-21 s.v. *תַּהַשׁ*.

¹¹ **sn** The Hebrew actually has the “table of faces,” and this has been traditionally rendered “table of shewbread.”

¹² **tn** The Greek has “violet” instead of blue. This is also the case in vv. 8, 10, and 14.

¹³ **tn** The “pole” or “bar” (*מוֹט*, *mot*) is of a different style than the poles used for transporting the ark. It seems to be a flexible bar carried by two men with the implements being transported tied to the bar. The NEB suggests the items were put in a bag and slung over the bar, but there is no indication of the manner.

¹⁴ **tc** The Greek text has “and he must place the cover upon the altar” instead of “and they must take away the ashes from the altar.” The verb is the Piel form; its nuance seems to be privative, i.e., stating that the object is deprived of the material – the ashes are removed. This is the main altar in the courtyard.

¹⁵ **tc** For this passage the Greek and Smr have a substantial addition concerning the purple cloth for the laver and its base, and a further covering of skin (see D. W. Gooding, “On the Use of the LXX for Dating Midrashic Elements in the Targums,” *JTS* 25 [1974]: 1-11).

4:15 “When Aaron and his sons have finished⁴ covering² the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is ready to journey, then³ the Kohathites will come to carry them;⁴ but they must not touch⁵ any⁶ holy thing, or they will die.⁷ These are the responsibilities⁸ of the Kohathites with the tent of meeting.

4:16 “The appointed responsibility of Eleazar son of Aaron the priest is for the oil for the light, and the spiced incense, and the daily grain offering, and the anointing oil; he also has⁹ the appointed responsibility over all the tabernacle with¹⁰ all that is in it, over the sanctuary and over all its furnishings.”¹¹

4:17 Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron: 4:18 “Do not allow the tribe of the families of the Kohathites to be cut off¹² from among the Levites; 4:19 but in order that they will live¹³ and not die when they approach the most holy things, do this for them: Aaron and his sons will go in and appoint¹⁴ each man¹⁵ to his service and his responsibility. 4:20 But the Kohathites¹⁶ are

not to go in to watch while the holy things are being covered, or they will die.”

The Service of the Gershonites

4:21 Then the LORD spoke to Moses: 4:22 “Also take a census of the Gershonites, by their clans and by their families. 4:23 You must number them from thirty years old and upward to fifty years old, all who enter the company to do the work of the tent of meeting. 4:24 This is the service of the families of Gershonites, as they serve¹⁷ and carry it. 4:25 They must carry the curtains for the tabernacle and the tent of meeting with its covering, the covering of fine leather that is over it, the curtains for the entrance of the tent of meeting, 4:26 the hangings for the courtyard, the curtain for the entrance of the gate of the court,¹⁸ which is around the tabernacle and the altar, and their ropes, along with all the furnishings for their service and everything that is made for them. So they are to serve.¹⁹

4:27 “All the service of the Gershonites, whether²⁰ carrying loads²¹ or for any of their work, will be at the direction of²² Aaron and his sons. You will assign them all their tasks²³ as their responsibility. 4:28 This is the service of the families of the Gershonites concerning the tent of meeting. Their responsibilities will be under the authority²⁴ of Ithamar son of Aaron the priest.²⁵

The Service of the Merarites

4:29 “As for the sons of Merari, you are to number them by their families and by their clans. 4:30 You must number them from thirty years old and upward to fifty years old, all who enter the company to do the work of the tent of meeting. 4:31 This is what they are responsible

¹ tn The verb form is the Piel perfect with a vav (ו) consecutive; it continues the future sequence, but in this verse forms a subordinate clause to the parallel sequential verb to follow.

² tn The Piel infinitive construct with the preposition serves as the direct object of the preceding verbal form, answering the question of what it was that they finished.

³ tn Heb “after this.”

⁴ tn The form is the Qal infinitive construct from נָסַף (nasa), “to lift, carry”; here it indicates the purpose clause after the verb “come.”

⁵ tn The imperfect tense may be given the nuance of negated instruction (“they are not to”) or negated obligation (“they must not”).

⁶ tn Here the article expresses the generic idea of any holy thing (R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 19, §92).

⁷ tn The verb is the perfect tense with a vav (ו) consecutive, following the imperfect tense warning against touching the holy thing. The form shows the consequence of touching the holy thing, and so could be translated “or they will die” or “lest they die.” The first is stronger.

⁸ tn The word מַשָּׂא (masa) is normally rendered “burden,” especially in prophetic literature. It indicates the load that one must carry, whether an oracle, or here the physical responsibility.

⁹ tn This is supplied to the line to clarify “appointed.”

¹⁰ tn Heb “and.”

¹¹ sn One would assume that he would prepare and wrap these items, but that the Kohathites would carry them to the next place.

¹² sn The verb is simply the Qal, “do not cut off.” The context calls for a permissive nuance – “do not let them be cut off.” It was a difficult task to be handling the holy things correctly; Moses and Aaron were to see to it that they did it right and did not handle the objects, that is, Moses and Aaron were to safeguard their lives by making certain that proper procedures were followed.

¹³ tn The word order is different in the Hebrew text: Do this...and they will live. Consequently, the verb “and they will live” is a perfect tense with a vav (ו) consecutive to express the future consequence of “doing this” for them.

¹⁴ tn The perfect tense with vav (ו) consecutive continues the instruction for Aaron.

¹⁵ tn The distributive sense is obtained by the repetition, “a man” and “a man.”

¹⁶ tn In the Hebrew text the verse has as the subject “they,” but to avoid confusion the antecedent has been clarified in the translation.

¹⁷ tn The two forms are the infinitive construct and then the noun: “to serve and for the burden.” They are to serve and they are to take the responsibility. The infinitive is explaining the verb.

¹⁸ tc This whole clause is not in the Greek text; it is likely missing due to homoioteleuton.

¹⁹ tn The work of these people would have been very demanding, since the size and weight of the various curtains and courtyard hangings would have been great. For a detailed discussion of these, see the notes in the book of Exodus on the construction of the items.

²⁰ tn The term “whether” is supplied to introduce the enumerated parts of the explanatory phrase.

²¹ tn Here again is the use of the noun “burden” in the sense of the loads they were to carry (see the use of carts in Num 7:7).

²² tn The expression is literally “upon/at the mouth of” (עַל־פִּי, ‘al-pi); it means that the work of these men would be under the direct orders of Aaron and his sons.

²³ tn Or “burden.”

²⁴ tn Or “the direction” (NASB, TEV); Heb “under/by the hand of.” The word “hand” is often used idiomatically for “power” or “authority.” So also in vv. 33, 37, 45, 48.

²⁵ sn The material here suggests that Eleazar had heavier responsibilities than Ithamar, Aaron’s fourth and youngest son. It is the first indication that the Zadokite Levites would take precedence over the Ithamar Levites (see 1 Chr 24:3-6).

to carry as their entire service in the tent of meeting: the frames¹ of the tabernacle, its crossbars, its posts, its sockets, 4:32 and the posts of the surrounding courtyard with their sockets, tent pegs, and ropes, along with all their furnishings and everything for their service. You are to assign by names the items that each man is responsible to carry.² 4:33 This is the service of the families of the Merarites, their entire service concerning the tent of meeting, under the authority of Ithamar son of Aaron the priest.”

Summary

4:34 So Moses and Aaron and the leaders of the community numbered the Kohathites by their families and by clans, 4:35 from thirty years old and upward to fifty years old, everyone who entered the company for the work in the tent of meeting; 4:36 and those of them numbered by their families were 2,750. 4:37 These were those numbered from the families of the Kohathites, everyone who served in the tent of meeting, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the word of the LORD by the authority of Moses.

4:38 Those numbered from the Gershonites, by their families and by their clans, 4:39 from thirty years old and upward to fifty years old, everyone who entered the company for the work in the tent of meeting – 4:40 those of them numbered by their families, by their clans, were 2,630. 4:41 These were those numbered from the families of the Gershonites, everyone who served in the tent of meeting, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the word of the LORD.

4:42 Those numbered from the families of the Merarites, by their families, by their clans, 4:43 from thirty years old and upward to fifty years old, everyone who entered the company for the work in the tent of meeting – 4:44 those of them numbered by their families were 3,200. 4:45 These are those numbered from the families of the Merarites, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the word of the LORD by the authority of Moses.

4:46 All who were numbered of the Levites, whom Moses, Aaron, and the leaders of Israel numbered by their families and by their clans, 4:47 from thirty years old and upward to fifty years old, everyone who entered to do the work of service and the work of carrying³ relating to

the tent of meeting – 4:48 those of them numbered were 8,580. 4:49 According to the word of the LORD they were numbered,⁴ by the authority of Moses, each according to his service and according to what he was to carry.⁵ Thus were they numbered by him,⁶ as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Separation of the Unclean

5:1⁷ Then the LORD spoke to Moses: 5:2 “Command the Israelites to expel⁸ from the camp every leper,⁹ everyone who has a

one place to the next.

⁴ **tn** The verb is the simple perfect tense – “he numbered them.” There is no expressed subject; therefore, the verb can be rendered as a passive.

⁵ **tn** Or “his burden.”

⁶ **tn** The passive form simply reads “those numbered by him.” Because of the cryptic nature of the word, some suggest reading a preterite, “and they were numbered.” This is supported by the Greek, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate. It would follow in the emendation that the relative pronoun be changed to “just as” (כַּאֲשֶׁר, *ka'asher*). The MT is impossible the way it stands; it can only be rendered into smooth English by adding something that is missing.

⁷ **sn** The fifth chapter falls into four main parts: separation of the unclean (vv. 1-4), restitution for sin (vv. 5-10), the jealousy ordeal (vv. 11-28), and the summary (vv. 29-31). There is a good deal of literature on the biblical theme of holiness (for which see the notes on Leviticus primarily). But with regard to this chapter, see (with caution), Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*; J. Neusner, *The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism*; and K. Milgrom, “Two Kinds of *ḥaṭṭā't*,” *VT* 26 (1976): 333-37.

⁸ **tn** The construction uses the Piel imperative followed by this Piel imperfect/jussive form; it is here subordinated to the preceding volitive, providing the content of the command. The verb שָׁלַח (*shalakh*) in this verbal stem is a strong word, meaning “expel, put out, send away, or release” (as in “let my people go”).

⁹ **sn** The word צָרַע (*tsarua'*), although translated “leper,” does not primarily refer to leprosy proper (i.e., Hansen’s disease). The RSV and the NASB continued the KJV tradition of using “leper” and “leprosy.” More recent studies have concluded that the Hebrew word is a generic term covering all infectious skin diseases (including leprosy when that actually showed up). True leprosy was known and feared certainly by the time of Amos (ca. 760 B.C.). There is evidence that the disease was known in Egypt by 1500 B.C. So this term would include that disease in all probability. But in view of the diagnosis and healing described in Leviticus 13 and 14, the term must be broader. The whole basis for the laws of separation may be found in the book of Leviticus. The holiness of the LORD who dwelt among his people meant that a high standard was imposed on them for their living arrangements as well as access to the sanctuary. Anything that was corrupted, diseased, dying, or contaminated was simply not compatible with the holiness of God and was therefore excluded. This is not to say that it was treated as sin, or the afflicted as sinners. It simply was revealing – and safeguarding – the holiness of the LORD. It thus provided a revelation for all time that in the world to come nothing unclean will enter into the heavenly sanctuary. As the Apostle Paul says, we will all be changed from this corruptible body into one that is incorruptible (1 Cor 15:53). So while the laws of purity and holiness were practical for the immediate audience, they have far-reaching implications for theology. The purity regulations have been done away with in Christ – the problem is dealt with differently in the new covenant. There is no earthly temple, and so the separation laws are not in force. Wisdom would instruct someone with an infectious disease to isolate, however. But just because the procedure is fulfilled in Christ does not mean that believers today are fit for glory just as they are. On the contrary, they must be

¹ **sn** More recent studies have concluded that these “boards” were made of two long uprights joined by cross-bars (like a ladder). They were frames rather than boards, meaning that the structure under the tent was not a solid building. It also meant that the “boards” would have been lighter to carry.

² **tn** *Heb* “you shall assign by names the vessels of the responsibility of their burden.”

³ **tn** The text multiplies the vocabulary of service here in the summary. In the Hebrew text the line reads literally: “everyone who came to serve the service of serving, and the service of burden.” The Levites came into service in the shrine, and that involved working in the sanctuary as well as carrying it from

discharge,¹ and whoever becomes defiled by a corpse.² 5:3 You must expel both men and women; you must put them outside the camp, so that³ they will not defile their camps, among which I live.” 5:4 So the Israelites did so, and expelled them outside the camp. As the LORD had spoken⁴ to Moses, so the Israelites did.

Restitution for Sin

5:5 Then the LORD spoke to Moses: 5:6 “Tell the Israelites, ‘When⁵ a man or a woman commits any sin that people commit,⁶ thereby breaking faith⁷ with the LORD, and that person is found guilty,⁸ 5:7 then he must confess⁹ his sin

that he has committed and must make full reparation,¹⁰ add one fifth to it, and give it to whom-ever he wronged.¹¹ 5:8 But if the individual has no close relative¹² to whom reparation can be made for the wrong, the reparation for the wrong must be paid to the LORD¹³ for the priest, in addition to the ram of atonement by which atonement is made for him. 5:9 Every offering¹⁴ of all the Israelites’ holy things that they bring to the priest will be his. 5:10 Every man’s holy things¹⁵ will be his; whatever any man gives the priest will be his.”

The Jealousy Ordeal

5:11¹⁶ The LORD spoke to Moses: 5:12 “Speak to the Israelites and tell them, ‘If any man’s wife goes astray and behaves unfaithfully toward him, 5:13 and a man has sexual relations¹⁷ with her¹⁸ without her husband knowing it,¹⁹ and it is hidden that she has defiled herself, since²⁰ there was no witness against her, nor was she caught – 5:14 and if jealous feelings²¹ come

changed before going into his presence. In like manner the sacrifices have been done away in Christ – not what they covered. Sin is still sin, even though it is dealt with differently on this side of the cross. But the ritual and the regulations of the old covenant at Sinai have been fulfilled in Christ.

1 sn The rules of discharge (Lev 12 and 15) include everything from menstruation to chronic diseases (see G. Wyper, *ISBE* 1:947, as well as R. K. Harrison, *Leviticus* (TOTC), 158-66, and G. J. Wenham, *Leviticus* (NICOT), 217-25.

2 tn The word is נֶפֶשׁ (*nefesh*), which usually simply means “[whole] life,” i.e., the soul in the body, the person. But here it must mean the corpse, the dead person, since that is what will defile (although it was also possible to become unclean by touching certain diseased people, such as a leper).

3 tn The imperfect tense functions here as a final imperfect, expressing the purpose of putting such folks outside the camp. The two preceding imperfects (repeated for emphasis) are taken here as instruction or legislation.

4 tn The perfect tense is here given a past perfect nuance to stress that the word of the LORD preceded the obedience.

5 sn This type of law is known as casuistic. The law is introduced with “when/if” and then the procedure to be adopted follows it. The type of law was common in the Law Code of Hammurabi.

6 tn The verse simply says “any sin of a man,” but the genitive could mean that it is any sin that a man would commit (subjective genitive), or one committed against a man (objective genitive). Because of the similarity with Lev 5:22 HT (6:3 ET), the subjective is better. The sin is essentially “missing the mark” which is the standard of the Law of the LORD. The sin is not in this case accidental or inadvertent. It means here simply failing to live up to the standard of the LORD. Since both men and women are mentioned in the preceding clause, the translation uses “people” here.

7 tn The verb is נִגְדַל (*na’al*), which means to “defraud, violate, trespass against,” or “to deal treacherously, do an act of treachery.” In doing any sin that people do, the guilty have been unfaithful to the LORD, and therefore must bring him a sacrifice.

8 tn The word used here for this violation is אָשָׁם (*’asham*). It can be translated “guilt, to be guilty”; it can also be used for the reparation offering. The basic assumption here is that the individual is in a state of sin – is guilty. In that state he or she feels remorse for the sin and seeks forgiveness through repentance. See further P. P. Saydon, “Sin Offering and Trespass Offering,” *CBQ* 8 (1946): 393-98; H. C. Thompson, “The Significance of the Term ‘Asham in the Old Testament,” *TGUOS* 14 (1953): 20-26.

9 tn The verb is the Hitpaal perfect tense with *vav* (ו) consecutive from the verb יָדָה (*yadah*), which in this stem means “acknowledge, confess sin,” but in the Hiphil (primarily) it means “praise, give thanks.” In both cases one is acknowledging something, either the sin, or the person and work of the LORD. Here the verb comes in the apodosis: “when...then he must confess.”

10 tn The verb is the Hiphil perfect of שׁוּב (*shuv*, “return”). Here it has the sense of “repay” with the word “reparation” (traditionally rendered “guilt offering,” but now is understood to refer to what was defrauded). The Levitical rulings called for the guilty to restore what was taken, if it could be made right, and pay a fifth more as a surcharge.

11 tn This is now the third use of אָשָׁם (*’asham*); the first referred to “guilt,” the second to “reparation,” and now “wronged.” The idea of “guilt” lies behind the second two uses as well as the first. In the second “he must repay his guilt” (meaning what he is guilty of); and here it can also mean “the one against whom he is guilty of sinning.”

12 sn For more information on the word, see A. R. Johnson, “The Primary Meaning of נֶאֱמָר,” *VTSup* 1 (1953): 67-77.

13 tc The editors of *BHS* prefer to follow the Greek, Syriac, and Latin and not read “for the LORD” here, but read a form of the verb “to be” instead. But the text makes more sense as it stands: The payment is to be made to the LORD for the benefit of the priests.

14 tn The Hebrew word תְּרוּמָה (*’erumah*) seems to be a general word for any offering that goes to the priests (see J. Milgrom, *Studies in Cultic Theology and Terminology* [SJLA 36], 159-72).

15 sn The “holy gifts” are described with the root of קָדַשׁ (*qodesh*) to convey that they were separate. Such things had been taken out of the ordinary and normal activities of life.

16 sn There is a good bit of bibliography here. See, e.g., J. M. Sasson, “Numbers 5 and the Waters of Judgment,” *BZ* 16 (1972): 249-51; and M. Fishbane, “Accusation of Adultery: A Study of Law and Scribal Practice in Numbers 5:11-31,” *HUCA* 45 (1974): 25-46.

17 tn Heb “and a man lies with her with the emission of semen.” This makes it clear that there was adultery involved, so that the going astray is going astray morally. The indication in the text is that if she had never behaved suspiciously the sin might not have been detected.

18 tc The sign of the accusative אֹתָהּ (*’otah*) is probably to be repositioned to the preposition with the suffix, אֵתָהּ (*’ittah*).

19 tn Heb “and it is concealed from the eyes of her husband.”

20 tn The noun clause beginning with the simple conjunction is here a circumstantial clause, explaining that there was no witness to the sin.

21 tn The Hebrew text has the construct case, “spirit of jealousy.” The word “spirit” here has the sense of attitude, mood, feelings. The word קִנְיָהּ (*qin’ah*) is the genitive of attribute, modifying what kind of feelings they are. The word means either “zeal” or “jealousy,” depending on the context. It is a passionate feeling to guard or protect an institution or relation-

over him and he becomes suspicious⁴ of his wife, when she is defiled,² or if jealous feelings come over him and he becomes suspicious of his wife, when she is not defiled – 5:15 then³ the man must bring his wife to the priest, and he must bring the offering required for her, one tenth of an ephah of barley meal; he must not pour olive oil on it or put frankincense on it, because it is a grain offering of suspicion,⁴ a grain offering for remembering,⁵ for bringing⁶ iniquity to remembrance.

5:16 “Then the priest will bring her near and have her stand⁷ before the LORD. 5:17 The priest will then take holy water⁸ in a pottery jar, and take some⁹ of the dust¹⁰ that is on the floor of the tabernacle, and put it into the water. 5:18 Then the priest will have the woman stand before the LORD, uncover the woman’s head, and put the grain offering for remembering in her hands, which is the grain offering of suspicion. The priest will hold in his hand the bitter water that brings a curse.¹¹ 5:19 Then the priest will put the

ship. It can also express strong emotional possessiveness such as envy and coveting. Here there is a feeling of jealousy, but no proof of infidelity.

1 tn The word is now used in the Piel stem; the connotation is certainly “suspicious,” for his jealousy seems now to have some basis, even if it is merely suspicion.

2 tn The noun clause begins with the conjunction and the pronoun; here it is forming a circumstantial clause, either temporal or causal.

3 tn All the conditions have been laid down now for the instruction to begin – if all this happened, then this is the procedure to follow.

4 tn The Hebrew word is “jealousy,” which also would be an acceptable translation here. But since the connotation is that suspicion has been raised about the other person, “suspicion” seems to be a better rendering in this context.

5 tn The word “remembering” is זָכָר (zikkaron); the meaning of the word here is not so much “memorial,” which would not communicate much, but the idea of bearing witness before God concerning the charges. The truth would come to light through this ritual, and so the attestation would stand. This memorial would bring the truth to light. It was a somber occasion, and so no sweet smelling additives were placed on the altar.

6 tn The final verbal form, מַזְכֶּרֶת (mazkeret), explains what the memorial was all about – it was causing iniquity to be remembered.

7 tn The verb is the Hiphil of the word “to stand.” It could be rendered “station her,” but that sounds too unnatural. This is a meeting between an accused person and the Judge of the whole earth.

8 tn This is probably water taken from the large bronze basin in the courtyard. It is water set apart for sacred service. “Clean water” (so NEB) does not capture the sense very well, but it does have the support of the Greek that has “pure running water.” That pure water would no doubt be from the bronze basin anyway.

9 tn Heb “from.” The preposition is used here with a partitive sense.

10 sn The dust may have come from the sanctuary floor, but it is still dust, and therefore would have all the pollutants in it.

11 tn The expression has been challenged. The first part, “bitter water,” has been thought to mean “water of contention” (so NEB), but this is not convincing. It has some support in the versions which read “contention” and “testing,” no doubt trying to fit the passage better. N. H. Snaith (*Leviticus and Numbers* [NCB], 129) suggests from an Arabic word that it was designed to cause an abortion – but that would raise an entirely different question, one of who the father of a child was. And that has not been introduced here. The water was

woman under oath and say to her, “If no other¹² man has had sexual relations with you, and if you have not gone astray and become defiled while under your husband’s authority, may you be free from this bitter water that brings a curse.¹³ 5:20 But if you¹⁴ have gone astray while under your husband’s authority, and if you have defiled yourself and some man other than your husband has had sexual relations with you. . . .”¹⁵ 5:21 Then the priest will put the woman under the oath of the curse¹⁶ and will say¹⁷ to her, “The LORD make you an attested curse¹⁸ among your people,¹⁹ if the LORD makes²⁰ your thigh fall away²¹ and your abdo-

“bitter” in view of the consequences it held for her if she was proven to be guilty. That is then enforced by the wordplay with the last word, the Piel participle הַמְאָרָרִים (*ham’ararim*). The bitter water, if it convicted her, would pronounce a curse on her. So she was literally holding her life in her hands.

sn This ancient ritual seems to have functioned like a lie detector test, with all the stress and tension involved. It can be compared to water tests in the pagan world, with the exception that in Israel it was stacked more toward an innocent verdict. It seems to have been a temporary provision, for this is the only place that it appears, and no provision is made for its use later. It may have served as a didactic force, warning more than actually legislating. No provision is made in it for a similar charge to be brought against the man, but in the case of the suspicion of the woman the man would be very hesitant to demand this test given the harshness on false witnessing in Israel. The passage remains a rather strange section of the Law.

12 tn The word “other” is implied, since the woman would not be guilty of having sexual relations with her own husband.

13 sn Although there would be stress involved, a woman who was innocent would have nothing to hide, and would be confident. The wording of the priest’s oath is actually designed to enable the potion to keep her from harm and not produce the physical effects it was designed to do.

14 tn The pronoun is emphatic – “but you, if you have gone astray.”

15 tn This is an example of the rhetorical device known as aposiopesis, or “sudden silence.” The sentence is broken off due to the intensity or emphasis of the moment. The reader is left to conclude what the sentence would have said.

16 sn For information on such curses, see M. R. Lehmann, “Biblical Oaths,” *ZAW* 81 (1969): 74-92; A. C. Thiselton, “The Supposed Power of Words in the Biblical Writings,” *JTS* 25 (1974): 283-99; and F. C. Fensham, “Malediction and Benediction in Ancient Vassal Treaties and the Old Testament,” *ZAW* 74 (1962): 1-9.

17 tn Heb “the priest will say.”

18 tn This interpretation takes the two nouns as a hendiadys. The literal wording is “the LORD make you a curse and an oath among the people.” In what sense would she be an oath? The point of the whole passage is that the priest is making her take an oath to see if she has been sinful and will be cursed.

19 sn The outcome of this would be that she would be quoted by people in such forms of expression as an oath or a curse (see Jer 29:22).

20 tn The construction uses the infinitive construct with the preposition to form an adverbial clause: “in the giving of the LORD. . . .” meaning, “if and when the LORD makes such and such to happen.”

21 tn TEV takes the expression “your thigh” as a euphemism for the genitals: “cause your genital organs to shrink.”

men swell;¹ 5:22 and this water that causes the curse will go² into your stomach, and make your abdomen swell and your thigh rot.”³ Then the woman must say, “Amen, amen.”⁴

5:23 “Then the priest will write these curses on a scroll and then scrape them off into the bitter water.⁵ 5:24 He will make the woman drink the bitter water that brings a curse, and the water that brings a curse will enter her to produce bitterness. 5:25 The priest will take the grain offering of suspicion from the woman’s hand, wave the grain offering before the LORD, and bring it to the altar. 5:26 Then the priest will take a handful of the grain offering as its memorial portion, burn it on the altar, and afterward make the woman drink the water. 5:27 When he has made her drink the water, then, if she has defiled herself and behaved unfaithfully toward her husband, the water that brings a curse will enter her to produce bitterness – her abdomen will swell, her thigh will fall away, and the woman will become a curse among her people. 5:28 But if the woman has not defiled herself, and is clean, then she will be free of ill effects⁶ and will be able to bear children.

5:29 “This is the law for cases of jealousy,⁷ when a wife, while under her husband’s authority, goes astray and defiles herself, 5:30 or when jealous feelings come over a man and he becomes suspicious of his wife; then he must have the woman stand before the LORD, and the priest will carry out all this law upon her. 5:31 Then the man will be free from iniquity, but that

woman will bear the consequences⁸ of her iniquity.”⁹

The Nazirite Vow

6:1¹⁰ Then the LORD spoke to Moses: 6:2 “Speak to the Israelites, and tell them, ‘When either a man or a woman¹¹ takes a special vow,¹² to take a vow¹³ as a Nazirite,¹⁴ to separate¹⁵ himself to the LORD, 6:3 he must separate¹⁶ himself from wine and strong drink, he must drink neither vinegar¹⁷ made from wine nor vinegar made from strong drink, nor may he drink any juice¹⁸ of grapes, nor eat fresh grapes or raisins.¹⁹

⁸ sn The text does not say what the consequences are. Presumably the punishment would come from God, and not from those administering the test.

⁹ tn The word “iniquity” can also mean the guilt for the iniquity as well as the punishment of consequences for the iniquity. These categories of meanings grew up through figurative usage (metonymies). Here the idea is that if she is guilty then she must “bear the consequences.”

¹⁰ sn This chapter can be divided into five sections: The vow is described in vv. 1-8, then the contingencies for defilement are enumerated in vv. 9-12, then there is a discussion of discharging the vows in vv. 13-20, and then a summary in v. 21; after this is the high priestly blessing (vv. 22-27). For information on the vow, see G. B. Gray, “The Nazirite,” *JTS* 1 (1899-1900): 201-11; Z. Weisman, “The Biblical Nazirite, Its Types and Roots,” *Tarbiz* 36 (1967): 207-20; and W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (OTL), 1:303-6.

¹¹ tn The formula is used here again: “a man or a woman – when he takes.” The vow is open to both men and women.

¹² tn The vow is considered special in view of the use of the verb יָפַל (yafli’), the Hiphil imperfect of the verb “to be wonderful, extraordinary.”

¹³ tn The construction uses the infinitive construct followed by the cognate accusative: “to vow a vow.” This intensifies the idea that the vow is being taken carefully.

¹⁴ tn The name of the vow is taken from the verb that follows; נָזַר (nazar) means “to consecrate oneself,” and so the Nazirite is a consecrated one. These are folks who would make a decision to take an oath for a time or for a lifetime to be committed to the LORD and show signs of separation from the world. Samuel was to be a Nazirite, as the fragment of the text from Qumran confirms – “he will be a נָזִיר (nazir) forever” (1 Sam 1:22).

¹⁵ tn The form of the verb is an Hiphil infinitive construct, forming the wordplay and explanation for the name Nazirite. The Hiphil is here an internal causative, having the meaning of “consecrate oneself” or just “consecrate to the LORD.”

¹⁶ tn The operative verb now will be the Hiphil of נָזַר (nazar); the consecration to the LORD meant separation from certain things in the world. The first will be wine and strong drink – barley beer (from Akkadian *sikaru*, a fermented beer). But the second word may be somewhat wider in its application than beer. The Nazirite, then, was to avoid all intoxicants as a sign of his commitment to the LORD. The restriction may have proved a hardship in the daily diet of the one taking the vow, but it spoke a protest to the corrupt religious and social world that used alcohol to excess.

¹⁷ tn The “vinegar” (חֶמֶץ, *homets*) is some kind of drink preparation that has been allowed to go sour.

¹⁸ tn This word occurs only here. It may come from the word “to water, to be moist,” and so refer to juice.

¹⁹ tn Heb “dried” (so KJV, ASV, NRSV).

¹ sn Most commentators take the expressions to be euphemisms of miscarriage or stillbirth, meaning that there would be no fruit from an illegitimate union. The idea of the abdomen swelling has been reinterpreted by NEB to mean “fall away.” If this interpretation stands, then the idea is that the woman has become pregnant, and that has aroused the suspicion of the husband for some reason. R. K. Harrison (*Numbers* [WEC], 111-13) discusses a variety of other explanations for diseases and conditions that might be described by these terms. He translates it with “miscarriage,” but leaves open what the description might actually be. Cf. NRSV “makes your uterus drop, your womb discharge.”

² tn The verb is the perfect tense with *vav* (ו) consecutive. It could be taken as a jussive following the words of the priest in the previous section, but it is more likely to be a simple future.

³ tn Heb “fall away.”

⁴ tn The word “amen” carries the idea of “so be it,” or “truly.” The woman who submits to this test is willing to have the test demonstrate the examination of God.

⁵ sn The words written on the scroll were written with a combination of ingredients mixed into an ink. The idea is probably that they would have been washed or flaked off into the water, so that she drank the words of the curse – it became a part of her being.

⁶ tn Heb “will be free”; the words “of ill effects” have been supplied as a clarification.

⁷ tn Heb “law of jealousies.”

6:4 All the days of his separation he must not eat anything that is produced by the grapevine, from seed¹ to skin.²

6:5 “All the days of the vow³ of his separation no razor may be used on his head⁴ until the time⁵ is fulfilled for which he separated himself to the LORD. He will be holy,⁶ and he must let⁷ the locks of hair on his head grow long.

6:6 “All the days that he separates himself to the LORD he must not contact⁸ a dead body.⁹ 6:7 He must not defile himself even¹⁰ for his father or his mother or his brother or his sister if they die,¹¹ because the separation¹² for¹³ his God is on his head. 6:8 All the days of his separation he must be holy to the LORD.

Contingencies for Defilement

6:9 “If anyone dies very suddenly¹⁴ beside him and he defiles¹⁵ his consecrated head,¹⁶ then he must shave his head on the day of his purification – on the seventh day he must shave it. 6:10 On the eighth day he is to bring¹⁷ two turtledoves or two young pigeons to the priest, to the entrance to the tent of meeting. 6:11 Then the priest will offer one for a purification offering¹⁸ and the other¹⁹ as a burnt offering,²⁰ and make atonement²¹ for him, because of his transgression²² in regard to the corpse. So he must reconsecrate²³ his head on that day. 6:12 He must rededicate²⁴ to the LORD the days of his separation and bring a male lamb in its first year as a

¹ tn This word also is rare, occurring only here.

² sn Here is another *hapax legomenon*, a word only found here. The word seems linked to the verb “to be clear,” and so may mean the thin skin of the grape. The reason for the strictness with these two words in this verse is uncertain. We know the actual meanings of the words, and the combination must form a merism here, meaning no part of the grape could be eaten. Abstaining from these common elements of food was to be a mark of commitment to the LORD. Hos 3:1 even denounces the raisin cakes as part of a pagan world, and eating them would be a violation of the oath.

³ tc The parallel expression in v. 8 (“all the days of his separation”) lacks the word “vow.” This word is also absent in v. 5 in a few medieval Hebrew manuscripts. The presence of the word in v. 5 may be due to dittography.

⁴ sn There is an interesting parallel between this prohibition and the planting of trees. They could not be pruned or trimmed for three years, but allowed to grow free (Lev 20:23). Only then could the tree be cut and the fruit eaten. The natural condition was to be a sign that it was the LORD’s. It was to be undisturbed by humans. Since the Nazirite was to be consecrated to the LORD, that meant his whole person, hair included. In the pagan world the trimming of the beard and the cutting of the hair was often a sign of devotion to some deity.

⁵ tn Heb “days.”

⁶ tn The word “holy” here has the sense of distinct, different, set apart.

⁷ tn The Piel infinitive absolute functions as a verb in this passage; the Piel carries the sense of “grow lengthy” or “let grow long.”

⁸ tn The Hebrew verb is simply “enter, go,” no doubt with the sense of go near.

⁹ tn The Hebrew has נֶפֶשׁ מֵת (nefesh met), literally a “dead person.” But since the word נֶפֶשׁ can also be used for animals, the restriction would be for any kind of corpse. Death was very much a part of the fallen world, and so for one so committed to the LORD, avoiding all such contamination would be a witness to the greatest separation, even in a family.

¹⁰ tn The vav (ו) conjunction at the beginning of the clause specifies the cases of corpses that are to be avoided, no matter how painful it might be.

¹¹ tn The construction uses the infinitive construct with the preposition and the suffixed subjective genitive – “in the dying of them” – to form the adverbial clause of time.

sn The Nazirite would defile himself, i.e., ruin his vow, by contacting their corpses. Jesus’ hard saying in Matt 8:22, “let the dead bury their own dead,” makes sense in the light of this passage – Jesus was calling for commitment to himself.

¹² tn The word “separation” here is metonymy of adjunct – what is on his head is long hair that goes with the vow.

¹³ tn The genitive could perhaps be interpreted as possession, i.e., “the vow of his God,” but it seems more likely that an objective genitive would be more to the point.

¹⁴ tn The construction uses the imperfect tense followed by the infinitive absolute, יָמוּת מֵת (yamut met). Because the verb is in a conditional clause, the emphasis that is to be given through the infinitive must stress the contingency. The point is “if someone dies – unexpectedly.” The next words underscore the suddenness of this.

¹⁵ tn The verb is the Piel perfect with a vav (ו) consecutive; it continues the idea within the conditional clause.

¹⁶ sn The expression is figurative for the vow that he took; the figure is the metonymy because the reference to the head is a reference to the long hair that symbolizes the oath.

¹⁷ tn The imperfect tense in this verse is still instructional rather than a simple future. The translations can vary, but the point that it is directive must be caught.

¹⁸ tn The traditional translation of חַטָּאת (khata’t) is “sin offering,” but it is more precise to render it “purification offering” (as with the other names of sacrifices) to show the outcome, not the cause of the offering (see Lev 4). Besides, this offering was made for ritual defilements (for which no confession was required) as well as certain sins (for which a confession of sin was required). This offering restored the person to the ritual state of purity by purifying the area into which he would be going.

¹⁹ tn The repetition of “the one...and the one” forms the distributive sense of “the one...and the other.”

²⁰ tn The burnt offering (Lev 1) reflects the essence of atonement: By this sacrifice the worshiper was completely surrendering to God, and God was completely accepting the worshiper.

²¹ tn The verb וְכִפֶּר (v^ekipper) is the Piel perfect with vav (ו) consecutive. The meaning of the verb is “to expiate, pacify, atone.” It refers to the complete removal of the barrier of fellowship between the person and God, and the total acceptance of that person into his presence. The idea of “to cover,” often linked to this meaning, is derived from a homonym, and not from this word and its usage.

²² tn The verb “to sin” has a wide range of meanings, beginning with the idea of “missing the way or the goal.” In view of the nature of this case – the prescribed ritual without confession – the idea is more that he failed to keep the vow’s stipulations in this strange circumstance than that he committed intentional sin.

²³ tn The verb simply means “to consecrate,” but because it refers to a vow that was interrupted, it must here mean to “reconsecrate.”

²⁴ tn The same idea is to be found now in the use of the word נָזַר (nazar), which refers to a recommitment after the vow was interrupted.

reparation offering,¹ but the former days will not be counted² because his separation³ was defiled.

Fulfilling the Vows

6:13 “Now this is the law of the Nazirite: When the days of his separation are fulfilled, he must be brought⁴ to the entrance of the tent of meeting, **6:14** and he must present his offering⁵ to the LORD: one male lamb in its first year without blemish for a burnt offering, one ewe lamb in its first year without blemish for a purification offering, one ram without blemish for a peace offering,⁶ **6:15** and a basket of bread made without yeast, cakes of fine flour mixed with olive oil, wafers made without yeast and smeared with olive oil, and their⁷ grain offering and their drink offerings.⁸

6:16 “Then the priest must present all these⁹ before the LORD and offer¹⁰ his purification offering and his burnt offering. **6:17** Then he must offer the ram as a peace offering¹¹ to the LORD, with the basket of bread made without yeast; the priest must also offer his grain offering and his drink offering.

1 tn The necessity of bringing the reparation offering was due to the reinstatement into the vow that had been interrupted.

2 tn Heb “will fall”; KJV “shall be lost”; ASV, NASB, NRSV “shall be void.”

3 tc The similar expression in v. 9 includes the word “head” (i.e., “his consecrated head”). The LXX includes this word in v. 12 as well.

4 tn The Hebrew text has “he/one shall bring him”; since there is no expressed subject, this verb should be taken in the passive sense – “he shall be brought.” Since the context suggests an obligatory nuance, the translation “he must be brought” has been used. Some scholars solve the problem by emending the Hebrew text here, but there is no manuscript evidence to support the emendation.

5 tn Heb “he shall offer his offering” – the object is a cognate accusative.

6 sn The peace offering שְׁלָמִים (*shelamim*) is instructed in Lev 3 and 7. The form is always in the plural. It was a sacrifice that celebrated the fact that the worshiper was at peace with God, and was not offered in order to make peace with God. The peace offering was essentially a communal meal in the presence of God. Some have tried to equate this offering with similar sounding names in Akkadian and Ugaritic (see B. A. Levine, *In the Presence of the Lord* [SJLA], 3-52), but the unique features of the Israelite sacrifice make this connection untenable.

7 tn The suffixes in the MT are plural in this verse, whereas in v. 17 they are singular. This seems to be a matter of stylistic choice, referring to whomever may be taking the vow.

8 sn The offerings for the termination of the Nazirite vow would not have been inexpensive. This indicates that the person making the short term vow may have had income, or have come from a wealthier section of society. Short term vows had to be considered carefully as this ruling required a good amount of food to be brought.

9 tn “all these” is supplied as the object.

10 tn Heb “make.”

11 tn The “peace offering” is usually written as “a sacrifice of peace” (וְבִה שְׁלָמִים, *zevakh shelamim*). The word “sacrifice” is related to the word “to slaughter,” and so indicates that this is a bloody offering in celebration of peace with God.

6:18 “Then the Nazirite must shave his consecrated head¹² at the entrance to the tent of meeting and must take the hair from his consecrated head and put it on the fire¹³ where the peace offering is burning.¹⁴ **6:19** And the priest must take the boiled shoulder of the ram, one cake made without yeast from the basket, and one wafer made without yeast, and put them on the hands of the Nazirite after he has shaved his consecrated head;¹⁵ **6:20** then the priest must wave them as a wave offering¹⁶ before the LORD; it is a holy portion for the priest, together with the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the raised offering.¹⁷ After this the Nazirite may drink¹⁸ wine.”

6:21 “This is the law¹⁹ of the Nazirite who vows to the LORD his offering according to his separation, as well as whatever else he can provide.²⁰ Thus he must fulfill²¹ his vow that he makes, according to the law of his separation.”

12 tn Some versions simply interpret this to say that he shaves his hair, for it is the hair that is the sign of the consecration to God. But the text says he shaves his consecrated head. The whole person is obviously consecrated to God – not just the head. But the symbolic act of cutting the hair shows that the vow has been completed (see Acts 21:23-24). The understanding of the importance of the hair in the ancient world has been the subject of considerable study over the years (see R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 436; and J. A. Thompson, “Numbers,” *New Bible Commentary: Revised*, 177).

13 sn Some commentators see this burning of the hair as an offering (McNeile, *Numbers*, 35; G. B. Gray, *Numbers* [ICC], 68). But others probably with more foundation see it as destroying something that has served a purpose, something that if left alone might be venerated (see R. de Vaux, *Israel*, 436).

14 tn Heb “which is under the peace offering.” The verse does not mean that the hair had to be put under that sacrifice and directly on the fire.

15 tn The line does not include the word “head”; it literally has “after the consecrating of himself his consecrated [head].” The infinitive construct is here functioning in the temporal clause with the suffix as the subject and the object following.

16 sn The ritual of lifting the hands filled with the offering and waving them in the presence of the LORD was designed to symbolize the transfer of the offering to God in the sight of all. This concludes the worshiper’s part; the offering now becomes the property of the priest – his priest’s due (or “raised/heave offering”).

17 sn The “wave offering” may be interpreted as a “special gift” to be transferred to the LORD, and the “heave offering” as a “special contribution” to God – the priest’s due. These two offerings have also inspired a good deal of study.

18 tn The imperfect tense here would then have the nuance of permission. It is not an instruction at this point; rather, the prohibition has been lifted and the person is free to drink wine.

19 tn Actually, “law” here means a whole set of laws, the basic rulings on this topic.

20 tn Heb “whatever else his hand is able to provide.” The imperfect tense has the nuance of potential imperfect – “whatever he can provide.”

21 tn Heb “according to the vow that he vows, so he must do.”

The Priestly Benediction

6:22¹ The LORD spoke to Moses: 6:23 “Tell Aaron and his sons, ‘This is the way² you are to bless³ the Israelites. Say⁴ to them:

6:24 “The LORD bless you⁵ and protect⁶ you;

6:25 The LORD make his face to shine upon you,
and be gracious to you;⁷

6:26 The LORD lift up his countenance upon you⁸

¹ **sn** This brief section records the blessing of the priest, especially the high priest after he emerges from the holy of holies to bless the people (see Lev 9:22). The two main elements in the oracle are “grace and peace.” It is probable that the Apostle Paul based his salutations on this oracle. For additional information, see L. J. Liebreich, “The Songs of Ascent and the Priestly Blessing,” *JBL* 74 (1955): 33-36; P. D. Miller, “The Blessing of God: An Interpretation of Num 6:22-27,” *Int* 29 (1975): 240-51; and A. Murtonen, “The Use and Meaning of the Words *ʾbārek* and *bʾrakah* in the Old Testament,” *VT* 9 (1959): 158-77.

² **tn** Or “thus.”

³ **tn** The Piel imperfect has the nuance of instruction. The participle “thus” explains that the following oracle is the form to use.

⁴ **tn** Here is the only use of the verb אָמַר (*amar*) as an infinitive absolute; it functions as a verb form, an imperative or an imperfect of instruction. Several commentators have attempted to emend the text to get around the difficulty, but such emendations are unnecessary.

⁵ **tn** The short blessing uses the jussive throughout, here the Piel jussive with a pronominal suffix. While the jussive has quite a range of nuances, including wish, desire, prayer, or greeting, the jussives here are stronger. The formal subject of the verb is the LORD, and the speaker pronouncing the blessing is the priest, notably after emerging from the holy of holies where atonement has been made. The LORD says in this passage that when the priest says this, then the LORD will bless them. The jussive then is an oracle, not a wish or a prayer. It is a declaration of what the LORD imparts. It is as binding and sure as a patriarchal blessing which once said officially could not be taken back. The priest here is then pronouncing the word of the LORD, declaring to the congregation the outcome of the atonement.

⁶ **tn** The verb “to keep” concerns the divine protection of the people; its basic meaning is “to exercise great care over,” “to guard,” or “to give attention to” (see *TWOT* 2:939). No doubt the priestly blessing informed the prayer and promise that makes up Ps 121, for the verb occurs six times in the eight verses. So in addition to the divine provision (“bless” basically means “enrich” in a number of ways) there is the assurance of divine protection.

⁷ **tn** Whereas the first line of the blessing had three Hebrew words, the second has five, and the third has seven. In this second line and the following third, the blessing takes the form of an emblem followed by the truth. For the LORD to make his face shine on them would mean to be gracious to them. M. Noth rightly calls this image of the shining face “a figure of speech for benevolence and favour” (*Numbers* [OTL], 59); see, for example, Pss 4:6; 31:16; 44:3; 67:1; 80:3, 7, 19; 119:135; Dan 9:17). The image may have its inspiration in the theophanies. The picture is of divine favor – the beaming face of a parent for his beloved.

⁸ **tn** The last line of the blessing also has first the image and then the parallel interpretation – for God to lift up his face is for God to give peace. The idea of the fallen face is one of anger (see Gen 4:6,7); and the idea of the hidden face is that of withholding support, favor, or peace (see Deut 31:18; Ps 30:8; Ps 44:25). If God lifts his face toward his people, it means he has given them peace – peace, prosperity, completeness, health, safety, general well-being, and the like.

and give you peace.”

6:27 So they will put my name⁹ on the Israelites, and I will bless them.”

The Leader's Offerings

7:1¹⁰ When Moses had completed setting up the tabernacle,¹¹ he anointed it and consecrated it and all its furnishings, and he anointed and consecrated the altar and all its utensils. 7:2 Then the leaders of Israel, the heads of their clans,¹² made an offering. They were the leaders of the tribes; they were the ones who had been supervising¹³ the numbering. 7:3 They brought¹⁴ their offering before the LORD, six covered carts¹⁵ and twelve oxen – one cart for every two of the leaders, and an ox for each one; and they presented them in front of the tabernacle.

The Distribution of the Gifts

7:4 Then the LORD spoke to Moses: 7:5 “Receive these gifts¹⁶ from them, that they may be¹⁷ used in doing the work¹⁸ of the tent of meeting;

⁹ **tn** The idea of their putting the name of Yahweh on the people is somewhat problematic. The pronouncing of the name of Yahweh in this context over the people was taken to be the effectual means of blessings. “Putting the name on them” is an expression that emphasizes the truth that he is their God and they are his people or that having his name is having his blessing.

¹⁰ **sn** This long and repetitious chapter has several parts to it: the introduction (vv. 1-3), the assigning of gifts (vv. 4-9), the time of presentation (vv. 10-11), and then the tribes (vv. 12-83), and then a summary (vv. 84-89).

¹¹ **tn** The construction of this line begins with the temporal indicator (traditionally translated “and it came to pass”) and then after the idiomatic “in the day of” (= “when”) uses the Piel infinitive construct from כָּלָה (*kalah*). The infinitive is governed by the subjective genitive, “Moses,” the formal subject of the clause. The object of the infinitive is the second infinitive, “to set up” (לָקַיִם, *ʾlhaqim*). This infinitive, the Hiphil, serves as the direct object, answering the question of what it was that Moses completed. The entire clause is an adverbial clause of time.

sn This chapter belongs chronologically after Lev 8:11, because Aaron and his sons were not yet made the celebrants and officiants of the new shrine (completed in Exodus). Here then chapters 7-9 are actually earlier than chapters 1-6, and form a supplement by adding information not found in Exodus and Leviticus. The first verse here recapitulates the first act of Moses in consecrating the shrine (Exod 30:23-31).

¹² **tn** *Heb* “the house of their fathers.”

¹³ **tn** The form is the Qal active participle from the verb “to stand” (עָמַד, *amad*). The form describes these leaders as “the ones standing over [the ones numbered].” The expression, along with the clear indication of the first census in chapter 1, shows that this was a supervisory capacity.

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “and they brought.”

¹⁵ **sn** For a discussion and drawings, see W. S. McCullough, *IBD* 1:540. But see also D. J. Wiseman, *IBD* 1:254.

¹⁶ **tn** The object is not in the Hebrew text, but has been supplied.

¹⁷ **tn** The verb is the perfect tense with *vav* (ו) consecutive; following the imperative, this could be given an independent volitive translation (“they shall be”), but more fittingly a subordinated translation expressing the purpose of receiving the gifts.

¹⁸ **tn** The sentence uses the infinitive construct expressing purpose, followed by its cognate accusative: “[that they may be] for doing the work of” (literally, “serving the service of”).

and you must give them to the Levites, to every man¹ as his service requires.”²

7:6 So Moses accepted the carts and the oxen and gave them to the Levites. **7:7** He gave two carts and four oxen to the Gershonites, as their service required; **7:8** and he gave four carts and eight oxen to the Merarites, as their service required, under the authority³ of Ithamar son of Aaron the priest. **7:9** But to the Kohathites he gave none, because the service of the holy things, which they carried⁴ on their shoulders, was their responsibility.⁵

The Time of Presentation

7:10 The leaders offered⁶ gifts⁷ for⁸ the dedication⁹ of the altar when it was anointed.¹⁰ And the leaders presented¹¹ their offering before the altar. **7:11** For the LORD said to Moses, “They must present their offering, one leader for each day,¹² for the dedication of the altar.”

The Tribal Offerings

7:12 The one who presented his offering on the first day was Nahshon son of Amminadab, from the tribe of Judah.¹³ **7:13** His offering was one silver platter weighing 130 shekels,¹⁴ and one silver sprinkling bowl weighing 70 shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel, each of them full of fine flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering; **7:14** one gold pan weighing 10 shekels, full of incense; **7:15** one young bull, one

ram, and one male lamb in its first year, for a burnt offering; **7:16** one male goat for a purification offering; **7:17** and for the sacrifice of peace offerings: two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs in their first year. This was the offering of Nahshon son of Amminadab.

7:18 On the second day Nethanel son of Zuar, leader of Issachar, presented an offering. **7:19** He offered for his offering one silver platter weighing 130 shekels and one silver sprinkling bowl weighing 70, both according to the sanctuary shekel, each of them full of fine flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering; **7:20** one gold pan weighing 10 shekels, full of incense; **7:21** one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb in its first year, for a burnt offering; **7:22** one male goat for a purification offering; **7:23** and for the sacrifice of peace offerings: two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs in their first year. This was the offering of Nethanel son of Zuar.

7:24 On the third day Eliab son of Helon, leader of the Zebulunites, presented an offering.¹⁵ **7:25** His offering was one silver platter weighing 130 shekels and one silver sprinkling bowl weighing 70 shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel, each of them full of fine flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering; **7:26** one gold pan weighing 10 shekels, full of incense; **7:27** one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb in its first year, for a burnt offering; **7:28** one male goat for a purification offering; **7:29** and for the sacrifice of peace offerings: two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs in their first year. This was the offering of Eliab son of Helon.

7:30 On the fourth day Elizur son of Shedeur, leader of the Reubenites, presented an offering. **7:31** His offering was one silver platter weighing 130 shekels and one silver sprinkling bowl weighing 70 shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel, each of them full of fine flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering; **7:32** one gold pan weighing 10 shekels, full of incense; **7:33** one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb in its first year, for a burnt offering; **7:34** one male goat for a purification offering; **7:35** and for the sacrifice of peace offerings: two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five lambs in their first year. This was the offering of Elizur son of Shedeur.

7:36 On the fifth day Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai, leader of the Simeonites, presented an offering. **7:37** His offering was one silver platter weighing 130 shekels and one silver sprinkling bowl weighing 70 shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel, each of them

¹ **tn** The noun *ish* (יִישׁ) is in apposition to the word “Levites,” and is to be taken in a distributive sense: “to the Levites, [to each] man according to his service.”

² **tn** The expression *kefi* (כַּפִּי) is “according to the mouth of.” Here, it would say “according to the mouth of his service,” which would mean “what his service calls for.”

³ **tn** *Heb* “hand.”

⁴ **tn** The verb is the imperfect tense, but it describes their customary activity – they had to carry, they used to carry.

⁵ **tn** *Heb* “upon them,” meaning “their duty.”

⁶ **tn** The verse begins with the preterite and *vav* (ו) consecutive: “and they offered.”

⁷ **tn** The direct object, “gifts,” is implied but not actually stated in the Hebrew text. It has been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons and for clarity.

⁸ **tn** The sign of the accusative here must indicate an adverbial accusative and not the direct object; they offered their gifts for the dedication of the altar.

⁹ **sn** Some commentators take the word “dedication” in the sense of a dedication gift, and so make it the direct object. Many modern scholars assume that this is a late word, belonging only in P, the Chronicler, and the heading of Ps 30 (a Davidic psalm).

¹⁰ **tn** The adverbial clause uses the Niphal infinitive construct as the main verb. The word is the well-known *mashakh* (מָשַׁח), “to anoint, smear”.

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “offered,” but this is redundant and has been translated as “presented” for stylistic reasons. The same phrase occurs in vv. 11 and 12.

¹² **tn** The distributive sense is achieved by repetition: “one leader for the day, one leader for the day.”

¹³ **sn** The tribe of Judah is listed first. It seems that it had already achieved a place of prominence based on the patriarchal promise of the Messiahship in Judah (Gen 49:10).

¹⁴ **tn** The word “shekels” has been supplied in the translation for clarity. So also in vv. 19, 20, 25, 26, 31, 32, 37, 38, 43, 44, 49, 50, 55, 56, 60, 62, 66, 68, 73, 74, 79, 85, 86.

¹⁵ **tn** The phrase “presented an offering” is not found in the Hebrew text at this point but has been supplied to clarify what action is being done. The same phrase is absent from the Hebrew text in the following verses which tell who makes the offerings (7:30, 36, 42, 48, 54, 60, 66, 72, 78).

full of fine flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering; **7:38** one gold pan weighing 10 shekels; **7:39** one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb in its first year, for a burnt offering; **7:40** one male goat for a purification offering; **7:41** and for the sacrifice of peace offerings: two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five lambs in their first year. This was the offering of Sheloumiel son of Zuri-shaddai.

7:42 On the sixth day Eliasaph son of Deuel, leader of the Gadites, presented an offering. **7:43** His offering was one silver platter weighing 130 shekels and one silver sprinkling bowl weighing 70 shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel, each of them full of fine flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering; **7:44** one gold pan weighing 10 shekels; **7:45** one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb in its first year, for a burnt offering; **7:46** one male goat for a purification offering; **7:47** and for the sacrifice of peace offerings: two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five lambs in their first year. This was the offering of Eliasaph son of Deuel.

7:48 On the seventh day Elishama son of Ammihud, leader of the Ephraimites, presented an offering. **7:49** His offering was one silver platter weighing 130 shekels and one silver sprinkling bowl weighing 70 shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel, each of them full of fine flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering; **7:50** one gold pan weighing 10 shekels, full of incense; **7:51** one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb in its first year, for a burnt offering; **7:52** one male goat for a purification offering; **7:53** and for the sacrifice of peace offerings: two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five lambs in their first year. This was the offering of Elishama son of Ammihud.

7:54 On the eighth day Gamaliel son of Pedahzur, leader of the Manassehites, presented an offering. **7:55** His offering was one silver platter weighing 130 shekels and one silver sprinkling bowl weighing 70 shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel, each of them full of fine flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering; **7:56** one gold pan weighing 10 shekels, full of incense; **7:57** one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb in its first year, for a burnt offering; **7:58** one male goat for a purification offering; **7:59** and for the sacrifice of peace offerings: two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five lambs in their first year. This was the offering of Gamaliel son of Pedahzur.

7:60 On the ninth day Abidan son of Gideon, leader of the Benjaminites, presented an offering. **7:61** His offering was one silver platter weighing 130 shekels and one silver sprinkling bowl weighing 70 shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel, each of them full of fine flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering; **7:62** one gold pan weighing 10 shekels, full of incense;

7:63 one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb in its first year, for a burnt offering; **7:64** one male goat for a purification offering; **7:65** and for the sacrifice of peace offerings: two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five lambs in their first year. This was the offering of Abidan son of Gideon.

7:66 On the tenth day Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai, leader of the Danites, presented an offering. **7:67** His offering was one silver platter weighing 130 shekels and one silver sprinkling bowl weighing 70 shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel, each of them full of fine flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering; **7:68** one gold pan weighing 10 shekels, full of incense; **7:69** one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb in its first year, for a burnt offering; **7:70** one male goat for a purification offering; **7:71** and for the sacrifice of peace offerings: two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five lambs in their first year. This was the offering of Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai.

7:72 On the eleventh day Pagiel son of Ocran, leader of the Asherites, presented an offering. **7:73** His offering was one silver platter weighing 130 shekels and one silver sprinkling bowl weighing 70 shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel, each of them full of fine flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering; **7:74** one gold pan weighing 10 shekels, full of incense; **7:75** one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb in its first year, for a burnt offering; **7:76** one male goat for a purification offering; **7:77** and for the sacrifice of peace offerings: two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five lambs in their first year. This was the offering of Pagiel son of Ocran.

7:78 On the twelfth day Ahira son of Enan, leader of the Naphtalites, presented an offering. **7:79** His offering was one silver platter weighing 130 shekels and one silver sprinkling bowl weighing 70 shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel, each of them full of fine flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering; **7:80** one gold pan weighing 10 shekels; **7:81** one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb in its first year, for a burnt offering; **7:82** one male goat for a purification offering; **7:83** and for the sacrifice of peace offerings: two bulls, five rams, five male goats, and five lambs in their first year. This was the offering of Ahira son of Enan.

Summary

7:84 This was the dedication for the altar from the leaders of Israel, when it was anointed: twelve silver platters, twelve silver sprinkling bowls, and twelve gold pans. **7:85** Each silver platter weighed 130 shekels, and each silver sprinkling bowl weighed 70 shekels. All the silver of the vessels weighed 2,400 shekels, according to the sanctuary shekel. **7:86** The twelve gold pans full of incense weighed 10 shekels each, according to the sanctuary shekel; all the gold of the pans weighed 120

shekels. 7:87 All the animals for the burnt offering were 12 young bulls, 12 rams, 12 male lambs in their first year, with their grain offering, and 12 male goats for a purification offering. 7:88 All the animals for the sacrifice for the peace offering were 24 young bulls, 60 rams, 60 male goats, and 60 lambs in their first year. These were the dedication offerings for the altar after it was anointed.¹

7:89 Now when Moses went into² the tent of meeting to speak with the LORD,³ he heard the voice speaking to him from above the atonement lid⁴ that was on the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubim.⁵ Thus he spoke to him.

Lighting the Lamps

8:1⁶ The LORD spoke to Moses: 8:2 “Speak to Aaron and tell him, ‘When you

set up⁷ the lamps, the seven lamps are to give light⁸ in front of the lampstand.’”

8:3 And Aaron did so; he set up the lamps to face toward the front of the lampstand, as the LORD commanded Moses. 8:4 This is how the lampstand was made:⁹ It was beaten work in gold;¹⁰ from its shaft to its flowers it was beaten work. According to the pattern which the LORD had shown Moses, so he made the lampstand.

The Separation of the Levites

8:5 Then the LORD spoke to Moses: 8:6 “Take the Levites from among the Israelites and purify¹¹ them. 8:7 And do this¹² to them to purify them: Sprinkle water of purification¹³ on them; then have them shave¹⁴ all their body¹⁵ and wash¹⁶ their clothes, and so purify themselves.¹⁷

¹ sn Even though the chapter seems wearisome and repetitious to the modern reader, it is a significant document. A. Rainey shows how it matches the exact ledgers of ancient sanctuaries (see ZPEB 5:202). The recording would have been done by the priestly scribes. Of the many points that can be observed here, it should not be missed that each tribe, regardless of its size or relative importance, was on equal footing before the LORD. Each tribe shared in the work of the LORD equally. Each tribe approached the sanctuary in precisely the same way on this memorable occasion. All such devotion to the work of the LORD was to receive the blessing of God.

² tn The adverbial clause of time is constructed with the infinitive construct of the verb “to enter” (בָּיָא, *bo'*) with the preposition and with the subjective genitive that follows serving as the subject of the clause. The verse is strategic in the structure of the book: At the completion of the dedication with the offerings Moses received more revelation from the LORD in the tent. This verse therefore lays the foundation for what follows.

³ ct The MT is obscure here, simply giving the purpose infinitive and the prepositional phrase (“with him”). But the following clause using the Hitpael of the same verb, introducing a reflexive sense: “then he heard the voice speaking with him.” The Greek clarified it by inserting “Lord” after the word “voice.” The editor of BHS favors emendation of the form to a Piel participle rather than the Hitpael of the MT (reading יְדַבֵּר [m^cdabber] instead of יְדַבֵּר [middabber], the Hitpael with assimilation). Most commentators agree with the change, assuming there was a mistaken pointing in the MT.

⁴ tn The Hebrew word כַּפֹּרֶת (*kapporet*) has been traditionally rendered “mercy seat,” but since the ark is the footstool (see Ps 132), this translation is somewhat misleading. The word is etymologically connected to the verb “to make atonement.” A technical translation would be “place of atonement” or “propitiatory”; a more common translation would be “cover, lid” – provided that the definition “to cover” does not get transferred to the verb “to atone,” for that idea belongs to a homonym. See also Exod 25:17.

⁵ tn The cherubim are the carved forms of the angels attached to the ark. They indicate the guarding role of this order of angels in the holy of holies. They were also embroidered on the curtains. For basic material see ZPEB 1:788-90, and R. K. Harrison, *ISBE* 1:642-43.

⁶ sn This chapter has three main sections to it: the lighting of the lamps (vv. 1-4), the separation of the Levites (vv. 5-22), and the work of the Levites (vv. 23-26). Many modern scholars assume that the chapter belongs to P and was added late. But the chapter reiterates some of the Mosaic material concerning the work of the Levites in the new sanctuary. For the chapter to make sense the historical setting must be accepted; if the historical setting is accepted, the chapter is necessary as part of that early legislation. For more reading, see M. Haran, “The Nature of the *ohel mo'edh* in the Pentateuchal Sources,” *JSS* 5 (1960): 50-65, and “The Priestly Image of the Tabernacle,” *HUCA* 36 (1965): 191-226; and C. L. Meyers, *The Tabernacle Menorah*.

⁷ tn The verb is יָלָחַ (*'alah*). The Hiphil infinitive construct functions in a temporal clause. The idea of arranging the lamps on the lampstand certainly involved raising the lamps and placing them on the tops of each shaft and branch. Some have taken the idea to mean cause the flame to go up, or light the lamps.

⁸ tn The imperfect tense forms part of the instruction, and so the translation has to indicate that. The instruction would seem obvious, but the light was to shine in the area immediately in front of the lampstand, so that it would illumine the way and illumine the table that was across the room (hence, “in front of”).

⁹ tn The Hebrew text literally has “and this is the work of the lampstand,” but that rendering does not convey the sense that it is describing how it was made.

¹⁰ sn The idea is that it was all hammered from a single plate of gold.

¹¹ tn The verb טָהַר (*tahar*) means that Moses was “to purify” or “to make ceremonially clean” the Levites so that they could enter the sanctuary and do the work prescribed for them. Whatever is “unclean” is not permitted in the sanctuary at all.

¹² tn Or, more literally, “and thus you shall do.” The verb is the imperfect tense of instruction or legislation. Here it introduces the procedures to be followed.

¹³ tn The genitive in this expression indicates the purpose of the water – it is for their purification. The expression is literally “the waters of sin.” The word “purification” is the same as for the “sin/purification offering” – תְּחִיַּת (*khatta'at*). This water seems to have been taken from the main laver and is contrasted with the complete washing of the priests in Lev 8:6.

¹⁴ tn The verb is the Hiphil perfect with a *vav* (ו) of sequence. This verb, and those to follow, has the force of a jussive since it comes after the imperative. Here the instruction is for them to remove the hair from their bodies (“flesh”). There is no indication that this was repeated (as the Egyptian priests did every few days). It seems to have been for this special occasion only. A similar requirement was for the leper (Lev 14:7-9).

¹⁵ tn Heb “flesh.”

¹⁶ tn Or “let/have them wash”; the priests were given new clothes (Lev 8:13), but the Levites simply washed their own.

¹⁷ tn The verb is a reflexive (or possibly passive) in this verse, indicating the summary of the process. The ritual steps that have been prescribed will lead to this conclusion. The verb could be treated as a final imperfect (being a perfect with *vav* [ו] consecutive), and so translated “that they may....” The major difference here is that the ritual made the Levites “clean,” whereas the ritual for the priests made them “holy” or “sanctified” (Lev 8:12).

8:8 Then they are to take a young bull with its grain offering of fine flour mixed with olive oil; and you are to take a second young bull for a purification offering.¹ **8:9** You are to bring the Levites before the tent of meeting and assemble the entire community of the Israelites. **8:10** Then you are to bring the Levites before the LORD, and the Israelites are to lay their hands on the Levites;² **8:11** and Aaron is to offer³ the Levites before the LORD as a wave offering from the Israelites, that they may do the work⁴ of the LORD. **8:12** When⁵ the Levites lay their hands on the heads of the bulls, offer⁶ the one for a purification offering and the other for a whole burnt offering to the LORD,⁷ to make atonement for the Levites. **8:13** You are to have the Levites stand before Aaron⁸ and his sons, and then offer them as a wave offering to the LORD. **8:14** And so⁹ you are to separate the Levites from among the Israelites, and the Levites will be mine.

8:15 “After this, the Levites will go in¹⁰ to do the work¹¹ of the tent of meeting. So you must

cleans them¹² and offer them like a wave offering.¹³ **8:16** For they are entirely given¹⁴ to me from among the Israelites. I have taken them for myself instead of¹⁵ all who open the womb, the firstborn sons of all the Israelites. **8:17** For all the firstborn males among the Israelites are mine, both humans and animals; when I destroyed¹⁶ all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I set them apart for myself. **8:18** So I have taken the Levites instead of all the firstborn sons among the Israelites. **8:19** I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and his sons from among the Israelites, to do the work for the Israelites in the tent of meeting, and to make atonement for the Israelites, so there will be no plague among the Israelites when the Israelites come near the sanctuary.”¹⁷

8:20 So Moses and Aaron and the entire community of the Israelites did this with the Levites. According to all that the LORD commanded Moses concerning the Levites, this is what the Israelites did with them. **8:21** The Levites purified themselves¹⁸ and washed their clothing; then Aaron presented them like a wave offering before the LORD, and Aaron made atonement for them to purify them. **8:22** After this, the Levites went in to do their work in the tent of meeting before Aaron and before his sons. As the LORD had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so they did.

1 sn The first sacrifice was for the purification of the Levites. The second animal, which Moses was to take, would be used for the purification of the tabernacle from all pollution.

2 sn The consecration ceremony was to be done in full view of the assembled people. In all probability the laying on of the hands was done through representatives of the tribes, and not all the people. This ritual of the imposition of hands showed that the people were taking part in the consecration, and that the Levites represented them in the service of the LORD.

3 tn The Hebrew text actually has “wave the Levites as a wave offering.” The wave offering was part of the ritual of the peace offering and indicated the priest’s portion being presented to God in a lifted, waving motion for all to see. The Levites were going to be in the sanctuary to serve the LORD and assist the priests. It is unclear how Moses would have presented them as wave offerings, but the intent is that they would be living sacrifices, as Paul would later say in Rom 12:1 for all Christians.

4 tn The construction emphasizes the spiritual service of the Levites, using the infinitive construct of אָבַד (*avad*) followed by its cognate accusative.

5 tn The clause begins with a vav (ו) on the noun “the Levites,” indicating a disjunctive clause. Here it is clearly a subordinate clause prior to the instruction for Moses, and so translated as a circumstantial clause of time.

6 tn The imperative is from the verb “to do; to make,” but in the sentence it clearly means to sacrifice the animals.

7 sn The “purification offering” cleansed the tabernacle from impurity, and the burnt offering atoned by nullifying and removing the effects of sin in the Levites.

8 tc The Greek text adds the LORD here: “before the LORD, before Aaron.”

9 tn The vav (ו) consecutive on the perfect tense not only carries the nuance of instruction forward to this clause, but also marks this clause out as a summary of what has taken place, i.e., by doing all this ritual Moses will have separated the Levites from the people for God’s own possession.

10 tn The imperfect tense could also be given the nuance of the imperfect of permission: “the Levites may go in.”

11 tn Heb “to serve.”

12 tn The two verbs in the rest of this verse are perfect tenses with vav (ו) consecutive constructions, making them equal to the imperfect. Some commentators try to get around the difficulty of repetition by making these future perfects, “and you will have cleansed,” as opposed to a summary statement, “for thus you will cleanse....”

13 tc The Greek text adds “before the LORD.”

14 tn As before, the emphasis is obtained by repeating the passive participle: “given, given to me.”

15 tn Or “as substitutes” for all the firstborn of the Israelites.

16 tn The idiomatic “on the day of” precedes the infinitive construct of אָבַד (*nakhah*) to form the temporal clause: “in the day of my striking...” becomes “when I struck.”

17 sn The firstborn were those that were essentially redeemed from death in Egypt when the blood was put on the doors. So in the very real sense they belonged to God (Exod 13:2,12). The firstborn was one who stood in special relationship to the father, being the successive offspring. Here, the Levites would stand in for the firstborn in that special role and special relationship. God also made it clear that the nation of Israel was his firstborn son (Exod 4:22-23), and so they stood in that relationship before all the nations. The tribe of Reuben was to have been the firstborn tribe, but in view of the presumptuous attempt to take over the leadership through pagan methods (Gen 35:22; 49:3-4), was passed over. The tribes of Levi and Simeon were also put down for their ancestors’ activities, but sanctuary service was still given to Levi.

18 tn The verb is the Hitpael of כָּתַף (*khatta*). In this stem the meaning of the root “to sin” is likely to be connected to the noun “sin/purification” offering in a denominative sense, although some would take it as a privative usage, “to remove sin.” The idea is clear enough: They performed all the ritual in order to purify themselves ceremonially.

The Work of the Levites

8:23 Then the LORD spoke to Moses: **8:24** “This is what pertains to the Levites:¹ At the age of twenty-five years² and upward one may begin to join the company³ in the work of the tent of meeting. **8:25** and at the age of fifty years they must retire from performing the work and may no longer work. **8:26** They may assist⁴ their colleagues⁵ in the tent of meeting, to attend to needs, but they must do no work. This is the way you must establish⁶ the Levites regarding their duties.”

Passover Regulations

9:17 The LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they had come out⁸ of the land of Egypt:

9:2 “The Israelites are to observe⁹ the Passover¹⁰ at its appointed time.¹¹ **9:3** In the four-

1 tñ The Hebrew text has “this [is that] which [pertains] to the Levites.” “This is what concerns the Levites, meaning, the following rulings are for them.”

2 tc The age of *twenty-five* indicated in v. 24 should be compared with the age of *thirty* indicated in Num 4:3,23,30. In order to harmonize the numbers given in chapter 4 with the number given in Num 8:24 the LXX (and perhaps its Hebrew Vorlage) has thirty in all of these references. See further G. J. Wenham, *Numbers* (TOTC 4), 97-98.

3 tñ The infinitive is לִצְבֹּא (litsvo’), related to the word for “host, army, company,” and so “to serve as a company.” The meaning is strengthened by the cognate accusative following it.

4 tñ The verb is the Piel perfect of שָׂרַת (sharat, “to serve, minister”). Here the form has the *vav* (ו) consecutive, and so is equal to the imperfect tense stressing permission. After the Levites reached the age of retirement, they were permitted to assist the others, but were not permitted to do the work themselves.

5 tñ Heb “brothers,” but the meaning in this context is “fellow Levites.”

6 tñ Heb “you shall do, make.”

7 sn The chapter has just the two sections, the observance of the Passover (vv. 1-14) and the cloud that led the Israelites in the wilderness (vv. 15-23). It must be remembered that the material in vv. 7-9 is chronologically earlier than vv. 1-6, as the notices in the text will make clear. The two main discussions here are the last major issues to be reiterated before dealing with the commencement of the journey.

8 tñ The temporal clause is formed with the infinitive construct of יָצָא (yatsa’, “to go out; to leave”). This verse indicates that a full year had passed since the exodus and the original Passover; now a second ruling on the Passover is included at the beginning of the second year. This would have occurred immediately after the consecration of the tabernacle, in the month before the census at Sinai.

9 tñ The verb is simply “to do; to make” (עָשָׂה [‘asah] in the jussive). It must have the idea here of “to perform; to keep; to observe” the ritual of the Passover.

10 sn For a detailed study note on the Passover, see the discussion with the original institution in Exod 12. The word פֶּסַח (pesakh) – here in pause and with the article – has become the technical name for the spring festival of Israel. In Exod 12 the name is explained by the use of the verb “to pass over” (עָבַר, ‘avar), indicating that the angel of death would pass over the house with the blood applied. Many scholarly attempts have been made to supply the etymology of the word, but none has been compelling enough to be accepted by a large number of biblical scholars. For general literature on the Passover, see J. B. Segal, *The Hebrew Passover*, as well as the Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias.

11 tc The Greek text uses a plural here but the singular in vv. 7 and 13; the Smr uses the plural in all three places.

teenth day of this month, at twilight,¹² you are to observe it at its appointed time; you must keep¹³ it in accordance with all its statutes and all its customs.”¹⁴ **9:4** So Moses instructed¹⁵ the Israelites to observe¹⁶ the Passover. **9:5** And they observed the Passover¹⁷ on the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight in the wilderness of Sinai; in accordance with all that the LORD had commanded Moses, so the Israelites did.

9:6 It happened that some men¹⁸ who were ceremonially defiled¹⁹ by the dead body of a man²⁰ could not keep²¹ the Passover on that day, so they came before Moses and before Aaron on that day. **9:7** And those men said to him, “We are ceremonially defiled by the dead body of a man; why are we kept back from offering the LORD’s offering at its appointed time among the Israelites?” **9:8** So Moses said to them, “Remain²² here and I will hear²³ what the LORD will command concerning you.”

9:9 The LORD spoke to Moses: **9:10** “Tell the Israelites, ‘If any²⁴ of you or of your posterity become ceremonially defiled by touching a dead body, or are on a journey far away, then he

12 tñ The literal Hebrew expression is “between the evenings” (so also in vv. 5, 11). Sunset is certainly one evening; the other may refer to the change in the middle of the afternoon to the late afternoon, or the beginning of dusk. The idea is probably just at twilight, or dusk (see R. B. Allen, *TWOT* 2:694).

13 tñ The two verbs in this verse are identical; they are imperatives of instruction. The English translation has been modified for stylistic variation.

14 tñ The two words in this last section are standard “Torah” words. The word חָק (khaq) is a binding statute, something engraved and monumental. The word מִשְׁפָּט (mishpat) means “judgment, decision,” but with a more general idea of “custom” at its core. The verse is making it very clear that the Passover had to follow the custom and form that was legislated in Egypt.

15 tñ Heb “spoke to.”

16 tñ The infinitive construct functions as the direct object of the preceding verb (a Hebrew complementary usage), answering the question of what he said.

17 tc The LXX omits this first clause; it also omits “at twilight.”

18 tñ In the Hebrew text the noun has no definite article, and so it signifies “some” or “certain” men.

19 tñ The meaning, of course, is to be ceremonially unclean, and therefore disqualified from entering the sanctuary.

20 tñ Or “a human corpse” (so NAB, NKJV). So also in v.7; cf. v. 10.

21 tñ This clause begins with the *vav* (ו) conjunction and negative before the perfect tense. Here is the main verb of the sentence: They were not able to observe the Passover. The first part of the verse provides the explanation for their problem.

22 tñ The verb is simply “stand,” but in the more general sense of waiting to hear the answer.

23 tñ The cohortative may be subordinated to the imperative: “stand...[that I] may hear.”

24 tñ This sense is conveyed by the repetition of “man” – “if a man, a man becomes unclean.”

may¹ observe the Passover to the LORD. **9:11** They may observe it on the fourteenth day of the second month² at twilight; they are to eat it with bread made without yeast and with bitter herbs. **9:12** They must not leave any of it until morning, nor break any of its bones; they must observe it in accordance with every statute of the Passover.

9:13 But³ the man who is ceremonially clean, and was not on a journey, and fails⁴ to keep the Passover, that person must be cut off from his people.⁵ Because he did not bring the LORD's offering at its appointed time, that man must bear his sin.⁶

9:14 If a resident foreigner lives⁷ among you and wants to keep⁸ the Passover to the LORD, he must do so according to the statute of the Passover, and according to its custom. You must have⁹ the same¹⁰ statute for the resident foreigner¹¹ and for the one who was born in the land."¹²

The Leading of the Lord

9:15¹² On¹³ the day that the tabernacle was set up,¹⁴ the cloud¹⁵ covered the tabernacle – the tent of the testimony¹⁶ – and from evening until morning there was¹⁷ a fiery appearance¹⁸ over the tabernacle. **9:16** This is the way it used to be continually: The cloud would cover it by day,¹⁹ and there was a fiery appearance by night. **9:17** Whenever the cloud was taken up²⁰ from the tabernacle, then after that the Israelites would begin their journey; and in whatever place²¹ the cloud settled, there the Israelites would make camp. **9:18** At the commandment²² of the LORD the Israelites would begin their journey, and at the commandment of the LORD they would make camp; as long as²³ the cloud remained settled over the tabernacle they would camp. **9:19** When the cloud remained over the tabernacle many days, then the Israelites obeyed the instructions²⁴ of the LORD and did not journey.

¹ **tn** The perfect tense with *vav* (ו) consecutive functions as the equivalent of an imperfect tense. In the apodosis of this conditional sentence, the permission nuance fits well.

² **sn** The delay of four weeks for such people would have permitted enough time for them to return from their journey, or to recover from any short termed defilement such as is mentioned here. Apart from this provision, the Passover was to be kept precisely at the proper time.

³ **tn** The disjunctive *vav* (ו) signals a contrastive clause here: "but the man" on the other hand....

⁴ **tn** The verb *תָּרַל* (*khadal*) means "to cease; to leave off; to fail." The implication here is that it is a person who simply neglects to do it. It does not indicate that he forgot, but more likely that he made the decision to leave it undone.

⁵ **sn** The pronouncement of such a person's penalty is that his life will be cut off from his people. There are at least three possible interpretations for this: physical death at the hand of the community (G. B. Gray, *Numbers* [ICC], 84-85), physical and/or spiritual death at the hand of God (J. Milgrom, "A Prolegomenon to Lev 17:11," *JBL* 90 [1971]: 154-55), or excommunication or separation from the community (R. A. Cole, *Exodus* [TOTC], 109). The direct intervention of God seems to be the most likely in view of the lack of directions for the community to follow. Excommunication from the camp in the wilderness would have been tantamount to a death sentence by the community, and so there really are just two views.

⁶ **tn** The word for "sin" here should be interpreted to mean the consequences of his sin (so a metonymy of effect). Whoever willfully violates the Law will have to pay the consequences.

⁷ **tn** The words translated "resident foreigner" and "live" are from the same Hebrew root, גָּר (*gur*), traditionally translated "to sojourn." The "sojourner" who "sojourns" is a foreigner, a resident alien, who lives in the land as a temporary resident with rights of land ownership.

⁸ **tn** The verb is the simple perfect tense with *vav* (ו) consecutive. It is therefore the equivalent to the imperfect that comes before it. The desiderative imperfect fits this usage well, since the alien is not required to keep the feast, but may indeed desire to do so.

⁹ **tn** The Hebrew text has "there will be to you," which is the way of expressing possession in Hebrew. Since this is legal instruction, the imperfect tense must be instruction or legislation.

¹⁰ **tn** Or "you must have one statute."

¹¹ **tn** The conjunction is used here to specify the application of the law: "and for the resident foreigner, and for the one...." indicates "both for the resident foreigner and the one who...."

¹² **sn** This section (Num 9:15-23) recapitulates the account in Exod 40:34 but also contains some additional detail about the cloud that signaled Israel's journeys. Here again material from the book of Exodus is used to explain more of the laws for the camp in motion.

¹³ **tn** *Heb* "and/nor on the day."

¹⁴ **tn** The construction uses the temporal expression with the Hiphil infinitive construct followed by the object, the tabernacle. "On the day of the setting up of the tabernacle" leaves the subject unstated, and so the entire clause may be expressed in the passive voice.

¹⁵ **sn** The explanation and identification of this cloud has been a subject of much debate. Some commentators have concluded that it was identical with the cloud that led the Israelites away from Egypt and through the sea, but others have made a more compelling case that this is a different phenomenon (see *ZPEB* 4:796). A number of modern scholars see the description as a retrojection from later, perhaps Solomonic times (see G. H. Davies, *IDB* 3:817). Others have tried to connect it with Ugaritic terminology, but unconvincingly (see T. W. Mann, "The Pillar of Cloud in the Reed Sea Narrative," *JBL* 90 [1971]: 15-30; G. E. Mendenhall, *The Tenth Generation*, 32-66, 209-13; and R. Good, "Cloud Messengers?" *UF* 10 [1978]: 436-37).

¹⁶ **sn** The cloud apparently was centered over the tent, over the spot of the ark of the covenant in the most holy place. It thereafter spread over the whole tabernacle.

¹⁷ **tn** The imperfect tense in this and the next line should be classified as a customary imperfect, stressing incomplete action but in the past time – something that used to happen, or would happen.

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* "like the appearance of fire."

¹⁹ **tc** The MT lacks the words "by day," but a number of ancient versions have this reading (e.g., Greek, Syriac, *Tg. Ps.-J.*, Latin Vulgate).

²⁰ **tn** The verb in this initial temporal clause is the Niphal infinitive construct.

²¹ **tn** *Heb* "in the place where it settled there"; the relative clause modifies the noun "place," and the resumptive adverb completes the related idea – "which it settled there" means "where it settled."

²² **tn** *Heb* "at the mouth of" (so also in vv. 20, 23).

²³ **tn** *Heb* "all the days of – that the cloud settled over the tabernacle." "All" is the adverbial accusative of time telling how long they camped in one spot – all. The word is then qualified by the genitive of the thing measured – "all of the days" – and this in turn is qualified by a noun clause functioning as a genitive after "days of."

²⁴ **tn** This is the same Hebrew expression that was used earlier for the Levites "keeping their charge" or more clearly, "fulfilling their obligations" to take care of the needs of the

9:20 When¹ the cloud remained over the tabernacle a number of days,² they remained camped according to the LORD's commandment,³ and according to the LORD's commandment they would journey. 9:21 And when⁴ the cloud remained only⁵ from evening until morning, when the cloud was taken up⁶ the following morning, then they traveled on. Whether by day or by night, when the cloud was taken up they traveled. 9:22 Whether it was for two days, or a month, or a year,⁷ that the cloud prolonged its stay⁸ over the tabernacle, the Israelites remained camped without traveling,⁹ but when it was taken up, they traveled on. 9:23 At the commandment of the LORD they camped, and at the commandment of the LORD they traveled on; they kept the instructions of the LORD according to the commandment of the LORD, by the authority¹⁰ of Moses.

The Blowing of Trumpets

10:1¹¹ The LORD spoke to Moses: 10:2 "Make¹² two trumpets of silver; you are to make¹³ them from a single hammered piece.¹⁴

people and the sanctuary. It is a general expression using שָׁמַר (*shamar*) followed by its cognate noun מִשְׁמֶרֶת (*mishmeret*).

1 tn The sentence uses וְהָיָה (v^h*vesh*) followed by a noun clause introduced with אֲשֶׁר (*asher*) to express an existing situation; it is best translated as an adverbial clause of time: "and it was when the cloud was...."

2 tn The word "number" is in apposition to the word "days" to indicate that their stay was prolonged for quite a few days.

3 tn Heb "mouth of the LORD."

4 tn The construction is the same in the preceding verse.

5 tn "Only" is supplied to reflect the contrast between the two verses.

6 tn The construction in this half of the verse uses two vav (h) consecutive clauses. The first is subordinated to the second as a temporal clause: "when...then...."

7 tn The MT has אֶרְבַּע יָמִים (*o-yamim*). Most translators use "or a year" to interpret this expression in view of the sequence of words leading up to it, as well as in comparison with passages like Judg 17:10 and 1 Sam 1:3 and 27:7. See also the uses in Gen 40:4 and 1 Kgs 17:15. For the view that it means four months, see F. S. North, "Four Month Season of the Hebrew Bible," *VT* 11 (1961): 446-48.

8 tn In the Hebrew text this sentence has a temporal clause using the preposition with the Hiphil infinitive construct of אָרַךְ (*arakh*) followed by the subjective genitive, "the cloud." But this infinitive is followed by the infinitive construct לִישְׁבֹן (*lishkon*), the two of them forming a verbal hendiadys: "the cloud made long to stay" becomes "the cloud prolonged its stay."

9 tn Heb "and they would not journey"; the clause can be taken adverbially, explaining the preceding verbal clause.

10 tn Heb "hand."

11 sn Here we have a short section (10:1-10) dealing with the regulations for blowing trumpets in times of war or in times of peace.

12 tn The Hebrew text uses what is called the "ethical dative" – "make [for] you two trumpets." It need not be translated, but can simply be taken to underscore the direct imperative.

13 tn The imperfect tense is again instruction or legislation.

14 sn The instructions are not clearly spelled out here. But the trumpets were to be made of silver ingots beaten out into a sheet of silver and then bent to form a trumpet. There is archaeological evidence of silver smelting as early as 3000 B.C. Making silver trumpets would have been a fairly easy thing for the Israelites to do. The trumpet would have been straight, with a tapered form, very unlike the "ram's horn" (שׁוֹפָר, *shofar*). The trumpets were used by the priests in Israel from the

You will use them¹⁵ for assembling the community and for directing the traveling of the camps. 10:3 When¹⁶ they blow¹⁷ them both, all the community must come¹⁸ to you to the entrance of the tent of meeting.

10:4 "But if they blow with one trumpet, then the leaders, the heads of the thousands of Israel, must come to you.¹⁹ 10:5 When you blow an alarm,²⁰ then the camps that are located²¹ on the east side must begin to travel.²² 10:6 And when you blow an alarm the second time, then the camps that are located on the south side must begin to travel.²³ An alarm must be sounded²⁴ for their journeys. 10:7 But when you assemble the community,²⁵ you must blow, but you must not sound an alarm.²⁶ 10:8 The sons of Aaron, the priests, must blow the trumpets; and they will be to you for an eternal ordinance throughout your generations. 10:9 If you go to war in your land against an adversary who opposes²⁷ you, then you must sound an alarm with the trumpets, and you will be remembered before

outset, but later were used more widely. The sound would be sharp and piercing, but limited in scope to a few notes. See further C. Sachs, *The History of Musical Instruments*.

15 tn Heb "and they shall be for you for assembling," which is the way of expressing possession. Here the intent concerns how Moses was to use them.

16 tn The perfect tense with vav (h) consecutive is here subordinated as a temporal clause to the following similar verbal construction.

17 tn The verb תִּקַּע (*taqa'*) means "to strike, drive, blow a trumpet."

18 tn Heb "the assembly shall assemble themselves."

19 tn Heb "they shall assemble themselves."

20 tn The word for an alarm is תְּרוּעָה (*trua'ah*). The root verb of this word means "to give a blast on the trumpet." It may also on occasion mean "give a shout" in battle (Josh 6:10). In this passage it must refer to the sound of the trumpet.

21 tn Heb "the camps that are camping."

22 tn The perfect tense with vav (h) consecutive functions as the equivalent of the imperfect tense. Here the emphasis is on the start of the journey.

23 tc The MT does not mention the departures of the northerly and westerly tribes. The Greek text completes the description by adding them, making a full schedule of the departure of the groups of tribes. The Greek is not likely to be original, however, since it carries all the signs of addition to complete the text, making a smooth, full reading. The MT is to be preferred; it apparently used two of the groups to give the idea.

24 tn The Hebrew text has "they shall blow an alarm"; the sentence without a formal subject should be taken as a passive idea.

25 tn There is no expressed subject in the initial temporal clause. It simply says, "and in the assembling the assembly." But since the next verb is the second person of the verb, that may be taken as the intended subject here.

26 sn The signal for moving camp was apparently different in tone and may have been sharper notes or a different sequence. It was in some way distinguishable.

27 tn Both the "adversary" and "opposes" come from the same root: יָצַר (*isara*), "to hem in, oppress, harass," or basically, "be an adversary."

the LORD your God, and you will be saved¹ from your enemies.

10:10 “Also in the time when you rejoice, such as² on your appointed festivals or³ at the beginnings of your months, you must blow with your trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings, so that they may⁴ become⁵ a memorial for you before your God: I am the LORD your God.”

The Journey From Sinai to Kadesh

10:11⁶ On the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle of the testimony.⁷ **10:12** So the Israelites set out⁸ on their journeys from the wilderness of Sinai; and the cloud settled in the wilderness of Paran.

Judah Begins the Journey

10:13 This was the first time they set out on their journey according to the commandment⁹ of the LORD, by the authority¹⁰ of Moses.

10:14 The standard¹¹ of the camp of the Judahites set out first according to their companies, and over his company was Nahshon son of Amminadab.

10:15 Over the company of the tribe of Issacharites was Nathanel son of Zuar, **10:16** and over the company of the tribe of the Zebulunites was Elion son of Helon. **10:17** Then the tabernacle was dismantled, and the sons of Gershon and

the sons of Merari set out, carrying the tabernacle.

Journey Arrangements for the Tribes

10:18 The standard of the camp of Reuben set out according to their companies; over his company was Elizur son of Sheueur. **10:19** Over the company of the tribe of the Simeonites was Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai, **10:20** and over the company of the tribe of the Gadites was Eliasaph son of Deuel. **10:21** And the Kohathites set out, carrying the articles for the sanctuary;¹² the tabernacle was to be set up¹³ before they arrived.¹⁴ **10:22** And the standard of the camp of the Ephraimites set out according to their companies; over his company was Elishama son of Ammihud. **10:23** Over the company of the tribe of the Manassehites was Gamaliel son of Pedahzur, **10:24** and over the company of the tribe of Benjaminites was Abidan son of Gideon.

10:25 The standard of the camp of the Danites set out, which was the rear guard¹⁵ of all the camps by their companies; over his company was Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai. **10:26** Over the company of the tribe of the Asherites was Pagiel son of Ocran, **10:27** and over the company of the tribe of the Naphtalites was Ahira son of Enan. **10:28** These were the traveling arrangements¹⁶ of the Israelites according to their companies when they traveled.¹⁷

The Appeal to Hobab

10:29¹⁸ Moses said to Hobab son of Reuel, the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law,¹⁹ “We are

¹ **tn** The Niphal perfect in this passage has the passive nuance and not a reflexive idea – the Israelites would be spared because God remembered them.

² **tn** The conjunction may be taken as explicative or epexegetical, and so rendered “namely; even; that is,” or it may be taken as emphatic conjunction, and translated “especially.”

³ **tn** The *vav* (ו) is taken here in its alternative use and translated “or.”

⁴ **tn** The form is the perfect tense with *vav* (ו) consecutive. After the instruction imperfects, this form could be given the same nuance, or more likely, subordinated as a purpose or result clause.

⁵ **tn** The verb “to be” (הָיָה, *hayah*) has the meaning “to become” when followed by the preposition *lamed* (ל).

⁶ **sn** This section is somewhat mechanical: It begins with an introduction (vv. 11, 12), and then begins with Judah (vv. 13-17), followed by the rest of the tribes (vv. 18-27), and finally closes with a summary (v. 28). The last few verses (vv. 29-36) treat the departure of Hobab.

⁷ **tc** Smr inserts a lengthy portion from Deut 1:6-8, expressing the command for Israel to take the land from the Amorites.

tn The expression is difficult; it is מִשְׁכַּן הָעֵדוּת (*mishkan ha'edut*). The reference is to the sacred shrine that covered the ark with the commandments inside. NEB renders the expression as “tabernacle of the Token”; NAB has “the dwelling of the commandments.”

⁸ **sn** The verb is the same as the noun: “they journeyed on their journeyings.” This underscores the point of their continual traveling.

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “mouth.”

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “hand.”

¹¹ **sn** The “standard” (דֶּגֶל, *degel*) was apparently some kind of a symbol put up on a pole to signify the tribal hosts. R. de Vaux thought it simply referred to a pole or a mast, but that would not distinguish tribes (*Ancient Israel*, 226-27).

¹² **tn** *Heb* “carrying the sanctuary,” a metonymy of whole for parts, representing all the holy objects that were located in the sanctuary.

¹³ **tn** The verb is the third person plural form; without an expressed subject it is treated as a passive.

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “against their coming.”

¹⁵ **tn** The MT uses a word that actually means “assembler,” so these three tribes made up a strong rear force recognized as the assembler of all the tribes.

¹⁶ **tn** Or “journeyings of.”

¹⁷ **tn** The verb is the preterite with *vav* (ו) consecutive. But in this sentence it should be subordinated as a temporal clause to the preceding statement, even though it follows it.

¹⁸ **sn** For additional bibliography for this short section, see W. F. Albright, “Jethro, Hobab, and Reuel in Early Hebrew Tradition,” *CBQ* 25 (1963): 1-11; G. W. Coats, “Moses in Midian,” *JBL* 92 (1973): 3-10; B. Mazar, “The Sanctuary of Arad and the Family of Hobab the Kenite,” *JNES* 24 (1965): 297-303; and T. C. Mitchell, “The Meaning of the Noun /*tn* in the Old Testament,” *VT* 19 (1969): 93-112.

¹⁹ **sn** There is a problem with the identity of Hobab. The MT says that he is the son of Reuel, making him the brother-in-law of Moses. But Judg 4:11 says he is the father-in-law. In Judg 1:16; 4:11 Hobab is traced to the Kenites, but in Exod 3:1 and 18:1 Jethro (Reuel) is priest of Midian. Jethro is identified with Reuel on the basis of Exod 2:18 and 3:1, and so Hobab becomes Moses' חֹתֵן (*khoten*), a relative by marriage and perhaps brother-in-law. There is not enough information to decide on the identity and relationships involved here. Some suggest that there is one person with the three names (G. B. Gray, *Numbers* [ICC], 93); others suggest Hobab is a family name (R. F. Johnson, *IDB* 2:615), and some suggest that the expression “the son of Reuel the Midianite” had dropped out of the genealogy of Judges, leading to the

journeying to the place about which the LORD said, 'I will give it to you.' Come with us and we will treat you well,¹ for the LORD has promised good things² for Israel." **10:30** But Hobab³ said to him, "I will not go, but I will go instead to my own land and to my kindred." **10:31** Moses⁴ said, "Do not leave us,⁵ because you know places for us to camp in the wilderness, and you could be our guide.⁶ **10:32** And if you come with us, it is certain⁷ that whatever good things the LORD will favor us with, we will share with you as well."

10:33 So they traveled from the mountain of the LORD three days' journey;⁸ and the ark of the covenant of the LORD was traveling before them during the three days' journey, to find a resting place for them. **10:34**⁹ And the cloud of the LORD was over them by day, when they traveled¹⁰ from the camp. **10:35** And when the ark traveled, Moses would say, "Rise up, O LORD! May your enemies be scattered, and may those who hate you flee before you!" **10:36** And when it came to rest he would say, "Return, O LORD, to the many thousands of Israel!"¹¹

conflict (J. Crichton, *ISBE* 2:1055). If Hobab is the same as Jethro, then Exod 18:27 does not make much sense, for Jethro did go home. On this basis many conclude Hobab is a brother-in-law. This would mean that after Jethro returned home, Moses conversed with Hobab, his brother-in-law. For more discussion, see the articles and the commentaries.

1 **tn** The verb is the Hiphil of the root "to be good" (יָבַח, *yav-av*); it may be translated "treat well, deal favorably, generously with." Here it is a perfect tense with *vav* (ו) following the imperative, showing a sequence in the verbal ideas.

2 **tn** The Hebrew text simply has "has spoken good" for Israel.

3 **tn** *Heb* "he"; the referent (Hobab) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

4 **tn** *Heb* "he"; the referent (Moses) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

5 **tn** The form with אֵלֶיךָ (*'al-na'*) is a jussive; negated it stresses a more immediate request, as if Hobab is starting to leave, or at least determined to leave.

6 **tn** In the Hebrew text the expression is more graphic: "you will be for us for eyes." Hobab was familiar with the entire Sinai region, and he could certainly direct the people where they were to go. The text does not record Hobab's response. But the fact that Kenites were in Canaan as allies of Judah (Judg 1:16) would indicate that he gave in and came with Moses. The first refusal may simply be the polite Semitic practice of declining first so that the appeal might be made more urgently.

7 **tn** *Heb* "and it shall be."

8 **tn** The phrase "a journey of three days" is made up of the adverbial accusative qualified with the genitives.

9 **tc** The scribes sensed that there was a dislocation with vv. 34-36, and so they used the inverted letters *nun* (נ) as brackets to indicate this.

10 **tn** The adverbial clause of time is composed of the infinitive construct with a temporal preposition and a suffixed subjective genitive.

11 **sn** These two formulaic prayers were offered by Moses at the beginning and at the end of the journeys. They prayed for the LORD to fight ahead of the nation when it was on the move, and to protect them when they camped. The theme of the first is found in Ps 68:1. The prayers reflect the true mentality of holy war, that it was the LORD who fought for Israel and defended her. The prayers have been included in the prayer book for synagogue services.

The Israelites Complain

11:1¹² When the people complained,¹³ it displeased¹⁴ the LORD. When the LORD heard¹⁵ it, his anger burned,¹⁶ and so¹⁷ the fire of the LORD¹⁸ burned among them and consumed some of the outer parts of the camp. **11:2** When the people cried to Moses, he¹⁹ prayed to the LORD, and the fire died out.²⁰ **11:3** So he called the name of that place Taberah²¹ because there the fire of the LORD burned among them.

12 **sn** The chapter includes the initial general complaints (vv. 1-3), the complaints about food (vv. 4-9), Moses' own complaint to the LORD (vv. 10-15), God's response to Moses (vv. 16-25), Eldad and Medad (vv. 26-29), and the quail (vv. 30-35). The first part records the burning of the camp, named Taberah. Here is one of the several naming narratives in the wilderness experience. The occasion for divine judgment is the complaining of the people. The passages serve to warn believers of all ages not to murmur as the Israelites did, for such complaining reveals a lack of faith in the power and goodness of God. For additional literature, see W. Brueggemann, "From Hurt to Joy, from Death to Life," *Int* 28 (1974): 3-19; B. S. Childs, "The Etiological Tale Re-examined," *VT* 24 (1974): 387-97; G. W. Coats, *Rebellion in the Wilderness*; and A. C. Tunyogi, "The Rebellions of Israel," *JBL* 81 (1962): 385-90.

13 **tn** The temporal clause uses the Hitpoel infinitive construct from נָאָה (*'anan*). It is a rare word, occurring in Lam 3:39. With this blunt introduction the constant emphasis of obedience to the word of the LORD found throughout the first ten chapters suddenly comes to an end. It is probable that the people were tired of moving for several days, the excitement of the new beginning died out quickly in the "great and terrible wilderness." Resentment, frustration, discomfort – whatever it all involved – led to complaining and not gratitude.

14 **tn** *Heb* "it was evil in the ears of the LORD." The word רָע (*ra'*) is a much stronger word than "displeased" would suggest. The bold anthropomorphism shows that what the LORD heard was painful to him.

15 **tn** The preterite with *vav* (ו) consecutive is here subordinated to the next verb as a temporal clause.

16 **tn** The common Hebrew expression uses the verb הָרַח (*harah*, "to be hot, to burn, to be kindled"). The subject is אֲפוֹ (*'appo*), "his anger" or more literally, his nose, which in this anthropomorphic expression flares in rage. The emphasis is superlative – "his anger raged."

17 **tn** The *vav* (ו) consecutive does not simply show sequence in the verbs, but here expresses the result of the anger of the LORD for their complaining. With such a response to the complaining, one must conclude that it was unreasonable. There had been no long deprivation or endured suffering; the complaining was early and showed a rebellious spirit.

18 **sn** The "fire of the LORD" is supernatural, for it is said to come from the LORD and not from a natural source. God gave them something to complain about – something to fear. The other significant place where this "fire of the LORD" destroyed was in the case of Nadab and Abihu who brought strange fire to the altar (Lev 10:2).

19 **tn** *Heb* "Moses."

20 **sn** Here is the pattern that will become in the wilderness experience so common – the complaining turns to a cry to Moses, which is then interpreted as a prayer to the LORD, and there is healing. The sequence presents a symbolic lesson, an illustration of the intercession of the Holy Spirit. The NT will say that in times of suffering Christians do not know how to pray, but the Spirit intercedes for them, changing their cries into the proper prayers (Rom 8).

21 **tn** The name תַּבֵּרָה (*tav'erah*) is given to the spot as a commemorative of the wilderness experience. It is explained by the formula using the same verbal root, "to burn." Such naming narratives are found dozens of times in the OT, and

Complaints about Food

11:4¹ Now the mixed multitude² who were among them craved more desirable foods,³ and so the Israelites wept again⁴ and said, “If only we had meat to eat!”⁵ 11:5 We remember⁶ the fish

most frequently in the Pentateuch. The explanation is seldom an exact etymology, and so in the literature is called a popular etymology. It is best to explain the connection as a figure of speech, a paronomasia, which is a phonetic word play that may or may not be etymologically connected. Usually the name is connected to the explanation by a play on the verbal root – here the preterite explaining the noun. The significance of commemorating the place by such a device is to “burn” it into the memory of Israel. The narrative itself would be remembered more easily by the name and its motif. The namings in the wilderness wanderings remind the faithful of unbelief, and warn us all not to murmur as they murmured. See further A. P. Ross, “Paronomasia and Popular Etymologies in the Naming Narrative of the Old Testament,” Ph.D. diss., University of Cambridge, 1982.

¹ **sn** The story of the sending of the quail is a good example of poetic justice, or talionic justice. God had provided for the people, but even in that provision they were not satisfied, for they remembered other foods they had in Egypt. No doubt there was not the variety of foods in the Sinai that might have been available in Egypt, but their life had been bitter bondage there as well. They had cried to the LORD for salvation, but now they forget, as they remember things they used to have. God will give them what they crave, but it will not do for them what they desire. For more information on this story, see B. J. Malina, *The Palestinian Manna Tradition*. For the attempt to explain manna and the other foods by natural phenomena, see F. W. Bodenheimer, “The Manna of Sinai,” *BA* 10 (1947): 1-6.

² **tn** The mixed multitude (or “rabble,” so NASB, NIV, NRSV; NLT “foreign rabble”) is the translation of an unusual word, מִצְרַיִם (ha’safuf). It occurs in the Hebrew Bible only here. It may mean “a gathering of people” from the verb אָסַף (*asaf*), yielding the idea of a mixed multitude (in line with Exod 12:38). But the root is different, and so no clear connection can be established. Many commentators therefore think the word is stronger, showing contempt through a word that would be equivalent to a “riff-raff.”

³ **tn** The Hebrew simply uses the cognate accusative, saying “they craved a craving” (הִיאָוּ תַאֲוָה, *hi’avvu ta’vah*), but the context shows that they had this strong craving for food. The verb describes a strong desire, which is not always negative (Ps 132:13-14). But the word is a significant one in the Torah; it was used in the garden story for Eve’s desire for the tree, and it is used in the Decalogue in the warning against coveting (Deut 5:21).

⁴ **tc** The Greek and the Latin versions read “and they sat down” for “and they returned,” involving just a change in vocalization (which they did not have). This may reflect the same expression in Judg 20:26. But the change does not improve this verse.

tn The Hebrew text uses a verbal hendiadys here, one word serving as an adverb for the other. It literally reads “and they returned and they wept,” which means they wept again. Here the weeping is put for the complaint, showing how emotionally stirred up the people had become by the craving. The words throughout here are metonymies. The craving is a metonymy of cause, for it would have then led to expressions (otherwise the desires would not have been known). And the weeping is either a metonymy of effect, or of adjunct, for the actual complaints follow.

⁵ **tn** The Hebrew expresses the strong wish or longing idiomatically: “Who will give us flesh to eat?” It is a rhetorical expression not intended to be taken literally, but merely to give expression to the longing they had. See GKC 476 §151.a.1.

⁶ **tn** The perfect tense here expresses the experience of a state of mind.

sn As with all who complain in such situations, their memory was selective. It was their bitter cries to the LORD from the suffering in bondage that God heard and answered. And now,

we used to eat⁷ freely⁸ in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. 11:6 But now we⁹ are dried up,¹⁰ and there is nothing at all before us¹¹ except this manna!” 11:7 (Now the manna was like coriander seed, and its color like the color of bdellium. 11:8 And the people went about and gathered it, and ground it with mills or pounded it in mortars; they baked it in pans and made cakes of it. It tasted like fresh olive oil.¹² 11:9 And when the dew came down¹³ on the camp in the night, the manna fell¹⁴ with it.)

Moses’ Complaint to the Lord

11:10¹⁵ Moses heard the people weeping¹⁶ throughout their families, everyone at the door of his tent; and when the anger of the LORD was kindled greatly, Moses was also displeased.¹⁷ 11:11 And Moses said to the LORD, “Why have you afflicted¹⁸ your servant? Why have I not found favor in your sight, that¹⁹ you lay the bur-

shortly after being set free, their memory of Egypt is for things they do not now have. It is also somewhat unlikely that they as slaves had such abundant foods in Egypt.

⁷ **tn** The imperfect tense would here be the customary imperfect, showing continual or incomplete action in past time.

⁸ **tn** The adverb “freely” is from the word כָּחַן (*khanan*, “to be gracious”), from which is derived the noun “grace.” The word underscores the idea of “free, without cost, for no reason, gratis.” Here the simple sense is “freely,” without any cost. But there may be more significance in the choice of the words in this passage, showing the ingratitude of the Israelites to God for His deliverance from bondage. To them now the bondage is preferable to the salvation – this is what angered the LORD.

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “our souls.”

¹⁰ **sn** The Hebrews were complaining both about the bland taste of the manna and dehydration – they were parched in the wilderness.

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “before our eyes,” meaning that “we see nothing except this manna.”

¹² **tn** *Heb* “And its taste was like the taste of fresh olive oil.”

¹³ **tn** The temporal clause is constructed of the infinitive construct from יָרַד (*yarad*) with a temporal preposition, followed by the subjective genitive.

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “came down.”

¹⁵ **sn** Moses begins to feel the burden of caring for this people, a stubborn and rebellious people. His complaint shows how contagious their complaining has been. It is one thing to cry out to God about the load of ministry, but it is quite another to do it in such a way as to reflect a lack of faith in God’s provision. God has to remind the leader Moses that he, the LORD, can do anything. This is a variation on the theme from Exodus – “who am I that I should lead....”

¹⁶ **tn** The participle “weeping” is functioning here as the noun in the accusative case, an adverbial accusative of state. It is explicative of the object.

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* “it was evil in the eyes of Moses.”

¹⁸ **tn** The verb is the Hiphil of רָעַע (*ra’a’*, “to be evil”). Moses laments (with the rhetorical question) that God seems to have caused him evil.

¹⁹ **tn** The infinitive construct with the preposition is expressing the result of not finding favor with God (see R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax*, 12-13, §57). What Moses is claiming is that because he has been given this burden God did not show him favor.

den of this entire people on me? **11:12** Did I conceive this entire people?¹ Did I give birth to² them, that you should say to me, ‘Carry them in your arms, as a foster father³ bears a nursing child,’ to the land which you swore to their fathers? **11:13** From where shall I get⁴ meat to give to this entire people, for they cry to me, ‘Give us meat, that we may eat!’⁵ **11:14** I am not able to bear this entire people alone,⁶ because it⁷ is too heavy for me! **11:15** But if you are going to deal⁸ with me like this, then kill me immediately.⁹ If I have found favor in your sight then do not let me see my trouble.¹⁰

The Response of God

11:16¹¹ The LORD said to Moses, “Gather to me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know are elders of the people and officials¹² over them, and bring them to the tent of meeting; let them take their position there with you. **11:17** Then I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take part of the spirit that is on you, and will put it on them, and they will bear some of the burden of the people with you, so that you do not bear it¹³ all by yourself.

11:18 “And say to the people, ‘Sanctify yourselves¹⁴ for tomorrow, and you will eat meat, for you have wept in the hearing¹⁵ of the LORD, saying, “Who will give us meat to eat,¹⁶ for life¹⁷ was good for us in Egypt?” Therefore the LORD will give you meat, and you will eat. **11:19** You will eat, not just one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, **11:20** but a whole month,¹⁸ until it comes out your nostrils and makes you sick,¹⁹ because you have despised²⁰ the LORD who is among you and have

1 sn The questions Moses asks are rhetorical. He is actually affirming that they are not his people, that he did not produce them, but now is to support them. His point is that God produced this nation, but has put the burden of caring for their needs on him.

2 tn The verb means “to beget, give birth to.” The figurative image from procreation completes the parallel question, first the conceiving and second the giving birth to the nation.

3 tn The word אָמֵן (*omen*) is often translated “nurse,” but the form is a masculine form and would better be rendered as a “foster parent.” This does not work as well, though, with the יָגֵן (*yoneg*), the “sucking child.” The two metaphors are simply designed to portray the duty of a parent to a child as a picture of Moses’ duty for the nation. The idea that it portrays God as a mother pushes it too far (see M. Noth, *Numbers* [OTL], 86-87).

4 tn The Hebrew text simply has “from where to me flesh?” which means “from where will I have meat?”

5 tn The cohortative coming after the imperative stresses purpose (it is an indirect volitive).

6 tn The word order shows the emphasis: “I am not able, I by myself, to bear all this people.” The infinitive לִישָׂאת (*lase’t*) serves as the direct object of the verb. The expression is figurative, for bearing or carrying the people means being responsible for all their needs and cares.

7 tn The subject of the verb “heavy” is unstated; in the context it probably refers to the people, or the burden of caring for the people. This responsibility was turning out to be a heavier responsibility than Moses anticipated. Alone he was totally inadequate.

8 tn The participle expresses the future idea of what God is doing, or what he is going to be doing. Moses would rather be killed than be given a totally impossible duty over a people that were not his.

9 tn The imperative of הָרַג (*harag*) is followed by the infinitive absolute for emphasis. The point is more that the infinitive adds to the emphasis of the imperative mood, which would be immediate compliance.

10 tn Or “my own ruin” (NIV). The word “trouble” here probably refers to the stress and difficulty of caring for a complaining group of people. The suffix on the noun would be objective, perhaps stressing the indirect object of the noun – trouble for me. The expression “on my trouble” (בְּרָעָתִי, *b^{ra}’ati*) is one of the so-called *tiqqune sopherim*, or “emendations of the scribes.” According to this tradition the original reading in v. 15 was [to look] “on your evil” (בְּרָעֲתֶיךָ, *b^{ra}’atekha*), meaning “the calamity that you bring about” for Israel. However, since such an expression could be mistakenly thought to attribute evil to the Lord, the ancient scribes changed it to the reading found in the MT.

11 sn The LORD provides Spirit-empowered assistance for Moses. Here is another variation on the theme of Moses’ faith. Just as he refused to lead alone and was given Aaron to share the work, so here he protests the burden and will share it with seventy elders. If God’s servant will not trust wholeheartedly, that individual will not be used by God as he or she might have been. Others will share in the power and the work. Probably one could say that it was God’s will for others to share this leadership – but not to receive it through these circumstances.

12 tn The “officials” (שְׂרָיִים, *shot^{rim}*) were a group of the elders who seem to have had some administrative capacities. The LXX used the word “scribes.” For further discussion, see R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 69-70.

13 tn The imperfect tense here is to be classified as a final imperfect, showing the result of this action by God. Moses would be relieved of some of the responsibility when these others were given the grace to understand and to resolve cases.

14 tn The Hitpaal is used to stress that they are to prepare for a holy appearance. The day was going to be special and so required their being set apart for it. But it is a holy day in the sense of the judgment that was to follow.

15 tn Heb “in the ears.”

16 tn Possibly this could be given an optative translation, to reflect the earlier one: “O that someone would give....” But the verb is not the same; here it is the Hiphil of the verb “to eat” – “who will make us eat” (i.e., provide meat for us to eat).

17 tn The word “life” is not in the text. The expression is simply “it was for us,” or “we had good,” meaning “we had it good,” or “life was good.”

18 tn Heb “a month of days.” So also in v. 21.

19 tn The expression לִזְרָה (*l^zarah*) has been translated “ill” or “loathsome.” It occurs only here in the Hebrew Bible. The Greek text interprets it as “sickness.” It could be nausea or vomiting (so G. B. Gray, *Numbers* [ICC], 112) from overeating.

20 sn The explanation is the interpretation of their behavior – it is in reality what they have done, even though they would not say they despised the LORD. They had complained and shown a lack of faith and a contempt for the program, which was in essence despising the LORD.

wept before him, saying, “Why⁴ did we ever come out of Egypt?””

11:21 Moses said, “The people around me² are 600,000 on foot;³ but you say, ‘I will give them meat,⁴ that they may eat⁵ for a whole month.’ **11:22** Would they have enough if the flocks and herds were slaughtered for them? If all the fish of the sea were caught for them, would they have enough?”

11:23 And the LORD said to Moses, “Is the LORD’s hand shortened?⁶ Now you will see whether my word to you will come true⁷ or not!”

11:24 So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD. He then gathered seventy men of the elders of the people and had them stand around the tabernacle. **11:25** And the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to them, and he took some of the Spirit that was on Moses⁸ and put it on the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested on them,⁹ they prophesied,¹⁰ but did not do so again.¹¹

¹ **tn** The use of the demonstrative pronoun here (“why is this we went out...”) is enclitic, providing emphasis to the sentence: “Why in the world did we ever leave Egypt?”

² **tn** *Heb* “the people who I am in their midst,” i.e., among whom I am.

³ **tn** The Hebrew sentence stresses the number. The sentence begins “600,000...”

⁴ **tn** The word order places the object first here: “Meat I will give them.” This adds to the contrast between the number and the statement of the Lord.

⁵ **tn** The verb is the perfect tense with a *vav* (ו) consecutive, carrying the sequence from the preceding imperfect tense. However, this verb may be subordinated to the preceding to express a purpose clause.

⁶ **sn** This anthropomorphic expression concerns the power of God. The “hand of the LORD” is idiomatic for his power, what he is able to do. The question is rhetorical; it is affirming that his hand is not shortened, i.e., that his power is not limited. Moses should have known this, and so this is a rebuke for him at this point. God had provided the manna, among all the other powerful acts they had witnessed. Meat would be no problem. But the lack of faith by the people was infectious.

⁷ **tn** Or “will happen” (TEV); KJV “shall come to pass unto thee.”

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “on him”; the referent (Moses) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁹ **tn** The temporal clause is introduced by the temporal indicator וַיְהִי (*vayehi*), which need not be translated. It introduces the time of the infinitive as past time narrative. The infinitive construct is from נָחַם (*nuakh*, “to rest”). The figurative expression of the Spirit resting upon them indicates the temporary indwelling and empowering by the Spirit in their lives.

¹⁰ **tn** The text may mean that these men gave ecstatic utterances, much like Saul did when the Spirit came upon him and he made the same prophetic utterances (see 1 Sam 10:10-13). But there is no strong evidence for this (see K. L. Barker, “Zechariah,” *EBC* 7:605-6). In fact there is no consensus among scholars as to the origin and meaning of the verb “prophesy” or the noun “prophet.” It has something to do with speech, being God’s spokesman or spokeswoman or making predictions or authoritative utterances or ecstatic utterances. It certainly does mean that the same Holy Spirit, the same divine provision that was for Moses to enable him to do the things that God had commanded him to do, was now given to them. It would have included wisdom and power with what they were saying and doing – in a way that was visible and demonstrable to the people! The people needed to know that the same provision was given to these men, authenticating their leadership among the clans. And so it could not simply be a change in their understanding and wisdom.

¹¹ **tn** The final verb of the clause stresses that this was not

Eldad and Medad

11:26 But two men remained in the camp; one’s name was Eldad, and the other’s name was Medad. And the spirit rested on them. (Now they were among those in the registration,¹² but had not gone to the tabernacle.) So they prophesied in the camp. **11:27** And a¹³ young man ran and told Moses, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp!” **11:28** Joshua son of Nun, the servant¹⁴ of Moses, one of his choice young men,¹⁵ said,¹⁶ “My lord Moses, stop them!”¹⁷ **11:29** Moses said to him, “Are you jealous for me?¹⁸ I wish that¹⁹ all the LORD’s people were prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!” **11:30** Then Moses returned to the camp along with the elders of Israel.

Provision of Quail

11:31 Now a wind²⁰ went out²¹ from the LORD and brought quail²² from the sea, and let

repeated: “they did not add” is the literal rendering of וְלֹא יָסַף (*v’lo’ yasafu*). It was a one-time spiritual experience associated with their installation.

¹² **tn** The form of the word is the passive participle כְּתוּבִים (*k’tuvim*, “written”). It is normally taken to mean “among those registered,” but it is not clear if that means they were to be among the seventy or not. That seems unlikely since there is no mention of the seventy being registered, and vv. 24-25 says all seventy went out and prophesied. The registration may be to eldership, or the role of the officer.

¹³ **tn** The article indicates that the “young man” was definite in the mind of the writer, but indefinite in English.

¹⁴ **tn** The form is the Piel participle מְשָׁרֵת (*m’sharet*), meaning “minister, servant, assistant.” The word has a loftier meaning than the ordinary word for slave.

¹⁵ **tn** The verb is בָּחַר (*bakhar*, “to choose”); here the form is the masculine plural participle with a suffix, serving as the object of the preposition מִן (*min*). It would therefore mean “[one of] his chosen men,” or “[one of] his choice men.”

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “answered and said.”

¹⁷ **sn** The effort of Joshua is to protect Moses’ prerogative as leader by stopping these men in the camp from prophesying. Joshua did not understand the significance in the LORD’s plan to let others share the burden of leadership.

¹⁸ **tn** The Piel participle מְקַנְנֶה (*m’qanne’*) serves as a verb here in this interrogative sentence. The word means “to be jealous; to be envious.” That can be in a good sense, such as with the translation “zeal,” or it can be in a negative sense as here. Joshua’s apparent “zeal” is questioned by Moses – was he zealous/envious for Moses sake, or for some other reason?

¹⁹ **tn** The optative is expressed by the interrogative clause in Hebrew, “who will give...” Moses expresses here the wish that the whole nation would have that portion of the Spirit. The new covenant, of course, would turn Moses’ wish into a certainty.

²⁰ **sn** The irony in this chapter is expressed in part by the use of the word רוּחַ (*ruakh*). In the last episode it clearly meant the Spirit of the LORD that empowered the men for their spiritual service. But here the word is “wind.” Both the spiritual service and the judgment come from God.

²¹ **tn** The verb means “burst forth” or “sprang up.” See the ways it is used in Gen 33:12, Judg 16:3, 14; Isa 33:20.

²² **sn** The “quail” ordinarily cross the Sinai at various times of the year, but what is described here is not the natural phenomenon. Biblical scholars looking for natural explanations usually note that these birds fly at a low height and can be swatted down easily. But the description here is more of a supernatural supply and provision. See J. Gray, “The Desert Sojourn of the Hebrews and the Sinai Horeb Tradition,” *VT* 4 (1954): 148-54.

them fall¹ near the camp, about a day's journey on this side, and about a day's journey on the other side, all around the camp, and about three feet² high on the surface of the ground. **11:32** And the people stayed up³ all that day, all that night, and all the next day, and gathered the quail. The one who gathered the least gathered ten homers,⁴ and they spread them out⁵ for themselves all around the camp. **11:33** But while the meat was still between their teeth, before they chewed it,⁶ the anger of the LORD burned against the people, and the LORD struck the people with a very great plague.

11:34 So the name of that place was called Kibroth Hattaavah,⁷ because there they buried the people that craved different food.⁸ **11:35** The people traveled from Kibroth Hattaavah to Hazereth, and they stayed at Hazereth.

Miriam and Aaron Oppose Moses

12:1⁹ Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against¹⁰

1 tn Or "left them fluttering."

2 tn *Heb* "two cubits." The standard cubit in the OT is assumed by most authorities to be about eighteen inches (45 cm) in length.

3 tn *Heb* "rose up, stood up."

4 sn This is about two thousand liters.

5 tn The verb (a preterite) is followed by the infinitive absolute of the same root, to emphasize the action of spreading out the quail. Although it is hard to translate the expression, it indicates that they spread these quail out all over the area. The vision of them spread all over was evidence of God's abundant provision for their needs.

6 tn The verb is a prefixed conjugation, normally an imperfect tense. But coming after the adverb *תָּרַם* (*terem*) it is treated as a preterite.

7 sn The name "the graves of the ones who craved" is again explained by a wordplay, a popular etymology. In Hebrew *קִבְרוֹת הַתְּאֵוָה* (*qিবrot hatta'avah*) is the technical name. It is the place that the people craved the meat, longing for the meat of Egypt, and basically rebelled against God. The naming marks another station in the wilderness where the people failed to accept God's good gifts with grace and to pray for their other needs to be met.

8 tn The words "different food" are implied, and are supplied in the translation for clarity.

9 sn In this short chapter we find a prime example of jealousy among leaders and how God dealt with it. Miriam and Aaron are envious of Moses' leadership, but they use an occasion – his marriage – to criticize him. Often the immediate criticism is simply a surface issue for a deeper matter. God indicates very clearly he will speak through many people, including them, but Moses is different. Moses is the mediator of the covenant. The chapter is a lesson of what not to do. They should have fulfilled their duties before God and not tried to compete or challenge the leader in this way. There is a touch of divine irony here, for Miriam is turned white with leprosy. The chapter falls easily into the sections of the story: the accusation (vv. 1-3), the LORD's response (vv. 4-10), the intercession of Moses (vv. 11-16). For further information, see J. S. Kselman, "A Note on Numbers 12:6-8," *VT* 26 (1976): 500-504.

10 tn The preposition *bet* (בְּ) has the adversative sense here, "[speak] against" (see also its use for hostile speech in 21:5, 7). Speaking against is equal to the murmuring throughout the wilderness period. The verb of the sentence is *וַתִּדְבֹּר* (*vatt'dabber*), the *feminine* form of the verb. This indicates that Miriam was the main speaker for the two, the verb agreeing with the first of the compound subject.

sn It may be that Miriam was envious of the Cushite woman Moses married. And, in view of the previous chapter's content about others being given a portion of the Spirit to share in the

Moses because of the Cushite¹¹ woman he had married¹² (for he had married an Ethiopian woman). **12:2** They¹³ said, "Has the LORD only¹⁴ spoken through Moses? Has he not also spoken through us?"¹⁵ And the LORD heard it.¹⁶

12:3 (Now the man Moses was very humble,¹⁷ more so than any man on the face of the earth.)

leadership role, she may have seen this as her chance finally to become just as important in the nation as her younger brother. After all, she safeguarded his birth and early years (Exod 2). But there are two issues here – the reason she gives ("does the LORD only speak through Moses?"), and the reason the text gives (the Cushite woman).

11 tn The Hebrew text has *הַכּוּשִׁית* (*hakkushit*, "the Cushite") as the modifier of "woman." The Greek text interpreted this correctly as "Ethiopian." The word Cush in the Bible can describe the Cassites, east of Babylon of the later period (Gen 10:18), or Ethiopia (Isa 20:3; Nah 3:5; et al.). Another suggestion is that it would refer to Cushan of Hab 3:7, perhaps close to Midian, and so the area Moses had been. This would suggest it could be Zipporah – but the Bible does not identify the Cushite as Zipporah. The most natural understanding would be that it refers to an Egyptian/Ethiopian woman. The text does not say when Moses married this woman, or what Miriam's problem with her was. It is clear that it was a racial issue, by virtue of the use of "Cushite." Whether she was of darker skin than the Hebrews would be hard to say, since the Bible gives no further detail. Neither does it say if this is a second wife, or a woman Moses married since Zipporah went home (Exod 18:2). These do not seem to be the issues the text wishes to elaborate on; it is simply stating that this woman was the occasion for a deeper challenge.

12 tn *Heb* "taken."

13 tn Now the text changes to use a plural form of the verb. The indication is that Miriam criticized the marriage, and then the two of them raised questions about his sole leadership of the nation.

14 tn The use of both *רַק* and *אִתּוֹ* (*raq* and 'akh) underscore the point that the issue is Moses' uniqueness.

15 tn There is irony in the construction in the text. The expression "speak through us" also uses *בְּדִבְרֵנוּ* (*dibber + b'*). They ask if God has not also spoken through them, after they have spoken against Moses. Shortly God will speak against them – their words are prophetic, but not as they imagined.

sn The questions are rhetorical. They are affirming that God does not only speak through Moses, but also speaks through them. They see themselves as equal with Moses. The question that was asked of the earlier presumptuous Moses – "Who made you a ruler over us?" – could also be asked of them. God had not placed them as equals with Moses. The passage is relevant for today when so many clamor for equal authority and leadership with those whom God has legitimately called.

16 sn The statement is striking. Obviously the LORD knows all things. But the statement of the obvious here is meant to indicate that the LORD was about to do something about this.

17 tc The spelling of the word is a *Kethib-Qere* reading with only a slight difference between the two.

tn The word *בָּנִי* (*anav*) means "humble." The word may reflect a trustful attitude (as in Pss 25:9, 37:11), but perhaps here the idea of "more tolerant" or "long-suffering." The point is that Moses is not self-assertive. God singled out Moses and used him in such a way as to show that he was a unique leader. For a suggestion that the word means "miserable," see C. Rogers, "Moses: Meek or Miserable?" *JETS* 29 (1986): 257-63.

sn Humility is a quality missing today in many leaders. Far too many are self-promoting, or competitive, or even pompous. The statement in this passage would have been difficult for Moses to write – and indeed, it is not impossible that an editor might have added it. One might think that for someone to claim to be humble is an arrogant act. But the statement is one of fact – he was not self-assertive (until Num 20 when he strikes the rock).

The Response of the Lord

12:4 The LORD spoke immediately to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam: “The three of you come to the tent of meeting.” So the three of them went. **12:5** And the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud and stood at the entrance of the tent; he then called Aaron and Miriam, and they both came forward.

12:6 The LORD¹ said, “Hear now my words: If there is a prophet among you,² I the LORD³ will make myself known to him in a vision; I will speak with him in a dream. **12:7** My servant⁴ Moses is not like this; he is faithful⁵ in all my house. **12:8** With him I will speak face to face,⁶ openly,⁷ and not in riddles; and he will see the form⁸ of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?” **12:9** The anger of the LORD burned against them, and

he departed. **12:10** When⁹ the cloud departed from above the tent, Miriam became¹⁰ leprous¹¹ as snow. Then Aaron looked at¹² Miriam, and she was leprous!

The Intercession of Moses

12:11 So Aaron said to Moses, “O my lord,¹³ please do not hold this sin against us, in which we have acted foolishly and have sinned! **12:12** Do not let her be like a baby born dead, whose flesh is half-consumed when it comes out of its¹⁴ mother’s womb!”

12:13 Then Moses cried to the LORD, “Heal her now, O God.”¹⁵ **12:14** The LORD said to Moses, “If her father had only spit¹⁶ in her face, would she not have been disgraced for seven days? Shut her out from the camp seven days, and afterward she can be brought back in again.”

12:15 So Miriam was shut outside of the camp for seven days, and the people did not journey on until Miriam was brought back in.¹⁷ **12:16** After that the people moved from Hazeroth and camped in the wilderness of Paran.

Spies Sent Out

13:1¹⁸ The LORD spoke¹⁹ to Moses:

¹ tn Heb “he.”

² tn The form of this construction is rare: נְבִיאֵיכֶם (*nevi'akhem*) would normally be rendered “your prophet.” The singular noun is suffixed with a plural pronominal suffix. Some commentators think the MT has condensed “a prophet” with “to you.”

³ tn The Hebrew syntax is difficult here. “The LORD” is separated from the verb by two intervening prepositional phrases. Some scholars conclude that this word belongs with the verb at the beginning of v. 6 (“And the LORD spoke”).

⁴ sn The title “my servant” or “servant of the LORD” is reserved in the Bible for distinguished personages, people who are truly spiritual leaders, like Moses, David, Hezekiah, and also the Messiah. Here it underscores Moses’ obedience.

⁵ tn The word “faithful” is נֶאֱמָן (*ne’eman*), the Niphal participle of the verb אָמַן (*aman*). This basic word has the sense of “support, be firm.” In the Niphal it describes something that is firm, reliable, dependable – what can be counted on. It could actually be translated “trustworthy.”

⁶ tn The emphasis of the line is clear enough – it begins literally “mouth to mouth” I will speak with him. In human communication this would mean equality of rank, but Moses is certainly not equal in rank with the LORD. And yet God is here stating that Moses has an immediacy and directness with communication with God. It goes beyond the idea of friendship, almost to that of a king’s confidant.

⁷ tn The word מַרְאֵה (*mar’eh*) refers to what is seen, a vision, an appearance. Here it would have the idea of that which is clearly visible, open, obvious.

⁸ tn The word “form” תְּמוּנָה (*temunah*) means “shape, image, form.” The Greek text took it metaphorically and rendered it “the glory of the LORD.” This line expresses even more the uniqueness of Moses. The elders saw God on one special occasion (Exod 24:10), and the people never (Deut 4:12, 15), but Moses has direct and familiar contact with God.

⁹ tn The disjunctive *vav* (ו) is here introducing a circumstantial clause of time.

¹⁰ tn There is no verb “became” in this line. The second half of the line is introduced with the particle הִנֵּה (*hinneh*, “look, behold”) in its archaic sense. This deictic use is intended to make the reader focus on Miriam as well.

¹¹ sn The word “leprosy” and “leprous” covers a wide variety of skin diseases, and need not be limited to the actual disease of leprosy known today as Hansen’s disease. The description of it here has to do with snow, either the whiteness or the wetness. If that is the case then there would be open wounds and sores – like Job’s illness (see M. Noth, *Numbers* [OTL], 95-96).

¹² tn Heb “turned to.”

¹³ tn The expression בִּי אֲדוֹנָי (*bi’adoni*, “O my lord”) shows a good deal of respect for Moses by Aaron. The expression is often used in addressing God.

¹⁴ tc The words “its mother” and “its flesh” are among the so-called *tiqqune sopherim*, or “emendations of the scribes.” According to this tradition the text originally had here “our mother” and “our flesh,” but the ancient scribes changed these pronouns from the first person to the third person. Apparently they were concerned that the image of Moses’ mother giving birth to a baby with physical defects of the sort described here was somehow inappropriate, given the stature and importance of Moses.

¹⁵ tc Some scholars emend אֵל (*el*, “God”) to אֵלֵּי (*al*, “to”). The effect of this change may be seen in the NAB: “Please, not this! Pray, heal her!”

¹⁶ tn The form is intensified by the infinitive absolute, but here the infinitive strengthens not simply the verbal idea but the conditional cause construction as well.

¹⁷ tn The clause has the Niphal infinitive construct after a temporal preposition.

¹⁸ sn Chapter 13 provides the names of the spies sent into the land (vv. 1-16), their instructions (vv. 17-20), their activities (vv. 21-25), and their reports (vv. 26-33). It is a chapter that serves as a good lesson on faith, for some of the spies walked by faith, and some by sight.

¹⁹ tn The verse starts with the *vav* (ו) consecutive on the verb: “and....”

13:2 “Send out men to investigate¹ the land of Canaan, which I am giving² to the Israelites. You are to send one man from each ancestral tribe,³ each one a leader among them.” 13:3 So Moses sent them from the wilderness of Paran at the command⁴ of the LORD. All of them were leaders⁵ of the Israelites.

13:4 Now these were their names: from the tribe of Reuben, Shammua son of Zaccur; 13:5 from the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat son of Hori; 13:6 from the tribe of Judah, Caleb son of Jephunneh; 13:7 from the tribe of Issachar, Igal son of Joseph; 13:8 from the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea son of Nun; 13:9 from the tribe of Benjamin, Palti son of Raphu; 13:10 from the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel son of Sodi; 13:11 from the tribe⁶ of Joseph, namely, the tribe of Manasseh, Gaddi son of Susi; 13:12 from the tribe of Dan, Ammiel son of Gemalli; 13:13 from the tribe of Asher, Sethur son of Michael; 13:14 from the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi son of Vopshi; 13:15 from the tribe of Gad, Geuel son of Maki. 13:16 These are the names of the men whom Moses sent to investigate the land. And Moses gave Hoshea son of Nun the name Joshua.⁷

The Spies' Instructions

13:17 When Moses sent⁸ them to investigate the land of Canaan, he told them, “Go up through the Negev,⁹ and then go up into the hill country 13:18 and see¹⁰ what the land is like,¹¹ and whether the people who live in it are strong or weak, few or many, 13:19 and whether the land they live in is good or bad, and whether the cities they inhabit are like camps or fortified cities, 13:20 and whether the land is rich or poor, and whether or not there are forests in it. And be brave,¹² and bring back some of the fruit of the

land.” Now it was the time of year¹³ for the first ripe grapes.¹⁴

The Spies' Activities

13:21 So they went up and investigated the land from the wilderness of Zin to Rehob,¹⁵ at Lebo Hamath. 13:22 When they went up through the Negev, they¹⁶ came¹⁷ to Hebron where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi,¹⁸ descendants of Anak, were living. (Now Hebron had been built seven years before Zoan¹⁹ in Egypt.) 13:23 When they came to the valley of Eshcol, they cut down from there a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they carried it on a staff²⁰ between two men, as well as some of the pomegranates and the figs. 13:24 That place was called²¹ the Eshcol Valley,²² because of the cluster²³ of grapes that the Israelites cut from there. 13:25 They returned from investigating the land after forty days.

¹³ tn Heb “Now the days were the days of.”

¹⁴ sn The reference to the first ripe grapes would put the time somewhere at the end of July.

¹⁵ sn Zin is on the southern edge of the land, but Rehob is far north, near Mount Hermon. The spies covered all the land.

¹⁶ tc The MT has the singular, but the ancient versions and Smr have the plural.

¹⁷ tn The preterite with *vav* (ו) consecutive is here subordinated to the following clause. The first verse gave the account of their journey over the whole land; this section focuses on what happened in the area of Hebron, which would be the basis for the false report.

¹⁸ sn These names are thought to be three clans that were in the Hebron area (see Josh 15:14; Judg 1:20). To call them descendants of Anak is usually taken to mean that they were large or tall people (2 Sam 21:18-22). They were ultimately driven out by Caleb.

¹⁹ sn The text now provides a brief historical aside for the readers. Zoan was probably the city of Tanis, although that is disputed today by some scholars. It was known in Egypt in the New Kingdom as “the fields of Tanis,” which corresponded to the “fields of Zoar” in the Hebrew Bible (Ps 78:12, 43).

²⁰ tn The word is related etymologically to the verb for “slip, slide, bend, totter.” This would fit the use very well. A pole that would not bend would be hard to use to carry things, but a pole or staff that was flexible would serve well.

²¹ tn The verb is rendered as a passive because there is no expressed subject.

²² tn Or “Wadi Eshcol.” The translation “brook” is too generous; the Hebrew term refers to a river bed, a ravine or valley through which torrents of rain would rush in the rainy season; at other times it might be completely dry.

²³ tn The word “Eshcol” is drawn from the Hebrew expression concerning the “cluster of grapes.” The word is probably retained in the name Burj Haskeh, two miles north of Damascus.

¹ tn The imperfect tense with the conjunction is here subordinated to the preceding imperative to form the purpose clause. It can thus be translated “send...to investigate.”

² tn The participle here should be given a future interpretation, meaning “which I am about to give” or “which I am going to give.”

³ tn Heb “one man one man of the tribe of his fathers.”

⁴ tn Heb “mouth.”

⁵ tn Heb “heads.”

⁶ tc Some scholars emend “tribe” to “sons.” Cf. Num 1:10.

⁷ sn The difference in the names is slight, a change from “he saves” to “the Lord saves.” The Greek text of the OT used *lesoun* for Hebrew *Yeshua*.

⁸ tn The preterite with *vav* (ו) consecutive is here subordinated to the next verb of the same formation to express a temporal clause.

⁹ tn The instructions had them first go up into the southern desert of the land, and after passing through that, into the hill country of the Canaanites. The text could be rendered “into the Negev” as well as “through the Negev.”

¹⁰ tn The form is the perfect tense with *vav* (ו) consecutive; the word therefore carries the volitional mood of the preceding imperatives. It may be either another imperative, or it may be subordinated as a purpose clause.

¹¹ tn Heb “see the land, what it is.”

¹² tn The verb is the Hitpael perfect with *vav* (ו) consecutive, from the root כָּזַח (*khazaq*, “to be strong”). Here it could mean “strengthen yourselves” or “be courageous” or “determined.” See further uses in 2 Sam 10:12; 1 Kgs 20:22; 1 Chr 19:13.

The Spies' Reports

13:26 They came back¹ to Moses and Aaron and to the whole community of the Israelites in the wilderness of Paran at Kadesh.² They reported³ to the whole community and showed the fruit of the land. **13:27** They told Moses,⁴ “We went to the land where you sent us.⁵ It is indeed flowing with milk and honey,⁶ and this is its fruit. **13:28** But⁷ the inhabitants⁸ are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. Moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there. **13:29** The Amalekites live in the land of the Negev; the Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live by the sea and along the banks⁹ of the Jordan.”¹⁰

13:30 Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses, saying, “Let us go up¹¹ and occupy it,¹² for we are well able to conquer it.”¹³ **13:31** But the men¹⁴ who had gone up with him said, “We are not able to go up against these people, because they are stronger than we are!” **13:32** Then they presented the Israelites with a discouraging¹⁵ report of the land they had investigated, saying, “The land that we passed through¹⁶ to investigate is a land that devours¹⁷ its inhabi-

tants.¹⁸ All the people we saw there¹⁹ are of great stature. **13:33** We even saw the Nephilim²⁰ there (the descendants of Anak came from the Nephilim), and we seemed liked grasshoppers both to ourselves²¹ and to them.”²²

The Israelites Respond in Unbelief

14:1²³ Then all the community raised a loud cry,²⁴ and the people wept²⁵ that night. **14:2** And all the Israelites murmured²⁶ against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, “If only we had died²⁷ in the land of Egypt, or if only we had perished²⁸ in this wilderness! **14:3** Why has the LORD brought us into this land only to be killed by the sword, that our wives and our children should become plunder? Wouldn't it be

¹ **tn** The construction literally has “and they went and they entered,” which may be smoothed out as a verbal hendiadys, the one verb modifying the other.

² **sn** Kadesh is Ain Qadeis, about 50 miles (83 km) south of Beer Sheba. It is called Kadesh-barnea in Num 32:8.

³ **tn** *Heb* “They brought back word”; the verb is the Hiphil preterite of שָׁבַח (*shuv*).

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “told him and said.” The referent (Moses) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁵ **tn** The relative clause modifies “the land.” It is constructed with the relative and the verb: “where you sent us.”

⁶ **sn** This is the common expression for the material abundance of the land (see further, F. C. Fensham, “An Ancient Tradition of the Fertility of Palestine,” *PEQ* 98 [1966]: 166-67).

⁷ **tn** The word אַחַד (*’efes*) forms a very strong adversative. The land was indeed rich and fruitful, but....”

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “the people who are living in the land.”

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “by the side [hand] of.”

¹⁰ **sn** For more discussion on these people groups, see D. J. Wiseman, ed., *Peoples of Old Testament Times*.

¹¹ **tn** The construction is emphatic, using the cohortative with the infinitive absolute to strengthen it: עָלֶה נַעֲלֶה (*’aloh na’aleh*, “let us go up”) with the sense of certainty and immediacy.

¹² **tn** The perfect tense with *vav* (ו) consecutive brings the cohortative idea forward: “and let us possess it”; it may also be subordinated to form a purpose or result idea.

¹³ **tn** Here again the confidence of Caleb is expressed with the infinitive absolute and the imperfect tense: יָבֹל נֹבֵל (*yakhol nukhal*), “we are fully able” to do this. The verb יָכַל (*yakhal*) followed by the preposition *lamed* means “to prevail over, to conquer.”

¹⁴ **tn** The *vav* (ו) disjunctive on the noun at the beginning of the clause forms a strong adversative clause here.

¹⁵ **tn** Or “an evil report,” i.e., one that was a defamation of the grace of God.

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “which we passed over in it”; the pronoun on the preposition serves as a resumptive pronoun for the relative, and need not be translated literally.

¹⁷ **tn** The verb is the feminine singular participle from אָכַל (*’akhal*); it modifies the land as a “devouring land,” a bold figure for the difficulty of living in the place.

¹⁸ **sn** The expression has been interpreted in a number of ways by commentators, such as that the land was infertile, that the Canaanites were cannibals, that it was a land filled with warlike dissensions, or that it denotes a land geared for battle. It may be that they intended the land to seem infertile and insecure.

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “in its midst.”

²⁰ **tc** The Greek version uses *gigantes* (“giants”) to translate “the Nephilim,” but it does not retain the clause “the sons of Anak are from the Nephilim.”

sn The Nephilim are the legendary giants of antiquity. They are first discussed in Gen 6:4. This forms part of the pessimism of the spies' report.

²¹ **tn** *Heb* “in our eyes.”

²² **tn** *Heb* “in their eyes.”

²³ **sn** This chapter forms part of the story already begun. There are three major sections here: dissatisfaction with the reports (vv. 1-10), the threat of divine punishment (vv. 11-38), and the defeat of the Israelites (vv. 39-45). See K. D. Sakenfeld, “The Problem of Divine Forgiveness in Num 14,” *CBQ* 37 (1975): 317-30; also J. R. Bartlett, “The Use of the Word רָאָה as a Title in the Old Testament,” *VT* 19 (1969): 1-10.

²⁴ **tn** The two verbs “lifted up their voice and cried” form a hendiadys; the idiom of raising the voice means that they cried aloud.

²⁵ **tn** There are a number of things that the verb “to weep” or “wail” can connote. It could reflect joy, grief, lamentation, or repentance, but here it reflects fear, hopelessness, or vexation at the thought of coming all this way and being defeated by the Canaanite armies. See Judg 20:23, 26.

²⁶ **tn** The Hebrew verb “to murmur” is לוּן (*lun*). It is a strong word, signifying far more than complaining or grumbling, as some of the modern translations have it. The word is most often connected to the wilderness experience. It is paralleled in the literature with the word “to rebel.” The murmuring is like a parliamentary vote of no confidence, for they no longer trusted their leaders and wished to choose a new leader and return. This “return to Egypt” becomes a symbol of their lack of faith in the LORD.

²⁷ **tn** The optative is expressed by לוּ (*lu*) and then the verb, here the perfect tense מָתוּ (*matnu*) – “O that we had died....” Had they wanted to die in Egypt they should not have cried out to the LORD to deliver them from bondage. Here the people became consumed with the fear and worry of what lay ahead, and in their panic they revealed a lack of trust in God.

²⁸ **tn** *Heb* “died.”

better for us to return to Egypt?” **14:4** So they said to one another,¹ “Let’s appoint² a leader³ and return⁴ to Egypt.”

14:5 Then Moses and Aaron fell down with their faces to the ground⁵ before the whole assembled community⁶ of the Israelites. **14:6** And Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, two of those who had investigated the land, tore their garments. **14:7** They said to the whole community of the Israelites, “The land we passed through to investigate is an exceedingly⁷ good land. **14:8** If the LORD delights in us, then he will bring us into this land and give it to us – a land that is flowing with milk and honey.⁸ **14:9** Only do not rebel against the LORD, and do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us.⁹ Their protection¹⁰ has turned aside from them, but the LORD is with us. Do not fear them!”

14:10 However, the whole community threatened to stone them.¹¹ But¹² the glory¹³ of the LORD appeared to all the Israelites at the tent¹⁴ of meeting.

The Punishment from God

14:11 The LORD said to Moses, “How long will this people despise¹⁵ me, and how long will they not believe¹⁶ in me, in spite of the signs that I have done among them? **14:12** I will strike them with the pestilence,¹⁷ and I will disinherit them; I will make you into a nation that is greater and mightier than they!”

14:13 Moses said to the LORD, “When the Egyptians hear¹⁸ it – for you brought up this people by your power from among them – **14:14** then they will tell it to the inhabitants¹⁹ of this land. They have heard that you, LORD, are among this people, that you, LORD, are seen face to face,²⁰ that your cloud stands over them, and that you go before them by day in a pillar of cloud and in a pillar of fire by night. **14:15** If you kill²¹ this entire people at once,²² then the nations that have heard of your fame will say, **14:16** ‘Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land that he swore to them, he killed them in the wilderness.’ **14:17** So now, let the power of my LORD²³ be great, just as you have said, **14:18** ‘The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in loyal love,²⁴ forgiving iniquity and transgression,²⁵ but by no means clearing²⁶ the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the

1 tn Heb “a man to his brother.”

2 tn The verb is נתן (*natan*, “to give”), but this verb has quite a wide range of meanings in the Bible. Here it must mean “to make,” “to choose,” “to designate” or the like.

3 tn The word “head” (ראש, *ro’sh*) probably refers to a tribal chief who was capable to judge and to lead to war (see J. R. Bartlett, “The Use of the Word ראש as a Title in the Old Testament,” VT 19 [1969]: 1-10).

4 tn The form is a cohortative with a vav (ו) prefixed. After the preceding cohortative this could also be interpreted as a purpose or result clause – in order that we may return.

5 sn This action of Moses and Aaron is typical of them in the wilderness with the Israelites. The act shows self-abasement and deference before the sovereign LORD. They are not bowing before the people here, but in front of the people they bow before God. According to Num 16:41-50 this prostration is for the purpose of intercessory prayer. Here it prevents immediate wrath from God.

6 tn Heb “before all the assembly of the congregation.”

7 tn The repetition of the adverb מאד (*me’od*) is used to express this: “very, very [good].”

8 tn The subjective genitives “milk and honey” are symbols of the wealth of the land, second only to bread. Milk was a sign of such abundance (Gen 49:12; Isa 7:21,22). Because of the climate the milk would thicken quickly and become curds, eaten with bread or turned into butter. The honey mentioned here is the wild honey (see Deut 32:13; Judg 14:8-9). It signified sweetness, or the finer things of life (Ezek 3:3).

9 sn The expression must indicate that they could destroy the enemies as easily as they could eat bread.

10 tn Heb “their shade.” The figure compares the shade from the sun with the protection from the enemy. It is also possible that the text is alluding to their deities here.

11 tn Heb “said to stone them with stones.” The verb and the object are not from the same root, but the combination nonetheless forms an emphasis equal to the cognate accusative.

12 tn The vav (ו) on the noun “glory” indicates a strong contrast, one that interrupts their threatened attack.

13 sn The glory of the LORD refers to the reality of the LORD’s presence in a manifestation of his power and splendor. It showed to all that God was a living God. The appearance of the glory indicated blessing for the obedient, but disaster for the disobedient.

14 tn The Greek, Syriac, and Tg. Ps.-J. have “in the cloud over the tent.”

15 tn The verb נאצו (*na’ats*) means “to condemn, spurn” (BDB 610 s.v.). Coats suggests that in some contexts the word means actual rejection or renunciation (*Rebellion in the Wilderness*, 146, 7). This would include the idea of distaste.

16 tn The verb “to believe” (root אמן, *’aman*) has the basic idea of support, dependability for the root. The Hiphil has a declarative sense, namely, to consider something reliable or dependable and to act on it. The people did not trust what the LORD said.

17 tn The Greek version has “death.”

18 tn The construction is unusual in that we have here a perfect tense with a vav (ו) consecutive with no verb before it to establish the time sequence. The context requires that this be taken as a vav (ו) consecutive. It actually forms the protasis for the next verse, and would best be rendered “when...then they will say.”

19 tn The singular participle is to be taken here as a collective, representing all the inhabitants of the land.

20 tn “Face to face” is literally “eye to eye.” It only occurs elsewhere in Isa 52:8. This expresses the closest communication possible.

21 tn The verb is the Hiphil perfect of בות (*mut*), והפיתה (*’hemattah*). The vav (ו) consecutive makes this also a future time sequence verb, but again in a conditional clause.

22 tn Heb “as one man.”

23 tn The form in the text is אדוני (*’adonay*), the word that is usually used in place of the tetragrammaton. It is the plural form with the pronominal suffix, and so must refer to God.

24 tn The expression רב־חֶסֶד (*rav khesed*) means “much of loyal love,” or “faithful love.” Some have it “totally faithful,” but that omits the aspect of his love.

25 tn Or “rebellion.”

26 tn The infinitive absolute emphasizes the verbal activity of the imperfect tense, which here serves as a habitual imperfect. Negated it states what God does not do; and the infinitive makes that certain.

children until the third and fourth generations.¹ **14:19** Please forgive² the iniquity of this people according to your great loyal love,³ just as you have forgiven this people from Egypt even until now.”

14:20 Then the LORD said, “I have forgiven them as you asked.⁴ **14:21** But truly, as I live,⁵ all the earth will be filled with the glory of the LORD. **14:22** For all the people have seen my glory and my signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have tempted⁶ me now these ten times,⁷ and have not obeyed me,⁸ **14:23** they will by no means⁹ see the land that I swore to their fathers, nor will any of them who despised me see it. **14:24** Only my servant Caleb, because he had a different spirit and has followed me fully – I will bring him into the land where he had gone, and his descendants¹⁰ will possess it. **14:25** (Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites were living in the valleys.)¹¹ Tomorrow, turn and journey into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea.”

14:26 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron: **14:27** “How long must I bear¹² with this evil

congregation¹³ that murmurs against me? I have heard the complaints of the Israelites that they murmured against me. **14:28** Say to them, ‘As I live,¹⁴ says¹⁵ the LORD, I will surely do to you just what you have spoken in my hearing.¹⁶ **14:29** Your dead bodies¹⁷ will fall in this wilderness – all those of you who were numbered, according to your full number, from twenty years old and upward, who have murmured against me. **14:30** You will by no means enter into the land where¹⁸ I swore¹⁹ to settle²⁰ you. The only exceptions are Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun. **14:31** But I will bring in your little ones, whom you said would become victims of war,²¹ and they will enjoy²² the land that you have despised. **14:32** But as for you, your dead bodies will fall in this wilderness, **14:33** and your children will wander²³ in the wilderness forty years and suffer for your unfaithfulness,²⁴ until your dead bodies lie finished²⁵ in the wilderness. **14:34** According to the number of the days you have investigated this land, forty days – one day for a year – you will suffer for²⁶ your iniquities, forty years, and you will know what it means

¹ **sn** The Decalogue adds “to those who hate me.” The point of the line is that the effects of sin, if not the sinful traits themselves, are passed on to the next generation.

² **tn** The verb פָּלַח (selakh-na'), the imperative form, means “forgive” (see Ps 130:4), “pardon,” “excuse.” The imperative is of course a prayer, a desire, and not a command.

³ **tn** The construct unit is “the greatness of your loyal love.” This is the genitive of specification, the first word being the modifier.

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “forgiven according to your word.” The direct object, “them,” is implied.

⁵ **sn** This is the oath formula, but in the Pentateuch it occurs here and in v. 28.

⁶ **tn** The verb נָסָה (nasah) means “to test, to tempt, to prove.” It can be used to indicate things are tried or proven, or for testing in a good sense, or tempting in the bad sense, i.e., putting God to the test. In all uses there is uncertainty or doubt about the outcome. Some uses of the verb are positive: If God tests Abraham in Genesis 22:1, it is because there is uncertainty whether he fears the LORD or not; if people like Gideon put out the fleece and test the LORD, it is done by faith but in order to be certain of the LORD’s presence. But here, when these people put God to the test ten times, it was because they doubted the goodness and ability of God, and this was a major weakness. They had proof to the contrary, but chose to challenge God.

⁷ **tn** “Ten” is here a round figure, emphasizing the complete testing. But see F. V. Winnett, *The Mosaic Tradition*, 121-54.

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “listened to my voice.”

⁹ **tn** The word אִם (im) indicates a negative oath formula: “if” means “they will not.” It is elliptical. In a human oath one would be saying: “The LORD do to me if they see...,” meaning “they will by no means see.” Here God is swearing that they will not see the land.

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “seed.”

¹¹ **sn** The judgment on Israel is that they turn back to the desert and not attack the tribes in the land. So a parenthetical clause is inserted to state who was living there. They would surely block the entrance to the land from the south – unless God removed them. And he is not going to do that for Israel.

¹² **tn** The figure is aposiopesis, or sudden silence. The main verb is deleted from the line, “how long...this evil community.” The intensity of the emotion is the reason for the ellipsis.

¹³ **sn** It is worth mentioning in passing that this is one of the Rabbinic proof texts for having at least ten men to form a congregation and have prayer. If God called ten men (the bad spies) a “congregation,” then a congregation must have ten men. But here the word “community/congregation” refers in this context to the people of Israel as a whole, not just to the ten spies.

¹⁴ **sn** Here again is the oath that God swore in his wrath, an oath he swore by himself, that they would not enter the land. “As the LORD lives,” or “by the life of the LORD,” are ways to render it.

¹⁵ **tn** The word אָמַר (n'um) is an “oracle.” It is followed by the subjective genitive: “the oracle of the LORD” is equal to saying “the LORD says.”

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “in my ears.”

sn They had expressed the longing to have died in the wilderness, and not in war. God will now give them that. They would not say to God “your will be done,” so he says to them, “your will be done” (to borrow from C. S. Lewis).

¹⁷ **tn** Or “your corpses” (also in vv. 32, 33).

¹⁸ **tn** The relative pronoun “which” is joined with the resumptive pronoun “in it” to form a smoother reading “where.”

¹⁹ **tn** The Hebrew text uses the anthropomorphic expression “I raised my hand” in taking an oath.

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* “to cause you to dwell; to cause you to settle.”

²¹ **tn** Or “plunder.”

²² **tn** *Heb* “know.”

²³ **tn** The word is “shepherds.” It means that the people would be wilderness nomads, grazing their flock on available land.

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* “you shall bear your whoredoms.” The imagery of prostitution is used throughout the Bible to reflect spiritual unfaithfulness, leaving the covenant relationship and following after false gods. Here it is used generally for their rebellion in the wilderness, but not for following other gods.

²⁵ **tn** The infinitive is from תָּמַם (tamam), which means “to be complete.” The word is often used to express completeness in a good sense – whole, blameless, or the like. Here and in v. 35 it seems to mean “until your deaths have been completed.” See also Gen 47:15; Deut 2:15.

²⁶ **tn** *Heb* “you shall bear.”

to thwart me.¹ 14:35 I, the LORD, have said, “I will surely do so to all this evil congregation that has gathered together against me. In this wilderness they will be finished, and there they will die!””

14:36 The men whom Moses sent to investigate the land, who returned and made the whole community murmur against him by producing² an evil report about the land, 14:37 those men who produced the evil report about the land, died by the plague before the LORD. 14:38 But Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among³ the men who went to investigate the land, lived. 14:39 When Moses told⁴ these things to all the Israelites, the people mourned⁵ greatly.

14:40 And early⁶ in the morning they went up to the crest of the hill country,⁷ saying, “Here we are, and we will go up to the place that the LORD commanded,⁸ for we have sinned.”⁹ 14:41 But Moses said, “Why¹⁰ are you now transgressing the commandment¹¹ of the LORD? It will not succeed! 14:42 Do not go up, for the LORD is not among you, and you will be¹² defeated before your enemies. 14:43 For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and you will fall by the sword. Because you have turned away from the LORD, the LORD will not be with you.”

¹ **tn** The phrase refers to the consequences of open hostility to God, or perhaps abandonment of God. The noun מְנוּחָה (*menû'ah*) occurs in Job 33:10 (perhaps). The related verb occurs in Num 30:6 HT (30:5 ET) and 32:7 with the sense of “disallow, discourage.” The sense of the expression adopted in this translation comes from the meticulous study of R. Loewe, “Divine Frustration Exegetically Frustrated,” *Words and Meanings*, 137-58.

² **tn** The verb is the Hiphil infinitive construct with a *lamed* (ל) preposition from the root יָצָא (*yatsa'*, “to bring out”). The use of the infinitive here is epexegetical, that is, explaining how they caused the people to murmur.

³ **tn** The Hebrew text uses the preposition “from,” “some of” – “from those men.” The relative pronoun is added to make a smoother reading.

⁴ **tn** The preterite here is subordinated to the next preterite to form a temporal clause.

⁵ **tn** The word אָבַל (*aval*) is rare, used mostly for mourning over deaths, but it is used here of mourning over bad news (see also Exod 33:4; 1 Sam 15:35; 16:1; etc.).

⁶ **tn** The verb וַיִּשְׁכְּמוּ (*vayyashkimu*) is often found in a verbal hendiadys construction: “They rose early...and they went up” means “they went up early.”

⁷ **tn** The Hebrew text says literally “the top of the hill,” but judging from the location and the terrain it probably means the heights of the hill country.

⁸ **tn** The verb is simply “said,” but it means the place that the LORD said to go up to in order to fight.

⁹ **sn** Their sin was unbelief. They could have gone and conquered the area if they had trusted the LORD for their victory. They did not, and so they were condemned to perish in the wilderness. Now, thinking that by going they can undo all that, they plan to go. But this is also disobedience, for the LORD said they would not now take the land, and yet they think they can. Here is their second sin, presumption.

¹⁰ **tn** The line literally has, “Why is this [that] you are transgressing....” The demonstrative pronoun is enclitic; it brings the force of “why in the world are you doing this now?”

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “mouth.”

¹² **tn** This verb could also be subordinated to the preceding: “that you be not smitten.”

14:44 But they dared¹³ to go up to the crest of the hill, although¹⁴ neither the ark of the covenant of the LORD nor Moses departed from the camp. 14:45 So the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in that hill country swooped¹⁵ down and attacked them¹⁶ as far as Hormah.¹⁷

Sacrificial Rulings

15:1¹⁸ The LORD spoke to Moses: 15:2 “Speak to the Israelites and tell them, ‘When you enter the land where you are to live,¹⁹ which I am giving you,²⁰ 15:3 and you make an offering by fire to the LORD from the herd or from the flock (whether a burnt offering or a sacrifice for discharging a vow or as a freewill offering or in your solemn feasts) to create a pleasing aroma to the LORD, 15:4 then the one who presents his offering to the LORD must bring²¹ a grain offering of one-tenth of an ephah of finely ground flour mixed with one fourth of a hin of olive oil.²² 15:5 You must also prepare one-fourth of a

¹³ **tn** N. H. Snaith compares Arabic *'afala* (“to swell”) and *gafala* (“reckless, headstrong”; *Leviticus and Numbers* [NCB], 248). The word עָפַל (*'ofel*) means a “rounded hill” or a “tumor.” The idea behind the verb may be that of “swelling,” and so “act presumptuously.”

¹⁴ **tn** The disjunctive *vav* (ו) here introduces a circumstantial clause; the most appropriate one here would be the concessive “although.”

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “came down.”

¹⁶ **tn** The verb used here means “crush by beating,” or “pounded” them. The Greek text used “cut them in pieces.”

¹⁷ **tn** The name “Hormah” means “destruction”; it is from the word that means “ban, devote” for either destruction or temple use.

¹⁸ **sn** The wilderness wandering officially having begun, these rules were then given for the people to be used when they finally entered the land. That they would be provided here would be of some encouragement to the nation after their great failure. God still spoke of a land that was to be their land, even though they had sinned greatly. This chapter collects a number of religious rules. The first 16 verses deal with rulings for sacrifices. Then, vv. 17-36 concerns sins of omission. Finally, rules concerning tassels are covered (vv. 37-41). For additional reading, see G. B. Gray, *Sacrifice in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1925); B. A. Levine, *In the Presence of the LORD* (SJLA); D. J. McCarthy, “The Symbolism of Blood and Sacrifice,” *JBL* 88 (1969): 166-76; “Further Notes on the Symbolism of Blood and Sacrifice,” *JBL* 92 (1973): 205-10; J. Milgrom, “Sin Offering or Purification Offering,” *VT* 21 (1971): 237-39; N. H. Snaith, “Sacrifices in the Old Testament,” *VT* 7 (1957): 308-17; R. J. Thompson, *Penitence and Sacrifice in Early Israel*; R. de Vaux, *Studies in Old Testament Sacrifice*.

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “the land of your habitations.”

²⁰ **tn** The Hebrew participle here has the *futur instans* use of the participle, expressing that something is going to take place. It is not imminent, but it is certain that God would give the land to Israel.

²¹ **tn** The three words at the beginning of this verse are all etymologically related: “the one who offers his offering shall offer.”

²² **sn** Obviously, as the wording of the text affirms, this kind of offering would be made after they were in the land and able to produce the grain and oil for the sacrifices. The instructions anticipated their ability to do this, and this would give hope to them. The amounts are difficult to determine, but it may be that they were to bring 4.5 liters of flour and 1.8 liters each of oil and wine.

hin of wine for a drink offering¹ with the burnt offering or the sacrifice for each lamb.² **15:6** Or for a ram, you must prepare as a grain offering two-tenths of an ephah of finely ground flour mixed with one-third of a hin of olive oil, **15:7** and for a drink offering you must offer one-third of a hin of wine as a pleasing aroma to the LORD. **15:8** And when you prepare a young bull as a burnt offering or a sacrifice for discharging a vow or as a peace offering to the LORD, **15:9** then a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of finely ground flour mixed with half a hin of olive oil must be presented³ with the young bull, **15:10** and you must present as the drink offering half a hin of wine with the fire offering as a pleasing aroma to the LORD. **15:11** This is what is to be done⁴ for each ox, or each ram, or each of the male lambs or the goats. **15:12** You must do so for each one according to the number that you prepare.

15:13 “Every native-born person must do these things in this way to present an offering made by fire as a pleasing aroma to the LORD. **15:14** If a resident foreigner is living⁵ with you – or whoever is among you⁶ in future generations⁷ – and prepares an offering made by fire as a pleasing aroma to the LORD, he must do it the same way you are to do it.⁸ **15:15** One statute must apply⁹ to you who belong to the congregation and to the resident foreigner who is living among you, as a permanent¹⁰ statute for your future generations. You and the resident foreigner will be alike¹¹ before the LORD. **15:16** One law and one custom must apply to you and to the resident foreigner who lives alongside you.”

Rules for First Fruits

15:17 The LORD spoke to Moses: **15:18** “Speak to the Israelites and tell them, ‘When

you enter the land to which I am bringing you¹² **15:19** and you eat¹³ some of the food of the land, you must offer up a raised offering¹⁴ to the LORD. **15:20** You must offer up a cake of the first of your finely ground flour¹⁵ as a raised offering; as you offer the raised offering of the threshing floor, so you must offer it up. **15:21** You must give to the LORD some of the first of your finely ground flour as a raised offering in your future generations.

Rules for Unintentional Offenses

15:22¹⁶ “If you¹⁷ sin unintentionally and do not observe all these commandments that the LORD has spoken to Moses – **15:23** all that the LORD has commanded you by the authority¹⁸ of Moses, from the day that the LORD commanded Moses and continuing through your future generations – **15:24** then if anything is done unintentionally¹⁹ without the knowledge of²⁰ the community, the whole community must prepare one young bull for a burnt offering – for a pleasing aroma to the LORD – along with its grain offering and its customary drink offering, and one male goat for a purification offering. **15:25** And the priest is to make atonement²¹ for the whole

¹² tn The relative clause is literally, “which I am causing you to enter there.” The final adverb is resumptive, and must be joined with the relative pronoun.

¹³ tn The verse has a temporal clause that actually continues or supplements the temporal clause of the preceding verse. It is made up of the temporal indicator, the infinitive construct with the preposition, and the suffixed subjective genitive: “and it shall be when you eat.” Here it is translated simply “and eat” since the temporal element was introduced in the last verse.

¹⁴ tn This is the תְּרוּמָה (*ʿrumah*), the “raised offering” or “heave offering” (cf. KJV, ASV). It may simply be called a “contribution” (so NAB). The verb of the sentence is from the same root: “you shall lift up/raise up.” It was to be an offering separated from the rest and raised up to the LORD in the sight of all. It was designed to remind the Israelites that the produce and the land belonged to God.

¹⁵ tn Or “the first of your dough.” The phrase is not very clear. N. H. Snaith thinks it means a batch of loaves from the kneading trough – the first batch of the baking (*Leviticus and Numbers* [NCB], 251).

¹⁶ sn These regulations supplement what was already ruled on in the Levitical code for the purification and reparation offerings. See those rulings in Lev 4-7 for all the details. Some biblical scholars view the rules in Leviticus as more elaborate and therefore later. However, this probably represents a misunderstanding of the purpose of each collection.

¹⁷ tn The verb is the plural imperfect; the sin discussed here is a sin committed by the community, or the larger part of the community.

¹⁸ tn Heb “hand.”

¹⁹ tn The idea of לִישְׁגָּחָה (*lishgagah*) seems to be that of “inadvertence” or “without intent.” The text gives no indication of how this offense might be committed, or what it might include. It probably describes any transgressions done in ignorance of the Law that involved a violation of tabernacle procedure or priestly protocol or social misdemeanor. Even though it was done unintentionally, it was still a violation and called for ritual purification.

²⁰ tn Heb “[away] from the eyes of the community.”

²¹ tn The verb is the Piel perfect with *vav* (ו) consecutive (וַיִּכְפֹּר, *v^hkipper*) to continue the instruction of the passage: “the priest shall make atonement,” meaning the priest is to make atonement for the sin (thus the present translation).

¹ sn The drink-offering was an ancient custom, mentioned in the Ugaritic tablets of Ras Shamra (14th century B.C.). The drink offering was poured out at the base of the altar (see Sir 50:15 and Josephus, *Ant.* 3.9.4 [3.234]).

² tn Heb “for the one lamb,” but it clearly means “for each lamb.”

³ tn The text changes from direct address here to the third person form of the verb. If the MT is correct, then to make a smooth translation it would need to be made a passive (in view of the fact that no subject is expressed).

⁴ tn Heb “according to thus shall it be done.”

⁵ tn The word גֵּר (*gur*) was traditionally translated “to sojourn,” i.e., to live temporarily in a land. Here the two words are from the root: “if a sojourner sojourns.”

⁶ tn Heb “in your midst.”

⁷ tn The Hebrew text just has “to your generations,” but it means in the future.

⁸ tn The imperfect tenses must reflect the responsibility to comply with the law, and so the classifications of instruction or obligation may be applied.

⁹ tn The word “apply” is supplied in the translation.

¹⁰ tn Or “a statute forever.”

¹¹ tn Heb “as you, as [so] the alien.”

community of the Israelites, and they will be forgiven,¹ because it was unintentional and they have brought their offering, an offering made by fire to the LORD, and their purification offering before the LORD, for their unintentional offense. **15:26** And the whole community² of the Israelites and the resident foreigner who lives among them will be forgiven, since all the people were involved in the unintentional offense.

15:27 “If any person³ sins unintentionally, then he must bring a yearling female goat for a purification offering. **15:28** And the priest must make atonement for the person who sins unintentionally – when he sins unintentionally before the LORD – to make atonement for him, and he will be forgiven. **15:29** You must have one law for the person who sins unintentionally, both for the native-born among the Israelites and for the resident foreigner who lives among them.

Deliberate Sin

15:30 “But the person⁴ who acts defiantly,⁵ whether native-born or a resident foreigner, insults⁶ the LORD.⁷ That person⁸ must be cut off⁹ from among his people. **15:31** Because he has despised¹⁰ the word of the LORD and has

broken¹¹ his commandment, that person¹² must be completely cut off.¹³ His iniquity will be on him.”¹⁴

15:32 When the Israelites were¹⁵ in the wilderness they found a man gathering wood on the Sabbath day.¹⁶ **15:33** Those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron and to the whole community. **15:34** They put him in custody, because there was no clear instruction about what should be done to him. **15:35** Then the LORD said to Moses, “The man must surely be put to death; the whole community must stone¹⁷ him with stones outside the camp.” **15:36** So the whole community took him outside the camp and stoned him to death,¹⁸ just as the LORD commanded Moses.

This verb means “to expiate,” “to atone for,” “to pacify.” It describes the ritual events by which someone who was separated from the holy LORD God could find acceptance into his presence through the sacrificial blood of the substitutory animal. See Lev 1 and Num 16:41-50.

1 tn Or “they will be forgiven.”

2 tn Again, rather than translate literally “and it shall be forgiven [to] them” (all the community), one could say, “they (all the community) will be forgiven.” The meaning is the same.

3 tn The Hebrew text has *וְאִישׁ נֶפֶשׁ אָדָמָה* (*v'ish-im-nefesh 'akhat*), sometime translated “and if any soul.” But the word describes the whole person, the soul in the body; it refers here to the individual who sins.

4 tn Heb “soul.”

5 tn The sin is described literally as acting “with a high hand” – *בְּיַד רָמָה* (*b'yad ramah*). The expression means that someone would do something with deliberate defiance, with an arrogance in spite of what the LORD said. It is as if the sinner was about to attack God, or at least lifting his hand against God. The implication of the expression is that it was done in full knowledge of the Law (especially since this contrasts throughout with the sins of ignorance). Blatant defiance of the word of the LORD is dealt with differently. For similar expressions, see Exod 14:8 and Num 33:3.

6 tn The verb occurs only in the Piel; it means “to blaspheme,” “to revile.”

7 tn The word order in the Hebrew text places “Yahweh” first for emphasis – it is the LORD such a person insults.

8 tn Heb “soul.”

9 tn The clause begins with “and” because the verb is the perfect tense with *vav* (ו) consecutive. As discussed with Num 9:13, to be cut off could mean excommunication from the community, death by the community, or death by divine intervention.

10 tn The verb *בָּזָה* (*bazah*, “to despise”) means to treat something as worthless, to treat it with contempt, to look down the nose at something as it were.

11 tn The verb *פָּרַר* (*parar*, “to break”) can mean to nullify, break, or violate a covenant.

12 tn Heb “soul.”

13 tn The construction uses the Niphal imperfect with the modifying Niphal infinitive absolute. The infinitive makes the sentence more emphatic. If the imperfect tense is taken as an instruction imperfect, then the infinitive makes the instruction more binding. If it is a simple future, then the future is certain. In either case, there is no exclusion from being cut off.

14 sn The point is that the person's iniquity remains with him – he must pay for his sin. The judgment of God in such a case is both appropriate and unavoidable.

15 tn The preterite of the verb “to be” is here subordinated to the next, parallel verb form, to form a temporal clause.

16 sn For this brief passage, see A. Phillips, “The Case of the Woodgatherer Reconsidered,” *VT* 19 (1969): 125-28; J. Weingreen, “The Case of the Woodgatherer (Numbers XV 32-36),” *VT* 16 (1966): 361-64; and B. J. Bamberger, “Revelations of Torah after Sinai,” *HUCA* 16 (1941): 97-113. Weingreen argues that there is something of the Rabbinic method of setting a fence around the Law here; in other words, if this sin were not punished, the Law would have been violated in greater ways. Gathering of wood, although seemingly harmless, is done with intent to kindle fire, and so reveals a culpable intent.

17 tn The sentence begins with the emphatic use of the infinitive absolute with the verb in the Hophal imperfect: “he shall surely be put to death.” Then, a second infinitive absolute *רָגַם* (*ragom*) provides the explanatory activity – all the community is to stone him with stones. The punishment is consistent with other decrees from God (see Exod 31:14,15; 35:2). Moses had either forgotten such, or they had simply neglected to (or were hesitant to) enact them.

18 tn Heb “stoned him with stones, and he died.”

Rules for Tassels

15:37 The LORD spoke to Moses: **15:38** “Speak to the Israelites and tell them to make⁴ tassels² for themselves on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and put a blue thread³ on the tassel of the corners. **15:39** You must have this tassel so that you may look at it and remember all the commandments of the LORD and obey them and so that you do not follow⁴ after your own heart and your own eyes that lead you to unfaithfulness.⁵ **15:40** Thus⁶ you will remember and obey all my commandments and be holy to your God. **15:41** 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.”

The Rebellion of Korah

16:17 Now Korah son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth, who were Reubenites,⁸ took men⁹ **16:2** and re-

belled against Moses, along with some of the Israelites, 250 leaders¹⁰ of the community, chosen from the assembly,¹¹ famous men.¹² **16:3** And they assembled against Moses and Aaron, saying to them, “You take too much upon yourselves,¹³ seeing that the whole community is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the community of the LORD?”

16:4 When Moses heard it he fell down with his face to the ground.¹⁴ **16:5** Then he said to Korah and to all his company, “In the morning the LORD will make known who are his, and who is holy. He will cause that person¹⁵ to approach him; the person he has chosen he will cause to approach him. **16:6** Do this, Korah, you and all your company: **16:7** put fire in them, and set incense on them before the LORD tomorrow, and the man whom the LORD chooses will be holy. You take too much upon yourselves, you sons of Levi!” **16:8** Moses said to Korah, “Listen now, you sons of Levi! **16:9** Does it seem too small a thing to you that the God of Israel has separated you from the community of Israel to bring you near to himself, to perform the service of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the community to minister to them? **16:10** He has brought you near and all your brothers, the sons of Levi, with you. Do you now seek¹⁷ the priesthood also?

¹ **tn** The construction uses the imperative followed by perfect tenses with vav (ו) consecutives. The first perfect tense may be translated as the imperative, but the second, being a third common plural form, has to be subordinated as a purpose clause, or as the object of the preceding verb: “speak... and say...that they make.”

² **sn** This is a reference to the תְּשִׁיטִי (tsitsit), the fringes on the borders of the robes. They were meant to hang from the corners of the upper garment (Deut 22:12), which was worn on top of the clothing. The tassel was probably made by twisting the overhanging threads of the garment into a knot that would hang down. This was a reminder of the covenant. The tassels were retained down through history, and today more elaborate prayer shawls with tassels are worn during prayer. For more information, see F. J. Stephens, “The Ancient Significance of Sishit,” *JBL* 50 (1931): 59-70; and S. Bertman, “Tasselled Garments in the Ancient East Mediterranean,” *BA* 24 (1961): 119-28.

³ **sn** The blue color may represent the heavenly origin of the Law, or perhaps, since it is a royal color, the majesty of the LORD.

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “seek out, look into.”

⁵ **tn** This last clause is a relative clause explaining the influence of the human heart and physical sight. It literally says, “which you go whoring after them.” The verb for “whoring” may be interpreted to mean “act unfaithfully.” So, the idea is these influences lead to unfaithful activity: “after which you act unfaithfully.”

⁶ **tn** This clause also serves as a purpose/result clause of the preceding – “in order that you may remember....” But because the line is so long, it is simpler to make this a separate sentence in the translation.

⁷ **sn** There are three main movements in the story of ch. 16. The first is the rebellion itself (vv. 1-19). The second is the judgment (vv. 20-35). Third is the atonement for the rebels (vv. 36-50). The whole chapter is a marvelous account of a massive rebellion against the leaders that concludes with reconciliation. For further study see G. Hort, “The Death of Qorah,” *ABR* 7 (1959): 2-26; and J. Liver, “Korah, Dathan and Abiram,” *Studies in the Bible* (ScrHier 8), 189-217.

⁸ **tc** The MT reading is plural (“the sons of Reuben”); the Smr and LXX have the singular (“the son of Reuben”).

⁹ **tn** In the Hebrew text there is no object for the verb “took.” The translation presented above supplies the word “men.” However, it is possible that the MT has suffered damage here. The LXX has “and he spoke.” The Syriac and Targum have “and he was divided.” The editor of BHS suggests that perhaps the MT should be emended to “and he arose.”

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “princes” (so KJV, ASV).

¹¹ **tn** These men must have been counselors or judges of some kind.

¹² **tn** *Heb* “men of name,” or “men of renown.”

¹³ **tn** The meaning of רַב־לַחֶמֶת (rab-lakhem) is something like “you have assumed far too much authority.” It simply means “much to you,” perhaps “you have gone too far,” or “you are overreaching yourselves” (M. Noth, *Numbers* [OTL], 123). He is objecting to the exclusiveness of the system that Moses has been introducing.

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “fell on his face.”

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “him.”

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “his congregation” or “his community.” The expression is unusual, but what it signifies is that Korah had set up a rival “Israel” with himself as leader.

¹⁷ **tn** The verb is the Piel perfect. There is no imperfect tense before this, which makes the construction a little difficult. If the vav (ו) is classified as a consecutive, then the form would stand alone as an equivalent to the imperfect, and rendered as a modal nuance such as “would you [now] seek,” or as a progressive imperfect, “are you seeking.” This latter nuance can be obtained by treating it as a regular perfect tense, with an instantaneous nuance: “do you [now] seek.”

sn Moses discerned correctly the real motivation for the rebellion. Korah wanted to be the high priest because he saw how much power there was in the spiritual leadership in Israel. He wanted something like a general election with himself as the candidate and his supporters promoting him. The great privilege of being a Levite and serving in the sanctuary was not enough for him – the status did not satisfy him. Korah gave no rebuttal. The test would be one of ministering with incense. This would bring them into direct proximity with the LORD. If God honored Korah as a ministering priest, then it would be settled. But Moses accuses them of rebellion against the LORD, because the LORD had chosen Aaron to be the priest.

16:11 Therefore you and all your company have assembled together against the LORD! And Aaron – what is he that you murmur against him?¹ **16:12** Then Moses summoned² Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, but they said, “We will not come up.³ **16:13** Is it a small thing⁴ that you have brought us up out of the land that flows with milk and honey,⁵ to kill us in the wilderness? Now do you want to make yourself a prince⁶ over us? **16:14** Moreover,⁷ you have not brought us into a land that flows with milk and honey, nor given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards. Do you think you can blind⁸ these men? We will not come up.”

16:15 Moses was very angry, and he said to the LORD, “Have no respect⁹ for their offering! I have not taken so much as one donkey from them, nor have I harmed any one of them!”

16:16 Then Moses said to Korah, “You and all your company present yourselves before the LORD – you and they, and Aaron – tomorrow.

16:17 And each of you¹⁰ take his censer, put¹¹ incense in it, and then each of you present his censer before the LORD: 250 censers, along with you, and Aaron – each of you with his censer.” **16:18** So everyone took his censer, put fire in it, and set incense on it, and stood at the entrance of the tent of meeting, with Moses and Aaron. **16:19** When¹² Korah assembled the whole community against them at the entrance of the tent of meeting, then the glory of the LORD appeared to the whole community.

The Judgment on the Rebels

16:20 The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron: **16:21** “Separate yourselves¹³ from among this community,¹⁴ that I may consume them in an instant.” **16:22** Then they threw themselves down with their faces to the ground¹⁵ and said, “O God, the God of the spirits of all people,¹⁶ will you be angry with the whole community when only one man sins?”¹⁷

16:23 So the LORD spoke to Moses: **16:24** “Tell the community: ‘Get away¹⁸ from around the homes of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.’”

16:25 Then Moses got up¹⁹ and went to Dathan and Abiram; and the elders of Israel went after him. **16:26** And he said to the community, “Move away from the tents of these wicked²⁰

¹ **sn** The question indicates that they had been murmuring against Aaron, that is, expressing disloyalty and challenging his leadership. But it is actually against the LORD that they had been murmuring because the LORD had put Aaron in that position.

² **tn** *Heb* “Moses sent to summon.” The verb קָרָא (*qara*) followed by the *lamed* (ל) preposition does not mean “call to” but “summon.” This is a command performance; for them to appear would be to submit to Moses’ authority. This they will not do.

³ **tn** The imperfect tense נִגְלַה (*na’aleh*) expresses their unwillingness to report: “we are not willing,” or “we will not.” The verb means “to go up.” It is used in the sense of appearing before an authority or a superior (see, e.g., Gen 46:31; Deut 25:7; Judg 4:5).

⁴ **tn** The question is rhetorical. It was not a small thing to them – it was a big thing.

⁵ **tn** The modern scholar who merely sees these words as belonging to an earlier tradition about going up to the land of Canaan that flows with milk and honey misses the irony here. What is happening is that the text is showing how twisted the thinking of the rebels is. They have turned things completely around. Egypt was the land flowing with milk and honey, not Canaan where they will die. The words of rebellion are seldom original, and always twisted.

⁶ **tn** The verb הִשְׁתַּרֵּר (*histarer*) is the Hitpael infinitive absolute that emphasizes the preceding תִּשְׁתַּרֵּר (*tistarer*), the Hitpael imperfect tense (both forms having metathesis). The verb means “to rule; to act like a prince; to make oneself a prince.” This is the only occurrence of the reflexive for this verb. The exact nuance is difficult to translate into English. But they are accusing Moses of seizing princely power for himself, perhaps making a sarcastic reference to his former status in Egypt. The rebels here are telling Moses that they had discerned his scheme, and so he could not “hoodwink” them (cf. NEB).

⁷ **tn** Here אַף (*af*) has the sense of “in addition.” It is not a common use.

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “will you bore out the eyes of these men?” The question is “Will you continue to mislead them?” (or “hoodwink” them). In Deut 16:19 it is used for taking a bribe; something like that kind of deception is intended here. They are simply stating that Moses is a deceiver who is misleading the people with false promises.

⁹ **tn** The verb means “to turn toward”; it is a figurative expression that means “to pay attention to” or “to have regard for.” So this is a prayer against Dathan and Abiram.

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “and take, a man, his censer.”

¹¹ **tn** This verb and the following one are both perfect tenses with *vav* (ו) consecutives. Following the imperative they carry the same force, but in sequence.

¹² **tn** This clause is clearly foundational for the clause that follows, the appearance of the LORD; therefore it should be subordinated to the next as a temporal clause (one preterite followed by another preterite may be so subordinated).

¹³ **tn** The verb is הִבַּדְלוּ (*hibbad’lu*), the Niphal imperative of בָּדַל (*badal*). This is the same word that was just used when Moses reminded the Levites that they had been separated from the community to serve the LORD.

¹⁴ **sn** The group of people siding with Korah is meant, and not the entire community of the people of Israel. They are an assembly of rebels – their “community” consisting in their common plot.

¹⁵ **sn** It is Moses and Aaron who prostrate themselves; they have the good of the people at heart.

¹⁶ **tn** The expression “the God of the spirits of all humanity [flesh]” is somewhat difficult. The Hebrew text says אֱלֹהֵי הַרוּחַת אֱלֹהֵי הָאָדָמָה (‘*elohey harukhot e’lkol-basar*). This expression occurs in Num 27:16 again. It also occurs in some postbiblical texts, a fact which has prompted some scholars to conclude that it is a late addition. The words clearly show that Moses is interceding for the congregation. The appeal in the verse is that it is better for one man to die for the whole nation than the whole nation for one man (see also John 11:50).

¹⁷ **tn** The verb is the Qal imperfect יִכְתֵּם (*yekheta*); it refers to the sinful rebellion of Korah, but Moses is stating something of a principle: “One man sins, and will you be angry....” A past tense translation would assume that this is a preterite use of the imperfect (without *vav* [ו] consecutive).

¹⁸ **tn** The motif of “going up” is still present; here the Hebrew text says “go up” (the Niphal imperative – “go up yourselves”) from their tents, meaning, move away from them.

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “rose up.”

²⁰ **tn** The word רָשָׁע (*rasha*) has the sense of a guilty criminal. The word “wicked” sometimes gives the wrong connotation. These men were opposing the LORD, and so were condemned as criminals – they were guilty. The idea of “wickedness” therefore applies in that sense.

men, and do not touch anything they have, lest you be destroyed because¹ of all their sins.”² **16:27** So they got away from the homes of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram on every side, and Dathan and Abiram came out and stationed themselves³ in the entrances of their tents with their wives, their children, and their toddlers. **16:28** Then Moses said, “This is how⁴ you will know that the LORD has sent me to do all these works, for I have not done them of my own will.⁵ **16:29** If these men die a natural death,⁶ or if they share the fate⁷ of all men, then the LORD has not sent me. **16:30** But if the LORD does something entirely new,⁸ and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up⁹ along with all that they have, and they¹⁰ go down alive to the grave,¹¹ then you will know that these men have despised the LORD!”

¹ **tn** The preposition *bet* (ב) in this line is causal – “on account of their sins.”

² **sn** The impression is that the people did not hear what the LORD said to Moses, but only what Moses said to the people as a result. They saw the brilliant cloud, and perhaps heard the sound of his voice, but the relaying of the instructions indicates they did not hear the actual instruction from the LORD himself.

³ **tn** The verb *נִצְבִים* (*nitsavim*) suggests a defiant stance, for the word is often used in the sense of taking a stand for or against something. It can also be somewhat neutral, having the sense of positioning oneself for a purpose.

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “in this.”

⁵ **tn** The Hebrew text simply has *כִּי־לִבִּי* (*ki-lo' millibbi*, “for not from my heart”). The heart is the center of the will, the place decisions are made (see H. W. Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*). Moses is saying that the things he has done have not come “from the will of man” so to speak – and certainly not from some secret desire on his part to seize power.

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “if like the death of every man they die.”

⁷ **tn** The noun is *פְּקֻדָּה* (*p'quddah*, “appointment, visitation”). The expression refers to a natural death, parallel to the first expression.

⁸ **tn** The verb *בָּרָא* (*bara'*) is normally translated “create” in the Bible. More specifically it means to fashion or make or do something new and fresh. Here the verb is joined with its cognate accusative to underscore that this will be so different everyone will know it is of God.

⁹ **tn** The figures are personifications. But they vividly describe the catastrophe to follow – which was very much like a mouth swallowing them.

¹⁰ **tn** The word is “life” or “lifetime”; it certainly means their lives – they themselves. But the presence of this word suggests more. It is an accusative specifying the state of the subject – they will go down alive to Sheol.

¹¹ **tn** The word “Sheol” in the Bible can be used four different ways: the grave, the realm of the departed [wicked] spirits or Hell, death in general, or a place of extreme danger (one that will lead to the grave if God does not intervene). The usage here is certainly the first, and very likely the second as well. A translation of “pit” would not be inappropriate. Since they will go down there alive, it is likely that they will sense the deprivation and the separation from the land above. See H. W. Robinson, *Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament*; N. J. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Netherworld in the Old Testament* (BibOr 21), 21-23; and A. Heidel, *The Gilgamesh Epic*, especially ch. 3.

16:31 When he had finished¹² speaking¹³ all these words, the ground that was under them split open, **16:32** and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, along with their households, and all Korah's men, and all their goods. **16:33** They and all that they had went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed over them. So they perished from among the community. **16:34** All the Israelites¹⁴ who were around them fled at their cry,¹⁵ for they said, “What if¹⁶ the earth swallows us too?” **16:35** Then a fire¹⁷ went out from the LORD and devoured the 250 men who offered incense.

The Atonement for the Rebellion

16:36 (17:1)¹⁸ The LORD spoke to Moses: **16:37** “Tell¹⁹ Eleazar son of Aaron the priest to pick up²⁰ the censers out of the flame, for they are holy, and then scatter the coals of fire²¹ at a distance. **16:38** As for the censers of these men who sinned at the cost of their lives,²² they must be made²³ into hammered sheets for covering the altar, because they presented them before the LORD and sanctified them. They will become a sign to the Israelites.” **16:39** So Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers presented by those who had been burned up, and they were hammered out as a covering for the altar. **16:40** It was a memorial for the Israelites, that no outsider who is not a descendant of²⁴ Aaron should approach to burn incense before the LORD, that he might not become like Korah and his company – just

¹² **tn** The initial temporal clause is standard: It begins with the temporal indicator “and it was,” followed here by the Piel infinitive construct with the preposition and the subjective genitive suffix. “And it happened when he finished.”

¹³ **tn** The infinitive construct with the preposition *lamed* (ל) functions here as the direct object of the preceding infinitive. It tells what he finished.

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* “all Israel.”

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “voice.”

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “lest.”

¹⁷ **tn** For a discussion of the fire of the LORD, see J. C. H. Laughlin, “The Strange Fire of Nadab and Abihu,” *JBL* 95 (1976): 559-65.

¹⁸ **sn** Beginning with **16:36**, the verse numbers through **17:13** in the English Bible differ from the verse numbers in the Hebrew text (*BHS*), with **16:36** ET = **17:1** HT, **16:37** ET = **17:2** HT, **17:1** ET = **17:16** HT, etc., through **17:13** ET = **17:28** HT. With **18:1** the verse numbers in the ET and HT are again the same. But in the English chap. 17 there are two parts: Aaron's rod budding (1-9), and the rod preserved as a memorial (10-13). Both sections begin with the same formula.

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “say to.”

²⁰ **tn** The verb is the jussive with a *vav* (ו) coming after the imperative; it may be subordinated to form a purpose clause (“that he may pick up”) or the object of the imperative.

²¹ **tn** The Hebrew text just has “fire,” but it would be hard to conceive of this action apart from the idea of coals of fire.

²² **tn** The expression is “in/by/against their life.” That they sinned against their life means that they brought ruin to themselves.

²³ **tn** The form is the perfect tense with *vav* (ו) consecutive. But there is no expressed subject for “and they shall make them,” and so it may be treated as a passive (“they shall [must] be made”).

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* “from the seed of.”

as the LORD had spoken by the authority¹ of Moses. **16:41** But on the next day the whole community of Israelites murmured against Moses and Aaron, saying, “You have killed the LORD’s people!”² **16:42** When the community assembled³ against Moses and Aaron, they turned toward the tent of meeting – and⁴ the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD appeared. **16:43** Then Moses and Aaron stood before the tent of meeting.

16:44 The LORD spoke to Moses: **16:45** “Get away from this community, so that I can consume them in an instant!” But they threw themselves down with their faces to the ground.⁵ **16:46** Then Moses said to Aaron, “Take the censer, put burning coals from the altar in it, place incense on it, and go quickly into the assembly and make atonement for them, for wrath has gone out from the LORD – the plague has begun!” **16:47** So Aaron did⁶ as Moses commanded⁷ and ran into the middle of the assembly, where the plague was just beginning among the people. So he placed incense on the coals and made atonement for the people. **16:48** He stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stopped. **16:49** Now 14,700 people died in the plague, in addition to those who died in the event with Korah. **16:50** Then Aaron returned to Moses at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and the plague was stopped.

The Budding of Aaron’s Staff

17:1⁸ The LORD spoke to Moses: **17:2** “Speak to the Israelites, and receive from them a staff from each tribe,⁹ one from every tribal leader,¹⁰ twelve staffs; you must write each man’s name on his staff. **17:3** You must write Aaron’s name on the staff of Levi; for one staff is for the head of every tribe.¹¹ **17:4** You must place them¹² in

the tent of meeting before the ark of the covenant¹³ where I meet with you. **17:5** And the staff of the man whom I choose will blossom; so I will rid myself of the complaints of the Israelites, which they murmur against you.”

17:6 So Moses spoke to the Israelites, and each of their leaders gave him a staff, one for each leader,¹⁴ according to their tribes¹⁵ – twelve staffs; the staff of Aaron was among their staffs. **17:7** Then Moses placed the staffs before the LORD in the tent of the testimony.¹⁶

17:8 On the next day Moses went into the tent of the testimony – and¹⁷ the staff of Aaron for the house of Levi had sprouted, and brought forth buds, and produced blossoms, and yielded almonds!¹⁸ **17:9** So Moses brought out all the staffs from before the LORD to all the Israelites. They looked at them,¹⁹ and each man took his staff.

The Memorial

17:10 The LORD said to Moses, “Bring Aaron’s staff back before the testimony to be preserved for a sign to the rebels, so that you may bring their murmurings to an end²⁰ before me, that they will not die.”²¹ **17:11** So Moses did as the LORD commanded him – this is what he did.

17:12 The Israelites said to Moses, “We are bound to die!²² We perish, we all perish! **17:13** (17:28)²³ Anyone who even comes close to the tabernacle of the LORD will die! Are we all to die?”²⁴

¹ tn Heb “hand.”

² sn The whole congregation here is trying to project its guilt on Moses and Aaron. It was they and their rebellion that brought about the deaths, not Moses and Aaron. The Lord had punished the sinners. The fact that the leaders had organized a rebellion against the Lord was forgotten by these people. The point here is that the Israelites had learned nothing of spiritual value from the event.

³ tn The temporal clause is constructed with the temporal indicator (“and it was”) followed by the Niphal infinitive construct and preposition.

⁴ tn The verse uses וַיִּבְרָא (v^hhinneh, “and behold”). This is the deictic particle – it is used to point things out, suddenly calling attention to them, as if the reader were there. The people turned to look toward the tent – and there is the cloud!

⁵ tn Heb “they fell on their faces.”

⁶ tn Heb “took.”

⁷ tn Or “had spoken” (NASB); NRSV “had ordered.”

⁸ sn Num **17:1** in the English Bible is **17:16** in the Hebrew text (BHS). See also the note on **16:36**.

⁹ tn Heb “receive from them a rod, a rod from the house of a father.”

¹⁰ tn Heb “from every leader of them according to their fathers’ house.”

¹¹ tn Heb “one rod for the head of their fathers’ house.”

¹² tn The verb is the Hiphil perfect of נָחַת (nuakh, “to rest”), and so “to set at rest, lay, place, put.” The form with the vav (ו) consecutive continues the instruction of the previous verse.

¹³ tn The Hebrew text simply reads “the covenant” or “the testimony.”

¹⁴ tn Heb “a rod for one leader, a rod for one leader.”

¹⁵ tn Heb “the house of their fathers.”

¹⁶ tn The name of the tent now attests to the centrality of the ark of the covenant. Instead of the “tent of meeting” (בֵּיתֵיךָ, mo’ed) we now find the “the tent of the testimony” (הַעֲדוּת, ha’edut).

¹⁷ tn Here too the deictic particle (“and behold”) is added to draw attention to the sight in a vivid way.

¹⁸ sn There is no clear answer why the tribe of Levi had used an almond staff. The almond tree is one of the first to bud in the spring, and its white blossoms are a beautiful sign that winter is over. Its name became a name for “watcher”; Jeremiah plays on this name for God’s watching over his people (1:11-12).

¹⁹ tn The words “at them” are not in the Hebrew text, but they have been added in the translation for clarity.

²⁰ tn The verb means “to finish; to complete” and here “to bring to an end.” It is the imperfect following the imperative, and so introduces a purpose clause (as a final imperfect).

²¹ tn This is another final imperfect in a purpose clause.

²² tn The use of הֵן (hen) and the perfect tense in the nuance of a prophetic perfect expresses their conviction that they were bound to die – it was certain (see GKC 312-13 §106.n).

²³ sn Num **17:13** in the English Bible is **17:28** in the Hebrew text (BHS). See also the note on **16:36**.

²⁴ tn The verse stresses the completeness of their death: “will we be consumed by dying” (הֲיִאֲכַלְנוּ לְדִיּוֹתָם, ha’im tamnu ligvoa’).

Responsibilities of the Priests

18:1¹ The LORD said to Aaron, “You and your sons and your tribe² with you must bear the iniquity of the sanctuary,³ and you and your sons with you must bear the iniquity of your priesthood.

18:2⁴ “Bring with you your brothers, the tribe of Levi, the tribe of your father, so that they may join⁴ with you and minister to you while⁵ you and your sons with you are before the tent of the testimony. **18:3** They must be responsible to care for you and to care for the entire tabernacle. However, they must not come near the furnishings of the sanctuary and the altar, or both they and you will die. **18:4** They must join⁶ with you, and they will be responsible for the care of the tent of meeting, for all the service of the tent, but no unauthorized person⁷ may approach you. **18:5** You will be responsible for the care of the sanctuary and the care of the altar, so that there will be⁸ no more wrath on the Israelites. **18:6** I myself have chosen⁹ your brothers the Levites from among the Israelites. They are given to you as a gift from the LORD, to perform the duties¹⁰ of the tent of meeting. **18:7** But you and your sons with you are responsible for your priestly duties, for everything at the altar and within the curtain. And you must serve. I give you the priesthood as a gift for service, but the unauthorized person who approaches must be put to death.”

¹ **sn** This chapter and the next may have been inserted here to explain how the priests are to function because in the preceding chapter Aaron's position was affirmed. The chapter seems to fall into four units: responsibilities of priests (vv. 1-7), their portions (vv. 8-19), responsibilities of Levites (vv. 20-24), and instructions for Levites (vv. 25-32).

² **tn** *Heb* “your father's house.”

³ **sn** The responsibility for the sanctuary included obligations relating to any violation of the sanctuary. This was stated to forestall any further violations of the sanctuary. The priests were to pay for any ritual errors, primarily if any came too near. Since the priests and Levites come near all the time, they risk violating ritual laws more than any. So, with the great privileges come great responsibilities. The bottom line is that they were responsible for the sanctuary.

⁴ **sn** The verb forms a wordplay on the name Levi, and makes an allusion to the naming of the tribe Levi by Leah in the book of Genesis. There Leah hoped that with the birth of Levi her husband would be attached to her. Here, with the selection of the tribe to serve in the sanctuary, there is the wordplay again showing that the Levites will be attached to Aaron and the priests. The verb is לָוִי (*yillavu*), which forms a nice wordplay with *Levi* (לֵוִי). The tribe will now be attached to the sanctuary. The verb is the imperfect with a *vav* (ו) that shows volitive sequence after the imperative, here indicating a purpose clause.

⁵ **tn** The clause is a circumstantial clause because the disjunctive *vav* (ו) is on a nonverb to start the clause.

⁶ **tn** Now the sentence uses the Niphal perfect with a *vav* (ו) consecutive from the same root לָוִי (*lavah*).

⁷ **tn** The word is “stranger, alien,” but it can also mean Israelites here.

⁸ **tn** The clause is a purpose clause, and the imperfect tense a final imperfect.

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “taken.”

¹⁰ **tn** The infinitive construct in this sentence is from לָוִי (*avad*), and so is the noun that serves as its object: to serve the service.

The Portion of the Priests

18:8 The LORD spoke to Aaron, “See, I have given you the responsibility for my raised offerings; I have given all the holy things of the Israelites to you as your priestly portion¹¹ and to your sons as a perpetual ordinance. **18:9** Of all the most holy offerings reserved¹² from the fire this will be yours: Every offering of theirs, whether from every grain offering or from every purification offering or from every reparation offering which they bring to me, will be most holy for you and for your sons. **18:10** You are to eat it as a most holy offering; every male may eat it. It will be holy to you.

18:11 “And this is yours: the raised offering of their gift, along with all the wave offerings of the Israelites. I have given them to you and to your sons and daughters with you as a perpetual ordinance. Everyone who is ceremonially clean in your household may eat of it.

18:12 “All the best of the olive oil and all the best of the wine and of the wheat, the first fruits of these things that they give to the LORD, I have given to you.¹³ **18:13** And whatever first ripe fruit in their land they bring to the LORD will be yours; everyone who is ceremonially clean in your household may eat of it.

18:14 “Everything devoted¹⁴ in Israel will be yours. **18:15** The firstborn of every womb which they present to the LORD, whether human or animal, will be yours. Nevertheless, the firstborn sons you must redeem,¹⁵ and the firstborn males of unclean animals you must redeem. **18:16** And those that must be redeemed you are to redeem when they are a month old, according to your estimation, for five shekels of silver according to the sanctuary shekel (which is twenty gerahs). **18:17** But you must not redeem the firstborn of a cow or a sheep or a goat; they are holy. You must splash¹⁶ their blood on the altar and burn their fat for an offering made by fire for a pleasing aroma to the LORD. **18:18** And their meat will be yours, just as the breast and the right hip

¹¹ **tn** This is an uncommon root. It may be connected to the word “anoint” as here (see RSV). But it may also be seen as an intended parallel to “perpetual due” (see Gen 47:22; Exod 29:28; Lev 6:11 [HT]).

¹² **tn** *Heb* “from the fire.” It probably refers to those parts that were not burned.

¹³ **tn** This form may be classified as a perfect of resolve – he has decided to give them to them, even though this is a listing of what they will receive.

¹⁴ **tn** The “ban” (כֶּרֶם, *kherem*) in Hebrew describes that which is exclusively the LORD's, either for his sanctuary use, or for his destruction. It seems to refer to an individual's devoting something freely to God.

¹⁵ **tn** The construction uses the infinitive absolute and the imperfect tense of the verb “to redeem” in order to stress the point – they were to be redeemed. N. H. Snaith suggests that the verb means to get by payment what was not originally yours, whereas the other root גָּאֵל (*ga'al*) means to get back what was originally yours (*Leviticus and Numbers* [NCB], 268).

¹⁶ **tn** Or “throw, toss.”

of the raised offering is yours. **18:19** All the raised offerings of the holy things that the Israelites offer to the LORD, I have given to you, and to your sons and daughters with you, as a perpetual ordinance. It is a covenant of salt¹ forever before the LORD for you and for your descendants with you.”

Duties of the Levites

18:20 The LORD spoke to Aaron, “You will have no inheritance in their land, nor will you have any portion of property² among them – I am your portion and your inheritance among the Israelites. **18:21** See, I have given the Levites all the tithes in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they perform – the service of the tent of meeting. **18:22** No longer may the Israelites approach the tent of meeting, or else they will bear their sin³ and die. **18:23** But the Levites must perform the service⁴ of the tent of meeting, and they must bear their iniquity.⁵ It will be a perpetual ordinance throughout your generations that among the Israelites the Levites⁶ have no inheritance.⁷ **18:24** But I have given⁸ to the Levites for an inheritance the tithes of the Israelites that are offered⁹ to the LORD as a raised offering. That is why I said to them that among the Israelites they are to have no inheritance.”

Instructions for the Levites

18:25 The LORD spoke to Moses: **18:26** “You are to speak to the Levites, and you must tell them, ‘When you receive from the Israelites the tithe that I have given you from them as your

inheritance, then you are to offer up¹⁰ from it as a raised offering to the LORD a tenth of the tithe. **18:27** And your raised offering will be credited¹¹ to you as though it were grain from the threshing floor or as new wine¹² from the winepress. **18:28** Thus you are to offer up a raised offering to the LORD of all your tithes which you receive from the Israelites; and you must give the LORD’s raised offering from it to Aaron the priest. **18:29** From all your gifts you must offer up every raised offering due¹³ the LORD, from all the best of it, and the holiest part of it.”¹⁴

18:30 “Therefore you will say to them,¹⁵ ‘When you offer up¹⁶ the best of it, then it will be credited to the Levites as the product of the threshing floor and as the product of the winepress. **18:31** And you may¹⁷ eat it in any place, you and your household, because it is your wages for your service in the tent of meeting. **18:32** And you will bear no sin concerning it when you offer up the best of it. And you must not profane the holy things of the Israelites, or else you will die.’”¹⁸

The Red Heifer Ritual

19:1¹⁹ The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron: **19:2** “This is the ordinance of the law which the LORD has commanded: ‘Instruct²⁰ the Israelites

¹ **sn** Salt was used in all the offerings; its importance as a preservative made it a natural symbol for the covenant which was established by sacrifice. Even general agreements were attested by sacrifice, and the phrase “covenant of salt” speaks of such agreements as binding and irrevocable. Note the expression in Ezra 4:14, “we have been salted with the salt of the palace.” See further J. F. Ross, *IDB* 4:167.

² **tn** The phrase “of property” is supplied as a clarification.

³ **tn** The Hebrew text uses the infinitive construct of the verb “to bear” with the *lamed* (ל) preposition to express the result of such an action. “To bear their sin” would mean that they would have to suffer the consequences of their sin.

⁴ **tn** The verse begins with the perfect tense of אָבַד (*avad*) with *vav* (ו) consecutive, making the form equal to the instructions preceding it. As its object the verb has the cognate accusative “service.”

⁵ **sn** The Levites have the care of the tent of meeting, and so they are responsible for any transgressions against it.

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “they”; the referent (the Levites) has been supplied in the translation for clarity.

⁷ **tn** The Hebrew text uses both the verb and the object from the same root to stress the point: They will not inherit an inheritance. The inheritance refers to land.

⁸ **tn** The classification of the perfect tense here too could be the perfect of resolve, since this law is declaring what will be their portion – “I have decided to give.”

⁹ **tn** In the Hebrew text the verb has no expressed subject (although the “Israelites” is certainly intended), and so it can be rendered as a passive.

¹⁰ **tn** The verb in this clause is the Hiphil perfect with a *vav* (ו) consecutive; it has the same force as an imperfect of instruction: “when...then you are to offer up.”

¹¹ **tn** The verb is חָשַׁב (*khashav*, “to reckon; to count; to think”); it is the same verb used for “crediting” Abram with righteousness. Here the tithe of the priests will be counted as if it were a regular tithe.

¹² **tn** *Heb* “fullness,” meaning the fullness of the harvest, i.e., a full harvest.

¹³ **tn** The construction is “every raised offering of the LORD”; the genitive here is probably to be taken as a genitive of worth – the offering that is due the LORD.

¹⁴ **tn** Or “its hallowed thing.”

¹⁵ **tn** The wording of this verse is confusing; it may be that it is addressed to the priests, telling them how to deal with the offerings of the Levites.

¹⁶ **tn** The clause begins with the infinitive construct with its preposition and suffixed subject serving to indicate the temporal clause.

¹⁷ **tn** The verb is the perfect tense with *vav* (ו) consecutive; it functions as the equivalent of the imperfect of permission.

¹⁸ **tn** The final clause could also be rendered “in order that you do not die.” The larger section can also be interpreted differently; rather than take it as a warning, it could be taken as an assurance that when they do all of this they will not be profaning it and so will not die (R. K. Harrison, *Numbers* [WEC], 253).

¹⁹ **sn** In the last chapter the needs of the priests and Levites were addressed. Now the concern is for the people. This provision from the sacrifice of the red heifer is a precaution to ensure that the purity of the tabernacle was not violated by pollutions of impurity or death. This chapter has two main parts, both dealing with ceremonial purity: the ritual of the red heifer (vv. 1-10), and the purification from uncleanness (vv. 11-22). For further study see J. Milgrom, “The Paradox of the Red Cow (Num 19),” *VT* 31 (1981): 62-72.

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* “speak to.”

to bring¹ you a red² heifer³ without blemish, which has no defect⁴ and has never carried a yoke. **19:3** You must give it to Eleazar the priest so that he can take it outside the camp, and it must be slaughtered before him.⁵ **19:4** Eleazar the priest is to take⁶ some of its blood with his finger, and sprinkle some of the blood seven times⁷ directly in front of the tent of meeting. **19:5** Then the heifer must be burned⁸ in his sight – its skin, its flesh, its blood, and its offal is to be burned.⁹ **19:6** And the priest must take cedar wood, hyssop,¹⁰ and scarlet wool and throw them into the midst of the fire where the heifer is burning.¹¹ **19:7** Then the priest must wash¹² his clothes and bathe himself¹³ in water, and afterward he may come¹⁴ into the camp, but the priest will be ceremonially unclean until evening.

1 tn The line literally reads, “speak to the Israelites that [and] they bring [will bring].” The imperfect [or jussive] is subordinated to the imperative either as a purpose clause, or as the object of the instruction – speak to them *that* they bring, or tell them to bring.

2 tn The color is designated as red, although the actual color would be a tanned red-brown color for the animal (see the usage in Isa 1:18 and Song 5:10). The reddish color suggested the blood of ritual purification; see J. Milgrom, “The Paradox of the Red Cow (Num 19),” VT 31 (1981): 62-72.

3 sn Some modern commentators prefer “cow” to “heifer,” thinking that the latter came from the influence of the Greek. Young animals were usually prescribed for the ritual, especially here, and so “heifer” is the better translation. A bull could not be given for this purification ritual because that is what was given for the high priests or the community according to Lev 4.

4 tn Heb “wherein there is no defect.”

5 tc The clause is a little ambiguous. It reads “and he shall slaughter it before him.” It sounds as if someone else will kill the heifer in the priest’s presence. Since no one is named as the subject, it may be translated as a passive. Some commentators simply interpret that Eleazar was to kill the animal personally, but that is a little forced for “before him.” The Greek text gives a third person plural sense to the verb; the Vulgate follows that reading.

6 tn The verb is the perfect tense with *vav* (ו) consecutive; it functions here as the equivalent of the imperfect of instruction.

7 sn Seven is a number with religious significance; it is often required in sacrificial ritual for atonement or for purification.

8 tn Again, the verb has no expressed subject, and so is given a passive translation.

9 tn The imperfect tense is third masculine singular, and so again the verb is to be made passive.

10 sn In addition to the general references, see R. K. Harrison, “The Biblical Problem of Hyssop,” EvQ 26 (1954): 218-24.

11 sn There is no clear explanation available as to why these items were to be burned with the heifer. N. H. Snaith suggests that in accordance with Babylonian sacrifices they would have enhanced the rites with an aroma (*Leviticus* and *Numbers* [NCB], 272). In Lev 14 the wood and the hyssop may have been bound together by the scarlet wool to make a sprinkling device. It may be that the symbolism is what is important here. Cedar wood, for example, is durable; it may have symbolized resistance to future corruption and defilement, an early acquired immunity perhaps (R. K. Harrison, *Numbers* [WEC], 256).

12 tn The sequence continues with the perfect tense and *vav* (ו) consecutive.

13 tn Heb “his flesh.”

14 tn This is the imperfect of permission.

19:8 The one who burns it¹⁵ must wash his clothes in water and bathe himself in water. He will be ceremonially unclean until evening.

19:9 “Then a man who is ceremonially clean must gather up the ashes of the red heifer and put them in a ceremonially clean place outside the camp. They must be kept¹⁶ for the community of the Israelites for use in the water of purification¹⁷ – it is a purification for sin.¹⁸ **19:10** The one who gathers the ashes of the heifer must wash his clothes and be ceremonially unclean until evening. This will be a permanent ordinance both for the Israelites and the resident foreigner who lives among them.

Purification from Uncleaness

19:11 “Whoever touches¹⁹ the corpse²⁰ of any person²¹ will be ceremonially unclean²² seven days. **19:12** He must purify himself²³ with water on the third day and on the seventh day, and so will be clean. But if he does not purify himself on the third day and the seventh day, then he will not be clean. **19:13** Anyone who touches the corpse of any dead person and does not purify himself defiles the tabernacle of the LORD. And that person must be cut off from Israel,²⁴ because the water of purification was not sprinkled on him. He will be unclean; his uncleanness remains on him.

15 sn Here the text makes clear that he had at least one assistant.

16 tn Heb “it will be.”

17 tn The expression לְמֵי נִדָּח (l^{me} niddah) is “for waters of impurity.” The genitive must designate the purpose of the waters – they are for cases of impurity, and so serve for cleansing or purifying, thus “water of purification.” The word “impurity” can also mean “abhorrent” because it refers to so many kinds of impurities. It is also called a purification offering; Milgrom notes that this is fitting because the sacrificial ritual involved transfers impurity from the purified to the purifier (pp. 62-72).

18 sn The ashes were to be stored somewhere outside the camp to be used in a water portion for cleansing someone who was defiled. This is a ritual that was enacted in the wilderness; it is something of a restoring rite for people alienated from community.

19 tn The form is the participle with the article functioning as a substantive: “the one who touches.”

20 tn Heb “the dead.”

21 tn The expression is full: לְבִישׁ אָדָם (l^{ekh}ol-*nefesh* ‘adam) – of any life of a man, i.e., of any person.

22 tn The verb is a perfect tense with *vav* (ו) consecutive; it follows only the participle used as the subject, but since the case is hypothetical and therefore future, this picks up the future time. The adjective “ceremonially” is supplied in the translation as a clarification.

23 tn The verb is the Hitpael of חָטָא (*khata*), a verb that normally means “to sin.” But the Piel idea in many places is “to cleanse; to purify.” This may be explained as a privative use (“to un-sin” someone, meaning cleanse) or denominative (“make a sin offering for someone”). It is surely connected to the purification offering, and so a sense of purify is what is wanted here.

24 sn It is in passages like this that the view that being “cut off” meant the death penalty is the hardest to support. Would the Law prescribe death for someone who touches a corpse and fails to follow the ritual? Besides, the statement in this section that his uncleanness remains with him suggests that he still lives on.

19:14 “This is the law: When a man dies¹ in a tent, anyone who comes into the tent and all who are in the tent will be ceremonially unclean seven days. **19:15** And every open container that has no covering fastened on it is unclean. **19:16** And whoever touches the body of someone killed with a sword in the open fields,² or the body of someone who died of natural causes,³ or a human bone, or a grave, will be unclean seven days.⁴

19:17 “For a ceremonially unclean person you must take⁵ some of the ashes of the heifer⁶ burnt for purification from sin and pour⁷ fresh running⁸ water over them in a vessel. **19:18** Then a ceremonially clean person must take hyssop, dip it in the water, and sprinkle it on the tent, on all its furnishings, and on the people who were there, or on the one who touched a bone, or one killed, or one who died, or a grave. **19:19** And the clean person must sprinkle the unclean on the third day and on the seventh day; and on the seventh day he must purify him,⁹ and then he must wash his clothes, and bathe in water, and he will be clean in the evening. **19:20** But the man who is unclean and does not purify himself, that person must be cut off from among the community, because he has polluted the sanctuary of the LORD; the water of purification was not sprinkled on him, so he is unclean.

19:21 “So this will be a perpetual ordinance for them: The one who sprinkles¹⁰ the water of purification must wash his clothes, and the one who touches the water of purification will be

unclean until evening.¹¹ **19:22** And whatever the unclean person touches will be unclean, and the person who touches it will be unclean until evening.”

The Israelites Complain Again

20:1¹² Then the entire community of Israel¹³ entered the wilderness of Zin in the first month,¹⁴ and the people stayed in Kadesh.¹⁵ Miriam died and was buried there.¹⁶

20:2 And there was no water for the community, and so they gathered themselves together against Moses and Aaron. **20:3** The people contended¹⁷ with Moses, saying,¹⁸ “If only¹⁹ we had died when our brothers died before the LORD! **20:4** Why²⁰ have you brought up the LORD’s community into this wilderness? So that²¹ we

11 sn This gives the indication of the weight of the matter, for “until the evening” is the shortest period of ritual uncleanness in the Law. The problem of contamination had to be taken seriously, but this was a relatively simple matter to deal with – if one were willing to obey the Law.

12 sn This chapter is the account of how Moses struck the rock in disobedience to the LORD, and thereby was prohibited from entering the land. For additional literature on this part, see E. Arden, “How Moses Failed God,” *JBL* 76 (1957): 50-52; J. Gray, “The Desert Sojourn of the Hebrews and the Sinai Horeb Tradition,” *VT* 4 (1954): 148-54; T. W. Mann, “Theological Reflections on the Denial of Moses,” *JBL* 98 (1979): 481-94; and J. R. Porter, “The Role of Kadesh-Barnea in the Narrative of the Exodus,” *JTS* 44 (1943): 130-43.

13 tn The Hebrew text stresses this idea by use of apposition: “The Israelites entered, the entire community, the wilderness.”

14 sn The text does not indicate here what year this was, but from comparing the other passages about the itinerary, this is probably the end of the wanderings, the fortieth year, for Aaron died some forty years after the exodus. So in that year the people come through the wilderness of Zin and prepare for a journey through the Moabite plains.

15 sn The Israelites stayed in Kadesh for some time during the wandering; here the stop at Kadesh Barnea may have lasted several months. See the commentaries for the general itinerary.

16 sn The death of Miriam is recorded without any qualifications or epitaph. In her older age she had been self-willed and rebellious, and so no doubt humbled by the vivid rebuke from God. But she had made her contribution from the beginning.

17 tn The verb is ריב (*riv*); it is often used in the Bible for a legal complaint, a law suit, at least in form. But it can also describe a quarrel, or strife, like that between Abram’s men and Lot’s men in Genesis 13. It will be the main verb behind the commemorative name Meribah, the place where the people strove with God. It is a far more serious thing than grumbling – it is directed, intentional, and well-argued. For further discussion, see J. Limburg, “The Root ‘*riv*’ and the Prophetic Lawsuit Speeches,” *JBL* 88 (1969): 291-304.

18 tn Heb “and they said, saying.”

19 tn The particle לו (*lu*) indicates the optative nuance of the line – the wishing or longing for death. It is certainly an absurdity to want to have died, but God took them at their word and they died in the wilderness.

20 tn Heb “and why....” The conjunction seems to be recording another thing that the people said in their complaint against Moses.

21 tn The clause uses the infinitive construct with the *lamed* (ל) preposition. The clause would be a result clause in this sentence: “Why have you brought us here...with the result that we will all die?”

1 tn The word order gives the classification and then the condition: “a man, when he dies....”

2 tn The expression for “in the open field” is literally “upon the face of the field” (עַל־פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה), *al p^{ne} hassadeh*. This ruling is in contrast now to what was contacted in the tent.

3 tn Heb “a dead body,” but in contrast to the person killed with a sword, this must refer to someone who died of natural causes.

4 sn See Matt 23:27 and Acts 23:3 for application of this by the time of Jesus.

5 tn The verb is the perfect tense, third masculine plural, with a *vav* (ו) consecutive. The verb may be worded as a passive, “ashes must be taken,” but that may be too awkward for this sentence. It may be best to render it with a generic “you” to fit the instruction of the text.

6 tn The word “heifer” is not in the Hebrew text, but it is implied.

7 tn Here too the verb is the perfect tense with *vav* (ו) consecutive; rather than make this passive, it is here left as a direct instruction to follow the preceding one. For the use of the verb נָתַן (*natan*) in the sense of “pour,” see S. C. Reif, “A Note on a Neglected Connotation of *ntn*,” *VT* 20 (1970): 114-16.

8 tn The expression is literally “living water.” Living water is the fresh, flowing spring water that is clear, life-giving, and not the collected pools of stagnant or dirty water.

9 tn The construction uses a simple Piel of קָדַשׁ (*khata*, “to purify”) with a pronominal suffix – “he shall purify him.” Some commentators take this to mean that after he sprinkles the unclean then he must purify himself. But that would not be the most natural way to read this form.

10 tn The form has the conjunction with it: וַיִּזְרֹק (*umazzeh*). The conjunction subordinates the following as the special law. It could literally be translated “and this shall be...that the one who sprinkles.”

and our cattle should die here? **20:5** Why¹ have you brought us up from Egypt only to bring us to² this dreadful place? It is no place for grain, or figs, or vines, or pomegranates; nor is there any water to drink!”

Moses Responds

20:6 So Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the entrance to the tent of meeting. They then threw themselves down with their faces to the ground, and the glory of the LORD appeared to them. **20:7** Then the LORD spoke to Moses: **20:8** “Take the staff and assemble the community, you and Aaron your brother, and then speak³ to the rock before their eyes. It will pour forth⁴ its water, and you will bring water out of the rock for them, and so you will give the community and their beasts water to drink.”

20:9 So Moses took the staff from before the LORD, just as he commanded him. **20:10** Then Moses and Aaron gathered the community together in front of the rock, and he said to them, “Listen, you rebels,⁵ must we bring⁶ water out of this rock for you?” **20:11** Then Moses raised his hand, and struck the rock twice with his staff. And water came out abundantly. So the community drank, and their beasts drank too.

The Lord's Judgment

20:12 Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not trust me enough⁷ to

show me as holy⁸ before⁹ the Israelites, therefore you will not bring this community into the land I have given them.”¹⁰

20:13 These are the waters of Meribah, because the Israelites contended with the LORD, and his holiness was maintained¹¹ among them.

Rejection by the Edomites

20:14¹² Moses¹³ sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom:¹⁴ “Thus says your brother Israel: ‘You know all the hardships we have experienced,¹⁵ **20:15** how our ancestors went down into Egypt, and we lived in Egypt a long time,¹⁶ and the Egyptians treated us and our ancestors badly.¹⁷ **20:16** So when we cried to the LORD, he heard our voice and sent a messenger,¹⁸ and has brought us up out of Egypt. Now¹⁹ we are here in Kadesh, a town on the edge of your country.²⁰ **20:17** Please let us pass through²¹ your country. We will not pass through the

⁸ **sn** Using the basic meaning of the word קָדַשׁ (*qadash*, “to be separate, distinct, set apart”), we can understand better what Moses failed to do. He was supposed to have acted in a way that would have shown God to be distinct, different, holy. Instead, he gave the impression that God was capricious and hostile – very human. The leader has to be aware of what image he is conveying to the people.

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “in the eyes of.”

¹⁰ **tn** There is debate as to exactly what the sin of Moses was. Some interpreters think that the real sin might have been that he refused to do this at first, but that fact has been suppressed from the text. Some think the text was deliberately vague to explain why they could not enter the land without demeaning them. Others simply, and more likely, note that in Moses there was unbelief, pride, anger, impatience – disobedience.

¹¹ **tn** The form is unusual – it is the Niphal preterite, and not the normal use of the Piel/Pual stem for “sanctify/sanctified.” The basic idea of “he was holy” has to be the main idea, but in this context it refers to the fact that through judging Moses God was making sure people ensured his holiness among them. The word also forms a wordplay on the name Kadesh.

¹² **sn** For this particular section, see W. F. Albright, “From the Patriarchs to Moses: 2. Moses out of Egypt,” *BA* 36 (1973): 57-58; J. R. Bartlett, “The Land of Seir and the Brotherhood of Edom,” *JTS* 20 (1969): 1-20, and “The Rise and Fall of the Kingdom of Edom,” *PEQ* 104 (1972): 22-37, and “The Brotherhood of Edom,” *JSOT* 4 (1977): 2-7.

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “And Moses sent.”

¹⁴ **sn** Some modern biblical scholars are convinced, largely through arguments from silence, that there were no unified kingdoms in Edom until the 9th century, and no settlements there before the 12th century, and so the story must be late and largely fabricated. The evidence is beginning to point to the contrary. But the cities and residents of the region would largely be Bedouin, and so leave no real remains.

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “found.”

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “many days.”

¹⁷ **tn** The verb רָעַע (*ra'a*) means “to act or do evil.” Evil here is in the sense of causing pain or trouble. So the causative stem in our passage means “to treat wickedly.”

¹⁸ **tn** The word could be rendered “angel” or “messenger.” Some ambiguity may be intended in this report.

¹⁹ **tn** The Hebrew text uses הַיְנֵה (*hinneh*) to emphasize the “here and now” aspect of the report to Edom.

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* “your border.”

²¹ **tn** The request is expressed by the use of the cohortative, “let us pass through.” It is the proper way to seek permission.

¹ **tn** *Heb* “and why.”

² **tn** Here also the infinitive construct (Hiphil) forms the subordinate clause of the preceding interrogative clause.

³ **tn** The verb is the Piel perfect with *vav* (ו) consecutive, following the two imperatives in the verse. Here is the focus of the instruction for Moses.

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “give.” The verb is the perfect tense with *vav* (ו) consecutive, as are the next two in the verse. These are not now equal to the imperatives, but imperfects, showing the results of speaking to the rock: “speak...and it will...and so you will...”

⁵ **tn** The word is הַמְרִיבִים (*hammorim*, “the rebels”), but here as a vocative: “you rebels.” It was a harsh address, although well-earned.

⁶ **tn** The word order and the emphasis of the tense are important to this passage. The word order is “from this rock must we bring out to you water?” The emphasis is clearly on “from this rock!” The verb is the imperfect tense; it has one of the modal nuances here, probably obligatory – “must we do this?”

⁷ **tn** Or “to sanctify me.”

sn The verb is the main word for “believe, trust.” It is the verb that describes the faith in the Word of the LORD that leads to an appropriate action. Here God says that Moses did not believe him, meaning that what he did showed more of Moses than of what God said. Moses had taken a hostile stance toward the people, and then hit the rock twice. This showed that Moses was not satisfied with what God said, but made it more forceful and terrifying, thus giving the wrong picture of God to the people. By doing this the full power and might of the LORD was not displayed to the people. It was a momentary lack of faith, but it had to be dealt with.

fields or through the vineyards, nor will we drink water from any well. We will go by the King's Highway;⁴ we will not turn to the right or the left until we have passed through your region."²

20:18 But Edom said to him, "You will not pass through me,³ or I will come out against⁴ you with the sword."⁵ **20:19** Then the Israelites said to him, "We will go along the highway, and if we⁵ or our cattle drink any of your water, we will pay for it. We will only pass through on our feet, without doing anything else."⁶

20:20 But he said, "You may not pass through."⁷ Then Edom came out against them⁶ with a large and powerful force.⁷ **20:21** So Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border; therefore Israel turned away from him.

Aaron's Death

20:22 So the entire company of Israelites⁸ traveled from Kadesh and came to Mount Hor.⁹ **20:23** And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor, by the border of the land of Edom. He said: **20:24** "Aaron will be gathered to his ancestors,¹⁰ for he will not enter into the land I have given to the Israelites because both of

you¹¹ rebelled against my word¹² at the waters of Meribah. **20:25** Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up on Mount Hor. **20:26** Remove Aaron's priestly garments¹³ and put them on Eleazar his son, and Aaron will be gathered to his ancestors¹⁴ and will die there."¹⁵

20:27 So Moses did as the LORD commanded; and they went up Mount Hor in the sight¹⁵ of the whole community. **20:28** And Moses removed Aaron's garments and put them on his son Eleazar. So Aaron died there on the top of the mountain. And Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain. **20:29** When all the community saw that Aaron was dead, the whole house of Israel mourned for Aaron thirty days.

Victory at Hormah

21:1¹⁶ When the Canaanite king of Arad¹⁷ who lived in the Negev¹⁸ heard that Israel was approaching along the road to Atharim, he fought against Israel and took some of them prisoner.

21:2 So Israel made a vow¹⁹ to the LORD and said, "If you will indeed deliver²⁰ this people into our²¹ hand, then we will utterly destroy²² their cities."²³ **21:3** The LORD listened to the voice of Israel and delivered up the Canaanites,²³ and

¹ **sn** This is a main highway running from Damascus in the north to the Gulf of Aqaba, along the ridge of the land. Some scholars suggest that the name may have been given by the later Assyrians (see B. Obed, "Observations on Methods of Assyrian Rule in Transjordan after the Palestinian Campaign of Tiglathpileser III," *JNES* 29 [1970]: 177-86). Bronze Age fortresses have been discovered along this highway, attesting to its existence in the time of Moses. The original name came from the king who developed the highway, probably as a trading road (see S. Cohen, *IDB* 3:35-36).

² **tn** *Heb* "borders."

³ **tn** The imperfect tense here has the nuance of prohibition.

⁴ **tn** *Heb* "to meet."

⁵ **tn** The Hebrew text uses singular pronouns, "I" and "my," but it is the people of Israel that are intended, and so it may be rendered in the plural. Similarly, Edom speaks in the first person, probably from the king. But it too could be rendered "we."

⁶ **tn** *Heb* "to meet him."

⁷ **tn** *Heb* "with many [heavy] people and with a strong hand." The translation presented above is interpretive, but that is what the line means. It was a show of force, numbers and weapons, to intimidate the Israelites.

⁸ **tn** Again the passage uses apposition: "the Israelites, the whole community."

⁹ **sn** The traditional location for this is near Petra (Josephus, *Ant.* 4.4.7). There is serious doubt about this location since it is well inside Edomite territory, and since it is very inaccessible for the transfer of the office. Another view places it not too far from Kadesh Barnea, about 15 miles (25 km) northeast at Jebel Madurah, on the northwest edge of Edom and so a suitable point of departure for approaching Canaan from the south (see J. L. Mihelec, *IDB* 2:644; and J. de Vaulx, *Les Nombres* [SB], 231). Others suggest it was at the foot of Mount Hor and not actually up in the mountains (see Deut 10:6).

¹⁰ **sn** This is the standard poetic expression for death. The bones would be buried, often with the bones of relatives in the same tomb, giving rise to the expression.

¹¹ **tn** The verb is in the second person plural form, and so it is Moses and Aaron who rebelled, and so now because of that Aaron first and then Moses would die without going into the land.

¹² **tn** *Heb* "mouth."

¹³ **tn** The word "priestly" is supplied in the translation for clarity.

¹⁴ **tn** *Heb* "will be gathered"; this is a truncated form of the usual expression "gathered to his ancestors," found in v. 24. The phrase "to his ancestors" is supplied in the translation here.

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* "eyes."

¹⁶ **sn** This chapter has several events in it: the victory over Arad (vv. 1-3), the plague of serpents (vv. 4-9), the approach to Moab (vv. 10-20), and the victory over Sihon and Og (vv. 21-35). For information, see D. M. Gunn, "The 'Battle Report': Oral or Scribal Convention," *JBL* 93 (1974): 513-18; and of the extensive literature on the archaeological site, see *EAEHL* 1:74-89.

¹⁷ **sn** The name *Arad* probably refers to a place a number of miles away from Tel Arad in southern Israel. The name could also refer to the whole region (like Edom).

¹⁸ **tn** Or "the south"; "Negev" has become a technical name for the southern desert region and is still in use in modern times.

¹⁹ **tn** The Hebrew text uses a cognate accusative with the verb: They vowed a vow. The Israelites were therefore determined with God's help to defeat Arad.

²⁰ **tn** The Hebrew text has the infinitive absolute and the imperfect tense of נָטַן (*natan*) to stress the point – if you will surely/indeed give."

²¹ **tn** *Heb* "my."

²² **tn** On the surface this does not sound like much of a vow. But the key is in the use of the verb for "utterly destroy" – כָּרַם (*kharam*). Whatever was put to this "ban" or "devotion" belonged to God, either for his use, or for destruction. The oath was in fact saying that they would take nothing from this for themselves. It would simply be the removal of what was alien to the faith, or to God's program.

²³ **tc** Smr, Greek, and Syriac add "into his hand."

they utterly destroyed them and their cities. So the name of the place was called¹ Hormah.

Fiery Serpents

21:4 Then they traveled from Mount Hor by the road to the Red Sea,² to go around the land of Edom, but the people³ became impatient along the way. **21:5** And the people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness, for there is no bread or water, and we⁴ detest this worthless⁵ food.”

21:6 So the LORD sent poisonous⁶ snakes⁷ among the people, and they bit the people; many people of Israel died. **21:7** Then the people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you. Pray to the LORD that he would take away⁸ the snakes from us.” So Moses prayed for the people.

21:8 The LORD said to Moses, “Make a poisonous snake and set it on a pole. When anyone who is bitten looks⁹ at it, he will live.” **21:9** So Moses made a bronze snake and put it on a pole, so that if a snake had bitten someone, when he looked at the bronze snake he lived.¹⁰

The Approach to Moab

21:10¹¹ The Israelites traveled on and camped in Oboth. **21:11** Then they traveled on from Oboth and camped at Iye Abarim,¹² in the wilderness that is before Moab, on the eastern side.¹³ **21:12** From there they moved on and camped in the valley of Zered. **21:13** From there they moved on and camped on the other side of the Arnon, in the wilderness that extends from the regions¹⁴ of the Amorites, for Arnon is the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites. **21:14** This is why it is said in the Book of the Wars of the LORD,

“Waheb in Suphah¹⁵ and the wadis, the Arnon **21:15** and the slope of the valleys¹⁶ that extends to the dwelling of Ar,¹⁷ and falls off at the border of Moab.”

21:16 And from there they traveled¹⁸ to Beer;¹⁹ that is the well where the LORD spoke to Moses, “Gather the people and I will give them water.” **21:17** Then Israel sang²⁰ this song:

“Spring up, O well, sing to it!

¹ **tn** In the Hebrew text the verb has no expressed subject, and so here too is made passive. The name “Hormah” is etymologically connected to the verb “utterly destroy,” forming the popular etymology (or paronomasia, a phonetic wordplay capturing the significance of the event).

² **tn** The “Red Sea” is the general designation for the bodies of water on either side of the Sinai peninsula, even though they are technically gulfs from the Red Sea.

³ **tn** *Heb* “the soul of the people,” expressing the innermost being of the people as they became frustrated.

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “our souls.”

⁵ **tn** The Israelites’ opinion about the manna was clear enough – “worthless.” The word used is קִלְקִיל (*q^lloqel*, “good for nothing, worthless, miserable”).

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “fiery.”

⁷ **tn** The designation of the serpents/ snakes is נְחָשִׁים (*n^hkhashim*), which is similar to the word for “bronze” (נְחֹשֶׁת (*n^hkhoshet*)). This has led some scholars to describe the serpents as bronze in color. The description of them as fiery indicates they were poisonous. Perhaps the snake in question is a species of adder.

⁸ **tn** The verb is the Hiphil jussive with a *vav* (ו) consecutive from the verb סָוַר (*sur*); after the imperative this form may be subordinated to become a purpose clause.

⁹ **tn** The word order is slightly different in Hebrew: “and it shall be anyone who is bitten when he looks at it he shall live.”

¹⁰ **sn** The image of the snake was to be a symbol of the curse that the Israelites were experiencing; by lifting the snake up on a pole Moses was indicating that the curse would be drawn away from the people – if they looked to it, which was a sign of faith. This symbol was later stored in the temple, until it became an object of worship and had to be removed (2 Kgs 18:4). Jesus, of course, alluded to it and used it as an illustration of his own mission. He would become the curse, and be lifted up, so that people who looked by faith to him would live (John 3:14). For further material, see D. J. Wiseman, “Flying Serpents,” *TynBul* 23 (1972): 108-10; and K. R. Joines, “The Bronze Serpent in the Israelite Cult,” *JBL* 87 (1968): 245-56.

¹¹ **sn** See further D. L. Christensen, “Numbers 21:14-15 and the Book of the Wars of Yahweh,” *CBQ* 36 (1974): 359-60; G. W. Coats, “The Wilderness Itinerary,” *CBQ* 34 (1972): 135-52; G. I. Davies, “The Wilderness Itinerary,” *TB* 25 (1974): 46-81; idem, *The Way of the Wilderness*; G. E. Mendenhall, “The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine,” *BA* 25 (1962): 66-87.

¹² **sn** These places are uncertain. *Oboth* may be some 15 miles (25 km) from the south end of the Dead Sea at a place called ‘Ain el-Weiba. *Iye Abarim* may be the modern Mahay at the southeastern corner of Moab. See J. Simons, *The Geographical and Topographical Texts of the Old Testament*.

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “the rising of the sun.”

¹⁴ **tn** Or “border.”

¹⁵ **tc** The ancient versions show a wide variation here: Smr has “Waheb on the Sea of Reeds,” the Greek version has “he has set Zoob on fire and the torrents of Arnon.” Several modern versions treat the first line literally, taking the two main words as place names: Waheb and Suphah. This seems most likely, but then there would then be no subject or verb. One would need something like “the Israelites marched through.” The KJV, following the Vulgate, made the first word a verb and read the second as “Red Sea” – “what he did in the Red Sea.” But the subject of the passage is the terrain. D. L. Christensen proposed emending the first part from אֶת יַהֲוֵה (*et yaveh*) to אֶת־יְהוָה (*’attah yehvah*, “the LORD came”). But this is subjective. See his article “Num 21:14-15 and the Book of the Wars of Yahweh,” *CBQ* 36 (1974): 359-60.

¹⁶ **tc** There are many variations in this text, but the MT reading of something like “the descent of the torrents/valleys” is preferable, since it is describing the topography.

¹⁷ **sn** The place is unknown; it is apparently an important city in the region.

¹⁸ **tn** The words “they traveled” are not in the Hebrew text, but are supplied here because of English style. The same phrase is supplied at the end of v. 18.

¹⁹ **sn** Isa 15:8 mentions a Moabite Beerelim, which Simons suggests is Wadi Etmed.

²⁰ **tn** After the adverb “then” the prefixed conjugation has the preterite force. For the archaic constructions, see D. N. Freedman, “Archaic Forms in Early Hebrew Poetry,” *ZAW* 72 (1960): 101-7. The poem shows all the marks of being ancient.

21:18 The well which the princes⁴ dug, which the leaders of the people opened with their scepters and their staffs.”

And from the wilderness they traveled to Mattanah; **21:19** and from Mattanah to Nahaliel; and from Nahaliel to Bamoth; **21:20** and from Bamoth to the valley that is in the country of Moab, near the top of Pisgah, which overlooks the wilderness.²

The Victory over Sihon and Og

21:21³ Then Israel sent messengers to King Sihon of the Amorites, saying,⁴

21:22 “Let us⁵ pass through your land;⁶ we will not turn aside into the fields or into the vineyards, nor will we drink water from any well, but we will go along the King’s Highway until we pass your borders.” **21:23** But Sihon did not permit Israel to pass through his border; he⁷ gathered all his forces⁸ together and went out against Israel into the wilderness. When⁹ he came to Jahaz, he fought against Israel. **21:24** But the Israelites¹⁰ defeated him in battle¹¹ and took possession of his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok, as far as the Ammonites, for the border of the Ammonites was strongly defended. **21:25** So Israel took all these cities; and Israel settled in all the cities of the Amorites, in Heshbon, and in all its villages.¹² **21:26** For Heshbon was the city of King Sihon of the Amorites. Now he had fought against the former king of Moab and had taken all of his land from his control,¹³ as far

as the Arnon. **21:27** That is why those who speak in proverbs¹⁴ say,

“Come to Heshbon, let it be built.

Let the city of Sihon be established!¹⁵

21:28 For fire went out from Heshbon, a flame from the city of Sihon.

It has consumed Ar of Moab and the lords¹⁶ of the high places of Arnon.

21:29 Woe to you, Moab.

You are ruined, O people of Chemosh!¹⁷

He has made his sons fugitives, and his daughters the prisoners of King Sihon of the Amorites.

21:30 We have overpowered them;¹⁸

Heshbon has perished as far as Dibon.

We have shattered them as far as Nophah, which¹⁹ reaches to Medeba.”

21:31 So the Israelites²⁰ lived in the land of the Amorites. **21:32** Moses sent spies to reconnoiter²¹ Jaazer, and they captured its villages²² and dispossessed the Amorites who were there.

21:33 Then they turned and went up by the road to Bashan. And King Og of Bashan and all his forces²³ marched out against them to do battle at Edrei. **21:34** And the LORD said to Moses, “Do not fear him, for I have delivered him and all his people and his land into your hand. You will do to him what you did to King Sihon of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon. **21:35** So they defeated Og,²⁴ his sons, and all his people, until

¹ **sn** The brief song is supposed to be an old workers’ song, and so the mention of leaders and princes is unusual. Some think they are given credit because they directed where the workers were to dig. The scepter and staff might have served some symbolic or divining custom.

² **tn** Or perhaps as a place name, “Jeshimon.”

³ **sn** For this section, see further J. R. Bartlett, “Sihon and Og of the Amorites,” *VT* 20 (1970): 257-77, and “The Moabites and the Edomites,” *Peoples of Old Testament Times*, 229-58; S. H. Horn, “The Excavations at Tell Hesban, 1973,” *ADAJ* 18 (1973): 87-88.

⁴ **tc** Smr and the LXX have “words of peace.”

⁵ **tn** The Hebrew text uses the singular in these verses to match the reference to “Israel.”

⁶ **tc** Smr has “by the King’s way I will go. I will not turn aside to the right or the left.”

⁷ **tn** Heb “Sihon.”

⁸ **tn** Heb “people.”

⁹ **tn** The clause begins with a preterite with *vav* (ו) consecutive, but may be subordinated to the next preterite as a temporal clause.

¹⁰ **tn** The Hebrew text has “Israel,” but the verb is plural.

¹¹ **tn** Heb “with the edge of the sword.”

¹² **tn** Heb “its daughters.”

¹³ **sn** There is a justice, always, in the divine plan for the conquest of the land. Modern students of the Bible often think that the conquest passages are crude and unjust. But an understanding of the ancient Near East is critical here. This Sihon was not a part of the original population of the land. He himself invaded the territory and destroyed the population of Moab that was indigenous there and established his own kingdom. The ancient history is filled with such events; it is the way of life they chose – conquer or be conquered. For Israel to defeat them was in part a turning of their own devices back on their heads – “those that live by the sword will die by the sword.” Sihon knew this, and he did not wait, but took the

war to Israel. Israel wanted to pass through, not fight. But now they would either fight or be pushed into the gorge. So God used Israel to defeat Sihon, who had no claim to the land, as part of divine judgment.

¹⁴ **sn** Proverbs of antiquity could include pithy sayings or longer songs, riddles, or poems composed to catch the significance or the irony of an event. This is a brief poem to remember the event, like an Egyptian victory song. It may have originated as an Amorite war taunt song; it was sung to commemorate this victory. It was cited later by Jeremiah (48:45-46). The composer invites his victorious people to rebuild the conquered city as a new capital for Sihon. He then turns to address the other cities which his God(s) has/have given to him. See P. D. Hanson, “The Song of Heshbon and David’s Nir,” *HTR* 61 (1968): 301.

¹⁵ **tn** Meaning, “rebuilt and restored.”

¹⁶ **tc** Some scholars emend to בַּלְעֵי (bal’ah), reading “and devoured,” instead of בַּעֲלֵי (ba’aley, “its lords”); cf. NAB, NRSV, TEV. This emendation is closer to the Greek and makes a better parallelism, but the MT makes good sense as it stands.

¹⁷ **sn** The note of holy war emerges here as the victory is a victory over the local gods as well as over the people.

¹⁸ **tc** The first verb is difficult. MT has “we shot at them.” The Greek has “their posterity perished” (see GKC 218 §76.f).

¹⁹ **tc** The relative pronoun “which” (אֲשֶׁר, asher) posed a problem for the ancient scribes here, as indicated by the so-called extraordinary point (*puncta extraordinaria*) over the letter ר (resh) of אֵשׁ. Smr and the LXX have “fire” (אֵשׁ, esh) here (cf. NAB, NUB, RSV, NRSV). Some modern scholars emend the word to שָׂחָה (sho’ah, “devastation”).

²⁰ **tn** Heb “Israel.”

²¹ **tn** Heb “Moses sent to spy out.”

²² **tn** Heb “daughters.”

²³ **tn** Heb “people.”

²⁴ **tn** Heb “him”; the referent (Og) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

there were no survivors,⁴ and they possessed his land.

Balaam Refuses to Curse Israel

22:1² The Israelites traveled on³ and camped in the plains of Moab on the side of the Jordan River⁴ across from Jericho.⁵ **22:2** Balak son of Zippor saw all that the Israelites had done to the Amorites. **22:3** And the Moabites were greatly afraid of the people, because they were so numerous. The Moabites were sick with fear because of the Israelites.

22:4 So the Moabites said to the elders of Midian, “Now this mass of people⁶ will lick up everything around us, as the bull devours the grass of the field. Now Balak son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at this time. **22:5** And he sent messengers to Balaam⁷ son of Beor at Pethor, which is by the Euphrates River⁸ in the land of Amaw,⁹ to summon him, saying, “Look, a nation has come out of Egypt. They cover the face¹⁰ of the earth, and they are settling next to me. **22:6** So¹¹ now, please come and curse this

nation¹² for me, for they are too powerful for me. Perhaps I will prevail so that we may conquer them¹³ and drive them out of the land. For I know that whoever you bless is blessed,¹⁴ and whoever you curse is cursed.”

22:7 So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the fee for divination in their hand. They came to Balaam and reported¹⁵ to him the words of Balak. **22:8** He replied to them, “Stay¹⁶ here tonight, and I will bring back to you whatever word the LORD may speak to me.” So the princes of Moab stayed with Balaam. **22:9** And God came to Balaam and said, “Who are these men with you?” **22:10** Balaam said to God, “Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent a message to me, saying, **22:11** “Look, a nation has come out¹⁷ of Egypt, and it covers the face of the earth. Come now and put a curse on them for me; perhaps I will be able to defeat them¹⁸ and drive them out.”¹⁹ **22:12** But God said to Balaam, “You must not go with them; you must not curse the people,²⁰ for they are blessed.”²¹

22:13 So Balaam got up in the morning, and said to the princes of Balak, “Go to your land,²² for the LORD has refused to permit me to go²³ with you.” **22:14** So the princes of Moab de-

¹ tn Heb “no remnant.”

² sn The fifth section of the book (22:1-33:56) traces the Israelite activities in Transjordan. It is hard to determine how long they were in Transjordan, but a good amount of time must have elapsed for the number of moves they made and the wars they fought. There is a considerable amount of information available on this section of the book. Some of the most helpful works include: H. C. Brichto, *The Problem of “Curse” in the Hebrew Bible* (JBLMS); E. Burrows, *The Oracles of Jacob and Balaam*; G. W. Coats, “Balaam, Sinner or Saint?” *BR* 18 (1973): 21-29; P. C. Craigie, “The Conquest and Early Hebrew Poetry,” *TynBul* 20 (1969): 76-94; I. Parker, “The Way of God and the Way of Balaam,” *ExpTim* 17 (1905): 45; and J. A. Wharton, “The Command to Bless: An Exposition of Numbers 22:41–23:25,” *Int* 13 (1959): 37-48. This first part introduces the characters and sets the stage for the oracles. It can be divided into four sections: the invitation declined (vv. 1-14), the second invitation extended (vv. 15-21), God opposes Balaam (vv. 22-35), and Balaam meets Balak (vv. 36-41).

³ tn The verse begins with the *vav* (ו) consecutive.

⁴ tn The word “River” is not in the Hebrew text, but has been supplied in the translation for clarity.

⁵ map For the location of Jericho see Map5-B2; Map6-E1; Map7-E1; Map8-E3; Map10-A2; Map11-A1.

⁶ tn The word is simply “company,” but in the context he must mean a vast company – a horde of people.

⁷ sn There is much literature on pagan diviners and especially prophecy in places in the east like Mari (see, for example, H. B. Huffmon, “Prophecy in the Mari Letters,” *BA* 31 [1968]: 101-24). Balaam appears to be a pagan diviner who was of some reputation; he was called to curse the Israelites, but God intervened and gave him blessings only. The passage forms a nice complement to texts that deal with blessings and curses. It shows that no one can curse someone whom God has blessed.

⁸ tn Heb “by the river”; in most contexts this expression refers to the Euphrates River (cf. NAB, NCV, NRSV, TEV, CEV, NLT).

⁹ tn Heb “in the land of Amaw” (cf. NAB, NRSV, TEV); traditionally “in the land of the sons of his people.” The LXX has “by the river of the land.”

¹⁰ tn Heb “eye.” So also in v. 11.

¹¹ tn The two lines before this verse begin with the particle *hinneh* (הִנֵּה), and so they lay the foundation for these imperatives. In view of those circumstances, this is what should happen.

¹² tn Heb “people.” So also in vv. 10, 17, 41.

¹³ tn The construction uses the imperfect tense *אֶכְלֵם* (*ukhal*, “I will be able”) followed by the imperfect tense *נִכְהֵם* (*nakkeh*, “we will smite/attack/defeat”). The second verb is clearly the purpose or the result of the first, even though there is no conjunction or particle.

¹⁴ tn The verb is the Piel imperfect of *בָּרַךְ* (*barakh*), with the nuance of possibility: “whomever you may bless.” The Pual participle *בִּרְכָה* (*birakhah*) serves as the predicate.

¹⁵ tn Heb “spoke.”

¹⁶ tn The verb *לִין* (*lin*) means “to lodge, spend the night.” The related noun is “a lodge” – a hotel of sorts. Balaam needed to consider the offer. And after darkness was considered the best time for diviners to consult with their deities. Balaam apparently knows of the LORD; he testifies to this effect in 22:18.

¹⁷ tn In this passage the text differs slightly; here it is “the nation that comes out,” using the article on the noun, and the active participle in the attributive adjective usage.

¹⁸ tn Here the infinitive construct is used to express the object or complement of the verb “to be able” (it answers the question of what he will be able to do).

¹⁹ tn The verb is the Piel perfect with *vav* (ו) consecutive. It either carries the force of an imperfect tense, or it may be subordinated to the preceding verbs.

²⁰ tn The two verbs are negated imperatives; they have the nuance of prohibition: You must not go and you must not curse.

²¹ tn The word *בִּרְכָה* (*barakh*) is the Qal passive participle, serving here as the predicate adjective after the supplied verb “to be.” The verb means “enrich,” in any way, materially, spiritually, physically. But the indication here is that the blessing includes the promised blessing of the patriarchs, a blessing that gave Israel the land. See further, C. Westermann, *Blessing in the Bible and the Life of the Church* (OBT).

²² tc The LXX adds “to your lord.”

²³ tn The main verb is the Piel perfect, “he has refused.” This is followed by two infinitives. The first (*לִתְּתִי*, *lititti*) serves as a complement or direct object of the verb, answering the question of what he refused to do – “to give me.” The second infinitive (*לְהִלְכְּךָ*, *lahalokh*) provides the object for the preceding infinitive: “to grant me to go.”

parted⁴ and went back to Balak and said, “Balaam refused to come with us.”

Balaam Accompanies the Moabite Princes

22:15 Balak again sent princes,² more numerous and more distinguished than the first.³ **22:16** And they came to Balaam and said to him, “Thus says Balak son of Zippor: ‘Please do not let anything hinder you from coming⁴ to me. **22:17** For I will honor you greatly,⁵ and whatever you tell me I will do. So come, put a curse on this nation for me.’”

22:18 Balaam replied⁶ to the servants of Balak, “Even if Balak would give me his palace full of silver and gold, I could not transgress the commandment⁷ of the LORD my God⁸ to do less or more. **22:19** Now therefore, please stay⁹ the night here also, that I may know what more the LORD might say to me.”¹⁰ **22:20** God came to Balaam that night, and said to him, “If the men have come to call you, get up and go with them, but the word that I will say to you, that you must do.” **22:21** So Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the princes of Moab.

God Opposes Balaam

22:22 Then God’s anger was kindled¹¹ because he went, and the angel of the LORD stood in the road to oppose¹² him. Now he was riding on his donkey and his two servants were with him. **22:23** And the donkey saw the angel of the

LORD standing in the road with¹³ his sword drawn in his hand, so the donkey turned aside from the road and went into the field. But Balaam beat the donkey, to make her turn back to the road.

22:24 Then the angel of the LORD stood in a path¹⁴ among the vineyards, where there was a wall on either side.¹⁵ **22:25** And when the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she pressed herself into the wall, and crushed Balaam’s foot against the wall. So he beat her again.¹⁶

22:26 Then the angel of the LORD went farther, and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right or to the left. **22:27** When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she crouched down under Balaam. Then Balaam was angry, and he beat his donkey with a staff.

22:28 Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, “What have I done to you that you have beaten me these three times?” **22:29** And Balaam said to the donkey, “You have made me look stupid; I wish¹⁷ there were a sword in my hand, for I would kill you right now.” **22:30** The donkey said to Balaam, “Am not I your donkey that you have ridden ever since I was yours until this day? Have I ever attempted¹⁸ to treat you this way?”¹⁹ And he said, “No.” **22:31** Then the LORD opened Balaam’s eyes, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way with his sword drawn in his hand; so he bowed his head and threw himself down with his face to the ground.²⁰ **22:32** The angel of the LORD said to him, “Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? Look, I came out to oppose you because what you are doing²¹ is perverse before me.” **22:33** The donkey saw me and turned from me these three times. If²³ she had not turned from me, I would have killed you but saved her alive.” **22:34** Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, “I

¹ tn Heb “rose up.”

² tn The construction is a verbal hendiadys. It uses the Hiphil preterite of the verb “to add” followed by the Qal infinitive “to send.” The infinitive becomes the main verb, and the preterite an adverb: “he added to send” means “he sent again.”

³ tn Heb “than these.”

⁴ tn The infinitive construct is the object of the preposition.

⁵ tn The construction uses the Piel infinitive כָּבַד (*kabbed*) to intensify the verb, which is the Piel imperfect/cohortative אֶכְבֶּדָּה (*akhhabbedkha*). The great honor could have been wealth, prestige, or position.

⁶ tn Heb “answered and said.”

⁷ tn Heb “mouth.”

⁸ sn In the light of subsequent events one should not take too seriously that Balaam referred to Yahweh as his God. He is referring properly to the deity for which he is acting as the agent.

⁹ tn In this case “lodge” is not used, but “remain, reside” (שָׁבוּ, *shavu*).

¹⁰ tn This clause is also a verbal hendiadys: “what the LORD might add to speak,” meaning, “what more the LORD might say.”

¹¹ sn God’s anger now seems to contradict the permission he gave Balaam just before this. Some commentators argue that God’s anger is a response to Balaam’s character in setting out – which the Bible does not explain. God saw in him greed and pleasure for the riches, which is why he was so willing to go.

¹² tn The word is שָׂטָן (*satan*, “to be an adversary, to oppose”).

¹³ tn The word has the conjunction “and” on the noun, indicating this is a disjunctive *vav* (ו), here serving as a circumstantial clause.

¹⁴ tn The word means a “narrow place,” having the root meaning “to be deep.” The Greek thought it was in a field in a narrow furrow.

¹⁵ tn Heb “a wall on this side, and a wall on that side.”

¹⁶ tn Heb “he added to beat her,” another verbal hendiadys.

¹⁷ tn The optative clause is introduced with the particle לוֹ (*lu*).

¹⁸ tn Here the Hiphil perfect is preceded by the Hiphil infinitive absolute for emphasis in the sentence.

¹⁹ tn Heb “to do thus to you.”

²⁰ tn The Hishtaphel verb הָרָה (*khavah*) – שָׁקָה (*shakhah*) with metathesis – has a basic idea of “bow oneself low to the ground,” and perhaps in some cases the idea of “coil up.” This is the normal posture of prayer and of deep humility in the ancient religious world.

²¹ tn Heb “your way.”

²² tn The verb יָרַת (*yarat*) occurs only here and in Job 16:11. Balaam is embarking on a foolish mission with base motives. The old rendering “perverse” is still acceptable.

²³ tc Many commentators consider אִלַּי (*ulay*, “perhaps”) to be a misspelling in the MT in place of לִלַּי (*luley*, “if not”).

have sinned, for I did not know that you stood against me in the road.¹ So now, if it is evil in your sight,² I will go back home.”³ **22:35** But the angel of the LORD said to Balaam, “Go with the men, but you may only speak⁴ the word that I will speak to you.”⁵ So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.

Balaam Meets Balak

22:36 When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at a city of Moab which was on the border of the Amnon at the boundary of his territory. **22:37** Balak said to Balaam, “Did I not send again and again⁶ to you to summon you? Why did you not come to me? Am I not able to honor you?”⁷ **22:38** Balaam said to Balak, “Look, I have come to you. Now, am I able⁸ to speak⁹ just anything? I must speak¹⁰ only the word that God puts in my mouth.” **22:39** So Balaam went with Balak, and they came to Kiriath-huzoth. **22:40** And Balak sacrificed bulls and sheep, and sent some¹¹ to Balaam, and to the princes who were with him. **22:41** Then on the next morning Balak took Balaam, and brought him up to Bamoth Baal.¹² From there he saw the extent of the nation.

Balaam Blesses Israel

23:1¹³ Balaam said to Balak, “Build me seven altars here, and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams.” **23:2** So Balak did just as Balaam had said. Balak and Balaam then offered on each¹⁴ altar a bull and a ram. **23:3** Balaam said to Balak, “Station yourself¹⁵ by your burnt offering, and I will go off; perhaps the LORD will come to meet me, and whatever he reveals to me¹⁶ I will tell you.”¹⁷ Then he went to a deserted height.¹⁸

23:4 Then God met Balaam, who¹⁹ said to him, “I have prepared seven altars, and I have offered on each altar a bull and a ram.” **23:5** Then the LORD put a message²⁰ in Balaam’s mouth and said, “Return to Balak, and speak what I tell you.”²¹

23:6 So he returned to him, and he was still²² standing by his burnt offering, he and all the princes of Moab. **23:7** Then Balaam²³ uttered²⁴ his oracle, saying,

“Balak, the king of Moab, brought me²⁵
from Aram,
out of the mountains of the east, saying,
‘Come, pronounce a curse on Jacob for
me;
come, denounce Israel.’²⁶

¹ **sn** Balaam is not here making a general confession of sin. What he is admitting to is a procedural mistake. The basic meaning of the word is “to miss the mark.” He now knows he took the wrong way, i.e., in coming to curse Israel.

² **sn** The reference is to Balaam’s way. He is saying that if what he is doing is so perverse, so evil, he will turn around and go home. Of course, it did not appear that he had much of a chance of going forward.

³ **tn** The verb is the cohortative from “return”: I will return [me].

⁴ **tn** The imperfect tense here can be given the nuance of permission.

⁵ **tn** The Hebrew word order is a little more emphatic than this: “but only the word which I speak to you, it you shall speak.”

⁶ **tn** The emphatic construction is made of the infinitive absolute and the perfect tense from the verb שָׁלַח (*shalakh*, “to send”). The idea must be more intense than something like, “Did I not certainly send.” Balak is showing frustration with Balaam for refusing him.

⁷ **sn** Balak again refers to his ability to “honor” the seer. This certainly meant payment for his service, usually gold ornaments, rings and jewelry, as well as some animals.

⁸ **tn** The verb is אִכָּל (*ukhal*) in a question – “am I able?” But emphasizing this is the infinitive absolute before it. So Balaam is saying something like, “Can I really say anything?”

⁹ **tn** The Piel infinitive construct (without the preposition) serves as the object of the verb “to be able.” The whole question is rhetorical – he is saying that he will not be able to say anything God does not allow him to say.

¹⁰ **tn** The imperfect tense is here taken as an obligatory imperative.

¹¹ **sn** The understanding is that Balak was making a sacrifice for a covenant relationship, and so he gave some of the meat to the men and to the seer.

¹² **sn** The name *Bamoth Baal* means “the high places of Baal.”

¹³ **sn** The first part of Balaam’s activity ends in disaster for Balak – he blesses Israel. The chapter falls into four units: the first prophecy (vv. 1-10), the relocation (vv. 11-17), the second prophecy (vv. 18-24), and a further location (vv. 25-30).

¹⁴ **tn** The Hebrew text has “on the altar,” but since there were seven of each animal and seven altars, the implication is that this means on each altar.

¹⁵ **tn** The verb הִיטָוּב (*hiyatev*) means “to take a stand, station oneself.” It is more intentional than simply standing by something. He was to position himself by the sacrifice as Balaam withdrew to seek the oracle.

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “and the word of what he shows me.” The noun is in construct, and so the clause that follows functions as a noun clause in the genitive. The point is that the word will consist of divine revelation.

¹⁷ **tn** The verb is the perfect tense with *vav* (ו) consecutive. This clause is dependent on the clause that precedes it.

¹⁸ **sn** He went up to a bald spot, to a barren height. The statement underscores the general belief that such tops were the closest things to the gods. On such heights people built their shrines and temples.

¹⁹ **tn** The relative pronoun is added here in place of the conjunction to clarify that Balaam is speaking to God and not vice versa.

²⁰ **tn** *Heb* “word.”

²¹ **tn** *Heb* “and thus you shall speak.”

²² **tn** The Hebrew text draws the vividness of the scene with the deictic particle הִנֵּה (*hinneh*) – Balaam returned, and *there he was*, standing there.

²³ **tn** *Heb* “he”; the referent (Balaam) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* “took up.”

²⁵ **tn** The passage calls for a past tense translation; since the verb form is a prefixed conjugation, this tense should be classified as a preterite without the *vav* (ו). Such forms do occur, especially in the ancient poetic passages.

²⁶ **sn** The opening lines seem to be a formula for the seer to identify himself and the occasion for the oracle. The tension is laid out early; Balaam knows that God has intended to bless Israel, but he has been paid to curse them.

23:8 How¹ can I curse² one whom God has not cursed, or how can I denounce one whom the LORD has not denounced?

23:9 For from the top of the rocks I see them,³

from the hills I watch them.⁴

Indeed, a nation that lives alone, and it will not be reckoned⁵ among the nations.

23:10 Who⁶ can count⁷ the dust⁸ of Jacob, Or number⁹ the fourth part of Israel?

Let me¹⁰ die the death of the upright,¹¹ and let the end of my life¹² be like theirs.¹³

Balaam Relocates

23:11 Then Balak said to Balaam, “What have you done to me? I brought you to curse my enemies, but on the contrary¹⁴ you have only blessed them!”¹⁵ 23:12 Balaam replied,¹⁶ “Must I

¹ **tn** The figure is erotesis, a rhetorical question. He is actually saying he cannot curse them because God has not cursed them.

² **tn** The imperfect tense should here be classified as a potential imperfect.

³ **tn** *Heb* “him,” but here it refers to the Israelites (Israel).

⁴ **sn** Balaam reports his observation of the nation of Israel spread out below him in the valley. Based on that vision, and the LORD’s word, he announces the uniqueness of Israel – they are not just like one of the other nations. He was correct, of course; they were the only people linked with the living God by covenant.

⁵ **tn** The verb could also be taken as a reflexive – Israel does not consider itself as among the nations, meaning, they consider themselves to be unique.

⁶ **tn** The question is again rhetorical; it means no one can count them – they are innumerable.

⁷ **tn** The perfect tense can also be classified as a potential nuance. It does not occur very often, but does occur several times.

⁸ **sn** The reference in the oracle is back to Gen 13:16, which would not be clear to Balaam. But God had described their growth like the dust of the earth. Here it is part of the description of the vast numbers.

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “and as a number, the fourth part of Israel.” The noun in the MT is not in the construct state, and so it should be taken as an adverbial accusative, forming a parallel with the verb “count.” The second object of the verse then follows, “the fourth part of Israel.” Smr and the LXX have “and who has numbered” (וּמִסְפָּר, *umispār*), making this colon more parallel to the preceding one. The editor of *BHS* prefers this reading.

¹⁰ **tn** The use of נֶפֶשׁ (*nefesh*) for the subject of the verb stresses the personal nature – me.

¹¹ **sn** Here the seer’s words link with the promise of Gen 12:3, that whoever blesses Israel will be blessed. Since the blessing belongs to them, the upright (and not Balak), Balaam would like his lot to be with them.

¹² **tn** *Heb* “my latter end.”

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “his.”

¹⁴ **tn** The Hebrew text uses הִנְהִיחַ (*hinneh*) here to stress the contrast.

¹⁵ **tn** The construction is emphatic, using the perfect tense and the infinitive absolute to give it the emphasis. It would have the force of “you have done nothing but bless,” or “you have indeed blessed.” The construction is reminiscent of the call of Abram and the promise of the blessing in such elaborate terms.

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “he answered and said.” The referent (Balaam) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

not be careful¹⁷ to speak what the LORD has put in my mouth?”¹⁸ 23:13 Balak said to him, “Please come with me to another place from which you can observe them. You will see only a part of them, but you will not see all of them. Curse them for me from there.”

23:14 So Balak brought Balaam¹⁹ to the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah,²⁰ where²¹ he built seven altars and offered a bull and a ram on each altar. 23:15 And Balaam²² said to Balak, “Station yourself here²³ by your burnt offering, while I meet the LORD there. 23:16 Then the LORD met Balaam and put a message²⁴ in his mouth and said, “Return to Balak, and speak what I tell you.” 23:17 When Balaam²⁵ came to him, he was still standing by his burnt offering, along with the princes of Moab. And Balak said to him, “What has the LORD spoken?”

Balaam Prophesies Again

23:18 Balaam²⁶ uttered²⁷ his oracle, and said,

“Rise up,²⁸ Balak, and hear;
Listen to me, son of Zippor:

23:19 God is not a man, that he should lie,
nor a human being,²⁹ that he should
change his mind.

Has he said, and will he not do it?

Or has he spoken, and will he not make it
happen?³⁰

¹⁷ **tn** The verb שָׁמַר (*shamar*) means “to guard, watch, observe” and so here with a sense of “be careful” or even “take heed” (so KJV, ASV). The nuance of the imperfect tense would be obligatory: “I must be careful” – to do what? to speak what the LORD has put in my mouth. The infinitive construct “to speak” is therefore serving as the direct object of שָׁמַר.

¹⁸ **tn** The clause is a noun clause serving as the direct object of “to speak.” It begins with the sign of the accusative, and then the relative pronoun that indicates the whole clause is the accusative.

¹⁹ **tn** *Heb* “he brought him”; the referents (Balak and Balaam) have been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁰ **tn** Some scholars do not translate this word as “Pisgah,” but rather as a “lookout post” or an “elevated place.”

²¹ **tn** *Heb* “and he built.”

²² **tn** *Heb* “he”; the referent (Balaam) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²³ **tn** The verse uses כֹּה (*koh*) twice: “Station yourself here... I will meet [the LORD] there.”

²⁴ **tn** *Heb* “word.”

²⁵ **tn** *Heb* “he”; the referent (Balaam) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

²⁶ **tn** *Heb* “he.” The antecedent has been supplied in the translation for clarity.

²⁷ **tn** *Heb* “took up.”

²⁸ **tn** The verb probably means “pay attention” in this verse.

²⁹ **tn** *Heb* “son of man.”

³⁰ **tn** The verb is the Hiphil of קָוַם (*qum*, “to cause to rise; to make stand”). The meaning here is more of the sense of fulfilling the promises made.

23:20 Indeed, I have received a command¹ to bless; he has blessed,² and I cannot reverse it.³ 23:21 He⁴ has not looked on iniquity in Jacob,⁵ nor has he seen trouble⁶ in Israel. The LORD their God is with them; his acclamation⁷ as king is among them. 23:22 God brought them⁸ out of Egypt. They have, as it were, the strength of a wild bull.⁹ 23:23 For there is no spell against¹⁰ Jacob, nor is there any divination against Israel. At this time¹¹ it must be said¹² of Jacob and of Israel, ‘Look at¹³ what God has done!’ 23:24 Indeed, the people will rise up like a lioness, and like a lion raises himself up; they will not lie down until they eat their¹⁴ prey, and drink the blood of the slain.’¹⁵

¹ tn The Hebrew text simply has “I have received [to] bless.” The infinitive is the object of the verb, telling what he received. Balaam was not actually commanded to bless, but was given the word of blessing so that he was given a divine decree that would bless Israel.

² sn The reference is probably to the first speech, where the LORD blessed Israel. Balaam knows that there is nothing he can do to reverse what God has said.

³ tn The verb is the Hiphil of שׁוּב (*shuv*), meaning “to cause to return.” He cannot return God’s word to him, for it has been given, and it will be fulfilled.

⁴ tn These could be understood as impersonal and so rendered “no one has discovered.”

⁵ sn The line could mean that God has regarded Israel as the ideal congregation without any blemish or flaw. But it could also mean that God has not looked on their iniquity, meaning, held it against them.

⁶ tn The word means “wrong, misery, trouble.” It can mean the idea of “disaster” as well, for that too is trouble. Here it is parallel to “iniquity” and so has the connotation of something that would give God reason to curse them.

⁷ tn The people are blessed because God is their king. In fact, the shout of acclamation is among them – they are proclaiming the LORD God as their king. The word is used normally for the sound of the trumpet, but also of battle shouts, and then here acclamation. This would represent their conviction that Yahweh is king. On the usage of this Hebrew word see further BDB 929-30 s.v. תְּרוּעָה; HALOT 1790-91 s.v.

⁸ tn The form is the Hiphil participle from יָצָא (*yatsa*) with the object suffix. He is the one who brought them out.

⁹ sn The expression is “the horns of the wild ox” (KJV “unicorn”). The point of the image is strength or power. Horns are also used in the Bible to represent kingship (see Pss 89 and 132).

¹⁰ tn Or “in Jacob.” But given the context the meaning “against” is preferable. The words describe two techniques of consulting God; the first has to do with observing omens in general (“enchantments”), and the second with casting lots or arrows of the like (“divinations” [Ezek 21:26]). See N. H. Snaith, *Leviticus and Numbers* (NCB), 295-96.

¹¹ tn The form is the preposition “like, as” and the word for “time” – according to the time, about this time, now.

¹² tn The Niphal imperfect here carries the nuance of obligation – one has to say in amazement that God has done something marvelous or “it must be said.”

¹³ tn The words “look at” are not in the Hebrew text but have been added in the translation for clarity.

¹⁴ tn The pronoun “their” has been supplied for clarity; it is not present in the Hebrew text.

¹⁵ sn The oracle compares Israel first to a lion, or better,

Balaam Relocates Yet Again

23:25 Balak said to Balaam, “Neither curse them at all¹⁶ nor bless them at all!”¹⁷ 23:26 But Balaam replied¹⁸ to Balak, “Did I not tell you, ‘All that the LORD speaks,¹⁹ I must do?’”

23:27 Balak said to Balaam, “Come, please; I will take you to another place. Perhaps it will please God²⁰ to let you curse them for me from there.”²¹

23:28 So Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, that looks toward the wilderness.²² 23:29 Then Balaam said to Balak, “Build seven altars here for me, and prepare seven bulls and seven rams.” 23:30 So Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

Balaam Prophesies Yet Again

24:1²³ When Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel,²⁴ he did not go as at the other times²⁵ to seek for omens,²⁶ but he set his face²⁷ toward the wilderness. 24:2 When Balaam lifted up his eyes, he saw Israel camped tribe by

lioness, because she does the tracking and hunting of food while the lion moves up and down roaring and distracting the prey. But the lion is also the traditional emblem of Judah, Dan and Gad, as well as the symbol of royalty. So this also supports the motif of royalty as well as power for Israel.

¹⁶ tn The verb is preceded by the infinitive absolute: “you shall by no means curse” or “do not curse them at all.” He brought him to curse, and when he tried to curse there was a blessing. Balak can only say it would be better not to bother.

¹⁷ tn The same construction now works with “nor bless them at all.” The two together form a merism – “don’t say anything.” He does not want them blessed, so Balaam is not to do that, but the curse isn’t working either.

¹⁸ tn Heb “answered and said.”

¹⁹ tn This first clause, “all that the LORD speaks” – is a noun clause functioning as the object of the verb that comes at the end of the verse. It is something of an independent accusative case, since it is picked up with the sign of the accusative: “all that the LORD speaks, it I must do.”

²⁰ tn Heb “be pleasing in the eyes of God.”

²¹ sn Balak is stubborn, as indeed Balaam is persistent. But Balak still thinks that if another location were used it just might work. Balaam had actually told Balak in the prophecy that other attempts would fail. But Balak refuses to give up so easily. So he insists they perform the ritual and try again. This time, however, Balaam will change his approach, and this will result in a dramatic outpouring of power on him.

²² tn Or perhaps as a place name, “Jeshimon” (cf. 21:20).

²³ sn For a thorough study of the arrangement of this passage, see E. B. Smick, “A Study of the Structure of the Third Balaam Oracle,” *The Law and the Prophets*, 242-52. He sees the oracle as having an introductory strophe (vv. 3, 4), followed by two stanzas (vv. 5, 6) that introduce the body (vv. 7b-9b) before the final benediction (v. 9b).

²⁴ tn Heb “it was good in the eyes of the LORD.”

²⁵ tn Heb “as time after time.”

²⁶ tn The word הַשְׂחִים (*h²hashim*) means “omens,” or possibly “auguries.” Balaam is not even making a pretense now of looking for such things, because they are not going to work. God has overruled them.

²⁷ tn The idiom signifies that he had a determination and resolution to look out over where the Israelites were, so that he could appreciate more their presence and use that as the basis for his expressing of the oracle.

tribe;¹ and the Spirit of God came upon him.
24:3 Then he uttered this oracle:²

“The oracle³ of Balaam son of Beor;
the oracle of the man whose eyes are
open;⁴

24:4 the oracle of the one who hears the
words of God,
who sees a vision from the Almighty,
although falling flat on the ground⁵ with
eyes open.⁶

24:5 ‘How⁷ beautiful are your tents, O
Jacob,

and your dwelling places, O Israel!

24:6 They are like⁸ valleys⁹ stretched
forth,

like gardens by the river’s side,
like aloes¹⁰ that the LORD has planted,
and like cedar trees beside the waters.

24:7 He will pour the water out of his
buckets,¹¹
and their descendants will be like abun-
dant¹² water;¹³

their king will be greater than Agag,¹⁴
and their kingdom will be exalted.

24:8 God brought them out of Egypt.
They have, as it were, the strength of a
young bull;

they will devour hostile people¹⁵
and will break their bones
and will pierce them through with arrows.
24:9 They crouch and lie down like a lion,

and as a lioness,¹⁶ who can stir him?
Blessed is the one who blesses you,
and cursed is the one who curses you!”

24:10 Then Balak became very angry at
Balaam, and he struck his hands together.¹⁷ Balak
said to Balaam, “I called you to curse my enemies,
and look, you have done nothing but bless¹⁸ them
these three times! 24:11 So now, go back where
you came from!¹⁹ I said that I would greatly hon-
or you, but now the LORD has stood in the way of
your honor.”

24:12 Balaam said to Balak, “Did I not also tell
your messengers whom you sent to me, 24:13 ‘If
Balak would give me his palace full of silver and
gold, I cannot go beyond²⁰ the commandment²¹ of
the LORD to do either good or evil of my own will,²²
but whatever the LORD tells me I must speak’?
24:14 And now, I am about to go²³ back to my
own people. Come now, and I will advise you as
to what this people will do to your people in the
future.”²⁴

Balaam Prophecies a Fourth Time

24:15 Then he uttered this oracle:²⁵

“The oracle of Balaam son of Beor;
the oracle of the man whose eyes are
open;

24:16 the oracle of the one who hears the
words of God,
and who knows the knowledge of the
Most High,

who sees a vision from the Almighty,
although falling flat on the ground with
eyes open:

24:17 ‘I see him, but not now;
I behold him, but not close at hand.²⁶
A star²⁷ will march forth²⁸ out of Jacob,

¹ tn Heb “living according to their tribes.”

² tn Heb “and he took up his oracle and said.”

³ tn The word אָמַר (*amur*) is an “oracle.” It is usually fol-
lowed by a subjective genitive, indicating the doer of the ac-
tion. The word could be rendered “says,” but this translations
is more specific.

⁴ tn The Greek version reads “the one who sees truly.” The
word has been interpreted in both ways, “shut” or “open.”

⁵ tn The phrase “flat on the ground” is supplied in the trans-
lation for clarity. The Greek version interprets the line to mean
“falling asleep.” It may mean falling into a trance.

⁶ tn The last colon simply has “falling, but opened eyes.”
The falling may simply refer to lying prone; and the opened
eyes may refer to his receiving a vision. See H. E. Freeman, *An
Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*, 37-41.

⁷ tn Here הַאֵל (*mah*) has an exclamatory sense: “How!” (see
Gen 28:17).

⁸ tn Heb “as valleys they spread forth.”

⁹ tn Or “rows of palms.”

¹⁰ sn The language seems to be more poetic than precise.
N. H. Snaitch notes that cedars do not grow beside water; he
also connects “aloes” to the eaglewood that is more exotic,
and capable of giving off an aroma (*Leviticus and Numbers*
[NCB], 298).

¹¹ tc For this colon the LXX has “a man shall come out of his
seed.” Cf. the Syriac Peshitta and Targum.

¹² tn Heb “many.”

¹³ sn These two lines are difficult, but the general sense is
that of irrigation buckets and a well-watered land. The point is
that Israel will be prosperous and fruitful.

¹⁴ sn Many commentators see this as a reference to Agag
of 1 Sam 15:32-33, the Amalekite king slain by Samuel, for
that is the one we know. But that is by no means clear, for
this text does not identify this Agag. If it is that king, then this
poem, or this line in this poem, would have to be later, unless
one were to try to argue for a specific prophecy. Whoever this
Agag is, he is a symbol of power.

¹⁵ tn Heb “they will devour nations,” their adversaries.

¹⁶ tn On the usage of this word see HALOT 517 s.v. לָבַיָּא.

¹⁷ sn This is apparently a sign of contempt or derision (see
Job 27:23; and Lam 2:15).

¹⁸ tn The construction is emphatic, using the infinitive abso-
lute with the perfect tense for “bless.”

¹⁹ tn Heb “flee to your place.”

²⁰ tn Heb “I am not able to go beyond.”

²¹ tn Heb “mouth.”

²² tn Heb “from my heart.”

²³ tn The construction is the particle הִנֵּה (*hinneh*) suffixed
followed by the active participle. This is the *futur instans* use
of the participle, to express something that is about to hap-
pen: “I am about to go.”

²⁴ tn Heb “in the latter days.” For more on this expression,
see E. Lipiński, “בְּאַרְבַּע הַיָּמִים” dans les textes préexiliques,” VT
20 (1970): 445-50.

²⁵ tn Heb “and he took up his oracle and said.”

²⁶ tn Heb “near.”

²⁷ sn This is a figure for a king (see also Isa 14:12) not only
in the Bible but in the ancient Near Eastern literature as a
whole. The immediate reference of the prophecy seems to be
to David, but the eschatological theme goes beyond him.
There is to be a connection made between this passage and
the sighting of a star in its ascendancy by the magi, who then
traveled to Bethlehem to see the one born King of the Jews
(Matt 2:2). The expression “son of a star” (*Aram Bar Kochba*)
became a title for a later claimant to kingship, but he was
doomed by the Romans in A.D. 135.

²⁸ tn The verb is the perfect tense with *vav* (ו) consecutive;
it is equal to the imperfect expressing the future. The verb

and a scepter⁴ will rise out of Israel.
He will crush the skulls² of Moab,
and the heads³ of all the sons of Sheth.⁴
24:18 Edom will be a possession,
Seir,⁵ his enemies, will also be a possession;
but Israel will act valiantly.
24:19 A ruler will be established from
Jacob;
he will destroy the remains of the city.”⁶

Balaam's Final Prophecies

24:20 Then Balaam⁷ looked on Amalek and delivered this oracle:⁸

“Amalek was the first⁹ of the nations,
but his end will be that he will perish.”

24:21 Then he looked on the Kenites and uttered this oracle:

“Your dwelling place seems strong,
and your nest¹⁰ is set on a rocky cliff.

24:22 Nevertheless the Kenite will be consumed.¹¹

How long will Asshur take you away
captive?”

24:23 Then he uttered this oracle:

“O, who will survive when God does
this!”¹²

¹ *darakh* (דַּרַךְ), related to the noun “way, road,” seems to mean something like tread on, walk, march.”

² *sn* The “scepter” is metonymical for a king who will rise to power. NEB strangely rendered this as “comet” to make a parallel with “star.”

³ *tn* The word is literally “corners,” but may refer to the corners of the head, and so “skull.”

⁴ *tc* The MT reads “shatter, devastate.” Smr reads קָרַךְ (*qodqod*, “head; crown; pate”). Smr follows Jer 48:45 which appears to reflect Num 24:17.

⁵ *sn* The prophecy begins to be fulfilled when David defeated Moab and Edom and established an empire including them. But the Messianic promise extends far beyond that to the end of the age and the inclusion of these defeated people in the program of the coming King.

⁶ *sn* Seir is the chief mountain range of Edom (Deut 33:2), and so the reference here is to the general area of Edom.

⁷ *tn* Or, understanding the Hebrew word for “city” as a place name, “of Ir” (cf. NRSV, NLT).

⁸ *tn* Heb “he”; the referent (Balaam) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

⁹ *tn* Heb “and he lifted up his oracle and said.” So also in vv. 21, 23.

¹⁰ *sn* This probably means that it held first place, or it thought that it was “the first of the nations.” It was not the first, either in order or greatness.

¹¹ *sn* A pun is made on the name Kenite by using the word “your nest” (קִינְיָה, *qinnekha*); the location may be the rocky cliffs overlooking Petra.

¹² *tc* Heb “Nevertheless Cain will be wasted; how long will Asshur take you captive?” Cain was believed to be the ancestor of the Kenites. The NAB has “yet destined for burning, even as I watch, are your inhabitants.” Asshur may refer to a north Arabian group of people of Abrahamic stock (Gen 25:3), and not the Assyrian empire.

¹³ *tc* Because there is no parallel line, some have thought that it dropped out (see de Vaulx, *Les Nombres*, 296).

24:24 Ships will come from the coast of
Kittim,¹³
and will afflict Asshur,¹⁴ and will afflict
Eber,
and he will also perish forever.”¹⁵

24:25 Balaam got up and departed and returned to his home,¹⁶ and Balak also went his way.

Israel's Sin with the Moabite Women

25:1¹⁷ When¹⁸ Israel lived in Shittim, the people began to commit sexual immorality¹⁹ with the daughters of Moab. **25:2** These women invited²⁰ the people to the sacrifices of their gods; then the people ate and bowed down to their gods.²¹

25:3 When Israel joined themselves to Baal-peor,²² the anger of the LORD flared up against Israel.

¹³ *tc* The MT is difficult. The Kittim refers normally to Cyprus, or any maritime people to the west. W. F. Albright proposed emending the line to “islands will gather in the north, ships from the distant sea” (“The Oracles of Balaam,” *JBL* 63 [1944]: 222-23). Some commentators accept that reading as the original state of the text, since the present MT makes little sense.

¹⁴ *tn* Or perhaps “Assyria” (so NCV, TEV, CEV, NLT).

¹⁵ *tn* Or “it will end in utter destruction.”

¹⁶ *tn* Heb “place.”

¹⁷ *sn* Chapter 25 tells of Israel's sins on the steppes of Moab, and God's punishment. In the overall plan of the book, here we have another possible threat to God's program, although here it comes from within the camp (Balaam was the threat from without). If the Moabites could not defeat them one way, they would try another. The chapter has three parts: fornication (vv. 1-3), God's punishment (vv. 4-9), and aftermath (vv. 10-18). See further G. E. Mendenhall, *The Tenth Generation*, 105-21; and S. C. Reif, “What Enraged Phinehas? A Study of Numbers 25:8,” *JBL* 90 (1971): 200-206.

¹⁸ *tn* This first preterite is subordinated to the next as a temporal clause; it is not giving a parallel action, but the setting for the event.

¹⁹ *sn* The account apparently means that the men were having sex with the Moabite women. Why the men submitted to such a temptation at this point is hard to say. It may be that as military heroes the men took liberties with the women of occupied territories.

²⁰ *tn* The verb simply says “they called,” but it is a feminine plural. And so the women who engaged in immoral acts with Hebrew men invited them to their temple ritual.

²¹ *sn* What Israel experienced here was some of the debased ritual practices of the Canaanite people. The act of prostrating themselves before the pagan deities was probably participation in a fertility ritual, nothing short of cultic prostitution. This was a blatant disregard of the covenant and the Law. If something were not done, the nation would have destroyed itself.

²² *tn* The verb is “yoked” to Baal-peor. The word is unusual, and may suggest the physical, ritual participation described below. It certainly shows that they acknowledge the reality of the local god.

sn The evidence indicates that Moab was part of the very corrupt Canaanite world, a world that was given over to the fertility ritual of the times.

God's Punishment

25:4 The LORD said to Moses, “Arrest all the leaders⁴ of the people, and hang them up² before the LORD in broad daylight,³ so that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel.” **25:5** So Moses said to the judges of Israel, “Each of you must execute those of his men⁴ who were joined to Baal-peor.”

25:6 Just then⁵ one of the Israelites came and brought to his brothers⁶ a Midianite woman in the plain view of Moses and of⁷ the whole community of the Israelites, while they⁸ were weeping at the entrance of the tent of meeting. **25:7** When Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it,⁹ he got up from among the assembly, took a javelin in his hand, **25:8** and went after the Israelite man into the tent¹⁰ and thrust through the Israelite man and into the woman's abdomen.¹¹ So the plague was stopped from the Israelites.¹² **25:9** Those that died in the plague were 24,000.

1 sn The meaning must be the leaders behind the apostasy, for they would now be arrested. They were responsible for the tribes' conformity to the Law, but here they had not only failed in their duty, but had participated. The leaders were executed; the rest of the guilty died by the plague.

2 sn The leaders who were guilty were commanded by God to be publicly exposed by hanging, probably a reference to impaling, but possibly some other form of harsh punishment. The point was that the swaying of their executed bodies would be a startling warning for any who so blatantly set the Law aside and indulged in apostasy through pagan sexual orgies.

3 tn *Heb* “in the sun.” This means in broad daylight.

4 tn *Heb* “slay – a man his men.” The imperative is plural, and so “man” is to be taken collectively as “each of you men.”

5 tn The verse begins with the deictic particle הִנֵּה (*v^hhinneh*), pointing out the action that was taking place. It stresses the immediacy of the action to the reader.

6 tn Or “to his family”; or “to his clan.”

7 tn *Heb* “before the eyes of Moses and before the eyes of.”

8 tn The *vav* (ו) at the beginning of the clause is a disjunctive because it is prefixed to the nonverbal form. In this context it is best interpreted as a circumstantial clause, stressing that this happened “while” people were weeping over the sin.

9 tn The first clause is subordinated to the second because both begin with the preterite verbal form, and there is clearly a logical and/or chronological sequence involved.

10 tn The word קִבְּוֹה (*qubbah*) seems to refer to the innermost part of the family tent. Some suggest it was in the tabernacle area, but that is unlikely. S. C. Reif argues for a private tent shrine (“What Enraged Phinehas? A Study of Numbers 25:8,” *JBL* 90 [1971]: 200-206).

11 tn *Heb* “and he thrust the two of them the Israelite man and the woman to her belly [lower abdomen].” Reif notes the similarity of the word with the previous “inner tent,” and suggests that it means Phinehas stabbed her in her shrine tent, where she was being set up as some sort of priestess or cult leader. Phinehas put a quick end to their sexual immorality while they were in the act.

12 sn Phinehas saw all this as part of the pagan sexual ritual that was defiling the camp. He had seen that the LORD himself had had the guilty put to death. And there was already some plague breaking out in the camp that had to be stopped. And so in his zeal he dramatically put an end to this incident, that served to stop the rest and end the plague.

The Aftermath

25:10 The LORD spoke to Moses: **25:11** “Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned my anger away from the Israelites, when he manifested such zeal¹³ for my sake among them, so that I did not consume the Israelites in my zeal.¹⁴ **25:12** Therefore, announce:¹⁵ ‘I am going to give¹⁶ to him my covenant of peace.¹⁷ **25:13** So it will be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of a permanent priesthood, because he has been zealous for his God,¹⁸ and has made atonement¹⁹ for the Israelites.’”

25:14 Now the name of the Israelite who was stabbed – the one who was stabbed with the Midianite woman – was Zimri son of Salu, a leader of a clan²⁰ of the Simeonites. **25:15** The name of the Midianite woman who was killed was Cozbi daughter of Zur. He was a leader²¹ over the people of a clan of Midian.²²

25:16 Then the LORD spoke to Moses: **25:17** “Bring trouble²³ to the Midianites, and destroy

13 tn *Heb* “he was zealous with my zeal.” The repetition of forms for “zeal” in the line stresses the passion of Phinehas. The word “zeal” means a passionate intensity to protect or preserve divine or social institutions.

14 tn The word for “zeal” now occurs a third time. While some English versions translate this word here as “jealousy” (KJV, ASV, NASB, NRSV), it carries the force of God's passionate determination to defend his rights and what is right about the covenant and the community and parallels the “zeal” that Phinehas had just demonstrated.

15 tn *Heb* “say.”

16 tn Here too the grammar expresses an imminent future by using the particle הִנֵּי (*hinni*) before the participle נֹתֵן (*noten*) – “here I am giving,” or “I am about to give.”

17 tn Or “my pledge of friendship” (NAB), or “my pact of friendship” (NJPS). This is the designation of the leadership of the priestly ministry. The terminology is used again in the rebuke of the priests in Mal 2.

18 tn The motif is reiterated here. Phinehas was passionately determined to maintain the rights of his God by stopping the gross sinful perversions.

19 sn The atonement that he made in this passage refers to the killing of the two obviously blatant sinners. By doing this he dispensed with any animal sacrifice, for the sinners themselves died. In Leviticus it was the life of the substitutionary animal that was taken in place of the sinners that made atonement. The point is that sin was punished by death, and so God was free to end the plague and pardon the people. God's holiness and righteousness have always been every bit as important as God's mercy and compassion, for without righteousness and holiness mercy and compassion mean nothing.

20 tn *Heb* “a father's house.” So also in v. 15.

21 tn *Heb* “head.”

22 sn The passage makes it clear that this individual was a leader, one who was supposed to be preventing this thing from happening. The judgment was swift and severe, because the crime was so great, and the danger of it spreading was certain. Paul refers to this horrible incident when he reminds Christians not to do similar things (1 Cor 10:6-8).

23 tn The form is the infinitive absolute used in place of a verb here; it clearly is meant to be an instruction for Israel. The idea is that of causing trouble, harassing, vexing Midian. The verb is repeated as the active participle in the line, and so the punishment is talionic.

them, 25:18 because they bring trouble to you by their treachery with which they have deceived¹ you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of a prince of Midian,² their sister, who was killed on the day of the plague that happened as a result of Peor.”

A Second Census Required

26:1³ After the plague the LORD said to Moses and to Eleazar son of Aaron the priest,⁴ **26:2** “Take a census of the whole community of Israelites, from twenty years old and upward, by their clans,⁵ everyone who can serve in the army of Israel.”⁶ **26:3** So Moses and Eleazar the priest spoke with them in the plains of Moab, by the Jordan River⁷ across from Jericho.⁸ They said, **26:4** “Number the people⁹ from twenty years old and upward, just as the LORD commanded Moses and the Israelites who went out from the land of Egypt.”

Reuben

26:5 Reuben was the firstborn of Israel. The Reubenites: from¹⁰ Hanoch, the family of the Hanochites; from Pallu, the family of the Palluites; **26:6** from Hezron, the family of the Hezronites; from Carmi, the family of the Carmites. **26:7** These were the families of the Reubenites; and those numbered of them were 43,730.¹¹ **26:8** Pallu’s descendant¹² was Eliab. **26:9** Eliab’s descendants were Nemuel, Dathan, and Abiram. It was Dathan and Abiram who as leaders of the community rebelled against Moses and Aaron with the followers¹³ of Korah when they rebelled against the LORD. **26:10** The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them and Korah at the time that company died, when the fire consumed 250 men. So they became a warning. **26:11** But the descendants of Korah did not die.

Simeon

26:12 The Simeonites by their families: from Nemuel, the family of the Nemuelites; from Jamin, the family of the Jaminites; from Jakin, the family of the Jakinites; **26:13** from Zerah,¹⁴ the family of the Zerachites; and from Shaul, the family of the Shaulites. **26:14** These were the families of the Simeonites, 22,200.¹⁵

Gad

26:15 The Gadites by their families: from Zephon, the family of the Zephonites; from Haggi, the family of the Haggites; from Shuni, the family of the Shunites; **26:16** from Ozni,¹⁶ the family of the Oznites; from Eri,¹⁷ the family of the Erites; **26:17** from Arod,¹⁸ the family of the Arodites, and from Areli, the family of the Arelites. **26:18** These were the families of the Gadites according to those numbered of them, 40,500.¹⁹

Judah

26:19 The descendants of Judah were Er and Onan, but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan. **26:20** And the Judahites by their families were: from Shelah, the family of the Shelahites; from Perez, the family of the Perezites; and from Zerah, the family of the Zerachites. **26:21** And the Perezites were: from Hezron, the family of the Hezronites; from Hamul,²⁰ the family of the Hamulites. **26:22** These were the families of Judah according to those numbered of them, 76,500.²¹

Issachar

26:23 The Issacharites by their families: from Tola, the family of the Tolaites; from Puah, the family of the Puites; **26:24** from Jashub, the family of the Jashubites; and from Shimron, the family of the Shimronites. **26:25** These were the families of Issachar, according to those numbered of them, 64,300.²²

Zebulun

26:26 The Zebulunites by their families: from Sered, the family of the Sardites; from Elon, the family of the Elonites; from Jahleel, the family of the Jahleelites. **26:27** These were the

¹ **tn** This is the same word as that translated “treachery.”

² **sn** Cozbi’s father, Zur, was one of five Midianite kings who eventually succumbed to Israel (Num 31:8). When the text gives the name and family of a woman, it is asserting that she is important, at least for social reasons, among her people.

³ **sn** The breakdown of ch. 26 for outlining purposes will be essentially according to the tribes of Israel. The format and structure is similar to the first census, and so less comment is necessary here.

⁴ **tc** The MT has also “saying.”

⁵ **tn** *Heb* “house of their fathers.”

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “everyone who goes out in the army in Israel.”

⁷ **tn** The word “River” is not in the Hebrew text, but has been supplied in the translation for clarity (also in v. 62).

⁸ **map** For the location of Jericho see Map5-B2; Map6-E1; Map7-E1; Map8-E3; Map10-A2; Map11-A1.

⁹ **tn** “Number the people” is added here to the text for a smooth reading.

¹⁰ **tc** The Hebrew text has no preposition here, but one has been supplied in the translation for clarity. Cf. vv. 23, 30, 31, 32.

¹¹ **sn** The Reubenites had decreased from 46,500 to 43,730.

¹² **tc** The MT has “and the sons of Pallu.”

¹³ **tn** Or “company” (so KJV, NASB, NRSV); *Heb* “congregation.”

¹⁴ **tc** This is “Zohar” in Exod 6:15 and Gen 46:10.

¹⁵ **sn** Before entering Sinai the tribe numbered 59,300, the third largest. Now it was about one-third its original size.

¹⁶ **tc** The MT of Gen 46:16 reads this as “Ezbon.”

¹⁷ **tc** The Greek version and Smr have “Ad[d]i,” probably by confusion of letters.

¹⁸ **tc** Gen 46:16 and the LXX here read “Arodi.”

¹⁹ **sn** The Gadites decreased from 45,650 to 40,500.

²⁰ **tc** Smr and the Greek version have “Hamuel.”

²¹ **sn** The Judahites increased from 74,600 to 76,500.

²² **sn** The Issacharites increased from 54,400 to 64,300.

families of the Zebulunites, according to those numbered of them, 60,500.¹

Manasseh

26:28 The descendants of Joseph by their families: Manasseh and Ephraim. **26:29** The Manassehites: from Machir, the family of the Machirites (now Machir became the father of Gilead); from Gilead, the family of the Gileadites. **26:30** These were the Gileadites: from Iezer, the family of the Iezerites; from Helek, the family of the Helekites; **26:31** from Asriel, the family of the Asrielites; from Shechem, the family of the Shechemites; **26:32** from Shemida, the family of the Shemidaïtes; from Hephher, the family of the Hephherites. **26:33** Now Zelophehad son of Hephher had no sons, but only daughters; and the names of the daughters of Zelophehad were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. **26:34** These were the families of Manasseh; those numbered of them were 52,700.²

Ephraim

26:35 These are the Ephraimites by their families: from Shuthelah, the family of the Shuthelahites; from Beker, the family of the Bekerites; from Tahan, the family of the Tahanites. **26:36** Now these were the Shuthelahites: from Eran, the family of the Eranites. **26:37** These were the families of the Ephraimites, according to those numbered of them, 32,500.³ These were the descendants of Joseph by their families.

Benjamin

26:38 The Benjaminites by their families: from Bela, the family of the Belaites; from Ashbel, the family of the Ashbelites; from Ahiram, the family of the Ahiramites; **26:39** from Shupham,⁴ the family of the Shuphamites; from Hupham, the family of the Huphamites. **26:40** The descendants of Bela were Ard⁵ and Naaman. From Ard,⁶ the family of the Ardites; from Naaman, the family of the Naamanites. **26:41** These are the Benjaminites, according to their families, and according to those numbered of them, 45,600.⁷

Dan

26:42 These are the Danites by their families: from Shuham, the family of the Shuhamites. These were the families of Dan, according to their families. **26:43** All the families of the Shuhahites according to those numbered of them were 64,400.⁸

Asher

26:44 The Asherites by their families: from Imnah, the family of the Imnahites; from Ishvi, the family of the Ishvites; from Beriah, the family of the Beriahites. **26:45** From the Beriahites: from Heber, the family of the Heberites; from Malkiel, the family of the Malkielites. **26:46** Now the name of the daughter of Asher was Serah.⁹ **26:47** These are the families of the Asherites, according to those numbered of them, 53,400.¹⁰

Naphtali

26:48 The Naphtalites by their families: from Jahzeel, the family of the Jahzeelites; from Guni, the family of the Gunites; **26:49** from Jezer, the family of the Jezerites; from Shillem, the family of the Shillemites. **26:50** These were the families of Naphtali according to their families; and those numbered of them were 45,400.¹¹

Total Number and Division of the Land

26:51 These were those numbered of the Israelites, 601,730.¹²

26:52 Then the LORD spoke to Moses: **26:53** "To these the land must be divided as an inheritance according to the number of the names. **26:54** To a larger group you will give a larger inheritance,¹³ and to a smaller group you will give a smaller inheritance.¹⁴ To each one its inheritance must be given according to the number of people in it.¹⁵ **26:55** The land must be divided by lot; and they will inherit in accordance with the names of their ancestral tribes. **26:56** Their inheritance must be apportioned¹⁶ by lot among the larger and smaller groups.

26:57 And these are the Levites who were numbered according to their families: from Gershon, the family of the Gershonites; of Kohath, the family of the Kohathites; from Merari, the family of the Merarites. **26:58** These are the

¹ sn The Zebulunites showed an increase from 57,400 to 60,500.

² sn The Manassehites increased from 32,200 to 52,700.

³ sn This is a significant reduction from the first count of 40,500.

⁴ tc With the exception of a few manuscripts the MT has *Shephupham*. The spelling in the translation above is supported by Smr and the ancient versions.

⁵ tc The LXX has *Adar*. Cf. 1 Chr 8:3.

⁶ tc "From Ard" is not in the Hebrew text.

⁷ sn The Benjaminites increased from 35,400 to 45,600. The Greek version has here 35,500.

⁸ sn The Danites increased from 62,700 to 64,400.

⁹ tn Also mentioned in 1 Chr 7:30.

¹⁰ sn The Asherites increased from 41,500 to 53,400.

¹¹ sn The Naphtalites decreased from 53,400 to 45,400.

¹² sn This number shows only a slightly smaller total in the second census; the first was 603,550.

¹³ tn Heb "to many you will multiply his inheritance."

¹⁴ tn Heb "to a few you will lessen his inheritance."

¹⁵ tn Heb "according to those that were numbered of him," meaning, in accordance with the number of people in his clan.

¹⁶ tn Heb "divided."

families of the Levites: the family of the Libnites, the family of the Hebronites, the family of the Mahlites, the family of the Mushites, the family of the Korahites. Kohath became the father of Amram. **26:59** Now the name of Amram's wife was Jochebed, daughter of Levi, who was born⁴ to Levi in Egypt. And to Amram she bore Aaron, Moses, and Miriam their sister. **26:60** And to Aaron were born Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. **26:61** But Nadab and Abihu died when they offered strange fire² before the LORD. **26:62** Those of them who were numbered were 23,000, all males from a month old and upward, for they were not numbered among the Israelites; no inheritance was given to them among the Israelites.

26:63 These are those who were numbered by Moses and Eleazar the priest, who numbered the Israelites in the plains of Moab along the Jordan River opposite Jericho.³ **26:64** But there was not a man among these who had been⁴ among those numbered by Moses and Aaron the priest when they numbered the Israelites in the wilderness of Sinai. **26:65** For the LORD had said of them, "They will surely die in the wilderness." And there was not left a single man of them, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun.

Special Inheritance Laws

27:1⁵ Then the daughters of Zelophehad son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh of the families of Manasseh,⁶ the son Joseph came forward. Now these are the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. **27:2** And they stood before Moses and Eleazar the priest and the leaders of the whole assembly at the entrance to

the tent of meeting and said, **27:3** "Our father died in the wilderness, although⁷ he was not part of⁸ the company of those that gathered themselves together against the LORD in the company of Korah, but he died for his own sin,⁹ and he had no sons. **27:4** Why should the name of our father be lost from among his family because he had no son? Give us a possession¹⁰ among the relatives¹¹ of our father."

27:5 So Moses brought their case before the LORD. **27:6** The LORD said to Moses: **27:7** "The daughters of Zelophehad have a valid claim.¹² You must indeed¹³ give them possession of an inheritance among their father's relatives, and you must transfer¹⁴ the inheritance of their father to them. **27:8** And you must tell the Israelites, 'If a man dies¹⁵ and has no son, then you must transfer his inheritance to his daughter; **27:9** and if he has no daughter, then you are to give his inheritance to his brothers; **27:10** and if he has no brothers, then you are to give his inheritance to his father's brothers; **27:11** and if his father has no brothers, then you are to give his inheritance to his relative nearest to him from his family, and he will possess it. This will be for the Israelites a legal requirement,¹⁶ as the LORD commanded Moses.'"

Leadership Change

27:12¹⁷ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go up this mountain of the Abarim range,¹⁸ and

⁷ **tn** This clause begins with a *vav* (ו) on a pronoun, marking it out as a disjunctive *vav*. In this context it fits best to take it as a circumstantial clause introducing concession.

⁸ **tn** *Heb* "in the midst of."

⁹ **tn** The word order is emphatic: "but in/on account of his own sins he died."

¹⁰ **tn** That is, the possession of land, or property, among the other families of their tribe.

¹¹ **tn** The word is "brothers," but this can be interpreted more loosely to relatives. So also in v. 7.

¹² **tn** *Heb* "[the daughters of Zelophehad] speak right" (using the participle דוברת [dov⁶rot] with כן [ken]).

¹³ **tn** The Hebrew text uses the infinitive absolute with the imperfect tense. The imperfect is functioning as the imperfect of instruction, and so the infinitive strengthens the force of the instruction.

¹⁴ **tn** The verb is the Hiphil perfect with a *vav* (ו) consecutive, from the root נָכַר ('avar, "to pass over"). Here it functions as the equivalent of the imperfect of instruction: "and you shall cause to pass," meaning, "transfer."

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* "a man, if he dies."

¹⁶ **tn** The expression is חֻקַּת מִשְׁפָּט (khuqqat mishpat, "a statute of judgment"), which means it is a fixed enactment that determines justice. It is one which is established by God.

¹⁷ **sn** See further J. Lindblom, "Lot Casting in the Old Testament," *VT* 12 (1962): 164-78; E. Lipirski, "Urim and Thummim," *VT* 20 (1970): 495-96; and S. E. Loewenstamm, "The Death of Moses," *Tarbiz* 27 (1957/58): 142-57.

¹⁸ **tc** The Greek version adds "which is Mount Nebo." This is a typical scribal change to harmonize two passages.

¹ **tn** *Heb* "who she bore him to Levi." The verb has no expressed subject. Either one could be supplied, such as "her mother," or it could be treated as a passive.

² **tn** The expression אֵשׁ זָרָה ('esh zarah, "strange fire") seems imprecise and has been interpreted numerous ways (see the helpful summary in J. E. Hartley, *Leviticus* [WBC 4], 132-33). The infraction may have involved any of the following or a combination thereof: (1) using coals from some place other than the burnt offering altar (i.e., "unauthorized coals" according to J. Milgrom, *Leviticus* [AB], 1:598; cf. Lev 16:12 and cf. "unauthorized person" אִישׁ זָר [ish zar] in Num 16:40 [17:5 HT], NASB "layman"), (2) using the wrong kind of incense (cf. the Exod 30:9 regulation against "strange incense" קְטֹרֶת זָרָה [q⁶to⁶ret zarah] on the incense altar and the possible connection to Exod 30:34-38), (3) performing an incense offering at an unscripted time (B. A. Levine, *Leviticus* [JPSTC], 59), or (4) entering the Holy of Holies at an inappropriate time (Lev 16:1-2).

sn This event is narrated in Lev 10:1-7.

³ **map** For the location of Jericho see Map5-B2; Map6-E1; Map7-E1; Map8-E3; Map10-A2; Map11-A1.

⁴ **tn** "who had been" is added to clarify the text.

⁵ **sn** For additional information on this section, see N. H. Snaith, "The Daughters of Zelophehad," *VT* 16 (1966): 124-27; and J. Weingreen, "The Case of the Daughters of Zelophehad," *VT* 16 (1966): 518-22.

⁶ **tc** The phrase "of the families of Manasseh" is absent from the Latin Vulgate.

see¹ the land I have given² to the Israelites. **27:13** When you have seen it, you will be gathered³ to your ancestors,⁴ as Aaron your brother was gathered to his ancestors.⁵ **27:14** For⁶ in the wilderness of Zin when the community rebelled against me, you⁷ rebelled against my command⁸ to show me as holy⁹ before their eyes over the water – the water of Meribah in Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.”

27:15 Then Moses spoke to the LORD: **27:16** “Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all humankind,¹⁰ appoint¹¹ a man over the community, **27:17** who will go out before them, and who will come in before them,¹² and who will lead them out, and who will bring them in, so that¹³ the community of the LORD may not be like sheep that have no shepherd.”

27:18 The LORD replied¹⁴ to Moses, “Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is such a spirit,¹⁵ and lay your hand on him; **27:19** set him¹⁷ before Eleazar the priest and before the

whole community, and commission¹⁸ him publicly.¹⁹ **27:20** Then you must delegate²⁰ some of your authority²¹ to him, so that the whole community of the Israelites will be obedient.²² **27:21** And he will stand before Eleazar the priest, who²³ will seek counsel²⁴ for him before the LORD by the decision of the Urim.²⁵ At his command²⁶ they will go out, and at his command they will come in, he and all the Israelites with him, the whole community.”

27:22 So Moses did as the LORD commanded him; he took Joshua and set²⁷ him before Eleazar the priest and before the whole community. **27:23** He laid his hands on him and commissioned him, just as the LORD commanded,²⁸ by the authority²⁹ of Moses.

Daily Offerings

28:1³⁰ The LORD spoke to Moses: **28:2** “Command the Israelites:³¹ ‘With regard to my offering,³² be sure to offer³³ my food for my

1 tn The imperative could be subordinated to the first to provide a purpose clause, although a second instruction fits well enough.

2 tn This perfect tense would best be classified as a perfect of resolve: “which I have decided to give.” God had not yet given the land to them, but it was certain he would.

3 tn The first verb is a perfect tense with a *vav* (ו) consecutive, and the second verb is also. In such parallel clauses, the first may be subordinated, here as a temporal clause.

4 tn *Heb* “people.”

5 tn *Heb* “was gathered.” The phrase “to his ancestors” is elided in the Hebrew text, but is an implied repetition from the beginning of the verse, and has been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons.

6 tn The preposition on the relative pronoun has the force of “because of the fact that.”

7 tn The verb is the second masculine plural form.

8 tn *Heb* “mouth.”

9 sn Using the basic meaning of the word קָדַשׁ (*qadash*, “to be separate, distinct, set apart”), we can understand better what Moses failed to do. He was supposed to have acted in a way that would have shown God to be distinct, different, holy. Instead, he gave the impression that God was capricious and hostile – very human. The leader has to be aware of what image he is conveying to the people.

10 tn *Heb* “flesh”; cf. NAB, NIV “all mankind”; NCV “all people”; NLT “all living things.”

11 tn This is the same verb פָּקַד (*paqad*) that is used throughout the book for the aspect of “numbering” the people.

12 sn This is probably technical terminology for a military leader (Josh 14:11; 1 Sam 18:13-16; 1 Kgs 3:7; 2 Kgs 11:9). The image of a shepherd can also be military in nature (1 Kgs 22:17).

13 tn The Hebrew text has the conjunction with the negated imperfect tense, “and it will not be.” This clause should be subordinated to the preceding to form a result clause, and the imperfect then function as a final imperfect.

14 tn Or “said.”

15 sn The word “spirit” probably refers to the Holy Spirit, in which case it would be rendered “in whom is the Spirit.” This would likely be a permanent endowment for Joshua. But it is also possible to take it to refer to a proper spirit to do all the things required of such a leader (which ultimately is a gift from the Spirit of God). The Hebrew text simply says “in whom is a spirit.”

16 sn This symbolic act would indicate the transfer of leadership to Joshua.

17 tn This could be translated “position him,” or “have him stand,” since it is the causative stem of the verb “to stand.”

18 tn The verb is the Piel perfect of צִוָּה (*tsivvah*, literally “to command”). The verb has a wide range of meanings, and so here in this context the idea of instructing gives way to a more general sense of commissioning for duty. The verb in question is equal to the imperfect of instruction.

19 tn *Heb* “in their eyes.”

20 tn The verb is simply “give,” but in this context giving some of Moses’ honor to Joshua in the presence of the people is essentially passing the leadership to him, or delegating the authority to him with the result that people would follow him.

21 tc The Greek, Syriac, and Vulgate read “glory” for this form that occurs only here in the Pentateuch. Elsewhere it is rendered “majesty, splendor” (see Ps 96:6). It could even be “vitality” here. The authority being transferred here is both spiritual and civil.

22 tn *Heb* “hear.”

23 tn The passage simply has “and he will ask,” but Eleazar is clearly the subject now.

24 tn *Heb* “ask.”

25 sn The new leader would not have the privilege that Moses had in speaking to God face to face. Rather, he would have to inquire of the LORD through the priest, and the priest would seek a decision by means of the Urim. The Urim and the Thummim were the sacred lots that the priest had in his pouch, the “breastplate” as it has traditionally been called. Since the Law had now been fully established, there would be fewer cases that the leader would need further rulings. Now it would simply be seeking the LORD’s word for matters such as whether to advance or not. The size, shape or substance of these objects is uncertain. See further C. Van Dam, *The Urim and Thummim*.

26 tn *Heb* “mouth,” meaning what he will say.

27 tn *Heb* “stood.”

28 tn *Heb* “spoke.”

29 tn *Heb* “hand.”

30 sn For additional reading on these chapters, see G. B. Gray, *Sacrifice in the Old Testament*; A. F. Rainey, “The Order of Sacrifices in the Old Testament Ritual Texts,” *Bib* 51 (1970): 485-98; N. H. Snaith, *The Jewish New Year Festival*.

31 tn *Heb* “and say to them.” These words have not been included in the translation for stylistic reasons.

32 tn The sentence begins with the accusative “my offering.” It is suspended at the beginning as an independent accusative to itemize the subject matter. The second accusative is the formal object of the verb. It could also be taken in apposition to the first accusative.

33 tn The construction uses the imperfect tense expressing instruction, followed by the infinitive construct used to express the complement of direct object.

offering made by fire, as a pleasing aroma to me at its appointed time.¹ **28:3** You will say to them, ‘This is the offering made by fire which you must offer to the LORD: two unblemished lambs one year old each day for a continual² burnt offering. **28:4** The first lamb you must offer in the morning, and the second lamb you must offer in the late afternoon,³ **28:5** with one-tenth of an ephah⁴ of finely ground flour as a grain offering mixed with one quarter of a hin⁵ of pressed olive oil. **28:6** It is a continual burnt offering that was instituted on Mount Sinai as a pleasing aroma, an offering made by fire to the LORD.

28:7 ‘‘And its drink offering must be one quarter of a hin for each lamb.⁶ You must pour out the strong drink⁷ as a drink offering to the LORD in the holy place. **28:8** And the second lamb you must offer in the late afternoon; just as you offered the grain offering and drink offering in the morning,⁸ you must offer it as an offering made by fire, as a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

Weekly Offerings

28:9 ‘‘On the Sabbath day, you must offer⁹ two unblemished lambs a year old, and two-tenths of an ephah¹⁰ of finely ground flour as a grain offering, mixed with olive oil, along with its drink offering. **28:10** This is the burnt offering for every Sabbath,¹¹ besides the continual burnt offering and its drink offering.

Monthly Offerings

28:11 ‘‘On the first day of each month¹² you must offer as a burnt offering to the LORD two young bulls, one ram, and seven unblemished lambs a year old, **28:12** with three-tenths of an ephah of finely ground flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering for each bull, and two-tenths of an ephah of finely ground flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering for the ram, **28:13** and one-tenth of an ephah of finely ground flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering for each lamb, as a burnt offering for a pleasing aroma, an offering made by fire to the LORD. **28:14** For their drink offerings, include¹³ half a hin of wine with each bull, one-third of a hin for the ram, and one-fourth of a hin for each lamb. This is the burnt offering for each month¹⁴ throughout the months of the year. **28:15** And one male goat¹⁵ must be offered to the LORD as a purification offering, in addition to the continual burnt offering and its drink offering.

Passover and Unleavened Bread

28:16 ‘‘On the fourteenth day of the first month is the LORD’s Passover. **28:17** And on the fifteenth day of this month is the festival. For seven days bread made without yeast must be eaten. **28:18** And on the first day there is to be a holy assembly; you must do no ordinary work¹⁶ on it.

28:19 ‘‘But you must offer to the LORD an offering made by fire, a burnt offering of two young bulls, one ram, and seven lambs one year old; they must all be unblemished.¹⁷ **28:20** And their grain offering is to be of finely ground flour mixed with olive oil. For each bull you must offer three-tenths of an ephah, and two-tenths for the ram. **28:21** For each of the seven lambs you are to offer one-tenth of an ephah, **28:22** as well as one goat for a purification offering, to make atonement for you. **28:23** You must offer these in addition to the burnt offering in the morning which is for a continual burnt offering. **28:24** In this manner you must offer daily throughout the seven days the food of the sacrifice made by fire as a sweet aroma to the LORD. It is to be offered in addition to the continual burnt offering and its drink offering. **28:25** On the seventh day you are to have a holy assembly, you must do no regular work.

¹ sn See L. R. Fisher, ‘‘New Ritual Calendar from Ugarit,’’ *HTR* 63 (1970): 485-501.

² sn The sacrifice was to be kept burning, but each morning the priests would have to clean the grill and put a new offering on the altar. So the idea of a continual burnt offering is more that of a regular offering.

³ tn Heb ‘‘between the evenings’’ meaning between dusk and dark.

⁴ sn That is about two quarts.

⁵ sn That is about one quart.

⁶ tn Heb ‘‘the one lamb,’’ but it is meant to indicate for ‘‘each lamb.’’

⁷ tn The word שֶׁכָּר (shekhar) is often translated ‘‘strong drink.’’ It can mean ‘‘barley beer’’ in the Akkadian cognate, and also in the Hebrew Bible when joined with the word for wine. English versions here read ‘‘wine’’ (NAB, TEV, CEV); ‘‘strong wine’’ (KJV); ‘‘fermented drink’’ (NIV, NLT); ‘‘strong drink’’ (ASV, NASB, NRSV).

⁸ tn Heb ‘‘as the grain offering of the morning and as its drink offering.’’

⁹ tn The words ‘‘you must offer’’ are not in the Hebrew text, but are implied. They have been supplied in the translation to make a complete English sentence.

¹⁰ sn That is, about 4 quarts.

¹¹ tn Heb ‘‘the burnt offering of the Sabbath by its Sabbath.’’

¹² tn Heb ‘‘of your months.’’

¹³ tn The word ‘‘include’’ is not in the Hebrew text but is implied. It is supplied in the translation to make a complete English sentence.

¹⁴ tn Heb ‘‘a month in its month.’’

¹⁵ tn Heb ‘‘one kid of the goats.’’

¹⁶ tn Heb ‘‘any work [of] service’’; this means any occupational work, that is, the ordinary service.

¹⁷ tn Heb ‘‘unblemished they will be to you.’’ So also in v. 31.

Firstfruits

28:26 “Also, on the day of the first fruits, when you bring a new grain offering to the LORD during your Feast of Weeks, you are to have a holy assembly. You must do no ordinary work. **28:27** But you must offer as the burnt offering, as a sweet aroma to the LORD, two young bulls, one ram, seven lambs one year old, **28:28** with their grain offering of finely ground flour mixed with olive oil: three-tenths of an ephah for each bull, two-tenths for the one ram, **28:29** with one-tenth for each of the seven lambs, **28:30** as well as one male goat to make an atonement for you. **28:31** You are to offer them with their drink offerings in addition to the continual burnt offering and its grain offering – they must be unblemished.

Blowing Trumpets

29:1 “On the first day of the seventh month, you are to hold a holy assembly. You must not do your ordinary work, for it is a day of blowing trumpets for you. **29:2** You must offer a burnt offering as a sweet aroma to the LORD: one young bull, one ram, and seven lambs one year old without blemish.

29:3 “Their grain offering is to be of finely ground flour mixed with olive oil, three-tenths of an ephah for the bull, two-tenths of an ephah for the ram, **29:4** and one-tenth for each of the seven lambs, **29:5** with one male goat for a purification offering to make an atonement for you; **29:6** this is in addition to the monthly burnt offering and its grain offering, and the daily burnt offering with its grain offering and their drink offerings as prescribed, as a sweet aroma, a sacrifice made by fire to the LORD.

The Day of Atonement

29:7 “On the tenth day of this seventh month you are to have a holy assembly. You must humble yourselves;¹ you must not do any work on it. **29:8** But you must offer a burnt offering as a pleasing aroma to the LORD, one young bull, one ram, and seven lambs one year old, all of them without blemish.² **29:9** Their grain offering must be of finely ground flour mixed with olive oil, three-tenths of an ephah for the bull, two-tenths for the ram, **29:10** and one-tenth for each of the seven lambs, **29:11** along with one male goat for a purification offering, in addition to the purification offering for atonement and the continual burnt offering with its grain offering and their drink offerings.

¹ tn Heb “afflict yourselves”; NAB “mortify yourselves”; NIV, NRSV “deny yourselves.”

sn The verb seems to mean “humble yourself.” There is no explanation given for it. In the days of the prophets fasting seems to be associated with it (see Isa 58:3-5), and possibly the symbolic wearing of ashes.

² tn Heb “they shall be to you without blemish.”

The Feast of Temporary Shelters

29:12 “On the fifteenth day of the seventh month you are to have a holy assembly; you must do no ordinary work, and you must keep a festival to the LORD for seven days. **29:13** You must offer a burnt offering, an offering made by fire as a pleasing aroma to the LORD: thirteen young bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs each one year old, all of them without blemish. **29:14** Their grain offering must be of finely ground flour mixed with olive oil, three-tenths of an ephah for each of the thirteen bulls, two-tenths of an ephah for each of the two rams, **29:15** and one-tenth for each of the fourteen lambs, **29:16** along with one male goat for a purification offering, in addition to the continual burnt offering with its grain offering and its drink offering.

29:17 “On the second day you must offer twelve young bulls, two rams, fourteen lambs one year old, all without blemish, **29:18** and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, according to their number as prescribed, **29:19** along with one male goat for a purification offering, in addition to the continual burnt offering with its grain offering and their drink offerings.

29:20 “On the third day you must offer³ eleven bulls, two rams, fourteen lambs one year old, all without blemish, **29:21** and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, according to their number as prescribed, **29:22** along with one male goat for a purification offering, in addition to the continual burnt offering with its grain offering and its drink offering.

29:23 “On the fourth day you must offer ten bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs one year old, all without blemish, **29:24** and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, according to their number as prescribed, **29:25** along with one male goat for a purification offering, in addition to the continual burnt offering with its grain offering and its drink offering.

29:26 “On the fifth day you must offer nine bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs one year old, all without blemish, **29:27** and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, according to their number as prescribed, **29:28** along with one male goat for a purification offering, in addition to the continual burnt offering with its grain offering and its drink offering.

29:29 “On the sixth day you must offer eight bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs one year old, all without blemish, **29:30** and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, according to their number as prescribed, **29:31** along with one

³ tn The words “you must offer” are implied.

male goat for a purification offering, in addition to the continual burnt offering with its grain offering and its drink offering.

29:32 “On the seventh day you must offer seven bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs one year old, all without blemish, **29:33** and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, according to their number as prescribed, **29:34** along with one male goat for a purification offering, in addition to the continual burnt offering with its grain offering and its drink offering.

29:35 “On the eighth day you are to have a holy assembly; you must do no ordinary work on it. **29:36** But you must offer a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, as a pleasing aroma to the LORD, one bull, one ram, seven lambs one year old, all of them without blemish, **29:37** and with their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bull, for the ram, and for the lambs, according to their number as prescribed, **29:38** along with one male goat for a purification offering, in addition to the continual burnt offering with its grain offering and its drink offering.

29:39 “These things you must present to the LORD at your appointed times, in addition to your vows and your freewill offerings, as your burnt offerings, your grain offerings, your drink offerings, and your peace offerings.” **29:40** (30:1)¹ So Moses told the Israelites everything, just as the LORD had commanded him.²

Vows Made by Men

30:1³ Moses told the leaders⁴ of the tribes concerning the Israelites, “This is what⁵ the LORD has commanded: **30:2** If a man⁶ makes a vow⁷ to the LORD or takes an oath⁸ of binding

obligation on himself,⁹ he must not break his word, but must do whatever he has promised.¹⁰

Vows Made by Single Women

30:3 “If a young¹¹ woman who is still living¹² in her father’s house makes a vow to the LORD or places herself under an obligation, **30:4** and her father hears of her vow or the obligation to which she has pledged herself, and her father remains silent about her,¹³ then all her vows will stand,¹⁴ and every obligation to which she has pledged herself will stand. **30:5** But if her father overrules her when he hears¹⁵ about it, then none¹⁶ of her vows or her obligations which she has pledged for herself will stand. And the LORD will release¹⁷ her from it, because her father overruled her.

Vows Made by Married Women

30:6 “And if she marries a husband while under a vow,¹⁸ or she uttered¹⁹ anything impulsively by which she has pledged herself, **30:7** and her husband hears about it, but remains silent about her when he hears about it, then her vows will stand and her obligations which she has pledged for herself will stand. **30:8** But if when her husband hears it he overrules her, then

⁹ **tn** The Hebrew text has לְאָסֵר אִסָּר (le'sor 'issar), meaning “to take a binding obligation.” This is usually interpreted to mean a negative vow, i.e., the person attempts to abstain from something that is otherwise permissible. It might involve fasting, or abstaining from marital sex, but it might also involve some goal to be achieved, and the abstaining from distractions until the vow is fulfilled (see Ps 132). The נָדָר (neder) may have been more for religious matters, and the אִסָּר more for social concerns, but this cannot be documented with certainty.

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “according to all that goes out of his mouth.”

¹¹ **tn** The qualification comes at the end of the verse, and simply says “in her youth.”

¹² **tn** The Hebrew text just has “in her father’s house” and not “who is still living,” but that is the meaning of the line.

¹³ **tn** The intent of this expression is that he does not object to the vow.

¹⁴ **tn** The verb קָוַם (qum) is best translated “stand” here, but the idea with it is that what she vows is established as a genuine oath with the father’s approval (or acquiescence).

¹⁵ **tn** The idiom is “in the day of,” but it is used in place of a preposition before the infinitive construct with its suffixed subjective genitive. The clause is temporal.

¹⁶ **tn** The Hebrew “all will not stand” is best rendered “none will stand.”

¹⁷ **tn** The verb has often been translated “forgive” (cf. KJV, ASV, NASB, NRSV, NLT), but that would suggest a sin that needed forgiving. The idea of “release from obligation” is better; the idea is like that of having a debt “forgiven” or “retired.” In other words, she is free from the vow she had made. The LORD will not hold the woman responsible to do what she vowed.

¹⁸ **tn** *Heb* “and her vows are upon her.” It may be that the woman gets married while her vows are still unfulfilled.

¹⁹ **tn** The Hebrew text indicates that this would be some impetuous vow that she uttered with her lips, a vow that her husband, whether new or existing, would not approve of. Several translate it “a binding obligation rashly uttered.”

¹ **sn** Beginning with **29:40**, the verse numbers through **30:16** in the English Bible differ from the verse numbers in the Hebrew text (BHS), with **29:40** ET = **30:1** HT, **30:1** ET = **30:2** HT, etc., through **30:16** ET = **30:17** HT. With **31:1** the verse numbers in the ET and HT are again the same.

² **tn** *Heb* “Moses.” The proper name has been replaced by the pronoun (“him”) in the translation for stylistic reasons.

³ **sn** Num 30 deals with vows that are different than the vows discussed in Lev 27 and Num 6. The material is placed here after all the rulings of the offerings, but it could have been revealed to Moses at any time, such as the Nazirite vows, or the question of the daughters’ inheritance. The logic of placing it here may be that a festival was the ideal place for discharging a vow. For additional material on vows, see R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 465-66.

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “heads.”

⁵ **tn** *Heb* “This is the word which.”

⁶ **tn** The legal construction states the class to which the law applies, and then lays down the condition: “men [man] – if....”

⁷ **tn** The Hebrew text uses a cognate accusative construction to express this: “a man if he vows a vow.”

⁸ **tn** The expression is “swear an oath” (הִשְׁבַּע שְׁבִיעָה, *hishava' sh'vu'ah*). The vow (נָדָר, *neder*) was a promise to donate something of oneself or one’s substance to the LORD. The solemn oath seals the vow before the LORD, perhaps with sacrifice. The vocabulary recalls Abraham’s treaty with Abimelech and the naming of Beer Sheba with the word (see Gen 21).

he will nullify¹ the vow she has taken,² and whatever she uttered impulsively which she has pledged for herself. And the LORD will release her from it.

Vows Made by Widows

30:9 “But every vow of a widow or of a divorced woman which she has pledged for herself will remain intact.³ **30:10** If she made the vow in her husband’s house or put herself under obligation with an oath, **30:11** and her husband heard about it, but remained silent about her, and did not overrule her, then all her vows will stand, and every obligation which she pledged for herself will stand. **30:12** But if her husband clearly nullifies⁴ them when he hears them, then whatever she says⁵ by way of vows or obligations will not stand. Her husband has made them void, and the LORD will release her from them.

30:13 “Any vow or sworn obligation that would bring affliction to her,⁶ her husband can confirm or nullify.⁷ **30:14** But if her husband remains completely silent⁸ about her from day to day, he thus confirms all her vows or all her obligations which she is under; he confirms them because he remained silent about when he heard them. **30:15** But if he should nullify them after he has heard them, then he will bear her iniquity.⁹”

30:16 These are the statutes that the LORD commanded Moses, relating to¹⁰ a man and his wife, and a father and his young daughter who is still living in her father’s house.

The Midianite War

31:1¹¹ The LORD spoke to Moses: **31:2** “Exact vengeance¹² for the Israelites on the Midianites¹³ – after that you will be gathered to your people.”¹⁴

31:3 So Moses spoke to the people: “Arm¹⁵ men from among you for the war, to attack the Midianites and to execute¹⁶ the LORD’s vengeance on Midian. **31:4** You must send to the battle a thousand men from every tribe throughout all the tribes of Israel.”¹⁷ **31:5** So a thousand from every tribe, twelve thousand armed for battle in all, were provided out of the thousands of Israel.

Campaign Against the Midianites

31:6 So Moses sent them to the war, one thousand from every tribe, with Phinehas son of Eleazar the priest, who was in charge¹⁸ of the holy articles¹⁹ and the signal trumpets. **31:7** They fought against the Midianites, as the LORD commanded Moses, and they killed every male.²⁰

¹¹ **sn** This lengthy chapter records the mobilization of the troops (vv. 1-5), the war itself (vv. 6-13), the death of the captive women (vv. 14-18), the purification of the nations (vv. 19-24), and the distribution of the spoils (vv. 25-54). For more detail, see G. W. Coats, “Moses in Midian,” *JBL* 92 (1973): 3-10; and W. J. Dumbrell, “Midian – a Land or a League?” *VT* 25 (1975): 323-37.

¹² **tn** The imperative is followed by its cognate accusative to stress this vengeance. The Midianites had attempted to destroy Israel with their corrupt pagan practices, and now will be judged. The accounts indicate that the effort by Midian was calculated and evil.

¹³ **sn** The war was commanded by the LORD and was to be divine vengeance on the Midianites. So it was holy war. No Israelites then could take spoils in this – it was not a time for plunder and aggrandizement. It was part of the judgment of God upon those who would destroy or pervert his plan and his people.

¹⁴ **sn** This would be the last major enterprise that Moses would have to undertake. He would soon die and “be gathered to his people” as Aaron was.

¹⁵ **tn** The Niphal imperative, literally “arm yourselves,” is the call to mobilize the nation for war. It is followed by the jussive, “and they will be,” which would then be subordinated to say “that they may be.” The versions changed the verb to a Hiphil, but that is unnecessary: “arm some of yourselves.”

¹⁶ **tn** *Heb* “give.”

¹⁷ **sn** Some commentators argue that given the size of the nation (which they reject) the small number for the army is a sign of the unrealistic character of the story. The number is a round number, but it is also a holy war, and God would give them the victory. They are beginning to learn here, and at Jericho, and later against these Midianites under Gideon, that God does not want or need a large army in order to obtain victory.

¹⁸ **tn** The Hebrew text uses the idiom that these “were in his hand,” meaning that he had the responsibility over them.

¹⁹ **sn** It is not clear what articles from the sanctuary were included. *Tg. Ps.-J.* adds (interpretively) “the Urim and Thummim.”

²⁰ **sn** Many modern biblical scholars assume that this passage is fictitious. The text says that they killed every male, but Judges accounts for the Midianites. The texts can be harmonized rather simply – they killed every Midianite who was in the battle. Midianite tribes and cities dotted the whole region, but that does not mean Israel went and killed every single one of them. There apparently was a core of Midianites whom Balaam had influenced to pervert Israel.

¹ **tn** The verb is the Hiphil perfect with a *vav* (ו) consecutive from the verb פָּקַד (*parar*, “to annul”). The verb functions here as the equivalent of an imperfect tense; here it is the apodosis following the conditional clause – if this is the case, then this is what will happen.

² **tn** *Heb* “which [she is] under it.”

³ **tn** The Hebrew text says her vow “shall stand against her.” In other words, she must fulfill, or bear the consequences of, whatever she vowed.

⁴ **tn** The verb is the imperfect tense in the conditional clause. It is intensified with the infinitive absolute, which would have the force of saying that he nullified them unequivocally, or he made them null and void.

⁵ **tn** *Heb* whatever proceeds from her lips.”

⁶ **tn** The sentence uses the infinitive construct לְעִנּוּתָא (*l’annot*, “to afflict”), which is the same word used in the instructions for the day of atonement in which people are to afflict themselves (their souls). The case here may be that the woman would take a religious vow on such an occasion to humble herself, to mortify her flesh, to abstain from certain things, perhaps even sexual relations within marriage.

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “or her husband can nullify.”

⁸ **tn** The sentence uses the infinitive absolute to strengthen the idea.

⁹ **sn** In other words, he will pay the penalty for making her break her vows if he makes her stop what she vowed. It will not be her responsibility.

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “between.”

31:8 They killed the kings of Midian in addition to those slain – Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba – five Midianite kings.¹ They also killed Balaam son of Beor with the sword.²

31:9 The Israelites took the women of Midian captives along with their little ones, and took all their herds, all their flocks, and all their goods as plunder. **31:10** They burned³ all their towns⁴ where they lived and all their encampments. **31:11** They took all the plunder and all the spoils, both people and animals. **31:12** They brought the captives and the spoils and the plunder to Moses, to Eleazar the priest, and to the Israelite community, to the camp on the plains⁵ of Moab, along the Jordan River⁶ across from Jericho.⁷ **31:13** Moses, Eleazar the priest, and all the leaders of the community went out to meet them outside the camp.

The Death of the Midianite Women

31:14 But Moses was furious with the officers of the army, the commanders over thousands and commanders over hundreds, who had come from service in the war. **31:15** Moses said to them, “Have you allowed all the women to live?”⁸ **31:16** Look, these people through the counsel of Balaam caused the Israelites to act treacherously against the LORD in the matter of Peor – which resulted in the plague among the community of the LORD! **31:17** Now therefore kill every boy,⁹ and kill every woman who has

had sexual intercourse with a man.¹⁰ **31:18** But all the young women¹¹ who have not had sexual intercourse with a man¹² will be yours.¹³

Purification After Battle

31:19 “Any of you who has killed anyone or touched any of the dead, remain outside the camp for seven days; purify yourselves and your captives on the third day, and on the seventh day. **31:20** You must purify each garment and everything that is made of skin, everything made of goat’s hair, and everything made of wood.”¹⁴

31:21 Then Eleazar the priest said to the men of war who had gone into the battle, “This is the ordinance of the law that the LORD commanded Moses: **31:22** ‘Only the gold, the silver, the bronze, the iron, the tin, and the lead, **31:23** everything that may stand the fire, you are to pass through the fire,¹⁵ and it will be ceremonially clean, but it must still be purified with the water of purification. Anything that cannot withstand the fire you must pass through the water. **31:24** You must wash your clothes on the seventh day, and you will be ceremonially clean, and afterward you may enter the camp.’”

The Distribution of Spoils

31:25 Then the LORD spoke to Moses: **31:26** “You and Eleazar the priest, and all the family leaders of the community, take the sum¹⁶ of the plunder that was captured, both people and animals. **31:27** Divide the plunder into two parts, one for those who took part in the war – who went out to battle – and the other for all the community.

¹ **sn** Here again we see that there was no unified empire, but Midianite tribal groups.

² **sn** And what was Balaam doing among the Midianites? The implication is strong. This pagan diviner had to submit to the revealed will of God in the oracles, but he nonetheless could be hired. He had been a part of the attempt to destroy Israel that failed; he then apparently became part of the plan, if not the adviser, to destroy them with sexual immorality and pagan ritual.

³ **tn** *Heb* “burned with fire.”

⁴ **tn** The ban applied to the encampments and forts of this group of Midianite tribes living in the region of Moab.

⁵ **tn** Or “steppes.”

⁶ **tn** The word “River” is not in the Hebrew text, but has been supplied in the translation for clarity.

⁷ **tn** Again this expression, “the Jordan of Jericho,” is used. It describes the intended location along the Jordan River, the Jordan next to or across from Jericho.

map For the location of Jericho see Map5-B2; Map6-E1; Map7-E1; Map8-E3; Map10-A2; Map11-A1.

⁸ **tn** The verb is the Piel perfect of the word *חָיָה* (*khayah*, “to live”). In the Piel stem it must here mean “preserve alive,” or “allow to live,” rather than make alive.

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “every male among the little ones.”

sn The command in holy war to kill women and children seems in modern times a terrible thing to do (and it was), and something they ought not to have done. But this criticism fails to understand the situation in the ancient world. The entire life of the ancient world was tribal warfare. God’s judgment is poured out on whole groups of people who act with moral abandonment and in sinful pursuits. See E. J. Young, *My Servants, the Prophets*, 24; and J. W. Wenham, *The Enigma of Evil*.

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “every woman who has known [a] man by lying with a man.”

¹¹ **tn** Or “girls.” The Hebrew indicates they would be female children, making the selection easy.

¹² **tn** *Heb* “who have not known [a] man by lying with a man.”

¹³ **sn** Many contemporary scholars see this story as fictitious, composed by the Jews during the captivity. According to this interpretation, the spoils of war here indicate the wealth of the Jews in captivity, which was to be given to the Levites and priests for the restoration of the sanctuary in Jerusalem. The conclusion drawn from this interpretation is that returning Jews had the same problem as the earlier ones: to gain a foothold in the land. Against this interpretation of the account is a lack of hard evidence, a lack which makes this interpretation appear contrived and subjective. If this was the intent of a later writer, he surely could have stated this more clearly than by making up such a story.

¹⁴ **sn** These verses are a reminder that taking a life, even if justified through holy war, still separates one from the holiness of God. It is part of the violation of the fallen world, and only through the ritual of purification can one be once again made fit for the presence of the LORD.

¹⁵ **sn** Purification by fire is unique to this event. Making these metallic objects “pass through the fire” was not only a way of purifying (burning off impurities), but it seems to be a dedicatory rite as well to the LORD and his people. The aspect of passing through the fire is one used by these pagans for child sacrifice.

¹⁶ **tn** The idiom here is “take up the head,” meaning take a census, or count the totals.

31:28 “You must exact¹ a tribute for the LORD from the fighting men who went out to battle: one life out of five hundred, from the people, the cattle, and from the donkeys and the sheep. **31:29** You are to take it from their half-share and give it to Eleazar the priest for a raised offering to the LORD. **31:30** From the Israelites’ half-share you are to take one portion out of fifty of the people, the cattle, the donkeys, and the sheep – from every kind of animal – and you are to give them to the Levites, who are responsible for the care of the LORD’s tabernacle.”

31:31 So Moses and Eleazar the priest did as the LORD commanded Moses. **31:32** The spoil that remained of the plunder which the fighting men² had gathered³ was 675,000 sheep, **31:33** 72,000 cattle, **31:34** 61,000 donkeys, **31:35** and 32,000 young women who had never had sexual intercourse with a man.⁴

31:36 The half-portion of those who went to war numbered 337,500 sheep; **31:37** the LORD’s tribute from the sheep was 675. **31:38** The cattle numbered⁵ 36,000; the LORD’s tribute was 72. **31:39** The donkeys were 30,500, of which the LORD’s tribute was 61. **31:40** The people were 16,000, of which the LORD’s tribute was 32 people.⁶

31:41 So Moses gave the tribute, which was the LORD’s raised offering, to Eleazar the priest, as the LORD commanded Moses.

31:42 From the Israelites’ half-share that Moses had separated from the fighting men,⁷ **31:43** there were 337,500 sheep from the portion belonging to the community, **31:44** 36,000 cattle, **31:45** 30,500 donkeys, **31:46** and 16,000 people.

31:47 From the Israelites’ share Moses took one of every fifty people and animals and gave them to the Levites who were responsible for the care of the LORD’s tabernacle, just as the LORD commanded Moses.

31:48 Then the officers who were over the thousands of the army, the commanders over thousands and the commanders over hundreds, approached Moses **31:49** and said to him,⁸ “Your

servants have taken a count⁹ of the men who were in the battle, who were under our authority,¹⁰ and not one is missing. **31:50** So we have brought as an offering for the LORD what each man found: gold ornaments, armlets, bracelets, signet rings, earrings, and necklaces, to make atonement for ourselves¹¹ before the LORD.”¹² **31:51** Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold from them, all of it in the form of ornaments. **31:52** All the gold of the offering they offered up to the LORD from the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds weighed 16,750 shekels.¹³ **31:53** Each soldier had taken plunder for himself. **31:54** So Moses and Eleazar the priest received the gold from the commanders of thousands and commanders¹⁴ of hundreds and brought it into the tent of meeting as a memorial¹⁵ for the Israelites before the LORD.

The Petition of the Reubenites and Gadites

32:1¹⁶ Now the Reubenites and the Gadites possessed a very large number of cattle. When they saw that the lands of Jazer and Gilead were ideal for cattle,¹⁷ **32:2** the Gadites and the Reubenites came and addressed Moses, Eleazar the priest, and the leaders of the community. They said, **32:3** “Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam,¹⁸ Nebo, and Beon,¹⁹ **32:4** the land that the LORD subdued²⁰ before the community of Israel, is ideal for cattle, and your servants have cattle.” **32:5** So they said, “If we have found favor in your sight,²¹ let this land be

¹ **tn** The verb is the Hiphil, “you shall cause to be taken up.” The perfect with *vav* (ו) continues the sequence of the instructions. This raised offering was to be a tax of one-fifth of one percent for the LORD.

² **tn** *Heb* “people.”

³ **tn** *Heb* “had plundered.”

⁴ **sn** Here again we encounter one of the difficulties of the book, the use of the large numbers. Only twelve thousand soldiers fought the Midianites, but they brought back this amount of plunder, including 32,000 girls. Until a solution for numbers in the book can be found, or the current translation confirmed, one must remain cautious in interpretation.

⁵ **tn** The word “numbered” has been supplied in the translation for clarity.

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “soul.”

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “the men who were fighting.”

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “to Moses”; the proper name has been replaced by the pronoun (“him”) in the translation for stylistic reasons.

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “lifted up the head.”

¹⁰ **tn** *Heb* “in our hand.”

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “our souls.”

¹² **sn** The expression here may include the idea of finding protection from divine wrath, which is so common to Leviticus, but it may also be a thank offering for the fact that their lives had been spared.

¹³ **sn** Or about 420 imperial pounds.

¹⁴ **tn** The Hebrew text does not repeat the word “commanders” here, but it is implied.

¹⁵ **tn** The purpose of the offering was to remind the LORD to remember Israel. But it would also be an encouragement for Israel as they remembered the great victory.

¹⁶ **sn** While the tribes are on the other side of Jordan, the matter of which tribes would settle there has to be discussed. This chapter begins the settlement of Israel into the tribal territories, something to be continued in Joshua. The chapter has the petitions (vv. 1-5), the response by Moses (vv. 6-15), the proposal (vv. 16-27), and the conclusion of the matter (vv. 28-42). For literature on this subject, both critical and conservative, see S. E. Loewenstein, “The Relation of the Settlement of Gad and Reuben in Numbers 32:1-38, Its Background and Its Composition,” *Tarbiz* 42 (1972): 12-26; J. Mauchline, “Gilead and Gilgal, Some Reflections on the Israelite Occupation of Palestine,” *VT* 6 (1956): 19-33; and A. Bergmann, “The Israelite Tribe of Half-Manasseh,” *JPOS* 16 (1936): 224-54.

¹⁷ **tn** *Heb* “the place was a place of/for cattle.”

¹⁸ **tc** *Smr* and the *LXX* have *Sibmah*. Cf. v. 38.

¹⁹ **tn** Cf. *Baal-meon* in v. 38.

²⁰ **tn** The verb is the Hiphil perfect of נָכַח (*nakhah*), a term that can mean “smite, strike, attack, destroy.”

²¹ **tn** *Heb* “eyes.”

given to your servants for our inheritance. Do not have us cross¹ the Jordan River.”²

Moses' Response

32:6 Moses said to the Gadites and the Reubenites, “Must your brothers go to war while you³ remain here? **32:7** Why do you frustrate the intent⁴ of the Israelites to cross over into the land which the LORD has given them? **32:8** Your fathers did the same thing when I sent them from Kadesh Barnea to see the land. **32:9** When⁵ they went up to the Eshcol Valley and saw the land, they frustrated the intent of the Israelites so that they did not enter⁶ the land that the LORD had given⁷ them. **32:10** So the anger of the LORD was kindled that day, and he swore, **32:11** ‘Because they have not followed me wholeheartedly,⁸ not⁹ one of the men twenty years old and upward¹⁰ who came from Egypt will see the land that I swore to give¹¹ to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, **32:12** except Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite, and Joshua son of Nun, for they followed the LORD wholeheartedly.’ **32:13** So the LORD’s anger was kindled against the Israelites, and he made them wander in the wilderness for forty years, until all that generation that had done wickedly before¹² the LORD was finished.¹³ **32:14** Now look, you are standing in your fathers’ place, a brood of sinners, to increase still further the fierce wrath of the LORD against the Israelites. **32:15** For if you turn away from following

him, he will once again abandon¹⁴ them in the wilderness, and you will be the reason for their destruction.”¹⁵

The Offer of the Reubenites and Gadites

32:16 Then they came very close to him and said, “We will build sheep folds here for our flocks and cities for our families,¹⁶ **32:17** but we will maintain ourselves in armed readiness¹⁷ and go before the Israelites until whenever we have brought them to their place. Our descendants will be living in fortified towns as a protection against¹⁸ the inhabitants of the land. **32:18** We will not return to our homes until every Israelite has his inheritance. **32:19** For we will not accept any inheritance on the other side of the Jordan River¹⁹ and beyond, because our inheritance has come to us on this eastern side of the Jordan.”

32:20 Then Moses replied,²⁰ “If you will do this thing, and if you will arm yourselves for battle before the LORD, **32:21** and if all your armed men cross the Jordan before the LORD until he drives out his enemies from his presence **32:22** and the land is subdued before the LORD, then afterward you may return and be free of your obligation to the LORD and to Israel. This land will then be your possession in the LORD’s sight.

32:23 “But if you do not do this, then look, you will have sinned²¹ against the LORD. And know that your sin will find you out. **32:24** So build cities for your descendants and pens for your sheep, but do what you have said²² you would do.”

32:25 So the Gadites and the Reubenites replied to Moses, “Your servants will do as my lord commands. **32:26** Our children, our wives, our flocks, and all our livestock will be there in the cities of Gilead, **32:27** but your servants will cross over, every man armed for war, to do battle in the LORD’s presence, just as my lord says.”

32:28 So Moses gave orders about them to Eleazar the priest, to Joshua son of Nun, and to the heads of the families of the Israelite tribes. **32:29** Moses said to them: “If the Gadites and the Reubenites cross the Jordan with you, each one

¹ tn The verb is the Hiphil jussive from עָבַר (*avar*, “to cross over”). The idea of “cause to cross” or “make us cross” might be too harsh, but “take across” with the rest of the nation is what they are trying to avoid.

² tn The word “River” is not in the Hebrew text, but has been supplied in the translation for clarity.

³ tn The *vav* (ו) is a *vav* disjunctive prefixed to the pronoun; it fits best here as a circumstantial clause, “while you stay here.”

⁴ tn Heb “heart.” So also in v. 9.

⁵ tn The preterite with *vav* (ו) consecutive is here subordinated to the parallel yet chronologically later verb in the next clause.

⁶ tn The infinitive construct here with *lamed* (ל) is functioning as a result clause.

⁷ tn The LORD had not given it yet, but was going to give it. Hence, the perfect should be classified as a perfect of resolve.

⁸ tn The clause is difficult; it means essentially that “they have not made full [their coming] after” the LORD.

⁹ tn The sentence begins with “if they see....” This is the normal way for Hebrew to express a negative oath – “they will by no means see....” The sentence is elliptical; it is saying something like “[May God do so to me] if they see,” meaning they won’t see. Of course here God is taking the oath, which is an anthropomorphic act. He does not need to take an oath, and certainly could not swear by anyone greater, but it communicates to people his resolve.

¹⁰ tc The LXX adds “those knowing bad and good.”

¹¹ tn The words “to give” are not in the Hebrew text but have been supplied in the translation for clarity.

¹² tn Heb “in the eyes of.”

¹³ tn The verb is difficult to translate, since it has the idea of “complete, finish” (תָּמַם, *tamam*). It could be translated “consumed” in this passage (so KJV, ASV); NASB “was destroyed.”

¹⁴ tn The construction uses a verbal hendiadys with the verb “to add” serving to modify the main verb.

¹⁵ tn Heb “and you will destroy all this people.”

¹⁶ tn Heb “our little ones.”

¹⁷ tn The MT has הָשִׁיב (*khushim*); the verbal root is חָשַׁב (*khush*, “to make haste” or “hurry”). But in light of the Greek and Latin Vulgate the Hebrew should probably be emended to הָמַשִׁיב (*hamushim*), a qal passive participle meaning “in battle array.” See further BDB 301 s.v. חָשַׁב, BDB 332 s.v. הָמַשִׁיב; HALOT 300 s.v. חָשַׁב, HALOT 331 s.v. הָמַשִׁיב.

¹⁸ tn Heb “from before.”

¹⁹ tn The word “River” is not in the Hebrew text, but has been supplied in the translation for clarity.

²⁰ tn Heb “said to them.”

²¹ tn The nuance of the perfect tense here has to be the future perfect.

²² tn Heb “that which goes out/has gone out of your mouth.”

equipped for battle in the LORD's presence, and you conquer the land,¹ then you must allot them the territory of Gilead as their possession. **32:30** But if they do not cross over with you armed, they must receive possessions among you in Canaan." **32:31** Then the Gadites and the Reubenites answered, "Your servants will do what the LORD has spoken."² **32:32** We will cross armed in the LORD's presence into the land of Canaan, and then the possession of our inheritance that we inherit will be ours on this side of the Jordan River."³

Land Assignment

32:33 So Moses gave to the Gadites, the Reubenites, and to half the tribe of Manasseh son of Joseph the realm of King Sihon of the Amorites, and the realm of King Og of Bashan, the entire land with its cities and the territory surrounding them.⁴ **32:34** The Gadites rebuilt Dibon, Ataroth, Aroer, **32:35** Atroth Shophan, Jazer, Jogbehah, **32:36** Beth Nimrah, and Beth Haran as fortified cities, and constructed pens for their flocks. **32:37** The Reubenites rebuilt Heshbon, Elealeh, Kiriathaim, **32:38** Nebo, Baal Meon (with a change of name), and Sibmah. They renamed⁵ the cities they built.

32:39 The descendants of Machir son of Manasseh went to Gilead, took it, and dispossessed the Amorites who were in it. **32:40** So Moses gave Gilead to Machir, son of Manasseh, and he lived there.⁶ **32:41** Now Jair son of Manasseh went and captured their small towns and named them Havvoth Jair.⁷ **32:42** Then Nobah went and captured Kenath and its villages and called it Nobah after his own name.

Wanderings from Egypt to Sinai

33:1⁸ These are the journeys of the Israelites, who went out of the land of Egypt by their divisions under the authority⁹ of Moses and Aaron. **33:2** Moses recorded their departures¹⁰ according to their journeys, by the commandment¹¹ of the LORD; now these are their journeys according to their departures. **33:3** They departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the

first month; on the day¹² after the Passover the Israelites went out defiantly¹³ in plain sight¹⁴ of all the Egyptians. **33:4** Now the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn, whom the LORD had killed among them; the LORD also executed judgments on their gods.

33:5 The Israelites traveled from Rameses and camped in Succoth.

33:6 They traveled from Succoth, and camped in Etham, which is on the edge of the wilderness. **33:7** They traveled from Etham, and turned again to Pi-hahiroth, which is before Baal-Zephon; and they camped before Migdal. **33:8** They traveled from Pi-hahiroth,¹⁵ and passed through the middle of the sea into the wilderness, and went three days' journey in the wilderness of Etham, and camped in Marah. **33:9** They traveled from Marah and came to Elim; in Elim there are twelve fountains of water and seventy palm trees, so they camped there.

33:10 They traveled from Elim, and camped by the Red Sea. **33:11** They traveled from the Red Sea and camped in the wilderness of Zin. **33:12** They traveled from the wilderness of Zin and camped in Dophkah. **33:13** And they traveled from Dophkah, and camped in Alush.

33:14 They traveled from Alush and camped at Rephidim, where there was no water for the people to drink. **33:15** They traveled from Rephidim and camped in the wilderness of Sinai.

Wanderings in the Wilderness

33:16 They traveled from the desert of Sinai and camped at Kibroth Hattaavah. **33:17** They traveled from Kibroth Hattaavah and camped at Hazeroth. **33:18** They traveled from Hazeroth and camped in Rithmah. **33:19** They traveled from Rithmah and camped at Rimmon-perez. **33:20** They traveled from Rimmon-perez and camped in Libnah. **33:21** They traveled from Libnah and camped at Rissah. **33:22** They traveled from Rissah and camped in Kehelathah. **33:23** They traveled from Kehelathah and camped at Mount Shepher. **33:24** They traveled from Mount Shepher and camped in Haradah. **33:25** They traveled from Haradah and camped in Makheloth. **33:26** They traveled from Makheloth and camped at Tahath. **33:27** They traveled from Tahath and camped at Terah. **33:28** They traveled from Terah and camped in Mithcah. **33:29** They traveled from Mithcah and camped in Hashmonah. **33:30** They traveled

¹ *tn* Heb "and the land is subdued before you."

² *tn* Heb "that which the LORD has spoken to your servants, thus we will do."

³ *tn* The word "River" is not in the Hebrew text, but has been supplied in the translation for clarity.

⁴ *tn* Heb "the land with its cities in the borders of the cities of the land all around."

⁵ *tn* Heb "called names."

⁶ *tn* Heb "in it."

⁷ *sn* Havvoth Jair. The Hebrew name means "villages of Jair."

⁸ *sn* This material can be arranged into four sections: from Egypt to Sinai (vv. 1-15), the wilderness wanderings (vv. 16-36), from Kadesh to Moab (vv. 37-49), and final orders for Canaan (vv. 50-56).

⁹ *tn* Heb "hand."

¹⁰ *tn* Heb "their going out."

¹¹ *tn* Heb "mouth."

¹² *tn* Heb "morrow."

¹³ *tn* Heb "with a high hand"; the expression means "defiantly; boldly" or "with confidence." The phrase is usually used for arrogant sin and pride, the defiant fist, as it were. The image of the high hand can also mean the hand raised to deliver the blow (Job 38:15).

¹⁴ *tn* Heb "in the eyes."

¹⁵ *tc* So many medieval Hebrew manuscripts, Smr, Syriac, and Latin Vulgate. Other witnesses have "from before Hahiroth."

from Hashmonah and camped in Moseroth. **33:31** They traveled from Moseroth and camped in Bene Jaakan. **33:32** They traveled from Bene Jaakan and camped at Hor-haggidgad. **33:33** They traveled from Hor-haggidgad and camped in Jotbathah. **33:34** They traveled from Jotbathah and camped in Abronah. **33:35** They traveled from Abronah and camped at Ezion-geber. **33:36** They traveled from Ezion-geber and camped in the wilderness of Zin, which is Kadesh.

Wanderings from Kadesh to Moab

33:37 They traveled from Kadesh and camped in Mount Hor at the edge of the land of Edom. **33:38** Aaron the priest ascended Mount Hor at the command¹ of the LORD, and he died there in the fortieth year after the Israelites had come out of the land of Egypt on the first day of the fifth month. **33:39** Now Aaron was 123 years old when he died in Mount Hor. **33:40** The king of Arad, the Canaanite king who lived in the south of the land of Canaan, heard about the approach of the Israelites.

33:41 They traveled from Mount Hor and camped in Zalmonah. **33:42** They traveled from Zalmonah and camped in Punon. **33:43** They traveled from Punon and camped in Oboth. **33:44** They traveled from Oboth and camped in Iye-abarim, on the border of Moab. **33:45** They traveled from lim² and camped in Dibon-gad. **33:46** They traveled from Dibon-gad and camped in Almon-diblathaim. **33:47** They traveled from Almon-diblathaim and camped in the mountains of Abarim before Nebo. **33:48** They traveled from the mountains of Abarim and camped in the plains of Moab by the Jordan River³ across from Jericho.⁴ **33:49** They camped by the Jordan, from Beth Jeshimoth as far as Abel-shittim in the plains of Moab.

At the Border of Canaan

33:50 The LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, across from Jericho. He said: **33:51** “Speak to the Israelites and tell them, ‘When you have crossed the Jordan into the land of Canaan, **33:52** you must drive out all the inhabitants of the land before you. Destroy all their carved images, all their molten images,⁵ and demolish their high places. **33:53** You must dispossess the inhabitants of the land and live in it, for I have given you the land to possess it. **33:54** You must divide the land by lot for an inheritance among your families. To a larger group you must give a larger inheritance, and to

a smaller group you must give a smaller inheritance. Everyone’s inheritance must be in the place where his lot falls. You must inherit according to your ancestral⁶ tribes. **33:55** But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land before you, then those whom you allow to remain will be irritants in your eyes and thorns in your side, and will cause you trouble in the land where you will be living. **33:56** And what I intended to do to them I will do to you.”

The Southern Border of the Land

34:1⁷ Then the LORD spoke to Moses: **34:2** “Give these instructions⁸ to the Israelites, and tell them: ‘When you enter Canaan, the land that has been assigned to you as an inheritance,⁹ the land of Canaan with its borders, **34:3** your southern border¹⁰ will extend from the wilderness of Zin along the Edomite border, and your southern border will run eastward to the extremity of the Salt Sea, **34:4** and then the border will turn from the south to the Scorpion Ascent,¹¹ continue to Zin, and then its direction¹² will be from the south to Kadesh Barnea. Then it will go to Hazar Addar and pass over to Azmon. **34:5** There the border will turn from Azmon to the Stream of Egypt, and then its direction is to the sea.¹³

The Western Border of the Land

34:6 “And for a western border¹⁴ you will have the Great Sea.¹⁵ This will be your western border.

The Northern Border of the Land

34:7 “And this will be your northern border: From the Great Sea you will draw a line to Mount Hor; **34:8** from Mount Hor you will draw a line to Lebo Hamath,¹⁶ and the direction of the border will be to Zedad. **34:9** The border will continue to Ziphron, and its direction will be to Hazar Enan. This will be your northern border.

⁶ tn Heb “of your fathers.”

⁷ sn This chapter falls into several sections: the south (vv. 1-5), the west (v. 6), the north (vv. 7-9), the east (vv. 10-15), and then a list of appointed officials (vv. 16-29).

⁸ tn Or “command.”

⁹ tn Heb “this is the land that will fall to you as an inheritance.”

¹⁰ tn The expression refers to the corner or extremity of the Negev, the South.

¹¹ tn Or “the Ascent of Scorpions” (עֲרַבְיִים [‘aqrabbiim] means “scorpions” in Hebrew).

¹² tn Heb “its going forth,” or the way it runs.

¹³ sn That is, the Mediterranean.

¹⁴ tn The word for west is simply “sea,” because the sea is west of Israel.

¹⁵ sn That is, the Mediterranean Sea (also in the following verse).

¹⁶ tn Or “to the entrance to Hamath.”

¹ tn Heb “mouth.”

² tn lim is a shortened form of the name Iye-abarim mentioned in v. 44.

³ tn The word “River” is not in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity.

⁴ map For the location of Jericho see Map5-B2; Map6-E1; Map7-E1; Map8-E3; Map10-A2; Map11-A1.

⁵ tn The Hebrew text repeats the verb “you will destroy.”

The Eastern Border of the Land

34:10 “For your eastern border you will draw a line from Hazar Enan to Shepham. **34:11** The border will run down from Shepham to Riblah, on the east side of Ain, and the border will descend and reach the eastern side of the Sea of Kinnereth.¹ **34:12** Then the border will continue down the Jordan River² and its direction will be to the Salt Sea. This will be your land by its borders that surround it.”

34:13 Then Moses commanded the Israelites: “This is the land which you will inherit by lot, which the LORD has commanded to be given³ to the nine and a half tribes, **34:14** because the tribe of the Reubenites by their families,⁴ the tribe of the Gadites by their families, and half of the tribe of Manasseh have received their inheritance. **34:15** The two and a half tribes have received their inheritance on this side of the Jordan, east of Jericho,⁵ toward the sunrise.”

Appointed Officials

34:16 The LORD said to Moses: **34:17** “These are the names of the men who are to allocate the land to you as an inheritance.⁶ Eleazar the priest and Joshua son of Nun. **34:18** You must take one leader from every⁷ tribe to assist in allocating the land as an inheritance.⁸ **34:19** These are the names of the men: from the tribe of Judah, Caleb son of Jephunneh; **34:20** from the tribe of the Simeonites, Shemuel son of Ammihud; **34:21** from the tribe of Benjamin, Elidad son of Kislon; **34:22** and from the tribe of the Danites, a leader, Bukki son of Jogli. **34:23** From the Josephites, Hanniel son of Ephod, a leader from the tribe of Manasseh; **34:24** from the tribe of the Ephraimites, a leader, Kemuel son of Shiptan; **34:25** from the tribe of the Zebulunites, a leader, Elizaphan son of Parnach; **34:26** from the tribe of the Issacharites, a leader, Paltiel son of Azzan; **34:27** from the tribe of the Asherites, a leader, Ahihud son of Shelomi; **34:28** and from the tribe

of the Naphtalites, a leader, Pedahel son of Ammihud.” **34:29** These are the ones whom the LORD commanded to divide up the inheritance among the Israelites in the land of Canaan.

The Levitical Cities

35:19 Then the LORD spoke to Moses in the Moabite plains by the Jordan near Jericho.¹⁰ He said: **35:2** “Instruct the Israelites to give¹¹ the Levites towns to live in from the inheritance the Israelites¹² will possess. You must also give the Levites grazing land around the towns. **35:3** Thus they will have towns in which to live, and their grazing lands will be for their cattle, for their possessions, and for all their animals. **35:4** The grazing lands around the towns that you will give to the Levites must extend to a distance of 500 yards¹³ from the town wall.

35:5 “You must measure¹⁴ from outside the wall of the town on the east 1,000 yards,¹⁵ and on the south side 1,000 yards, and on the west side 1,000 yards, and on the north side 1,000 yards, with the town in the middle.¹⁶ This territory must belong to them as grazing land for the towns. **35:6** Now from these towns that you will give to the Levites you must select six towns of refuge to which a person who has killed someone may flee.¹⁷ And you must give them forty-two other towns.

⁹ **sn** This section has two main parts, the Levitical cities (vv. 1-8) and the Cities of Refuge (vv. 9-34).

¹⁰ **map** For location see Map5-B2; Map6-E1; Map7-E1; Map8-E3; Map10-A2; Map11-A1.

¹¹ **tn** The verb is the perfect tense with *vav* (ו) consecutive: “command...and they will give,” or “that they give.”

¹² **tn** *Heb* “they”; the referent (the Israelites) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹³ **tn** *Heb* “one thousand cubits.” The standard cubit in the OT is assumed by most authorities to be about eighteen inches (45 cm) in length, so this would be a distance of 1,500 feet or 500 yards (675 meters).

¹⁴ **tn** The verb is the Qal perfect of מָדַד (madad, “to measure”). With its *vav* (ו) consecutive it carries the same instructional force as the imperfect.

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “two thousand cubits” (also three more times in this verse). This would be a distance of 3,000 feet or 1,000 yards (1,350 meters).

¹⁶ **sn** The precise nature of the layout described here is not altogether clear. V. 4 speaks of the distance from the wall as being 500 yards; v. 5, however, describes measurements of 1,000 yards. Various proposals have been made in order to harmonize vv. 4 and 5. P. J. Budd, *Numbers* (WBC), 376, makes the following suggestion: “It may be best to assume that the cubits of the Levitical pasture lands are cubit frontages of land – in other words on each side of the city there was a block of land with a frontage of two thousand cubits (v 5), and a depth of 1000 cubits (v 4).”

¹⁷ **tn** The “manslayer” is the verb “to kill” in a participial form, providing the subject of the clause. The verb means “to kill”; it can mean accidental killing, premeditated killing, or capital punishment. The clause uses the infinitive to express purpose or result: “to flee there the manslayer,” means “so that the manslayer may flee there.”

¹ **tn** Or “the Sea of Galilee” (so NLT); NCV, TEV, CEV “Lake Galilee.”

sn The word means “harp.” The lake (or sea) of Galilee was so named because it is shaped somewhat like a harp.

² **tn** The word “River” is not in the Hebrew text, but has been supplied in the translation for clarity.

³ **tn** The infinitive forms the direct object of what the LORD commanded. It actually means “to give,” but without an expressed subject may be made passive.

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “the house of their fathers.” So also a little later in this verse.

⁵ **map** For the location of Jericho see Map5-B2; Map6-E1; Map7-E1; Map8-E3; Map10-A2; Map11-A1.

⁶ **tn** The verb can be translated simply as “divide,” but it has more the idea of allocate as an inheritance, the related noun being “inheritance.”

⁷ **tn** This sense is created by repetition: “one leader, one leader from the tribe.”

⁸ **tn** The sentence simply uses לָקַח (linkhol, “to divide, apportion”). It has been taken already to mean “allocate as an inheritance.” Here “assist” may be added since Joshua and Eleazar had the primary work.

35:7 “So the total of the towns you will give the Levites is forty-eight. You must give these together with their grazing lands. **35:8** The towns you will give must be from the possession of the Israelites. From the larger tribes you must give more; and from the smaller tribes fewer. Each must contribute some of its own towns to the Levites in proportion to the inheritance allocated to each.

The Cities of Refuge

35:9 Then the LORD spoke to Moses: **35:10** “Speak to the Israelites and tell them, ‘When you cross over the Jordan River¹ into the land of Canaan, **35:11** you must then designate some towns as towns of refuge for you, to which a person who has killed someone unintentionally may flee. **35:12** And they must stand as your towns of refuge from the avenger in order that the killer may not die until he has stood trial before the community. **35:13** These towns that you must give shall be your six towns for refuge.

35:14 “You must give three towns on this side of the Jordan, and you must give three towns in the land of Canaan; they must be towns of refuge. **35:15** These six towns will be places of refuge for the Israelites, and for the foreigner, and for the settler among them, so that anyone who kills any person accidentally may flee there.

35:16 “But if he hits someone with an iron tool so that he dies,² he is a murderer. The murderer must surely be put to death. **35:17** If he strikes him by throwing a stone large enough that he could die, and he dies, he is a murderer. The murderer must surely be put to death. **35:18** Or if he strikes him with a wooden hand weapon so that he could die, and he dies, he is a murderer. The murderer must surely be put to death. **35:19** The avenger³ of blood himself must kill the murderer; when he meets him, he must kill him.

35:20 “But if he strikes him out of hatred or throws something at him intentionally⁴ so that he dies, **35:21** or with enmity he strikes him with his hand and he dies, the one who struck him must surely be put to death, for he is a murderer. The avenger of blood must kill the murderer when he meets him.

35:22 “But if he strikes him suddenly, without enmity, or throws anything at him unintentionally, **35:23** or with any stone large enough that a man could die, without seeing him, and throws it at him, and he dies, even though he

was not his enemy nor sought his harm, **35:24** then the community must judge between the slayer and the avenger of blood according to these decisions. **35:25** The community must deliver the slayer out of the hand of the avenger of blood, and the community must restore him to the town of refuge to which he fled, and he must live there⁵ until the death of the high priest, who was anointed with the consecrated oil. **35:26** But if the slayer at any time goes outside the boundary of the town to which he had fled, **35:27** and the avenger of blood finds him outside the borders of the town of refuge, and the avenger of blood kills the slayer, he will not be guilty of blood, **35:28** because the slayer⁶ should have stayed in his town of refuge until the death of the high priest. But after the death of the high priest, the slayer may return to the land of his possessions. **35:29** So these things must be a statutory ordinance⁷ for you throughout your generations, in all the places where you live.

35:30 “Whoever kills any person, the murderer must be put to death by the testimony⁸ of witnesses, but one witness cannot⁹ testify against any person to cause him to be put to death. **35:31** Moreover, you must not accept a ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death; he must surely be put to death. **35:32** And you must not accept a ransom for anyone who has fled to a town of refuge, to allow him to return home and live on his own land before the death of the high priest.¹⁰

35:33 “You must not pollute the land where you live, for blood defiles the land, and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed there, except by the blood of the person who shed it. **35:34** Therefore do not defile the land that you will inhabit, in which I live, for I the LORD live among the Israelites.”

Women and Land Inheritance

36:1 Then the heads of the family groups¹¹ of the Gileadites, the descendant of Machir, the descendant of Manasseh, who were from the Josephite families, approached and spoke before Moses¹² and the leaders who were the heads of the

⁵ **tn** Heb “in it.”

⁶ **tn** Heb “he.”

⁷ **tn** Heb “a statute of judgment” (so KJV).

⁸ **tn** Heb “at the mouth of”; the metonymy stresses it is at their report.

⁹ **tn** The verb should be given the nuance of imperfect of potentiality.

¹⁰ **tn** Heb “the priest.” The Greek and the Syriac have “high priest.” The present translation, along with many English versions, uses “high priest” as a clarification.

¹¹ **tn** The expression is “the heads of the fathers by the family of the Gileadites.”

¹² **tn** The Greek and the Syriac add “and before Eleazar the priest.”

¹ **tn** The word “River” is not in the Hebrew text, but has been supplied in the translation for clarity.

² **tn** the verb is the preterite of “die.” The sentence has: “if... he strikes him and he dies.” The *vav* (ו) consecutive is showing the natural result of the blow.

³ **tn** The participle גֹּאֵל (*go’el*) is the one who protects the family by seeking vengeance for a crime. This is the same verb used for levirate marriages and other related customs.

⁴ **tn** The Hebrew text is more vivid: “by lying in wait.”

Israelite families.¹ **36:2** They said, “The LORD commanded my lord to give² the land as an 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. **36:3** Now if they should be married to one of the men³ from another Israelite tribe, their inheritance would be taken from the inheritance of our fathers and added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they marry.⁴ As a result, it will be taken from the lot of our inheritance. **36:4** And when the Jubilee of the Israelites is to take place,⁵ their inheritance will be added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they marry. So their inheritance will be taken away from the inheritance of our ancestral tribe.”⁶

Moses' Decision

36:5 Then Moses gave a ruling⁷ to the Israelites by the word⁸ of the LORD: “What the tribe of the Josephites is saying is right. **36:6** This is what⁹ the LORD has commanded for Zelophehad's daughters: ‘Let them marry¹⁰ whomever they think best,¹¹ only they must marry within the family of their father's tribe. **36:7** In this way the inheritance of the Israelites will not be transferred¹² from tribe to tribe. But every one of the Israelites must retain the ancestral heritage. **36:8** And every daughter who possesses an inheritance from any of the tribes of the Israelites must become the wife of a man from any family in her father's tribe, so that every Israelite¹³ may retain the inheritance of his fathers. **36:9** No inheritance may pass from tribe to tribe. But every one of the tribes of the Israelites must retain its inheritance.”

36:10 As the LORD had commanded Moses, so the daughters of Zelophehad did. **36:11** For the daughters of Zelophehad – Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Noah – were married to the sons of their uncles.¹⁴ **36:12** They were married into the families of the Manassehites, the descendants of Joseph, and their inheritance remained in the tribe of their father's family.

36:13 These are the commandments and the decisions that the LORD commanded the Israelites through the authority¹⁵ of Moses, on the plains of Moab by the Jordan River¹⁶ opposite Jericho.¹⁷

¹ **tn** *Heb* “heads of the fathers.”

² **tn** The infinitive construct “to give” serves here as the complement or object of the verb, answering what the LORD had commanded Moses.

³ **tn** “Men” is understood; it says “to one from the sons of the tribes of the Israelites for a wife,” or if he has her for a wife.

⁴ **tn** *Heb* “which they will be to them,” meaning, to those who have them, i.e., the marriages.

⁵ **tn** The verb *hayah* (הָיָה) is most often translated “to be,” but it can also mean “to happen, to take place, to come to pass,” etc.

⁶ **tn** *Heb* “the tribe of our fathers.”

⁷ **tn** *Heb* “commanded.”

⁸ **tn** *Heb* “mouth.”

⁹ **tn** *Heb* “the word that.”

¹⁰ **tn** The idiom again is “let them be for wives for....”

¹¹ **tn** *Heb* “to the one who is good in their eyes.”

¹² **tn** *Heb* “turned aside.”

¹³ **tn** The subject is “Israelites” and the verb is plural to agree with it, but the idea is collective as the word for “man” indicates: “so that the Israelites may possess – [each] man the inheritance of his fathers.”

¹⁴ **tn** They married in the family as they were instructed. But the meaning of *dod* (דוד) is not necessarily restricted to “uncle.”

¹⁵ **tn** *Heb* “by the hand.”

¹⁶ **tn** The word “River” is not in the Hebrew text, but has been supplied in the translation for clarity.

¹⁷ **map** For the location of Jericho see Map5-B2; Map6-E1; Map7-E1; Map8-E3; Map10-A2; Map11-A1.