

THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

BY

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Introduction

The fourth book of the Pentateuch bears in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (Septuagint) the title Arithmoi, of which the Latin Numeri and our English "Numbers" are translations. It is called by this name because the people Israel are twice numbered in this book. The first time when they started on their journey, and the second time at the close of their thirty-eight years wandering (chapters 1, and 26). The Hebrews have given to this book the name Be-Midbar, which means "in the wilderness."

It is the wilderness book and covers the entire period of Israel's history from the second month of the second year after the Exodus from Egypt to the tenth month of the fortieth year. However, the years of wanderings are passed over in silence, only the different camps are mentioned. Our annotations point out the significance of this.

The Author of Numbers

Numbers is closely linked with Leviticus, though it differs greatly from it. Moses wrote the record of the events in the wilderness as he wrote the instructions Jehovah gave concerning the worship of His people. Only a person who was contemporaneous with the events recorded in Numbers could have been the author of this book. In chapter 33:2 we find a statement to the effect that Moses wrote their goings out according to their journeys. If Moses did not write the book, who then was the author? If the Mosaic authorship is denied the genuineness and trustworthiness of the entire book must be given up. Higher criticism, so called, claims that Moses did not write Numbers and that the book itself was not contemporary with the events it describes. They call attention that throughout the book Moses is referred to in the third person. They make much of chapter 12:3, as bearing definite testimony against Moses as the author. (For the explanation see our annotations on that chapter.) The same documents, compilers and redactors, etc., which, as it is claimed, composed the other books of the Pentateuch, and put them into shape in which we have them, centuries after Moses lived, are also brought into play in connection with Numbers. It would be more than unprofitable to follow these foolish theories which have laid the foundation to the most serious denials of the revelation of God.

Interesting History

The story of Numbers is of deep interest. We do not need to follow here the events in detail as recorded in the different chapters; this will be our happy task as we study this book. The Lord had the people numbered first. They had to show their pedigree that they really belonged to the people of God. Then the camp was set in order. The service of the Levites in connection with the tabernacle was appointed. Everything was in readiness for the journey towards the land and the possession of the land. Jehovah Himself went before the camp. Then comes the sad history of Israel's failure, their murmuring and unbelief. They became wanderers and their carcasses fell in the wilderness.

In the Light of the New Testament

Every careful reader of the New Testament Scriptures knows that Numbers is there repeatedly quoted. The Lord spoke to Nicodemus about the serpent which Moses lifted up in the wilderness (chapter 21:9) and spoke of it as a type of His death on the cross. Balaam is mentioned by Peter, Jude and in the book of Revelation. Korah and the awful rebellion under him is used by Jude in his brief testimony concerning the apostasy of the last days.

But above all must we remember in the closer study of the book of Numbers that the Holy Spirit has called special attention to the experiences of Israel in this book in its typical character and as a solemn warning for us as pilgrims in this present evil age. The failure of Israel on account of unbelief to enter into the promised land and possess it foreshadows the failure of Christendom to possess the heavenly things in Christ. We follow this more fully in the annotations. All this is fully authorized by the divine statement in First Corinthians 10:1-12.

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

And again it is written, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4). Read also Hebrews 3:7-19; 4:1-6. The entire wilderness experience of Israel as recorded in this book will yield to us deeper lessons if we seek them with prayer and a heart which is willing to know and to do His will. These typical and

spiritual applications have been made as far as our limited space permits. Much more may be discovered in this great book, our annotations, we hope, will be used, under God, to point out the way.

The faithfulness of Jehovah in the midst of the most awful failures of His people and how He kept them and manifested His grace towards them is one of the beautiful things of this book.

The Levites and their Service

In the wilderness book only the service of the Levites is mentioned. Their responsibility in a service divinely given in taking charge of the things of the tabernacle (all typical of Christ and His work) is typical of our service into which the Lord calls each member of His body.

in this book we find likewise the first of the greater prophetic utterances of the Bible. The parables of Balaam form a great prophecy. The Appendix gives a full exposition. May it please God to use the analysis and annotations which now follow.

The Division of Numbers

The division of this book is very simple if we follow the historical account it contains. There are three parts to it. We give them and the leading contents of the different chapters.

I. THE PREPARATION FOR THE JOURNEY

1. The People Numbered (1:1-54)
2. The Camp Put in Order (2:1-34)
3. The Levites and their Ministrations (3-4)
4. The Sanctification of the Camp and the Nazarite (5-6)
5. The Offerings of the Princes (7:1-89)
6. The Consecration of the Levites (8:1-26)
7. Passover and Jehovah with His People (9:1-23)
8. The Trumpets of Silver (10:1-10)

II. THE JOURNEY STARTED AND THE PEOPLE'S UNBELIEF, FAILURE AND PUNISHMENT

1. The Departure and the First Failure (10:11-36)
2. At Taberah and Kibroth-Hattaavah (11:1-35)
3. The Rebellion of Miriam and Aaron (12:1-16)
4. At Kadesh Barnea and Israel's Unbelief (13-14)
5. Various Laws, the Sabbath Breaker, and the Tassels upon the Garment (15:1-41)
6. The Rebellion of Korah and the Murmuring of the Whole Assembly (16:1-50)
7. The Priesthood of Aaron Confirmed (17:1-13)
8. The Priesthood and Iniquity and the Recompense of the Priests (18:1-32)
9. The Red Heifer and the Law of Purification (19:1-22)
10. At Kadesh in the Fortieth Year, Murmuring and Conquests (20-21)

III. EVENTS IN THE PLAINS OF MOAB AND FACING THE LAND

1. Balaam and His Parables (22-24)

2. Israel's Sin with the Daughters of Moab and the Zeal of Phinehas (25:1-18)
3. The Second Numbering of the People (26:1-65)
4. The Daughters of Zelophehad, the Death of Moses and his Successor Announced (27:1-23)
5. Order of the Offerings and the Set Times (28-29)
6. Concerning Vows (30:1-16)
7. The War against the Midianites (31:1-54)
8. The Tribes of Reuben, Gad, Half-Manasseh and their portion (32:1-42)
9. The Encampments in the Wilderness (33:1-49)
10. Instructions Concerning the Conquest and the Boundaries of the Land (33:50-34:29)
11. The Cities of Refuge (35:1-34)
12. The Security of the Inheritance (36:1-13)

Analysis and Annotations

I. THE PREPARATION FOR THE JOURNEY

1. The People Numbered

CHAPTER 1

1. The command to number (1:1-4)
2. The appointed helpers for the work (1:5-16)
3. The congregation assembled (1:17-19)
4. The twelve tribes numbered (1:20-46)
5. The Levites separated unto the tabernacle service (1:47-54)

It was exactly one month after the erection of the tabernacle that the Lord gave the commandment to Moses to number the people. This is seen by comparing the first verse of Numbers with Exodus 40:17. It must not be overlooked that there was a previous numbering of the people in connection with the atonement money. Then all who were twenty years and above, the same as in this census, were numbered. This took place nine months before, and the number of men twenty years and over was 603,550. The same number is given in this first chapter. See Exodus 38:25-26 and Num. 1:46.

The numbering was "after their families by the house of their fathers." And those to be numbered were "all from twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel." They had to declare their pedigrees after their families, and only those who could do that had a place in this mustering and could be warriors. This showing of their pedigree was necessary on account of the mixed multitude which had joined themselves to the people of God. "And a mixed multitude went up also with them" (Exod. 12:38). This mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting (Num. 11:4). Therefore only those who could show by their pedigree their rightful place among the people of God were mustered and could go to war. Our pedigree, which gives us a place among the people of God, is the new birth, by which we become children of God. And our calling is to a spiritual warfare, not with flesh and blood, but against the devil and his wiles and the wicked spirits (Eph. 6:11-12).

The significance of the statement "all that are able to go forth to war in Israel" must not be overlooked. God wanted His people to go forward

and reach in a few days the land of promise, enter in and conquer that land. How this plan was frustrated by their unbelief, and the men of twenty years and over died in the wilderness, without seeing the land is the sad history of this book.

Moses and Aaron were called to be the leaders in numbering the people by their armies. As we saw in Exodus, both Moses and Aaron are typical of Christ. He knoweth His people and His watchful eye rests upon each. With Moses and Aaron were associated the princes of the tribes mentioned in verses 5-16. The names of these princes are of deep interest when we translate them into English. The prince of Reuben is Elizur, "My God is a rock." The Prince of Simeon, Shelumiel, "At peace with God." The Prince of Judah, Nahshon, "A diviner." Then comes Nathaniel, "The gift of God." The Prince of Issachar, Zebulun, is represented by Eliab, "My God is father." Joseph has his double portion and Ephraim has Elishama, "My God hath heart." Manasseh's Prince is Gamaliel, "My God is a rewarder." Benjamin has Abidan, "My father is judge." The Prince of Dan is Ahiezer, "Brother of help." Asher has Pagiel, "Event of God." Gad's Prince is Eliasaph, "God addeth," and Naphtali is represented by Ahira, "Brother is evil." Nearly all these names are an encouragement to faith. These helpers in forming the mighty army speak by their names of the victory and blessing in store for His people if they go forward in faith. (The deeper lessons connected with it are pointed out in an excellent manner in the Numerical Bible.)

The different tribes, except Levi, were then numbered. We give a table which gives the result of this numbering and also the second numbering thirty-eight years later. The comparison is interesting:

First Numbering Chapter 1 ...	Second Numbering Chapter 26
Reuben 46,500	... 43,730 = 2,700 decrease
Simeon 59,300	... 22,200 = 37,100 decrease
Gad 45,650	... 40,500 = 5,150 decrease
Judah 74,600	... 76,500 = 1,900 increase
Issachar 54,400	... 64,300 = 9,900 increase
Zebulun 57,400	... 60,500 = 3,100 increase
Manasseh 32,200	... 52,700 = 20,500 increase
Ephraim 40,500	... 32,500 = 8,000 decrease
Benjamin 35,400	... 45,600 = 10,200 increase
Dan 62,700	... 64,400 = 1,700 increase
Asher 41,500	... 53,400 = 11,900 increase
Naphtali 53,400	... 45,400 = 8,000 decrease
- - - - -	- - - - -
Total 603,550	... 601,730 = 1,820 decrease

The tribe of Levi is not included. The end of this chapter gives the reason. They were not to be among the warriors, but appointed over the tabernacle of testimony, over all the vessels, and what belonged to it. They were to bear it and their place was round about the tabernacle. Their service, divinely appointed and the beautiful lessons connected with it, we shall follow more fully in our annotations of the third and fourth chapters.

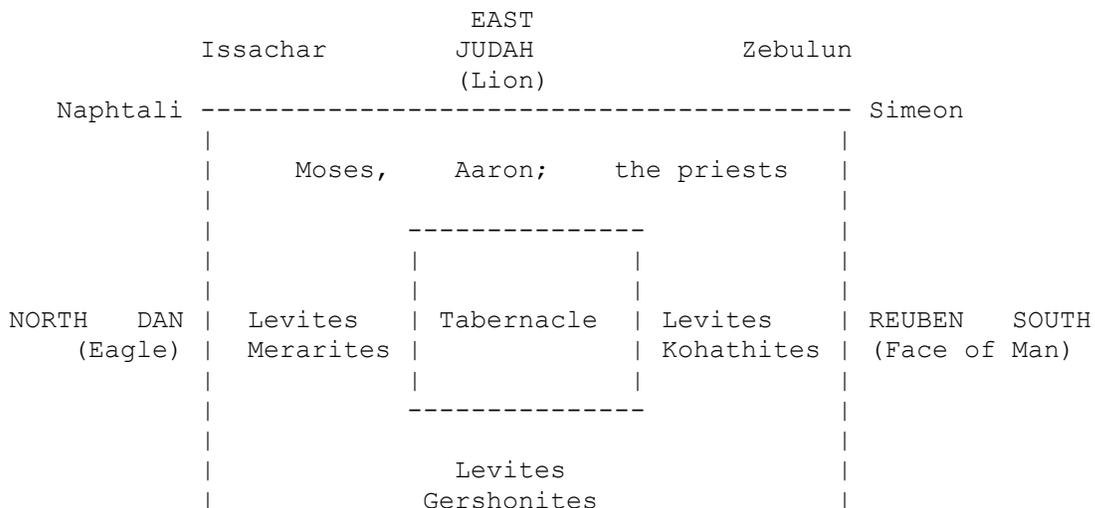
2. The Camp Put in Order

CHAPTER 2

1. The command (2:1-2)
2. The east-side: Judah, Issachar and Zebulun (2:3-9)
3. The south-side: Reuben, Simeon and Gad (2:10-16)
4. The position of the Levites (2:17)
5. The west-side: Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin (2:18-24)
6. The north-side: Dan, Asher and Naphtali (2:25-34)

The camp is now divinely arranged and put in order. Nothing was left to themselves. Jehovah spoke and gave the instructions, how every man of the children of Israel was to pitch by his own standard, with the ensign of their father's house over against, round about the tabernacle. The tabernacle where Jehovah dwelt was in the midst. Around this center the tribes were grouped in four camps, an east side, a south side, west side and north side, three tribes on each side. Rabbinical tradition adds many interesting details which may be true. According to this tradition each had its own standard with the crests of its ancestors. On the east, above the tent of Nahshon, there shone a standard of green, because it was on an emerald (the green stone) that the name of Judah was engraved upon the breastplate of the high priest. Upon this standard was a lion, according to the words of Jacob, "Judah is a lion's whelp." Towards the south, above the tent of Elizur, the son of Reuben, there floated a red standard, the color of the Sardius, the stone upon which Reuben's name was written. Upon his standard was a human head, because Reuben was the head of the family. And Reuben means, as we saw in Exodus, "Behold a son," typical of Him who became the Son of man. On the west, above the tent of Elishama, the son of Ephraim, there was a golden flag on which was the head of a calf, because it was through the vision of the calves or oxen that Joseph had predicted and provided for the famine in Egypt; and hence Moses, when blessing the tribe of Joseph (Deut. 33:17) said, "his glory is that of the first-born of a bull." Towards the north, above the tent of Ahiezer, the son of Dan, there floated a motley standard of red and white, like the jasper, in which the name of Dan was engraven upon the breastplate. In his standard was an eagle, the great foe of serpents, because Jacob had compared Dan to a serpent; but Ahiezer had substituted the eagle, the destroyer of serpents, as he shrank from carrying an adder upon his flag. This, we remind our readers, is Jewish tradition, and very interesting.

A little diagram will bring the camp more vividly before us.



and his sons, but it had nothing to say about the ministry entrusted to the Levites. The priests had given to them the ministry of the sanctuary, where they acted as worshippers and intercessors. The work of the Levites as given in this chapter, and that which follows, was of a more outward nature. They had to guard the tabernacle, to attend to its erection and taking down, to bear the different parts, all of which was ordered in all its details by Jehovah.

Levi means "joined." The grace of God had joined them to the Lord and His ministry. Christian believers are joined to the Lord and are both priests and Levites, possessing priesthood and ministry. Our priesthood consists in the ministry of the sanctuary, in worship and intercession. Our Levite ministry is many sided. It is given to us from the Lord to be exercised towards men. We bring spiritual sacrifices, the fruit of our lips, the sacrifice of praise unto God. The whole life of a Christian is to have the Levite character of ministry. "For me to live is Christ" is our service as the Levite lived for the tabernacle and its service. All Christian believers are priests and all have a ministry.

The generations of Aaron and Moses are mentioned first in this chapter. While elsewhere we read of Moses and Aaron, Aaron's name here stands first. His name is put first because he typifies Christ as Priest, upon whose intercession all depends. The Levites were then brought to Aaron to minister unto him and keep his charge. Jehovah claims them for His own instead of all the first-born. "Therefore the Levites shall be mine." "Mine shall they be, I am Jehovah." The first-born were sanctified unto the Lord because of deliverance. They knew therefore that they were sanctified unto Jehovah and owned by Him. And this is our blessed knowledge in Christ. We are delivered, sanctified, belong to Him and to keep His charge, rendering the service into which He has called us. May our hearts be led into the enjoyment of all this.

The difference between the numbering of the tribe of Levi and the other tribes must be noted. In the previous chapter those were numbered who were twenty years and over, but the Levites were numbered "every male from a month old and upward." This difference was because they were in place of the first-born, which were at the tender age of weakness and helplessness either redeemed or given up (18:16).

The sons of Levi made prominent as the heads of eight families, are, Gershon, Kohath and Merari.

Gershon (exile) with his sons, Libni and Shimei, were 7,500 souls. Their place was on the west-side of the tabernacle, over against Ephraim. (See diagram in the previous chapter.) They had charge of the tabernacle, the tent, the coverings and the hangings of the door of the tabernacle.

Kohath (assembly) with the Amramites, Izecharites, Hebronites and Uzzielites, were 8,600 souls. Their place was on the south side and they had charge of the ark, the table, the candlestick, the altars, the hanging and all the service thereof.

Merari (bitter) with the family of Mahlites and Mushites were 6,200 souls and their place was on the north-side, over against Dan. Their service consisted in handling the boards of the tabernacle, pillars, sockets, pins and cords. Each had his specific work given. There could be no misunderstanding about it. How strange it would have been if these

22,000 Levites had formed committees and sub-committees to divide the work and direct in it! All this would have brought in disorder. All they needed to do was to do the work into which the Lord had called them. All the instructions were given; obedience to these instructions, and faithfulness in the discharge of it were the essential things. The same is true in connection with the church. Every member in the body of Christ has a service to render. Each member is put into place by the Lord Himself and He gives to each the service, as He gave to these sons of Levi and their families their specific work in and around the tabernacle. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God, that worketh all things in all" (1 Cor. 12:4-6). How little this truth is recognized! Much of what is called Christian service is service in self will and therefore lacks power and blessing. As these Levites knew their work, because the Lord had spoken and called them into it, so every member of the body of Christ is to know his calling and his service.

"We, as Christians, are very apt to jostle one another, indeed, we are sure to do so if we do not each one pursue his own divinely appointed line of work. We say "divinely appointed," and would press the word; we have no right to choose our own work. If the Lord has made one man an evangelist, another a teacher, another a pastor, and another an exhorter, how is the work to go on? Surely, it is not by the evangelist trying to teach, and the teacher to exhort, or one who is not fitted for either trying to do both. No, it is by each one exercising his own divinely imparted gift. No doubt, it may please the Lord to endow one individual with a variety of gifts; but this does not, in the smallest degree, touch the principle on which we are dwelling, which is simply this, every one of us is responsible to know his own special line and pursue it. If this be lost sight of, we shall get into hopeless confusion. God has His quarry-men, His stone-squarers, and His masons. The work progresses by each man attending diligently to his own work. If all were quarry-men, where were the stone-squarers? if all were stone-squarers, where were the masons? The greatest possible damage is done to the cause of Christ, and to God's work in the world, by one man aiming at another's line of things, or seeking to imitate another's gift. It is a grievous mistake, against which we would solemnly warn the reader. Nothing can be more senseless. God never repeats Himself. There are not two faces alike, not two leaves in the forest alike, not two blades of grass alike. Why, then, should any one aim at another's line of work, or affect to possess another's gift? Let each one be satisfied to be just what his Master has made him. This is the secret of real peace and progress." (C.H. Mackintosh, Notes on Numbers.)

Worship holds the first and highest place. This is for us His people most clearly stated in the New Testament. Devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ in our life is the highest form of service and all other service must flow, and will flow, from faithfulness to the Person of our Lord.

Gershon and his sons had charge of the coverings and the fine linen. Gershon means exile, a stranger. The fine linen is typical of righteousness. The coverings, hangings, which divided off and separated the different parts of the tabernacle, must have the meaning of separation. His service points us to the fact that we are separated ones and strangers in the world. This separation must be witnessed to by practical righteousness.

Merari had charge with his sons of the boards, the sockets, pins and

cords. These held the building together. We stated in the annotations on Exodus (chapter 26) that Christ and His people are typified in the boards of shittim wood, resting in the sockets of silver. The framework of the tabernacle, with the bars of shittim wood uniting the boards, is a type of that building of which we read in Ephesians, "a building fitly framed together," the church. The work of Merari suggests the thought of union.

It is interesting to compare this wilderness service as outlined above with the exhortation in Eph. 4:1-3. Knowing God's calling, in possession of God's highest and best, as revealed in that Epistle, passing through the wilderness, we are to walk worthy of that calling.

1. In all lowliness and meekness; manifesting Christ: Kohath-service.
2. With longsuffering, etc.; practical righteousness: Gershon-service.
3. Keeping the unity of the Spirit; united in the one body: Merari-service.

And if we walk thus we shall make known the excellencies of Him, who hath called us from darkness to His marvellous light and exercise in obedience the special gift He has given to us as members of His body.

The numbering then proceeded. The number of those fit for service was 8,580.

Kohathites:	Able men	2,750	...	Unable	5,850	...	Total	8,600
Gershonites:	Able men	2,630	...	Unable	4,870	...	Total	7,500
Merarites:	Able men	3,200	...	Unable	3,000	...	Total	6,200
						...	Total	22,300

But how many among God's people are unfit for service, being out of conscious fellowship with God and conformed to this present evil age? May it please the Spirit of God to awaken such to see anew their calling and their blessed privileges as priests and Levites unto God.

But while it is impossible to restore the house, that is the professing church, so sadly divided and broken in pieces, it is not impossible for the individual believer to live and serve according to the divine ideal.

In verse 38 we find the place given where Moses, Aaron and the priests were to encamp. It was before the tabernacle, that is, on the east side. The number of the Levites is given as 22,000. If we add the number of the Gershonites, Kohathites and Merarites, 7,500, 8,600 and 6,200, we get 22,300. Here is a difficulty which seems to remain unsolved. The total number in verse 39 must be correct, for in verse 46 we read that the number of the first-born exceeded the total number of the Levites by 273.

CHAPTER 4

The Service of the Levites and their Numbering

1. The children of Kohath; their service (4:1-20)
2. The sons of Gershon; their service (4:21-28)
3. The sons of Merari; their service (4:29-33)

4. Their numbering for service (4:34-49)

This chapter enters more fully into the service of the Levites. They are mustered for service "from thirty years old and upwards even unto fifty years old." As we saw in the previous chapter, their service was to carry the holy things of Jehovah through the wilderness. The wilderness is for us the type of the world through which we pass, and our business as Christians is to manifest Christ. We must guard the holy things of our faith as jealously as the Levites guarded the tabernacle and its sacred contents, and this must be done by us with the testimony of our lips and the testimony of our lives. The service of the Kohathites, Gershonites and Merarites is full of blessed instructions for us, at which we can but briefly hint. In the previous chapter Gershon stands first, as he is the first-born. Here the first-born has to take a secondary place and Kohath is put first. The lesson is that the divine appointment for service is not the matter of natural relation and endowment, but of grace. The sons of Kohath had to carry the most holy things. All of them typify Christ in His humanity as our Redeemer and Lord. This stands first. It is occupation with Christ, and therefore fellowship with God.

4. The Sanctification of the Camp and the Nazarite

CHAPTER 5

1. Concerning the leper, the issue and defilement of the dead (5:1-4)
2. Concerning restitution (5:5-10)
3. Concerning the wife suspected of adultery (5:11-31)

So far we had the outward arrangement of the camp. This chapter tells us that the camp had to be holy and therefore must be cleansed from that which defiles. Divine directions are given concerning the unclean person, the restitution of anything unjustly taken and what is to be done with a wife suspected of adultery. Leprosy could not be tolerated in the camp in the midst whereof Jehovah dwelt. The persons who had an issue and had come in touch with the dead, as well as the leper, both male and female, were to be put without the camp. This command was at once obeyed. "And the children of Israel did so, and put them out without the camp." The typical meaning of leprosy we learned from Leviticus as well as the meaning of the issue. Sin is typified thereby as manifested in and through one who belongs to the people of God. While here we have the divine command to put the unclean person out of the camp, we have the equally divinely given command in the New Testament: "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1 Cor. 5:13). The principle is the same whether in the camp of Israel or in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. To touch the dead also defiled. If it was a dead person, the one who touched the same was considered unclean for seven days (Num. 19:11); if a man touched a dead animal it rendered him unclean till the evening (Lev. 11:27, 39, 40). To purify such who had become defiled in this manner, the ordinance of the red heifer was given. In no other portion of the Law is made so much of this form of defilement as in Numbers. This is in keeping with the character of the book. Israel passing through the wilderness came face to face with death on all sides. Spiritually the application is not hard to make. The world through which God's children pass is the enemy of God, alienated from Him and lying in the wicked one. Death is stamped upon it and the world is under condemnation. By the cross of Christ we are crucified to the world and the

world is crucified unto us. The Word of God therefore exhorts us not to be conformed to this world (Rom. 12:2). We are not to love the world nor the things in the world (1 John 2:15-17). James tells us that whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God (James 4:4). Against defilement with the world in its different phases the child of God must constantly be on his guard. The camp must be holy, because Jehovah is in the midst. All what defiles belongs outside.

The wrong committed in the camp (verses 5-10) must be confessed, restitution be made, and, according to the law of the trespass-offering, the fifth part must be added to it. Unconfessed sin could not be tolerated in the camp where Jehovah dwells. And the same principle we find in the New Testament. "The grace of God, which has brought in unlimited forgiveness, would be rather a calamity if it did not enforce confession. Can one conceive a thing more dreadful morally than a real weakening of the sense of sin in those brought nigh to God? It may seem so where there is only a superficial acquaintance with God. Where the truth hath been hastily gathered and learned on the surface it is quite possible to pervert the gospel to an enfeebling of the immutable principles of God, ignoring His detestation of sin, and our own necessary abhorrence of it as born of God. Whatever produces such an effect is the deepest wrong to Him and the greatest loss to us. This is guarded against here." (W. Kelly, Lectures on the Pentateuch.)

In the next paragraph concerning the wife suspected of adultery, no positive defilement or sin is in view, only the suspicion of it. A careful reading of the passage is suggested. The offering of jealousy is described in detail, but the brief character of our annotations forbids a closer examination. We can only point out that the offering consisted not of fine flour as in the meal-offering, but of barley meal, which was coarser. No leaven was mixed with it, for that would have implied before the test, the guilt of the accused woman. Nor was oil and frankincense put on the offering, no joy and worship could be connected with this offering of jealousy. Then the priest took holy water in an earthen vessel and the dust of the tabernacle floor and put it into the water. This also has a symbolical meaning. The water stands for the Word, and the dust typifies death and the curse. It was a most solemn ceremony of a searching nature. The innocent one had nothing to fear; the drinking of the bitter water that causeth the curse but resulted for her in vindication. The guilty one was found out by Jehovah and the curse rested upon her. This ordinance is also applicable to Israel as the unfaithful wife of Jehovah.

CHAPTER 6

The Nazarite

1. The vow of a Nazarite (6:1-8)
2. The defilement of the Nazarite (6:9-12)
3. The law of the Nazarite (6:15-21)
4. The blessing of Aaron and his sons (6:22-27)

The word Nazarite means, one who is separated. The vow of the Nazarite meant separation unto Jehovah and separation in three things: 1. Separation from wine and strong drink, vinegar of wine, vinegar of strong drink, liquor of grapes, moist or dried grapes, from all that is made of the wine-tree, from the kernels even unto the husks. 2. His hair was to grow long and no razor was to come upon his head. 3. He was to be separated from

the dead. This Nazarite vow was only for a certain period of time and not permanent. When it ended he shaved his head and drank wine.

This entire chapter concerning the Nazarite is of intense interest for it contains many helpful and most blessed lessons for us. It is needless to say that no more vows like the vow of the Nazarite can be made in the literal sense of the word, just as there is no longer a special class of priests among God's people. A Nazarite was a separate one, a saint, and such are we in Christ Jesus. But while the grace of God has constituted us saints, the practical living out of our Nazariteship remains with us. It must be the matter of the willing heart, the heart, which, in devotion to the Lord, yields itself to Him. The wine, strong drink, and all which comes from the vine stands for earthly joys, for pleasures, for that which is pleasing to the old nature. The wine and strong drink stand typically for the intoxicating pleasures which this poor, lost world indulges in and which the god of this age so often uses to dull the heart and the spirituality of the saints. But there are other things mentioned, which in themselves are harmless, like the moist grapes and dried grapes. These represent also earthly joys of a harmless character, but which cannot give to the believer the joy in the Lord which His heart craves. Christ is to be our all in all, the saint does not need anything whatever of earthly joys to sustain him. Christ is sufficient. Asaph reveals the true Nazarite spirit, when He said, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none on earth that I desire beside Thee" (Ps. 73:25). Paul in writing to the Philippians gives the expression of a Nazarite: "For me to live is Christ." "And furthermore, I consider all things but loss for the sake of the surpassing knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord; for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Phil. 3:8).

"Legality this is not. Legality is the spirit of self righteousness, or of slavish dread, never of love, or desire after Christ, or of expectation from Him, such as that of which we have been speaking. Carry these ever so far, they can never land you in that in the direction of which they do not even point, but away from it. He who speaks of himself as doing but one thing was neither a legalist nor an extremist. He was simply a man into whose heart, forever filling it, the glory of Christ had shined.

"Let us not confound this, however, with the spirit of asceticism that has peopled monasteries with men fleeing vainly from this world, or scattered through the desert the abodes of the recluse. Nor let us imagine as involved in it any 'death to nature,' in which what God has made or instituted is branded as if it were unclean. It is striking that just in these two epistles in which Christian position is most emphasized (Ephesians and Colossians) the duties of earthly relationships are most largely dwelt upon. The lilies of the field could be seen by Him who as Son of Man was here on earth for us arrayed in glory beyond all Solomon's. His hands indeed had made them, and if not a sparrow fell to the ground without His Father, He could say, 'I and My Father are one.' Still as ever is it true that the Lord's works are manifold, and in wisdom has He made them all: the earth is full of His riches; yea, and His works are sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.

"But the Christian Nazarite is Christ's: therefore in his pleasures, in his business, in his duties, Christ is before him, with him, over him. He has fellowship with the Father and the Son, and there is nothing for him outside this. Here is the principle which makes him of necessity a stranger to what they find pleasure in, who find none in Him. The world's 'vine of

wine,' as a whole, he is separate from" (F.W. Grant, Numerical Bible).

The long hair of the Nazarite is not difficult to interpret. 1 Cor. 11:1-15 gives the key. "if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him. But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given her for a covering." The long hair of the woman testifies of the authority under which she is put. The long hair of the Nazarite therefore showed that he had humbled himself, made of himself no reputation. He took the place of dependence and loneliness. He gave up his rights and became nothing. And this is the place of blessing and power. The Christian Nazarite in his practical separation to the Lord, loves the low place and delights to follow after Him who emptied Himself and stooped so low. The separation from the dead has the same meaning as in the previous chapter. May it please God to give the writer and every reader of these lines a deeper longing to live as a true Nazarite, separated unto the Lord.

The Nazarite vow ended. Our separation is only as long as we are in the wilderness. The time came when the Nazarite, having fulfilled his vow, drank wine. A time of joy is coming for the saints of God, when His words shall be fulfilled. "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26:29). Then in His presence, delivered completely from sin and an evil world, we shall have joy unending, and instead of the place of lowliness we shall be exalted and share His throne with Him. Oh! for a thousand lives to devote to the Lord Jesus Christ!

The blessing with which this chapter ends gives a precious revelation of the triune God. Three times the Name of Jehovah was put upon the children of Israel; the Father-God, who keeps; Jehovah the Son, who is gracious; Jehovah the Holy Spirit, who gives peace. And there are certain people who deny the triune God and claim that no such doctrine is found in the Bible! How great will be the blessing, when He comes the second time to bless His people and all creation!

5. The Offerings of the Princes

CHAPTER 7

1. The princes present their offerings (7:1-3)
2. The command concerning these offerings and the Levites (7:4-11)
3. The twelve princes and what they offered (7:12-88)
4. Moses hears the voice from the mercy-seat (7:89)

This is the longest chapter in Numbers. The princes of Israel appear to bring their free-will offerings in six covered wagons drawn each by two oxen. No command had been given. With a willing heart they devoted of their possessions to the service of the sanctuary. The Lord accepting the offerings gave directions that the Gershonites and Merarites were to receive the wagons and the oxen for their service. The sons of Gershon received two wagons and four oxen and the sons of Merari four wagons and eight oxen. The gift was according to the service into which Jehovah had called them. The Merarites had to take care of the heavy boards and the Lord provided the means to carry the burden and render the service. For all service into which He calls His people, He also provides the strength and the means for the service. The sons of Kohath received nothing. They needed no wagons and oxen; their service was to carry the precious things upon

their shoulders.

The critics of the Word of God have found fault with the lengthy statements and repetitions concerning the twelve princes and their offerings. If these critics had penned this chapter, they would have given these offerings in a verse or two. But what unbelief belittles and rejects, is precious to faith. The details of the offerings and repetitions are written by the Holy Spirit, that we may know that Jehovah takes notice of the devotion and sacrifice of His people. He keeps a record of it all. The same eye, which followed the princes as they approached the tabernacle with their wagons, saw the two mites, which the poor widow deposited into the treasury; the same eye sees us. He will not forget the least service rendered unto Him.

All the twelve are called princes, except Nahshon of Judah. He, as the leader, the representative of Judah, must be the type of the Lord Jesus Christ, and He is more than a prince. We give a bird's eye view of the persons named and their gifts.

1. Judah: Nahshon (7:12)
2. Issachar- Nethaniel (7:18)
3. Zebulun: Eliab (7:24)
4. Reuben: Elizur (7:30)
5. Simeon: Shelumiel (7:36)
6. Gad: Eliasaph (7:42)
7. Ephraim: Elishama (7:48)
8. Manasseh: Gamaliel (7:54)
9. Benjamin: Abidan (7:60)
10. Dan: Ahiezer (7:66)
11. Asher: Pagiel (7:72)
12. Naphtali: Ahira (7:78)

12 Silver Chargers, each 130 shekels.
12 Silver Bowls, each 70 shekels.
12 Gold Spoons, each 10 shekels.

Total Shekels of Silver, 2400
Total Shekels of Gold, 120

Of beasts for sacrifice:

Bullocks	12
Rams	12
Lambs	12
Goats	24
Rams	60
He-Goats	60
Lambs	60

Total 240

Jehovah expressed His approval and His joy, after the offerings had been presented, by speaking to Moses in an audible voice, from between the Cherubim. The promise given in Exodus 25:21, 22 was fulfilled.

6. The Consecration of the Levites

CHAPTER 8

1. The lighting of the candlestick (8:1-4)
2. The consecration of the Levites (8:5-22)
3. The charge to the Levites repeated (8:23-26)

The candlestick is the type of Christ as in the sanctuary, that is, Christ in glory. The lighting of the seven lamps introduced in the beginning of the wilderness book is of blessed meaning. The seven lamps were to illuminate the candlestick of beaten gold, throw their light upon the candlestick so that the gold and beautiful workmanship might be seen. The oil in the seven lamps represents the Holy Spirit. Spiritually applied we have the picture here of the Spirit of God shedding light upon Christ. For this He is given to His people, to glorify Christ. And this is the great need of the people of God in their journey through the wilderness. The eyes of the pilgrim and stranger, the passenger passing through the wilderness, must be fixed upon Christ in glory.

The consecration of the Levites consisted in sprinkling with water, shaving the whole body, washing of their clothes. They had to stand before the tabernacle of the congregation and the whole assembly of the children of Israel was gathered together. The children of Israel had to put their hands upon the Levites. The whole congregation became thus identified with the service of the Levites. The Levites represented the entire congregation of Israel and served in their behalf. The sprinkling with water in their consecration stands typically for the purification from sins. This they could not do for themselves, another had to do it. But the sharp razor they were able to take to remove from their bodies all the hair, which stands for that which belongs to the flesh, the old nature. They had also to wash their clothes, which typically signifies the water (the Word) applied to our habits and to our ways. The lessons are many. He who would be a true Levite in service must constantly use the sharp knife of self-judgment to remove all what is of self.

Their period of service was fixed. It was uniform, from 25 to 50 years. It was a gracious provision that at 50 the Levite was permitted to retire from the harder work. There is no clash here with the statement of chapter 4. From 25 to 30 they could do the lighter work of the tabernacle, even as the Levites over 50 years were exempt from the harder tasks. The Lord still fixes the period in which His servants are to serve Him, as He also looks out for their comfort (John 21:12, 18-19).

7. Passover and Jehovah with his People

CHAPTER 9

1. The command to keep the Passover (9:1-3)
2. The Passover kept (9:4-5)
3. Provision in case of defilement (9:6-14)
4. Jehovah with His people (9:15-23)

Jehovah next commands His people to keep the feast of redemption, Passover. And they obeyed at once. The first Passover was held in Egypt, the second in the wilderness at Sinai, with their faces turned towards the land of promise, and it was next celebrated in the land of Canaan. This shows how essential the blood is for everything. The blood delivers out of

Egypt, it keeps in the wilderness and brings into the land of promise. Here in the wilderness they looked back to redemption as it had been accomplished in Egypt, the sprinkled blood of the paschal lamb had delivered them, and they looked forward to the land towards which they journeyed. Jehovah, who had delivered them out of Egypt by blood, carried His people through the wilderness, supplying all their wants, and brought them in virtue of that redemption blood, the ever blessed type of the precious blood of the Lamb, into the land of Canaan. We have the Lord's table where we enjoy the feast of redemption, feeding on Himself and His great love. There we look back to the Cross where He died, and praise Him for our deliverance. There we look forward to the blessed goal "till He comes." And we know that while on the way all our need shall be supplied, according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

A gracious provision was made for the men who were defiled by the dead or were on a journey afar. They could keep the Passover a month later, in the second month on the fourteenth day. The men who were defiled made a confession of it. And Moses not knowing what to do about their case turned to the Lord for instruction, which was immediately given. The grace of God met this need in a blessed way. There was time given for cleansing and for return from the journey and then a month later they could keep the Passover. None was to be shut out from the feast of redemption which God in His grace had provided for His people. Confession and self-judgment are needed in keeping the Lord's Supper. If the wanderer but returns he finds a welcome at the table He has spread for His people. What grace the Lord manifests towards His people! But how little grace those who are the objects of His love and grace manifest towards each other! If one, however, did neglect the Passover wilfully, he was to be cut off from among his people. Such neglect showed that he had no heart for Jehovah and His redemption.

And the cloud was with His people. In that cloud Jehovah was present, He was with His people. They tarried and journeyed according to the command of the Lord. The cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. "So it was alway." He did not leave His dwelling place in the midst of the people. All their movements were ordered by the cloud, that is, by the Lord Himself.

That mighty camp of over 600,000 men of twenty years and over, the 22,000 Levites and the hundreds of thousands of women and children, were dependent on the cloud. They could make no plans of their own. They did not know where they would go the next day. When they camped they did not know for how long it would be; when they marched they were ignorant how long it would last. Their eyes had to be fixed every morning, every night and throughout the day upon the cloud. They had to look up. Daily they were dependent upon Jehovah and upon the cloud for guidance.

And does He do anything less for His people living in the present age? Is the promise of guidance confined to Israel? Is it still His promise to His trusting child, "I will guide thee with mine eye"? Every Christian knows that he is under His care and under His guidance. If He guided Israel thus, how much more He will guide us who are, through grace, members of His body, one spirit with the Lord! How often we frustrate the manifestations of His power and His love by choosing our own path.

"Thus it was with Israel, and thus it should be with us. We are passing through a trackless desert--a moral wilderness. There is absolutely no way. We should not know how to walk, or where to go, were it not for

that one most precious, most deep, most comprehensive sentence which fell from the lips of our blessed Lord, 'I am the way.' Here is divine, infallible guidance. We are to follow Him. 'I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life' (John 8). This is living guidance. It is not acting according to the letter of certain rules and regulations; it is following a living Christ--walking as He walked, doing as He did, imitating His example in all things. This is Christian movement--Christian action. It is keeping the eye fixed upon Jesus, and having the features, traits and lineaments of His character imprinted on our new nature, and reflected back or reproduced in our daily life and ways.

"Now this will assuredly involve the surrender of our own will, our own plans, our own management, altogether. We must follow the cloud: we must wait ever, wait only upon God. We cannot say, We shall go here or there, do this or that, tomorrow, or next week. All our movements must be placed under the regulating power of that one commanding sentence (often, alas! lightly penned and uttered by us), 'If the Lord will.'" (C.H. Mackintosh).

8. The Trumpets of Silver

CHAPTER 10:1-10

1. The silver trumpets (10:1-2)
2. How they were to be used (10:3-10)

The silver trumpets were also given for guidance. They made known the mind of the Lord in an audible way. The cloud was seen. It stands for guidance by the eye. The silver trumpets were heard. When Israel was gathered together the trumpets were blown. "When ye blow an alarm, then the camps that lie on the east side shall go forward; when ye blow an alarm the second time then the camps that lie on the south side shall take their journey." They were used in time of war and the promise of victory and deliverance is connected with it. And in the days of gladness, in solemn days, in the beginning of the months, at the burnt offerings and peace offerings these trumpets were to be blown. And in the future there will be a use for the trumpet in connection with the gathering of Israel (feast of trumpets). Read Isaiah 27:12-13; Joel 2:1. Thus all was ordered for them by the Lord. The sound of the trumpets was to them the voice of God giving direction and a comforting assurance at the same time. They typify the Word of God. It must not be overlooked that the sons of Aaron, the priests, had to blow the trumpet. They were in holy communion with the Lord and made known His will to the people. As Israel was dependent on the sound of the trumpets, so are we dependent as His people on the testimony of His Word. His will is ascertained in priestly intimacy with Himself.

This ends the first part of this interesting book. It shows how Jehovah made all preparations and provisions for the wilderness journey of His people. He had them numbered, the camp was arranged and put in order, the service of the Levites appointed. The offerings were brought, the Levites consecrated, the Passover celebrated and the guidance by the cloud and silver trumpets given. All was ready for the journey.

II. THE JOURNEY STARTED: ISRAEL'S UNBELIEF, FAILURE AND PUNISHMENT

1. The Departure and the First Failure

CHAPTER 10:11-36

1. The cloud moves (10:11-13)
2. The standard of the camp of Judah (10:14-17)
3. The standard of the camp of Reuben (10:18-21)
4. The standard of the camp of Ephraim (10:22-24)
5. The standard of the camp of Dan (10:25-28)
6. The first failure (10:29-32)
7. The cloud leading (10:33-36)

It was on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was taken up from off the tabernacle and the signal was given for the camp to break up. The wilderness journey begins and we shall soon be face to face with the sad story of Israel's failure, a failure which is repeated in the history of Christendom. What a magnificent spectacle it must have been when the camp of Israel moved for the first time in its divinely arranged order! No pen can describe the scene. The cloud moved and advanced towards the wilderness of Paran. Judah with his flowing standard led by Nahshon comes first. Then the tabernacle was taken down and the sons of Gershon and Merari set forward carrying the different parts of the tabernacle. In the second chapter instruction was given that the tabernacle was to set forward with the camp of the Levites in the midst of the camp. Here the order is changed. We shall find later the reason for this. Then the Other camps followed, all in perfect order with Dan the rear guard of all the camps. Was it possible that one not an eye-witness could have given such a remarkable and minute description of all this? Only the person who was actually there and saw it with his own eyes could have written this account. No compiler living a few hundred years later could have produced such a work.

How beautiful the order in the camp! What a contrast with the disorder and concision which followed so soon! And this has all been repeated in Christendom.

The incident between Moses and Hobab is significant. The first failure is recorded and it is on the side of Moses. He turned to his father-in-law, a man who knew the wilderness well, and said, "Leave us not, I pray thee; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes." Criticism has pointed this out as one of the marks of imperfection in this book and calls it a contradiction. It is a contradiction, but not in the sense as infidelity takes it. It gives a perfect picture of what the human heart is, and therefore is a mark of the perfection of this record. Jehovah had offered Himself as the leader of His people. He was to be eyes for them. And Moses as the human leader of the host of Israel, knowing Jehovah and His promise, turns to a poor Midianite and expects guidance and directions of him! How true it is what one has said, "We find it hard to lean upon an unseen arm. A Hobab that we can see inspires us with more confidence than the living God whom we cannot see. We move on with comfort and satisfaction when we possess the countenance and help of some poor fellow-mortal, but we hesitate, falter and quail when called to move on in naked faith in God." Every Christian believer knows this tendency of the heart. Every failure begins with leaning on the arm of flesh and leaving out the Lord. And now we understand why the tabernacle was taken to the front and out of the place in the middle of the camps.

Jehovah anticipated this failure and graciously, not in judgment, He acts towards His people. "The ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days journey to search out a resting place for them." They wanted to find a resting place through Hobab's guiding eye for the tabernacle and the camp, and now Jehovah in unspeakable condescension and marvellous patience proceeds to search out a resting place for His people. Thus while we fail, He never fails His people. "Oh! for faith to trust Him more."

2. At Taberah and Kibroth-Hattaavah

CHAPTER 11

1. The first complaint and the punishment (11:1)
2. The first prayer and the answer (11:2-3)
3. The manna rejected (11:4-9)
4. Moses' complaint and request (11:10-15)
5. The institution of the seventy elders (1:16-30)
6. The quails given and the wrath of Jehovah (11:31-35)

They were now facing the land which was only a short distance away. The ark had sought out a resting place for them. Jehovah had graciously made all provision for their need and comfort. If enemies came victory was on their side, for with the setting forward of the ark Moses said, "Arise Jehovah and let Thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee." No hardships whatever they had encountered. What else was necessary but to trust Jehovah, praise His Name and possess the land which He had promised to them. Instead of acting thus they complained. It is the first complaint after the camp had been set in order. Their murmuring must have been on account of the journey, which after the long repose at Sinai seemed hard to them. It shows what man is with an evil, stubborn heart. Failure is stamped on man's history everywhere. It can be traced throughout the Word of God. Every age has this mark. Judgment fell as the result of this murmuring upon those in the uttermost parts of the camp. Most likely those who complained fell behind and expressed a desire not to go forward. Among these the fire burned; no record, however, is given of the first judgment. It must have been tempered with mercy. And the people did not turn to Jehovah in this hour of punishment, but cried to Moses. When he prayed the fire was quenched and the name of the place was called Taberah, which means "burning."

Alas! they did not profit by the chastening. The second murmuring is more pronounced and more definite. The mixed multitude were a large number who had joined the exodus. They did not know the reality of redemption as Israel did, because they were Egyptians, most likely the so-called "Fellahs." This multitude fell a lusting and infected the children of Israel. They wept and spoke lightly of the bread from heaven. Such a mixed multitude without the knowledge of redemption is found in the professing church. They have crept in unawares and have been and still are a fearful detriment to the people of God. No unregenerated person has a place in the church of God. They cannot eat and enjoy the manna God has given, but constantly lust after the food of Egypt. (Compare Num. 11:4-5 with Deut. 8:8. Egypt's food consisted in six things. Seven things are mentioned as food in the land.) in connection with the despised manna we find a description of that God-given food. It is, as we learned from Exodus, the type of Christ, the food God has given to His people. And how often that

food is neglected and Egypt's food preferred to the Word of God!

Moses' complaint follows. He seems discouraged and downcast as he looks over the vast camp and sees everybody weeping. It was failure in Moses also, who did not fully trust Jehovah that He could take care of His people and endow him, the leader of His people, with His own strength. The Lord met his weak and discouraged servant and told him to call the elders, seventy of them, and the Spirit, who was upon Moses, was to be put upon them. They were to share the burden with him. But while this delivered him from some of the care it also lost him dignity. Again Moses addressed Jehovah and expressed doubt about the feeding of the six hundred thousand footmen. "Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them to suffice them? or shall all the fish in the sea be gathered together for them to suffice them?" And the Lord rebuked him. The elders who received the Spirit prophesied and did not cease. What they prophesied is not revealed in the record. They uttered the words of God, exhorting the people in their increasing departure from Jehovah. Prophecy is always put into the foreground in the days of failure and apostasy. Here we also learn that prophecy is a gift. While Moses failed, Joshua also made a failure in being envious because Eldad and Medad prophesied in the camp. He was jealous not for Jehovah, but for Moses. "And Moses said unto him, enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them." This wish of Moses' is realized in the church, for all His believing people now have the gift of the Spirit. And the remnant of God's earthly people will yet be prophets upon whom the Spirit of God is poured out. This will be accomplished in the future when the Lord has come.

The end of the chapter shows Jehovah's bountiful provision in sending the flesh they had desired. But the wrath of the Lord was kindled against them, and while they were eating a great plague broke out. There was no repentance. Greedily they fell upon what God had provided. It was only to satisfy their lust; the giver they did not see behind the gift. The rebellious, stubborn heart, unrepenting, was there, making use for their own destruction what the Lord had given. Hence the severe judgment. The quails typify Christ. Professing Christendom speaks of Christ, but there is no repentance, no self-judgment, only the form of godliness, but the power is denied. The judgment of God must rest upon such. Kibroth-Hattaavah means "graves of lust."

3. The Rebellion of Miriam and Aaron

CHAPTER 12

1. Miriam and Aaron speak against Moses (12:1-3)
2. The interference of the Lord (12:4-9)
3. Miriam leprous (12:10)
4. Aaron's confession and intercession (12:11-12)
5. Moses' prayer and Miriam's restoration (12:13-16)

Open rebellion against Moses by his own brother and sister is the next step in the story of failure. Envy was at the bottom of it. The words Miriam and Aaron spoke reveal that they aimed at Moses' position. Miriam was a prophetess (Exod. 15:20). Aaron had the dignity of the priesthood. Pride, the crime of the devil (1 Tim. 3:6), lead them to speak against their own brother. Miriam was the leader in this rebellion, for her name

stands first and the judgment falls upon her. She may have been moved to jealousy by the elders having received the Spirit and exercising the gift of prophecy among the people. And Aaron reveals the weakness of the flesh. It is the second time he failed in this manner. He could not resist the clamoring of the people when they demanded the golden calf and here he cannot resist his sister, who became the willing instrument of Satan, like the first woman (1 Tim. 2:14). Moses had a Cushite woman for wife. This typifies the great truth of the union of Christ and the church, that Gentiles were to be joint-heirs and joint-members of the same body. But it seems that the Cushite wife of Moses was only a subterfuge and an attempt to reflect upon the moral character of the man of God, whose position they envied.

(If this thought is followed out in its dispensational meaning, it becomes very interesting. The natural relations objected to this union, as the Jews were moved with jealousy when the gospel was preached to the Gentiles and the Gentiles believed. The book of Acts bears abundant testimony to this fact.)

"And the Lord heard it." Magnificent words these! and the Lord also said, "Wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" It is a serious thing to speak against any servant of God. The Lord will always guard those who serve Him and vindicate their character. Moses did not take the case in his own hands. He did not answer back. His gracious character stands out in majestic greatness. How hard it is for a man who holds a high and honored position to bear any attack in silence and not to open his mouth! Moses kept silent, for he was very meek above all the men which were upon the face of the earth. In this he is a blessed type of Him who was meek and lowly; who reviled not when He was reviled, who opened not His mouth.

But did Moses really write the third verse? And if he did, does this not prove that he spoke well of himself? Some claim that this is an addition to the text. "The self-praise on the part of Moses which many have discovered in this description of his character, and on account of which some even of the earlier expositors regarded this verse as a later gloss, whilst more recent critics have used it as an argument against the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, is not an expression of vain self display, or a glorification of his own gifts and excellences which he prided himself upon possessing above all others. It is simply a statement which was indispensable to a full and correct interpretation of all the circumstances and which was made quite objectively with reference to the character which Moses had not given to himself, but had acquired through the grace of God." (Keil and Delitzsch, The Pentateuch.) This fully meets the difficulty.

And Jehovah speaks well of His servant Moses. He is declared faithful. With him He speaks and the similitude of Jehovah he is to behold. Compare with Hebrews 3:5-6. A greater than Moses is here! Christ is faithful as Son over God's house. Aaron confesses his sin and Miriam's sin. She is leprous and excluded from the congregation of Israel, where she tried to be the leader, but graciously restored at the appointed time as the result of the prayer of Moses. And may we not read here Israel's story, leprous now, but some day healed and restored?

4. At Kadesh-Barnea and Israel's Unbelief

CHAPTER 13

1. The command to search out the land (13:1-3)
2. The names of the spies (13:4-16)
3. Directions given (13:17-20)
4. Their explorations (13:21-25)
5. The report they brought (13:26-33)

The crisis is reached with this chapter. The events of the preceding chapters are the prelude to the complete failure and disaster. To understand the situation we must consult Deut. 1:21-24. Moses spoke in faith when he said, "Behold, the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee; go up and possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged." And the people's answer was that men be sent to search out the land. It was unbelief once more. They wanted to see first before they acted upon the Word of God. The saying also pleased Moses. No doubt he asked the Lord and received an answer from Him, which is recorded in the opening verses of this chapter.

Leading men are selected to act as spies. Reuben here stands first, Simeon follows, Levi is left out, for the Levites were not to have an inheritance in the land, Judah (praise) is the third. Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, who represents the tribe of Judah is here mentioned for the first time. Caleb means "brave," "whole hearted." Joshua's name is given also as "Oshea." Oshea means "saviour" and Joshua is "Jehovah is Saviour." The name of Joshua is found some 250 times in the Bible. He is the type of the Lord Jesus Christ. The name "Jesus" is the Greek equivalent. Caleb and Joshua were the only two in the whole company who trusted in Jehovah. And Jehovah rewarded them for their faith. Another interesting name is "Sethur" (verse 13). His name means "mysterious." The four letters of the name of Sethur give the number 666. He may have been the leader of the opposition, as Antichrist has this number (Rev. 13).

They found the land exactly as it had been described. "We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it." They brought a great cluster of grapes, pomegranates and figs. These tell us of spiritual food and service, which is for those who possess the land, our heavenly portion in Christ. They could not deny that Jehovah's promise was true. They carried the evidences of it upon their shoulders while they carried unbelief in their hearts. They looked at the children of Anak, the giants, which dwelled in the land and not to Jehovah, who had delivered them from the Egyptians. If they had reckoned with the Lord and trusted Him, not they, but the giants would have appeared to them as grasshoppers. Caleb said in faith, "Let us go up at once and possess it." Their unbelieving hearts refused and declared, "We are not able to go up." They brought an evil report of the land. The Hebrew for "bringing up an evil report" is in Prov. 10:18 translated "uttering a slander." Unbelief slanders God; it is an insult to the Lord.

And all this has many lessons for us. The church is called to possess a heavenly portion. This is typified by Canaan. Christendom has made a worse failure than Israel by not entering into the inheritance and by turning back to the world. And besides this, there are the lessons connected with our individual experience.

CHAPTER 14

The Rebellion of the People, Moses' Intercession and the Divine Sentence

1. The rebellion (14:1-10)
2. The intercession of Moses (14:11-25)
3. The divine sentence (14:26-39)
4. The presumption of the people and the defeat (14:40-45)

The words of unbelief of the ten spies yielded an awful harvest among the people. The camp was transformed into a camp of despair, weeping and crying during the night. Outspoken rebellion against Moses and Aaron was heard on all sides. Worse than that took place; they accused Jehovah of deception. Such is unbelief. They are ready to select a captain and march back to Egypt. Moses, Aaron, Joshua and Caleb stand alone among the hundreds of thousands of murmuring, rebellious Israelites and the mixed multitude. They fell on their faces, no doubt in the attitude of prayer and worship, to tell the Lord. They tried to stem the swelling tide of rebellion. Read the supplementary words in Deut. 1:29-3 1. "Jehovah is with us!" This was the word of cheer and comfort. Their answer was the stones with which they were ready to stone the servants of the Lord. Unbelief had robbed them of all reason, blinded their eyes and rushed them into despair and prompted them to become murderers.

Beautiful is the scene of Moses' intercession. He stands out as a striking type of our great Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jehovah's offer to Moses to make a new start after destroying the rebels and to make Moses a greater nation, even than Israel, is rejected. He does not want glory for himself, but he is jealous for Jehovah's name and glory. And in the intercession he reminds Jehovah of His own words He had spoken to him when on the mountain (Exod. 34:5-9). And upon this magnificent intercession Jehovah said, "I have pardoned according to thy word." Another, our ever blessed Lord, has secured forgiveness for His shining people. Grace now reigns through righteousness. Connected with this forgiveness is the divine declaration that the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. The grace which has secured pardon will yet establish glory on this earth. In spite of Israel's failure and the failure of man in this dispensation of grace, glory must ultimately cover this earth. This will be in the day when our Lord is revealed in all His glory. The measure of Israel's sin is full. They had tempted the Lord ten times (Exod. 14:11-12; 15:23-24; 16:2; 16:20; 16:27; 17:1-3; 22; Num. 11:1; 11:4; 14:2). The divine sentence is pronounced. "Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness, and all that were numbered among you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, who have murmured against me." Only Caleb and Joshua are an exception. Up to now they had been pilgrims, but now they became wanderers (verse 33). The ten spies were carried away by the plague. Their unbelief resulted in the disaster which came upon all the people as they were the first witnesses of the divine displeasure. "They could not enter in because of unbelief" (Heb. 3:19). And Christendom in its failure to lay hold in faith of the heavenly calling and heavenly possession, has lost its pilgrim character and has become the wanderer, minding earthly things.

Another failure follows. The divine sentence pronounced upon them resulted in mourning and a lip-confession, we have sinned." True repentance and self-judgment there was not. They tried to make their error good in their own strength and they attempted to go up without the ark and without Moses. "Whereas at first they had refused to enter upon the conflict with the Canaanites through their unbelief in the might of the promise of God, now, through unbelief in the severity of the judgment of God, they resolved to engage in the conflict by their own power, and without the help of God,

and to cancel the old sin of unbelieving despair through the new sin of presumptuous confidence" (Dr. F. Delitzsch). And Christendom, stripped of its power, tries to meet the giants of sin and wickedness in the same way, only to suffer defeat in all their attempts.

5. Various Laws, the Sabbath-Breaker, and the Tassels on the Garments

CHAPTER 15

1. Concerning offerings in the land (15:1-16)
2. The second communication concerning offerings (15:17-31)
3. The Sabbath-breaker (15:32-36)
4. The tassels on the garments (15:37-41)

The historical account is here interrupted. What the critics have to say about this chapter speaking of it as an evidence of the patchwork of different persons, we care not to follow. Our space is too valuable for that. The chapter is beautifully in order at this point. God gave two communications to Moses (verses 1 and 17). In the foreground of these communications stand the comforting assurance, "When ye come into the land." Jehovah assured them that in spite of all their failure He would give them the land and that He would bring them there. While the great mass died in the wilderness they received nevertheless the assurance that the rest would reach that land. And then they would bring the sacrifices and offerings. God's faithfulness stands here in contrast with man's failure. We cannot enter into the details of this chapter. The offerings speak of Christ as they always do. The stranger is also mentioned (verses 14-16). There was to be one law and one custom for Israel and for the stranger among them. The stranger is placed upon the same level with the Jew. While in Exod. 12:48 the circumcision of the stranger who would keep Passover is commanded, nothing is said here of this rite as touching the stranger. And this is not without meaning.

"Israel had forfeited everything. The rebellious generation was to be set aside and cut off; but God's eternal purpose of grace must stand, and all His promises be fulfilled. All Israel shall be saved; they shall possess the land; they shall offer pure offerings, pay their vows, and taste the joy of the kingdom. On what ground? On the ground of sovereign mercy. Well, it is on the self same ground that 'the stranger' shall be brought in; and not only brought in, but 'as ye are, so shall the stranger be before the Lord'" (C.H. Mackintosh).

All will find its final great fulfillment in the day when wandering Israel is restored to the land. And that day seems no longer far off. God will keep His promises, for His gifts and calling are without repentance. The annotations in Leviticus will help in understanding verses 22-31. The burnt offering and the sin offering typify the atoning death of our Lord. The presumptuous sin mentioned in verses 30-31 is illustrated by the case of the Sabbath-breaker. And there is a deeper lesson connected with it. Rest is procured through the finished work of Christ. The sinner who refuses this offered rest and passes it by, substituting for it his own works, acts presumptuously and will be cut off. He has despised the word and the work of Jehovah. It is the "anathema" of the Epistle to the Galatians.

The tassels of blue, the heavenly color, (in Hebrew 'Tsitsith'; still

worn by orthodox Jews in literal fulfillment of the command) were to remind them of the commandments so that they would do them and not go after strange things. It was a help to a separated, a holy life. May we be constantly reminded by the Word of God of an holy and heavenly calling and be delivered from worldliness.

6. The Rebellion of Korah

CHAPTER 16

1. The rebellion of Korah (16:1-19)
2. The punishment (16:20-35)
3. Eleazar and his work (16:36-40)
4. The murmuring of the whole congregation (16:41-43)
5. The staying of the plague (16:44-50)

The history is now resumed and we have the worst episode of Israel's history in the wilderness before us. We have seen and followed the steps downward and toward this fearful rebellion and the terrible punishment which followed. It started with unbelief. This tragedy is mentioned in the New Testament. In the Epistle of Jude we read, "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsayings of Korah." This little Epistle gives a prophetic picture of the apostasy of the professing people of God during our age. This apostasy began in the days of Jude and is now fully developed in the end of the age. Unbelief is given in Jude's Epistle as the starting point of the departure from God (verse 5), and Israel's unbelief is used as the picture of the unbelief of Christendom. Besides Cain (the one who rejects the sacrifice) Balaam and Korah are mentioned as types of the apostasy. The consummation of the apostasy is opposition to Christ, His blessed office-work and glory. And this seems to have been reached in our day. The opposition will continue and become more outspoken, more widespread, till the judgment by fire in the day of the Lord falls upon the apostates.

The leader of the rebellion was Korah, a Kohathite. It will be remembered that the Kohathites had the choicest service among the Levites; they carried the very best upon their shoulders, the sacred things of worship. The departure from God and rebellion against His Word often begins with those who claim the office of teachers and preachers. Such is the case in our times. Korah's name means "hail; ice." May not this indicate the coldness of his heart? Even so the apostate teachers of the last days, mere hirelings like Balaam, are only natural men, not having the Spirit (Jude 19). Their mouths may speak great swelling words, their hearts have never tasted the love of Christ; they know Him not, or they would not betray Him.

The sons of Reuben, Dathan and Abiram, and On, besides two hundred and fifty, joined the revolt. Their attempt was a complete overthrow of the constitution which had been given to Israel and the establishment of another order and other leaders. They themselves sought recognition and Korah aimed at the priesthood of Aaron and would have it himself. Verses 8-10 indicate this. Korah and his associates aimed at God's appointed high priest. And Moses put this serious matter in the hands of the Lord.

Moses and Aaron could not deal with this rebellion. The glory of the Lord appeared. Divine judgment falls upon them. Dathan and Abiram, their

wives, their sons and their little ones, besides the ringleader Korah, are swallowed up by the earth and went down alive into the pit. (It is also foreshadowing the judgment to come upon the apostates when the Lord appears the second time. See Rev. 19:20.) The two hundred and fifty who had taken presumptuously censers with incense, thereby defying the priesthood, are consumed by fire. It must be noted that the sons of Korah did not perish. A careful reading of verses 27-33 will bring out this fact and chapter 26:11 settles it beyond a doubt, "notwithstanding the children of Korah died not." Sovereign grace saved the sons of Korah from the awful fate of the father. They were saved from the pit. Mercy was remembered in wrath. What grace bestowed upon them may be learned by consulting the following passages: 1 Chronicles 6:54-67; 9:19-32; 26:1-20; 2 Chron. 23:3, 4, 19; 31:14-18. They had the cities of refuge, were keepers of the gates of the tabernacle; were over the chambers and treasuries of the house of the Lord; the instruments of the sanctuary, the wine, oil, etc., were in their charge; they were mighty men of valor; strong men; they were the royal guards. And more than that, the Holy Spirit inspired them to write some of the beautiful Psalms. Read Psalm 84, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts." What meaning this Psalm has when studied in the light of the story of Korah! They were faithful, devoted in their service because they knew that they had been saved from the pit. And we have the same deliverance and knowledge of it. Should we be less faithful and devoted?

Interesting is Eleazar's priesthood and ministry. As the third son of Aaron and in his ministry here he typifies the priesthood of Christ. The censers are kept as a memorial and as a warning. This ministry of Eleazar and Aaron staying the plague with the censer of incense, when the whole congregation revolted, is a confirmation of the divinely appointed priesthood and its efficacy. The preservation of the sinning, murmuring people depended upon the exercise of the priesthood. Blessed be God for Him who has made atonement, and whose priesthood in the presence of God keeps His people.

What higher criticism has made of this may be learned by the following statement:

"From the plain account of the text it appears that Aaron separated the men and women suffering with the plague from those not yet attacked, and then he piled the censer with incense and swung it between the hosts, so that not a germ in the air could pass over from the plague-stricken to those not yet attacked by the disease.

"The disinfecting of the air and separating of the sick from the well was dictated by Moses, who had learned in Egypt all the science of his day, and the Egyptian priests were master of many secrets which we have to learn over again." How absurd!

7. The Priesthood of Aaron Confirmed

CHAPTER 17

1. The divine command (17:1-5)
2. The rods before Jehovah (17:6-7)
3. The blossoming rod of Aaron (17:8-13)

Little comment is needed on this chapter. The blossoming and fruit

bearing rod of Aaron is another confirmation of the priesthood. Standing among the dying, "making an atonement," he is a type of Christ in His atoning work. The blossoming rod is the beautiful figure of resurrection. The rods were absolutely dead, not a sign of life was there. And Aaron's rod received life during that night and life was there in its abundance, buds, blossoms and almonds. Christ risen from the dead, the firstfruits of them that slept, is here blessedly foreshadowed. It was life from the dead and finds its application too in connection with the sinner who is dead in trespasses and sins, while it also foreshadows the spiritual resurrection of Israel. The murmurings of the children of Israel were taken away by the rod of Aaron preserved before the testimony or else they would have died. The blossoming rod preserved was a provision for the wilderness journey. In Hebrews we read, "Wherein was the golden pot of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant" (Heb. 9:4). The manna God's people need constantly in the wilderness as well as the ministry of Him who ever liveth and intercedeth for us. In 1 Kings 8:9 we read, "There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone." They were then in the land. When we reach our eternal home the manna and the intercession of a merciful high priest are no longer needed.

The rebellion of Korah yielded after all something. It added two things to the tabernacle, the plates from the censers for the covering of the altar and Aaron's blossoming rod.

8. Priesthood and Iniquity and the Recompense of the Priesthood

CHAPTER 18

1. The iniquity borne by the priesthood (18:1-7)
2. The recompense of the priests (18:8-19)
3. The inheritance of the priests (18:20-32)

"Aaron, thou and thy sons and thy father's house with thee shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary, and thou and thy sons with thee shall bear the iniquity of your priesthood." This is evidently in answer to the question, "Shall we be consumed with dying?" (17:13) The ministry of the priests and the Levites keeping the charge of the tabernacle and the charge of the altar "that there be no wrath any more upon the children of Israel" (verse 5). The priesthood which had been the object of rebellion was to be their security. If it had not been for the priestly service they would have all been consumed by the wrath of God. Christ is again here in view, He who ever liveth and intercedeth for His own people; Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins. He bore the iniquity and the wrath Himself.

The recompense of the priests is fully described in the second section of this chapter. In conclusion of it we read, "It is a covenant of salt forever before the Lord unto thee and to thy seed with thee." It is an indissoluble and inviolable covenant. The recompense of the priest and his house must be applied to the reward which Christ has, the joy which is His and His people, His house, sharing it with Him. The two sections harmonize beautifully. Aaron had no inheritance in the land. His inheritance is the Lord. "I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel." The Levites had no inheritance in the land, but received tithes. Aaron's was the better portion, and such is ours in Christ.

9. The Red Heifer and the Water of Purification

CHAPTER 19

1. The provision appointed: The red heifer and the ashes (19:1-10)
2. The use of the water of purification (19:11-22)

This is a most interesting chapter. The ordinance of the red heifer and the water of purification is nowhere mentioned in Leviticus. The day of atonement, so prominent in Leviticus, is not referred to in Numbers at all. The provision of the water of purification is characteristic of the wilderness book. The people were dying by the thousands, and means had to be provided for the cleansing of those who became defiled by contact with the dead. The ashes of the red heifer used in the way as described in this chapter were for the cleansing of the defiled. Without following the details of this new ordinance in the wilderness we point out briefly its typical meaning. That the red heifer is a type of Christ no one can fail to see. "For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb. 9:13-14) This fully warrants the typical application. The red heifer was to be without spot, wherein is no blemish is the type of Christ, without spot and blemish. It had to be an heifer upon which never came a yoke. A yoke is put on an animal to restrain the wild nature, to bring it to subjection. Our blessed Lord needed no yoke, for He came willingly. "Lo, I come to do Thy will." Nowhere is the color of a sacrificial animal mentioned but here. Red is the color of blood. It is the type of His obedience unto death. The heifer was slain without the camp. So Christ suffered without the camp (Heb. 13:12). The sprinkling of the blood seven times toward the tabernacle is the type of the blood of atonement. Everything of the red heifer was consumed by fire and into the fire was cast cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet. These things typify the world. (See cleansing of the leper in Lev. 14). The world and all its glory is judged in the judgment of the cross.

Here is the essential difference between this and all other offerings: it is an offering once offered which (ideally, at least) never needs to be renewed. In all other cases, if any man sinned, fresh blood had to be shed, a fresh sacrifice to be made; but in this, the virtue remained of what had already been offered: the ashes were the memorial of an already accepted work. (F.W Grant)

The ashes of the red heifer were gathered up by a clean man and put outside of the camp in a clean place. Water was used with the ashes and was sprinkled upon the defiled persons, upon the tent and all the vessels. This was the mode of their purification. It is all so full and rich that it would take many pages to explain all the blessed lessons connected with it. We need constant cleansing because we pass through the wilderness, the world, and death is stamped upon everything. The death of Christ has made provision for our cleansing, as it has provided for the removal of our guilt. The living water is the type of the Holy Spirit. Defilement with the world interrupts communion with God. The death of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit through the Word cleanse us from that defilement. See 1 John 1.

"If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1). But if we fail to walk in the light--if we forget, and, in our forgetfulness touch the unclean thing, how is our communion to be restored? Only by the removal of the defilement. And how is this to be effected? By the application to our hearts and consciences of the precious truth of the death of Christ. The Holy Ghost produces self-judgment, and brings to our remembrance the truth that Christ suffered death for that defilement which we so lightly and indifferently contract. It is not a fresh sprinkling of the blood of Christ--a thing unknown in Scripture--but the remembrance of His death brought home, in fresh power, to the contrite heart, by the ministry of the Holy Ghost.

10. At Kadesh in the Fortieth Year: Murmuring and Conquest

CHAPTER 20

1. The death of Miriam (20:1)
2. The murmuring of the people (20:2-5)
3. The divine instruction (20:6-8)
4. Moses' and Aaron's failure (20:9-13)
5. Edom's refusal (20:14-22)
6. The death of Aaron (20:23-29)

Between the nineteenth and twentieth chapter lies the unrecorded period of almost 38 years, the wandering of the children of Israel in the wilderness. In chapter 33 we find their different camps mentioned. In verse 38 of that chapter we read, "And Aaron the priest went up into the mount Hor at the commandment of the Lord, and died there, in the fortieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the first day of the fifth month." The death of Aaron is recorded in the twentieth chapter. It was therefore about 37 years and six months when the spies had been sent out and their arrival in the desert of Zin. The critics have made this unrecorded period the occasion of attack upon the Mosaic authorship of this book. They suppose that the last historian who wrote on the Pentateuch left out a great deal of the history of the forty years wanderings. There was nothing to record but the scenes of death and sorrow; the entire theocratic covenant was suspended, and therefore theocratic history has no occurrence to record. It is even so now during the present age, during which Israel is set aside and wanders among the nations of the world.

During all these years of wandering in the wilderness circumcision was not carried out (Joshua 5:2-5). What else happened during this unrecorded period in the wilderness may be learned from a number of passages. "But the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness; they walked not in My statutes, and they despised My judgments, which if a man do, he shall live in them; and My sabbaths they greatly polluted. Then I said, I would pour out My fury upon them in the wilderness to consume them" (Ezek. 20:13, etc.), "Have ye not offered unto Me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves" (Amos 5:25, 26). "Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by

the space of forty years in the wilderness? Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan (worship of Saturn) figures which you made to worship them" (Acts 7:42, 43). They continued in stubbornness and rebellion and became idolators. But oh! the mercy of God! He continued to feed them and gave them water. "These forty years the Lord thy God hath been with thee, thou hast lacked nothing" (Deut. 2:7). "And I have led you forty years in the wilderness; your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot" (Deut. 19:5). What marvellous compassion! And thus He still deals in mercy with His wayward wandering people. (Psalm 90, standing at the beginning of the fourth section of the book of Psalms (Numbers) was written by Moses, no doubt, when he saw them dying.)

This chapter, which brings us to the last year of their journey, begins with death and ends with death. In the middle we find the record of the failure of Moses and Aaron.

Miriam is the first to die, and her brother Aaron followed her four months later. Hundreds of thousands had passed away; their carcasses fell in the wilderness. And the new generation which has come up also murmured like their fathers and brethren. Such is the heart of man! "Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord!" The Lord commanded Moses to take the rod and speak to the rock, and He promised that the rock should give water. No word of displeasure came from the lips of the gracious Lord, who had compassion with His people. Moses took the rod from before the Lord as He had commanded him. But he also took the rod in his hand with which he had smitten the rock, according to the Lord's command in Exodus 17:5-6. But the words Moses spoke were far from being gracious. "Hear now ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" God had not called His people rebels. And Moses' words are far from meek. He makes it appear as if he could supply the water. "They angered Him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes. Because they provoked his spirit so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips" (Ps. 106:32-33). And greater still was his failure when he took his rod and not the blossoming rod of Aaron and smote the rock twice. The first smiting of the rock in Exodus 17 with Moses' rod, the rod of judgment is the type of the death of Christ. This should not be repeated; one smiting was enough just as the death of Christ once for all has opened the floodgates of divine grace. Aaron's rod, the type of Christ in resurrection, was sufficient, and but the word spoken would bring forth the water. But the anger of Moses marred this scene. He completely lost sight of the gracious Lord and misrepresented Him by his action. "Moses failed, departed from the rich grace of God, fell back on judgment, and judgment accordingly dealt with him." It was a grievous sin, and on account of it he was not fit to lead Israel into the land. And Aaron, equally weak in faith, shared Moses' fate. Edom then bars the way for the hosts of Israel and would not let them pass through their land. And Aaron dies on Mount Hor, after Moses had, in obedience to the Lord, removed his priestly garments and put them upon Eleazar.

CHAPTER 21

Murmuring and Conquest

1. Opposition of King Arad (21:1-3)
2. Murmuring and the fiery serpents (21:4-7)
3. The serpent of brass (21:8-9)

4. Journeying and singing again (21:10-20)
5. Sihon and Og (21:21-35)

The first victory is here recorded. The Lord delivered Canaanites into the hands of Israel, and according to their vow they utterly destroyed them and their cities.

But in spite of this victory the people became again discouraged because of the way, and they spoke against God and against Moses. "Our soul loatheth this light bread." Here we may trace our own individual experience. As one has said, "A time of victory has to be watched, lest it be a precursor of danger. A time of defeat on the other hand constantly prepares one for a fresh and greater blessing from God. so rich is His grace."

The punishment by the fiery serpents follows. Jehovah provided a remedy in the serpent of brass,* which was put on a pole.

* "It is less easy to arrive at the interpretation of the serpent that was lifted up, in its purely symbolical character, that is, to ascertain the aspect which it presents, when regarded from an Old Testament point of view. The serpent appears to have been almost universally received by antiquity as a symbol of healing, or the healing art; this symbolization probably originated when it was ascertained that some of the most efficacious remedies of nature are precisely the most dangerous poisons. When we, accordingly, regard the serpent, in the present instance, as a symbol of healing, we obtain from such a view a bond of union between the symbol and the type; we are, also, enabled by this view to explain the fact that idolatrous worship was rendered to the brazen serpent till the reign of Hezekiah, who destroyed it" (2 Kings 18:4) J.H. Kurtz.

"And it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." Our Lord has given us the meaning of this remedy. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:14, 15). The type is so simple and clear that we refrain from enlarging on it. Dr. Martin Luther in one of his sermons on John 3 made the following statements: "in the first place, the serpent which Moses was to make was to be of brass or copper, that is to say, of a reddish color (although without poison) like the persons who were red and burning with heat because of the bite of the fiery serpents. In the second place, the brazen serpent was to be set up on a pole for a sign. And in the third place, those who desired to recover from the fiery serpent's bite and live, were to look at the brazen serpent upon the pole, otherwise they could not recover or live." In these three points we find the typical character of the brazen serpent. "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3). "He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21). This took place when Christ was lifted up, when He hung on the cross. And now "there is life in a look at the Crucified One." By His sacrificial death, life, even eternal life is the present and eternal possession of the sinner who believes on the Son of God.

And now we see them journeying on, healed and victorious. Nine places are mentioned. The last is Pisgah, from which they get a vision of the land and can look back over the desert lands which are now forever behind them. Two songs are recorded. Israel begins now to sing again. There were no

songs in the wilderness, nothing but murmurings. The first time they sang was at the Red Sea, and now as they are nearing the land they break out once more in song. The first is a battle-song, which speaks of victory; the second song is on account of the water from the digged wells. Spiritually considered, the victory and the abundant water may well be brought in connection with Him who is typified in the brazen serpent. There is not alone life by faith in Him, but God gives us freely with Him all things. There is victory, there is the abundance of water, the gift of the Holy Spirit. The princes digged the well. But how? It was not a laborious task. They did it with their staves. It is the sweet picture of grace supplying the need. It seems as if the brazen serpent incident is a marked turning point. And in a future day the remnant of Israel shall look upon Him whom they have pierced (Zech. 12:10). "Behold He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him." Then Israel will be healed, have victory and sing a new song. Read the song prophetically given in Isaiah 12. "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." And then a still greater victory is won. Israel conquers Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og the giant-king of Bashan. Both typify the powers of darkness in the world in their resistance to God's people. But victory is on our side because God is for us and with us.

Numerous critical points in the text we have to pass by. We mention but one in connection with the book of the wars of Jehovah. This book has been declared to be of different origin. The critics have made much of it by the fragmentary character of verses 14-16. Some state "that it is a work dating from the time of Jehoshaphat, containing the early history of Israel." All these statements are mere theories and invention. The book of the wars of Jehovah was undoubtedly a collection of odes of the time of Moses himself in celebration of the wonderful and glorious acts of the Lord. These critical points and questions raised are of no importance whatever.

III. EVENTS IN THE PLAIN OF MOAB FACING THE LAND

1. Balak and Balaam and Balaam's Parables

CHAPTER 22

1. Balak's message to Balaam (22:1-20)
2. The journey of Balaam (22:21-35)
3. Balaam with Balak (22:36-41)

The last section of the wilderness book begins with the story of Balak and Balaam. An enemy, the Gentile Balaam, has to speak the words of prophecy, predicting wonderful blessing and glory for the hosts of Israel. The advancing Israelites inspired terror and Balak (waster), the king of Moab, not willing to meet Israel in open battle, sent for Balaam (devourer of the people) to put his powerful magic spell upon Israel and curse them.

Balaam, originally a heathen magician of an ordinary class, was, very probably (like Jethro, Exodus 18) and Rahab (Joshua 2) conducted to the acknowledgement of Jehovah by the overpowering influence of the wonderful deeds of God in Egypt and in the wilderness, which made a deep impression on all of the surrounding nations (Exodus 15:14; Joshua 5:1). He resolved to serve Jehovah and to perform his enchantments henceforth in the name of Jehovah. Analogous instances in the New Testament occur in Matt. 12:27;

Acts 19:13; and, particularly, in Acts, ch. 8, which relates the case of Simon the sorcerer, the Balaam of the New Testament. Such a combination of heathenish magic with the service of Jehovah, could not be permanent, and the experience of Balaam would necessarily soon compel him to abandon the one or the other. When the message of Balak reached him, the period of decision arrived--the test was applied, and Balaam was found wanting.

Balak send gifts to Balaam, but he declined the invitation as the result of divine instructions. He could not resist the second deputation, which was more imposing than the first. God gave him permission on the condition that he was to say nothing but what God would tell him. How God's anger (not Jehovah, the covenant name) was kindled against him and the ass saw the angel of Jehovah, how the Lord opened the mouth of the ass and all the other details the reader will find in the text, so that a repetition here is not needed. Infidelity and higher criticism scoff at the incident of the speaking ass. One of their arguments is that the story of the speaking ass is disproven by the fact that Balaam carried on a conversation with the beast without expressing any astonishment at all at the occurrence. This is admirably answered by Augustinus: "Balaam was so carried away by his cupidity that he was not terrified by this miracle, and replied just as if he had been speaking to a man, when God, although He did not change the nature of the ass into that of a rational being, made it give utterance to whatever He pleased for the purpose of restraining his madness." That the ass saw the angel of the Lord first, before Balaam saw him, does not present any difficulty at all.

Naturalists tell us that irrational animals have a much keener instinctive presentiment of many natural phenomena, such as earthquakes and storms, than man. The horses, for instance, sometimes will see dangers when the rider is entirely ignorant of what is ahead.

"Jehovah opened the mouth of the ass." An omnipotent God can do this; why then should it be thought impossible? It is unbelief which makes objection to a miracle of this kind. If the occurrence did not happen, and must be classed as they claim, with legends, what becomes of the inspiration of the New Testament? The Holy Spirit through Peter confirms the miracle (2 Peter 2:15-16).

Balaam is used in the Epistle of Jude and in the corresponding testimony in the second Epistle of Peter (chapter 2) as well as in the message to Pergamos, as a type of the apostates in Christendom. "They ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward" (Jude 2). "Following the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness" (2 Peter 2:15). They make merchandise of the things of God. They deny the Master, who bought them, and exercise a religious office for "filthy lucre's sake." We shall find additional information on this matter in the twenty-fifth chapter.

The Parables of Balaam

CHAPTERS 23-24

1. The first parable (23:1-10)
2. Balak's surprise and Balaam's answer (23:11-12)
3. At Zophim (23:13-17)
4. The second parable (23:18-24)

5. Balak's request and Balaam's reply (23:25-30)
6. Balaam's third parable (24:1-9)
7. Balak's anger and Balaam's firmness (24:10-14)
8. Balaam's fourth parable (24:15-24)
9. Balaam and Balak separate (24:25)

The parables of Balaam compose the first great prophetic utterance of the Bible. They are remarkable in every way. The language is sublime. The unwilling prophet is forced to say what Jehovah put into his mouth. Here is a hint on inspiration. The thoughts and revelations of Jehovah are put into Balaam's lips by the Spirit of God, so that he had to utter them. How did Moses find out what was said by Balaam? Balak would surely not report the sayings to Moses; Balaam did not tell Moses. What transpired at the different stations where Balak and Balaam were, was not known to Israel. The Holy Spirit gave the correct report of all that took place and all what was said to Moses.

These parables are of such importance and interest that we give a complete exposition and point out the prophetic meaning. The reader will find this exposition and a metrical version of these parables at the close of these annotations on Numbers.

But what was said of Israel is also true, spiritually, of the church. We wish all our readers would follow this thought. Israel was a separated people; so is the church. God keeps His covenant with Israel and does not go back on His Word; the same is true of His spiritual people. He does not behold iniquity or perverseness in His redeemed people; this speaks of justification. God is with His people to bless them and give them complete victory over all their enemies, These are but brief hints.

2. Israel's Sin with the Daughters of Moab: Phinehas

CHAPTER 25

1. The transgression and the anger of Jehovah (25:1-5)
2. Phinehas' action (25:6-9)
3. Phinehas and his reward (25:10-15)
4. The Midianites to be smitten (26:16-18)

The sin of Israel was the result of Balaam's work. He could not turn Jehovah from Israel (no enemy can), but he could turn Israel from God. While we do not read here that the fornication and idolatry into which Israel fell was Balaam's work, elsewhere this information is given. See Numbers 31:16 and Rev. 2:14. The stumbling block, which this instrument of Satan put into the way of Israel, by which they committed fornication and idolatry, were the daughters of Moab. Pergamos in the second chapter of Revelation is prophetically that period of the church which began with Constantine the Great. Then the church left the ground of separation and was wedded to the world. Spiritual fornication was committed and idolatry followed in its train. This was Satan's work as much as Balaam's act was. And today we see Christendom in the sad condition of Israel at Shittim. Separation is given up completely. Judgment will be visited ere long upon apostate, adulterous Christendom as it fell upon Israel. In the plague 24,000 died. In 1 Cor. 10:8, we read, "Neither let us commit fornication as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand." The record in Numbers speaks of a previous punishment when the heads of the

transgressors were hung up before the Lord against the sun. Traditions among the Jews states that the number of those who were thus punished was a thousand, so that only 23,000 perished in the plague. In verse 9 this thousand is reckoned in, while in Corinthians they are left out.

Then followed an outrageous act of defiance (verse 6). The name of the Midianitish woman was Cozbi (my lie). By the zeal of Phinehas the people were saved from further judgment and Jehovah was glorified. He was zealous for His God and made an atonement for the children of Israel. He received for reward an everlasting priesthood. It is another type of Christ in His righteousness and holy zeal for God.

3. The Second Numbering

CHAPTER 26

1. The command to number (26:1-4)
2. The census taken (26:5-50)
3. The total number (26:51)
4. The inheritance (26:52-56)
5. The Levites (26:57-62)
6. The new generation (26:63-65)

The reader will find the comparison of these two numberings in the annotations of the first chapter. The increase and decrease of the different tribes may be learned by consulting that table. The many names in their meaning teach many lessons of interest. At the close of the chapter we have the fact stated that the penal sentence which God had pronounced upon the people who came out of Egypt (Num. 14:29, 38) had been executed. God kept His Word, as He always will.

"Of the vast total of upwards of 600,000 then enumerated, Caleb and Joshua alone had their names registered in the present census. This, however, is to be understood with a qualification. It is evident from Josh. 14:1; 22:13, that both Eleazar and Phinehas did actually enter into the promised land. How is this consistent with the statement here made? We reply that the sentence of exclusion applied to the other tribes which were enumerated on two former occasions, and in which the Levites were not embraced. We do not read that they had any share in the transaction which brought the divine denunciation upon the mass of the people. This tribe did not, like the others, send a spy into Canaan, nor does it appear that it concurred in the general murmuring which the report of the spies occasioned."

4. The Daughters of Zelophehad, the Death of Moses and His Successor Announced

CHAPTER 27

1. The daughters of Zelophehad (27:1-11)
2. Moses' death announced and his request (27:12-17)
3. Joshua appointed (27:18-23)

The question of the daughters of Zelophehad was concerning their inheritance. Their father had died in the wilderness and there were no

sons. They expected and claimed a possession among the brethren of their father. They fully counted on the Lord and His goodness, though their case was not met by the previous instructions. "It is impossible for God to be like a poor man, who says, 'You expect more good than I am prepared to bestow.' God could not make such an answer. He always gives more. Whatever may be the petition of faith, the answer of grace never fails to go beyond it." The answer given to Moses was that they were surely to receive their inheritance.

Moses' departure is announced by Jehovah. He cannot go over Jordan on account of his sin. But the Lord graciously permits him to go upon the mountain and view the land of promise in all its glory. Beautiful is Moses' answer to Jehovah. He does not speak of himself, nor does he think of his own interest. The people of God and their need are upon his heart. If they are taken care of he is satisfied and content with his own lot. What a blessed spirit of unselfishness he manifested! Joshua is the appointed successor, who is to lead the people into the land as Moses had led them out of Egypt. Moses and Joshua are both the types of Christ. Verse 21 is the key to understand the typical significance. "And he (Joshua) shall stand before Eleazar, the priest, who shall ask counsel for him." Aaron's priesthood, as we learned in Exodus and Leviticus, is the type of Christ in His sacrificial work on the cross. Eleazar, his successor, typifies the resurrection--heavenly priesthood of Christ. Moses is in different ways the type of Christ, as we have seen in his official and personal character; Joshua is the type of Christ in Spirit, who acts in His people by the Holy Spirit. Therefore Joshua has to stand before Eleazar the priest. He had, so to speak, to depend upon Eleazar, as the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer is dependent on the priesthood of Christ in glory.

5. The Offerings and the Set Times

CHAPTER 28

1. The daily offerings (28:1-8)
2. The Sabbatic offerings (28:9-10)
3. The monthly offerings (28:11-15)
4. The Passover (28:16-25)
5. The firstfruits (28:26-31)

CHAPTER 29

1. The blowing of trumpets (29:1-6)
2. The day of atonement (29:7-11)
3. The feast of tabernacles (29:12-16)
4. The second day offering (29:17-19)
5. The third day offering (29:20-22)
6. The fourth day offering (29:23-25)
7. The fifth day offering (29:26-28)
8. The sixth day offering (29:29-31)
9. The seventh day offering (29:32-34)
10. The eighth day offering (29:35-40)

These two chapters go together. They tell of Jehovah's portion which he is to receive in the worship of His people. The second verse reveals this. "Command the children of Israel and say unto them, My offering and My bread for My sacrifices, made by fire, for a sweet savour unto Me, shall ye

observe to offer unto Me in their due seasons." Needless to say that all speaks of Christ. He is seen in all the offerings, in the lambs, the young bullocks, the ram, the meal offerings and all the others. In Christ God has found His delight. In Leviticus we saw that aspect of the different offerings by which God has met our need in Christ and His blessed work; but here Jehovah speaks of these offerings as being "My bread." The heart of God feeds, humanly speaking, upon Christ. The sweet savour-offerings are the prominent feature of these two chapters. The sin-offerings take a secondary place. As we learned in Leviticus, the offerings which are a sweet odor in the presence of God are those which typify the matchless worth and blessed devotion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Leviticus 23 must be studied with these two chapters. The reader should turn to that chapter and see the meaning of the different feasts as given in the annotations. We call attention to the enlarged command concerning the feast of tabernacles. Ten verses are given in Leviticus 23 to the feast of tabernacles, but in Numbers 29 not less than twenty-seven are devoted to this feast. The seven days of the entire feast are mentioned with the different sacrifices, which were to be brought. They were to be brought in the following order and numbers:

First day:	13 Bullocks	2 Rams	14 Lambs	1 Goat
Second day:	12 Bullocks	2 Rams	14 Lambs	1 Goat
Third day:	11 Bullocks	2 Rams	14 Lambs	1 Goat
Fourth day:	10 Bullocks	2 Rams	14 Lambs	1 Goat
Fifth day:	9 Bullocks	2 Rams	14 Lambs	1 Goat
Sixth day:	8 Bullocks	2 Rams	14 Lambs	1 Goat
Seventh day:	7 Bullocks	2 Rams	14 Lambs	1 Goat

In all there are 70 bullocks, 14 rams, 98 lambs, and 7 goats. And besides these there were the daily burnt offerings and meal offerings. Why this detail in Numbers? And why should the feast of tabernacles begin on the first day with 13 bullocks and there be a gradual decline? As we learned in Leviticus, the feast of tabernacles the last of the feasts, foreshadows the millennium. The character of the millennium will therefore help us to understand some, at least, of the typical meaning of these offerings. The large number of offerings, especially the double seven in the lambs, which are offered, stand for the praise which Jehovah will receive during the age to come. But it is not perfect praise. The number thirteen on the first day is an incomplete number. It lacks one to make it perfect. And then we see that the number decreases from thirteen down to seven on the seventh day of the feast. The millennium, as we know from Revelation (chapter 20), ends in failure. There will be most likely a decline in devotion to God and full obedience to His will. A look at the above table shows that there is something which mars. The goats, only one each day, are for sin offering, for sin will be possible during the millennium, however, it will be very exceptional. The twice fourteen lambs means fulness of redemption which will be enjoyed unhindered in the coming age. The eighth day has the same offerings as the day of atonement. The eighth day in Scripture marks a new beginning; it is the day of the new creation. Following the feast, the eighth day stands for eternity. The precious work of Christ will never be forgotten in the ages to come.

6. Concerning Vows

1. The vow of a man (30:1-2)
2. The vows of women (30:3-16)

The entire chapter treats of vows. It also has a deeper meaning. There is a sharp contrast between the vow of a man and the vows of virgins, widows or wives. The vows of women could be set aside under certain conditions. The husband or the father could disallow the vow. But if they kept their peace or if she was a widow or divorced, she had to keep the vow. It was different with the man; he was not to break his word, but to do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.

The man who keeps his word, who does all that he vowed, typifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He has completely done the work He voluntarily bound Himself to do. The woman represents the nation Israel. They made a vow at Sinai which they could never keep. "Alas, when the gracious proffer of redemption came, though they had been even then long under the penalty of it, they refused redemption, held stubbornly to their broken contract, and remain under it today, the enduring lesson, published in every land, of what the law is for those who seek righteousness by it" (Numerical Bible).

Some day the vow under which Israel has put herself will be disallowed, then Israel is received back into favor. "And the Lord shall forgive her" (verse 8).

7. The War Against the Midianites

CHAPTER 31

1. The command to fight Midian (31:1-6)
2. The war (31:7-12)
3. The cleansing (31:13-24)
4. The spoil taken (31:25-47)
5. The oblation of the officers (31:48-54)

War is commanded next by the Lord. The Lord said to Moses, "Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites; afterward shalt thou be gathered to thy people." This is, therefore, the last thing in the official life of Moses. This war against Midian had been commanded before (25:16-18), the execution had been delayed. It was now to be carried out and the Midianites were to suffer for the wicked thing they had done to Israel by seducing them to the idolatrous worship of Baal Peor. Phinehas, the high priest, accompanied the army of 12,000 men. They were victorious and slew the kings of Midian; Balaam also was slain (verse 8). His wish, "let me die the death of the righteous," was not granted unto him, for he remained in his wickedness.

This war of revenge has a significant meaning. The key is found in the third verse, which, literally translated, reads: "Arm some of yourselves unto the war, and let them go against Midian, to execute the vengeance of Jehovah upon Midian." There is another day of vengeance coming which will fall heavily upon the Gentile world. The Lord will avenge His people Israel and judge the nations for the sin they committed against them. Of this the prophetic Word speaks often. That day is closely linked with Israel's restoration to the land. Then the true King-Priest will appear, like Phinehas, who was with the army of Israel (Isaiah 63:1-6; 2 Thess. 1:7-9).

Purification took place and the spoil was divided. This table may be studied in connection with verses 25-47.

Sheep,	675,000:	The soldiers,	337,500; therefrom to the Lord,	675
		The people,	337,500; therefrom to the Levites,	6750
Beeves,	72,000:	The soldiers,	36,000; therefrom to the Lord,	72
		The people,	36,000; therefrom to the Levites,	720
Asses,	61,000:	The soldiers,	30,500; therefrom to the Lord,	61
		The people,	30,500; therefrom to the Levites,	610
Persons,	32,000:	The soldiers,	16,000; therefrom to the Lord,	32
		The people,	16,000; therefrom to the Levites,	320

When the officers returned they discovered to their great joy that they had not lost a single man. God's power had been with them and kept them in a miraculous way. They brought a magnificent oblation. The gold they offered was brought into the tabernacle for a memorial.

8. The Tribes of Reuben, Gad, Half-Manasseh and their Portion

CHAPTER 32

1. The petition of Reuben and Gad (32:1-5)
2. The rebuke by Moses (32:6-15)
3. Their answer (32:16-19)
4. Moses' reply (32:20-24)
5. The final agreement (32:25-41)

Failure is now again manifested. Reuben and Gad looked upon the beautiful territory which had been taken from the two Amorite kings, Sihon and Og. As Reuben and Gad were especially rich in cattle and the territory was one of great fertility, they were anxious to possess the land. The half-tribe Manasseh evidently made the same request and joined Reuben and Gad (verse 33). A lengthy controversy followed between Moses and these tribes. Moses saw at once the evil which was connected with such a request. They despised the land of promise. God had commanded them to possess that land. By their request they showed readiness to disobey God. Furthermore by desiring the land of Jazer and Gilead they would become separated from their brethren; they would let them go to fight alone in the land. The whole request manifested selfishness.

Compare them with Lot and his selfish choice (Gen. 13). He lifted up his eyes and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered, even as the garden of the Lord, He then chose the plain of Jordan. How he suffered for it we know well from the divine record. Reuben and Gad also looked upon the good land and with the same selfishness as Lot requested the land. Consult 1 Chron. 5:25, 26 and 2 Kings 15:29, to find out how their descendants had to pay for the selfishness of their ancestors. They went a whoring after the gods of the people of the land and were the first carried away into captivity.

We see in their behaviour the picture of the Christian who is worldly-minded, who walks according to the flesh. He does not enter into the promised land and prefers earthly things to spiritual things. The story of Christendom is also written here.

9. The Encampments in the Wilderness

CHAPTER 33:1-49

1. The first stage: From Egypt to Sinai (33:1-15)
2. The second stage: From Sinai to Kadesh (33:16-17)
3. The third stage: From Rithmah to Kadesh--
The 38 years wandering (33:18-36)
4. The fourth stage: From Kadesh to the plain of Moab--
The fortieth year (33:37-49)

The chapter shows most blessedly how the eye of God follows the journeys and wanderings of His people and how He keeps record of them. Nothing escapes His watchful eye. And He leads His people in spite of their failures to the promised goal. Notice the long list of encampments of their wanderings with no history. Many lessons must be written here which God's people have not been able to understand. The Hebrew names given in this long list of stations shed much light on what may have taken place.

10. Instructions Concerning the Conquest and the Boundaries of the Land

CHAPTERS 33:50-34

1. Command to drive out the inhabitants of the land (33:50-56)
2. The division of the land (34:1-15)
3. The names of the men who shall divide the land (34:16-29)

The extermination of the Canaanites is first of all demanded. Everything of idolatry was to be destroyed. The land was to belong to a holy people who belong to Jehovah, therefore the Canaanite with his abominations had to be driven out of the land. "If ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, those that ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes and thorns in your sides and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell. Moreover, it shall come to pass, that I shall do unto you as I thought to do unto them" (33:55-56). The same warning was repeated by Joshua in his last address (Josh. 23:13). They did not drive them out as they were commanded, and they had to suffer in consequence of their disobedience.

The land of Canaan does not typify heaven, but our heavenly portion in Christ. In the annotations of the book of Joshua we hope to follow this more fully. The enemies in the land typify the wicked spirits, Satan and his powers. With these is our warfare, and we are commanded, like Israel, to conquer them. The boundaries of the land are given, and we find at the close of the chapter the names of the men who were to divide the inheritance unto the children of Israel. Notice the difference which is in the boundaries here as compared with Genesis 15:18. The promise given to Abraham and to his seed was under the covenant of grace, but Israel entered into the land under the law-covenant. If they had kept the law-covenant and had been obedient to Jehovah, they would have received the whole land. This they could not do. The original promise made to Abraham and his seed will be fulfilled in the future when the Lord will bring Israel back to possess the land. This will be in the millennium. The land will then be divided in a new way, revealed in the closing two chapters of Ezekiel.

11. The Cities of Refuge

CHAPTER 35

1. The provision of the Levites: Forty-eight cities (35:1-8)
2. The cities of refuge (35:9-34)

The cities of the Levites were scattered through the land. Genesis 49:7 is therefore fulfilled. The provision of cities for refuge is full of interest. The careful study of the purpose of these cities is recommended. Note especially that they were provided to give shelter for those who had killed a person unawares. The avenger of blood (Hebrew: *_goel*, which means to redeem) pursued the person and the city of refuge gave shelter. The death of the high priest resulted in liberty for all who were in the cities of refuge. It was the signal that they could return to their possessions (verse 28).

Israel's history may be easily read in this chapter in connection with the cities of refuge. The innocent blood shed is the blood of Christ. Blood guiltiness is upon the nation. They did it ignorantly, even as He prayed on Calvary's cross, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." They are on account of this blood-guiltiness kept out of their inheritance, and yet they have had their city of refuge and have been preserved till the time comes when they are set free and return to the possession in the land. And that will be when the Priesthood of Christ as now exercised by Him in glory ends, when He comes forth as the King-Priest to exercise the Melchisedek priesthood. The names of the cities are not given in the book of Numbers. They were: Bezer, Ramoth, Golan, Kedesh, Shechem and Hebron (Deut. 4:41-43; Josh. 20:7). The cities are also types of Christ because they gave shelter. He is our refuge and our hiding place.

12. The Security of the Inheritance

CHAPTER 36

1. The applicants and their statement (36:1-4)
2. The response of Moses (36:5-12)
3. The epilogue (36:13)

The chapter explains itself. But what is the lesson? It is evident that the inheritance given by the Lord must remain with those to whom it is given. And this brought security and comfort to the daughters of Zelophehad. It brings security and comfort to our hearts when we consider that our inheritance in Christ can never be taken from us. It belongs to us and we belong to the inheritance. The same is true of Israel with its earthly inheritance, the promised land.

Thus ends the wilderness book, a marvellous book, like every other portion of God's holy Word. May we remember in the study of this book, as stated in the introduction, that "all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Cor. 10:11). May we pass the time of our sojourning here with fear, realizing our separation unto God, the priestly and Levite service which belongs to us till we reach our eternal inheritance.

APPENDIX

THE PROPHECIES OF BALAAM

Numbers 23-24

The healing of Israel by the believing look on the brazen serpent stands at the end of their murmurings in the wilderness. Israel was victorious once more, and songs of praise and victory are heard in the camp. And now, after the sad history of their disobedience is almost ended, a prophet pronounces remarkable blessings over the wonderful nation, the nation so miraculously saved from Egypt, guided and kept and healed. This voice of prophecy comes from the lips of a Gentile, and a Gentile king hears the message first, in which, besides Israel, the king of Moab and all his Gentile successors are so eminently concerned.

Balak (waster) saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. He knew that the people had come out of Egypt. He was sore afraid; the fate of the Egyptians and Amorites seemed to foretell his own; his heart, therefore is filled with fear and hatred, and he desired to oppose and curse Israel. He allied himself with the elders of Midian. It is nothing less than the history of anti-Semitism in a nutshell. Gentile nations, Christian in name, still hate and fear the people whom no Pharaoh and no soothsayer could overcome, a people disobedient, judged and suffering, still always conquering. Like Balak, opposing Gentile nations and kingdoms will yet rise in fear and hatred against Israel before Israel's coming King will sweep them aside, and what Balak heard from the prophet's lips in his day--the complete destruction of the world-powers by the appearing of the glorious king of Jeshurum--will be the fate of these nations. Balak sends for Balaam, a prophet and a soothsayer. Who was Balaam? His name is a terrible one, "the devourer of people"; his father, Beor, "the consumer"; his native place, Pethor, meaning "interpretation." He must have known Jehovah to some extent, for he asked of Him and God answered his request. At the same time he was known for his skill in cursing nations and for his readiness for gold and silver to destroy them by his powerful spells. He may have practiced his soothsaying for many years, becoming rich by it, when, probably, one day he heard of Jehovah, who had done such great things for and among the wandering nation. Most likely for selfish reasons he sought God, like Simon, the sorcerer, who offered the apostles money for the power to heal the sick, thus Balaam may have desired the acquaintance of God, seeking revelations from Him for the sake of gain, and Jehovah revealed Himself to him. It is very significant that Balaam is mentioned in that important prophetic Epistle of Jude, where he stands as a type of the great apostasy at the end of this age. Balak, the representative of the anti-Semitic world-powers, and Balaam, the half hearted prophet, a type of apostate Christendom, forming an alliance against Israel.

The parables which Balaam is obliged to give by the power of God, are divided into four parts. He utters them from three points, all mountain tops. The first from the high places of Baal, the second from the summit of Pisgah, and the last from Peor. From these mountain tops Balak and Balaam had a good view of the camp of Israel. Each one of the three points is nearer to the camp and a more complete view obtained from them. It seems Balak tried to diminish the number of Israel and their strength in the eyes of Balaam, for he took him first to a place from which he saw only a part, the utmost part, the fourth part of the people. Seeing that his scheme

failed, Balak took Balaam to Pisgah; from there the view was more complete, and then at last to Peor, from which point he saw the twelve tribes of Israel with their flags in camp. Upon each mountain Balaam had seven altars erected, and two sacrifices, a bullock and a ram, are brought upon each altar. The whole proceedings were evidently calculated to make all as impressive and solemn as possible. On the heights of Baal, Balaam says to Balak: "I will go, may be Jehovah will come to meet me, and whatever He may say to me I will declare to thee." He went to a bare height and God met him there and put a word in his mouth. Next is Pisgah; here Balaam tells Balak to stand by the burnt offering, "while," he says, "I go to meet," in the authorized version it says "the Lord," but that does not appear in the original. In Hebrew it reads, "I will go to meet--yonder." He tried to impress Balak once more with his mysterious power, and in proceeding to Mount Peor, Balak, utterly disheartened by the continued blessing of Israel from Balaam's lips, demands that he is neither to curse nor to bless. Balaam, however, knows that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel; he no longer goes out to meet with enchantments; he drops the mask, and now the Spirit of God comes upon him. Balak's anger is kindled after this third parable, and while he smites his hands together the prophet opens his mouth once more and utters the sublimest of all his prophecies, after which he went to his place soon after to meet with his terrible fate.

And now we will read the parables themselves and study their wonderful meaning. The first from the heights of Baal:

From Aram Balak hath fetched me,
The King of Moab--from the mountains of the East.
Come, curse me Jacob,
Come and denounce Israel!
How shall I curse? God hath not cursed,
How shall I denounce? The Lord hath not denounced,
For from the top of the rocks I see Him
And from the hills I behold Him.
Behold a nation that dwelleth alone,
Not to be reckoned among the nations.
Who counted the dust of Jacob?
By number the fourth part of Israel.
Let me die the death of Jeshurum,
And let my last end be like his.

This first inspired utterance of Balaam speaks of the general character of Israel as the chosen people of God. It is, so to speak, the foundation, the key-note for all he is about to say by divine inspiration to Balak. We may divide this first parable into four parts.

1. After stating the fact of Balak's call and his wish that he should curse Jacob and denounce Israel, he states the impossibility to curse and to denounce--for God hath not cursed him, He hath not denounced him. In the original the name El, God, stands in connection with Jacob, and Jehovah, the covenant-keeping God, with Israel. When Balak's deputation came to Balaam, God had said to him, "Thou shalt not curse the people, for they are blessed." And now what God told him there in the secret place he is to speak here in public. It is the truth which we find all through the Word of God, Israel's blessed calling, the seed of Abraham blest and to be a blessing. How many have tried to curse Jacob and to denounce Israel? They have never succeeded, for Isaiah's vision has been fulfilled in all generations, "No weapon that is found against thee shall prosper, and every

tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." No magic, no voice, no power, no tongue can counteract the decree of God. Jacob and his seed is blest of God. Oh that men would understand it, but alas, they are wise in their own conceits, and boasting against the broken off branches they think of Jacob as accursed and denounce Israel, and thus dishonor God and make Him a liar.

2. With his hands before his eyes, Balak gazes upon the fourth part of the Israelitish camp from the tops of the rocks and from the hill and sees a second general characteristic of the people, namely, that Israel is to be a separated people. Israel is Ho-Am, the nation, and as such different from the nations and not to be reckoned among them.

Here then we have the destiny of Israel, a destiny the same for all times--a peculiar people, separated from all other nations. As far as Old Testament times are concerned, this decree of God can hardly be denied; but many Christians have stated and believe that in these New Testament times Israel has ceased to be a peculiar people, and that there is no difference between them and the other nations. Experience, however, teaches differently. Truly the seed of Abraham is today mingling with the nations, scattered in fact among all the nations, and there the sons of Jacob have not lost their peculiar characteristics. Assimilation has been attempted, and quite often by themselves, but rarely if ever has it been successful. God has kept Israel as His own separated people as truly as He has separated and keeps unto Himself by His Holy Spirit a spiritual, heavenly people, the church. All movements endeavoring to rob Israel of its peculiarity and separation have failed, and thus Israel remains a stranger in a strange land. What a tremendous testimony the Zionistic movement is in this direction! It is a movement to establish a Jewish state for the Jewish people in the Jewish land, and in itself a confession that assimilation with other nations is impossible. In speaking the Word of our God to the scattered Jews, God's future purpose in Israel as a nation must not be overlooked.

3. In the third place, we have the wonderful increase. "Who has counted the dust of Jacob?" The promise to Jacob when he went out from Beer-Sheba was, "Thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth." It stands for the earthly promises and earthly blessings which are Jacob's. What a sight it must have been for Balaam and Balak, standing beside their smoking altars, and down, way down in the desert, tent after tent is to be seen; but still it is only the fourth part, and appears like the dust of the earth--a people having passed through so much affliction and punishment, yet in spite of it all, strong and numerous as ever. In looking over the past, a still grander picture presents itself to us. Israel has wandered through a greater desert and through greater afflictions and punishments than ever before; they have been a people scattered and peeled, yet how wonderfully God has kept them, and more than ever they are like dust, down-trodden yet ever increasing, and multiplying, to the astonishment of their enemies. Who counted the dust of Jacob? The question is often asked, How many Jews are living today in the world? We tried to give a conservative estimate, still some tell us it is too low and others too high. The fact is no one seems to be able to get a correct number of the Jews living. Surely they are increasing rapidly all over the earth, and it is more true than ever before, "Who counted the dust of Jacob?"

4. Balaam's exclamation forms a fitting conclusion to his first parable. "Let me die the death of Jeshurum and let my end be like his." We

do not think that Balaam had so much the physical death of Israel in view, as their hope and glorious end, the glorious end of ages when the God of Jeshurum will reveal Himself once more for the salvation of His people and brings vengeance upon their enemies. Of that glorious end which is Israel's, that glorious morning after a night of storm and disaster, he has here the first glimpse, and in his next parable the Holy Spirit puts it before him and before Balak in detail. It remains only to be said that the contents of this first parable are in part a repetition of God's promises to Abraham, but now the promise is not given to a member of Abraham's family, but put into the mouth of a Gentile to transmit it to the Gentile king.

Next they are on top of Mount Pisgah, on the fields of Zophim. Balaam, after having been away from Balak hastens back, and filled with a greater degree of inspiration, it seems, he bursts forth:

Rise up Balak and hear!
Listen to me, son of Zippor!
God is not a man to lie;
Nor son of Adam to repent.
Hath He said and will He not do it?
Or spoken and shall not make it stand?
Behold I have commanded to bless:
Yea, he hath blessed and I cannot change it.
He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob:
Nor has he seen travail in Israel:
Jehovah, his God is with him,
The shout of a king is in his midst.
God bringeth them out of Egypt:
He hath strength like that of the wild ox:
No enchantment there is against Jacob,
There is no divination against Israel.
In its time shall it be said of Jacob and of Israel,
What hath God wrought?
Behold the people rise up as a lioness!
And as a lion does he raise himself up!
He shall not lie down till he eat of the prey,
And drink the blood of the slain.

What an awful rebuke this was to unbelieving Balak. He surely had expected a change in the mind of that God whose aid and help Balaam was to invoke. Maybe, he thought that God would once more, after a second request, allow Balaam, as at the time when Balak's princes came to him, to speak a more favorable word; instead of that with an awful commanding voice--for thus it must have been--Balaam shouts to Balak to rise and listen. He hears now that God's promises to Israel are unchangeable, they can never be reversed. The same truth we have not alone from Balaam's lips, but likewise from the lips of Paul, the servant of the Lord, who after giving his wonderful prophetic testimony concerning his own beloved Jewish nation, cries out in exaltation, "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." God is ever the covenant-keeping God, and every word which has come from His loving heart through the prophets to His people Israel He will yet fulfill. Balak, in his unbelief and his ignorance, as well as his hatred against Israel, is, alas, a sad type of Christendom, apostate, disbelieving the promises of the God of Abraham, ignorant of His purposes concerning Israel, and, therefore, despising and cursing those whom they should honor and love. Again, in this parable, we notice four principal

thoughts, which now bring us a step nearer to Israel, Israel's calling and Israel's future, just as Balaam and Balak were on Pisgah's mountain top nearer to the camp than on the heights of Baal.

1. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob nor seen travail (or perverseness) in Israel. It seems to us a very significant fact that in all of Balaam's parables sin and guilt are never mentioned. However, it does not say here that Israel is without iniquity or evil travail, but the statement is that God hath not beheld iniquity and not seen perverseness in Israel. Truly Israel had sinned against God during their travels in the wilderness. Israel was likewise punished for it, but their apostasy was never hopeless. In all their iniquity and perverseness they are still His beloved children, and the promise is theirs very definitely, that the seed of Israel can only be cast away for all that they have done if the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath (Jeremiah 31:36, 37). That, of course, means that it will never come to pass. But more than that, to Israel belongs the promise of forgiveness, when, indeed, the eyes of God will not behold iniquity in Jacob nor will He see perverseness in Israel. In Micah, the last chapter and last three verses, is one of these sweet national promises to Israel, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger forever, because He delighteth in mercy. He will turn again and have compassion upon us; He will tread our iniquities under foot, and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which Thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old." God looking upon Israel and no iniquity, God beholds His people and no perverseness; their sins forgiven and remembered no more.

2. In the second place notice the statement of Balaam, "Jehovah his God is with him, and the shout of a king in his midst." This was true in part when Balaam looked upon the camp of Israel. I wonder if Balaam's prophetic eye did pierce that cloud of glory, which in all its splendor was resting in the midst of Israel? Maybe he saw in that cloud, what the prophet Ezekiel saw in his vision, a throne, and upon the throne one like the Son of Man surrounded by the sign of the first covenant, a rainbow. There was no king in the midst of Israel at that time; Jehovah was King. Prophetically all points to the time when Israel's travail and iniquity will have an end, and He whose name is ever Emanuel will be the King in the midst of His redeemed people.

3. In the next place we notice that Balaam speaks of that deed of salvation, the redemption of Israel from the house of Egypt, which stands in the Old Testament as a type not only of our redemption in the blood of the Son of God, but likewise as the type of that future deed of God when He will gather His outcast children from the four corners of the earth. (See Jeremiah 16:14-15.) It is important that in the next parable Balaam repeats the same words only in another connection. Connected with the fact in this parable that God brought Israel out of Egypt stands the statement that there is no enchantment against Jacob and no divination against Israel. Egypt could hold Israel for centuries, but Egypt's wickedness ripened, and when the hour had come there was no power in the air nor upon the earth which could prevent the carrying out of the judgments of God upon Egypt, and the mercies upon Israel. No enchantment and no divination will ever frustrate God's plan in the future.

4. And then in the fourth place: In its time shall it be said of Jacob

and of Israel, "What hath God wrought?" Just a glimpse is given here of that time of conquest in Israel and through Israel, when the people shall rise up as a lioness, when she shall not lie down till she has eaten the prey and drunk the blood of the slain; which not only Balaam in his next parables has to make plainer because the vision now hastens towards the end, but likewise which all the prophets from beginning to end have revealed. We shall see more of this in the third parable of Balaam.

From the top of Peor, Balaam now beholds Israel abiding in their tents according to their tribes. The Spirit of the Lord comes upon him. It is no longer meeting with the Lord and receiving it from Him, but the Spirit is upon him and through the Spirit he receives a higher revelation. He is now fully persuaded that Israel is to be blessed and he yields himself without resistance to God.

The oracle of Balaam, son of Beor,
Even the oracle of the man with eyes that had been shut:
His oracle who heard the words of God,
Who seeth with the vision of the Almighty;
Falling, but his eyes uncovered:
How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob!
Thy tabernacles, O Israel!
As valleys are they spread forth
As gardens by the river's side;
As aloe trees that Jehovah planted;
As cedars beside the waters!

Water poureth from his buckets,
And his seed is in many waters:
And his king shall be higher than Agag,
And his kingdom shall be exalted.
God bringeth him out of Egypt;
He hath strength like that of the wild ox
He shall eat upon the nations, his adversaries,
Yea, he shall break their bones,
And smite them through with his arrows,
He couched, he lay down as a lion;
And as a lioness, who will rouse him?
Blessed is he that blessed thee,
And cursed is he that curseth thee!

Balaam, forced to speak, is now made to proclaim the victory of the nation of destiny and what God will do among them.

1. We notice first a description of Israel: "Goodly tents, beautiful tabernacles spread forth as valleys, gardens by the river side, aloe trees and cedars beside the waters, waters poured from his buckets, seed in many waters." Every Sabbath day and at every feast commanded by God, in entering the synagogue, this beautiful description of Israel's happiness is chanted by the orthodox Jews. Still it has not yet been realized, and whatever spiritual lessons for the church we may derive from it, we do not care to follow them at this time. Israel still living in miserable huts, no tabernacles among them, far from being like gardens by the riverside, and aloe trees and cedars beside the waters. Truly his seed in many waters, but not in honor and peace, but dishonor and unrest. The prophetic eye, however, sees it all accomplished, and Balaam's vision leaps over centuries and centuries to the time of the end when Israel's unbelief has ended and

once more the tribes are gathering to take possession of the land, their glorious inheritance. When that great Sabbath day commences, that day of the Lord, Israel's hope will be realized, and what the pious orthodox Jew today sees in faith and often repeats with tears in his eyes, will then be a blessed reality. How goodly are thy tents O Jacob, thy tabernacles O Israel. In the highly poetical strain we realize the type of the living Spirit, the water poured from His buckets.

2. In two lines Balaam speaks of the king and kingdom which is to be exalted. Agag was the title of the king of the Amalekites, the national enemy of Israel. Haman was an Agagite; he came from Amalek, a fitting type of Antichrist, and here Balaam sees a king coming, who is higher than Agag, than all the powers which are anti-Semitic, and that king will have a kingdom which will be exalted. It is hardly necessary to enlarge upon this.

3. We notice now for the second time the repetition, "God bringeth him out of Egypt," but after the phrase, he hath strength like that of a wild ox, he changes his words. In the second parable we saw that he continues saying, "there is no enchantment against Jacob and no divination against Israel," while in this he says after stating, "God bringeth him out of Egypt, he shall eat up the nations, his adversaries, yea, he shall break their bones and smite them through with his arrows." It seems in the second parable Egypt of the past is meant, and in this parable, it is Egypt of the future, as already quoted from Jeremiah, the regathering of the people through the high and wonderful hand of the Lord. Connected with that second Egypt, that great and wonderful deed of Jehovah's, when the whole nation will be redeemed and spirit-filled in that day; connected with that is the judgment of the nations, which are the adversaries of Israel. There is a wonderful similarity between the story in Exodus and the future history of Israel, and the nations still unwritten on the pages of history and only visible by eyes of faith in the word of our God, who will speak again and not keep silence. The words, "he couched, he lay down as a lion and as a lioness will rouse him," is a quotation from Jacob's prophecy of Judah, but here applied to the entire nation, which will become through the lion of the tribe of Judah the lioness who will lie down and spring upon its prey and drink the blood of the slain. The last stanza of the first part of the third parable is again a repetition of God's promise to Abraham now seen in its fulfillment; both declare from an enemy's mouth how surely, how fully every utterance of God shall come to pass.

However, the prophecy in these parables is still incomplete, something is lacking which must be said. Step by step the Lord and the Spirit led Balaam up to the consummation, and while Balak's anger is kindled and like a raving maniac he stamps with his feet and smites his hands together, crying to Balaam, "I called thee to curse mine enemies and lo, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times, flee to thy place," and while Balak denied him the honor he had promised, Balaam in a divine defiance, the fire of God burning forth from his eyes, turns once more to Balak and says, "Behold I am going to my people; come, I will admonish thee what this people shall do unto thy people in the last days." Then--

The oracle of Balaam, son of Beor,
Even the oracle of the man with eyes that had been shut!
The oracle of one that heareth the sayings of God
And who knoweth the knowledge of the Most High;
Seeing with the vision of the Almighty;
Falling, but his eyes uncovered:

I see him, but not now;
I behold him, but not nigh:
There hath come a star out of Jacob,
And a sceptre hath risen out of Israel,
And hath smitten through the sides of Moab,
And dashed against each other all the sons of tumult.
And Edom is a possession--
Seir also a possession--his enemies;
And Israel doeth valiantly.
Yea, out of Jacob one hath dominion,
And destroyeth what is left from the city.

And he looked upon Amalek and took up his parable, saying--

Amalek first of the nations!
And his latter end, destruction!

And he looked at Kenites and took up his parable, saying--

Firm is thy dwelling place,
And thy nest fixed in the rock!
But the Kenite shall be ruined,
Until Asshur carry thee captive away.

And he took up his parable, saying--

Who shall live when God appointeth this?
And ships shall come from the coasts of Kittim,
And shall afflict Asshur, and afflict Eber,
And he also ... to destruction.

And Balaam rose up and went and returned to his place and Balak also went his way.

This is the most remarkable parable of Balaam, and surely it is the very breath of God. He boasts himself of knowing the knowledge of the Most High, seeing with the vision of the Almighty. After this introduction he speaks again that he sees Him and beholds Him. However, not now and not nigh. We recollect that in the first parable he said likewise from the top of the rocks, "I see him and from the hills I behold him." There it was the nation, here it is a person; namely, the King of Israel whose shout he had heard before among the wonderful people. The description of this coming King is glorious. First he sees Him as a star coming out of Jacob, and then he calls Him a sceptre risen out of Israel, smiting through the sides of Moab and turning against each other all the sons of tumult. In consequence of this Edom becomes His possession, likewise Seir; all His enemies are conquered and Israel stands with the King and does valiantly. It is a very pronounced Messianic prophecy relating to the time when the kingdom is to be restored to Israel. Many teachers of God's Word have made a mistake in applying this prophecy to the time of the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Jews recognize the prophecy as relating to the King Messiah. One of their false messiahs was known by the name Bar-Chochva, the son of a star. We also notice that after he has taken Edom and Seir for his possession, Balaam says, "Yea, out of Jacob one hath dominion and destroyeth what is left from the city." In these words reference is made to His reign and rule in the coming age. The vital point of this last parable of Balaam is the prophecy concerning the fate of the Gentile powers. We have first Moab, who is smitten through the

sides; the sons of tumult are connected with Moab and who are dashed against each other, Edom and Seir, Amalek, Asshur, Eber, and the ships coming from the coast of Kittim. All these nations having passed away stand nevertheless in a very pronounced relation to the great day of the wrath of the Lord, when He whose right it is will appear once more. In fact they seem to come again to the front in the latter day. We will quote here a remarkable passage from the prophet Jeremiah, which relates to Moab. Jeremiah 48:47, "Yet will I bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days, saith the Lord." In chapter 49:6, we read, "And afterward I will bring again the captivity of the children of Ammon, saith the Lord." And in the 39th verse, "But it shall come to pass in the latter days that I will bring again the captivity of Elam, saith the Lord." All these nations have been judged in the past, and their descendants are hard to find, yet God knows and in His own way and in His own time He will have every one of His words fulfilled.

What else do we see in this last parable of Balaam than the judgment of the world powers? Later Nebuchadnezzar, another Gentile ruler like Balak, had a dream, and he saw the great image, the wonderful picture of the four kingdoms of the world; and Daniel, a true prophet of Jehovah, not like Balaam, interpreted the dream for Nebuchadnezzar, but what Nebuchadnezzar dreamed and Daniel saw in his vision Balaam here sees in his last vision from the top of Peor. Wonderful description of the time when the stone cut out without hands smashes the proud image and reduces it to dust! Wonderful vision later seen by Zechariah, the four carpenters who are being raised up to conquer the four horns who have scattered Israel, Judah and Jerusalem (Zechariah 1). There is no doubt that Asshur stands for the first of the Gentile empires, that is Babylon, and Eber probably for the other, the Medo-Persian, while Kittim, the isles of the west, stand for the Greek and Roman rule.