

THE FOURTH BOOK OF MOSES CALLED

NUMBERS

Commentary by **ROBERT JAMIESON**

CHAPTER 1

NUMBERS 1:1-54.

MOSES NUMBERING THE MEN OF WAR.

1, 2. *on the first day of the second month*, etc. — Thirteen months had elapsed since the exodus. About one month had been occupied in the journey; and the rest of the period had been passed in encampment among the recesses of Sinai, where the transactions took place, and the laws, religious and civil, were promulgated, which are contained in the two preceding books. As the tabernacle was erected on the first day of the first month, and the order here mentioned was given on the first day of the second, some think the laws in Leviticus were all given in one month. The Israelites having been formed into a separate nation, under the special government of God as their King, it was necessary, before resuming their march towards the promised land, to put them into good order. And accordingly Moses was commissioned, along with Aaron, to take a census of the people. This census was incidentally noticed (^{Exodus 38:26}), in reference to the poll tax for the works of the tabernacle; but it is here described in detail, in order to show the relative increase and military strength of the different tribes. The enumeration was confined to those capable of bearing arms [^{Numbers 1:3}], and it was to be made with a careful distinction of the tribe, family, and household to which every individual belonged. By this rule of summation many important advantages were secured: an exact genealogical register was formed, the

relative strength of each tribe was ascertained, and the reason found for arranging the order of precedence in march as well as disposing the different tribes in camp around the tabernacle. The promise of God to Abraham [^{<027>}Genesis 22:17] was seen to be fulfilled in the extraordinary increase of his posterity, and provision made for tracing the regular descent of the Messiah.

3. *Aaron shall number them by their armies* — or companies. In their departure from Egypt they were divided into five grand companies (^{<038>}Exodus 13:18), but from the sojourn in the wilderness to the passage of the Jordan, they were formed into four great divisions. The latter is here referred to.

4-16. *with you there shall be a man of every tribe*, etc. — The social condition of the Israelites in the wilderness bore a close resemblance to that of the nomad tribes of the East in the present day. The head of the tribe was a hereditary dignity, vested in the oldest son or some other to whom the right of primogeniture was transferred, and under whom were other inferior heads, also hereditary, among the different branches of the tribe. The Israelites being divided into twelve tribes, there were twelve chiefs appointed to assist in taking the census of the people.

5. *these are the names of the men that shall stand with you*, etc. — Each is designated by adding the name of the ancestors of his tribe, the people of which were called “Beni-Reuben,” “Beni-Levi,” sons of Reuben, sons of Levi, according to the custom of the Arabs still, as well as other nations which are divided into clans, as the Macs of Scotland, the Aps of Wales, and the O’s and the Fitzes of Ireland [CHALMERS].

16-18. *These were the renowned* — literally, “the called” of the congregation, summoned by name; and they entered upon the survey the very day the order was given.

18. *by their polls* — individually, one by one.

19. *As the Lord commanded Moses*, etc. — The numbering of the people was not an act sinful in itself, as Moses did it by divine appointment; but David incurred guilt by doing it without the authority of God. (See on ^{<140>}2 Samuel 24:10).

20-44. *These are those that were numbered* — In this registration the tribe of Judah appears the most numerous; and accordingly, as the pre-eminence had been assigned to it by Jacob [^{<0408>}Genesis 49:8-12], it got the precedence in all the encampments of Israel. Of the two half-tribes of Joseph, who is seen to be “a fruitful bough” [^{<0422>}Genesis 49:22], that of Ephraim was the larger, as had been predicted. The relative increase of all, as in the two just mentioned, was owing to the special blessing of God, conformably to the prophetic declaration of the dying patriarch. But the divine blessing is usually conveyed through the influence of secondary causes; and there is reason to believe that the relative populousness of the tribes would, under God, depend upon the productiveness of the respective localities assigned to them. [For tabular chart, see on ^{<0261>}Numbers 26:64.]

45, 46. *all they that were numbered were six hundred thousand.* etc. — What an astonishing increase from seventy-five persons who went down to Egypt about two hundred fifteen years before [see on ^{<0418>}Genesis 46:8], and who were subjected to the greatest privations and hardships! And yet this enumeration was restricted to men from twenty years and upwards (^{<0003>}Numbers 1:3). Including women, children, and old men, together with the Levites, the whole population of Israel, on the ordinary principles of computation, amounted to about 2,400,000.

47-54. *But the Levites ... were not numbered among them* — They were obliged to keep a register of their own. They were consecrated to the priestly office, which in all countries has been exempted customarily, and in Israel by the express authority of God, from military service. The custody of the things devoted to the divine service was assigned to them so exclusively, that “no stranger” — that is, no person, not even an Israelite of any other tribe, was allowed, under penalty of death, to approach these [^{<0460>}Numbers 16:40]. Hence they encamped round the tabernacle in order that there should be no manifestation of the divine displeasure among the people. Thus the numbering of the people was subservient to the separation of the Levites from those Israelites who were fit for military service, and to the practical introduction of the law respecting the first-born, for whom the tribe of Levi became a substitute [^{<0232>}Exodus 13:2 ^{<0482>}Numbers 3:12].

CHAPTER 2

NUMBERS 2:1-34.

THE ORDER OF THE TRIBES IN THEIR TENTS.

2. Every man ... shall pitch by his own standard, with the ensign of their father's house — Standards were visible signs of a certain recognized form for directing the movements of large bodies of people. As the Israelites were commanded to encamp “each by his own standard, with the ensign of their father’s house,” the direction has been considered as implying that they possessed three varieties:

- (1) the great tribal standards, which served as rallying points for the twelve large clans of the people;
- (2) the standards of the subdivided portions; and,
- (3) those of families or houses.

The latter must have been absolutely necessary, as one ensign only for a tribe would not have been visible at the extremities of so large a body. We possess no authentic information as to their forms, material, colors, and devices. But it is probable that they might bear some resemblance to those of Egypt, only stripped of any idolatrous symbols. These were of an umbrella or a fanlike form, made of ostrich feathers, shawls, etc., lifted on the points of long poles, which were borne, either like the sacred central one, on a car, or on men’s shoulders, while others might be like the beacon lights which are set on poles by Eastern pilgrims at night. Jewish writers say that the standards of the Hebrew tribes were symbols borrowed from the prophetic blessing of Jacob — Judah’s being a lion, Benjamin’s a wolf, etc. [⁽⁴⁴⁸⁾Genesis 49:3-24]; and that the ensigns or banners were distinguished by their colors — the colors of each tribe being the same as that of the precious stone representing that tribe in the breastplate of the high priest [⁽⁴²⁸⁷⁾Exodus 28:17-21].

far off about the tabernacle of the congregation shall they pitch — that is, “over against,” at a reverential distance. The place of every tribe is successively and specifically described because each had a certain part assigned both in the order of march and the disposition of the encampment.

3. on the east side toward the rising of the sun shall they of the standard of the camp of Judah pitch throughout their armies — Judah, placed at the head of a camp composed of three tribes rallying under its standard, was said to have combined the united colors in the high priest’s breastplate, but called by the name of Judah. They were appointed to occupy the east side and to take the lead in the march, which, for the most part, was in an easterly direction.

Nahshon — or Naasson (⁴⁰⁰⁸Matthew 1:4 ⁴⁰⁸⁹Luke 3:32,33).

shall be captain — It appears that the twelve men who were called to superintend the census were also appointed to be the captains of their respective tribes — a dignity which they owed probably to the circumstances, formerly noticed, of their holding the hereditary office of head or “prince.”

5. those that pitch next unto him — that is, on the one side.

7. Then the tribe of Zebulun — on the other side. While Judah’s tribe was the most numerous, those of Issachar and Zebulun were also very numerous; so that the association of those three tribes formed a strong and imposing van.

10-31. On the south side the standard of the camp of Reuben — The description given of the position of Reuben and his attendant tribes on the south, of Ephraim and his associates on the west, of Daniel and his confederates on the north, with that of Judah on the east, suggests the idea of a square or quadrangle, which, allowing one square cubit to each soldier while remaining close in the ranks, has been computed to extend over an area of somewhat more than twelve square miles. But into our calculations of the occupied space must be taken not only the fighting men, whose numbers are here given, but also the families, tents, and baggage. The tabernacle or sacred tent of their Divine King, with the camp of the Levites

around it [see on ⁻⁰⁴⁸⁸Numbers 3:38], formed the center, as does the chief's in the encampment of all nomad people. In marching, this order was adhered to, with some necessary variations. Judah led the way, followed, it is most probable, by Issachar and Zebulun [⁻⁰⁴⁰⁴Numbers 10:14-16]. Reuben, Simeon, and Gad formed the second great division [⁻⁰⁴⁰⁸Numbers 10:18-20]. They were followed by the central company, composed of the Levites, bearing the tabernacle [⁻⁰⁴²¹Numbers 10:21]. Then the third and posterior squadron consisted of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin [⁻⁰⁴⁰²Numbers 10:22-24], while the hindmost place was assigned to Dan, Asher, and Naphtali [⁻⁰⁴⁰⁵Numbers 10:25-27]. Thus Judah's, which was the most numerous, formed the van: and Dan's, which was the next in force, brought up the rear; while Reuben's and Ephraim's, with the tribes associated with them respectively, being the smallest and weakest, were placed in the center. (See on ⁻⁰⁴⁰³Numbers 10:13).

CHAPTER 3

NUMBERS 3:1-51.

THE LEVITES' SERVICE.

1. *These ... are the generations of Aaron and Moses*, etc. — This chapter contains an account of their families; and although that of Moses is not detailed like his brother's, his children are included under the general designation of the Amramites (^{<OR>}Numbers 3:27), a term which comprehends all the descendants of their common father Amram. The reason why the family of Moses was so undistinguished in this record is that they were in the private ranks of the Levites, the dignity of the priesthood being conferred exclusively on the posterity of Aaron; and hence, as the sacerdotal order is the subject of this chapter, Aaron, contrary to the usual style of the sacred history, is mentioned before Moses.

in the day that the Lord spake with Moses in mount Sinai — This is added, because at the date of the following record the family of Aaron was unbroken.

2-4. *And these are the names of the sons of Aaron* — All the sons of Aaron, four in number, were consecrated to minister in the priest's office. The two oldest enjoyed but a brief term of office (^{<OR>}Leviticus 10:1,2 ^{<OR>}Numbers 3:4 ^{<OR>}26:61); but Eleazar and Ithamar, the other two, were dutiful, and performed the sacred service during the lifetime of their father, as his assistants, and under his superintendence.

5-10. *Bring the tribe of Levi near* — The *Hebrew* word "bring near" is a sacrificial term, denoting the presentation of an offering to God; and the use of the word, therefore, in connection with the Levites, signifies that they were devoted as an offering to the sanctuary, no longer to be employed in any common offices. They were subordinate to the priests, who alone enjoyed the privilege of entering the holy place; but they were employed in discharging many of the humbler duties which belonged to the

sanctuary, as well as in various offices of great utility and importance to the religion and morals of the people.

9. *they are wholly given unto him out of the children of Israel*, etc. — The priests hold the place of God, and the Levites are the servants of God in the obedience they render to the priests.

11-13. *I have taken the Levites*, etc. — The consecration of this tribe did not originate in the legislative wisdom of Moses, but in the special appointment of God, who chose them as substitutes for the first-born. By an appointment made in memory of the last solemn judgment on Egypt (from which the Israelitish households were miraculously exempt) all the first-born were consecrated to God (^{([Exodus 13:12](#))} (^{([Exodus 22:29](#))}), who thus, under peculiar circumstances, seemed to adopt the patriarchal usage of appointing the oldest to act as the priest of the family. But the privilege of redemption that was allowed the first-born opened the way for a change; and accordingly, on the full organization of the Mosaic economy, the administration of sacred things formerly committed to the first-born was transferred from them to the Levites, who received that honor partly as a tribute to Moses and Aaron, partly because this tribe had distinguished themselves by their zeal in the affair of the golden calf (^{([Exodus 32:29](#))}), and also because, being the smallest of the tribes, they could ill find suitable employment and support in the work. (See on ^{([Deuteronomy 33:8](#))}). The designation of a special class for the sacred offices of religion was a wise arrangement; for, on their settlement in Canaan, the people would be so occupied that they might not be at leisure to wait on the service of the sanctuary, and sacred things might, from various causes, fall into neglect. But the appointment of an entire tribe to the divine service ensured the regular performance of the rites of religion. The subsequent portion of the chapter relates to the formal substitution of this tribe.

I am the Lord — that is, I decree it to be so; and being possessed of sovereign authority, I expect full obedience.

14-31. *Number the children of Levi* — They were numbered as well as the other tribes; but the enumeration was made on a different principle — for while in the other tribes the number of males was calculated from twenty years and upward [^{([Numbers 1:3](#))}], in that of Levi they were counted “from a month old and upward.” The reason for the distinction is

obvious. In the other tribes the survey was made for purposes of war [⁻⁰⁰⁰⁸Numbers 1:3], from which the Levites were totally exempt. But the Levites were appointed to a work on which they entered as soon as they were capable of instruction. They are mentioned under the names of Gershon, Kohath, and Merari, sons of Levi, and chiefs or ancestral heads of three subdivisions into which this tribe was distributed. Their duties were to assist in the conveyance of the tabernacle when the people were removing the various encampments, and to form its guard while stationary — the Gershonites being stationed on the west, the Kohathites on the south, and the families of Merari on the north. The Kohathites had the principal place about the tabernacle, and charge of the most precious and sacred things — a distinction with which they were honored, probably, because the Aaronic family belonged to this division of the Levitical tribe. The Gershonites, being the oldest, had the next honorable post assigned them, while the burden of the drudgery was thrown on the division of Merari.

32. chief — rather, “chiefs” of the Levites. Three persons are mentioned as chiefs of these respective divisions [⁻⁰⁰²⁹Numbers 3:24,30,35]. And Eleazar presided over them; whence he is called “the second priest” (⁻⁰²⁵⁸2 Kings 25:18); and in the case of the high priest’s absence from illness or other necessary occasions, he performed the duties (⁻¹⁰⁰⁴1 Kings 4:4).

38. those that encamp, etc. — That being the entrance side, it was the post of honor, and consequently reserved to Moses and the priestly family. But the sons of Moses had no station here.

39. twenty and two thousand — The result of this census, though made on conditions most advantageous to Levi, proved it to be by far the smallest in Israel. The separate numbers stated in ⁻⁰⁴⁹²Numbers 3:22,28,34, when added together, amount to twenty-two thousand three hundred. The omission of the three hundred is variously accounted for — by some, because they might be first-born who were already devoted to God and could not be counted as substitutes; and by others, because in Scripture style, the sum is reckoned in round numbers. The most probable conjecture is, that as *Hebrew* letters are employed for figures, one letter was, in the course of transcription, taken for another of like form but smaller value.

40-51. *Number all the first-born of the males of the children of Israel,* etc. — The principle on which the enumeration of the Levites had been made was now to be applied to the other tribes. The number of their male children, from a month old and upward, was to be reckoned, in order that a comparison might be instituted with that of the Levites, for the formal adoption of the latter as substitutes for the first-born. The Levites, amounting to twenty-two thousand, were given in exchange for an equal number of the first-born from the other tribes, leaving an excess of two hundred seventy-three; and as there were no substitutes for these, they were redeemed at the rate of five shekels for each (^{CHISE} Numbers 18:15,16). Every Israelite would naturally wish that his son might be redeemed by a Levite without the payment of this tax, and yet some would have to incur the expense, for there were not Levites enough to make an equal exchange. Jewish writers say the matter was determined by lot, in this manner: Moses put into an urn twenty-two thousand pieces of parchment, on each of which he wrote “a son of Levi,” and two hundred seventy-three more, containing the words, “five shekels.” These being shaken, he ordered each of the first-born to put in his hand and take out a slip. If it contained the first inscription, the boy was redeemed by a Levite; if the latter, the parent had to pay. The ransom money, which, reckoning the shekel at half a dollar, would amount to \$2.50 each, was appropriated to the use of the sanctuary. The excess of the general over the Levitical first-born is so small, that the only way of accounting for it is, by supposing those first-born only were counted as were males remaining in their parents’ household, or that those first-born only were numbered which had been born since the departure from Egypt, when God claimed all the first-born as his special property.

41. *the cattle of the Levites* — These, which they kept to graze on the glebes and meadows in the suburbs of their cities, to supply their families with dairy produce and animal food, were also taken as an equivalent for all the firstlings of the cattle which the Israelites at that time possessed. In consequence of this exchange the firstlings were not brought then, as afterwards, to the altar and the priests.

CHAPTER 4

NUMBERS 4:1-49.

OF THE LEVITES' SERVICE.

2, 3. *sons of Kohath, from thirty years old and upward* — This age was specifically fixed (see on ⁽¹⁰²⁾Numbers 8:24) as the full maturity of bodily energy to perform the laborious duties assigned them in the wilderness, as well as of mental activity to assist in the management of the sacred services. And it was the period of life at which John the Baptist and Christ entered on their respective ministries.

even unto fifty — The term prescribed for active duty was a period of twenty years, at the end of which they were exempted from the physical labors of the office, though still expected to attend in the tabernacle (⁽¹⁰³⁾Numbers 8:26).

all that enter into the host — so called from their ranks, and their special duty as guards of the tabernacle. The *Hebrew* word, however, signifies also a station of office; and hence the passage may be rendered, “All that enter into the sacerdotal office” (⁽¹⁰⁴⁾Numbers 4:23).

4-15. *This shall be the service of the sons of Kohath*, etc. — They are mentioned first, from their close connection with Aaron; and the special department of duty assigned to them during the journeyings of Israel accorded with the charge they had received of the precious contents of the tabernacle. But these were to be previously covered by the common priests, who, as well as the high priest, were admitted on such necessary occasions into the holy place. This was an exception to the general rule, which prohibited the entrance of any but the high priest. But when the cloud removed from the tabernacle, the sanctuary might be entered by the common priests, as to them was reserved the exclusive privilege of packing the sacred utensils; and it was not till the holy things were thus ready for carriage, that the Kohathites were allowed to approach.

5. *covering veil* — the inner veil, which separated the holy from the most holy place. (See on ^{<0263>}Exodus 36:35).

6. *covering of badgers' skins* — (See on ^{<0251>}Exodus 25:5). The covering, however, referred to was not that of the tabernacle, but one made for the special purpose of protecting the ark.

put in the staves — These golden staves were now taken out. (See on ^{<0255>}Exodus 25:15, compared with ^{<1088>}1 Kings 8:8). The *Hebrew* word rendered “put in,” signifies also “dispose,” and probably refers here to their insertion through the openings in the coverings made for receiving them, to preserve them from the touch of the carriers as well as from the influence of the weather. It is worthy of notice that the coverings did not consist of canvas or coarse tarpaulin, but of a kind which united beauty with decency.

7. *continual showbread* — Though the people were in the wilderness fed upon manna, the sacred loaves were constantly made of corn, which was probably raised in small quantities from the verdant patches of the desert.

10. *a bar* — or bier, formed of two poles fastened by two cross pieces and borne by two men, after the fashion of a sedan chair.

12. *instruments of ministry* — the official dress of the priests (^{<0210>}Exodus 31:10).

13. *shall take away the ashes from the altar*, etc. — The necessity of removing ashes from the altar plainly implies that sacrifices were offered in the wilderness (compare ^{<0282>}Exodus 18:12 24:4), though that rebellious race seems frequently to have neglected the duty (^{<3025>}Amos 5:25). No mention is made of the sacred fire; but as, by divine command, it was to be kept constantly burning, it must have been transferred to some pan or brazier under the covering, and borne by the appointed carriers.

15. *the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it, but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die* — The mode of transport was upon the shoulders of the Levites (see on ^{<0409>}Numbers 7:9), although afterwards wheeled vehicles were employed (^{<3062>}2 Samuel 6:3 ^{<1352>}1 Chronicles 15:12). And it was allowed to touch the covering, but not the things covered, on the penalty of death, which was inflicted more than once (^{<0409>}1 Samuel 6:19

⁴¹⁸²2 Samuel 6:6,7). This stern denunciation was designed to inspire a sentiment of deep and habitual reverence in the minds of those who were officially engaged about holy things.

16. to the office of Eleazar ... pertaineth the oil for the light, and the sweet incense, etc. — He was charged with the special duty of superintending the squadron who were employed in the carrying of the sacred furniture; besides, to his personal care were committed the materials requisite for the daily service, and which it was necessary he should have easily at his command (⁴²³⁸Exodus 29:38).

17-20. Cut ye not off the tribe of the families of the Kohathites from among the Levites, etc. — a solemn admonition to Moses and Aaron to beware, lest, by any negligence on their part, disorder and improprieties should creep in, and to take the greatest care that all the parts of this important service be apportioned to the proper parties, lest the Kohathites should be disqualified for their high and honorable duties. The guilt of their death would be incurred by the superintending priest, if he failed to give proper directions or allowed any irreverent familiarity with sacred things.

24-28. This is the service of the families of the Gershonites, etc. — They were appointed to carry “the curtains of the tabernacle” — that is, the goats’ hair covering of the tent — the ten curious curtains and embroidered hangings at the entrance, with their red morocco covering, etc.

28. their charge shall be under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron, etc. — The Levites were generally subject to the official command of the priests in doing the ordinary work of the tabernacle. But during the journeyings Eleazar, who was next in succession to his father, took the special charge of the Kohathites [⁴⁰⁴⁸Numbers 4:16], while his brother Ithamar had the superintendence of the Gershonites and Merarites [⁴⁰⁶³Numbers 4:33].

29-33. As for the sons of Merari — They carried the coarser and heavier appurtenances, which, however, were so important and necessary, that an inventory was kept of them — not only on account of their number and variety, but of their comparative commonness and smallness, which might have led to their being lost or missing through carelessness, inadvertency,

or neglect. It was a useful lesson, showing that God disregards nothing pertaining to His service, and that even in the least and most trivial matters, He requires the duty of faithful obedience.

34-49. *Moses and Aaron and the chief of the congregation numbered the sons of the Kohathites*, etc. — This enumeration was made on a different principle from that which is recorded in the preceding chapter [^{CH35}Numbers 3:15]. That was confined to the males from a month old and upward, while this was extended to all capable of service in the three classes of the Levitical tribe. In considering their relative numbers, the wisdom of Divine Providence appears in arranging that, whereas in the Kohathites and Gershonites, whose burdens were few and easier, there were but about a third part of them which were fit for service; the Merarites, whose burdens were more and heavier, had above one half of them fit for this work [POOLE]. The small population of this tribe, so inferior to that of the other tribes, is attempted to be explained (see on ^{CH39}Numbers 3:39).

CHAPTER 5

NUMBERS 5:1-4.

THE UNCLEAN TO BE REMOVED OUT OF THE CAMP.

2. *Command the children of Israel, that they put out of the camp every leper* — The exclusion of leprosy persons from the camp in the wilderness, as from cities and villages afterwards, was a sanitary measure taken according to prescribed rules (^{<OR>}Leviticus 13:1-14:57). This exclusion of lepers from society has been acted upon ever since; and it affords almost the only instance in which any kind of attention is paid in the East to the prevention of contagion. The usage still more or less prevails in the East among people who do not think the least precaution against the plague or cholera necessary; but judging from personal observation, we think that in Asia the leprosy has now much abated in frequency and virulence. It usually appears in a comparatively mild form in Egypt, Palestine, and other countries where the disorder is, or was, endemic. Small societies of excluded lepers live miserably in paltry huts. Many of them are beggars, going out into the roads to solicit alms, which they receive in a wooden bowl; charitable people also sometimes bring different articles of food, which they leave on the ground at a short distance from the hut of the lepers, for whom it is intended. They are generally obliged to wear a distinctive badge that people may know them at first sight and be warned to avoid them. Other means were adopted among the ancient Jews by putting their hand on their mouth and crying, “Unclean, unclean” [^{<OR>}Leviticus 13:45]. But their general treatment, as to exclusion from society, was the same as now described. The association of the lepers, however, in this passage, with those who were subject only to ceremonial uncleanness, shows that one important design in the temporary exile of such persons was to remove all impurities that reflected dishonor on the character and residence of Israel’s King. And this vigilant care to maintain external cleanliness in the people was typically designed to teach them the practice of moral purity, or cleansing themselves from all

filthiness of the flesh and spirit. The regulations made for ensuring cleanliness in the camp suggest the adoption of similar means for maintaining purity in the church. And although, in large communities of Christians, it may be often difficult or delicate to do this, the suspension or, in flagrant cases of sin, the total excommunication of the offender from the privileges and communion of the church is an imperative duty, as necessary to the moral purity of the Christian as the exclusion of the leper from the camp was to physical health and ceremonial purity in the Jewish church.

~~OUR~~ NUMBERS 5:5-10.

RESTITUTION ENJOINED.

6-8. *When a man or a woman shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against the Lord* — This is a wrong or injury done by one man to the property of another, and as it is called “a trespass against the Lord,” it is implied, in the case supposed, that the offense has been aggravated by prevaricating — by a false oath, or a fraudulent lie in denying it, which is a “trespass” committed against God, who is the sole judge of what is falsely sworn or spoken (~~OUR~~ Acts 5:3,4).

and that person be guilty — that is, from the obvious tenor of the passage, conscience-smitten, or brought to a sense and conviction of his evil conduct. (See on ~~OUR~~ Leviticus 6:2). In that case, there must be: first, confession, a penitential acknowledgment of sin; secondly, restitution of the property, or the giving of an equivalent, with the additional fine of a fifth part, both as a compensation to the person defrauded, and as a penalty inflicted on the injurer, to deter others from the commission of similar trespasses. (See on ~~OUR~~ Exodus 22:1). The difference between the law recorded in that passage and this is that the one was enacted against flagrant and determined thieves, the other against those whose necessities might have urged them into fraud, and whose consciences were distressed by their sin. This law also supposes the injured party to be dead, in which case, the compensation due to his representatives was to be paid to the priest, who, as God’s deputy, received the required satisfaction.

9, 10. *every offering ... shall be his* — Whatever was given in this way, or otherwise, as by freewill offerings, irrevocably belonged to the priest.

NUMBERS 5:11-31.

THE TRIAL OF JEALOUSY.

12-15. *if any man's wife go aside, and commit a trespass against him* — This law was given both as a strong discouragement to conjugal infidelity on the part of a wife, and a sufficient protection of her from the consequences of a hasty and groundless suspicion on the part of the husband. His suspicions, however, were sufficient in the absence of witnesses (^{<OR10>}Leviticus 20:10) to warrant the trial described; and the course of proceeding to be followed was for the jealous husband to bring his wife unto the priest with an offering of barley meal, because none were allowed to approach the sanctuary empty handed (^{<OR25>}Exodus 23:15). On other occasions, there were mingled with the offering, oil which signified joy, and frankincense which denoted acceptance (^{<OR10>}Psalms 141:2). But on the occasion referred to, both these ingredients were to be excluded, partly because it was a solemn appeal to God in distressing circumstances, and partly because it was a sin offering on the part of the wife, who came before God in the character of a real or suspected offender.

17, 18. *the priest shall take holy water* — Water from the laver, which was to be mixed with dust — an emblem of vileness and misery (^{<OR14>}Genesis 3:14 ^{<OR25>}Psalms 22:15).

in an earthen vessel — This fragile ware was chosen because, after being used, it was broken in pieces (^{<OR13>}Leviticus 6:28 11:33). All the circumstances of this awful ceremony — her being placed with her face toward the ark — her uncovered head, a sign of her being deprived of the protection of her husband (^{<OR10>}1 Corinthians 11:7) — the bitter potion being put into her hands preparatory to an appeal to God — the solemn adjuration of the priest (^{<OR5>}Numbers 5:19-22), all were calculated in no common degree to excite and appall the imagination of a person conscious of guilt.

21. *The Lord make thee a curse*, etc. — a usual form of imprecation (²¹⁶¹⁵Isaiah 65:15 ²¹⁶²²Jeremiah 29:22).

22. *the woman shall say, Amen, Amen* — The Israelites were accustomed, instead of formally repeating the words of an oath merely to say, “Amen,” a “so be it” to the imprecations it contained. The reduplication of the word was designed as an evidence of the woman’s innocence, and a willingness that God would do to her according to her desert.

23, 24. *write these curses in a book* — The imprecations, along with her name, were inscribed in some kind of record — on parchment, or more probably on a wooden tablet.

blot them out with the bitter water — If she were innocent, they could be easily erased, and were perfectly harmless; but if guilty, she would experience the fatal effects of the water she had drunk.

29. *This is the law of jealousies* — Adultery discovered and proved was punished with death. But strongly suspected cases would occur, and this law made provision for the conviction of the guilty person. It was, however, not a trial conducted according to the forms of judicial process, but an ordeal through which a suspected adulteress was made to go — the ceremony being of that terrifying nature, that, on the known principles of human nature, guilt or innocence could not fail to appear. From the earliest times, the jealousy of Eastern people has established ordeals for the detection and punishment of suspected unchastity in wives. The practice was deep-rooted as well as universal. And it has been thought, that the Israelites being strongly biased in favor of such usages, this law of jealousies “was incorporated among the other institutions of the Mosaic economy, in order 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 and improved form exhibits a proof at once of the wisdom and condescension of God.

CHAPTER 6

NUMBERS 6:1-22.

THE LAW OF THE NAZARITE IN HIS SEPARATION.

2-8. *When either man or woman ... shall vow a vow of a Nazarite* — that is, “a separated one,” from a *Hebrew* word, “to separate.” It was used to designate a class of persons who, under the impulse of extraordinary piety and with a view to higher degrees of religious improvement, voluntarily renounced the occupations and pleasures of the world to dedicate themselves unreservedly to the divine service. The vow might be taken by either sex, provided they had the disposal of themselves (⁰⁸⁰⁴Numbers 30:4), and for a limited period — usually a month or a lifetime (⁰⁷³⁵Judges 13:5 ⁰⁷⁶⁷Judges 16:17). We do not know, perhaps, the whole extent of abstinence they practiced. But they separated themselves from three things in particular — namely, from wine, and all the varieties of vinous produce; from the application of a razor to their head, allowing their hair to grow; and from pollution by a dead body. The reasons of the self-restrictions are obvious. The use of wine tended to inflame the passions, intoxicate the brain, and create a taste for luxurious indulgence. The cutting off the hair being a recognized sign of uncleanness (⁰⁸⁴⁸Leviticus 14:8,9), its unpolled luxuriance was a symbol of the purity he professed. Besides, its extraordinary length kept him in constant remembrance of his vow, as well as stimulated others to imitate his pious example. Moreover, contact with a dead body, disqualifying for the divine service, the Nazarite carefully avoided such a cause of unfitness, and, like the high priest, did not assist at the funeral rites of his nearest relatives, preferring his duty to God to the indulgence of his strongest natural affections.

9-12. *If any man die very suddenly by him, and he hath defiled the head of his consecration* — Cases of sudden death might occur to make him contract pollution; and in such circumstances he was required, after shaving his head, to make the prescribed offerings necessary for the removal of ceremonial defilement (⁰⁸⁵⁸Leviticus 15:13 ⁰⁸⁹¹Numbers 19:11).

But by the terms of this law an accidental defilement vitiated the whole of his previous observances, and he was required to begin the period of his Nazaritism afresh. But even this full completion did not supersede the necessity of a sin offering at the close. Sin mingles with our best and holiest performances, and the blood of sprinkling is necessary to procure acceptance to us and our services.

13-20. *when the days of his separation are fulfilled*, etc. — On the accomplishment of a limited vow of Nazaritism, Nazarites might cut their hair wherever they happened to be (^{<4188>}Acts 18:18); but the hair was to be carefully kept and brought to the door of the sanctuary. Then after the presentation of sin offerings and burnt offerings, it was put under the vessel in which the peace offerings were boiled; and the priest, taking the shoulder (^{<4172>}Leviticus 7:32), when boiled, and a cake and wafer of the meat offering, put them on the hands of the Nazarites to wave before the Lord, as a token of thanksgiving, and thus released them from their vow.

^{<4163>}NUMBERS 6:23-27.

THE FORM OF BLESSING THE PEOPLE.

23-27. *Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the congregation of Israel*, etc. — This passage records the solemn benediction which God appointed for dismissing the people at the close of the daily service. The repetition of the name “Lord” or “Jehovah” three times, expresses the great mystery of the Godhead — three persons, and yet one God. The expressions in the separate clauses correspond to the respective offices of the Father, to “bless and keep us”; of the Son, to be “gracious to us”; and of the Holy Ghost, to “give us peace.” And because the benediction, though pronounced by the lips of a fellow man, derived its virtue, not from the priest but from God, the encouraging assurance was added, “I the Lord will bless them.”

CHAPTER 7

NUMBERS 7:1-89.

THE PRINCES' OFFERINGS.

1. *the day that Moses had fully set up the tabernacle* — Those who take the word “day” as literally pointing to the exact date of the completion of the tabernacle, are under a necessity of considering the sacred narrative as disjointed, and this portion of the history from the seventh to the eleventh chapters as out of its place — the chronology requiring that it should have immediately followed the fortieth chapter of Exodus, which relates that the tabernacle was reared on the first day of the first month of the second year [^(B07)Exodus 40:17]. But that the term “day” is used in a loose and indeterminate sense, as synonymous with *time*, is evident from the fact that not one day but several days were occupied with the transactions about to be described. So that this chapter stands in its proper place in the order of the history; after the tabernacle and its instruments (the altar and its vessels) had been anointed (^(B80)Leviticus 8:10), the Levites separated to the sacred service — the numbering of the people, and the disposal of the tribes about the tabernacle, in a certain order, which was observed by the princes in the presentation of their offerings. This would fix the period of the imposing ceremonial described in this chapter about a month after the completion of the tabernacle.

2, 3. *the princes of Israel ... brought their offering before the Lord* — The finishing of the sacred edifice would, it may well be imagined, be hailed as an auspicious occasion, diffusing great joy and thankfulness throughout the whole population of Israel. But the leading men, not content with participating in the general expression of satisfaction, distinguished themselves by a movement, which, while purely spontaneous, was at the same time so appropriate in the circumstances and so equal in character, as indicates it to have been the result of concerted and previous arrangement. It was an offer of the means of carriage, suitable to the migratory state of the nation in the wilderness, for transporting the tabernacle from place to

place. In the pattern of that sacred tent exhibited on the mount, and to which its symbolic and typical character required a faithful adherence, no provision had been made for its removal in the frequent journeyings of the Israelites. That not being essential to the plan of the divine architect, it was left to be accomplished by voluntary liberality; and whether we look to the judicious character of the gifts, or to the public manner in which they were presented, we have unmistakable evidence of the pious and patriotic feelings from which they emanated and the extensive interest the occasion produced. The offerers were “the princes of Israel, heads of the house of their fathers,” and the offering consisted of six covered wagons or little cars, and twelve oxen, two of the princes being partners in a wagon, and each furnishing an ox.

4, 5. *The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take it of them, that they may be to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation* — They exhibited a beautiful example to all who are great in dignity and in wealth, to be foremost in contributing to the support and in promoting the interests of religion. The strictness of the injunctions Moses had received to adhere with scrupulous fidelity to the divine model of the tabernacle probably led him to doubt whether he was at liberty to act in this matter without orders. God, however, relieved him by declaring His acceptance of the freewill offerings, as well as by giving instructions as to the mode of their distribution among the Levites. It is probable that in doing so, He merely sanctioned the object for which they were offered, and that the practical wisdom of the offerers had previously determined that they should be distributed “unto the Levites, to every man according to his service” — that is, more or fewer were assigned to each of the Levitical divisions, as their department of duty seemed to require. This divine sanction it is of great importance to notice, as establishing the principle, that while in the great matters of divine worship and church government we are to adhere faithfully to the revealed rule of faith and duty, minor arrangements respecting them may be lawfully made, according to the means and convenience of God’s people in different places. “There is a great deal left to human regulation — appendages of undoubted convenience, and which it were as absurd to resist on the ground that an express warrant cannot be produced for them, as to protest against the

convening of the people to divine service, because there is no Scripture for the erection and ringing of a church bell” [CHALMERS].

6-9. *Moses took the wagons and the oxen* — The *Hebrew* word seems to be fairly rendered by the word “wagons.” Wheel carriages of some kind are certainly intended; and as they were covered, the best idea we can form of them is, that they bore some resemblance to our covered wagons. That wheel carriages were anciently used in Egypt, and in what is now Asiatic Turkey, is attested, not only by history, but by existing sculptures and paintings. Some of these the Israelites might have brought with them at their departure; and others, the skillful artisans, who did the mechanical work of the tabernacle, could easily have constructed, according to models with which they had been familiar. Each wagon was drawn by two oxen, and a greater number does not seem to have been employed on any of the different occasions mentioned in Scripture. Oxen seem to have been generally used for draught in ancient times among other nations as well as the Hebrews; and they continue still to be employed in dragging the few carts which are in use in some parts of Western Asia [KITTO].

gave them unto the Levites — The principle of distribution was natural and judicious. The Merarites had twice the number of wagons and oxen appropriated to them that the Gershonites had, obviously because, while the latter had charge only of the coverings and hangings (the light but precious and richly-embroidered drapery, [⁻⁰⁰²⁴Numbers 4:24-26]) the former were appointed to transport all the heavy and bulky materials (the boards, bars, pillars, and sockets) in short, all the larger articles of furniture [⁻⁰⁰³¹Numbers 4:31,32]. Whoever thinks only of the enormous weight of metal, the gold, silver, brass, etc. that were on the bases, chapters, and pillars, etc. will probably come to the conclusion that four wagons and eight oxen were not nearly sufficient for the conveyance of so vast a load. Besides, the Merarites were not very numerous, as they amounted only to thirty-two hundred men from thirty years and upward [⁻⁰⁰⁴⁴Numbers 4:44]; and, therefore, there is reason to suppose that a much greater number of wagons would afterwards be found necessary, and be furnished, than were given on this occasion [CALMET]. Others, who consider the full number of wagons and oxen to be stated in the sacred record, suppose that the Merarites may have carried many of the smaller things in their hands — the sockets, for instance, which being each a talent weight, was one man’s

burden (¹¹⁶²2 Kings 5:23). The Kohathites had neither wheeled vehicles nor beasts of burden assigned them, because, being charged with the transport of the furniture belonging to the holy place, the sacred worth and character of the vessels entrusted to them (see on ¹⁰⁴⁵Numbers 4:15) demanded a more honorable mode of conveyance. These were carried by those Levites shoulder high. Even in this minute arrangement every reflecting reader will perceive the evidence of divine wisdom and holiness; and a deviation from the prescribed rule of duty led, in one recorded instance, to a manifestation of holy displeasure, calculated to make a salutary and solemn impression (¹⁰⁶⁶2 Samuel 6:6-13).

10, 11. *the princes offered for dedicating of the altar*, etc. — “Altar” is here used in the singular for the plural; for it is evident, from the kind of offerings, that the altars of burnt offering and incense are both referred to. This was not the first or proper *dedication* of those altars, which had been made by Moses and Aaron some time before [¹⁰⁸¹Leviticus 8:11]. But it might be considered an additional “dedication” — those offerings being the first that were made for particular persons or tribes.

11. *They shall offer ... each prince on his day*, etc. — Eastern princes were accustomed anciently, as they are in Persia still on a certain yearly festival, to sit upon their thrones in great state, when the princes and nobles, from all parts of their dominions, appear before them with tributary presents, which form a large proportion of their royal revenue. And in the offering of all gifts or presents to great personages, every article is presented singly and with ostentatious display. The tabernacle being the palace of their great King, as well as the sanctuary of their God, the princes of Israel may be viewed, on the occasion under notice, as presenting their tributary offerings, and in the same manner of successive detail, which accords with the immemorial usages of the East. A day was set apart for each, as much for the imposing solemnity and splendor of the ceremony, as for the prevention of disorder and hurry; and it is observable that, in the order of offering, regard was paid to priority not of birth, but of rank and dignity as they were ranked in the camp — beginning at the east, proceeding to the south, then to the west, and closing with the north, according to the course of the sun.

12-17. *He that offered his offering the first day was Nahshon ... of the tribe of Judah*, etc. — Judah having had the precedence assigned to it, the prince or head of that tribe was the first admitted to offer as its representative; and his offering, as well as that of the others, is thought, from its costliness, to have been furnished not from his own private means, but from the general contributions of each tribe. Some parts of the offering, as the animals for sacrifice, were for the ritual service of the day, the peace offerings being by much the most numerous, as the princes and some of the people joined with the priests afterwards in celebrating the occasion with festive rejoicing Hence the feast of dedication became afterwards an anniversary festival. Other parts of the offering were intended for permanent use, as utensils necessary in the service of the sanctuary; such as an immense platter and bowl (^{<1253>}Exodus 25:29). Being of silver, they were to be employed at the altar of burnt offering, or in the court, not in the holy place, all the furniture of which was of solid or plated gold; and there was a golden spoon, the contents of which show its destination to have been the altar of incense. The word rendered “spoon” means a hollow cup, in the shape of a hand, with which the priests on ordinary occasions might lift a quantity from the incense-box to throw on the altar-fire, or into the censers; but on the ceremonial on the day of the annual atonement no instrument was allowed but the high priest’s own hands (^{<1812>}Leviticus 16:12).

18-83. *On the second day Nethaneel ... prince of Issachar, did offer* — This tribe being stationed on the right side of Judah, offered next through its representative; then Zebulun, which was on the left side; and so on in orderly succession, every tribe making the same kind of offering and in the same amount, to show that, as each was under equal obligation, each rendered an equal tribute. Although each offering made was the same in quantity as well as quality, a separate notice is given of each, as a separate day was appointed for the presentation, that equal honor might be conferred on each, and none appear to be overlooked or slighted. And as the sacred books were frequently read in public, posterity, in each successive age, would feel a livelier interest in the national worship, from the permanent recognition of the offerings made by the ancestors of the respective tribes. But while this was done in one respect, as subjects offering tribute to their king, it was in another respect, a purely religious

act. The vessels offered were for a sacrificial use — the animals brought were clean and fit for sacrifice, both symbolically denoting, that while God was to dwell among them as their Sovereign, they were a holy people, who by this offering dedicated themselves to God.

48. *On the seventh day* — Surprise has been expressed by some that this work of presentation was continued on the Sabbath. But assuming that the seventh day referred to was a Sabbath (which is uncertain), the work was of a directly religious character, and perfectly in accordance with the design of the sacred day.

84-88. *This was the dedication of the altar* — The inspired historian here sums up the separate items detailed in the preceding narrative, and the aggregate amount is as follows: twelve silver chargers, each weighing one hundred thirty shekels equals 1560; twelve silver bowls, each seventy shekels equals 840: total weight. A silver charger at one hundred thirty shekels, reduced to troy weight, made seventy-five ounces, nine pennyweight, 168.31 grains; and a silver bowl at seventy shekels amounts to forty ounces, twelve pennyweight, 2121.31 grains. The total weight of the twelve chargers is therefore nine hundred five ounces, sixteen pennyweight, 33.11 grains; and that of the twelve bowls four hundred eighty-seven ounces, fourteen pennyweight, 204.31 grains; making the total weight of silver vessels 1393 ounces, ten pennyweight, 237.31 grains with an approximate value of \$1200. The twelve golden spoons, allowing each to be five ounces, sixteen pennyweight, 3.31 grains, would have a value of about \$1000. All this would make a grand total of about \$2200. Besides these the offerings comprised twelve bullocks, twelve rams, twelve lambs, twenty-four goats, sixty rams, sixty he-goats, sixty lambs — amounting in all to two hundred forty. So large a collection of cattle offered for sacrifice on one occasion proves both the large flocks of the Israelites and the abundance of pastures which were then, and still are, found in the valleys that lie between the Sinaitic Mountains. All travelers attest the luxuriant verdure of those extensive wadies; and that they were equally or still more rich in pasture anciently, is confirmed by the numerous flocks of the Amalekites, as well as of Nabal, which were fed in the wilderness of Paran (⁽¹⁸⁵¹⁾1 Samuel 15:9).

89. *And when Moses was gone into the tabernacle of the congregation to speak with him* — As a king gives private audience to his minister, so special license was granted to Moses, who, though not a priest, was admitted into the sanctuary to receive instructions from his heavenly King as occasion demanded.

then he heard the voice of one speaking to him — Though standing on the outer side of the veil, he could distinctly hear it, and the mention of this circumstance is important as the fulfillment, at the dedication of the tabernacle, of a special promise made by the Lord Christ Himself, the Angel of the Covenant, commanding its erection (¹⁷²⁰Exodus 25:22). It was the reward of Moses' zeal and obedience; and, in like manner, to all who love Him and keep His commandments He will manifest Himself (¹⁸¹⁰John 14:21).

CHAPTER 8

NUMBERS 8:1-4.

HOW THE LAMPS ARE TO BE LIGHTED.

1. *the Lord spake unto Moses* — The order of this chapter suggests the idea that the following instructions were given to Moses while he was within the tabernacle of the congregation, after the princes had completed their offering. But from the tenor of the instructions, it is more likely that they were given immediately after the Levites had been given to the priests (see on ^{<04RE>}Numbers 3:1-4:49), and that the record of these instructions had been postponed till the narrative of other transactions in the camp had been made [PATRICK].

2. *Speak unto Aaron*, etc. — The candlestick, which was made of one solid, massive piece of pure gold, with six lamps supported on as many branches, a seventh in the center surmounting the shaft itself (^{<0253>}Exodus 25:31 ^{<0277>}37:17), and completed according to the pattern shown in the mount, was now to be lighted, when the other things in the sanctuary began to be applied to religious service. It was Aaron's personal duty, as the servant of God, to light His house, which, being without windows, required the aid of lights (^{<0019>}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 being derived from Christ, and diffused by His ministers throughout the world (^{<0045>}Revelation 4:5).

the seven lamps shall give light over against the candlestick — The candlestick stood close to the boards of the sanctuary, on the south side, in full view of the table of showbread on the north (^{<0235>}Exodus 26:35), having one set of its lamps turned towards the east, and another towards the west; so that all parts of the tabernacle were thus lighted up.

NUMBERS 8:5-22.

THE CONSECRATION OF THE LEVITES.

6, 7. *Take the Levites ... and cleanse them* — This passage describes the consecration of the Levites. Although the tribe was to be devoted to the divine service, their hereditary descent alone was not a sufficient qualification for entering on the duties of the sacred office. They were to be set apart by a special ceremony, which, however, was much simpler than that appointed for the priests; neither washing nor anointing, nor investiture with official robes, was necessary. Their purification consisted, along with the offering of the requisite sacrifices (^(GEN)Leviticus 1:4 3:2 4:4), in being sprinkled by water mixed with the ashes of a red heifer (^(GEN)Numbers 19:9), and shaved all over, and their clothes washed — a combination of symbolical acts which was intended to remind them of the mortification of carnal and worldly desires, and the maintenance of that purity in heart and life which became the servants of God.

9, 10. *thou shalt gather the whole assembly of the children of Israel together*, etc. — As it was plainly impossible that the whole multitude of the Israelites could do this, a select portion of them must be meant. This party, who laid their hands upon the Levites, are supposed by some to have been the first-born, who by that act, transferred their peculiar privilege of acting as God's ministers to the Levitical tribe; and by others, to have been the princes, who thus blessed them. It appears, from this passage, that the imposition of hands was a ceremony used in consecrating persons to holy offices in the ancient, as, from the example of our Lord and His apostles, it has been perpetuated in the Christian Church.

11-13. *And Aaron shall offer the Levites* — *Hebrew*, “as a wave offering”; and it has been thought probable that the high priest, in bringing the Levites one by one to the altar, directed them to make some simple movements of their persons, analogous to what was done at the presentation of the wave offerings before the Lord. Thus were they first devoted as an offering to God, and by Him surrendered to the priests to be employed in His service. The consecration ceremonial was repeated in the case of every Levite who was taken (as was done at a later period) to

assist the priests in the tabernacle and temple. (See on ^{<408>}2 Chronicles 29:34).

14. *and the Levites shall be mine* — that is, exempt from all military duty or secular work — free from all pecuniary imposition and wholly devoted to the custody and service of the sanctuary.

15. *after that, shall the Levites go in to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation* — into the court, to assist the priests; and at removal into the tabernacle — that is, into the door of it — to receive the covered furniture.

19. *to make an atonement for the children of Israel*, etc. — to aid the priests in that expiatory work; or, as the words may be rendered, “to make redemption for” the Levites being exchanged or substituted for the first-born for this important end, that there might be a sanctified body of men appointed to guard the sanctuary, and the people not allowed to approach or presumptuously meddle with holy things, which would expose them to the angry judgments of Heaven.

24. *from twenty and five years old*, etc. — (Compare ^{<408>}Numbers 4:3). They entered on their work in their twenty-fifth year, as pupils and probationers, under the superintendence and direction of their senior brethren; and at thirty they were admitted to the full discharge of their official functions.

25. *from the age of fifty years they shall cease waiting upon the service thereof*, etc. — that is, on the laborious and exhausting parts of their work.

26. *But shall minister with their brethren* — in the performance of easier and higher duties, instructing and directing the young, or superintending important trusts. “They also serve who only wait” [MILTON].

CHAPTER 9

NUMBERS 9:1-5.

THE PASSOVER ENJOINED.

2-5. *Let the children of Israel also keep the passover at his appointed season*, etc. — The date of this command to keep the passover in the wilderness was given shortly after the erection and consecration of the tabernacle and preceded the numbering of the people by a month. (Compare ^{<000>}Numbers 9:1 with ^{<000>}Numbers 1:1,2). But it is narrated after that transaction in order to introduce the notice of a particular case, for which a law was provided to meet the occasion. This was the first observance of the passover since the exodus; and without a positive injunction, the Israelites were under no obligation to keep it till their settlement in the land of Canaan (^{<022>}Exodus 12:25). The anniversary was kept on the exact day of the year on which they, twelve months before, had departed from Egypt; and it was marked by all the peculiar rites — the he lamb and the unleavened bread. The materials would be easily procured — the lambs from their numerous flocks and the meal for the unleavened bread, by the aid of Jethro, from the land of Midian, which was adjoining their camp (^{<000>}Exodus 3:1). But their girded loins, their sandaled feet, and their staff in their hand, being mere circumstances attending a hurried departure and not essential to the rite, were not repeated. It is supposed to have been the only observance of the feast during their forty years' wandering; and Jewish writers say that, as none could eat the passover except they were circumcised (^{<022>}Exodus 12:43,44,48), and circumcision was not practiced in the wilderness [^{<000>}Joshua 5:4-7], there could be no renewal of the paschal solemnity.

NUMBERS 9:6-14.

A SECOND PASSOVER ALLOWED.

6, 7. *there were certain men, who were defiled by the dead body of a man*

— To discharge the last offices to the remains of deceased relatives was imperative; and yet attendance on a funeral entailed ceremonial defilement, which led to exclusion from all society and from the camp for seven days. Some persons who were in this situation at the arrival of the first paschal anniversary, being painfully perplexed about the course of duty because they were temporarily disqualified at the proper season, and having no opportunity of supplying their want were liable to a total privation of all their privileges, laid their case before Moses. Jewish writers assert that these men were the persons who had carried out the dead bodies of Nadab and Abihu [^{<400>}Leviticus 10:4,5].

8-14. *Moses said unto them, Stand still, and I will hear what the Lord will command concerning you* — A solution of the difficulty was soon obtained, it being enacted, by divine authority, that to those who might be disqualified by the occurrence of a death in their family circle or unable by distance to keep the passover on the anniversary day, a special license was granted of observing it by themselves on the same day and hour of the following month, under a due attendance to all the solemn formalities. (See on ^{<400>}2 Chronicles 30:2). But the observance was imperative on all who did not labor under these impediments.

14. *if a stranger shall sojourn among you, and will keep the passover* — Gentile converts, or proselytes, as they were afterwards called, were admitted, if circumcised, to the same privileges as native Israelites, and were liable to excommunication if they neglected the passover. But circumcision was an indispensable condition; and whoever did not submit to that rite, was prohibited, under the sternest penalties, from eating the passover.

NUMBERS 9:15-23.

A CLOUD GUIDES THE ISRAELITES.

15. *the cloud covered the tabernacle* — The inspired historian here enters on an entirely new subject, which might properly have formed a separate chapter, beginning at this verse and ending at ^{<00B>}Numbers 10:29 [CALMET]. The cloud was a visible token of God's special presence and guardian care of the Israelites (^{<01B>}Exodus 14:20 ^{<045P>}Psalms 105:39). It was easily distinguishable from all other clouds by its peculiar form and its fixed position; for from the day of the completion of the tabernacle it rested by day as a dark, by night as a fiery, column on that part of the sanctuary which contained the ark of the testimony (^{<016P>}Leviticus 16:2).

17. *when the cloud was taken up* — that is, rose to a higher elevation, so as to be conspicuous at the remotest extremities of the camp. That was a signal for removal; and, accordingly, it is properly called (^{<00B>}Numbers 9:18) “the commandment of the Lord.” It was a visible token of the presence of God; and from it, as a glorious throne, He gave the order. So that its motion regulated the commencement and termination of all the journeys of the Israelites. (See on ^{<014P>}Exodus 14:19).

19. *when the cloud tarried long upon the tabernacle, ... then Israel kept the charge of the Lord, and journeyed not* — A desert life has its attractions, and constant movements create a passionate love of change. Many incidents show that the Israelites had strongly imbibed this nomad habit and were desirous of hastening to Canaan. But still the phases of the cloud indicated the command of God: and whatsoever irksomeness they might have felt in remaining long stationary in camp, “when the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle many days, they kept the charge of the Lord, and journeyed not.” Happy for them had they always exhibited this spirit of obedience! and happy for all if, through the wilderness of this world, we implicitly follow the leadings of God's Providence and the directions of God's Word!

CHAPTER 10

NUMBERS 10:1-36.

THE USE OF THE SILVER TRUMPETS.

2. *Make thee two trumpets of silver* — These trumpets were of a long form, in opposition to that of the Egyptian trumpets, with which the people were convened to the worship of Osiris and which were curved like rams' horns. Those which Moses made, as described by JOSEPHUS and represented on the arch of Titus, were straight, a cubit or more in length, the tubes of the thickness of a flute. Both extremities bore a close resemblance to those in use among us. They were of solid silver — so as, from the purity of the metal, to give a shrill, distinct sound; and there were two of them, probably because there were only two sons of Aaron; but at a later period the number was greatly increased (⁶⁶⁶⁸Joshua 6:8 ³⁴⁵¹²2 Chronicles 5:12). And although the camp comprehended 2,500,000 of people, two trumpets would be quite sufficient, for sound is conveyed easily through the pure atmosphere and reverberated strongly among the valleys of the Sinaitic hills.

3-7. *when they shall blow with them* — There seem to have been signals made by a difference in the loudness and variety in the notes, suited for different occasions, and which the Israelites learned to distinguish. A simple uniform sound by both trumpets summoned a general assembly of the people; the blast of a single trumpet convoked the princes to consult on public affairs; notes of some other kind were made to sound an alarm, whether for journeying or for war. One alarm was the recognized signal for the eastern division of the camp (the tribes of Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun) to march; two alarms gave the signal for the southern to move; and, though it is not in our present *Hebrew* text, the *Septuagint* has, that on three alarms being sounded, those on the west; while on four blasts, those on the north decamped. Thus the greatest order and discipline were established in the Israelitish camp — no military march could be better regulated.

8. *the sons of Aaron the priests shall blow with the trumpets*, etc. —

Neither the Levites nor any in the common ranks of the people could be employed in this office of signal giving. In order to attract greater attention and more faithful observance, it was reserved to the priests alone, as the Lord's ministers; and as anciently in Persia and other Eastern countries the alarm trumpets were sounded from the tent of the sovereign, so were they blown from the tabernacle, the visible residence of Israel's King.

9. *If ye go to war* — In the land of Canaan, either when attacked by foreign invaders or when they went to take possession according to the divine promise, "ye [that is, the priests] shall blow an alarm." This advice was accordingly acted upon (^{<0800>}Numbers 31:6 ^{<4430>}2 Chronicles 13:12); and in the circumstances it was an act of devout confidence in God. A solemn and religious act on the eve of a battle has often animated the hearts of those who felt they were engaged in a good and just cause; and so the blowing of the trumpet, being an ordinance of God, produced that effect on the minds of the Israelites. But more is meant by the words — namely, that God would, as it were, be aroused by the trumpet to bless with His presence and aid.

10. *Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days* — Festive and thanksgiving occasions were to be ushered in with the trumpets, as all feasts afterwards were (^{<0800>}Psalms 81:3 ^{<4420>}2 Chronicles 29:27) to intimate the joyous and delighted feelings with which they engaged in the service of God.

11. *It came to pass on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year* — The Israelites had lain encamped in Wady-Er-Rahah and the neighboring valleys of the Sinaitic range for the space of eleven months and twenty-nine days. (Compare ^{<0800>}Exodus 19:1). Besides the religious purposes of the highest importance to which their long sojourn at Sinai was subservient, the Israelites, after the hardships and oppression of the Egyptian servitude, required an interval of repose and refreshment. They were neither physically nor morally in a condition to enter the lists with the warlike people they had to encounter before obtaining possession of Canaan. But the wondrous transactions at Sinai — the arm of Jehovah so visibly displayed in their favor — the covenant entered into, and the special blessings guaranteed, beginning a course of moral and religious

education which moulded the character of this people — made them acquainted with their high destiny and inspired them with those noble principles of divine truth and righteousness which alone make a great nation.

12. *wilderness of Paran* — It stretched from the base of the Sinaitic group, or from Et-Tyh, over that extensive plateau to the southwestern borders of Palestine.

13-27. *the children of Israel took their journey ... by the hand of Moses* — It is probable that Moses, on the breaking up of the encampment, stationed himself on some eminence to see the ranks defile in order through the embouchure of the mountains. The marching order is described (^{CHIT}Numbers 2:1-34); but, as the vast horde is represented here in actual migration, let us notice the extraordinary care that was taken for ensuring the safe conveyance of the holy things. In the rear of Judah, which, with the tribes of Issachar and Zebulun, led the van, followed the Gershonites and Merarites with the heavy and coarser materials of the tabernacle. Next in order were set in motion the flank divisions of Reuben and Ephraim. Then came the Kohathites, who occupied the center of the moving mass, bearing the sacred utensils on their shoulder. They were so far behind the other portions of the Levitical body that these would have time at the new encampment to rear the framework of the tabernacle before the Kohathites arrived. Last of all, Dan, with the associated tribes, brought up the rear of the immense caravan. Each tribe was marshalled under its prince or chief and in all their movements rallied around its own standard.

29. *Hobab, the son of Raguel the Midianite* — called also Reuel (the same as Jethro [^{CHIT}Exodus 2:18, *Margin*]). Hobab, the son of this Midianite chief and brother-in-law to Moses, seems to have sojourned among the Israelites during the whole period of their encampment at Sinai and now on their removal proposed returning to his own abode. Moses urged him to remain, both for his own benefit from a religious point of view, and for the useful services his nomad habits could enable him to render.

31. *Leave us not, I pray thee ... and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes* — The earnest importunity of Moses to secure the attendance of this man, when he enjoyed the benefit of the directing cloud, has surprised

many. But it should be recollected that the guidance of the cloud, though it showed the general route to be taken through the trackless desert, would not be so special and minute as to point out the places where pasture, shade, and water were to be obtained and which were often hid in obscure spots by the shifting sands. Besides, several detachments were sent off from the main body; the services of Hobab, not as a single Arab, but as a prince of a powerful clan, would have been exceedingly useful.

32. *if thou go with us ... what goodness the Lord will show unto us, the same will we do unto thee* — A strong inducement is here held out; but it seems not to have changed the young man's purpose, for he departed and settled in his own district. (See on ^{<0016>}Judges 1:16 and ^{<0516>}1 Samuel 15:6).

33. *they departed ... three days' journey* — the first day's progress being very small, about eighteen or twenty miles.

ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them — It was carried in the center, and hence some eminent commentators think the passage should be rendered, "the ark went in their presence," the cloud above upon it being conspicuous in their eyes. But it is probable that the cloudy pillar, which, while stationary, rested upon the ark, preceded them in the march — as, when in motion at one time (^{<0149>}Exodus 14:19) it is expressly said to have shifted its place.

35, 36. *when the ark set forward that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered* — Moses, as the organ of the people, uttered an appropriate prayer both at the commencement and the end of each journey. Thus all the journeys were sanctified by devotion; and so should our prayer be, "If thy presence go not with us, carry us not hence" [^{<0315>}Exodus 33:15].

CHAPTER 11

NUMBERS 11:1-35.

MANNA LOATHED.

1. *When the people complained it displeased the Lord*, etc. —

Unaccustomed to the fatigues of travel and wandering into the depths of a desert, less mountainous but far more gloomy and desolate than that of Sinai, without any near prospect of the rich country that had been promised, they fell into a state of vehement discontent, which was vented at these irksome and fruitless journeyings. The displeasure of God was manifested against the ungrateful complainers by fire sent in an extraordinary manner. It is worthy of notice, however, that the discontent seems to have been confined to the extremities of the camp, where, in all likelihood, “the mixed multitude” [see on ^{<D123>}Exodus 12:38] had their station. At the intercession of Moses, the appalling judgment ceased (^{<D112>}Numbers 11:2), and the name given to the place, Taberah, remained ever after a monument of national sin and punishment. (See on ^{<D113>}Numbers 11:34).

4. *the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting* — These consisted of Egyptians. [See on ^{<D123>}Exodus 12:38.] To dream of banquets and plenty of animal food in the desert becomes a disease of the imagination; and to this excitement of the appetite no people are more liable than the natives of Egypt. But the Israelites participated in the same feelings and expressed dissatisfaction with the manna on which they had hitherto been supported, in comparison with the vegetable luxuries with which they had been regaled in Egypt.

5. *We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely* — (See on ^{<D117>}Exodus 7:17). The people of Egypt are accustomed to an almost exclusive diet of fish, either fresh or sun-dried, during the hot season in April and May — the very season when the Israelites were travelling in this desert. Lower Egypt, where were the brick-kilns in which they were

employed, afforded great facilities for obtaining fish in the Mediterranean, the lakes, and the canals of the Nile.

cucumbers — The Egyptian species is smooth, of a cylindrical form, and about a foot in length. It is highly esteemed by the natives and when in season is liberally partaken of, being greatly mellowed by the influence of the sun.

melons — The watermelons are meant, which grow on the deep, loamy soil after the subsidence of the Nile; and as they afford a juicy and cooling fruit, all classes make use of them for food, drink, and medicine.

leeks — by some said to be a species of grass cresses, which is much relished as a kind of seasoning.

onions — the same as ours; but instead of being nauseous and affecting the eyes, they are sweet to the taste, good for the stomach, and form to a large extent the aliment of the laboring classes.

garlic — is now nearly if not altogether extinct in Egypt although it seems to have grown anciently in great abundance. The herbs now mentioned form a diet very grateful in warm countries where vegetables and other fruits of the season are much used. We can scarcely wonder that both the Egyptian hangers-on and the general body of the Israelites, incited by their clamors, complained bitterly of the want of the refreshing viands in their toilsome wanderings. But after all their experience of the bounty and care of God, their vehement longing for the luxuries of Egypt was an impeachment of the divine arrangements; and if it was the sin that beset them in the desert, it became them more strenuously to repress a rebellious spirit, as dishonoring to God and unbecoming their relation to Him as a chosen people.

6-9. *But now ... there is nothing ... beside this manna* — Daily familiarity had disgusted them with the sight and taste of the monotonous food; and, ungrateful for the heavenly gift, they longed for a change of fare. It may be noticed that 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 pearl, 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 or unctuous to admit of being ground into meal. In taste it is said to have been like “wafers made with honey” (^{<0269>}Exodus 16:31), and here to have the taste of fresh oil. The discrepancy in these statements is only apparent; for in the latter the manna is described in its raw state; in the former, after it was ground and 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.

10-15. *Moses said unto the Lord, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant*, etc. — It is impossible not to sympathize with his feelings although the tone and language of his remonstrances to God cannot be justified. He was in a most distressing situation — having a mighty multitude under his care, with no means of satisfying their clamorous demands. *Their* conduct shows how deeply they had been debased and demoralized by long oppression: while *his* reveals a state of mind agonized and almost overwhelmed by a sense of the undivided responsibilities of his office.

16, 17. *the Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders* — (^{<0186>}Exodus 3:16 ^{<0187>}5:6 ^{<0249>}24:9 ^{<0282>}18:21,24 ^{<0345>}Leviticus 4:15). An order of seventy was to be created, either by a selection from the existing staff of elders or by the appointment of new ones, empowered to assist him by their collective wisdom and experience in the onerous cares of government. The Jewish writers say that this was the origin of the Sanhedrin, or supreme appellate court of their nation. But there is every reason to believe that it was only a temporary expedient, adopted to meet a trying exigency.

17. *I will come down* — that is, not in a visible manner or by local descent, but by the tokens of the divine presence and operations.

and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee — “The spirit” means the gifts and influences of the Spirit (^{<0278>}Numbers 27:18 ^{<0308>}Joel 2:28 ^{<0379>}John 7:39 ^{<0342>}1 Corinthians 14:12), and by “taking the spirit of Moses, and putting it upon them,” is not to be understood that the qualities of the great leader were to be in any degree impaired but that the elders would be endowed with a portion of the same gifts, especially of prophecy

(⁴⁰¹²⁵Numbers 11:25) — that is, an extraordinary penetration in discovering hidden and settling difficult things.

18-20. *say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against to-morrow, and ye shall eat flesh* — that is, “prepare yourselves,” by repentance and submission, to receive to-morrow the flesh you clamor for. But it is evident that the tenor of the language implied a severe rebuke and that the blessing promised would prove a curse.

21-23. *Moses said, The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand ... Shall the flocks and herds be slain for them, to suffice them?* — The great leader, struck with a promise so astonishing as that of suddenly furnishing, in the midst of the desert, more than two millions of people with flesh for a whole month, betrayed an incredulous spirit, surprising in one who had witnessed so many stupendous miracles. But it is probable that it was only a feeling of the moment — at all events, the incredulous doubt was uttered only to himself — and not, as afterwards, publicly and to the scandal of the people. (See on ⁴⁰¹⁰⁰Numbers 20:10). It was, therefore, sharply reprov'd, but not punished.

24. *Moses ... gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people* — The tabernacle was chosen for the convocation, because, as it was there God manifested Himself, there His Spirit would be directly imparted — there the minds of the elders themselves would be inspired with reverential awe and their office invested with greater respect in the eyes of the people.

25. *when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease* — As those elders were constituted civil governors, their “prophesying” must be understood as meaning the performance of their civil and sacred duties by the help of those extraordinary endowments they had received; and by their not “ceasing” we understand, either that they continued to exercise their gifts uninterruptedly the first day (see ⁴⁰¹²⁴1 Samuel 19:24), or that these were permanent gifts, which qualified them in an eminent degree for discharging the duty of public magistrates.

26-29. *But there remained two of the men in the camp* — They did not repair with the rest to the tabernacle, either from modesty in shrinking from the assumption of a public office, or being prevented by some ceremonial defilement. They, however, received the gifts of the Spirit as

well as their brethren. And when Moses was urged to forbid their prophesying, his answer displayed a noble disinterestedness as well as zeal for the glory of God akin to that of our Lord (^{<4182>}Mark 9:39).

31-35. *There went forth a wind from the Lord, and brought quails from the sea,* etc. — These migratory birds (see on ^{<1763>}Exodus 16:13) were on their journey from Egypt, when “the wind from the Lord,” an east wind (^{<4583>}Psalms 78:26) forcing them to change their course, wafted them over the Red Sea to the camp of Israel.

let them fall a day’s journey — If the journey of an individual is meant, this space might be thirty miles; if the inspired historian referred to the whole host, ten miles would be as far as they could march in one day in the sandy desert under a vertical sun. Assuming it to be twenty miles this immense cloud of quails (^{<1763>}Exodus 16:13) covered a space of forty miles in diameter. Others reduce it to sixteen. But it is doubtful whether the measurement be from the center or the extremities of the camp. It is evident, however, that the language describes the countless number of these quails.

as it were two cubits high — Some have supposed that they fell on the ground above each other to that height — a supposition which would leave a vast quantity useless as food to the Israelites, who were forbidden to eat any animal that died of itself or from which the blood was not poured out. Others think that, being exhausted with a long flight, they could not fly more than three feet above the earth, and so were easily felled or caught. A more recent explanation applies the phrase, “two cubits high,” not to the accumulation of the mass, but to the size of the individual birds. Flocks of large red-legged cranes, three feet high, measuring seven feet from tip to tip, have been frequently seen on the western shores of the Gulf of Akaba, or eastern arm of the Red Sea [STANLEY; SHUBERT].

32. *people stood up* — rose up in eager haste — some at one time, others at another; some, perhaps through avidity, both day and night.

ten homers — ten asses’ loads; or, “homers” may be used indefinitely (as in ^{<17184>}Exodus 8:14 ^{<171516>}Judges 15:16); and “ten” for many: so that the phrase “ten homers” is equivalent to “great heaps.” The collectors were probably one or two from each family; and, being distrustful of God’s goodness,

they gathered not for immediate consumption only, but for future use. In eastern and southern seas, innumerable quails are often seen, which, when weary, fall down, covering every spot on the deck and rigging of vessels; and in Egypt they come in such myriads that the people knock them down with sticks.

spread them all abroad for themselves round about the camp — salted and dried them for future use, by the simple process to which they had been accustomed in Egypt.

33. *while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed* — literally, “cut off”; that is, before the supply of quails, which lasted a month (^{CH13}Numbers 11:20), was exhausted. 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 — a heavy, solid diet of animal food, of which they seem to have partaken to so intemperate a degree as to produce a general surfeit, and fatal consequences. On a former occasion their murmurings for flesh were raised (^{CH13}Exodus 16:1-8) because they were in want of food. Here they proceeded, not from necessity, but wanton, lustful desire; and their sin, in the righteous judgment of God, was made to carry its own punishment.

34. *called the name of that place Kibrothhattaavah* — literally, “The graves of lust,” or “Those that lusted”; so that the name of the place proves that the mortality was confined to those who had indulged inordinately.

35. *Hazereth* — The extreme southern station of this route was a watering-place in a spacious plain, now Ain-Haderah.

CHAPTER 12

NUMBERS 12:1-9.

MIRIAM'S AND AARON'S SEDITION.

1. *an Ethiopian woman* — *Hebrew*, “a Cushite woman” — Arabia was usually called in Scripture the land of Cush, its inhabitants being descendants of that son of Ham (see on ^(12:15)Exodus 2:15) and being accounted generally a vile and contemptible race (see on ^(9:7)Amos 9:7). The occasion of this seditious outbreak on the part of Miriam and Aaron against Moses was the great change made in the government by the adoption of the seventy rulers [^(11:16)Numbers 11:16]. Their irritating disparagement of his wife (who, in all probability, was Zipporah [^(2:21)Exodus 2:21], and not a second wife he had recently married) arose from jealousy of the relatives, through whose influence the innovation had been first made (^(18:13-26)Exodus 18:13-26), while they were overlooked or neglected. Miriam is mentioned before Aaron as being the chief instigator and leader of the sedition.

2. *Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not also spoken by us?* — The prophetic name and character was bestowed upon Aaron (^(4:15,16)Exodus 4:15,16) and Miriam (^(15:20)Exodus 15:20); and, therefore, they considered the conduct of Moses, in exercising an exclusive authority in this matter, as an encroachment on their rights (^(6:4)Micah 6:4).

3. *the man Moses was very meek* — (^(14:13)Exodus 14:13 ^(21:7)21:7 ^(32:12,13)32:12,13 ^(9:18)Deuteronomy 9:18). This observation might have been made to account for Moses taking no notice of their angry reproaches and for God's interposing so speedily for the vindication of His servant's cause. The circumstance of Moses recording an eulogium on a distinguishing excellence of his own character is not without a parallel among the sacred writers, when forced to it by the insolence and contempt of opponents (^(11:5)2 Corinthians 11:5 ^(12:11,12)2 Corinthians 12:11,12). But it is not improbable that, as this verse appears to be a parenthesis, it may have been inserted as

a gloss by Ezra or some later prophet. Others, instead of “very meek,” suggest “very afflicted,” as the proper rendering.

4. *the Lord spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam* — The divine interposition was made thus openly and immediately, in order to suppress the sedition and prevent its spreading among the people.

5. *the Lord came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood the door of the tabernacle* — without gaining admission, as was the usual privilege of Aaron, though it was denied to all other men and women. This public exclusion was designed to be a token of the divine displeasure.

6, 7. *Hear now my words* — A difference of degree is here distinctly expressed in the gifts and authority even of divinely commissioned prophets. Moses, having been set over all God’s house, (that is, His church and people), was consequently invested with supremacy over Miriam and Aaron also and privileged beyond all others by direct and clear manifestations of the presence and will of God.

8. *with him will I speak mouth to mouth* — immediately, not by an interpreter, nor by visionary symbols presented to his fancy.

apparently — plainly and surely.

not in dark speeches — parables or similitudes.

the similitude of the Lord shall he behold — not the face or essence of God, who is invisible (^{<0230>}Exodus 33:20 ^{<5015>}Colossians 1:15 ^{<0118>}John 1:18); but some unmistakable evidence of His glorious presence (^{<0230>}Exodus 33:2 ^{<0345>}34:5). The latter clause should have been conjoined with the preceding one, thus: “not in dark speeches, and in a figure shall he behold the Lord.” The slight change in the punctuation removes all appearance of contradiction to ^{<0115>}Deuteronomy 4:15.

NUMBERS 12:10-16.

MIRIAM'S LEPROSY.

10. *the cloud departed from the tabernacle* — that is, from the door to resume its permanent position over the mercy seat.

Miriam became leprous — This malady in its most malignant form (^{<0049>}Exodus 4:6 ^{<0167>}2 Kings 5:27) as its color, combined with its sudden appearance, proved, was inflicted as a divine judgment; and she was made the victim, either because of her extreme violence or because the leprosy on Aaron would have interrupted or dishonored the holy service.

11-13. On the humble and penitential submission of Aaron, Moses interceded for both the offenders, especially for Miriam, who was restored; not, however, till she had been made, by her exclusion, a public example [^{<0124>}Numbers 12:14,15].

14. *her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days?* — The Jews, in common with all people in the East, seem to have had an intense abhorrence of spitting, and for a parent to express his displeasure by doing so on the person of one of his children, or even on the ground in his presence, separated that child as unclean from society for seven days.

15. *the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again* — Either not to crush her by a sentence of overwhelming severity or not to expose her, being a prophetess, to popular contempt.

16. *pitched in the wilderness of Paran* — The station of encampments seems to have been Rithma (^{<0639>}Numbers 33:19).

CHAPTER 13

NUMBERS 13:1-33.

THE NAMES OF THE MEN WHO WERE SENT TO SEARCH THE LAND.

1, 2. *The Lord spake unto Moses, Send thou men, that they may search the land, of Canaan* — Compare ^{<OR12>}Deuteronomy 1:22, whence it appears, that while the proposal of delegating confidential men from each tribe to explore the land of Canaan emanated from the people who petitioned for it, the measure received the special sanction of God, who granted their request at once as a trial, and a punishment of their distrust.

3. *those men were heads of the children of Israel* — Not the princes who are named (^{<OR14>}Numbers 10:14-16,18-20,22-27), but chiefs, leading men though not of the first rank.

16. *Oshea* — that is, “a desire of salvation.” Jehoshua, by prefixing the name of God, means “divinely appointed,” “head of salvation,” “Savior,” the same as Jesus [^{<OR21>}Matthew 1:21, *Margin*].

17. *Get you up this way ... , and go up into the mountain* — Mount Seir (^{<OR12>}Deuteronomy 1:2), which lay directly from Sinai across the wilderness of Paran, in a northeasterly direction into the southern parts of the promised land.

20. *Now the time was the time of the first grapes* — This was in August, when the first clusters are gathered. The second are gathered in September, and the third in October. The spies’ absence for a period of forty days determines the grapes they brought from Eshcol to have been of the second period.

21-24. *So they ... searched the land* — They advanced from south to north, reconnoitering the whole land.

the wilderness of Zin — a long level plain, or deep valley of sand, the monotony of which is relieved by a few tamarisk and rethem trees. Under the names of El Ghor and El Araba, it forms the continuation of the Jordan valley, extending from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Akaba.

Rehob — or, Beth-rehob, was a city and district situated, according to some, eastward of Sidon; and, according to others, it is the same as El Hule, an extensive and fertile champaign country, at the foot of Anti-libanus, a few leagues below Paneas.

as men come to Hamath — or, “the entering in of Hamath” (¹²⁴²⁵2 Kings 14:25), now the valley of Balbeck, a mountain pass or opening in the northern frontier, which formed the extreme limit in that direction of the inheritance of Israel. From the mention of these places, the route of the scouts appears to have been along the course of the Jordan in their advance; and their return was by the western border through the territories of the Sidonians and Philistines.

22. *unto Hebron* — situated in the heart of the mountains of Judah, in the southern extremity of Palestine. The town or “cities of Hebron,” as it is expressed in the *Hebrew*, consists of a number of sheikdoms distinct from each other, standing at the foot of one of those hills that form a bowl round and enclose it. “The children of Anak” mentioned in this verse seem to have been also chiefs of townships; and this coincidence of polity, existing in ages so distant from each other, is remarkable [VERE MONRO]. Hebron (Kirjath Arba, ¹²⁴²⁶Genesis 23:2) was one of the oldest cities in the world.

Zoan — (the Tunis of the Greeks) was situated on one of the eastern branches of the Nile, near the lake Menzala, and was the early royal residence of the Pharaohs. It boasted a higher antiquity than any other city in Egypt. Its name, which signifies flat and level, is descriptive of its situation in the low grounds of the Delta.

23. *they came unto the brook of Eshcol* — that is, “the torrent of the cluster.” Its location was a little to the southwest of Hebron. The valley and its sloping hills are still covered with vineyards, the character of whose fruit corresponds to its ancient celebrity.

and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes — The grapes reared in this locality are still as magnificent as formerly — they are said by one to be equal in size to prunes, and compared by another to a man's thumb. One cluster sometimes weights ten or twelve pounds. The mode of carrying the cluster cut down by the spies, though not necessary from its weight, was evidently adopted to preserve it entire as a specimen of the productions of the promised land; and the impression made by the sight of it would be all the greater because the Israelites were familiar only with the scanty vines and small grapes of Egypt.

26. *they came ... to Kadesh* — an important encampment of the Israelites. But its exact situation is not definitely known, nor is it determined whether it is the same or a different place from Kadesh-barnea. It is supposed to be identical with Ain-el-Weibeh, a famous spring on the eastern side of the desert [ROBINSON], or also with Petra [STANLEY].

27, 28. *they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey* — The report was given publicly in the audience of the people, and it was artfully arranged to begin their narrative with commendations of the natural fertility of the country in order that their subsequent slanders might the more readily receive credit.

29. *The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south* — Their territory lay between the Dead and the Red Seas, skirting the borders of Canaan.

Hittites ... dwell in the mountains — Their settlements were in the southern and mountainous part of Palestine (^{Gen 23:7}).

the Canaanites dwell by the sea — The remnant of the original inhabitants, who had been dispossessed by the Philistines, were divided into two nomadic hordes — one settled eastward near the Jordan; the other westward, by the Mediterranean.

32. *a land that eateth up the inhabitants* — that is, an unhealthy climate and country. Jewish writers say that in the course of their travels they saw a great many funerals, vast numbers of the Canaanites being cut off at that time, in the providence of God, by a plague or the hornet (^{Josh 24:12}).

men of a great stature — This was evidently a false and exaggerated report, representing, from timidity or malicious artifice, what was true of a few as descriptive of the people generally.

33. *there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak* — The name is derived from the son of Arba, a great man among the Arabians (^{אֲרַבִּי} Joshua 15:14), who probably obtained his appellation from wearing a splendid collar or chain round his neck, as the word imports. The epithet “giant” evidently refers here to stature. (See on ^{גִּבּוֹרִים} Genesis 6:4). And it is probable the Anakims were a distinguished family, or perhaps a select body of warriors, chosen for their extraordinary size.

we were in our own sight as grasshoppers — a strong Orientalism, by which the treacherous spies gave an exaggerated report of the physical strength of the people of Canaan.

CHAPTER 14

NUMBERS 14:1-45.

THE PEOPLE MURMUR AT THE SPIES' REPORT.

1. *all the congregation lifted up their voice and cried* — Not literally all, for there were some exceptions.
- 2-4. *Would God that we had died in Egypt* — Such insolence to their generous leaders, and such base ingratitude to God, show the deep degradation of the Israelites, and the absolute necessity of the decree that debarred that generation from entering the promised land [Numbers 14:29-35]. They were punished by their wishes being granted to die in that wilderness [Hebrews 3:17 Jude 1:5]. A leader to reconduct them to Egypt is spoken of (Nehemiah 9:17) as actually nominated. The sinfulness and insane folly of their conduct are almost incredible. Their conduct, however, is paralleled by too many among us, who shrink from the smallest difficulties and rather remain slaves to sin than resolutely try to surmount the obstacles that lie in their way to the Canaan above.
5. *Moses and Aaron fell on their faces* — as humble and earnest suppliants — either to the people, entreating them to desist from so perverse a design; or rather, to God, as the usual and only refuge from the violence of that tumultuous and stiff-necked rabble — a hopeful means of softening and impressing their hearts.
6. *Joshua ... and Caleb, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes* — The two honest spies testified their grief and horror, in the strongest manner, at the mutiny against Moses and the blasphemy against God; while at the same time they endeavored, by a truthful statement, to persuade the people of the ease with which they might obtain possession of so desirable a country, provided they did not, by their rebellion and ingratitude, provoke God to abandon them.

- 8. *a land flowing with milk and honey*** — a general expression, descriptive of a rich and fertile country. The two articles specified were among the principal products of the Holy Land.
- 9. *their defense is departed*** — *Hebrew*, “their shadow.” The Sultan of Turkey and the Shah of Persia are called “the shadow of God,” “the refuge of the world.” So that the meaning of the clause, “their defense is departed from them,” is, that the favor of God was now lost to those whose iniquities were full (^{-Q156}Genesis 15:16), and transferred to the Israelites.
- 10. *the glory of the Lord appeared*** — It was seasonably manifested on this great emergency to rescue His ambassadors from their perilous situation.
- 12. *the Lord said, ... I will smite them with the pestilence*** — not a final decree, but a threatening, suspended, as appeared from the issue, on the intercession of Moses and the repentance of Israel.
- 17. *let the power of my Lord be great*** — be magnified.
- 21. *all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord*** — This promise, in its full acceptation, remains to be verified by the eventual and universal prevalence of Christianity in the world. But the terms were used restrictively in respect to the occasion, to the report which would spread over all the land of the “terrible things in righteousness” [^{-B10}Psalm 65:5] which God would do in the infliction of the doom described, to which that rebellious race was now consigned.
- 22. *ten times*** — very frequently.
- 24. *my servant Caleb*** — Joshua was also excepted, but he is not named because he was no longer in the ranks of the people, being a constant attendant on Moses.
- because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully*** — Under the influence of God’s Spirit, Caleb was a man of bold, generous, heroic courage, above worldly anxieties and fears.
- 25. (*Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwelt in the valley*)** — that is, on the other side of the Idumean mountain, at whose base they were then encamped. Those nomad tribes had at that time occupied it with a

determination to oppose the further progress of the Hebrew people. Hence God gave the command that they seek a safe and timely retreat into the desert, to escape the pursuit of those resolute enemies, to whom, with their wives and children, they would fall a helpless prey because they had forfeited the presence and protection of God. This verse forms an important part of the narrative and should be freed from the parenthetical form which our English translators have given it.

30. *save Caleb ... and Joshua* — These are specially mentioned, as honorable exceptions to the rest of the scouts, and also as the future leaders of the people. But it appears that some of the old generation did not join in the mutinous murmuring, including in that number the whole order of the priests (⁶⁸Joshua 14:1).

34. *ye shall know my breach of promise* — that is, in consequence of your violation of the covenant betwixt you and Me, by breaking the terms of it, it shall be null and void on My part, as I shall withhold the blessings I promised in that covenant to confer on you on condition of your obedience.

36-38. *those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the Lord* — Ten of the spies struck dead on the spot — either by the pestilence or some other judgment. This great and appalling mortality clearly betokened the hand of the Lord.

40-45. *they rose up early in the morning, and gat them up into the top of the mountain* — Notwithstanding the tidings that Moses communicated and which diffused a general feeling of melancholy and grief throughout the camp, the impression was of very brief continuance. They rushed from one extreme of rashness and perversity to another, and the obstinacy of their rebellious spirit was evinced by their active preparations to ascend the hill, notwithstanding the divine warning they had received not to undertake that enterprise.

for we have sinned — that is, realizing our sin, we now repent of it, and are eager to do as Caleb and Joshua exhorted us — or, as some render it, *though* we have sinned, we trust God will yet give us the land of promise. The entreaties of their prudent and pious leader, who represented to them that their enemies, scaling the other side of the valley, would post

themselves on the top of the hill before them, were disregarded. How strangely perverse the conduct of the Israelites, who, shortly before, were afraid that, though their Almighty King was with them, they could not get possession of the land; and 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. The Amalekites and Canaanites, who had been lying in ambuscade expecting their movement, rushed down upon them from the heights and became the instruments of punishing their guilty rebellion.

45. *even unto Hormah* — The name was afterwards given to that place in memory of the immense slaughter of the Israelites on this occasion.

CHAPTER 15

NUMBERS 15:1-41.

THE LAW OF SUNDRY OFFERINGS.

1, 2. *The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel* — Some infer from ^{<0152>}Numbers 15:23 that the date of this communication must be fixed towards the close of the wanderings in the wilderness; and, also, that all the sacrifices prescribed in the law were to be offered only after the settlement in Canaan.

3. *make an offering by fire unto the Lord, a burnt offering* — It is evident that a peace offering is referred to because this term is frequently used in such a sense (^{<0152>}Exodus 18:12 ^{<0175>}Leviticus 17:5).

4. *tenth deal* — that is, an omer, the tenth part of an ephah (^{<0161>}Exodus 16:36).

fourth part of an hin of oil — This element shows it to have been different from such meat offerings as were made by themselves, and not merely accompaniments of other sacrifices.

6-12. *two tenth deals* — The quantity of flour was increased because the sacrifice was of superior value to the former. The accessory sacrifices were always increased in proportion to the greater worth and magnitude of its principal.

13-16. *a stranger* — one who had become a proselyte. There were scarcely any of the national privileges of the Israelites, in which the Gentile stranger might not, on conforming to certain conditions, fully participate.

19. *when ye eat of the bread of the land, ye shall offer up an heave offering* — The offering prescribed was to precede the act of eating.

unto the Lord — that is, the priests of the Lord (^{<0343>}Ezekiel 44:30).

20. *heave offering of the threshing-floor* — meaning the corn on the threshing-floor; that is, after harvest.

so shall ye heave it — to the priests accompanying the ceremony with the same rites.

22. *if ye have erred, and not observed all these commandments*, etc. — respecting the performance of divine worship, and the rites and ceremonies that constitute the holy service. The law relates only to any omission and consequently is quite different from *that* laid down in ^{<CRH>}Leviticus 4:13, which implies a transgression or positive neglect of some observances required. *This* law relates to private parties or individual tribes; *that* to the whole congregation of Israel.

24-26. *if aught be committed by ignorance* — The Mosaic ritual was complicated, and the ceremonies to be gone through in the various instances of purification which are specified, would expose a worshipper, through ignorance, to the risk of omitting or neglecting some of them. This law includes the stranger in the number of those for whom the sacrifice was offered for the sin of general ignorance.

27-29. *if any soul sin through ignorance* — not only in common with the general body of the people, but his personal sins were to be expiated in the same manner.

30. *the soul that doeth aught presumptuously* — *Hebrew*, “with an high” or “uplifted hand” — that is, knowingly, wilfully, obstinately. In this sense the phraseology occurs (^{<CRH>}Exodus 14:8 ^{<CRH>}Leviticus 26:21 ^{<CRH>}Psalms 19:13).

the same reproacheth the Lord — sets Him at open defiance and dishonors His majesty.

31. *his iniquity shall be upon him* — The punishment of his sins shall fall on himself individually; no guilt shall be incurred by the nation, unless there be a criminal carelessness in overlooking the offense.

32-34. *a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day* — This incident is evidently narrated as an instance of presumptuous sin. The mere gathering of sticks was not a sinful act and might be necessary for fuel to

warm him or to make ready his food. But its being done on the Sabbath altered the entire character of the action. The law of the Sabbath being a plain and positive commandment, this transgression of it was a known and wilful sin, and it was marked by several aggravations. For the deed was done with unblushing boldness in broad daylight, in open defiance of the divine authority — in flagrant inconsistency with His religious connection with Israel, as the covenant-people of God; and it was an application to improper purposes of time, which God had consecrated to Himself and the solemn duties of religion. The offender was brought before the rulers, who, on hearing the painful report, were at a loss to determine what ought to be done. That they should have felt any embarrassment in such a case may seem surprising, in the face of the sabbath law (⁴²³¹⁴Exodus 31:14). Their difficulty probably arose from this being the first public offense of the kind which had occurred; and the appeal might be made to remove all ground of complaint — to produce a more striking effect, so that the fate of this criminal might be a beacon to warn all Israelites in the future.

35, 36. *The Lord said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death*

— The Lord was King, as well as God of Israel, and the offense being a violation of the law of the realm, the Sovereign Judge gave orders that this man should be put to death; and, moreover, He required the whole congregation unite in executing the fatal sentence.

38. *bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments*

— These were narrow strips, in a wing-like form, wrapped over the shoulders and on various parts of the attire. “Fringe,” however, is the English rendering of two distinct *Hebrew* words — the one meaning a narrow lappet or edging, called the “hem” or “border” (⁴²³¹⁵Matthew 23:5 ⁴²³¹⁶Luke 8:44), which, in order to make it more attractive to the eye and consequently more serviceable to the purpose described, was covered with a riband of blue or rather purple color; the other term signifies strings with tassels at the end, fastened to the corners of the garment. Both of these are seen on the Egyptian and Assyrian frocks; and as the Jewish people were commanded by express and repeated ordinances to have them, the fashion was rendered subservient, in their case, to awaken high and religious associations — to keep them in habitual remembrance of the divine commandments.

41. *I am the Lord your God* — The import of this solemn conclusion is, that though He was displeased with them for their frequent rebellions, for which they would be doomed to forty years' wanderings, He would not abandon them but continue His divine protection and care of them till they were brought into the land of promise.

CHAPTER 16

NUMBERS 16:1-30.

THE REBELLION OF KORAH.

1, 2. *Now Korah, the son of Izhar* — Izhar, brother of Amram (^{<0188>}Exodus 6:18), was the second son of Kohath, and for some reason unrecorded he had been supplanted by a descendant of the fourth son of Kohath, who was appointed prince or chief of the Kohathites (^{<0081>}Numbers 3:30). Discontent with the preferment over him of a younger relative was probably the originating cause of this seditious movement on the part of Korah.

Dathan and Abiram, ... and On — These were confederate leaders in the rebellion, but On seems to have afterwards withdrawn from the conspiracy (compare ^{<0482>}Numbers 16:12,24,25,27 26:9 ^{<6109>}Deuteronomy 11:6 ^{<5467>}Psalms 106:17)

took men — The latter mentioned individuals, being all sons of Reuben, the eldest of Jacob's family, had been stimulated to this insurrection on the pretext that Moses had, by an arbitrary arrangement, taken away the right of primogeniture, which had vested the hereditary dignity of the priesthood in the first-born of every family, with a view of transferring the hereditary exercise of the sacred functions to a particular branch of his own house; and that this gross instance of partiality to his own relations, to the permanent detriment of others, was a sufficient ground for refusing allegiance to his government. In addition to this grievance, another cause of jealousy and dissatisfaction that rankled in the breasts of the Reubenites was the advancement of Judah to the leadership among the tribes. These malcontents had been incited by the artful representations of Korah (^{<6111>}Jude 1:11), with whom the position of their camp on the south side afforded them facilities of frequent intercourse. In addition to his feeling of personal wrongs, Korah participated in their desire (if he did not originate the attempt) to recover their lost rights of primogeniture. When the

conspiracy was ripe, they openly and boldly declared its object, and at the head of two hundred fifty princes, charged Moses with an ambitious and unwarrantable usurpation of authority, especially in the appropriation of the priesthood, for they disputed the claim of Aaron also to pre-eminence [⁴⁰⁴⁶Numbers 16:3].

3. *they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron* — The assemblage seems to have been composed of the whole band of conspirators; and they grounded their complaint on the fact that the whole people, being separated to the divine service (⁴⁰⁹⁰Exodus 19:6), were equally qualified to present offerings on the altar, and that God, being graciously, present among them by the tabernacle and the cloud, evinced His readiness to receive sacrifices from the hand of any others as well as from theirs.

4. *when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face* — This attitude of prostration indicated not only his humble and earnest desire that God would interpose to free him from the false and odious imputation, but also his strong sense of the daring sin involved in this proceeding. Whatever feelings may be entertained respecting Aaron, who had formerly headed a sedition himself [⁴⁰⁴⁷Numbers 12:1], it is impossible not to sympathize with Moses in this difficult emergency. But he was a devout man, and the prudential course he adopted was probably the dictate of that heavenly wisdom with which, in answer to his prayers, he was endowed.

5-11. *he spake unto Korah and unto all his company* — They were first addressed, not only because they were a party headed by his own cousin and Moses might hope to have more influence in that quarter, but because they were stationed near the tabernacle; and especially because an expostulation was the more weighty coming from him who was a Levite himself, and who was excluded along with his family from the priesthood. But to bring the matter to an issue, he proposed a test which would afford a decisive evidence of the divine appointment.

Even to-morrow — literally, “in the morning,” the usual time of meeting in the East for the settlement of public affairs.

the Lord will show who are his, ... even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him — that is, will bear attestation to his ministry by some visible or miraculous token of His approval.

6, 7. *Take you censers, Korah, and all his company*, etc. — that is, since you aspire to the priesthood, then go, perform the highest function of the office — that of offering incense; and if you are accepted well. How magnanimous the conduct of Moses, who was now as willing that God's people should be priests, as formerly that they should be prophets (⁻⁰¹¹²³Numbers 11:29). But he warned them that they were making a perilous experiment.

12-14. *Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram* — in a separate interview, the ground of their mutiny being different; for while Korah murmured against the exclusive appropriation of the priesthood to Aaron and his family, they were opposed to the supremacy of Moses in civil power. They refused to obey the summons; and their refusal was grounded on the plausible pretext that their stay in the desert was prolonged for some secret and selfish purposes of the leader, who was conducting them like blind men wherever it suited him.

15. *Moses was very wroth* — Though the meekest of all men [⁻⁰¹¹²³Numbers 12:3], he could not restrain his indignation at these unjust and groundless charges; and the highly excited state of his feeling was evinced by the utterance of a brief exclamation in the mixed form of a prayer and an impassioned assertion of his integrity. (Compare ⁻⁰¹¹²³1 Samuel 12:3).

and said unto the Lord, Respect not thou their offering — He calls it *their* offering, because, though it was to be offered by Korah and his Levitical associates, it was the united appeal of all the mutineers for deciding the contested claims of Moses and Aaron.

16-18. *Moses said unto Korah, Be thou and all thy company before the Lord* — that is, at “the door of the tabernacle” (⁻⁰¹¹²³Numbers 16:18), that the assembled people might witness the experiment and be properly impressed by the issue.

17. *two hundred fifty censers* — probably the small platters, common in Egyptian families, where incense was offered to household deities and

which had been among the precious things borrowed at their departure (^(12:35)Exodus 12:35,36).

20, 21. *the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, saying, Separate yourselves from among this congregation* — Curiosity to witness the exciting spectacle attracted a vast concourse of the people, and it would seem that the popular mind had been incited to evil by the clamors of the mutineers against Moses and Aaron. There was something in their behavior very offensive to God; for after His glory had appeared — as at the installation of Aaron (^(9:23)Leviticus 9:23), so now for his confirmation in the sacred office — He bade Moses and Aaron withdraw from the assembly “that He might consume them in a moment.”

22. *they fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh* — The benevolent importunity of their prayer was the more remarkable that the intercession was made for their enemies.

24-26. *Speak unto the congregation, ... Get you up from about the tabernacle* — Moses was attended in the execution of this mission by the elders. The united and urgent entreaties of so many dignified personages produced the desired effect of convincing the people of their crime, and of withdrawing them from the company of men who were doomed to destruction, lest, being partakers of their sins, they should perish along with them.

27. *the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram* — Korah being a Kohathite, his tent could not have been in the Reubenite camp, and it does not appear that he himself was on the spot where Dathan and Abiram stood with their families. Their attitude of defiance indicated their daring and impenitent character, equally regardless of God and man.

28-34. *Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me to do all these works* — The awful catastrophe of the earthquake which, as predicted by Moses, swallowed up those impious rebels in a living tomb, gave the divine attestation to the mission of Moses and struck the spectators with solemn awe.

35. *there came out a fire from the Lord* — that is, from the cloud. This seems to describe the destruction of Korah and those Levites who with

him aspired to the functions of the priesthood. (See ^{<0431>}Numbers 26:11,58 ^{<1022>}1 Chronicles 6:22,37).

37-40. *Speak unto Eleazar* — He was selected lest the high priest might contract defilement from going among the dead carcasses.

39, 40. *the brazen censers ... made broad plates to be a memorial* — The altar of burnt offerings, being made of wood and covered with brass, this additional covering of broad plates not only rendered it doubly secure against the fire, but served as a warning beacon to deter all from future invasions of the priesthood.

41. *the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord* — What a strange exhibition of popular prejudice and passion — to blame the leaders for saving the rebels! Yet Moses and Aaron interceded for the people — the high priest perilling his own life in doing good to that perverse race.

48. *he stood between the living and the dead* — The plague seems to have begun in the extremities of the camp. Aaron, in this remarkable act, was a type of Christ.

CHAPTER 17

^{<0170>}NUMBERS 17:1-13.

AARON'S ROD FLOURISHES.

2-5. *Speak unto the children of Israel* — The controversy with Moses and Aaron about the priesthood was of such a nature and magnitude as required a decisive and authoritative settlement. For the removal of all doubts and the silencing of all murmuring in the future regarding the holder of the office, a miracle was wrought of a remarkable character and permanent duration; and in the manner of performing it, all the people were made to have a direct and special interest.

take of every one ... princes ... twelve rods — As the princes, being the oldest sons of the chief family, and heads of their tribes, might have advanced the best claims to the priesthood, if that sacred dignity was to be shared among all the tribes, they were therefore selected, and being twelve in number — that of Joseph being counted only one — Moses was ordered to see that the name of each was inscribed — a practice borrowed from the Egyptians — upon his rod or wand of office. The name of Aaron rather than of Levi was used, as the latter name would have opened a door of controversy among the Levites; and as there was to be one rod only for the head of each tribe, the express appointment of a rod for Aaron determined him to be the head of that tribe, as well as that branch or family of the tribe to which the priestly dignity should belong. These rods were to be laid in the tabernacle close to the ark (compare ^{<0170>}Numbers 17:10 and ^{<300>}Hebrews 9:4), where a divine token was promised that would for all time terminate the dispute.

6. *the rod of Aaron was among their rods* — either one of the twelve, or, as many suppose, a thirteenth in the midst (^{<300>}Hebrews 9:4). The rods were of dry sticks or wands, probably old, as transmitted from one head of the family to a succeeding.

8. *Moses went into the tabernacle* — being privileged to do so on this occasion by the special command of God. And he there beheld the remarkable spectacle of Aaron's rod — which, according to JOSEPHUS, was a stick of an almond tree, bearing fruit in three different stages at once — buds, blossoms, and fruit.

10. *Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels* — For if, after all admonitions and judgments, seconded by miracles, the people should still rebel, they would certainly pay the penalty by death.

12, 13. *Behold, we die, we perish* — an exclamation of fear, both from the remembrance of former judgments, and the apprehension of future relapses into murmuring.

13. *cometh any thing near* — that is, nearer than he ought to do; an error into which many may fall. Will the stern justice of God overtake every slight offense? We shall all be destroyed. Some, however, regard this exclamation as the symptom or a new discontent, rather than the indication of a reverential and submissive spirit. Let us fear and sin not.

CHAPTER 18

<OR12> NUMBERS 18:1-7.

THE CHARGE OF THE PRIESTS AND LEVITES.

1. *the Lord said unto Aaron, Thou and thy sons and thy father's house with thee shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary* — Security is here given to the people from the fears expressed (<OR12>Numbers 17:12), by the responsibility of attending to all sacred things being devolved upon the priesthood, together with the penalties incurred through neglect; and thus the solemn responsibilities annexed to their high dignity, of having to answer not only for their own sins, but also for the sins of the people, were calculated in a great measure to remove all feeling of envy at the elevation of Aaron's family, when the honor was weighed in the balance with its burdens and dangers.

2-7. *thy brethren also of the tribe of Levi* — The departments of the sacred office, to be filled respectively by the priests and Levites, are here assigned to each. To the priests was committed the charge of the sanctuary and the altar, while the Levites were to take care of everything else about the tabernacle. The Levites were to attend the priests as servants — bestowed on them as “gifts” to aid in the service of the tabernacle — while the high and dignified office of the priesthood was a “service of gift.” “A stranger,” that is, one, neither a priest nor a Levite, who should intrude into any departments of the sacred office, should incur the penalty of death.

<OR12> NUMBERS 18:8-20.

THE PRIESTS' PORTION.

8-13. *the Lord spake unto Aaron, Behold, I also have given thee the charge of my heave offerings* — A recapitulation is made in this passage

of certain perquisites specially appropriated to the maintenance of the priests. They were parts of the votive and freewill offerings, including both meat and bread, wine and oil, and the first-fruits, which formed a large and valuable item.

14. *Every thing devoted in Israel shall be thine* — provided it was adapted for food or consumable by use; for the gold and silver vessels that were dedicated as the spoils of victory were not given to the priests, but for the use and adornment of the sacred edifice.

19. *it is a covenant of salt* — that is, a perpetual ordinance. This figurative form of expression was evidently founded on the conservative property of salt, which keeps meat from corruption; and hence it became an emblem of inviolability and permanence. It is a common phrase among Oriental people, who consider the eating of salt a pledge of fidelity, binding them in a covenant of friendship. Hence the partaking of the altar meats, which were appropriated to the priests on condition of their services and of which salt formed a necessary accompaniment, was naturally called “a covenant of salt” (^{ORIG}Leviticus 2:13).

^{ORIG}NUMBERS 18:21-32.

THE LEVITES' PORTION.

21, 22. *I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve* — Neither the priests nor the Levites were to possess any allotments of land but to depend entirely upon Him who liberally provided for them out of His own portion; and this law was subservient to many important purposes — such as that, being exempted from the cares and labors of worldly business, they might be exclusively devoted to His service; that a bond of mutual love and attachment might be formed between the people and the Levites, who, as performing religious services for the people, derived their subsistence from them; and further, that being the more easily dispersed among the different tribes, they might be more useful in instructing and directing the people.

23. *But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation: they shall bear their iniquity* — They were to be responsible for the right discharge of those duties that were assigned to them, and consequently to bear the penalty that was due to negligence or carelessness in the guardianship of the holy things.

26. *the Levites ... offer ... a tenth of the tithe* — Out of their own they were to pay tithes to the priests equally as the people gave to them. The best of their tithes was to be assigned to the priests, and afterwards they enjoyed the same liberty to make use of the remainder that other Israelites had of the produce of their threshing-floors and wine-presses.

32. *ye shall bear no sin by reason of it*, etc. — Neglect in having the best entailed sin in the use of such unhallowed food. And the holy things would be polluted by the reservation to themselves of what should be offered to God and the priests.

CHAPTER 19

NUMBERS 19:1-22.

THE WATER OF SEPARATION.

2. *This is the ordinance of the law* — an institution of a peculiar nature ordained by law for the purification of sin, and provided at the public expense because it was for the good of the whole community.

Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, etc. — This is the only case in which the color of the victim is specified. It has been supposed the ordinance was designed in opposition to the superstitious notions of the Egyptians. That people never offered a vow but they sacrificed a red bull, the greatest care being taken by their priests in examining whether it possessed the requisite characteristics, and it was an annual offering to Typhon, their evil being. By the choice, both of the sex and the color, provision was made for eradicating from the minds of the Israelites a favorite Egyptian superstition regarding two objects of their animal worship.

3-6. *ye shall give her unto Eleazar the priest that he may bring her forth without the camp* — He was the second or deputy high priest, and he was selected for this duty because the execution of it entailed temporary defilement, from which the acting high priest was to be preserved with the greatest care. It was led “forth without the camp,” in accordance with the law regarding victims laden with the sins of the people, and thus typical of Christ (^{<SIC>} Hebrews 13:12; also ^{<ERR>} Leviticus 24:14). The priest was to sprinkle the blood “seven times” before — literally, “towards” or “near” the tabernacle, a description which seems to imply either that he carried a portion of the blood in a basin to the door of the tabernacle (^{<ERR>} Leviticus 4:17), or that in the act of sprinkling he turned his face towards the sacred edifice, being disqualified through the defiling influence of this operation from approaching close to it. By this attitude he indicated that he was presenting an expiatory sacrifice, for the acceptance of which he hoped, in

the grace of God, by looking to the mercy seat. Every part of it was consumed by fire except the blood used in sprinkling, and the ingredients mixed with the ashes were the same as those employed in the sprinkling of lepers (^[440]Leviticus 14:4-7). It was a water of separation — that is, of “sanctification” for the people of Israel.

7. *the priest shall be unclean until the even* — The ceremonies prescribed show the imperfection of the Levitical priesthood, while they typify the condition of Christ when expiating our sins (^[441]2 Corinthians 5:21).

11-22. *He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean* — This law is noticed here to show the uses to which the water of separation [^[442]Numbers 19:9] was applied. The case of a death is one; and as in every family which sustained a bereavement the members of the household became defiled, so in 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. To afford the necessary supply of the cleansing mixture, the Jewish writers say that a red heifer was sacrificed every year, and that the ashes, mingled with the sprinkling ingredients, were distributed through all the cities and towns of Israel.

12. *He shall purify himself ... the third day* — The necessity of applying the water on the third day is inexplicable on any natural or moral ground; and, therefore, the regulation has been generally supposed to have had a typical reference to the resurrection, on that day, of Christ, by whom His people are sanctified; while the process of ceremonial purification being extended over seven days, was intended to show that sanctification is progressive and incomplete till the arrival of the eternal Sabbath. Every one knowingly and presumptuously neglecting to have himself sprinkled with this water was guilty of an offense which was punished by excommunication.

14. *when a man dieth in a tent*, etc. — The instances adduced appear very minute and trivial; but important ends, both of a religious and of a sanitary nature, were promoted by carrying the idea of pollution from contact with dead bodies to so great an extent. While it would effectually prevent that Egyptianized race of Israelites imitating the superstitious custom of the Egyptians, who kept in their houses the mummied remains of their ancestors, it ensured a speedy interment to all, thus not only

keeping burial places at a distance, but removing from the habitations of the living the corpses of persons who died from infectious disorders, and from the open field the unburied remains of strangers and foreigners who fell in battle.

21. *he that sprinkleth ... ; and he that toucheth the water of separation shall be unclean until even* — The opposite effects ascribed to the water of separation — of cleansing one person and defiling another — are very singular, and not capable of very satisfactory explanation. One important lesson, however, was thus taught, that its purifying efficacy was not inherent in itself, but arose from the divine appointment, as in other ordinances of religion, which are effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in him that administers them, but solely through the grace of God communicated thereby.

CHAPTER 20

NUMBERS 20:1-29.

THE DEATH OF MIRIAM.

1. *Then came the children of Israel ... into the desert of Zin in the first month* — that is, of the fortieth year (compare ⁻⁰⁶¹²Numbers 20:22,23, with ⁻⁰⁶³⁸Numbers 33:38). In this history only the principal and most important incidents are recorded, those confined chiefly to the first or second and the last years of the journeyings in the wilderness, thence called Et-Tih. Between ⁻⁰⁶²²Numbers 19:22 and ⁻⁰⁶⁰¹Numbers 20:1 there is a long and undescribed interval of thirty-seven years.

the people abide in Kadesh — supposed to be what is now known as Ain-el-Weibeh, three springs surrounded by palms. (See on ⁻⁰⁶³³Numbers 13:26). It was their second arrival after an interval of thirty-eight years (⁻⁰⁶¹⁹Deuteronomy 1:19). The old generation had nearly all died, and the new one encamped in it with the view of entering the promised land, not, however, as formerly on the south, but by crossing the Edomite region on the east.

Miriam died there — four months before Aaron [⁻⁰⁶³⁸Numbers 33:38].

2-13. *there was no water for the congregation* — There was at Kadesh a fountain, En-Mishpat (⁻⁰⁴⁴⁷Genesis 14:7), and at the first encampment of the Israelites there was no want of water. It was then either partially dried up by the heat of the season, or had been exhausted by the demands of so vast a multitude.

6. *Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly* — Here is a fresh ebullition of the untamed and discontented spirit of the people. The leaders fled to the precincts of the sanctuary, both as an asylum from the increasing fury of the highly excited rabble, and as their usual refuge in seasons of perplexity and danger, to implore the direction and aid of God.

8. *Take the rod* — which had been deposited in the tabernacle (⁽⁻⁰⁴⁷⁰⁾Numbers 17:10), the wonder-working rod by which so many miracles had been performed, sometimes called “the rod of God” (⁽⁻⁰²⁴⁰⁾Exodus 4:20), sometimes Moses’ (⁽⁻⁰⁰¹¹⁾Numbers 20:11) or Aaron’s rod (⁽⁻⁰¹⁷²⁾Exodus 7:12).

10. [Moses] *said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?* — The conduct of the great leader on this occasion was hasty and passionate (⁽⁻⁰⁹⁶³⁾Psalms 106:33). He had been directed to *speak* to the rock [⁽⁻⁰⁰¹⁸⁾Numbers 20:8], but he *smote it twice* [⁽⁻⁰⁰¹¹⁾Numbers 20:11] in his impetuosity, thus endangering the blossoms of the rod, and, instead of speaking to the *rock*, he spoke to the *people* in a fury.

11. *the congregation drank, and their beasts* — Physically the water afforded the same kind of needful refreshment to both. But from a religious point of view, this, which was only a common element to the cattle, was a sacrament to the people (⁽⁻⁰⁴⁰³⁾1 Corinthians 10:3,4) — It possessed a relative sanctity imparted to it by its divine origin and use.

12. *The Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not,* etc. — The act of Moses in smiting twice betrayed a doubt, not of the power, but of the will of God to gratify such a rebellious people, and his exclamation seems to have emanated from a spirit of incredulity akin to Sarai’s (⁽⁻⁰¹⁸³⁾Genesis 18:13). These circumstances indicate the influence of unbelief, and there might have been others unrecorded which led to so severe a chastisement.

13. *This is the water of Meribah* — The word “Kadesh” is added to it [⁽⁻⁰⁸²⁵⁾Deuteronomy 32:51] to distinguish it from another Meribah (⁽⁻⁰²⁷⁰⁾Exodus 17:7).

14-16. *Moses sent messengers ... to the king of Edom* — The encampment at Kadesh was on the confines of the Edomite territory, through which the Israelites would have had an easy passage across the Arabah by Wady-el-Ghuweir, so that they could have continued their course around Moab, and approached Palestine from the east [ROBERTS]. The Edomites, being the descendants of Esau and tracing their line of descent from Abraham as their common stock, were recognized by the Israelites as brethren, and a very brotherly message was sent to them.

17. *we will go by the king's highway* — probably Wady-el-Ghuweir [ROBERTS], through which ran one of the great lines of road, constructed for commercial caravans, as well as for the progress of armies. The engineering necessary for carrying them over marshes or mountains, and the care requisite for protecting them from the shifting sands, led to their being under the special care of the state. Hence the expression, “the king’s highway,” which is of great antiquity.

19. *if I and my cattle drink of thy water, then I will pay for it* — From the scarcity of water in the warm climates of the East, the practice of levying a tax for the use of the wells is universal; and the jealousy of the natives, in guarding the collected treasures of rain, is often so great that water cannot be procured for money.

21. *Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border*, etc. — A churlish refusal obliged them to take another route. (See on ^{<0204>}Numbers 21:4; ^{<0204>}Deuteronomy 2:4; and ^{<0118>}Judges 11:18; see also ^{<0144>}1 Samuel 14:47 ^{<0184>}2 Samuel 8:14, which describe the retribution that was taken.)

22. *the children of Israel ... came unto mount Hor* — now Gebel Haroun, the most striking and lofty elevation in the Seir range, called emphatically “the mount” (^{<0118>}Numbers 20:28). It is conspicuous by its double top.

24-28. *Aaron shall be gathered unto his people* — In accordance with his recent doom, he, attired in the high priest’s costume, was commanded to ascend that mountain and die. But although the time of his death was hastened by the divine displeasure as a punishment for his sins, the *manner* of his death was arranged in tenderness of love, and to do him honor at the close of his earthly service. His ascent of the mount was to afford him a last look of the camp and a distant prospect of the promised land. The simple narrative of the solemn and impressive scene implies, though it does not describe, the pious resignation, settled faith, and inward peace of the aged pontiff.

26. *strip Aaron of his garments* — that is, his pontifical robes, in token of his resignation. (See ^{<0201>}Isaiah 22:20-25).

put them on his son — as the inauguration into his high office. Having been formerly anointed with the sacred oil, that ceremony was not repeated, or, as some think, it was done on his return to the camp.

28. *Aaron died there in the top of the mount* — (See on ^{<6506>}Deuteronomy 10:6). A tomb has been erected upon or close by the spot where he was buried.

29. *When all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead* — Moses and Eleazar were the sole witnesses of his departure (^{<6408>}Numbers 20:28). According to the established law, the new high priest could not have been present at the funeral of his father without contracting ceremonial defilement (^{<6211>}Leviticus 21:11). But that law was dispensed with in the extraordinary circumstances. The people learned the event not only from the recital of the two witnesses, but from their visible signs of grief and change; and this event betokened the imperfection of the Levitical priesthood (^{<5172>}Hebrews 7:12).

they mourned for Aaron thirty days — the usual period of public and solemn mourning. (See on ^{<6348>}Deuteronomy 34:8).

CHAPTER 21

NUMBERS 21:1-35.

ISRAEL ATTACKED BY THE CANAANITES.

1. *King Arad the Canaanite* — rather, “the Canaanite king of Arad” — an ancient town on the southernmost borders of Palestine, not far from Kadesh. A hill called Tell Arad marks the spot.

heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies — in the way or manner of spies, stealthily, or from spies sent by himself to ascertain the designs and motions of the Israelites. The *Septuagint* and others consider the Hebrew word “spies” a proper NAME, and render it: “Came by the way of Atharim towards Arad” [KENNICOTT].

he fought against Israel, and took some of them prisoners — This discomfiture was permitted to teach them to expect the conquest of Canaan not from their own wisdom and valor, but solely from the favor and help of God (^{<0300>}Deuteronomy 9:4 ^{<0340>}Psalms 44:3,4).

2, 3. *Israel vowed a vow unto the Lord* — Made to feel their own weakness, they implored the aid of Heaven, and, in anticipation of it, *devoted* the cities of this king to future destruction. The nature and consequence of such anathemas are described (^{<0370>}Leviticus 27:1-34 ^{<0330>}Deuteronomy 13:1-18). This vow of extermination against Arad (^{<0210>}Numbers 21:2) gave name to the place Hormah (slaughter and destruction) though it was not accomplished till after the passage of the Jordan. Others think Hormah the name of a town mentioned (^{<0324>}Joshua 12:14).

4. *they journeyed from mount Hor* — On being refused the passage requested, they returned through the Arabah, “the way of the Red Sea,” to Elath, at the head of the eastern gulf of the Red Sea, and thence passed up through the mountains to the eastern desert, so as to make the circuit of the land of Edom (^{<0334>}Numbers 33:41,42).

the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way —

Disappointment on finding themselves so near the confines of the promised land without entering it; vexation at the refusal of a passage through Edom and the absence of any divine interposition in their favor; and above all, the necessity of a retrograde journey by a long and circuitous route through the worst parts of a sandy desert and the dread of being plunged into new and unknown difficulties — all this produced a deep depression of spirits. But it was followed, as usually, by a gross outburst of murmuring at the scarcity of water, and of expressions of disgust at the manna.

5. *our soul loatheth this light bread* — that is, bread without substance or nutritious quality. The refutation of this calumny appears in the fact, that on the strength of this food they performed for forty years so many and toilsome journeys. But they had been indulging a hope of the better and more varied fare enjoyed by a settled people; and disappointment, always the more bitter as the hope of enjoyment seems near, drove them to speak against God and against Moses (⁴³⁰⁹1 Corinthians 10:9).

6. *The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people* — That part of the desert where the Israelites now were — near the head of the gulf of Akaba — is greatly infested with venomous reptiles, of various kinds, particularly lizards, which raise themselves in the air and swing themselves from branches; and scorpions, which, being in the habit of lying in long grass, are particularly dangerous to the barelegged, sandaled people of the East. The only known remedy consists in sucking the wound, or, in the case of cattle, in the application of ammonia. The exact species of serpents that caused so great mortality among the Israelites cannot be ascertained. They are said to have been “fiery,” an epithet applied to them either from their bright, vivid color, or the violent inflammation their bite occasioned.

7-9. *the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned* — The severity of the scourge and the appalling extent of mortality brought them to a sense of sin, and through the intercessions of Moses, which they implored, they were miraculously healed. He was directed to make the figure of a serpent in brass, to be elevated on a pole or standard, that it might be seen at the extremities of the camp and that every bitten Israelite who looked to it might be healed. This peculiar method of cure was

designed, in the first instance, to show that it was the efficacy of God's power and grace, not the effect of nature or art, and also that it might be a type of the power of faith in Christ to heal all who look to Him because of their sins (^{<RB4>}John 3:14,15; see also on ^{<2K4>}2 Kings 18:4).

10. *the children of Israel set forward* — along the eastern frontier of the Edomites, encamping in various stations.

12. *pitched in the valley* — literally, the “woody brook-valley” of Zared (^{<RB3>}Deuteronomy 2:13 ^{<2S17>}Isaiah 15:7 ^{<30B4>}Amos 6:14). This torrent rises among the mountains to the east of Moab, and flowing west, empties itself into the Dead Sea. Ije-Abarim is supposed to have been its ford [CALMET].

13. *pitched on the other side of Arnon* — now El-Mojib, a deep, broad, and rapid stream, dividing the dominions of the Moabites and Amorites.

14. *book of the wars of the Lord* — A fragment or passage is here quoted from a poem or history of the wars of the Israelites, principally with a view to decide the position of Arnon.

15. *Ar* — the capital of Moab.

16. *from thence they went to Beer* — that is, a “well.” The name was probably given to it afterwards [see ^{<10B2>}Judges 9:21], as it is not mentioned (^{<0B11>}Numbers 33:1-56).

17, 18. *Then Israel sang* — This beautiful little song was in accordance with the wants and feelings of travelling caravans in the East, where water is an occasion both of prayer and thanksgiving. From the princes using their official rods only, and not spades, it seems probable that this well was concealed by the brushwood or the sand, as is the case with many wells in Idumea still. The discovery of it was seasonable, and owing to the special interposition of God.

21-23. *Israel sent messengers unto Sihon* — The rejection of their respectful and pacific message was resented — Sihon was discomfited in battle — and Israel obtained by right of conquest the whole of the Amorite dominions.

24. *from Arnon unto Jabbok* — now the Zurka. These rivers formed the southern and northern boundaries of his usurped territory.

for the border of ... Ammon was strong — a reason stated for Sihon not being able to push his invasion further.

25. *Israel dwelt in all the cities* — after exterminating the inhabitants who had been previously doomed (^{<OR23>}Deuteronomy 2:34).

26. *Heshbon* — (So 7:4) — situated sixteen English miles north of the Arnon, and from its ruins it appears to have been a large city.

27-30. *Wherefore they that speak in proverbs* — Here is given an extract from an Amorite song exultingly anticipating an extension of their conquests to Arnon. The quotation from the poem of the Amorite bard ends at ^{<OR23>}Numbers 21:28. The two following verses appear to be the strains in which the Israelites expose the impotence of the usurpers.

29. *people of Chemosh* — the name of the Moabite idol (^{<H111E>}1 Kings 11:7-33 ^{<OR23>}2 Kings 23:13 ^{<H111E>}Jeremiah 48:46).

he — that is, their god, hath surrendered his worshippers to the victorious arms of Sihon.

33. *they turned and went up by the way of Bashan* — a name given to that district from the richness of the soil — now Batanea or El-Bottein — a hilly region east of the Jordan lying between the mountains of Hermon on the north and those of Gilead on the south.

Og — a giant, an Amoritish prince, who, having opposed the progress of the Israelites, was defeated.

34, 35. *The Lord said unto Moses, Fear him not* — a necessary encouragement, for Og's gigantic stature (^{<OR23>}Deuteronomy 3:11) was calculated to inspire terror. He and all his were put to the sword.

CHAPTER 22

NUMBERS 22:1-20.

BALAK'S FIRST MESSAGE FOR BALAAM REFUSED.

1. *Israel ... pitched in the plains of Moab* — so called from having formerly belonged to that people, though wrested from them by Sihon. It was a dry, sunken, desert region on the east of the Jordan valley, opposite Jericho.

2. *Balak* — that is, “empty.” Terrified (^{<0125>}Deuteronomy 2:25 ^{<0155>}Exodus 15:15) at the approach of so vast a multitude and not daring to encounter them in the field, he resolved to secure their destruction by other means.

4. *elders of Midian* — called kings (^{<0618>}Numbers 31:8) and princes (^{<0621>}Joshua 13:21). The Midianites, a distinct people on the southern frontier of Moab, united with them as confederates against Israel, their common enemy.

5. *He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam* — that is, “lord” or “devourer” of people, a famous soothsayer (^{<0632>}Joshua 13:22).

son of Beor — or, in the Chaldee form, *Bosor* — that is, “destruction.”

Pethor — a city of Mesopotamia, situated on the Euphrates.

6. *Come ... curse me this people* — Among the heathen an opinion prevailed that prayers for evil or curses would be heard by the unseen powers as well as prayers for good, when offered by a prophet or priest and accompanied by the use of certain rites. Many examples are found in the histories of the Greeks and Romans of whole armies being devoted to destruction, and they occur among the natives of India and other heathen countries still. In the Burmese war, magicians were employed to curse the British troops.

7. *the elders of Moab and ... of Midian departed with the rewards of divination* — like the fee of a fortune teller, and being a royal present, it would be something handsome.

8-14. *Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the Lord shall speak unto me*, etc. — God usually revealed His will in visions and dreams; and Balaam's birth and residence in Mesopotamia, where the remains of patriarchal religion still lingered, account for his knowledge of the true God. His real character has long been a subject of discussion. Some, judging from his language, have thought him a saint; others, looking to his conduct, have described him as an irreligious charlatan; and a third class consider him a novice in the faith, who had a fear of God, but who had not acquired power over his passions [HENGSTENBERG].

13-15. *the Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you* — This answer has an *appearance* of being good, but it studiously concealed the reason of the divine prohibition (⁽⁴⁰²¹⁾Numbers 22:12), and it intimated his own willingness and desire to go — if permitted. Balak despatched a second mission, which held out flattering prospects, both to his avarice and his ambition (⁽⁴¹³¹⁾Genesis 31:30).

19, 20. *tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the Lord will say unto me more* — The divine will, as formerly declared, not being according to his desires, he hoped by a second request to bend it, as he had already bent his own conscience, to his ruling passions of pride and covetousness. The permission granted to Balaam is in accordance with the ordinary procedure of Providence. God often gives up men to follow the impulse of their own lusts; but there is no approval in thus leaving them to act at the prompting of their own wicked hearts (⁽⁴¹³²⁾Joshua 13:27).

CHAPTER 22

NUMBERS 22:21-41.

THE JOURNEY.

- 21. *Balaam ... saddled his ass*** — probably one of the white sprightly animals which persons of rank were accustomed to ride. The saddle, as usually in the East, would be nothing more than a pad or his outer cloak.
- 22. *God's anger was kindled because he went*** — The displeasure arose partly from his neglecting the condition on which leave was granted him — namely, to wait till the princes of Moab “came to call him” [^{<0221>}Numbers 22:20], and because, through desire for “the wages of unrighteousness” [^{<025>}2 Peter 2:15], he entertained the secret purpose of acting in opposition to the solemn charge of God.
- 24. *the angel of the Lord stood in a path of the vineyards*** — The roads which lead through fields and vineyards are so narrow that in most parts a man could not pass a beast without care and caution. A stone or mud fence flanks each side of these roads, to prevent the soil being washed off by the rains.
- 28. *the Lord opened the mouth of the ass*** — to utter, like a parrot, articulate sounds, without understanding them. That this was a visionary scene is a notion which seems inadmissible, because of the improbability of a vision being described as an actual occurrence in the middle of a plain history. Besides, the opening of the ass's mouth must have been an external act, and that, with the manifest tenor of Peter's language, strongly favors the literal view [^{<025>}2 Peter 2:15,16]. The absence of any surprise at such a phenomenon on the part of Balaam may be accounted for by his mind being wholly engrossed with the prospect of gain, which produced “the madness of the prophet” [^{<026>}2 Peter 2:16]. “It was a miracle, wrought to humble his proud heart, which had to be first subjected in the school of an ass before he was brought to attend to the voice of God speaking by the angel” [CALVIN].

34, 35. *I have sinned ... if it displease thee, I will get me back again* — Notwithstanding this confession, he evinced no spirit of penitence, as he speaks of desisting only from the outward act. The words “go with the men” was a mere withdrawal of further restraint, but the terms in which leave was given are more absolute and peremptory than those in ^{<021>}Numbers 22:20.

36, 37. *when Balak heard that Balaam was come, he went out to meet him* — Politeness requires that the higher the rank of the expected guest, greater distance is to be gone to welcome his arrival.

38. *the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak* — This appears a pious answer. It was an acknowledgment that he was restrained by a superior power.

39. *Kirjath-huzoth* — that is, “a city of streets.”

40. *Balak offered oxen and sheep* — made preparations for a grand entertainment to Balaam and the princes of Midian.

41. *high places of Baal* — eminences consecrated to the worship of Baal-peor (see on ^{<023>}Numbers 25:3) or Chemosh

CHAPTER 23

NUMBERS 23:1-30.

BALAK'S SACRIFICES.

1. *Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars* — Balak, being a heathen, would naturally suppose these altars were erected in honor of Baal, the patron deity of his country. It is evident, from ^{<02304>}Numbers 23:4 that they were prepared for the worship of the true God; although in choosing the high places of Baal as their site and rearing a number of altars (^{<12802>}2 Kings 18:22 ^{<29708>}Isaiah 17:8 ^{<34113>}Jeremiah 11:13 ^{<30811>}Hosea 8:11 10:1), instead of one only, as God had appointed, Balaam blended his own superstitions with the divine worship. The heathen, both in ancient and modern times, attached a mysterious virtue to the number *seven*; and Balaam, in ordering the preparation of so many altars, designed to mystify and delude the king.

3. *Stand by thy burnt offering* — as one in expectation of an important favor.

peradventure the Lord will come to meet me: and whatsoever he showeth me — that is, makes known to me by word or sign.

he went to an high place — apart by himself, where he might practice rites and ceremonies, with a view to obtain a response of the oracle.

4-6. *God met Balaam* — not in compliance with his incantations, but to frustrate his wicked designs and compel him, contrary to his desires and interests, to pronounce the following benediction (^{<02308>}Numbers 23:8-10).

7. *took up his parable* — that is, spoke under the influence of inspiration, and in the highly poetical, figurative, and oracular style of a prophet.

brought me from Aram — This word joined with “the mountains of the East,” denotes the upper portion of Mesopotamia, lying on the east of

Moab. The East enjoyed an infamous notoriety for magicians and soothsayers (²⁰¹¹Isaiah 2:6).

8. *How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed?* — A divine blessing has been pronounced over the posterity of Jacob; and therefore, whatever prodigies can be achieved by my charms, all magical skill, all human power, is utterly impotent to counteract the decree of God.

9. *from the top* — literally, “a bare place” on the rocks, to which Balak had taken him, for it was deemed necessary to see the people who were to be devoted to destruction. But that commanding prospect could contribute nothing to the accomplishment of the king’s object, for the destiny of Israel was to be a distinct, peculiar people, separated from the rest of the nations in government, religion, customs, and divine protection (²⁰¹²Deuteronomy 33:28). So that although I might be able to gratify your wishes against other people, I can do nothing against them (²⁰¹³Exodus 19:5 ²⁰¹⁴Leviticus 20:24).

10. *Who can count the dust of Jacob?* — an Oriental hyperbole for a very populous nation, as Jacob’s posterity was promised to be (²⁰¹⁵Genesis 13:16 28:14).

the number of the fourth part of Israel — that is, the camp consisted of four divisions; every one of these parts was formidable in numbers.

Let me die the death of the righteous — *Hebrew*, “of Jeshurun”; or, the Israelites. The meaning is: they are a people happy, above all others, not only in life, but at death, from their knowledge of the true God, and their hope through His grace. Balaam is a representative of a large class in the world, who express a wish for the blessedness which Christ has promised to His people but are averse to imitate the mind that was in Him.

13-15. *Come, ... with me unto another place, from whence thou mayest see them* — Surprised and disappointed at this unexpected eulogy on Israel, Balak hoped that, if seen from a different point of observation, the prophet would give utterance to different feelings; and so, having made the same solemn preparations, Balaam retired, as before, to wait the divine afflatus.

14. *he brought him into the field of Zophim ... top of Pisgah* — a flat surface on the summit of the mountain range, which was cultivated land. Others render it “the field of sentinels,” an eminence where some of Balak’s guards were posted to give signals [CALMET].

18, 19. *Rise up* — As Balak was already standing (⁴⁰²⁷Numbers 23:17), this expression is equivalent to “now attend to me.” The counsels and promises of God respecting Israel are unchangeable; and no attempt to prevail on Him to reverse them will succeed, as they may with a man.

21. *He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob* — Many sins were observed and punished in this people. But no such universal and hopeless apostasy had as yet appeared, to induce God to abandon or destroy them.

the Lord his God is with him — has a favor for them.

and the shout of a king is among them — such joyful acclamations as of a people rejoicing in the presence of a victorious prince.

22. *he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn* — Israel is not as they were at the Exodus, a horde of poor, feeble, spiritless people, but powerful and invincible as a *reem* — that is, a rhinoceros (⁴³⁸⁹Job 39:9 ⁴³²¹Psalms 22:21 ⁴³²¹Psalms 92:10).

23. *Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob* — No art can ever prevail against a people who are under the shield of Omnipotence, and for whom miracles have been and yet shall be performed, which will be a theme of admiration in succeeding ages.

26. *All that the Lord speaketh, that I must do* — a remarkable confession that he was divinely constrained to give utterances different from what it was his purpose and inclination to do.

28. *Balak brought Balaam unto the top of Peor* — or, Beth-peor (⁴¹⁸³Deuteronomy 3:29), the eminence on which a temple of Baal stood.

that looketh toward Jeshimon — the desert tract in the south of Palestine, on both sides of the Dead Sea.

CHAPTER 24

NUMBERS 24:1-25.

BALAAM FORETELLS ISRAEL'S HAPPINESS.

1. *to seek for* — that is, to use enchantments. His experience on the two former occasions (^(-021B)Numbers 23:3,15) had taught him that these superstitious accompaniments of his worship were useless, and therefore he now simply looked towards the camp of Israel, either with a secret design to curse them, or to await the divine afflatus.

2. *he saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes* — that is, in the orderly distribution of the camp (^(-021C)Numbers 2:1-34).

the spirit of God came upon him — Before the regular ministry of the prophets was instituted, God made use of various persons as the instruments through whom He revealed His will, and Balaam was one of these (^(-021D)Deuteronomy 23:5).

3. *the man whose eyes are open* — that is, a seer (^(-021E)1 Samuel 9:9), a prophet, to whom the visioned future was disclosed — sometimes when falling into a sleep (^(-021F)Genesis 15:12-15), frequently into “a trance.”

5-7. *How goodly are thy tents, ... O Israel!* — a fine burst of admiration, expressed in highly poetical strains. All travelers describe the beauty which the circular area of Bedouin tents impart to the desert. How impressive, then, must have been the view, as seen from the heights of Abarim, of the immense camp of Israel extended over the subjacent plains.

6. *As the valleys* — *Hebrew*, “brooks,” the watercourses of the mountains.

lign aloes — an aromatic shrub on the banks of his native Euphrates, the conical form of which suggested an apt resemblance to a tent. The redundant imagery of these verses depicts the humble origin, rapid progress, and prosperity of Israel.

7. *his king shall be higher than Agag* — The Amalekites were then the most powerful of all the desert tribes, and “Agag” a title common to their kings.

10-14. *Balak’s anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together* — The “smiting of the hands together” is, among Oriental people, an indication of the most violent rage (see ^{<3217>}Ezekiel 21:17 ^{<3223>}22:13) and ignominious dismissal.

15. *he took his parable* — or prophecy, uttered in a poetical style.

17. *I shall see him* — rather, “I do see” or “I have seen him” — a prophetic sight, like that of Abraham (^{<4089>}John 8:56).

him — that is, Israel.

there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel

— This imagery, in the hieroglyphic language of the East, denotes some eminent ruler — primarily David; but secondarily and pre-eminently, the Messiah (see on ^{<0490>}Genesis 49:10).

corners — or, “smite through the princes of Moab”; “corners,” or border, often used for a whole country (^{<0820>}Exodus 8:2 ^{<0747>}Psalms 74:17).

children of Sheth — some prince of Moab; or, according to some, “the children of the East.”

18. *Edom shall be a possession* — This prophecy was accomplished by David (^{<0814>}2 Samuel 8:14).

Seir — seen in the south, and poetically used for Edom. The double conquest of Moab and Edom is alluded to (^{<0608>}Psalms 60:8 ^{<0809>}108:9).

19. *Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion* — David, and particularly Christ.

that remaineth of the city — those who flee from the field to fortified places (^{<0609>}Psalms 60:9).

20. *Amalek ... his latter end shall be that he perish for ever* — Their territory was seen at the remote extremity of the desert. (See on ^{<0273>}Exodus 17:13; also ^{<0913>}1 Samuel 15:1-35).

21. *Kenites ... nest in a rock* — Though securely established among the clefts in the high rocks of En-gedi towards the west, they should be gradually reduced by a succession of enemies till the Assyrian invader carried them into captivity (^{<0016>}Judges 1:16 4:11,16,17; also ^{<253>}2 Kings 15:29 17:6).

23. *who shall live when God doeth this!* — Few shall escape the desolation that shall send a Nebuchadnezzar to scourge all those regions.

24. *Chittim* — the countries lying on the Mediterranean, particularly Greece and Italy (^{<212>}Daniel 11:29,30). The Assyrians were themselves to be overthrown — first, by the Greeks under Alexander the Great and his successors; secondly, by the Romans.

Eber — the posterity of the Hebrews (^{<0024>}Genesis 10:24).

he also shall perish — that is, the conqueror of Asher and Eber, namely, the Greek and Roman empires.

25. *Balaam rose up, and went ... to his place* — Mesopotamia, to which, however, he did not return. (See on ^{<0618>}Numbers 31:8).

CHAPTER 25

NUMBERS 25:1-18.

THE ISRAELITES' WHOREDOM AND IDOLATRY WITH MOAB.

1. *Israel abode in Shittim* — a verdant meadow, so called from a grove of acacia trees which lined the eastern side of the Jordan. (See ⁰⁶³⁰Numbers 33:49).

3. *Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor* — Baal was a general name for “lord,” and Peor for a “mount” in Moab. The real name of the idol was Chemosh, and his rites of worship were celebrated by the grossest obscenity. In participating in this festival, then, the Israelites committed the double offense of idolatry and licentiousness.

4. *The Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up* — Israelite criminals, who were capitally punished, were first stoned or slain, and *then* gibbeted. The persons ordered here for execution were the principal delinquents in the Baal-peor outrage — the subordinate officers, rulers of tens or hundreds.

before the Lord — for vindicating the honor of the true God.

against the sun — that is, as a mark of public ignominy; but they were to be removed towards sunset (⁰⁶²³Deuteronomy 21:23).

5. *judges of Israel* — the seventy elders, who were commanded not only to superintend the execution within their respective jurisdictions, but to inflict the punishment with their own hands. (See on ⁰⁶⁵³1 Samuel 15:33).

6, 7. *behold, one of the children of Israel ... brought ... a Midianitish woman* — This flagitious act most probably occurred about the time when the order was given and before its execution.

who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle — Some of the rulers and well-disposed persons were deploring the dreadful wickedness of the people and supplicating the mercy of God to avert impending judgments.

8. *the plague* — some sudden and widespread mortality.

9. *those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand* — Only twenty-three thousand perished (⁴⁵¹⁰⁸1 Corinthians 10:8) from pestilence. Moses includes those who died by the execution of the judges [⁴⁰²¹⁵Numbers 25:5].

11-13. *Phinehas ... hath turned my wrath away* — This assurance was a signal mark of honor that the stain of blood, instead of defiling, confirmed him in office and that his posterity should continue as long as the national existence of Israel.

14. *Zimri, ... a prince ... among the Simeonites* — Hebrew, “house of a father.” The slaughter of a man of such high rank is mentioned as a proof of the undaunted zeal of Phinehas, for there might be numerous avengers of his blood.

17. *Vex the Midianites, and smite them* — They seem to have been the most guilty parties. (Compare ⁴⁰²¹⁸Numbers 22:4 31:8).

18. *they vex you with their wiles* — Instead of open war, they plot insidious ways of accomplishing your ruin by idolatry and corruption.

their sister — their countrywoman.

CHAPTER 26

NUMBERS 26:1-51.

ISRAEL NUMBERED.

1. *after the plague* — That terrible visitation had swept away the remnant of the old generation, to whom God swore in His wrath that they should not enter Canaan (^{<951>}Psalm 95:11).

2. *Take the sum of all the congregation* — The design of this new census, after a lapse of thirty-eight years, was primarily to establish the vast multiplication of the posterity of Abraham in spite of the severe judgments inflicted upon them; secondarily, it was to preserve the distinction of families and to make arrangements, preparatory to an entrance into the promised land, for the distribution of the country according to the relative population of the tribes.

7. *These are the families of the Reubenites* — the principal households, which were subdivided into numerous smaller families. Reuben had suffered great diminution by Korah's conspiracy and other outbreaks [^{<946>}Numbers 16:1].

10. *the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up together with Korah* — rather, "the things of Korah." (See on ^{<945>}Numbers 16:35; compare ^{<947>}Psalm 106:17).

11. *Notwithstanding the children of Korah died not* — Either they were not parties to their father's crime, or they withdrew from it by timely repentance. His descendants became famous in the time of David, and are often mentioned in the Psalms [^{<941>}Psalm 42:1 ^{<941>}44:1 ^{<941>}45:1 ^{<941>}46:1 ^{<941>}47:1 ^{<941>}48:1 ^{<941>}49:1 ^{<941>}84:1 ^{<941>}85:1 ^{<941>}87:1 ^{<941>}88:1], also in ^{<102>}1 Chronicles 6:22,38.

12. *The sons of Simeon* — It is supposed that this tribe had been pre-eminent in the guilt of Baal-peor and had consequently been greatly

reduced in numbers. Thus God's justice and holiness, as well as His truth and faithfulness, were strikingly displayed: His justice and holiness in the sweeping judgments that reduced the ranks of some tribes; and His truth and faithfulness in the extraordinary increase of others so that the posterity of Israel continued a numerous people.

53. *the land shall be divided according to the number of names* — The portion of each tribe was to be greater or less, according to its populousness.

54. *To many thou shalt give the more inheritance* — that is, to the more numerous tribes a larger allotment shall be granted.

according to those that were numbered — the number of persons twenty years old at the time of the census being made, without taking into account either the increase of those who might have attained that age, when the land should be actually distributed, or the diminution from that amount, occasioned during the war of invasion.

55. *the land shall be divided by lot* — The appeal to the lot did not place the matter beyond the control of God; for it is at His disposal (²¹⁶³Proverbs 16:33), and He has fixed to all the bounds of their habitation. The manner in which the lot was taken has not been recorded. But it is evident that the lot was cast for determining the section of the country in which each tribe should be located — not the quantity of their possessions. In other words, when the lot had decided that a particular tribe was to be settled in the north or the south, the east or the west, the extent of territory was allocated according to the rule (⁰²⁶⁵Numbers 26:54).

58. *families of the Levites* — The census of this tribe was taken separately, and on a different principle from the rest. (See ⁰⁸¹⁶Exodus 6:16-19).

62. *twenty and three thousand* — so that there was an increase of a thousand (⁰⁰³³Numbers 3:39).

males from a month old and upward — (See on ⁰¹⁸⁴Numbers 3:14).

64. *among these there was not a man ... numbered ... in the wilderness of Sinai* — The statement in this verse must not be considered absolute. For,

besides Caleb and Joshua, there were alive at this time Eleazar and Ithamar, and in all probability a considerable number of Levites, who had no participation in the popular 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 not coming within the range of the fatal sentence; and therefore it would exhibit a spectacle not to be witnessed in the other tribes of many in their ranks above sixty years of age.

Tribes Chap. 1 Chap. 26 Increase Decrease

Reuben	46,500	43,730	—	2,770
Simeon	59,300	22,200	—	37,100
Gad	45,650	40,500	—	5,150
Judah	74,600	76,500	1,900	—
Issachar	54,400	64,300	9,900	—
Zebulun	57,400	60,500	3,100	—
Ephraim	40,500	32,500	—	8,000
Manasseh	32,200	52,700	20,500	—
Benjamin	35,400	45,600	10,200	—
Daniel	62,700	64,400	1,700	—
Asher	41,500	53,400	11,900	—
Naphtali	53,400	45,400	—	8,000
Total	603,550	601,730	59,200	61,020
Total decrease			1,820	

CHAPTER 27

NUMBERS 27:1-11.

THE DAUGHTERS OF ZELOPHEHAD ASK FOR AN INHERITANCE.

3. *Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not ... in the company of ... Korah* — This declaration might be necessary because his death might have occurred about the time of that rebellion; and especially because, as the children of these conspirators were involved along with their fathers in the awful punishment, their plea appeared the more proper and forcible that their father did not die for any cause that doomed his family to lose their lives or their inheritance.

died in his own sin — that is, by the common law of mortality to which men, through sin, are subject.

4. *Give unto us a possession among the brethren of our father* — Those young women perceived that the males only in families had been registered in the census. Because there were none in their household, their family was omitted. So they made known their grievance to Moses, and the authorities conjoined with him in administering justice. The case was important; and as the peculiarity of daughters being the sole members of a family would be no infrequent or uncommon occurrence, the law of inheritance, under divine authority, was extended not only to meet all similar cases, but other cases also — such as when there were no children left by the proprietor, and no brothers to succeed him. A distribution of the promised land was about to be made; and it is interesting to know the legal provision made in these comparatively rare cases for preserving a patrimony from being alienated to another tribe. (See on ^{ORIG}Numbers 36:5).

NUMBERS 27:12-17.

MOSES BEING TOLD OF HIS APPROACHING DEATH, ASKS FOR A SUCCESSOR.

12. *The Lord said unto Moses, Get thee up into this mount Abarim, and see the land* — Although the Israelites were now on the confines of the promised land, Moses was not privileged to cross the Jordan, but died on one of the Moabitic range of mountains, to which the general name of Abarim was given (^{<0636>}Numbers 33:47). The privation of this great honor was owing to the unhappy conduct he had manifested in the striking of the rock at Meribah [^{<0012>}Numbers 20:12]; and while the pious leader submitted with meek acquiescence to the divine decree, he evinced the spirit of genuine patriotism in his fervent prayers for the appointment of a worthy and competent successor (^{<0275>}Numbers 27:15-17).

16. *God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation* — The request was most suitably made to God in this character, as the Author of all the intellectual gifts and moral graces with which men are endowed, and who can raise up qualified persons for the most arduous duties and the most difficult situations.

NUMBERS 27:18-23.

JOSHUA APPOINTED TO SUCCEED HIM.

18. *Take thee Joshua ... a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him* — A strong testimony is here borne to the personality of the divine Spirit — the imposition of hands was an ancient ceremony. (See ^{<0484>}Genesis 48:14 ^{<0009>}Leviticus 1:4 ^{<5014>}1 Timothy 4:14).

20, 21. *Thou shalt put some of thine honor upon him* — In the whole history of Israel there arose no prophet or ruler in all respects like unto Moses till the Messiah appeared, whose glory eclipsed all. But Joshua was honored and qualified in an eminent degree, through the special service of the high priest, who asked counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the Lord.

CHAPTER 28

NUMBERS 28:1-31.

OFFERINGS TO BE OBSERVED.

2. *Command the children of Israel, and say unto them* — The repetition of several laws formerly enacted, which is made in this chapter, was seasonable and necessary, not only on account of their importance and the frequent neglect of them, but because a new generation had sprung up since their first institution and because the Israelites were about to be settled in the land where those ordinances were to be observed.

My offering, and my bread — used generally for the appointed offerings, and the import of the prescription is to enforce regularity and care in their observance.

9, 10. *This is the burnt offering of every sabbath* — There is no previous mention of a Sabbath burnt offering, which was additional to the daily sacrifices.

11-15. *And in the beginnings of your months ye shall offer a burnt offering unto the Lord* — These were held as sacred festivals; and though not possessing the character of solemn feasts, they were distinguished by the blowing of trumpets over the sacrifices (^{NUM}Numbers 10:10), by the suspension of all labor except the domestic occupations of women (^{AMOS}Amos 8:5), by the celebration of public worship (^{2KINGS}2 Kings 4:23), and by social or family feasts (^{1SAMUEL}1 Samuel 20:5). These observations are not prescribed in the law though they obtained in the practice of a later time. The beginning of the month was known, not by astronomical calculations, but, according to Jewish writers, by the testimony of messengers appointed to watch the first visible appearance of the new moon; and then the fact was announced through the whole country by signal-fires kindled on the mountain tops. The new-moon festivals having been common among the heathen, it is probable that an important design of their institution in Israel was to give the minds of that people a better direction;

and assuming this to have been one of the objects contemplated, it will account for one of the kids being offered unto the Lord (⁻⁰²¹⁵Numbers 28:15), not unto the moon, as the Egyptians and Syrians did. The Sabbath and the new moon are frequently mentioned together.

16-25. *in the fourteenth day of the first month is the passover* — The law for that great annual festival is given (⁻⁰²¹⁵Leviticus 23:5), but some details are here introduced, as certain specified offerings are prescribed to be made on each of the seven days of unleavened bread [⁻⁰²¹⁵Numbers 28:18-25].

26, 27. *in the day of the first-fruits ... offer the burnt offering* — A new sacrifice is here ordered for the celebration of this festival, in addition to the other offering, which was to accompany the first-fruits (⁻⁰²¹⁵Leviticus 23:18).

CHAPTER 29

NUMBERS 29:1-40.

THE OFFERING AT THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS.

1. *in the seventh month* — of the ecclesiastical year, but the first month of the civil year, corresponding to our September. It was, in fact, the New Year's Day, which had been celebrated among the Hebrews and other contemporary nations with great festivity and joy and ushered in by a flourish of trumpets. This ordinance was designed to give a religious character to the occasion by associating it with some solemn observances. (Compare ^{<P>}Exodus 12:2 ^{<L>}Leviticus 23:24).

it is a day of blowing the trumpets unto you — This made it a solemn preparation for the sacred feasts — a greater number of which were held during this month than at any other season of the year. Although the institution of this feast was described before, there is more particularity here as to what the burnt offering should consist of; and, in addition to it, a sin offering is prescribed. The special offerings, appointed for certain days, were not to interfere with the offerings usually requisite on these days, for in ^{<L>}Numbers 29:6 it is said that the daily offerings, as well as those for the first day of the month, were to take place in their ordinary course.

7-11. *ye shall have on the tenth day of this seventh month an holy convocation* — This was the great day of atonement. Its institution, together with the observance to which that day was devoted, was described (^{<L>}Leviticus 16:29,30). But additional offerings seem to be noticed, namely, the large animal sacrifice for a general expiation, which was a sweet savor unto the Lord, and the sin offering to atone for the sins that mingled with that day's services. The prescriptions in this passage appear supplementary to the former statement in Leviticus.

12-34. *on the fifteenth day* — was to be held the feast of booths or tabernacles. (See ^{<L>}Leviticus 23:34,35). The feast was to last seven days,

the first and last of which were to be kept as Sabbaths, and a particular offering was prescribed for each day, the details of which are given with a minuteness suited to the infant state of the church. Two things are deserving of notice: First, that this feast was distinguished by a greater amount and variety of sacrifices than any other — partly because, occurring at the end of the year, it might be intended to supply any past deficiencies — partly because, being immediately after the ingathering of the fruits, it ought to be a liberal acknowledgment — and partly, perhaps, because God consulted the weakness of mankind, who naturally grow weary both of the charge and labor of such services when they are long-continued, and made them every day less toilsome and expensive [PATRICK]. Secondly, it will be remarked that the sacrifices varied in a progressive ratio of decrease every day.

18. *after the manner* — according to the ritual order appointed by divine authority — that for meat offerings (^(402B)Numbers 29:3-10), and drink offerings (^(402B)Numbers 28:7,14).

35-40. *On the eighth day ye shall have a solemn assembly* — The feast of tabernacles was brought to a close on the eighth day, which was the great day (^(402B)Leviticus 23:39). Besides the common routine sacrifices, there were special offerings appointed for that day though these were fewer than on any of the preceding days; and there were also, as was natural on that occasion when vast multitudes were convened for a solemn religious purpose, many spontaneous gifts and services, so that there was full scope for the exercise of a devout spirit in the people, both for their obedience to the statutory offerings, and by the presentation of those which were made by free will or in consequence of vows.

39. *These things ye shall do unto the Lord in your set feasts* — From the statements made in this and the preceding chapter, it appears that the yearly offerings made to the altar at the public expense, without taking into account a vast number of voluntary vow and trespass offerings, were calculated at the following amount: — goats, fifteen; kids, twenty-one; rams, seventy-two; bullocks, one hundred thirty-two; lambs, 1,101; sum-total of animals sacrificed at public cost, 1,241. This, of course, is exclusive of the prodigious addition of lambs slain at the passover, which

in later times, according to JOSEPHUS, amounted in a single year to the immense number of 255,600.

CHAPTER 30

NUMBERS 30:1-16.

VOWS ARE NOT TO BE BROKEN.

1. *This is the thing which the Lord hath commanded* — The subject of this chapter relates to vowing, which seems to have been an ancient usage, allowed by the law to remain, and by which some people declared their intention of offering some gift on the altar or abstaining from particular articles of meat or drink, of observing a private fast, or doing something to the honor or in the service of God, over and above what was authoritatively required. In ^{<OR>}Numbers 29:39, mention was made of “vows and freewill offerings,” and it is probable, from the explanatory nature of the rules laid down in this chapter, that these were given for the removal of doubts and difficulties which conscientious persons had felt about their obligation to perform their vows in certain circumstances that had arisen.

2. *If a man vow a vow unto the Lord* — A mere secret purpose of the mind was not enough to constitute a vow; it had to be actually expressed in words; and though a purely voluntary act, yet when once the vow was made, the performance of it, like that of every other promise, became an indispensable duty — all the more because, referring to a sacred thing, it could not be neglected without the guilt of prevarication and unfaithfulness to God.

he shall not break his word — literally, “profane his word” — render it vain and contemptible (^{<OR>}Psalm 55:20 89:34). But as it would frequently happen that parties would vow to do things which were neither good in themselves nor in their power to perform, the law ordained that their natural superiors should have the right of judging as to the propriety of those vows, with discretionary power to sanction or interdict their fulfillment. Parents were to determine in the case of their children, and husbands in that of their wives — being, however, allowed only a day for

deliberation after the matter became known to them; and their judgment, if unfavorable, released the devotee from all obligation [^{-080B}Numbers 30:3-8].

3. *If a woman also vow a vow unto the Lord, and bind herself by a bond, being in her father's house in her youth* — Girls only are specified; but minors of the other sex, who resided under the parental roof, were included, according to Jewish writers, who also consider the name “father” as comprehending all guardians of youth. We are also told that the age at which young people were deemed capable of vowing was thirteen for boys and twelve for girls. The judgment of a father or guardian on the vow of any under his charge might be given either by an expressed approval or by silence, which was to be construed as approval. But in the case of a husband who, after silence from day to day, should ultimately disapprove or hinder his wife's vow, the sin of non-performance was to be imputed to him and not to her [^{-081E}Numbers 30:15].

9. *every vow of a widow* — In the case of a married woman, who, in the event of a separation from her husband, or of his death, returned, as was not uncommon, to her father's house, a doubt might have been entertained whether she was not, as before, subject to paternal jurisdiction and obliged to act with the paternal consent. The law ordained that the vow was binding if it had been made in her husband's lifetime, and he, on being made aware of it, had not interposed his veto [^{-080B}Numbers 30:10,11]; as, for instance, she might have vowed, when not a widow, that she would assign a portion of her income to pious and charitable uses, of which she might repent when actually a widow; but by this statute she was required to fulfill the obligation, provided her circumstances enabled her to redeem the pledge. The rules laid down must have been exceedingly useful for the prevention or cancelling of rash vows, as well as for giving a proper sanction to such as were legitimate in their nature, and made in a devout, reflecting spirit.

CHAPTER 31

^{<OBJ>}NUMBERS 31:1-54.

THE MIDIANITES SPOILED AND BALAAM SLAIN.

1, 2. *the Lord spake unto Moses, Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites* — a semi-nomad people, descended from Abraham and Keturah, occupying a tract of country east and southeast of Moab, which lay on the eastern coast of the Dead Sea. They seem to have been the principal instigators of the infamous scheme of seduction, planned to entrap the Israelites into the double crime of idolatry and licentiousness [^{<OBJ>}Numbers 25:1-3,17,18] by which, it was hoped, the Lord would withdraw from that people the benefit of His protection and favor. Moreover, the Midianites had rendered themselves particularly obnoxious by entering into a hostile league with the Amorites (^{<OBJ>}Joshua 13:21). The Moabites were at this time spared in consideration of Lot (^{<OBJ>}Deuteronomy 2:9) and because the measure of their iniquities was not yet full. God spoke of avenging “the children of Israel” (^{<OBJ>}Numbers 31:2); Moses spoke of avenging the Lord (^{<OBJ>}Numbers 31:3), as dishonor had been done to God and an injury inflicted on His people. The interests were identical. God and His people have the same cause, the same friends, and the same assailants. This, in fact, was a religious war, undertaken by the express command of God against idolaters, who had seduced the Israelites to practice their abominations.

3. *Arm some of yourselves* — This order was issued but a short time before the death of Moses. The announcement to him of that approaching event [^{<OBJ>}Numbers 31:2] seems to have accelerated, rather than retarded, his warlike preparations.

5. *there were delivered* — that is, drafted, chosen, an equal amount from each tribe, to prevent the outbreak of mutual jealousy or strife. Considering the numerical force of the enemy, this was a small quota to

furnish. But the design was to exercise their faith and animate them to the approaching invasion of Canaan.

6. *Moses sent ... Eleazar the priest, to the war* — Although it is not expressly mentioned, it is highly probable that Joshua was the general who conducted this war. The presence of the priest, who was always with the army (^{<610>}Deuteronomy 20:2), was necessary to preside over the Levites, who accompanied the expedition, and to inflame the courage of the combatants by his sacred services and counsels.

holy instruments — As neither the ark nor the Urim and Thummim were carried to the battlefield till a later period in the history of Israel, the “holy instruments” must mean the “trumpets” (^{<610>}Numbers 10:9). And this view is agreeable to the text, by simply changing “and” into “even,” as the *Hebrew* particle is frequently rendered.

7. *they slew all the males* — This was in accordance with a divine order in all such cases (^{<613>}Deuteronomy 20:13). But the destruction appears to have been only partial — limited to those who were in the neighborhood of the Hebrew camp and who had been accomplices in the villainous plot of Baal-peor (^{<621>}Numbers 25:1-3), while a large portion of the Midianites were absent on their pastoral wanderings or had saved themselves by flight. (Compare ^{<616>}Judges 6:1).

8. *the kings of Midian* — so called, because each was possessed of absolute power within his own city or district; called also dukes or princes of Sihon (^{<633>}Joshua 13:21), having been probably subject to that Amorite ruler, as it is not uncommon in the East to find a number of governors or pachas tributary to one great king.

Zur — father of Cozbi (^{<625>}Numbers 25:15).

Balaam also ... they slew with the sword — This unprincipled man, on his dismissal from Balak, set out for his home in Mesopotamia (^{<625>}Numbers 24:25). But, either diverging from his way to tamper with the Midianites, he remained among them without proceeding farther, to incite them against Israel and to watch the effects of his wicked counsel; or, learning in his own country that the Israelites had fallen into the snare which he had laid and which he doubted not would lead to their ruin, he had, under the

impulse of insatiable greed, returned to demand his reward from the Midianites. He was an object of merited vengeance. In the immense slaughter of the Midianitish people — in the capture of their women, children, and property and in the destruction of all their places of refuge — the severity of a righteous God fell heavily on that base and corrupt race. But, more than all others, Balaam deserved and got the just reward of his deeds. His conduct had been atrociously sinful, considering the knowledge he possessed, and the revelations he had received, of the will of God. For any one in his circumstances to attempt defeating the prophecies he had himself been the organ of uttering, and plotting to deprive the chosen people of the divine favor and protection, was an act of desperate wickedness, which no language can adequately characterize.

13. *Moses, and Eleazar the priest, ... went forth to meet them without the camp* — partly as a token of respect and congratulation on their victory, partly to see how they had executed the Lord's commands, and partly to prevent the defilement of the camp by the entrance of warriors stained with blood.

14-18. *And Moses was wroth with the officers of the host* — The displeasure of the great leader, though it appears the ebullition of a fierce and sanguinary temper, arose in reality from a pious and enlightened regard to the best interests of Israel. No order had been given for the slaughter of the women, and in ancient war they were commonly reserved for slaves. By their antecedent conduct, however, the Midianitish women had forfeited all claims to mild or merciful treatment; and the sacred character, the avowed object of the war (^{<CRISIS>} Numbers 31:2,3), made their slaughter necessary without any special order. But why “kill every male among the little ones”? It was designed to be a war of extermination, such as God Himself had ordered against the people of Canaan, whom the Midianites equalled in the enormity of their wickedness.

19-24. *abide without the camp seven days: whosoever hath killed any person ... purify both yourselves and your captives* — Though the Israelites had taken the field in obedience to the command of God, they had become defiled by contact with the dead. A process of purification was to be undergone, as the law required (^{<CRISIS>} Leviticus 15:13 ^{<CRISIS>} Numbers 19:9-12), and this purifying ceremony was extended to dress, houses,

tents, to everything on which a dead body had lain, which had been touched by the blood-stained hands of the Israelitish warriors, or which had been the property of idolaters. This became a standing ordinance in all time coming (^{<OR63>}Leviticus 6:28 11:33 15:12).

25-39. *Take the sum of the prey that was taken* — that is, of the captives and cattle, which, having been first lumped together according to ancient usage (^{<OR63>}Exodus 15:9 ^{<OR60>}Judges 5:30), were divided into two equal parts: the one to the people at large, who had sustained a common injury from the Midianites and who were all liable to serve: and the other portion to the combatants, who, having encountered the labors and perils of war, justly received the largest share. From both parts, however, a certain deduction was taken for the sanctuary, as a thank offering to God for preservation and for victory. The soldiers had greatly the advantage in the distribution; for a five-hundredth part only of their half went to the priest, while a fiftieth part of the congregation's half was given to the Levites.

32-47. *the booty, being the rest of the prey which the men of war had caught* — Some of the captives having been killed (^{<OR67>}Numbers 31:17) and part of the cattle taken for the support of the army, the total amount of the booty remaining was in the following proportions:

Prey Total Amount Half to Soldiers Deducted to God Half to
Congregation Deducted to Levites

Sheep 675,000 337,500 675 337,500 6,750

Beeves 72,000 36,000 72 36,000 720

Asses 61,000 30,500 61 30,500 610

Persons 32,000 16,000 32 16,000 320

48-54. *officers ... said ... there lacketh not one man of us* — A victory so signal, and the glory of which was untarnished by the loss of a single Israelitish soldier, was an astonishing miracle. So clearly betokening the direct interposition of Heaven, it might well awaken the liveliest feelings of grateful acknowledgment to God (^{<OR40>}Psalms 44:2,3). The oblation they brought for the Lord “was partly an atonement” or reparation for their error (^{<OR64>}Numbers 31:14-16), for it could not possess any expiatory virtue,

and partly a tribute of gratitude for the stupendous service rendered them. It consisted of the "spoil," which, being the acquisition of individual valor, was not divided like the "prey," or livestock, each soldier retaining it in lieu of pay; it was offered by the "captains" alone, whose pious feelings were evinced by the dedication of the spoil which fell to their share. There were jewels to the amount of 16,750 shekels, or about \$305,000.

CHAPTER 32

NUMBERS 32:1-42.

THE REUBENITES AND GADITES ASK FOR AN INHERITANCE.

1-5. *the land of Jazer, and the land of Gilead* — A complete conquest had been made of the country east of the Jordan, comprising “the land of Jazer,” which formed the southern district between the Arnon and Jabbok and “the land of Gilead,” the middle region between the Jabbok and Jarmouk, or Hieromax, including Bashan, which lay on the north of that river. The whole of this region is now called the Belka. It has always been famous for its rich and extensive pastures, and it is still the favorite resort of the Bedouin shepherds, who frequently contend for securing to their immense flocks the benefit of its luxuriant vegetation. In the camp of ancient Israel, Reuben and Gad were pre-eminently pastoral; and as these two tribes, being placed under the same standard, had frequent opportunities of conversing and arranging about their common concerns, they united in preferring a request that the trans-jordanic region, so well suited to the habits of a pastoral people, might be assigned to them.

6-19. *Moses said unto the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben, Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here* — Their language was ambiguous; and Moses, suspicious that this proposal was an act of unbelief, a scheme of self-policy and indolence to escape the perils of warfare and live in ease and safety, addressed to them a reproachful and passionate remonstrance. Whether they had really meditated such a withdrawal from all share in the war of invasion, or the effect of their leader’s expostulation was to drive them from their original purpose, they now, in answer to his impressive appeal, declared it to be their sincere intention to co-operate with their brethren; but, if so, they ought to have been more explicit at first.

16. *they came near* — The narrative gives a picturesque description of this scene. The suppliants had shrunk back, dreading from the undisguised

emotions of their leader that their request would be refused. But, perceiving, from the tenor of his discourse, that his objection was grounded only on the supposition that they would not cross the Jordan to assist their brethren, they became emboldened to approach him with assurances of their goodwill.

We will build sheepfolds here for our cattle, and cities for our little ones — that is, rebuild, repair. It would have been impossible within two months to found new cities, or even to reconstruct those which had been razed to the ground. Those cities of the Amorites were not absolutely demolished, and they probably consisted only of mud-built, or dry-stone walls.

17. and our little ones shall dwell in the fenced cities because of the inhabitants of the land — There was good policy in leaving a sufficient force to protect the conquered region lest the enemy should attempt reprisals; and as only forty thousand of the Reubenites and the Gadites, and a half of Manasseh, passed over the Jordan (^{<OR>}Joshua 4:13), there were left for the security of the new possessions 70,580 men, besides women and children under twenty years (compare ^{<OR>}Numbers 26:7,18,34).

We ourselves will go ready armed — that is, all of us in a collective body, or as many as may be deemed necessary, while the rest of our number shall remain at home to provide for the sustenance and secure the protection of our families and flocks. (See on ^{<OR>}Joshua 4:12).

20-33. Moses said unto them, If ye will do this thing — with sincerity and zeal.

go before the Lord to war — The phrase was used in allusion to the order of march in which the tribes of Reuben and Gad immediately preceded the ark (^{<OR>}Numbers 10:18-21), or to the passage over the Jordan, in which the ark stood in mid-channel, while all the tribes marched by in succession (^{<OR>}Joshua 3:4), of course including those of Reuben and Gad, so that, literally, they *passed over before the Lord* and before the rest of Israel (^{<OR>}Joshua 4:13). Perhaps, however, the phrase is used merely in a general sense to denote their marching on an expedition, the purpose of which was blessed with the presence, and destined to promote the glory, of God. The

displeasure which Moses had felt on the first mention of their proposal had disappeared on the strength of their solemn assurances. But a lurking suspicion of their motives seems still to have been lingering in his mind — he continued to speak to them in an admonitory strain; and he concluded by warning them that in case of their failing to redeem their pledge, the judgments of an offended God would assuredly fall upon them. This emphatic caution against such an eventuality throws a strong doubt on the honesty of their first intentions; and yet, whether through the opposing attitude or the strong invectives of Moses they had been brought to a better state of mind, their final reply showed that now all was right.

28-32. *concerning them Moses commanded* — The arrangement itself, as well as the express terms on which he assented to it, was announced by the leader to the public authorities. The pastoral country the two tribes had desired was to be granted them on condition that they would lend their aid to their brethren in the approaching invasion of Canaan. If they refused or failed to perform their promise, those possessions should be forfeited, and they themselves compelled to go across the Jordan and fight for a settlement like the rest of their brethren.

33. *half the tribe of Manasseh* — It is nowhere explained in the record how they were incorporated with the two tribes, or what broke this great tribe into two parts, of which one was left to follow the fortunes of its brethren in the settled life of the western hills, while the other was allowed to wander as a nomadic tribe over the pasture lands of Gilead and Bashan. They are not mentioned as accompanying Reuben and Gad in their application to Moses [⁻⁰⁶³¹Numbers 32:1]; neither were they included in his first directions (⁻⁰⁶²⁵Numbers 32:25); but as they also were a people addicted to pastoral pursuits and possessed as immense flocks as the other two, Moses invited the half of them to remain, in consequence, probably, of finding that this region was more than sufficient for the pastoral wants of the others, and he may have given them the preference, as some have conjectured, for their valorous conduct in the contests with the Amorites (compare ⁻⁰⁶²⁹Numbers 32:39, with ⁻⁰⁶⁷¹Joshua 17:1).

34-36. *And the children of Gad built* — (See on ⁻⁰⁶²⁶Numbers 32:16).

Dibon — identified with Dheban, now in ruins, an hour's distance from the Arnon (Mojeb).

Ataroth (*Hebrew*, “crowns”) — There are several towns so called in Scripture, but this one in the tribe of Gad has not been identified.

Aroer — now Arair, standing on a precipice on the north bank of the Arnon.

35-38. Atroth, Shopan, and Jaazer, etc. — Jaazer, near a famed fountain, Ain Hazier, the waters of which flow into Wady Schaib, about fifteen miles from Hesbon. Beth-nimrah, now Nimrin; Heshbon, now Hesban; Elealeh (*Hebrew*, “the high”), now Elaal; Kirjathaim (*Hebrew*, “the double city”); Nebo, now Neba, near the mountain of that name; Baal-meon, now Myoun, in ruins, where was a temple of Baal (^{<1837>}Joshua 13:17 ^{<2483>}Jeremiah 48:23); Shibmah, or Shebam (^{<1831>}Numbers 32:3), near Heshbon, famous for vines (^{<2369>}Isaiah 16:9,10 ^{<2483>}Jeremiah 48:32).

38. (*their names being changed*) — either because it was the general custom of conquerors to do so; or, rather, because from the prohibition to *mention the names of other gods* (^{<1231>}Exodus 23:13), as Nebo and Baal were, it was expedient on the first settlement of the Israelites to obliterate all remembrance of those idols. (See ^{<1337>}Joshua 13:17-20).

39. Gilead — now Jelud.

41. Havoth-jair — that is, “tent-villages.” Jair, who captured them, was a descendant of Manasseh on his mother’s side (^{<1312>}1 Chronicles 1:21,22).

42. Nobah — also a distinguished person connected with the eastern branch of the tribe of Manasseh.

CHAPTER 33

NUMBERS 33:1-15.

TWO AND FORTY JOURNEYS OF THE ISRAELITES — FROM EGYPT TO SINAI.

1. *These are the journeys of the children of Israel* — This chapter may be said to form the winding up of the history of the travels of the Israelites through the wilderness; for the three following chapters relate to matters connected with the occupation and division of the promised land. As several apparent discrepancies will be discovered on comparing the records here given of the journeyings from Sinai with the detailed accounts of the events narrated in the Book of Exodus and the occasional notices of places that are found in that of Deuteronomy, it is probable that this 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 adjacent plains till the surrounding herbage was exhausted. The catalogue extends from their departure out of Egypt to their arrival on the plains of Moab.

went forth ... with their armies — that is, a vast multitude marshalled in separate companies, but regular order.

2. *Moses wrote their goings out according to their journeys by the commandment of the Lord* — The wisdom of this divine order is seen in the importance of the end to which it was subservient — namely, partly to establish the truth of the history, partly to preserve a memorial of God’s marvellous interpositions on behalf of Israel, and partly to confirm their faith in the prospect of the difficult enterprise on which they were entering, the invasion of Canaan.

3. *Rameses* — generally identified with Heroopolis, now the modern Abu-Keisheid (see on ¹⁰²⁵⁷Exodus 12:37), which was probably the capital of Goshen, and, by direction of Moses, the place of general rendezvous previous to their departure.

- 4. *upon their gods*** — used either according to Scripture phraseology to denote their rulers (the first-born of the king and his princes) or the idolatrous objects of Egyptian worship.
- 5. *pitched in Succoth*** — that is, “booths” — a place of no note except as a temporary halting place, at Birketel-Hadji, the Pilgrim’s Pool [CALMET].
- 6. *Etham*** — edge, or border of all that part of Arabia-Petræa which lay contiguous to Egypt and was known by the general name of Shur.
- 7. *Pi-hahiroth, Baal-zephon ... Migdol*** — (See on ^{<0140>}Exodus 14:2).
- 8. *Marah*** — thought to be Ain Howarah, both from its position and the time (three days) it would take them with their children and flocks to march from the water of Ayun Musa to that spot.
- 9. *Elim*** — supposed to be Wady Ghurundel (see on ^{<0150>}Exodus 15:27).
- 10. *encamped by the Red Sea*** — The road from Wady Ghurundel leads into the interior, in consequence of a high continuous ridge which excludes all view of the sea. At the mouth of Wady-et-Tayibeh, after about three days’ march, it opens again on a plain along the margin of the Red Sea. The minute accuracy of the Scripture narrative, in corresponding so exactly with the geographical features of this region, is remarkably shown in describing the Israelites as proceeding by the only practicable route that could be taken. This plain, where they encamped, was the Desert of Sin (see on ^{<0160>}Exodus 16:1).
- 12-14. *Dophkah ... Alush ... Rephidim*** — These three stations, in the great valleys of El Sheikh and Feiran, would be equivalent to four days’ journey for such a host. Rephidim (^{<0170>}Exodus 17:6) was in Horeb, the burnt region — a generic name for a hot, mountainous country. [See on ^{<0170>}Exodus 17:1.]
- 15. *wilderness of Sinai*** — the Wady Er-Raheh.

NUMBERS 33:16-56.

FROM SINAI TO KADESH AND PLAINS OF MOAB.

16-37. *Kibroth-Hattaavah* (“the graves of lust,” see on ^{<0113>}Numbers 11:34) — The route, on breaking up the encampment at Sinai, led down Wady Sheikh; then crossing Jebel-et-Tih, which intersected the peninsula, they descended into Wady Zalaka, pitching successively at two brief, though memorable, stations (^{<0122>}Deuteronomy 9:22); then they encamped at Hazeroth (“unwalled villages”), supposed to be at Ain-Hadera (see on ^{<0115>}Numbers 11:35). Kadesh, or Kadesh-barnea, is supposed to be the great valley of the Ghor, and the city Kadesh to have been situated on the border of this valley [BURCKHARDT; ROBINSON]. But as there are no less than *eighteen stations* inserted between Hazeroth and Kadesh, and only eleven days were spent in performing that journey (^{<0120>}Deuteronomy 1:2), it is evident that the intermediate stations here recorded belong to another and totally different visit to Kadesh. The first was when they left Sinai in the second month (^{<0111>}Numbers 1:11 ^{<0120>}13:20), and were in Kadesh in August (^{<0145>}Deuteronomy 1:45), and “abode many days” in it. Then, murmuring at the report of the spies, they 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 (^{<0121>}Numbers 20:1). Between the two visits there intervened a period of thirty-eight years, during which they wandered hither and thither through all the region of El-Tih (“wanderings”), often returning to the same spots as the pastoral necessities of their flocks required; and there is the strongest reason for believing that the stations named between Hazeroth (^{<0128>}Numbers 33:8) and Kadesh (^{<0136>}Numbers 33:36) belong to the long interval of wandering. No certainty has yet been attained in ascertaining the locale of many of these stations. There must have been more than are recorded; for it is probable that those only are noted where they remained some time, where the tabernacle was pitched, and where Moses and the elders encamped, the people being scattered for pasture in various directions. From Ezion-geber, for instance, which stood at the head of the gulf of Akaba, to Kadesh, could not be much less than the whole length of the great valley of the Ghor, a distance of not less than

a hundred miles, whatever might be the exact situation of Kadesh; and, of course, there must have been several intervening stations, though none are mentioned. The incidents and stages of the rest of the journey to the plains of Moab are sufficiently explicit from the preceding chapters.

18. *Rithmah* (“the place of the broom”) — a station possibly in some wady extending westward of the Ghor.

19. *Rimmon-parez*, or Rimmon — a city of Judah and Simeon (^{<6852>}Joshua 15:32); Libnah, so called from its white poplars (^{<6829>}Joshua 10:29), or, as some think, a white hill between Kadesh and Gaza (^{<6829>}Joshua 10:29); Rissah (El-arish); mount Shapher (Cassius); Moseroth, adjacent to mount Hor, in Wady Mousa. Ezion-geber, near Akaba, a seaport on the western shore of the Elanitic gulf; Wilderness of Zin, on the east side of the peninsula of Sinai; Punon, in the rocky ravines of mount Hor and famous for the mines and quarries in its vicinity as well as for its fruit trees, now Tafyle, on the border of Edom; Abarim, a ridge of rugged hills northwest of the Arnon — the part called Nebo was one of its highest peaks — opposite Jericho. (See on ^{<6806>}Deuteronomy 10:6).

50-53. *ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you* — not, however, by expulsion, but extermination (^{<6804>}Deuteronomy 7:1).

and destroy all their pictures — obelisks for idolatrous worship (see on ^{<6804>}Leviticus 26:1).

and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places — by metonymy for all their groves and altars, and materials of worship on the tops of hills.

54. *ye shall divide the land by lot* — The particular locality of each tribe was to be determined in this manner while a line was to be used in measuring the proportion (^{<6830>}Joshua 18:10 ^{<6946>}Psalms 16:5,6).

55. *But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you* — No associations were to be formed with the inhabitants; otherwise, “if ye let remain, they will be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides” — that is, they would prove troublesome and dangerous neighbors, enticing to idolatry, and consequently depriving you of the divine favor and blessing. The neglect of the counsel against union with the idolatrous

inhabitants became fatal to them. This earnest admonition given to the Israelites in their peculiar circumstances conveys a salutary lesson to us to allow no lurking habits of sin to remain in us. That spiritual enemy must be eradicated from our nature; otherwise it will be ruinous to our present peace and future salvation.

CHAPTER 34

NUMBERS 34:1-29.

THE BORDERS OF THE LAND OF CANAAN.

2. *this is the ... land of Canaan* — The details given in this chapter mark the general boundary of the inheritance of Israel west of the Jordan. The Israelites never actually possessed all the territory comprised within these boundaries, even when it was most extended by the conquests of David and Solomon.

3-5. *your south quarter* — The line which bounded it on the south is the most difficult to trace. According to the best biblical geographers, the leading points here defined are as follows: The southwest angle of the southern boundary should be where the wilderness of Zin touches the border of Edom, so that the southern boundary should extend eastward from the extremity of the Dead Sea, wind around the precipitous ridge of Akkrabbim (“scorpions”), thought to be the high and difficult Pass of Safeh, which crosses the stream that flows from the south into the Jordan — that is, the great valley of the Arabah, reaching from the Dead to the Red Sea.

5. *river of Egypt* — the ancient brook Sihor, the Rhinocolura of the Greeks, a little to the south of El-Arish, where this wady gently descends towards the Mediterranean (^{481B}Joshua 13:3).

6. *the western border* — There is no uncertainty about this boundary, as it is universally allowed to be the Mediterranean, which is called “the great sea” in comparison with the small inland seas or lakes known to the Hebrews.

7-9. *north border* — The principal difficulty in understanding the description here arises from what our translators have called mount Hor. The Hebrew words, however, *Hor-ha-Hor*, properly signify “the mountain of the mountain,” or “the high double mountain,” which, from

the situation, can mean nothing else than the mountain Amana (So 4:8), a member of the great Lebanon range (⁴⁹³⁵Joshua 13:5).

8. *entrance of Hamath* — The northern plain between those mountain ranges, now the valley of Balbeck (see on ⁴⁹²¹Numbers 13:21).

Zedad — identified as the present Sudud (²⁵⁷⁵Ezekiel 47:15).

9. *Ziphron* — (“sweet odor”).

Hazar-enan — (“village of fountains”); but the places are unknown. “An imaginary line from mount Cassius, on the coast along the northern base of Lebanon to the entering into the Bekaa (Valley of Lebanon) at the Kamosa Hermel,” must be regarded as the frontier that is meant [VAN DE VELDE].

10-12. *east border* — This is very clearly defined. Shepham and Riblah, which were in the valley of Lebanon, are mentioned as the boundary line, which commenced a little higher than the sources of the Jordan. Ain is supposed to be the source of that river; and thence the eastern boundary extended along the Jordan, the sea of Chinnereth (Lake of Tiberias), the Jordan; and again terminated at the Dead Sea. The line being drawn on the east of the river and the seas included those waters within the territory of the western tribes.

13-15. *The two tribes and the half-tribe have received their inheritance on this side Jordan* — The conquered territories of Sihon and Og, lying between the Arnon and mount Hermon, were allotted to them — that of Reuben in the most southerly part, Gad north of it, and the half Manasseh in the northernmost portion.

16-29. *names of the men ... which shall divide the land* — This appointment by the Lord before the Jordan tended not only to animate the Israelites faith in the certainty of the conquest, but to prevent all subsequent dispute and discontent, which might have been dangerous in presence of the natives. The nominees were ten princes for the nine and a half tribes, one of them being selected from the western section of Manasseh, and all subordinate to the great military and ecclesiastical chiefs, Joshua and Eleazar. The names are mentioned in the exact order in which the tribes obtained possession of the land, and according to *brotherly* connection.

CHAPTER 35

NUMBERS 35:1-5.

EIGHT AND FORTY CITIES GIVEN TO THE LEVITES.

2. *give unto the Levites of the inheritance of their possession cities to dwell in* — As the Levites were to have no territorial domain allocated to them like the other tribes on the conquest of Canaan, 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 ^{<485D>}Numbers 35:4 and ^{<485E>}Numbers 35:5, with regard to the extent of these suburbs; but the statements in the two verses refer to totally different things — the one to the extent of the suburbs from the walls of the city, the other to the space of two thousand cubits from their extremity. In point of fact, there was an extent of ground, amounting to three thousand cubits, measured from the wall of the city. One thousand were most probably occupied with outhouses for the accommodation of shepherds and other servants, with gardens, vineyards, or oliveyards. And these which were portioned out to different families (^{<486F>}1 Chronicles 6:60) might be sold by one Levite to another, but not to any individual of another tribe (^{<486G>}Jeremiah 32:7). The other two thousand cubits remained a common for the pasturing of cattle (^{<485H>}Leviticus 25:34) and, considering their number, that space would be fully required.

NUMBERS 35:6-8.

CITIES OF REFUGE.

6. *there shall be six cities for refuge, which ye shall appoint for the manslayer* — The establishment of those privileged sanctuaries among the cities of the Levites is probably traceable to the idea, that they would be the most suitable and impartial judges — that their presence and counsels

might calm or restrain the stormy passions of the blood avenger — and that, from their being invested with the sacred character, they might be types of Christ, in whom sinners find a refuge from the destroyer (see ^{<B448>}Deuteronomy 4:43 ^{<G518>}Joshua 20:8).

8. *the cities which ye shall give shall be of the possession of the children of Israel* — The burden of furnishing those places for the residence and support of the Levitical order was to fall in equitable proportions upon the different tribes (see ^{<G351>}Numbers 33:54 ^{<G107>}Joshua 20:7).

^{<G519>}NUMBERS 35:9-34.

THE BLOOD AVENGER.

11. *that the slayer may flee thither, which killeth any person at unawares* — The practice of Goelism, that is, of the nearest relation of an individual who was killed being bound to demand satisfaction from the author of his death, existed from a very remote antiquity (^{<O014>}Genesis 4:14 ^{<O125>}27:45). It seems to have been an established usage in the age of Moses; and although in a rude and imperfect state of society, it is a natural and intelligible principle of criminal jurisprudence, it is liable to many great abuses; the chief of the evils inseparable from it is that the kinsman, who is bound in duty and honor to execute justice, will often be precipitate — little disposed, in the heat of passion or under the impulse of revenge, to examine into the circumstances of the case, 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. Should an Arab of one tribe happen to kill one of another tribe, there is “blood” between the tribes, and the stain can only be wiped out by the death of some individual of the tribe with which the offense originated. Sometimes the penalty is commuted by the payment of a stipulated number of sheep or camels. But such an equivalent, though offered, is as often refused, and blood has to be repaid only by blood. This practice of

Goelism obtained among the Hebrews to such an extent that it was not perhaps expedient to abolish it; and Moses, while sanctioning its continuance, was directed, by divine authority, to make some special regulations, which tended both to prevent the unhappy consequences of sudden and personal vengeance, and, at the same time, to afford an accused person time and means of proving his innocence. This was the humane and equitable end contemplated in the institution of cities of refuge. There were to be six of these legalized asylums, 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 native Israelites only, but of all resident strangers.

16-21. *If he smite him with an instrument of iron, so that he die*, etc. — Various cases are here enumerated in which the Goel or avenger was at liberty to take the life of the murderer; and every one of them proves a premeditated purpose.

22-28. *But if he thrust him suddenly without enmity, or have cast upon him any thing without laying of wait*, etc. — Under the excitement of a sudden provocation, or violent passion, an injury might be inflicted issuing in death; and for a person who had thus undesignedly committed slaughter, the Levitical cities offered the benefit of full protection. Once having reached the nearest, 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 within its walls was a wise and salutary rule, designed to show the sanctity of human blood in God's sight, as well as to protect the manslayer himself, whose presence and intercourse in society might have provoked the passions of the deceased's relatives. But the period of his release from this confinement was not until the death of the high priest. That was a season of public affliction, when private sorrows were sunk or 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. The moment, however, that the refugee broke through the restraints of his confinement and ventured beyond the precincts of the asylum, he forfeited the privilege, and, if he was discovered by his pursuer, he might be slain with impunity.

29-34. *these things shall be for a statute of judgment unto you throughout your generations* — The law of the blood-avenger, as thus established by divine authority, was a vast improvement on the ancient practice of Goelism. By the appointment of cities of refuge, the manslayer was saved, in the meantime, from the blind and impetuous fury of vindictive relatives; but he might be tried by the local court, and, if proved guilty on sufficient evidence, condemned and punished as a murderer, without the possibility of deliverance by any pecuniary satisfaction. The enactment of Moses, which was an adaptation to the character and usages of the Hebrew people, secured the double advantage of promoting the ends both of humanity and of justice.

CHAPTER 36

NUMBERS 36:1-13.

THE INCONVENIENCE OF THE INHERITANCE.

1. *the chief fathers of the families of the children of Gilead* — Being the tribal governors in Manasseh, they consulted Moses on a case that affected the public honor and interests of their tribe. It related once more to the daughters of Zelophehad. Formerly they had applied, at their own instance, to be recognized, for want of male heirs in their family, as entitled to inherit their father's property [⁰⁶⁷¹Numbers 27:1-11]; now the application was made on behalf of the tribe to which they belonged — that steps might be taken to prevent the alienation of their patrimony by their alliance with husbands of another tribe. The unrestricted marriages of daughters in such circumstances threatened seriously to affect the tenure of land in Israel, as their inheritance would go to their children, who, by the father's side, would belong to another tribe, and thus lead, through a complication of interests and the confusion of families, to an evil for which even the Jubilee could not afford a remedy. (See on ⁰⁶⁵³Leviticus 25:13).

5-12. *Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of the Lord* — The plea appeared just and reasonable; and, accordingly an enactment was made by which the daughters of Zelophehad, while left to the free choice of their husbands, were restricted to marry not only within their own tribe, but *within the family* of their father's tribe — that is, one of their cousins. This restriction, however, was imposed only on those who were heiresses. The law was not applicable to daughters in different circumstances (¹³²²1 Chronicles 23:22) — for they might marry into another tribe; but if they did so, they were liable to forfeit their patrimonial inheritance, which, on the death of their father or brothers, went to the nearest of the family kinsmen. Here was an instance of progressive legislation (see also ⁰⁶⁸⁷Exodus 18:27) in Israel, the enactments made being suggested by circumstances. But it is deserving of special notice that those additions to, or modifications of, the law were confined

to civil affairs; while the slightest change was inadmissible in the laws relating to worship or the maintenance of religion.

13. *These are the commandments and the judgments, which the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses unto the children of Israel in the plains of Moab* — The Israelitish encampment was on an extensive plateau north of the Arnon, which, though wrested from the Moabites by Sihon and Og, still retained the name of its original possessors. The particular site, as indicated by the words “Jordan near Jericho,” is now called El-Koura — a large plain lying not far from Nebo, between the Arnon and a small tributary stream, the Wael [BURCKHARDT]. It was a desert plain on the eastern bank, and marked only by groves of the wild, thorny acacia tree.