

Numbers 32-34

Bible Study

Review

Chapter 30—addresses vows made by women

- A vow is a commitment and God expected it to be followed through
- A father of a young girl... or husband of a wife, could either void or sustain a vow, but they had to do it right away

Chapter 31—War against the Midianites

- Israel campaigned against the Midianites who were implicated and responsible for the sin of Baal of Peor
 - Balaam who trapped Israel into the sin of Baal of Peor was killed
- The spoils were divided between the soldiers, the people, and a tribute given to God
- They had completed the conquering of the territory east of Jordan (Gilead)

Chapter 32



Gilead—land east of the Jordan

- ¹ Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of livestock; and when they saw the land of Jazer and the **land of Gilead**, that indeed the region *was* a place for livestock,
- ² the children of Gad and the children of Reuben came and spoke to Moses, to Eleazar the priest, and to the leaders of the congregation, saying,
- ³ "Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Shebam, Nebo, and Beon,
- ⁴ the country which the LORD defeated before the congregation of Israel, *is* a land for livestock, and your servants have livestock."
- ⁵ Therefore they said, "If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to your servants as a possession. Do not take us over the Jordan."

Reuben and Gad realized that the land east of the Jordan was well suited for their livestock and asked Moses to be able to take possession of that land for their inheritance



(Zondervan Bible Backgrounds Commentary)

“The more northern region of Gilead is more fertile with highland grassy regions for grazing, and with valleys and hillsides suitable for grain and fruit orchards. Rivers such as the Yarmuk, Jabesh, Jabbok and their tributaries, as well as numerous springs in the region, provide ample water supply for humans and animals alike”

Reuben, Gad and ½ Manasseh [v. 33-42] desire the land that had been conquered east of Jordan
[Technically not part of the promised land]

Moses' reaction is one of anger and sees their request as rebellion, like the spies report of chapters 13-14

⁶ And Moses said to the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben: "Shall your brethren go to war while you sit here?

⁷ Now why will you discourage the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the LORD has given them?

⁸ Thus your fathers did when I sent them away from Kadesh Barnea to see the land.

⁹ For when they went up to the Valley of Eshcol and saw the land, they discouraged the heart of the children of Israel, so that they did not go into the land which the LORD had given them.

¹⁰ So the LORD'S anger was aroused on that day, and He swore an oath, saying,

¹¹ 'Surely none of the men who came up from Egypt, from twenty years old and above, shall see the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because they have not wholly followed Me,

¹² except Caleb the son of Jephunneh, the Kenizzite, and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have wholly followed the LORD.'

¹³ So the LORD'S anger was aroused against Israel, and He made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation that had done evil in the sight of the LORD was gone.

¹⁴ And look! You have risen in your father's place, a brood of sinful men, to increase still more the fierce anger of the LORD against Israel.

¹⁵ For if you turn away from following Him, He will once again leave them in the wilderness, and you will destroy all these people."

Moses felt their action would discourage their fellow brethren from entering the promised land

Reuben and Gad have a counterproposal for Moses:

- ¹⁶ Then they came near to him and said: "We will build sheepfolds here for our livestock, and cities for our little ones,
- ¹⁷ but we ourselves will be armed, ready *to go* before the children of Israel until we have brought them to their place; and our little ones will dwell in the fortified cities because of the inhabitants of the land.
- ¹⁸ We will not return to our homes until every one of the children of Israel has received his inheritance.
- ¹⁹ For we will not inherit with them on the other side of the Jordan and beyond, because our inheritance has fallen to us on this eastern side of the Jordan."

The representatives of Reuben and Gad assured Moses that they would cross over with the other tribes to battle the Canaanites until they were all subdued...

But they also repeated that they claimed as their inheritance the land on the east side of the Jordan

Moses agrees to the request of Reuben and Gad...but adds a warning in verse 23

²⁰ Then Moses said to them: "If you do this thing, if you arm yourselves before the LORD for the war,

²¹ and all your armed men cross over the Jordan before the LORD until He has driven out His enemies from before Him,

²² and the land is subdued before the LORD, then afterward you may return and be blameless before the LORD and before Israel; and this land shall be your possession before the LORD.

²³ But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the LORD; and be sure your sin will find you out.

²⁴ Build cities for your little ones and folds for your sheep, and do what has proceeded out of your mouth."

²⁵ And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben spoke to Moses, saying: "Your servants will do as my lord commands.

²⁶ Our little ones, our wives, our flocks, and all our livestock will be there in the cities of Gilead;

²⁷ but your servants will cross over, every man armed for war, before the LORD to battle, just as my lord says."

v. 25-27 Reuben and Gad accept Moses' condition—they will go to war with the other tribes, while their women children and livestock remain in Gilead

Because Moses will not be alive to execute this judgment, he gives the authority to Eleazar, Joshua and the chiefs to execute the proposal:

²⁸ So Moses gave command concerning them to Eleazar the priest, to Joshua the son of Nun, and to the chief fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel.

²⁹ And Moses said to them: "If the children of Gad and the children of Reuben cross over the Jordan with you, every man armed for battle before the LORD, and the land is subdued before you, then you shall give them the land of Gilead as a possession.

³⁰ But if they do not cross over armed with you, they shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan."

³¹ Then the children of Gad and the children of Reuben answered, saying: "As the LORD has said to your servants, so we will do.

³² We will cross over armed before the LORD into the land of Canaan, but the possession of our inheritance *shall remain* with us on this side of the Jordan."

v. 30 Moses qualifies the agreement that if Reuben and Gad do not cross over Jordan for war, they will only get land in Canaan to inherit

v. 32 They assure Moses that they will cross over Jordan armed for a campaign against the Canaanites

Half of the tribe of Manasseh [v.33] also take their inheritance in Gilead:

³³ So Moses gave to the children of Gad, to the children of Reuben, and to **half the tribe of Manasseh** the son of Joseph, the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites and the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, the land with its cities within the borders, the cities of the surrounding country.

³⁴ And the children of **Gad** built Dibon and Ataroth and Aroer,

³⁵ Atroth and Shophan and Jazer and Jogbehah,

³⁶ Beth Nimrah and Beth Haran, fortified cities, and folds for sheep.

³⁷ And the children of **Reuben** built Heshbon and Elealeh and Kirjathaim,

³⁸ Nebo and Baal Meon (*their* names being changed) and Shibmah; and they gave *other* names to the cities which they built.

³⁹ And the children of Machir the son of **Manasseh** went to Gilead and took it, and dispossessed the Amorites who *were* in it.

⁴⁰ So Moses gave Gilead to Machir the son of Manasseh, and he dwelt in it.

⁴¹ Also Jair the son of Manasseh went and took its small towns, and called them Havoth Jair.

⁴² Then Nobah went and took Kenath and its villages, and he called it Nobah, after his own name.

These three tribes rebuild the cities east of Jordan changing some of the names

- According to Joshua 13: 15-33 Reuben takes southern territory, Gad to the north of the Jabbok River, and half Manasseh further north in Bashan

Jordan River



½ Manasseh
Gad
Reuben

Chapter 33

The itinerary of Israel's journeys—40 places listed from Egypt to the plains of Moab

(Oswald T. Allis) “As an historical document this chapter is of very great importance. It is especially to be noted that Moses is declared to have written it, a fact which has definite bearing on the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.”

¹ These *are* the journeys of the children of Israel, who went out of the land of Egypt by their armies under the hand of Moses and Aaron.

² Now Moses wrote down the starting points of their journeys at the command of the LORD. And these *are* their journeys according to their starting points:

v. 1 “the journeys” (Heb.= ‘pulling ups’)
(Companion) “i.e. of the tent pegs or the breakings ups of the camps”

v. 2 “Now Moses wrote down...at the command of the Lord”

(NICOT)) “This is the only passage in the book of Numbers that claims direct Mosaic authorship, although his presence dominates the whole book.”

Ex. 12: 37

v. 3-15—From Egypt to Sinai

³ They departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the day after the Passover the children of Israel went out with boldness in the sight of all the Egyptians.

⁴ For the Egyptians were burying all *their* firstborn, whom the LORD had killed among them. Also on their gods the LORD had executed judgments.

v. 3 They **set out** on their journey on the day after the Passover...

“on the fifteenth day of the first month” [Abib or Nisan]—The night to be observed, beginning the First Day of Unleavened Bread

Leviticus 23:5-6

⁵ On the fourteenth *day* of the first month at twilight *is* the LORD'S Passover.

⁶ And on the fifteenth day of the same month *is* the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; seven days you must eat unleavened bread.

⁵ Then the children of Israel moved from Rameses and camped at Succoth.

⁶ They departed from Succoth and camped at Etham, which *is* on the edge of the wilderness.

⁷ They moved from Etham and turned back to Pi Hahiroth, which *is* east of Baal Zephon; and they camped near Migdol.

⁸ They departed from before Hahiroth and passed through the midst of the sea into the wilderness, went three days' journey in the Wilderness of Etham, and camped at Marah.

⁹ They moved from Marah and came to Elim. At Elim *were* twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees; so they camped there.

¹⁰ They moved from Elim and camped by the Red Sea.

v. 10 “by the Red Sea” (Heb. *yam sup*)

(Tyndale) “In English the Red Sea designates the open sea separating Africa from Arabia. However, the Hebrew words *yam sup*, traditionally translated Red Sea, could more literally be rendered ‘sea of reeds’; that has been appealed to in support of the idea that Israel crossed an inland lake, not part of the Red Sea.

However, since in some passages *yam sup* does unambiguously refer to the Gulf of Aqabah (the northeastern branch of the Red Sea), this argument is fallacious” [Ex. 23:31; Deut. 1:40]

¹¹ They moved from the Red Sea and camped in the Wilderness of Sin.

¹² They journeyed from the Wilderness of Sin and camped at Dophkah.

¹³ They departed from Dophkah and camped at Alush.

¹⁴ They moved from Alush and camped at Rephidim, where there was no water for the people to drink.

¹⁵ They departed from Rephidim and camped in the Wilderness of Sinai.

(Expositors) “The listing of the numerous places (significantly forty in number between Rameses in Egypt and the plains of Moab) in Israel's desert experience appears to be a rather straightforward listing that might easily be charted on a map.

The chapter presents numerous difficulties however, once one brings out the map.”

v. 16-36—From Sinai to Kadesh including the years of wilderness wandering

- ¹⁶ They moved from the Wilderness of Sinai and camped at Kibroth Hattaavah.
- ¹⁷ They departed from Kibroth Hattaavah and camped at Hazeroth.
- ¹⁸ They departed from Hazeroth and camped at Rithmah.
- ¹⁹ They departed from Rithmah and camped at Rimmon Perez.
- ²⁰ They departed from Rimmon Perez and camped at Libnah.
- ²¹ They moved from Libnah and camped at Rissah.
- ²² They journeyed from Rissah and camped at Kehelathah.
- ²³ They went from Kehelathah and camped at Mount Shepher.
- ²⁴ They moved from Mount Shepher and camped at Haradah.
- ²⁵ They moved from Haradah and camped at Makheloth.
- ²⁶ They moved from Makheloth and camped at Tahath.
- ²⁷ They departed from Tahath and camped at Terah.
- ²⁸ They moved from Terah and camped at Mithkah.
- ²⁹ They went from Mithkah and camped at Hashmonah.

(Expositors) “Most of the sites were desert encampments, not cities with lasting archaeological evidences. Many of the places in the listing are not recorded elsewhere in Exodus and Numbers (e. g., most of the places in v. 19-29)”

- ³⁰ They departed from Hashmonah and camped at Moseroth.
- ³¹ They departed from Moseroth and camped at Bene Jaakan.
- ³² They moved from Bene Jaakan and camped at Hor Hagidgad.
- ³³ They went from Hor Hagidgad and camped at Jotbathah.
- ³⁴ They moved from Jotbathah and camped at Abronah.
- ³⁵ They departed from Abronah and camped at Ezion Geber.

³⁶ They moved from Ezion Geber and camped in the Wilderness of Zin, which *is* Kadesh.

v. 36 “In the Wilderness of Zin, which is Kadesh”—agrees with Numbers 20: 1

(Keil and Delitzch) “the encampment in the Wilderness of Zin, i.e., Kadesh [v.36] is to be understood as referring to the second arrival in Kadesh after the expiration of the thirty-eight years of wandering in the desert to which the congregation had been condemned”

(Introduction to the Old Testament, R.K. Harrison)-- Genuineness of the list place names

“The long list of names which has preserved various stations in the wilderness [Numbers 33:19-35]... That the list is genuine seems apparent from the fact that the incidents associated with this period reflect accurately the natural phenomena of the area in which the stations are supposed to have been located.”

v. 37-49 From Kadesh to the Acacia grove (Shittim, KJV)

³⁷ They moved from Kadesh and camped at Mount Hor, on the boundary of the land of Edom.

³⁸ Then Aaron the priest went up to Mount Hor at the command of the LORD, and died there in the fortieth year after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, on the first *day* of the fifth month.

³⁹ Aaron *was* one hundred and twenty-three years old when he died on Mount Hor.

Mount Hor becomes the setting of the memorial for Aaron the high priest the brother of Moses.

The second date in the list of chapter 33 is given: the 1st day of the fifth month of the 40th year [Aaron's death]

⁴⁰ Now the king of Arad, the Canaanite, who dwelt in the South in the land of Canaan, heard of the coming of the children of Israel.

v. 40 Reference to is to the story in Numbers 21: 1-3...the first victory for Israel on their march to Canaan

v. 41-49

The places of encampment during the fortieth year from Mount Hor, then around Edom and Moab until they came to the Acacia Grove in the plains of Moab [v.49]

⁴¹ So they **departed from Mount Hor** and camped at Zalmonah.

⁴² They departed from Zalmonah and camped at Punon.

⁴³ They departed from Punon and camped at Oboth.

⁴⁴ They departed from Oboth and camped at Ije Abarim, at the border of Moab.

⁴⁵ They departed from **Ijim** and camped at **Dibon** Gad.

⁴⁶ They moved from Dibon Gad and camped at Almon Diblathaim.

⁴⁷ They moved from Almon Diblathaim and camped in the mountains of Abarim, before Nebo.

⁴⁸ They departed from the mountains of Abarim and camped in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, *across from* Jericho.

⁴⁹ They **camped by the Jordan**, from Beth Jesimoth as far as the **Abel Acacia Grove** in the plains of Moab.



v. 49 Brings the story to the present—by the Jordan...the Acacia Grove in the plains of Moab

Historical confirmation of the biblical route of Israel:

(The Bible is History, Ian Wilson)

“There is confirmation of the northwards itinerary, Iyim...Dibon-gad...Abel-Shittim...Jordan, as described in Numbers 33: 45-50.

Among ancient Egyptian campaign routes into Canaan inscribed on the walls of the Temple of Karnak at Luxor is one from the time of Tuthmosis III in the 15th century BC. It lists 119 Canaanite place-names, specifically including Iyin, Dibon, Abel and Jordan in exactly the same sequence as in the Bible, enabling American scholar Charles Krahmalkov to conclude as recently as 1994:

“The biblical story of the invasion of the Transjordan that sets the stage for the conquest of all Palestine is told against a background that is historically accurate. The Israelite invasion route described in Numbers 33:50 was...an official, heavily trafficked Egyptian road through the Transjordan in the Late Bronze Age [c. 1500-1200 BC].

And the city of Dibon was in fact a station on that road in the Late Bronze Age...to date archaeologists may have not found its ruins, but it surely existed.”

Ch. 33: 50—36:13 [Last section of the book]—The focus on settlement in Canaan

v. 50-56 Command to drive out and destroy all items of idolatry of the Canaanites

⁵⁰ Now the LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, *across from* Jericho, saying,
⁵¹ "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you have crossed the Jordan into the land of Canaan,
⁵² then you shall **drive out** all the inhabitants of the land from before you, **destroy** all their engraved stones,
destroy all their molded images, and **demolish** all their high places;

v. 52 "drive out" the inhabitants—they were to destroy anything that would lead to idolatry
(Companion) "This was one of the great purposes for which the sword of Israel was raised"

Exodus 23: 23-24

²³ For My Angel will go before you and bring you in to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off.

²⁴ You shall not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their works; but **you shall utterly overthrow them** and completely break down their *sacred* pillars.

⁵³ you shall dispossess *the inhabitants of* the land and dwell in it, **for I have given you the land to possess.**

⁵⁴ And you shall divide the land by lot as an inheritance among your families; to the larger you shall give a larger inheritance, and to the smaller you shall give a smaller inheritance; there everyone's *inheritance* shall be whatever falls to him by lot. You shall inherit according to the tribes of your fathers.

⁵⁵ But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall be that those whom you let remain *shall be irritants* in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall harass you in the land where you dwell.

⁵⁶ Moreover it shall be *that* I will do to you as I thought to do to them.' "

Failure to drive out the Canaanites would result in constant trouble for Israel, and would eventually result in their own expulsion from the land

v. 55 "drive out the inhabitants"

(Und. Bible Com. Series) "Judges 3: 5-6 illustrates precisely the danger of which Numbers 33 warns. The people mingle with the inhabitants and fall into idolatry"



Judges 3:5-7

⁵ Thus the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

⁶ And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons; and they served their gods.

⁷ So the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD. They forgot the LORD their God, and served the Baals and Asherahs.

Chapter 34

- 1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,
- 2 "Command the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land of Canaan, this *is* the land that shall fall to you as an inheritance--the land of Canaan to its boundaries.
- 3 Your **southern border** shall be from the Wilderness of Zin along the border of Edom; then your southern border shall extend eastward to the end of the Salt Sea;
- 4 your border shall turn from the southern side of the Ascent of Akkrabbim, continue to Zin, and be on the south of Kadesh Barnea; then it shall go on to Hazar Addar, and continue to Azmon;
- 5 the border shall turn from Azmon to the Brook of Egypt, and it shall end at the Sea.



6 'As for the **western border**, you shall have the **Great Sea** for a border; this shall be your western border.

7 'And this shall be your **northern border**: From the Great Sea you shall mark out your *border* line to Mount Hor;

8 from Mount Hor you shall mark out *your border* to the entrance of Hamath; then the direction of the border shall be toward Zedad;

9 the border shall proceed to Ziphron, and it shall end at Hazar Enan. This shall be your northern border.

10 'You shall mark out your **eastern border** from Hazar Enan to Shepham;

11 the border shall go down from Shepham to Riblah on the east side of Ain; the border shall go down and reach to the eastern side of the Sea of Chinnereth;

12 the border shall go down along the Jordan, and it shall end at the Salt Sea. This shall be your land with its surrounding boundaries.' "



¹³ Then Moses commanded the children of Israel, saying: "This *is* the land which you shall inherit by lot, which the LORD has commanded to give to the nine tribes and to the half-tribe.

¹⁴ For the tribe of the children of Reuben according to the house of their fathers, and the tribe of the children of Gad according to the house of their fathers, have received *their inheritance*; and the half-tribe of Manasseh has received its inheritance.

¹⁵ The two tribes and the half-tribe have received their inheritance on this side of the Jordan, *across from* Jericho eastward, toward the sunrise."

v. 13 "this is the land...to give to the nine tribes and to the half-tribe"

The territory marked out in verses 3-12 would be inherited by nine and ½ of the tribes...Reuben, Gad and ½ of Manasseh had chosen their land east of the Jordan River

v. 13 "you shall inherit by lot"

(Aid to Bible Understanding) "The casting of lots is an ancient custom for deciding a question at issue. The method used was to cast pebbles or small bits or tablets of wood or stone into the gathered folds of a garment, 'the lap', or in a vase and shake them. The one whose lot fell out was the one chosen...the lot like the oath, implied prayer with it."

Responsibility to oversee the distribution of the land to the tribes fell to Eleazar, Joshua and one leader from each of the tribes

¹⁶ And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

¹⁷ "These *are* the names of the men who shall divide the land among you as an inheritance: **Eleazar** the priest and **Joshua** the son of Nun.

¹⁸ And you shall take **one leader of every tribe** to divide the land for the inheritance.

¹⁹ These *are* the names of the men: from the tribe of Judah, **Caleb** the son of Jephunneh;

²⁰ from the tribe of the children of Simeon, Shemuel the son of Ammihud;

²¹ from the tribe of Benjamin, Elidad the son of Chislon;

²² a leader from the tribe of the children of Dan, Bukki the son of Jogli;

v. 19-22

Southern tribes

²³ from the sons of Joseph: a leader from the tribe of the children of [1/2] Manasseh, Hanniel the son of Ephod,

²⁴ and a leader from the tribe of the children of Ephraim, Kemuel the son of Shiphtan;

v.23-24

Central tribes

²⁵ a leader from the tribe of the children of Zebulun, Elizaphan the son of Parnach;

²⁶ a leader from the tribe of the children of Issachar, Paltiel the son of Azzan;

²⁷ a leader from the tribe of the children of Asher, Ahihud the son of Shelomi;

²⁸ and a leader from the tribe of the children of Naphtali, Pedahel the son of Ammihud.

v. 25-28

Northern tribes

²⁹ These *are* the ones the LORD commanded to divide the inheritance among the children of Israel in the land of Canaan

Reuben and Gad are not on the list—their inheritance: east side of Jordan

Lessons

Numbers 32: 23 [last part]
“...and be sure your sin will find you out”

God holds people accountable by bringing to completion the consequences inherent in their own actions

Numbers 33: 52
“destroy all their engraved stones, destroy all their molded images, and demolish all their high places”

- To rid any pagan influences so that they could worship the true God

Jeremiah 10: 2 “Learn not the way of the heathen”

- False worship and its trappings can pollute God’s people