

Numbers Chapter 34

Verses 1-15: Yahweh gave the boundaries appointed for the people of Israel. The sheer quantity of land was evidence of God's grace. God gave precise instruction to Israel concerning the boundaries of the Land of Canaan. Sadly, the actual conquest of the Land fell far short of these boundaries.

This section fixes the boundaries of the Promised Land.

Numbers 34:1 "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,"

At the same time that he ordered Moses to direct the children of Israel, when they had passed over Jordan. To drive out the inhabitants of the land of Canaan, and divide their land among them. He proceeded to give the limits and boundaries of the land.

"Saying": As follows.

Numbers 34:2 "Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land of Canaan; (this [is] the land that shall fall unto you for an inheritance, [even] the land of Canaan with the coasts thereof:)"

Not to fix the borders, and settle the boundaries of the land, for that is done by the Lord himself. Who has determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of men's habitations, and particularly of Israel (see Deut. 32:8). But to observe and take notice of the limits he had fixed, that they might know how far they were to go on every side. Whom they were to drive out, and what they were to divide and inherit. And see what was their right, and preserve it from the encroachments of their neighbors. As well as observe the goodness of God unto them, in thus providing for them.

"When ye come into the land of Canaan": To take possession of it by virtue of a grant of it to them.

"This is the land that shall fall unto you for an inheritance": It is said to "fall", because it was divided by lot. Each tribe having such a part of it assigned to them, according to the lot that came up unto them.

"Even the land of Canaan, with the coasts thereof": Or according to its borders, which are as follow.

"Canaan" was the more ancient name for Palestine. The land of Canaan was loosely the land west of the Jordan river. It also included a small amount of land on the other side of Jordan. It included Moab, Sihon, land of Ammon, kingdom of Og, as well as all the land from the Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea. This was the land God had promised the Israelites for their inheritance.

Numbers 34:3 "Then your south quarter shall be from the wilderness of Zin along by the coast of Edom, and your south border shall be the outmost coast of the salt sea eastward:"

Or border of the land. Which, as Jarchi observes, was from east to west.

"Shall be from the wilderness of Zin": Which is Kadesh, where Miriam died (Num. 20:1). And if this Kadesh was Kadesh-barnea, as Dr. Lightfoot seems to have proved. From where the spies were sent, that was clearly on the south of the land of Canaan. For they were bid to go up their way southward (Num. 13:17). And so Kadesh-barnea is hereafter mentioned, as being in the southern border.

"Along by the coast of Edom": The land of Canaan, to the south. Bordered on three countries, Egypt, Edom, and Moab. According to Jarchi, some part of Egypt, the whole land of Edom, and the whole land of Moab. The part of the land of Egypt was in the south west corner of it. The land of Edom by it to the east. And the land of Moab by the land of Edom, at the end of the south to the east.

"And your south border shall be the outmost coast of the salt sea eastward": The same that is sometimes called the Dead sea, the sea of Sodom, or the lake Asphaltites, as Heathen writers generally call it.

The wilderness of Zin was next to the land of Edom. The Salt Sea was included in the territory on the other side.

Numbers 34:4 "And your border shall turn from the south to the ascent of Akrabbim, and pass on to Zin: and the going forth thereof shall be from the south to Kadesh-barnea, and shall go on to Hazar-addar, and pass on to Azmon:"

That is, the south border, which is still describing.

"Shall turn from the south to the ascent of Akrabbim; or Maaleh-acrabbim, as (in Joshua 15:3). So called from the multitude of serpents and scorpions in it (see Deut. 8:15). So Kimchi says, a place of serpents and scorpions was this ascent. Dr. Shaw thinks it very probable, that Mount Hor was the same chain of mountains that are now called Accaba by the Arabs. And were the easternmost range, as we may take them to be, of Ptolemy's black mountains. Josephus speaks of Acrabatene as belonging to the Edomites, which seems to be this same place.

"And pass on to Zin": That is, which ascent goes on to it. The Targum of Jonathan is, "and shall pass on to the palm trees of the mountain of iron;" by which is meant the same with the wilderness of Zin. The Septuagint calls it Ennac: the Vulgate Latin, Senna. Jerom makes mention of a place called Senna, seven miles from Jericho.

"And the going forth thereof shall be from the south to Kadesh-barnea": From whence the spies were sent southward to search the land (Num. 13:17).

"And shall go on to Hazar-addar": Called Adar (Joshua 15:3), and where it seems to be divided into two places, Hazar and Addar. Which very probably were near each other, and therefore here put together, as if but one place.

"And pass on to Azmon": Which the Targums call Kesam.

Kadesh-Barnea is the same place the Israelites camped. It is the same as Kadesh. It is a number of miles beyond the Salt Sea. This is giving minute details of the area to be taken.

Numbers 34:5 "And the border shall fetch a compass from Azmon unto the river of Egypt, and the goings out of it shall be at the sea."

Not go on in a straight line, but turn about.

"From Azmon unto the river of Egypt": The river Nile, as both the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem. But Aben Ezra seems to deny that that river is meant. And some think that Rhinocolura, which flows into the Mediterranean Sea, is meant; or the "valley of Egypt". Which divided Judea from Egypt, as follows.

"And the goings out of it": Not of the river, but of the border.

"Shall be at the sea": The above sea, called in the next verse the great sea. All the Targums render it to the west.

The river of Egypt was a river that ran during the rainy seasons. It was connected to the Sinai desert region.

Numbers 34:6 "And [as for] the western border, ye shall even have the great sea for a border: this shall be your west border."

Of the land of Canaan.

"You shall even have the great sea for a border": And no other, meaning the Mediterranean Sea, which lies west of the land of Judea. Aben Ezra calls it the Spanish sea. It has the name of "great", in comparison of some in the land of Canaan, as the Salt Sea, and the Sea of Tiberias.

"This shall be your west border": Namely, the Mediterranean Sea.

The great sea is speaking of the Mediterranean Sea. This sea is the western border of the Promised Land.

Numbers 34:7 "And this shall be your north border: from the great sea ye shall point out for you mount Hor:"

What follows.

"From the great sea ye shall point out for you Mount Hor": Not that Mount Hor on which Aaron died, for that was on the southern border of the land. But rather Mount Herman, which is said to be unto the entering into Hamath (Joshua 13:5). As this Mount Hor is in the following verse.

This is possibly speaking of the mountain we know as Hermon. This reference is to the whole Lebanon range.

Numbers 34:8 "From mount Hor ye shall point out [your border] unto the entrance of Hamath; and the goings forth of the border shall be to Zedad:"

The former being described by Hemath the great (Amos 6:2). This entrance was a narrow pass leading from the land of Canaan to Syria, through the valley which lies between Lebanon and Antilibanus.

"And the goings forth of the border shall be to Zedad": The same boundary as here is given in (Ezek. 47:15).

Hamath was a fertile land joining Lebanon.

Numbers 34:9 "And the border shall go on to Ziphron, and the goings out of it shall be at Hazar-enan: this shall be your north border."

Which in the Jerusalem Targum is called Zapherin. And Jerom says, that in his time this city was called Zephyrium, a town in Cilicia. But this seems to be at too great a distance.

"And the goings out of it shall be at Hazar-enan": Which was the utmost of the northern border, and so it is in (Ezek. 47:17). And there called the border of Damascus. Reland takes it to be the same with En-hazor, a city in the tribe of Naphtali (Joshua 19:37).

"This shall be your northern border": From the Mediterranean Sea to Hazar-enan in Naphtali.

Hazar-enan is east, northeast of Damascus.

Numbers 34:10 "And ye shall point out your east border from Hazar-enan to Shepham:"

From the place where the northern border ended. Which Jerom says the Hebrews call Apamia, as both the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem do here. Shepham was a city between Hazar-enan and Riblah in the tribe of Naphtali, where Andrichomius places it.

Shepham is to the northeast near Riblah.

Numbers 34:11 "And the coast shall go down from Shepham to Riblah, on the east side of Ain; and the border shall descend, and shall reach unto the side of the sea of Chinnereth eastward:"

Said to be in the land of Hemath (Jer. 52:9). Which, according to Jerom, was Antioch of Syria. And both the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem understand by it Daphne, which was in the suburbs of Antioch. But this seems to be carrying the limits of the land too far. Jarchi remarks, that when the border goes from the north towards the south, it is said to go down.

"On the east side of Ain": A city in the tribe of Judah. According to Jerom now a village that goes by the name of Bethennim, two miles from the turpentine tree. That is, from the tent of Abraham or oak of Mamre, and four miles from Hebron.

"And the border shall descend, and shall reach unto the side of the sea of Chinnereth eastward. The same with the sea of Tiberius, and the sea of Gennesaret. Frequently made mention of in the New Testament, and in (Ezek. 47:18), called the east sea).

The sea of Chinnereth is the same as the Gennesaret, or the sea of Galilee.

Numbers 34:12 "And the border shall go down to Jordan, and the goings out of it shall be at the salt sea: this shall be your land with the coasts thereof round about."

A well-known river to the east of the land of Canaan.

"And the goings out of it shall be at the salt sea": The sea of Sodom. And though all sea water is generally salt, this was remarkably so. Thus as the description of the borders of the land began with the salt sea (Num. 34:3), it ends with it.

"This shall be your land, with the coasts thereof round about": Which, according to the Targum of Jonathan, was thus bounded. Kadesh-barnea on the south. Taurus Urmanus (by which he interprets Mount Hor) on the north. The great sea on the west (i.e. the Mediterranean Sea), and the Salt Sea on the east.

The one thing we must remember in this, is that the land of promise (originally), was from the Jordan river to the great sea. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half tribe of Manasseh inherited land on the side of the Jordan river away from the sea. Their territory would actually lie east of the Jordan. Even the Salt Sea was included in the land.

Numbers 34:13 "And Moses commanded the children of Israel, saying, This [is] the land which ye shall inherit by lot, which the LORD commanded to give unto the nine tribes, and to the half tribe:"

"Give unto the nine tribes, and to the half tribe": The land to be conquered was to be given to the 9-1/2 tribes. The other 2-1/2 tribes already had their inheritance in Trans-Jordan (32:1-42).

The land, described in this lesson, did not include the land given to Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh. The land mentioned is the original chosen land. The four sides of original land promised was the Jordan River on one side, to the Mediterranean on the opposite side. It reached all the way to Lebanon on one side, to the land of Edom on the other.

Numbers 34:14 "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 half the tribe of Manasseh have received their inheritance:"

That tribe, and all the families belonging to it.

"Have received their inheritance, and half the tribe of Manasseh have received their inheritance": That is, it was agreed they should have it on condition of their going along with the other tribes over Jordan into the land of Canaan, and assist them in the conquest of it (Num. 32:1).

This is speaking of the land east of the Jordan River from Syria on the one side to Edom on the other. This land is their inheritance, the same as the land on the other side of the Jordan is the inheritance of the other 9 1/2 tribes.

Numbers 34:15 "The two tribes and the half tribe have received their inheritance on this side Jordan [near] Jericho eastward, toward the sunrising."

The tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh.

"Have received their inheritance on this side Jordan near Jericho, eastward, toward the sunrising": That is, they received the grant of it there, even in the plains of Moab, opposite Jericho. Which lay to the east of the land of Canaan.

Jericho is just west of the Jordan river, a few miles from the Salt Sea. This is just saying, they are east of the Jordan River.

Verses 16-29: The allotment of the land was to be supervised by "Eleazar, Joshua", and one leader from each of the tribes. They were named directly by God, showing the importance of the task. Only 10 tribal leaders are mentioned here, since Gad and Reuben had already settled in Trans-Jordan. They basically began in the south with Judah and Simeon, and ended in the north with Asher and Naphtali.

None of these leaders was the son of a leader from the previous generation (1:5-15). These men would prove to be more faithful than their predecessors.

Numbers 34:16 "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,"

At the same time that he gave him the bounds of the land of Canaan, which was to be divided between the nine tribes and a half. And that this might be done in the most impartial manner, and to the satisfaction of them all, he gave orders to Moses.

"Saying": As follows.

Numbers 34:17 "These [are] the names of the men which shall divide the land unto you: Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun."

Or "inherit the land for you". That is, as Jarchi interprets it, they were to take possession of it in their name and stand, as their representatives, and then distribute it unto them. Or divide it to be inherited by them. But whatever may be said for the princes of the tribes, as acting for their respective tribes, and representing them, the same cannot be said of the two first named, as follow.

"Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun": The one the principal person in ecclesiastical affairs, and the other in civil ones. To divide the land being partly a sacred work, as it was a type of the heavenly Canaan, and a civil one. As it concerned the present welfare of the people of Israel. And both were types of Christ. The priest upon his throne, who is both priest and King. Who, as the one, gives a right unto it, and, as the other, introduces into it.

God is explaining to Moses exactly who is to divide the land. We saw in a previous lesson, that the location of their inheritance was to be decided by lots. Joshua and Eleazar are to handle the actual division. The size of the land inherited by each family will be determined by how many members they have in their family. Eleazar took the place of Aaron, and Joshua will take the place of Moses. They will do the actual allotting of the land.

Numbers 34:18 "And ye shall take one prince of every tribe, to divide the land by inheritance."

That is, out of the nine tribes and the half, which are ten in all. Of the tribes of Reuben and Gad none were taken, because they already had their inheritance granted them elsewhere. Nor of the tribe of Levi, because they were to have no inheritance in the land. To divide the land by inheritance; who being men of honor, understanding, and probity, and naturally concerned for the good of the tribes to which they belonged. Would take care that justice be done to each, and that no fraudulent methods were used in drawing the lot. And then take possession according to the lot. And impartially divide the portion assigned among the respective families in the tribes, according to their rank and numbers.

The prince of each tribe will receive the allotment of territory from Eleazar and Joshua. It appears, this prince will subdivide the land for each family.

Numbers 34:19-28 "And the names of the men [are] these: Of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh." "And of the tribe of the children of Simeon, Shemuel the son of Ammihud." "Of the tribe of Benjamin, Elidad the son of Chislon." "And the prince of the tribe of the children of Dan, Bukki the son of Jogli." "The prince of the children of Joseph, for the tribe of the children of Manasseh, Hanniel the son of Ephod." "And the prince of the tribe of the children of Ephraim, Kemuel the son of Shiphtan." "And the prince of the tribe of the children of Zebulun, Elizaphan the son of Parnach." "And the prince of the tribe of the children of Issachar, Paltiel the son of Azzan." "And the prince of the tribe of the children of Asher, Ahihud the son of Shelomi." "And the prince of the tribe of the children of Naphtali, Pedahel the son of Ammihud."

Which were not left to the tribes to choose, but were nominated by the Lord himself, who best knew their capacities and qualifications for this service.

"Of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh": Who was one of the two spies that brought a good report of the land. And Joshua is the other. And these were the only two of the spies living, and who are the first that were appointed to this service, of overseeing the division of the land. The rest were all of the new generation, that were sprung up, whose fathers fell in the wilderness, and we know no more of them than their names. And therefore from here, to the end of (Num. 34:28). No further remarks are necessary, only that the tribes and the princes are reckoned in a different order than they were at any time before. Either at the first numbering of them (Num. 1:1), or at the offerings for the dedication of the altar (Num. 7:1). Or at the taking the sum of them (Num. 26:1), even according to the order of their situation in the land of Canaan by their lots. And which Moses did not live to see. And which therefore shows the prescience and predisposing providence of God. And that Moses, as Bishop Patrick observes, was guided by a divine Spirit in all his writings.

Caleb was one of the 12 spies that searched out the Promised Land, and brought back a good report. It is good that he would be listed first. This name above, and the other names of the heads of the tribes, were those who met with Eleazar and Joshua to receive their allotment of land.

We must remember in this, that this Hanniel received the land for the half tribe of Manasseh on the western side of the Jordan.

Numbers 34:29 "These [are they] whom the LORD commanded to divide the inheritance unto the children of Israel in the land of Canaan."

Not only named and appointed them, but laid his commands upon them, and obliged them.

"To divide the inheritance unto the children of Israel": Even this order was made before the land was conquered by them, so sure and certain was it unto them. And accordingly, they did divide it, and that in Shiloh, before the Lord. At the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, as in the presence of God, doing it in the most impartial and solemn manner (see Joshua 19:51).

We must remember, one more time, that the prince of each of the tribes met with Eleazar and Joshua and received their allotment of land. They in turn went back to their people, and divided the land to each family. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh had already received their land on the eastern side of the Jordan.

Numbers Chapter 34 Questions

1. What land was the inheritance of Israel?
2. Canaan was the ancient name for _____.
3. What were some of the lands on the eastern side of Jordan, the Israelites would inherit?

4. The south quarter shall be from the wilderness of _____.
5. What land did this join?
6. Where had the Israelites camped, that is mentioned in verse 4?
7. Where was this south of?
8. What was unusual about the river of Egypt?
9. What is the great sea speaking of?
10. What was the western border?
11. Mount Hor in verse 7, is speaking of what?
12. Hamath joined what country?
13. The original land of promise was from the great sea to where?
14. The sea of Chinnereth is the same as _____, or the sea of _____.
15. Who received land on the eastern side of the Jordan?
16. How was it to be determined, which land they got?
17. What were the four sides of the original Promised Land?
18. Where is Jericho?
19. How much land will each tribe inherit?
20. Who takes the place of Aaron?
21. Who takes Moses' place?
22. The _____ of each tribe will subdivide the land.
23. What is special about Caleb?
24. Name the other princes, who accept the inheritance for their people.
25. Who did the prince of each tribe meet with to divide the land?