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NUMBERS 21:1 The Canaanite, the king of Arad, who lived in the South, heard that Israel came by the way of Atharim. He fought against Israel, and took some of them captive.

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Arad, a king of the Canaanites, attacks Israel, and makes some prisoners, Num 21:1. They devote him and his people to destruction, Num 21:2; which they afterwards accomplished, Num 21:3. They journey from Hor, and are greatly discouraged, Num 21:4. They murmur against God and Moses, and loathe the manna, Num 21:5. The Lord sends fiery serpents among them, Num 21:6. They repent, and beg Moses to intercede for them, Num 21:7. The Lord directs him to make a brazen serpent, and set it on a pole, that the people might look on it and be healed, Num 21:8. Moses does so, and the people who beheld the brazen serpent lived, Num 21:9. They journey to Oboth, Ije-abarim, Zared, and Arnon, Num 21:10-13. A quotation from the book of the wars of the Lord, Num 21:14, Num 21:15. From Arnon they came to Beer, Num 21:16. Their song of triumph, Num 21:17-20. Moses sends messengers to the Amorites for permission to pass through their land, Num 21:21, Num 21:22. Sihon their king refuses, attacks Israel, is defeated, and all his cities destroyed, Num 21:23-26. The poetic proverbs made on the occasion, Num 21:27-30. Israel possesses the land of the Amorites, Num 21:31, Num 21:32. They are attacked by Og king of Bashan, Num 21:33. They defeat him, destroy his troops and family, and possess his land, Num 21:34, Num 21:35.

#### Verse 1

The way of the spies - אַתְרִים atharim. Some think that this signifies the way that the spies took when they went to search the land. But this is impossible, as Dr. Kennicott justly remarks, because Israel had now marched from Meribah-Kadesh to Mount Hor, beyond Ezion-Gaber, and were turning round Edom to the south-east; and therefore the word is to be understood here as the name of a place.

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NUMBERS 21:2 Israel vowed a vow to the LORD, and said, "If you will indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities."

NUMBERS 21:3 The LORD listened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities. The name of the place was called Hormah.

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#### Verse 3

The Lord hearkened to the voice of Israel - The whole of this verse appears to me to have been added after the days of Joshua. It is certain the Canaanites were not utterly destroyed at the time here spoken of, for this did not take place till after the death of Moses. If, instead of utterly destroyed them, וַיַּחֲרֵם vaiyacharem, we translate they devoted them to utter destruction, it will make a good sense, and not repugnant to the Hebrew; though some think it more probable that the verse was added afterwards by Joshua or Ezra, in testimony of the fulfillment of God's promise; for Arad, who is mentioned as being destroyed here, is mentioned among those destroyed by Joshua long after, (see Jos 12:14): but this is quite consistent with their being devoted to destruction, as this might be fulfilled any time after. See the note on Leviticus 27 (note).

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NUMBERS 21:4 They travelled from Mount Hor by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom The soul of the people was very discouraged because of the journey.

NUMBERS 21:5 The people spoke against God, and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, and there is no water; and our soul loathes this light bread."

Verse 5

This light bread - *הקלקל hakkelokel*, a word of excessive scorn; as if they had said, This innutritive, unsubstantial, cheat - stomach stuff.

NUMBERS 21:6 The LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people. Many people of Israel died.

Verse 6

Fiery serpents - *הנחשים השרפים hannechashim hasseraphim*. I have observed before, on Gen. iii., that it is difficult to assign a name to the creature termed in Hebrew *nachash*; it has different significations, but its meaning here and in Gen. iii. is most difficult to be ascertained. Seraphim is one of the orders of angelic beings, Isa 6:2, Isa 6:6; but as it comes from the root *שרף saraph*, which signifies to burn, it has been translated fiery in the text. It is likely that St. Paul alludes to the seraphim, Heb 1:7 : Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a Flame Of Fire. The animals mentioned here by Moses may have been called fiery because of the heat, violent inflammation, and thirst, occasioned by their bite; and consequently, if serpents, they were of the prester or dipsas species, whose bite, especially that of the former, occasioned a violent inflammation through the whole body, and a fiery appearance of the countenance. The poet Lucan has well expressed this terrible effect of the bite of the prester, and also of the dipsas, in the ninth book of his Pharsalia, which, for the sake of those who may not have the work at hand, I shall here insert.

Of the mortal effects of the bite of the dipsas in the deserts of Libya he gives the following description: - "Signiferum juvenem Tyrrheni sanguinis Aulum

Torta caput retro dipsas calcata momordit.

Vix dolor aut sensus dentis fuit: ipsaque laeti

Frons caret invidia: nec quidquam plaga minatur.

Ecce subit virus tacitum, carpitque medullas

Ignis edax, calidaque incendit viscera tabe.

Ebibit humorem circum vitalia fusum

Pestis, et in sicco linguam torrere palato

Coepit: defessos iret qui sudor in artus

Non fuit, atque oculos lacrymarum vena refugit."

Aulus, a noble youth of Tyrrhene blood,  
 Who bore the standard, on a dipsas trod;  
 Backward the wrathful serpent bent her head,  
 And, fell with rage, the unheeded wrong repaid.  
 Scarce did some little mark of hurt remain,  
 And scarce he found some little sense of pain.  
 Nor could he yet the danger doubt, nor fear  
 That death with all its terrors threatened there.  
 When lo! unseen, the secret venom spreads,  
 And every nobler part at once invades;  
 Swift flames consume the marrow and the brain,  
 And the scorched entrails rage with burning pain;  
 Upon his heart the thirsty poisons prey,  
 And drain the sacred juice of life away.  
 No kindly floods of moisture bathe his tongue,  
 But cleaving to the parched roof it hung;  
 No trickling drops distil, no dewy sweat,  
 To ease his weary limbs, and cool the raging heat.

Rowe.

The effects of the bite of the prester are not less terrible: "Nasidium Marsi cultorem torridus agri

Percussit prester: illi rubor igneus ora

Succendit, tenditque cutem, pereunte figura,

Miscens cuncta tumor toto jam corpore major:

Humanumque egressa modum super omnia membra

Effiatur sanies, late tollente veneno."

A fate of different kind Nasidius found,

A burning prester gave the deadly wound;

And straight, a sudden flame began to spread,

And paint his visage with a glowing red.

With swift expansion swells the bloated skin.

Naught but an undistinguished mass is seen;

While the fair human form lies lost within.

The puffy poison spreads, and leaves around,

Till all the man is in the monster drowned.

Rowe.

Bochart supposes that the hydrus or chersydrus is meant; a serpent that lives in marshy places, the bite of which produces the most terrible inflammations, burning heat, fetid vomitings, and a putrid solution of the whole body. See his works, vol. iii., col. 421. It is more likely to have been a serpent of the prester or dipsas kind, as the wilderness through which the Israelites passed did neither afford rivers nor marshes, though Bochart endeavors to prove that there might have been marshes in that part; but his arguments have very little weight. Nor is there need of a water serpent as long as the prester or dipsas, which abound in the deserts of Libya, might have abounded in the deserts of Arabia also. But very probably the serpents themselves were immediately sent by God for the chastisement of this rebellious people. The cure was certainly preternatural; this no person doubts; and why might not the agent be so, that inflicted the disease?

NUMBERS 21:7 The people came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, because we have spoken against the LORD, and against you. Pray to the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us." Moses prayed for the people.

NUMBERS 21:8 The LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole. It shall happen, that everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live."

Verse 8

Make thee a fiery serpent - Literally, make thee a seraph.

And put it upon a pole - על נס al nes, upon a standard or ensign.

NUMBERS 21:9 Moses made a serpent of brass, and set it on the pole. If a serpent had bitten any man, when he looked at the serpent of brass, he lived.

Verse 9

And Moses made a serpent of brass - נחש נחשת nechash nechosheth. Hence we find that the word for brass or copper comes from the same root with nachash, which here signifies a serpent, probably on account of the color; as most serpents, especially those of the bright spotted kind, have a very glistening appearance, and those who have brown or yellow spots appear something like burnished brass: but the true meaning of the root cannot be easily ascertained. On the subject of the cure of the serpent-bitten Israelites, by looking at the brazen serpent, there is a good comment in the book of The Wisdom of Solomon, (Apoth). Num 16:4-12, in which are these remarkable words: "They were admonished, having a sign of salvation, (i. e., the brazen serpent), to put them in remembrance of the commandments of thy law. For he that turned himself towards it was not saved by the Thing that he saw, but by Thee, that art the Savior of all." To the circumstance of looking at the brazen

serpent in order to be healed, our Lord refers, Joh 3:14, Joh 3:15 : "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." The brazen serpent was certainly no type of Jesus Christ; but from our Lord's words we may learn,

1. That as the serpent was lifted up on the pole or ensign, so Jesus Christ was lifted up on the cross.
2. That as the Israelites were to look at the brazen serpent, so sinners must look to Christ for salvation.
3. That as God provided no other remedy than this looking for the wounded Israelites, so he has provided no other way of salvation than faith in the blood of his Son.
4. That as he who looked at the brazen serpent was cured and did live, so he that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall not perish, but have eternal life.
5. That as neither the serpent, nor looking at it, but the invisible power of God healed the people, so neither the cross of Christ, nor his merely being crucified, but the pardon he has bought by his blood, communicated by the powerful energy of his Spirit, saves the souls of men.

May not all these things be plainly seen in the circumstances of this transaction, without making the serpent a type of Jesus Christ, (the most exceptionable that could possibly be chosen), and running the parallel, as some have done, through ten or a dozen particulars?

NUMBERS 21:10 The children of Israel travelled, and encamped in Oboth.

NUMBERS 21:11 They travelled from Oboth, and encamped at Iyeabarim, in the wilderness which is before Moab, toward the sunrise.

NUMBERS 21:12 From there they travelled, and encamped in the valley of Zered.

#### Verse 12

They - pitched in the valley of Zared - נחל זרד nachal zared. This should be translated the brook Zared, as it is in Deu 2:13, Deu 2:14. This stream has its origin in the mountains eastward of Moab, and runs from east to west, and discharges itself into the Dead Sea.

NUMBERS 21:13 From there they travelled, and encamped on the other side of the Arnon, which is in the wilderness, that comes out of the border of the Amorites: for the Arnon is the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites.

#### Verse 13

Arnon - Another river which takes its rise in the mountains of Moab, and, after having separated the ancient territories of the Moabites and Ammonites, falls into the Dead Sea, near the mouth of Jordan.

NUMBERS 21:14 Therefore it is said in the book of the Wars of the LORD, "Vaheb in Suphah, the valleys of the Arnon,

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#### Verse 14

The book of the wars of the Lord - There are endless conjectures about this book, both among ancients and moderns. Dr. Lightfoot's opinion is the most simple, and to me bears the greatest appearance of being the true one. "This book seems to have been some book of remembrances and directions, written by Moses for Joshua's private instruction for the management of the wars after him. See Exo 17:14-16. It may be that this was the same book which is called the book of Jasher, i. e., the book of the upright, or a directory for Joshua, from Moses, what to do and what to expect in his wars; and in this book it seems as if Moses directed the setting up of archery, see 2Sam 1:18, and warrants Joshua to command the sun, and expect its obedience, Jos 10:13."

What he did in the Red Sea, and in the brooks of Arnon - This clause is impenetrably obscure. All the versions, all the translators, and all the commentators, have been puzzled with it. Scarcely any two agree. The original is **בסופה את והב** eth vaheb besuphah, which our translators render, what he did in the Red Sea, following here the Chaldee Targum; but not satisfied with this version, they have put the most difficult words in English letters in the margin, Vaheb in Suphah. Calmet's conjecture here is ingenious, and is adopted by Houbigant; instead of **והב** vaheb, he reads **זרד** zared. Now a **ז** zain may be easily mistaken for a **ו** vau, and vice versa; and a **ה** he for a **ר**, resh, if the left limb happened to be a little obliterated, which frequently occurs, not only in MSS., but in printed books; the **ב** beth also might be mistaken for a **ד** dalet, if the ruled line on which it stood happened in that place to be a little thicker or blacker than usual. Thus then **והב** vaheb might be easily formed out of **זרד** zared, mentioned Num 21:12; the whole might then be read, They encamped at the brook Zared, and they came to Suphah, and thence to the brook Arnon. Take the passage as we may, it is evidently defective. As I judge the whole clause to have been a common proverb in those days, and Vaheb to be a proper name, I therefore propose the following translation, which I believe to be the best: From Vaheb unto Suph, and unto the streams of Arnon. If we allow it to have been a proverbial expression, used to point out extensive distance, then it was similar to that well known phrase, From Dan even unto Beersheba.

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NUMBERS 21:15 the slope of the valleys that incline toward the dwelling of Ar, leans on the border of Moab."

NUMBERS 21:16 From there they travelled to Beer; that is the well of which the LORD said to Moses, "Gather the people together, and I will give them water."

NUMBERS 21:17 Then Israel sang this song: "Spring up, well! Sing to it,

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#### Verse 17

Spring up, O well, etc. - This is one of the most ancient war songs in the world, but is not easily understood, which is commonly the case with all very ancient compositions, especially the poetic. See the remarks Exo 15:1 (note), etc.

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NUMBERS 21:18 the well, which the princes dug, which the nobles of the people dug, with the sceptre, and with their poles." From the wilderness they travelled to Mattanah;

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Verse 18

The princes digged the well - with their staves - This is not easily understood. Who can suppose that the princes dug this well with their staves? And is there any other idea conveyed by our translation? The word חפרו chapharu, which is translated they digged, should be rendered they searched out, which is a frequent meaning of the root; and במשענתם bemishanotham, which we render with their staves, should be translated on their borders or confines, from the root שטן shaan, to lie along. With these corrections the whole song may be read thus: -

Spring up, O well! Answer ye to it.

The well, the princes searched it out.

The nobles of the people have digged it.

By a decree, upon their own borders

This is the whole of the quotation from what is called the book of the wars of the Lord. But see Dr. Kennicott's remarks at the end of this chapter.

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NUMBERS 21:19 and from Mattanah to Nahaliel; and from Nahaliel to Bamoth;

NUMBERS 21:20 and from Bamoth to the valley that is in the field of Moab, to the top of Pisgah, which looks down on the desert.

NUMBERS 21:21 Israel sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, saying,

NUMBERS 21:22 "Let me pass through your land. We will not turn aside into field, or into vineyard. We will not drink of the water of the wells. We will go by the king's highway, until we have passed your border."

NUMBERS 21:23 Sihon would not allow Israel to pass through his border, but Sihon gathered all his people together, and went out against Israel into the wilderness, and came to Jahaz. He fought against Israel.

NUMBERS 21:24 Israel struck him with the edge of the sword, and possessed his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok, even to the children of Ammon; for the border of the children of Ammon was strong.

NUMBERS 21:25 Israel took all these cities. Israel lived in all the cities of the Amorites, in Heshbon, and in all its towns.

NUMBERS 21:26 For Heshbon was the city of Sihon the king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab, and taken all his land out of his hand, even to the Arnon.

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Verse 26

For Heshbon was the city of Sihon, etc. - It appears therefore that the territory now taken from Sihon by the Israelites was taken from a former king of Moab, in commemoration of which an epikedion or war song was made, several verses of which, in their ancient poetic form, are here quoted by Moses.

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NUMBERS 21:27 Therefore those who speak in proverbs say, "Come to Heshbon. Let the city of Sihon be built and established;

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#### Verse 27

They that speak in proverbs - המשלים hammoshelim, from מושל mashal, to rule, to exercise authority; hence a weighty proverbial saying, because admitted as an axiom for the government of life. The moshelim of the ancient Asiatics were the same, in all probability, as the Poetae among the Greeks and Latins, the shaara among the Arabs, who were esteemed as Divine persons, and who had their name from shaara, he knew, understood; whose poems celebrated past transactions, and especially those which concerned the military history of their nation. These poets were also termed sahebi deewan, companions or lords of the council of state, because their weighty sayings and universal knowledge were held in the highest repute. Similar to these were the bards among the ancient Druids, and the Sennachies among the ancient Celtic inhabitants of these nations.

The ode from the 27th to the 30th verse is composed of three parts. The first takes in Num 21:27 and Num 21:28; the second Num 21:29; and the third Num 21:30.

The first records with bitter irony the late insults of Sihon and his subjects over the conquered Moabites.

The second expresses the compassion of the Israelites over the desolations of Moab, with a bitter sarcasm against their god Chemosh, who had abandoned his votaries in their distress, or was not able to rescue them out of the hands of their enemies.

The third sets forth the revenge taken by Israel upon the whole country of Sihon, from Heshbon to Dibon, and from Nophah even to Medeba. See Isa 15:1, Isa 15:2.

The whole poem, divided into its proper hemistichs, as it stands in Kennicott's Hebrew Bible, is as follows: -

#### Verse 27. Part I

Come ye to Heshbon, let it be rebuilt;

The city of Sihon, let it be established.

#### Verse 28

For from Heshbon the fire went out,

And a flame from the city of Sihon:

It hath consumed the city of Moab,

With the lords of the heights of Arnon.



Verse 29. Part 2

Alas for thee, O Moab!

Thou hast perished, O people of Chemosh!

He hath given up his fugitive sons

And his daughters into captivity,

To the king of the Amorites, Sihon.

Verse 30. Part 3

But on them have We lifted destruction,

From Heshbon even to Dibon;

We have destroyed even to Nophah,

The fire did reach to Medebah.

See Kennicott's Remarks.

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NUMBERS 21:28 for a fire has gone out of Heshbon, a flame from the city of Sihon. It has devoured Ar of Moab, The lords of the high places of the Arnon.

NUMBERS 21:29 Woe to you, Moab! You are undone, people of Chemosh! He has given his sons as fugitives, and his daughters into captivity, to Sihon king of the Amorites.

NUMBERS 21:30 We have shot at them. Heshbon has perished even to Dibon. We have laid waste even to Nophah, Which reaches to Medeba.”

NUMBERS 21:31 Thus Israel lived in the land of the Amorites.

NUMBERS 21:32 Moses sent to spy out Jazer. They took its towns, and drove out the Amorites who were there.

NUMBERS 21:33 They turned and went up by the way of Bashan. Og the king of Bashan went out against them, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei.

NUMBERS 21:34 The LORD said to Moses, “Don’t fear him, for I have delivered him into your hand, with all his people, and his land. You shall do to him as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived at Heshbon.”

NUMBERS 21:35 So they struck him, with his sons and all his people, until there were no survivors; and they possessed his land.

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Verse 35

So they smote him, and his sons - There is a curious note of Dr. Lightfoot here, of which I should think it wrong to deprive the reader. "Sihon and Og conquered, A. M. 2553. Of the life of Moses, 120. From the Exodus, 40. It is now six and twenty generations from the creation, or from Adam to Moses; and accordingly doth Psalm 136, rehearse the durableness of God's mercy six and twenty

times over, beginning the story with the creation, and ending it in the conquest of Sihon and Og. The numerals of the name יהוה Jehovah amount to the sum of six and twenty."

On some difficulties in this chapter Dr. Kennicott makes the following observations: - "This one chapter has several very considerable difficulties; and some verses, as now translated, are remarkably unintelligible, A true state of this chapter is not, however, to be despaired of; and it has in it some circumstances which merit more than common attention. It contains the history of the last part of the travels of the Israelites in their way to the promised land; beginning with them at Mount Hor, the thirty-fourth encampment, and concluding with them, as in their forty-second and last encampment, near Jordan, in the country which they had acquired by conquest over Sihon, king of the Amorites. "It begins with saying - that King Arad, the Canaanite, who dwelt in the south, (in the land of Canaan, Num 33:40), attacked Israel and was defeated, and that Israel destroyed their cities; and that, after destroying these Canaanite cities, and consequently after being in a part of Canaan, a part of the very country they were going to, on the west of the Dead Sea, they returned towards the Red Sea, and near the eastern tongue or gulf of the Red Sea, on the south of Edom, marched round Edom to the east of the Dead Sea, in order to enter Canaan from the east side of Jordan! "This surprising representation of so vast and dangerous a march, quite unnecessarily performed, is owing to two circumstances. The first is, (Num 21:1), the Canaanites heard that Israel was coming by the way of the spies, meaning, by the way the spies went from Kadesh-Barnea into Canaan. But this being impossible, because Israel had now marched from Meribah-Kadesh to Mount Hor, beyond Ezion-gaber, and were turning round Edom, to the south-east; it is happy that the word rendered spies, in our version, is in the Greek a proper name, (Atharim), which removes that difficulty: and the other difficulty (Num 21:2, Num 21:3) is removed by the Greek version likewise, according to which, the vow made, with the facts subsequent, does not signify destroying the Canaanite cities, but devoting them to destruction at some future time. See Wall's Crit. Notes. "It proceeds with saying, that after defeating the Canaanites at Mount Hor, they journeyed from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, (in the road from Ammon, Midian, etc., to the eastern gulf of the Red Sea), to compass the land of Edom; that on their murmuring for want both of bread and of water they were punished by fiery serpents, after which they marched to Oboth, and thence to Ije-abarim in the wilderness, east of Moab. The encampments of the Israelites, amounting to forty-two, are recorded all together, in historical succession, in Numbers 33, where Ije-abarim is the 38th; Dibongad, 39; Almon-Diblathaim, 40; mountains of Abarim, 41; and the plains of Moab, by Jordan, 42. This regular detail in Numbers 33 has occasioned great perplexity as to Numbers 21, where, after the stations at Oboth and Ije-abarim, in Num 21:10, Num 21:11, we have, in Num 21:19, Num 21:20, the words Mattanah, Nahaliel, and Bamoth; which are usually considered as the proper names of three places, but widely different from the three proper names after Ije-abarim in the catalogue at Numbers 33. "But there is, in reality, no inconsistency here. In the plain and historical catalogue (Numbers 33). the words are strictly the proper names of the three places; but here the words Mattanah, Nahaliel, and Bamoth follow some lines of poetry, and seem to form a continuation of the song. They evidently express figurative and poetical ideas. The verbs journeyed from and pitched in are not found here, though necessary to prose narration: see Num 33:10 and Num 33:11 here, and Numbers 33. Lastly, Num 21:20, (in this 21st chapter), usually supposed to express the last encampment, does not. Pisgah signifies a hill; and the Israelites could not encamp on the top of any single hill, such as this is described. Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, which looketh toward Jeshimon, (Num 23:28), which Peor undoubtedly was in Moab. He took him to another hill in Moab, when he took him (Num 23:14) to the top of Pisgah, in the field of Zophim. And if the Pisgah or hill in Num 21:20, was in the country of Balak, it could not point out the last encampment, which was not

in Balak's country, but north of Arnon. "The word Mattanah probably alludes to a place distinguished by some gift or blessing from God. Fagius says:

Nomen loci, ab eventu aquarum quas Dominus ibi dedit, sic appellati; מתנה nam significat donum- 'The name of the place was so called, from the circumstance of the waters which the Lord gave there; for Mattanah signifies a gift.' נהליאל Nahaliel is torrentes Dei; i. e., great streams, particularly seasonable or salutary. And במות Bamoth (Num 21:20) may point out any high places of signal benefit in the country of Moab, or it may answer to the last station but one, which was the mountains of Abarim.

If, therefore, these words were meant to express poetically some eminent blessing, what blessing was so likely to be then celebrated as copious streams of water? And after they had wandered nearly forty years through many a barren desert, and after (compare Deu 8:15) having passed through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents and drought, where there was no water, it is no wonder they should shout for joy at finding water in plenty, and finding it almost on the banks of Arnon, the last river they were to pass, in their way to their last station, east of Jordan. No wonder they should sing in poetic rapture, that after the wilderness was (Mattanah) the Gift Of God; meaning the great well in Moab, dug by public authority; and no wonder that, after such a gift, there were (Nahaliel) blessed streams, by which they passed, till they came to (Bamoth) the high places from which, perhaps, these streams descended. And the thanksgiving ends, where the blessing was no longer wanted, on their coming down into the valley, along the banks of Arnon, which was then the north boundary of Moab. "The Israelites had spent no less than thirty-eight years in coming from Kadesh-Barnea to their encampment north of Zared. Here, at this fortieth station, they were commanded to pass through Moab by ער Ar, the chief city; but were not to stop till they came to the valley on the south of Arnon. At this last station but one they probably continued no longer than was necessary for sending messengers to Sihon, king of the Amorites, at Heshbon, and receiving his answer. They then crossed the Arnon; and having vanquished Sihon and Og, took possession of the forty-second and last encampment. "This one chapter has three pieces of poetry, either fragments or complete; and poetry, seldom found in a historical narrative, may be here accounted for from the exuberance of joy which must have affected these wearied travelers, when arriving thus happily near their journey's end. What occurs first is in Num 21:14; and has often been called the fragment of an old Amorite song. But it may have been Amorite or Moabite, or either or neither, for the subject matter of it, as it is generally understood, if indeed it can be said to be understood at all. The words את והב בסופה ואת הנתליס ארנו, usually supposed to contain this fragment, do not signify, as in our English version, What he did in the Red Sea, and in the brooks of Arnon. Without enumerating the many interpretations given by others, I shall offer a new one, which seems to make good sense, and a sense very pertinent. "Observe first, that there must have been a place called Suph, near the conflux of the Arnon and Jordan; because Moses, whilst in that last station, begins Deuteronomy with saying, he was on this side (i. e., east) of Jordan, over against Suph. By this word is not here meant the Red Sea; partly, because that has every where else the word for sea before it, and partly, because of the great distance of the Red Sea now from Moses. The single word, therefore, signifies here some place in itself obscure, because no where mentioned but in these two passages. And yet we cannot wonder that Moses should mention it twice, as the word Suph, introduced in speaking of the two last encampments, recalled to mind the Sea of Suph, so glorious to Israel, near the beginning of their march towards Canaan. "Moses had now led Israel from the Red Sea to the river Arnon, through many dreadful dangers, partly from hostile nations, partly from themselves; such dangers as no other people ever experienced, and such as no people could have surmounted, without the signal favor of the Almighty. And here, just before the battles with Sihon and Og, he reminds them of Pharaoh, etc.; and he asserts, that in the history of the wars

it shall be recorded that Jehovah, who had triumphantly brought Israel through the Sea of Suph, near Egypt, at first, had now conducted him to Suph, near Arnon; that

Jehovah went with him to Suph,

And he came to the streams of Arnon. "This version removes the difficulties urged by Hobbes, page 266, fol. 1750; by Spinoza, page 108, 4th., 1670; and retailed in a deistical pamphlet called The Doubts of the Infidels, page 4, 8vo., 1781. "The general meaning of the next piece of poetry seems to be this: that at some distance from the city of Ar, by which the Israelites were to pass, (Deu 2:18), they came to A Well of uncommon size and magnificence, which seems to have been sought out, built up, and adorned for the public, by the rulers of Moab. And it is no wonder that, on their arrival at such a well, they should look upon it as a blessing from Heaven, and speak of it as a new miracle in their favor.

17. Then Israel sang this song: - Spring up, O Well! Sing ye hitherto!

18. The Well! princes searched it out;The nobles of the people have digged it;By their decree, by their act of government,So, after the wilderness, was Mattanah!

19. And after Mattanah were Nahaliel!And after Nahaliel were Bamoth!

20. And after Bamoth was the valley;Where, in the country of Moab, Appeareth the top of Pisgah,Which is over against Jeshimon.

See Dr. Kennicott's Remarks upon Select Passages in the Old Testament.