

NUMBERS

NUMBERS 1-4 — NUMBER AND ORDER OF THE TRIBES

A secondary name for Numbers might be The Book of the Journeyings since it gives the story of Israel from Sinai to the arrival on the border of Canaan. Examine verse 1 and perceive that the time covered by Exodus and Leviticus was not more than fourteen months, while that of Numbers is over thirty-eight years. You will doubtless find a map in the back of your Bible which will aid in mastering this book. The journey will be seen to be first northwest as far as Kadesh, then south to the fork of the Red Sea, and finally northwest as before, around the land of Edom to Moab.

We will keep this geographical outline in mind, considering first the principal events at Sinai before they start, then what occurred between Sinai and Kadesh, and finally between Kadesh and Moab.

THE BOOK OF THE MURMURINGS

The book might be called the book of the murmurings as well as journeyings, for it is pervaded with a spirit of disobedience and rebellion against God, justifying the abstract given of the period in ~~19510~~ Psalm 95:10.

While annals of many powerful nations of this period are entirely forgotten, these of a comparative handful of people are preserved (despite their ungrateful spirit) because of the relation they bear to the redemption of the world through Jesus Christ. This accounts for the divine long-suffering towards them, and all the exhibits of divine love the book contains. We have rehearsed this before, but it is well to keep it in mind as we pursue our studies. Read 1 Corinthians 10 to discover how their history is a kind of object lesson illustrating God's dealings with us spiritually.

THE TRIBES NUMBERED (CHAP. 1)

What was Moses commanded to do, and when was he commanded to do it (vv. 1-2)? What people were thus to be numbered, and why (vv. 2-3)?

Comparing 4 and 16, what description is given of the heads of houses who were to be with Moses and Aaron in this matter?

Renowned means them that were called out of the different tribes for leadership; and princes stands for the same thing. These were usually the oldest son in each tribe after the manner of the nomads of the East today.

On what basis was the numbering conducted (v. 18)? This reference to pedigrees is important, as showing the care taken about genealogies. This was to keep the Aaronic order intact, but especially as a provision for tracing the descent of the Messiah through Judah.

Which tribe was the most numerous (v. 27)? Can you recall how this fulfills Jacob's prophecy (Genesis 49)? What prophecy of his is fulfilled in verses 32-35? What was the sum of the enrollment (v. 46)? What an increase from the seventy-five who went down into Egypt 215 years before! And yet this did not include the women and children, nor the old men, nor the tribe of Levi! It is estimated there were two and a half million in all.

About the Levites. What direction is given concerning them (vv. 47-49)? What were they to do, and where were they to camp, and why (vv. 50-53)?

THE TRIBES ARRANGED (CHAP. 2)

What was the rallying point for each family in the camp (v. 2)? We do not know the colors or forms of these ensigns, but possibly they were copied after Egypt minus their idolatrous symbols, and were of a fan-like form made of feathers, shawls, etc., and lifted on long poles. Some think they were symbols borrowed from Jacob's blessing on the tribes, and that Judah's ensign was a lion, Benjamin's a wolf, and so on. Perhaps the color was determined by the precious stone representing the tribe in the high priest's breastplate.

Were the tribes, other than the Levites, allowed to pitch their tents near the tabernacle (v. 2)? Which tribes took the lead on the march (vv. 3-9)? What seems to have formed the central company (v. 17)?

THE LEVITES' SERVICE (CHAPS. 3-4)

What genealogy is given at the opening of this chapter (vv. 1-4)? What shows the subordination of the rest of the Levites to the family of Aaron (vv. 6-7)? Give the history of the choice of this tribe in verses 12-13. Who

chose them? In substitution for whom? On what ground were the latter taken by the Lord?

On what different principle were the Levites numbered from the other tribes (v. 15)? Can you give a reason for this? Name the three sub-divisions of this tribe (v. 17). What was the particular place and charge of each (vv. 23, 25-26, 29, 31, 35-37)? Who was Eleazar and what official position had he (v. 32)? Compare ^{<104>}1 Kings 4:4 and ^{<125>}2 Kings 25:18. What location was assigned Moses and the family of Aaron (v. 38)?

Why was a new reckoning of all the males to be made (vv. 40-46)? How much was the ransom money (v. 47)? (A shekel was equal to about 60 cents.)

What was the age limit of Levitical service (4:3)? Compare 8:23-26. What precautions were necessary in the case of the Kohathites (v. 15)? Compare also verses 17-20. What carrying work was assigned the Gershonites (vv. 24-26)? Which of the sons of Aaron had the immediate charge of them (v. 28)? What was assigned the Merarites (vv. 31-32)? What word in verse 32 indicates that an inventory was kept of all the little things that nothing might be lost? What a lesson this teaches as to God's regard for the details of His service, and His interest in trivial things. What a strong light it flashes on the meaning of obedience.

QUESTIONS

1. What threefold geographical division of Numbers might be made?
2. What secondary name might be given to the book? Why?
3. Interpret "renowned" and "princes."
4. How many Israelites in the gross are supposed to have come out of Egypt?
5. Give an illustration of obedience in this lesson.

NUMBERS 5:1-9:14 — OTHER PRELIMINARIES

What command is given Moses in ^{<44>}Numbers 5:1-47.

What is the next command, and where has this previously been treated (5:5-10)? It must not be supposed that such repetitions are merely such.

There is always a reason for the repetition which the context will commonly disclose.

THE TRIAL OF JEALOUSY (5:11-31)

The trial of jealousy contains some new features to which attention should be called. As usual, get the facts in mind by a process of questioning, before attempting to generalize upon them.

The law provides for jealousy in a husband whether he has good ground for it or not (vv. 12-14). What is he to do under the circumstances (v. 15)? What preparations shall the priest make (vv. 16-18)? Then follows the adjuration of the woman and her assent to it (v. 22), and after this the actual test of her conduct (vv. 27-28).

The law was given as a discouragement to conjugal unfaithfulness on the part of a wife, and as a protection from the consequences of a wrong suspicion on the part of her husband. From the earliest times, the jealousy of Eastern people has established ordeals for the detection and punishment of suspected unchastity in wives. And it has been thought that the Israelites being biased in favor of such usages, this law was incorporated to free it from the idolatrous rites which the heathens had blended with it. Viewed in this light, its sanction by Divine authority in a corrected form exhibits a proof at once of the wisdom and condescension of God.

THE LAW OF THE NAZARITE (CHAP. 6)

This chapter is new in some respects. It concerns the vow of the Nazarite, from a Hebrew word which means to separate. This was a voluntary consecration of the person such as we studied about under "vows" in a former lesson. He has a strong impulse towards a holy life, and renounces certain worldly occupations and pleasures to that end, for a given period.

What is the first thing marking his separation (vv. 3-4)? The second (vv. 5)? Third (vv. 6-8)? Suppose the vow in this last respect were accidentally violated (vv. 9-12)? After the period of the vow is terminated, what is the procedure (vv. 13-20) ?

The reasons for these restrictions are obvious. Wine inflames the passions and creates a taste for undue indulgences. As a shaven head was a sign of uncleanness (⁽¹⁸⁴⁸⁾Leviticus 14:8-9), so the long hair symbolized the purity

he professed. It kept him in remembrance of his vow also, and acted as a stimulus for others to imitate his piety. Contact with a dead body, as we have seen, disqualified for God's service, hence his avoidance of it.

THE AARONIC BLESSING

Observe the doctrine of the Trinity foreshadowed in the three-fold repetition of the Name "*LORD*" or Jehovah — three Persons and yet but one God. Observe their respective offices. The Father will bless and keep us; the Son will be gracious unto us; the Spirit will give us peace. Observe the last verse. It is not the name of man that is put upon them, not even Moses' name nor Aaron's, but God's own Name, "I will bless them."

THE PRINCES' OFFERINGS (CHAP. 7)

Who were these princes (v. 2)? What was the first offering they brought (v. 3)? Why were none given the Kohathites (v. 9)? (Compare ~~1066~~ 2 Samuel 6:6-13 for a violation of this rule.) What other offerings did they present and for what purpose (vv. 84-88)? What shows the voluntary nature of these offerings (v. 5)?

There are two or three practical lessons here. In the first place, an example to wealthy Christians to generously support and further the work of the Lord. Secondly, an encouragement to believe that while in the great matters of worship and church government we should adhere faithfully to what God has revealed, yet in minor details liberty may be left to the means and convenience of the people. Moses would not have accepted and used these gifts, but God relieved his embarrassment, from which we infer that other things may be done without a special warrant if they are in the right direction, and in general harmony with God's will.

Where were the wagons obtained? Did they bring them from Egypt, or did Hebrew artisans construct them in the wilderness? The latter inquiry suggests that some of the offerings in this chapter may not have come entirely from the individual "prince," but have represented the general contributions of the tribe.

THE LAMPS AND THE LEVITES (CHAP. 8)

The last verse of the preceding chapter seems to belong to the present one. What great honor was accorded Moses? Though standing outside the veil

he could hear the voice of God within (^{<0252>}Exodus 25:22). Compare ^{<0342>}John 14:21.

What is now communicated to Moses (vv. 1-4)? It was Aaron's duty, as the servant of God, to light His house, which, being without windows, required lights. (^{<0001>}2 Peter 1-19.) And the course he was ordered to follow was first to light the middle lamp from the altar fire, and then the other lamps from each other — a course symbolical of all the light of heavenly truth derived from Christ, and diffused by his ministers throughout the world.

CONSECRATING THE LEVITES

What cleansing process was ordained (vv. 6-7)? What offerings required (v. 8)? Who were to lay their hands on the Levites (v. 10)? Perhaps some of the firstborn did this, thus indicating the substitution of the Levites in their place.

What was the next step in their consecration (v. 11)? The word for offer in this verse is "wave," and the probability is that some such motion was made by the Levites in token of their giving themselves to God and then being given back again to the nation for His service. (Compare verses 14-19.)

What seeming contradiction is there between verses 24 and 4:3? The probably explanation is that at the earlier age they entered on their work as probationers and at the later as fully equipped servitors. At the age of fifty were they to entirely cease labor, or is there an intimation in verse 26 that lighter tasks were assigned them?

A NEW PASSOVER LAW (9:1-14)

What is the command in verses 1-5? It may seem strange that any command should be given in this case, till we recall that Israel was still in the wilderness, and the institution of the Passover only implied its being observed in Canaan (^{<0225>}Exodus 12:25). To have it observed under present conditions required a special command.

But the circumstance is spoken of here to introduce the case next referred to (vv. 1-14). What is the case (vv. 6-8)? What special provision is made for it (vv. 9-11)?

QUESTIONS

1. What reasons can you give for the law of jealousy?
2. How are Divine wisdom and condescension shown in that law?
3. Give your conception of a Nazarite.
4. Explain the restraints he was to observe.
5. Learn by heart the Aaronic benediction.
6. What precious doctrine does it unfold?
7. What practical lessons are taught by chapter 7?
8. What is symbolized by the lighting of the lamps?

NUMBERS 9:15-10:36 — SINAI TO PARAN

The people had been at Sinai for about a year (compare ~~Exodus~~ Exodus 19:1). They were refreshed after their Egyptian servitude. The law had been given, the tabernacle erected, and the means and method of approach to God had been revealed. Thus had they entered on a course of moral and religious training which inspired them with a conviction of their high destiny, and prepared them to begin their journey to the promised land.

The events of this lesson revolve around the initial step of this journey, and include the following:

1. directions about the guiding cloud (9:15-23)
2. directions about the trumpets (10:1-10)
3. record of the first three days (vv. 11-28)
4. Moses' request to Hobab (vv. 29-32)
5. Moses' prayer (vv. 33-36).

THE CLOUD

We have sufficiently considered the subject of the cloud (~~Exodus~~ Exodus 13).

Of what was it the signal (v. 17)? To what was its action equivalent (v. 18)? What indicates their strict obedience to this signal (vv. 22-23)?

THE TRUMPETS

The Egyptian trumpets which called their votaries to the temples were short and curved like ram's horns, but these of Moses, to judge by those represented on the arch of Titus, were long and straight, much like our own. Of what, and how were they to be made (v. 2)? What was their purpose (vv. 2-3)? How many different calls were described (vv. 4-7)? Who could use the trumpets (v. 8)? Observe verse 9, and compare ^{<08106>}Numbers 31:6 and ^{<1432>}2 Chronicles 13:12. Sounding the trumpets on the eve of battle was a solemn and religious act, animating the hearts of those engaged in a righteous cause. It was a promise that God would be aroused to aid with his presence in the battle.

HOBAB, THE BROTHER-IN-LAW

Probably this relative of Moses remained during a part of their encampment at Sinai, but it was natural that as they started north, he should like to remain in his own neighborhood and with his own people.

But why Moses should have importuned him to remain with them as a guide when they had the "cloud" for that purpose is a question. The answer seems to be that the cloud showed the general route, but did not point out minutely where pasture, shade and water were to be obtained, and which were often hid in obscure spots by the shifting sand. Then too, detachments of the Israelites may have been sent off from the main body. Hobab meant more to them than a single individual, for he was doubtless, prince of a clan, and hence could render considerable service.

Notice the motive Moses places before him (v. 29), and the reward he promises him (v. 32), and yet, it does not influence him favorably, if we may so interpret ^{<0016>}Judges 1:16 and ^{<0936>}1 Samuel 15:6.

Preachers will find a text for a gospel sermon in these words of Moses. They are:

A confession: "We are journeying";

An invitation: "Come thou with us";

A promise: "We will do thee good";

A testimony: "The Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."

QUESTIONS

1. About how long had Israel remained at Sinai?
2. What five events are included in this lesson?
3. How would you interpret the trumpets on the eve of battle?
4. How explain Moses' request of Hobab?
5. Can you give a homiletic outline of ~~Numbers~~ Numbers 10:29?

NUMBERS 11-12 — MURMURING AND SEDITION

A COMPLAINING PEOPLE (11:1-3)

Fatigue of travel, desolate physical surroundings, disappointment at the length of the journey and other things brought about discontent. The Revised Version says the people began to speak "evil in the ears of the Lord."

What is represented as the effect on the Lord (v. 1)? How was it expressed by Him? What shows the locality in which this murmuring chiefly occurred? The nature of the fire is not stated, and there is some question whether it was an external burning, as in the case of Nadab and Abihu, or an internal one in the nature of a consuming fever, though the circumstances favor the first view. The allusion to the extremities of the camp, put with that to the "mixed multitude" of verse 4, indicates to some that the discontent originated among the Egyptian followers of Israel, however it may have been participated in by the latter ultimately (v. 4). In their distress to whom did the people resort, and with what result (v. 2)?

HEAVENLY PROVISION (11:4-9)

For what did the people long (v. 5), and what did they loathe (v. 6)? How is it described, and how prepared or used (vv. 7-9)? The resemblance of the manna to coriander seed was not in the color but in the size and figure; and from its comparison to bdellium, which is either a drop of white gum or a white pear, we are enabled to form a better idea of it. Moreover, it is evident, from the process of baking into cakes, that it could not have been the natural manna of the Arabian desert, for that is too gummy to admit of

being ground into meal. In taste it is said (~~4263~~Exodus 16:31) to have been like 'wafers made with honey, and here to have the taste of fresh oil. The discrepancy in these statements is only apparent; for in the former the manna is described in its raw state; in the latter after it was ground or baked. The minute description given here of its nature and use was designed to show the great sinfulness of the people in being dissatisfied with such excellent food, furnished so plentifully and gratuitously.

AID FOR MOSES (11:10-30)

Who now is complaining and why (vv. 11-15)? We can sympathize with Moses, but can we justify him? How does God answer him (vv. 16-17)? The Jews believe this to be the origin of the Sanhedrin, the highest court in Israel, so often named in the New Testament, and yet it may have been only a temporary expedient.

When God said, "I will come down," He doubtless meant not by a visible local descent, but by the tokens of His divine operations (v. 17). By "Spirit" is meant the Holy Spirit, only His person is not referred to but His gifts or influences (~~2972~~Joel 2:28, ~~4373~~John 7:39). Some of the heavenly bestowed qualities of leadership which had been given Moses would in like manner be distributed to them.

What relief is promised the people (v. 18)? How does the language show that the blessing would turn into a curse (vv. 19-20). How does even Moses show incredulity in this (vv. 21-22)? And how is he rebuked (v. 23)?

THE PLAGUE OF QUAILS (11:31-34)

These quails (v. 31) were on their migratory way from Egypt when the wind drove them into the camp. When the text says they fell over the camp "about a day's journey," it means that there was a countless number of them. When it says they fell about "two cubits high," the statement is that the level of their flight was two cubits above the earth. Being exhausted with their journey they could fly no higher, and so were easily caught.

How swiftly did the punishment fall on the people (v. 33)? The probability is that their stomachs, having been long inured to manna (a light food) were not prepared for so sudden a change of regimen of which they seem to have partaken to so intemperate a degree as to produce a general surfeit.

On a former occasion their murmurs for flesh were raised (^{<0260>}Exodus 16) because they were in want of food. Here they proceeded, not from necessity, but lustful desire; and their sin, in the righteous judgment of God, was made to carry its own punishment.

Kibroth-hattaavah means, "the grave of lust" (see margin), which indicates that the deaths were confined to those who indulged immoderately.

MIRIAM AND AARON'S SEDITION (CHAP. 12)

What was the occasion of this sedition (v. 1)? Judging by the order of the names, who may have been the leader in it? What testimony is borne to Moses (v. 3)? May this observation have been made because Moses took no notice of the reproaches of his relatives, leaving his vindication to God? Have we any other instance of an inspired penman eulogizing himself when circumstances seemed to demand it (^{<4715>}2 Corinthians 11:5; 12:11-12)?

What shows that the divine interposition on Moses' behalf was open as well as immediate (vv. 4-5)? How does God indicate a difference of degree in the gifts and authority of His servants (vv. 6-8). "Mouth to mouth" means without an interpreter or visionary symbols and "dark speeches," without parables or similitude. The "similitude" of the Lord cannot mean His face or essence (^{<0233>}Exodus 33:20; ^{<6018>}John 1:18; ^{<5015>}Colossians 1:15) but some evidence of His presence of another character (^{<0232>}Exodus 33:2; 34:5).

What punishment fell on Miriam (v. 10)? Why not on Aaron? Perhaps because his offense was not so great, or because leprosy would have interrupted or dishonored the holy service he performed.

How did Aaron express penitence (v. 11)? How did Moses show a conciliatory spirit (v. 13)? Nevertheless what continued humiliation must his sister endure (vv. 14-15)?

QUESTIONS

1. In what two ways may the fire of ^{<0410>}Numbers 11:1 be interpreted?
2. What shows the supernatural character of the manna of verse 8?
3. Why was it so minutely described?
4. What deep spiritual lesson is suggested in verse 25?
5. How would you interpret the phrase "two cubits high" in verse 31?

6. What is the physical explanation of the plague, verse 33?
7. How would you harmonize verse 8 with other Scriptures?
8. Why was not Aaron punished as well as Miriam?

NUMBERS 13-14 — CRISIS AT KADESH-BARNEA

The unbelief exhibited at Kadesh-barnea, and the divine comment on it invest the transaction with great significance. The people had faith to sprinkle the blood of atonement (^{<Q128>}Exodus 12:28), and to come out of Egypt (type of the world), but had not faith to enter their Canaan rest. Therefore, though redeemed, they "grieved" Jehovah for forty years. (Compare the chapters of this lesson with ^{<R119>}Deuteronomy 1:19-40; 1 Cor. 10:1-5; ^{<S182>}Hebrews 3:12-19; 4:3-11.)

OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS

In the lesson we have:

- God's command to Moses and his execution of it (13:1-20)
- the work of the spies (vv. 21-25)
- their report to Moses, Aaron and the congregation (vv. 26-33)
- the effect on the congregation (14:1-10)
- Jehovah's threat (vv. 11-12)
- Moses' intercession (vv. 13-19)
- Jehovah's answer and decree of chastisement (vv. 20-38)
- the presumption and punishment of the people (vv. 39-45).

Matters to be Noted

By comparing ^{<R123>}Deuteronomy 1:23, it will be seen that the proposition about the spies came from the people themselves, God granting their request both as a trial and punishment of their unbelief. Led by the pillar of fire and cloud they might have entered and conquered the land without any reconnaissance of it.

Kadesh (13:26) is usually identified with Kadesh-barnea mentioned in 32:8, and since the researches of Henry Clay Trumbull (1884) there has been little doubt about it.

According to ~~107~~ Nehemiah 9:17, the unbelief of the people actually went the length of nominating a "captain" to lead them back to Egypt, demonstrating the wisdom of the decree that debarred that generation from entering the promised land.

Remember the two witnesses for God (14:6), often referred to afterwards, and reflect on the arguments they present (vv. 7-9). If Jehovah's word be true as to the land, may we not believe it as to His ability to bring us in? By what divine interposition only were the lives of these witnesses preserved (v. 10)?

Moses' intercession is another of the great prayers of the Bible. See the boldness of his faith in the arguments he employs. For whose honor is he most concerned (vv. 13-16)? What promise does he quote (vv. 17-18)? Where in previous lessons was this commented on? What precedent does Moses rely upon (v. 19)?

Do not pass by the prophecy of verse 21. How much of human hopes are wrapped up in these words! Primarily they mean that the report of God's doings at that time would spread over all the land magnifying His name, but their ultimate application is to the millennium and beyond, as we shall see.

How perverse the conduct of the Israelites, who, shortly before, were afraid that, though God was with them, they could not get possession of the land; yet now they act still more foolishly in supposing that, though God were not with them, they could expel the inhabitants by their unaided efforts. The consequences were such as might have been anticipated.

QUESTIONS

1. Give the outline of this lesson by chapters.
2. With what other location is Kadesh identified, and on whose authority chiefly?
3. Have you read ~~107~~ Nehemiah 9:17?
4. Name the two faithful witnesses for God, chapter 14:6.

5. Name two great prayers of the Bible.
6. How would you interpret the prophecy of verse 21?
7. What illustrates the foolishness of Israel at this crisis?

NUMBERS 15-20 — THE WILDERNESS WANDERINGS

Quoting from the *Scofield Bible*:

The wilderness was part of the necessary discipline of the redeemed people, but this was not true of the years of wandering. The Red Sea, Marah, Elim, Sinai were God's ways in Israel's development and have their counterpart in Christian experiences; but from Kadesh-barnea to the Jordan all is for warning, and not imitation (~~600~~ 1 Corinthians 10:1-11; ~~807~~ Hebrews 3:17-19). There is a present rest of God, of which the Sabbath and Canaan were types into which believers may and therefore should immediately enter by faith, but alas, too many Christians never enter into it, and in a spiritual sense their carcasses fall in the wilderness. It is remarkable that just when the people are turning in unbelief from the land, God should be giving directions (as in chapter 15) for their conduct when they should enter it; but this is grace, and illustrates God's purpose in human redemption always.

It is not for anything in us that God has redeemed us in His Son, but for the magnifying of His own Name, and hence he has the same reason for keeping us saved to the end that He has for saving us at the beginning. (See ~~512~~ Romans 11:29 and ~~3006~~ Philippians 1:6.)

THE CHIEF EVENTS

The chief events of this section are the rebellion of Korah and his associates (chaps. 16-17), the death of Miriam and Aaron (chap. 20), and the miracle at Meribah (chap. 20), interspersed with particular laws and regulations of a Levitical chapter (chaps. 15; 18-19).

The Laws and Regulations (chap. 15)

Note that the sin of ignorance needs to be atoned for as well as other sins (15:22-29), and God in His grace has provided for it. Christians who talk

about possessing sinless perfection need forgiveness for such talk, for it is sin.

Note the difference between ignorant and presumptuous sins, and the illustration furnished of the latter (vv. 30-36), compare also ^{<1912>}Psalm 19:12-13.

The law of the Sabbath was plain, and this transgression of it aggravated. Remember in the punishing that Jehovah was acting not only as Israel's God, but King. Israel was a theocracy, whose Sovereign was Jehovah, which is not true of any other nation. This offense was not only a violation of a divine command in the ordinary sense, but a violation of the law of the realm. It was as Sovereign that God gave this order to execute the man.

The Great Rebellion (chaps. 16-17)

Who were its chief leaders (v. 1)? How many joined, and who were they (v. 2)? What was their grievance and their argument (v. 3)? What test is proposed by Moses (vv. 5-7)? How does he describe the ambition of Korah (vv. 8-11)? What indicates that the rebellion of the other leaders was instigated by jealousy of the supremacy of Moses (vv. 12-14)?

How is God's wrath expressed (v. 21)? And His punishment (vv. 32-35)? What exhibition of popular passion follows (v. 42)? Its punishment (v. 49)? How does Aaron's action (v. 48) typify Christ?

This controversy required a decisive settlement, which is why, as we see in the next chapter, a miracle was wrought. In a word, what was that miracle?

The Ordinance of the Red Heifer (chap. 19)

Among the regulations of this section that of the red heifer stands out with peculiar distinctness.

Was the heifer to be presented by an individual or the whole congregation (v. 2)? This indicates that it was to be used for the general good. What must be its color? Just why is not known, unless it be in opposition to the superstition of the Egyptians who sacrificed red bulls and oxen, but never red heifers or cows which were sacred to their goddess Isis.

What ritualistic action of the priest showed that he was presenting an expiatory sacrifice (vv. 3-4)? How does verse 6 suggest the ordinance for cleansing the lepers (^{<1840>}Leviticus 14:4-7)?

The subsequent verses of the chapter show the uses to which this "water of separation" was to be applied. For example, in case of a death. As in every family which sustained a bereavement, the members of the household became defiled, so an immense population, where instances of mortality and other cases of uncleanness would be daily occurring, the water of separation must have been in constant requisition.

We need to remember that the defilement here to be remedied as, in some other cases we have met with, implied no moral guilt but had only a ceremonial and typical significance. It was a part of that system which God would teach Israel, and through Israel the whole world, the essential nature of holiness.

The Miracle at Meribah (chap. 20)

If you compare verse 1 with verses 22-23 and then verse 33:38, you will see that between the last verse of the preceding and the first verse of this chapter there is a long and undescribed interval of thirty-seven years. In this book only the most important incidents are recorded, and these are confined chiefly to the first and second and the last years of the wanderings in the wilderness.

Where were the people now (v. 1)? This was their second arrival there after an interval of thirty-eight years (compare ^{<R216>}Deuteronomy 2:16). The old generation had nearly all died, and the new was now encamped here with the view of soon entering Canaan.

We need not suppose that during all this time the people moved about in a compact mass without any employment or object, but that their life was similar to nomads generally.

What event occurred at Kadesh at this time (v. 1)? What physical necessity arose (v. 2)? How did the people deport themselves (vv. 3-5)? Where as usual, did their leaders take refuge (v. 6)? What were they commanded to do (v. 8)? What "rod" is meant (compare 17:10)? How is the hasty and passionate conduct of Moses illustrated (v. 10)? Compare ^{<19463>}Psalm 106:33. He had been directed to speak to the rock, but what did he do? How were the leaders rebuked (v. 12)?

Contrast this miracle with the one in ^{<12175>}Exodus 17:5-7. The rock in both instances typified Christ (1 Con 10:4); but Christ once smitten, needs not to be smitten (crucified) again. Moses' act not only displayed impatience

and perhaps vain glory, but (in type) made of none effect one of the most vital doctrines of grace. The believer from whom the divine blessing has been withheld through sin needs not another sacrifice. It is for him to confess his sins according to ^{<100>}1 John 1:9, and receive cleansing and forgiveness. This is the symbolism of speaking to the rock instead of smiting it a second time.

QUESTIONS

1. How do the wanderings of Israel differ from their experience in the wilderness from a Scriptural point of view?
2. Give the chief events of this lesson?
3. Is ignorance counted a sin?
4. How did Israel in its government differ from every other nation?
5. State from memory what you know about the ordinance of the red heifer.
6. Do the same of the miracle at Meribah.

NUMBERS 20:14-21:35— THE JOURNEY RENEWED

PREPARATION FOR THE JOURNEY (20:14-29)

With Israel prepared to renew the journey, what now does Moses do (vv. 14-18)? In what spirit does Edom meet this request (18:20)? For the reason why Israel was not permitted to force a passage through Edom, refer to ^{<100>}Deuteronomy 2:1-8.

What event in Israel's history takes place at this juncture (vv. 23-28)? In what sense was this a chastisement on Aaron (v. 24)? Who succeeded him (26:28)? (Note the manner in which this incident is used in ^{<220>}Isaiah 22:20-25.) Compare ^{<302>}Hebrews 7:23-25. A tomb has been erected near the spot where Aaron was buried.

FIGHTINGS AND FEARS (CHAP. 21)

What event is narrated in the opening of chapter 21? We wonder why this discomfiture of Israel at the first was permitted, but perhaps to teach them

the lesson of their weakness and of dependence solely upon God (<BIB>Psalm 44:1-8). The phrase "utterly destroy" (v. 2) might be rendered by "devote." In what earlier lesson was this subject of devotement considered?

What prolongation of their journey was necessitated by Edom's refusal (v. 4)? What effect had this on the people? What previous cause of murmuring was renewed (v. 5)? What chastisement followed (v. 6)? What effect had it (v. 7)? How did God provide for their deliverance (8:9)? In what way did this show that the deliverance was not the effect of nature or art, but of God's power and grace? How is it used in the New Testament as a type of our salvation from sin through Christ? (See <BIB>John 3:14-15.) How did this "brazen serpent" subsequently become a snare to Israel? (See <BIB>2 Kings 18:1-4.)

That part of the desert where the Israelites now were — near the head of the gulf of Akaba — is infested with reptiles of various kinds, particularly lizards, which raise themselves in the air, and swing from branches; and scorpions which lying among long grass, are particularly dangerous to the bare-legged, sandaled people of the East. The species that caused so great mortality amongst the Israelites cannot be ascertained. They are described as fiery, either from their bright color, or the inflammation their bite caused. In studying the verses that follow it will be desirable to have a good map. Note what is said (v. 14) about the book of The Wars of the Lord as indicating a writing of some sort of which we have little record. The words following to the end of verse 16 are apparently a quotation from this book, and presumably inserted to decide the position of Arnon.

What discovery was made near this point, and how was it celebrated (vv. 17-18)? What country did the Israelites now obtain by right of conquest (vv. 21-32)?

QUESTIONS

1. How does this lesson teach that trials sometimes come for our good?
2. Quote <BIB>John 3:15-16.
3. Why is "fiery" used of the serpents?
4. What ancient historical writing is quoted in this lesson?

NUMBERS 22-24 — BALAAM AND HIS PROPHECIES

THE HISTORICAL SETTING (CHAP. 22)

In what neighborhood are the Israelites now camped (v. 1)? Where is this located? Who was the king of this people (v. 4)? What effect on him was wrought by Israel's victories over his neighbors (vv. 2-4)? What plan of defense other than war does he adopt (vv. 5-6)?

Balaam's History and Character

Balaam is a mystery. He comes from Mesopotamia where the knowledge of the true God lingered after it had been lost in the other parts of the known world. He is one of the group containing Melchisedec and Job, who testified that although Jehovah was now revealing Himself peculiarly to the Hebrews, yet He had not left Himself without witnesses in the other nations.

Not only Balaam's history but His character is a mystery, some thinking him a saint, and others a charlatan. Probably he was between the two, worshipping God ostensibly and yet serving himself where the temptation was strong, as it seems to have been in this case.

Examine verse 13 as an illustration where his answer conceals the reason for the divine prohibition while it shows a willingness to go if only he could get permission.

When that permission is obtained (v. 20), it is an instance where God gave up a man to his own lust without approving it (v. 22), while he proposed to overrule the wrong desire for the furtherance of His own will. It is one thing to serve God and another to willingly serve Him. For the ultimate fate of Balaam, compare chapter 31:8, and for inspired comments on his character, ~~60216~~ 2 Peter 2:16 and ~~60111~~ Jude 11.

The Dumb Donkey Speaks

Some say that verses 22-35 represent merely a version and not an actual occurrence, but this seems inadmissible in the middle of a plain history. That the ass may have been uttering sounds like a parrot, without

understanding them is probable, but the tenor of Peter's language strengthens the conviction that we are dealing with an external act.

But why does not the prophet show astonishment at the phenomenon? He may have done so, without record of it being made, or the lack of it may be explained by the engrossment of his mind with the prospect of gain, for Peter speaks of "the madness of the prophet."

THE DISAPPOINTED KING (CHAP. 23)

Balak prepared these altars and offered these sacrifices (23:1-3) in honor of Baal, the god of his country, but in whose honor did Balaam intend them (v. 4)? And yet how is his superstition mingled with the true worship? Compare ^{<1282>}2 Kings 18:22; ^{<2378>}Isaiah 17:8; ^{<24113>}Jeremiah 11:13; ^{<2881>}Hosea 8:11.

How does the prophet express the truth that no charms or demoniacal power can avail against God's purposes (v. 8)? How does verse 9, last part, harmonize with what we have learned about Israel previously? (Compare ^{<1295>}Exodus 19:5; ^{<1314>}Leviticus 20:24 and ^{<1638>}Deuteronomy 33:28.) How does the prophecy show not only Israel's separateness but greatness (v. 10)? Recall ^{<11316>}Genesis 13:16 and 38:14.

When Balaam says, "Let me die the death of the righteous," he is still referring to Israel. The Hebrew word for righteous is *jeshurun*, another name for the Israelites. And the prophet's meaning is that as they were blessed above others, not only in life but in death, because of their knowledge of the true God, he desired to have a part with them. But his desire was not very strong. He represents a large class in the world who wish for the salvation of Christ, and yet never accept it by receiving and confessing Him.

God's Unchangeable Grace

In the second prophecy (vv. 18-24), how is the unchangeable purpose of God's grace expressed (v. 19)? Compare how this principle in Israel's case still maintains, and applies to believers on Jesus Christ in this dispensation. The following will aid: ^{<1952>}1 Samuel 15:29; ^{<3186>}Malachi 3:6; ^{<6129>}Romans 11:29; ^{<6112>}Titus 1:2; ^{<8338>}Hebrews 13:8; ^{<3017>}James 1:17.

How does verse 21 show that this divine purpose toward Israel is one of grace? Does it say that there was no iniquity in Israel, or simply that God

took no cognizance of it? But does His non-cognizance of it mean that He never chastised Israel for it? On the contrary, we have seen Him chastising Israel continually as she has provoked it. What then do these words mean?

They mean that God neither has seen, nor shall see any iniquity in Israel that shall cause Him to change His original promise to Abraham and discard them as a nation from the place of privilege He has intended for them. This promise to Abraham is based on His original promise of the redemption of man in ~~<OCBIS>~~Genesis 3:15. This promise is unalterable, and depends not on man's goodness, but on God's truth and honor and grace. That is not to say that it has no effect on human character, and that mankind never will become good as the result of it, but only that its source is heavenly love and not earthly conduct (~~<R657>~~John 6:37-40; ~~<R041>~~Romans 4:4-8; 8:28-39; ~~<R001>~~Ephesians 2:1-10; ~~<OCB>~~1 Peter 1:3-9; ~~<R181>~~1 John 5:9-13).

THE GREAT PROPHECY (CHAP. 24)

At what conviction has the prophet now arrived, and with what effect on his conduct (24:1)? What was the feeling in his heart, do you suppose? Look at ~~<R235>~~Deuteronomy 23:5 for an answer. One wonders why God should use such a man as a prophet of good for His people, but before He ordained a regular line of prophets, He was pleased to reveal His will instrumentally through various persons.

Christians are sometimes solicitous to be anointed for service, as though that were the highest or only fruit of the new life. But while not disparaging the aim but encouraging it in its proper place, let us be humbled by the thought that God can get service out of bad as well as good men when He pleases. There is a higher aim for the Christian, and that is to "walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing" (~~<S010>~~Colossians 1:10). When one is doing that he is not likely to come short in service.

The prophecy of Balaam is arranged as poetry in the Revised Version. The redundant imagery of verses 5-7 depicts the humble origin, rapid progress and great prosperity of Israel.

With what king and kingdom is Israel compared (v. 7)? The Amalekites are meant, the most powerful of the desert tribes, a common title for whose kings was "Agag," like "Pharaoh" or "Caesar."

What does Balaam say of the future of Israel (v. 8)? With what effect on Balak (vv. 10-11)? How does the next prophecy particularize (v. 14)? Who do you suppose is the ultimate fulfillment of the word "him" in verse 17? It may mean the nation of Israel, but doubtless it is identical with the star and the sceptre of the same verse, whose application is Christ. That is not to say that the prophet knew this, but only that the event proves it. He only saw some great one coming out of Israel, not knowing whom, but we know whom in the light of the New Testament. (Compare to ^{<0490>}Genesis 49:10; ^{<3301>}Psalms 110; ^{<4112>}Matthew 2:2.) Of course, David was an approximate fulfillment of the words, and did the things referred to in verses 17 and 18, but in the complete sense the reference is to Christ, and especially at His second coming (^{<2320>}Isaiah 59:20; ^{<6125>}Romans 11:25-29).

What other national fate is predicted as well as Amalek (v. 21)? What great nation would ultimately deport the Kenites (v. 22)? What ultimately would be its history (v. 24)? "Chittim" or "Kittim" is an earlier name for Greece and some of the other western lands bordering on the Mediterranean, particularly Italy. What finally would become of the conqueror of Assyria (v. 24)? For some of the fulfillments of these prophecies, compare ^{<0274>}Exodus 17:14; ^{<0951>}1 Samuel 15:1; ^{<0016>}Judges 1:16; 4:11, 16-17; ^{<1253>}2 Kings 15:29; and ^{<2126>}Daniel 2:36-45; 5:7-8. The Assyrians were overthrown by the Greeks under Alexander and his successors, and afterwards by the Romans who conquered the Greeks. The Romans, however, are yet to be overthrown with the son of perdition at their head, by the second coming of Christ to set up His kingdom on the earth through restored Israel. Some of these things we shall learn more about later on, but in the meantime what a sweep there is in this vision of Balaam! Little did he know the meaning of it all!

QUESTIONS

1. With what group of men may Balaam be classed and why?
2. What is your impression of his character?
3. What two ways are there of serving God?
4. What shows the unusual incident of the ass historical?
5. What is the explanation of 23:21?
6. What is a higher aim for a saint than merely service?

7. Give the common title of the kings of Amalek.
8. Apply the words of 24:17 and tell why.
9. What territory is defined by Chittim?
10. What is the sweep of Balaam's prophecy?

NUMBERS 25-31 — BALAAM'S SCHEME

We are not through with the "hireling" prophet. We find him referred to in three places in the New Testament. Second Peter 2:15 speaks of his "way," Jude 11 of his "error" and ~~(114)~~ Revelation 2:14 of his "doctrine."

His way is that which characterizes all false teachers, viz: making a market of their gifts. His error lay in failing to see the principle of the vicarious atonement by which God can be just and yet the justifier of believing sinners (~~(115)~~ Romans 3:26). In other words, he felt that a holy God must curse such a people as Israel, knowing only a natural morality. His doctrine, which concerns us more particularly just now, refers to his teaching Balak to corrupt the people whom he could not curse (compare 25:1-3 with 31:16).

HARLOTRY AND IDOLATRY (CHAP. 25)

Into what sin did the people fall (v. 1)? This fall in morality was soon followed by what fall in religion (vv. 2-3)? Baal was a general name for "lord" and "peor" for a mount in Moab. The real name of this lord of the mount was Chemosh, whose worship was celebrated by the grossest obscenity.

What punishment fell on them (vv. 4-5)? Capital punishment in Israel meant that the victim was first stoned to death or otherwise slain, and then gibbeted. "The heads of the people" means the chief leaders in the outrage.

Verse 6 speaks of a flagitious act in connection with this disgraceful conduct, promptly revenged by whom (v. 7)? What reward to him follows (vv. 12-13)? What judgment had come to Israel (v. 8)? What judgment does God order upon the Midianites (vv. 17-18)?

SECOND NUMBERING (CHAP. 26)

What new command is now given Moses (vv. 1-2)? The probability is that the plague just mentioned had swept away the last of the older generation and hence the census.

This census was necessary to preserve the distinction of families in connection with the distribution of Canaan soon to take place.

By comparing the numbers with those of chapter 1, it will be seen that divine judgments had reduced the ranks of some of the tribes which had been particularly disobedient, while others had been increased so that Israel still continued about the same in numbers at the close of this period of thirty-eight years as at the beginning. What was the total diminution?

Before passing to the next chapter observe verse 64 and note that its statement must not be considered absolute. For, besides Caleb and Joshua, there were alive at this time Eleazar and Ithamar, and in all probability a number of Levites, who had no participation in the defections in the wilderness. The tribe of Levi, having neither sent a spy into Canaan, nor being included in the enumeration at Sinai, must be regarded as falling outside the range of the sentence; and therefore would exhibit a spectacle not witnessed in the other tribes of many in their ranks above sixty years of age.

A BRIEF GLANCE AT CHAPTERS 27-30

We pass over the request of the daughters of Zelophehad (27:1-11), the injunction to Moses (vv. 12-14), and the ordination of Joshua (vv. 15-23), as requiring no explanation under the circumstances. The same may be said about the offerings (chap. 28) whose repetition was probably necessary because a new generation had sprung up since their enactment, and because the people would soon be settled in the land where they could be observed.

THE MIDIANITES JUDGED, AND BALAAM SLAIN (CHAP. 31)

What is practically the last command of Moses received from God (vv. 1-2)? The Midianites, as may be recalled, were descendants of the marriage of Abraham with Keturah, and occupied the east and the southeast of Moab. They were the chief actors in the plot to seduce Israel into idolatry,

by which it was hoped Jehovah would withdraw His blessing from them and permit their enemies to triumph. Were the plan successful it would mean in so far the defeat of God's purpose for the redemption of the nations through the instrumentality of Israel as we have already learned. An understanding of this fact is necessary to preserve this chapter from misinterpretation.

A RELIGIOUS WAR

Who were to be avenged according to Jehovah (v. 2)? And who according to Moses (v. 3)? How interesting to perceive here another illustration of the identification of God with His people! They have the same cause, the same friends, and the same enemies. Compare ~~<400>~~ Acts 9:4-5.

And note another circumstance equally strange as the world considers things; viz: the preparation for death enjoined upon Moses! Were these Midianites his own enemies merely, one would expect him to be exhorted to forgive them and thus "die in peace with all the world." But being God's enemies, the most appropriate close of his earthly career would be to execute God's judgment upon them.

Are there not lessons here for the peace advocates of this century? While sympathizing with them in many things, yet if they expect wars to cease until God has had a final settlement with the wicked nations of the earth, they are yet in the primary class of Bible instruction.

"SOME THINGS ARE HARD TO UNDERSTAND"

The faith of some will stumble at things in this record, but a deeper knowledge of God makes all plain, and our duty is to trust Him until that knowledge comes.

The slaying of the males (v. 7) was in accord with the divine principle in all such cases (~~<6013>~~ Deuteronomy 20:13). In this instance, however, the destruction seems to have been only partial, if we may judge by ~~<6061>~~ Judges 6:1 and the following verses. Perhaps this is explained by the circumstance that only those families were slain who were near the Hebrew camp or had been accomplices in the plot. Many may have saved themselves by flight.

The slaying of Balaam (v. 8) raises a question when we compare the statement with ~~<6025>~~ Numbers 24:25. Perhaps he changed his plan about

returning home after starting, and remained among the Midianites for the evil purpose already spoken of; or, learning that Israel had fallen into the snare laid, he may have returned to demand his reward from Midian. His judgment was just in consideration of his sin in the light of special revelations received from God.

The killing of the women and children (vv. 14-18) will stagger us till we remember that Moses' wrath was not an ebullition of temper, but an expression of enlightened regard for the will of God, and the highest interests of Israel. By their conduct the women had forfeited all claims to other treatment, especially in view of the sacred character of this war. As to the male children, it is to be remembered that a war of extermination required their destruction. We will deal with this subject more fully when we come to the broader illustration in the destruction of the Canaanites in Joshua.

Observe the declaration in verses 48-50, especially the last clause of verse 49. Here we have an astonishing miracle witnessing to the interposition of God in this whole matter, and in so far silencing every objection raised on the ground of cruelty and injustice. Compare here the opening verses of ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 44, and other similar places. These judgments of God on sin and disobedience should open our eyes to its nature, should cause us to tremble at the fear of it, and adore the grace which has given such guilty souls as we a sin bearer in Jesus Christ.

QUESTIONS

1. How is Balaam spoken of in the New Testament, and by whom?
2. Define the meaning of Baalpeor.
3. Define capital punishment in Israel.
4. What was the need for this census?
5. Which tribe had the most of the older men at this time, and why?
6. Who were the Midianites, and where were they located?
7. What justifies their punishment?
8. What comment on the universal peace theory does this lesson contain?
9. What particular circumstance shows God's approval on the extermination of these enemies?

NUMBERS 32-34 — GETTING READY FOR CANAAN

REUBEN AND GAD'S CHOICE (CHAP. 32)

What was their choice of possessions, and on what ground was it made (vv. 1-5)? What suspicion of their motive possessed Moses (vv. 6-15)? What assurance is given him (vv. 16-19)? How is the matter closed (vv. 20-27)? What charge does Moses transmit to his successors (vv. 28-32)?

REVIEW OF THE JOURNEY (CHAP. 33)

This chapter may be said to form the winding-up of the history of the travels of the Israelites, for the following chapters relate to matters connected with the occupation and division of the land.

As several apparent discrepancies will be discovered on comparing the records here with Exodus, and the occasional notices of places in Deuteronomy, it is probably that his itinerary comprises a list of only the most important stations in their journeys; those where they formed prolonged encampments, and whence they dispersed their flocks and herds to pasture on the plains till the surrounding herbage was exhausted. The catalogue extends from their departure out of Egypt to their arrival on the plains of Moab.

At whose authorization was this record made (v. 2)? Thus was established the truth of history, thus a memorial of God's marvelous work on Israel's behalf preserved for all generations.

For additional light on verses 3-4 consult the Revised Version.

As there are no less than eighteen stations inserted between Hazeroth and Kadesh, and only eleven days were spent in performing that journey (~~FROM~~ Deuteronomy 1:2) the record here must refer to a different visit to Kadesh. The first was when they left Sinai in the second month (1:2; 13:20), and were in Kadesh in August (~~FROM~~ Deuteronomy 1:45), and "abode many days" in it, and murmuring at the report of the spies, were commanded to return into the desert "by the way of the Red Sea." The arrival at Kadesh, mentioned in this catalogue, corresponds to the second sojourn at that place, being the first month, or April (20:1).

Between the two visits there intervened a period of thirty-eight years, during which they wandered hither and thither, often returning to the same spots, as the pastoral necessities of their flocks required.

When did Aaron die, and at what age (vv. 38-39)? What command is renewed to Moses (vv. 50-53)? What warning accompanies it (vv. 55-56)?

THE BOUNDARIES (CHAP. 34)

It is difficult to trace these boundary lines on the map, especially those on the south, and students must be referred to Bible dictionaries on the subject.

In the meantime, it is clear that Israel never entered on the possession of all this territory, even in the golden era of David and Solomon. That they will do so in the millennial age there can be no doubt.

QUESTIONS

1. How would you explain certain discrepancies between these chapters and other parts of the Pentateuch?
2. How is the truth of this history established?
3. What explanation might be given of the eighteen stations and only eleven journeys?
4. Has Israel ever entered on possession of all her territory?
5. Is she likely to do so?

NUMBERS 35 — CITIES OF THE LEVITES, CITIES OF REFUGE

We may conclude our exposition of Numbers with this chapter, as the final one contains no difficulties not dealt with in previous lessons, or that are not explained in the text itself.

THE CITIES OF THE LEVITES (VV. 1-5)

As the Levites were to have no domain like the other tribes, they were to be distributed throughout the land in certain cities appropriated to their use; and these cities were to be surrounded by extensive suburbs.

There is an apparent discrepancy between verses 4 and 5 with regard to the extent of these suburbs; but the statements refer to different things — the one to the extent of the suburbs from the walls of the city, the other to the space of 2,000 cubits from their extremity.

In point of fact, there was an extent of ground, amounting to 3,000 cubits, measured from the wall of the city. One thousand were probably occupied with out-houses for the accommodation of shepherds and other servants, with gardens, or olive yards. And these, which were portioned out to different families (^{<3360>}1 Chronicles 6:60), might be sold by one Levite to another, but not to any individual of another tribe (Jet. 32:7). The other two thousand cubits remained a common for the pasturing of cattle (^{<0254>}Leviticus 25:34).

THE CITIES OF REFUGE (VV. 6-29)

The practice of Goelism — i.e., of the nearest relation of an individual who was killed being bound to demand satisfaction from the author of his death — existed from a remote antiquity (^{<0044>}Genesis 4:14; 27:45).

It seems to have been an established usage in the age of Moses; and, although in a rude state of society it is a natural principle of criminal jurisprudence, it is liable to great abuses. The chief of the evils inseparable from it are that the kinsman, who is bound to execute justice, will often be precipitate, little disposed in the heat of passion to discriminate between the premeditated purpose of the assassin and the misfortune of the unintentional homicide.

Moreover, it had a tendency not only to foster a vindictive spirit, but, in case of the Goel being unsuccessful in finding his victim, to transmit animosities and feuds against his descendants from one generation to another. This is exemplified among the Arabs in the present day.

This practice of Goelism obtained among the Hebrews to such an extent that it was not expedient to abolish it; and Moses, while sanctioning its continuance, was directed to make special regulations, which tended to prevent the consequences of personal vengeance, and, at the same time, to afford an accused person time and means of proving his innocence.

This was the humane end contemplated in the institution of cities of refuge. There were to be six, three on the east of Jordan, both because the territory

there was equal in length, though not in breadth, to Canaan, and because it might be more convenient for some to take refuge across the border. They were appointed for the benefit, not of the Israelites only, but of all resident strangers.

ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT

How many of these cities were there (v. 6)? For whom appointed? From among what other cities? What important qualification is made in verse 11? And what further one in verse 12? How were these cities arranged with reference to the Jordan (v. 14)? "On this side Jordan" should be rendered beyond Jordan, and the idea is that three were especially for those tribes which so recently had elected to stay on the east side of the river. Was this refuge limited to the Israelites (v. 15)?

THE AVENGER OF BLOOD

What three cases of premeditated murder are mentioned (vv. 16-18)? What three in verses 20-21? What name is given him whose duty it was to slay the murderer (v. 19)? The word "revenger" or avenger (see v. 12), is the translation of the Hebrew word Gaal from which comes Goelism. It means a kinsman, the nearest of kin. It was he, only, who could perform this office.

In the case of premeditated murder was there any escape for the guilty? But in the case of unpremeditated murder what protection did these cities provide (vv. 22-24)? What was the method of operation (vv. 24-25)? What condition was necessary for the man-slayer to observe (vv. 26-28)? Once having reached the nearest city, for one or other of them was within a day's journey of all parts of the land, he was secure. But he had to "abide in it." His confinement was a wise rule, designed to show the sanctity of human blood in God's sight, as well as to protect the man-slayer himself, whose presence in society might have provoked the passions of the deceased's relatives. But the period of his release from confinement was not until the death of the high priest. That was a season of public affliction, when private sorrows were overlooked under a sense of the national calamity, and when the death of so eminent a servant of God naturally led all to serious consideration about their own mortality.

We meet this subject again in ^{<690>}Deuteronomy 19 and ^{<600>}Joshua 20, all of the passages put together furnishing rich material for a Bible reading or a

sermon on the cities of refuge as a type of Christ. They are a type in the following ways; that is, in their:

1. origin, since they were divinely ordained
2. necessity, for without them there was no hope for the pursued
3. accessibility, for being on both sides of the Jordan, and within a day's journey of all parts of the land, they might be easily reached
4. security, for the manslayer once received within their walls could not be assailed
5. applicability, for they were designed for all, Jew and Gentile, friend and alien, without distinction

Any able to use such an outline will not need to be reminded of the New Testament Scriptures which parallel the different divisions. In working out the details it might be well to show that like our salvation in Christ, the value of these cities of refuge was limited to those that remained in them. Also, point the contrast, that whereas they were restricted to the innocent man-slayer, Christ receives the guilty. The man-slayer had to be judged first, we believers are already judged, condemned, and yet free in Christ.

It is proper to say also that the "avenger of blood" or the kinsman redeemer is a beautiful type of Christ, some think more fitting than the cities of refuge themselves, but of this we shall speak in the next lesson.

QUESTIONS

1. How is the supposed discrepancy between verses 4 and 5 explained?
2. What is meant by the word "Goelism?"
3. Of what is Gaal or Goel the translation?
4. What is the meaning of the word?
5. To what abuses was Goelism liable?
6. In what ways was the Mosaic legislation intended to restrain them?
7. Where were the cities of refuge located with reference to the Jordan, and why?
8. How comprehensive were their benefits?
9. Why should the manslayer be confined in them?

10. In how many ways may they be considered typical of Christ?

THE KINSMAN REDEEMER

In fulfillment of the promise in the last lesson there is here a consideration of the kinsman redeemer as a type of Christ, being an abridgment from the Rev. Henry Melvill, D.D., an eloquent English University preacher of an earlier generation. Our object is not only to open up the subject to those who have never considered it, but also to furnish material for a Gospel sermon to those who have opportunities in that direction.

Great Truths Taught by Common Things

Melvill begins by speaking of the close connection between the Jewish and Christian dispensations as we have discovered in our study of the Pentateuch. We have seen this especially in regard to redemption, the redeemer under the law being the type of the Redeemer under the Gospel. There may be no distinct allusions to Christ, but whenever you meet with a transaction of redemption, either of land or of a person, the matter is so ordered as to be typical of the person and work of Christ. Thus the Jews were taught even through the common dealings of life the great spiritual deliverance that was wrought out in the fullness of time.

There are three conditions marked in the Old Testament as requiring the interposition of a redeemer:

- (1) if there had been a forfeiture of an inheritance,
- (2) if there had been a loss of personal liberty, or
- (3) if there had been the shedding of blood.

In each it was enjoined that the Goel or redeemer should interfere on behalf of the distressed individual. Moreover, the occasions which necessitated the interference of the Goel, and the manner in which it was conducted, bear so close a likeness to the Gospel redeemer that we can scarcely doubt it to have been the purpose of the Holy Spirit to keep the scheme of human redemption always before Israel.

The Forfeiture of an Inheritance

To begin with the forfeiture of an inheritance alluded to in the twenty-fifth chapter of Leviticus. If an Israelite had become poor, and sold some of his possessions, the Goel was directed, if possible, to redeem the land. In that

case it became the property of the Goel until the year of Jubilee, when it returned to the original proprietor. The forfeited possession might be redeemed by the latter at any time were he able to pay the price of it; but were he not, then only the Goel could redeem it for him, and if he did or could not do so, no stranger might interfere, the possession must remain unredeemed.

We see the typical character of this transaction indicated first in the fact that only a kinsman could fill the office of Goel. Some other individual might be ready to render aid, but had he the rights of the closest kinship? If not, the law refused to allow his interposition. In laying down this principle, God taught that He who should arise as the Goel or Redeemer of a lost world, must be bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. No angel could redeem us (~~scrie~~ Hebrews 10-18).

In the next place, if you wish to describe man's natural condition and the change effected in it by the work of Christ, where can you obtain a better illustration than from the directions of this law in regard to a forfeited inheritance? Who is the Israelite that has grown poor and alienated himself from the possession of his fathers if it be not the sinner originally made in the image of God, and who has destroyed that image by an act of rebellion? An eternity of happiness was our possession, but we threw it away, bringing upon ourselves the curse of death of body and soul. We became poor, and who shall measure our spiritual poverty? Have we a solitary fraction of our own to pay for our redemption? Therefore, the inheritance must be forfeited forever, unless a kinsman redeemer shall arise. God has provided this redeemer in a man, and yet infinitely more than a man, the God-man Christ Jesus.

But furthermore, as in the case of the impoverished Israelite, what Christ had redeemed He has not instantly restored. The year of jubilee has not yet come for us, but with a mightier trumpet peal than could be heard upon the mountains of Israel shall that jubilee year be introduced. The resurrection and glorifying of our bodies will be their completion for entrance on the fullness of the purchased possession.

The Loss of Personal Liberty

To pass now to the second instance of redemption where there has been a loss of personal liberty, and where all that has been spoken of in regard to the forfeiture of an inheritance applies with only a light change. The same

chapter shows that for the discharge of a debt or the procurement of subsistence an Israelite might sell himself either to another Israelite or a stranger. Should he become the servant of an Israelite, there was no right of redemption, but he must remain in the house of his master till the jubilee. But should he become the servant of a stranger and cause arise for the interposition of the Goel the law ran: "After that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him.' If he were able to redeem himself he might do so but were the ability lacking then his kinsman must interpose, no stranger could discharge the office.

Observe that the Goel had no right to interfere unless the Israelite had sold himself to a stranger. The reason is that if his master was an Israelite like himself, then he had not become separated from God's people and the exigency had not arisen for his redemption in the same sense. It were only when the master were a stranger that the servicing became typical of man's bondage to Satan. It was in such a case only that we find the illustration of the New Testament, saying that the servant of sin has been "made captive by Satan at his will.'

Thank God in such a case the sinner need not languish forever in bondage. The chain need not be eternal, for there advances his kinsman, made of a woman, made under the law, and in the likeness of sinful flesh, to pay down the price of redemption and to bid the prisoner come forth into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

The Shedding of Blood

The third case of redemption, where there had been the shedding of blood, differs from the two already examined.

This is referred to in ~~Gen~~ Numbers 35, and in connection with the appointment of the cities of refuge.

The King James translation speaks only of the "avenger of blood," but the original is Goel or the kinsman redeemer. You will recall that the latter must pursue the murderer and take vengeance if he overtake him before reaching the city of refuge. But if the Goel were not at hand to follow him no stranger had the right to do so. This feature of the Goel therefore stands out as prominently here as in the other instances.

It is the common idea that the cities of refuge were typical of Christ and the murderer was the human race pursued by the justice of God. There is some

fidelity in this figure, and under certain limitations it may be considered as a type, but the standing type of Christ under the Mosaic law was the Goel, or kinsman redeemer. It is for this reason we seek the figure of Christ, not in the cities of refuge, but in the avenger of blood.

For example, those who were really guilty fled in vain to the city and must be delivered up to the punishment due their crime. Who can find in this any emblem of the flying of sinners for refuge to Christ?

On the other hand, observe that the human race, created deathless, was slain by Satan when he moved our first parents to the act prohibited in the words "in the day that thou doest it, thou shalt surely die." It was with reference to this slaughter of mankind that Christ said of him: "He was a murderer from the beginning." It was through Satan that death, whether of body or soul, gained footing in this creation, and we count it therefore proper to describe him as the great manslayer.

Our Nearest of Kin

But who pursued the murderer? Who took on him the vengeance which drew the wonder of the universe and "through death destroyed him that had the power of death?" Who but the kinsman redeemer? Who but that "seed of the woman" predicted to bruise the serpent's head? Though Satan for a while may be permitted to roam over this creation, there has been gained a mastery over him which has reduced him to the bond-slave of our kinsman. And He is only reserving the full taking of vengeance until the year of jubilee arrives, when the enemy will be hurled into the lake of fire forever and ever.

Finally, we should not suppose that in pleading for the typical character of the Goel we plead for the existence of a figure hidden from the men of the old dispensation. When Job exclaims, "I know that my redeemer liveth," what he really says is, "I know that my Goel, my kinsman, liveth." And if the saints among the Jews could describe Christ as the Goel, would they not naturally turn to the offices of the Goel that they might ascertain the offices of Christ?

Who is there that is not the kinsman of Christ, since that kinsmanship resulted in His taking human nature upon Him? It is enough to be a man to know oneself Christ's kinsman. He tasted death for every man. He redeemed every man's inheritance. He regained every man's liberty. He avenged every man's blood. Will anyone put from him through unbelief the

benefits of His interposition? "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established."

This is the glorious Gospel of the Son of God, and nothing but belief can exclude the poorest, the meanest, the wickedest among men from a full and free share in the perfect redemption.

QUESTIONS

1. What great truth were the Jews taught even in the common duties of life?
2. What three conditions in the Old Testament required the interposition of a redeemer?
3. What relation must this redeemer bear to the distressed person?
4. Could any other person act in this capacity?
5. What great principle of our redemption is illustrated in this case?
6. How long might the Goel retain a redeemed possession, and what does this illustrate?
7. Why, in the second case, might not the Goel interpose unless an Israelite had sold himself to a stranger?
8. Can you quote ~~
~~Job 19:25-27?