

# CHAPTER 21

## INTRODUCTION TO NUMBERS 21

This chapter gives an account of the defeat of King Arad, the Canaanite, (<sup><0210></sup>Numbers 21:1-3) of the murmurings of the children of Israel, because of difficulties in travelling round, the land of Edom, for which they were punished with fiery serpents, (<sup><0214></sup>Numbers 21:4-6) and how that upon their repentance a brazen serpent was ordered to be made, and to be erected on a pole, that whoever looked to it might live, (<sup><0217></sup>Numbers 21:7-9) and of the several journeys and stations of the children of Israel, until they came to the land of the Amorites, (<sup><0210></sup>Numbers 21:10-20), when they sent a message to Sihon their king, to desire him to grant them a passage through his country; but he refusing, they fought with him, smote him, and possessed his land, concerning which many proverbial sayings were used, (<sup><0221></sup>Numbers 21:21-32) and the chapter is concluded with the defeat of Og, king of Bashan, (<sup><0233></sup>Numbers 21:33-35).

**Ver. 1.** *And [when] King Arad the Canaanite, which dwelt in the south,* etc.] Arad seems rather to be the name of a place, city, or country, of which the Canaanite was king, than the name of a man, since we read of the king of Arad, (<sup><0214></sup>Joshua 12:14) see also (<sup><0216></sup>Judges 1:16) and so the Targums of Onkelos and Jerusalem here render it, the king of Arad; and the Targum of Jonathan says, he changed his seat and reigned in Arad, which might have its name from Arvad, a son of Canaan, (<sup><0118></sup>Genesis 10:18) and Jerom says <sup>f298</sup>, that Arath, the same with Arad, is a city of the Amorites, near the wilderness of Kadesh, and that to this day it is shown, a village four miles from Malatis and twenty from Hebron, in the tribe of Judah; and so Aben Ezra observes, that the ancients say, this is Sihon (the king of the Amorites), and he is called a Canaanite, because all the Amorites are Canaanites; but, according to Jarchi, the Amalekites are meant, as it is said, “the Amalekites dwell in the land of the south”: (<sup><0139></sup>Numbers 13:29) and so the Targum of Jonathan here,

“and when Amalek heard, that dwelt in the land of the south;”

what he heard is particularly expressed in the following clause:

*heard tell that Israel came by the way of the spies*: either after the manner of spies, or rather by the way in which the spies went thirty eight years ago, which was the way of the south, where this Canaanitish king dwelt, (see <sup><01517></sup>Numbers 13:17,22,29), the Septuagint version leaves the word untranslated, taking it for the name of a place, and reads, “by the way of Atharim”, so the Samaritan Pentateuch and Arabic version; and did such a place appear to have been hereabout, it would be the most likely sense of the passage; for as the spies were never discovered by the Canaanites, the way they went could not be known by them; nor is it very probable that, if it had been known, it should be so called, since nothing of any consequence to them as yet followed upon it:

*then he fought against Israel*; raised his forces and marched out against them, to oppose their passage, and engaged in a battle with them:

*and took some of them prisoners*; according to the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem, great numbers of them; but Jarchi says, only one single maidservant.

**Ver. 2.** *And Israel vowed a vow unto the Lord*, etc.] The Israelites made supplication to the Lord for help against their enemies, and that he would give them victory over them, and made promises to him:

*and said, if thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand*; certainly and entirely deliver them, so as that a complete victory shall be obtained over them:

*then will I utterly destroy their cities*; or “anathematize”, or devote them to utter destruction <sup>f299</sup>; slay man and beast, burn their houses and take their goods, not for a spoil, for their own private use, but reserve them for the service of God; all which is implied in the vow made, as was done to Jericho, (<sup><0162></sup>Joshua 6:21,24) and so it is a vow, as Abendana observes, of what they would do when they came to the land of Canaan.

**Ver. 3.** *And the Lord hearkened to the voice of Israel*, etc.] In their prayers and vows; with acceptance heard, and answered them according to their wish:

*and delivered up the Canaanites*: into their hands, gave them victory over them:

*and they utterly destroyed them and their cities*; that is, “anathematized” them, and devoted them to destruction; for as yet they did not actually destroy them, since we read of Arad afterwards, (<sup><06214></sup>Joshua 12:14), but this they did in Joshua’s time, when the whole land of Canaan came into their hands; for had they entered the land now, and took and destroyed the cities belonging to Arad, they would doubtless have proceeded, and pursued their conquests, and not have returned into the wilderness again to go round about Edom, in order to enter another way; many think, as Aben Ezra observes on (<sup><02101></sup>Numbers 21:1) that this section was written by Joshua, after the land was subdued:

*and he called the name of the place Hormah*; which before was called Zephath, and it seems to have its name from various disasters which happened at this place; as the defeat of the Israelites by the Amalekites, (<sup><0445></sup>Numbers 14:45), and here of the Canaanites by the Israelites, and afterwards of the inhabitants of this place by Judah and Simeon, (<sup><00117></sup>Judges 1:17) it had its name from “Cherem”, the anathema or destruction it was devoted to.

**Ver. 4.** *And they journeyed from Mount Hor*, etc.] After the battle with the king of Arad, and the defeat of him:

*by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom*; which lay by it, and from whence it had the name of the Red sea, Edom signifying red; and by the way of that the Israelites must needs go, to go round that country:

*and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way*; because it was going back instead of going forward to Canaan’s land, and because of the length of the way; it was a round about way they were going; when, could they have been admitted to have passed through the country of Edom, the way would have been short; or had they pursued their victory over the Canaanite, they would have gone directly into the land; and this perhaps was what fretted, vexed, and discouraged them, that they were obliged to go back, and take such a circuit, when they had such an opportunity of entering; and they might be distressed also with the badness and the roughness of the way, the borders of Edom being rocky and craggy: it is in the original text, “their soul or breath was short” <sup>f300</sup>; they fetched their breath short, being weary and faint with travelling, or through anger, as angry persons do, when in a great passion: so the people of God travelling through the wilderness of this world are often discouraged, because of the difficulties, trials, and troubles they meet with

in the way, from sin, Satan, and the world, and are fretful and impatient; but though they are led about and walk in a round about way, and in a rough way, yet in a right way to the city of their habitation, (~~19470~~ Psalm 107:7).

**Ver. 5.** *And the people spake against God,* etc.] Who went before them in the pillar of cloud and fire, for leading them in such a way; that is, against Christ, as the apostle has taught us to interpret it, (~~4300~~ 1 Corinthians 10:9), and is no inconsiderable proof of the deity of Christ; and so the Targum of Jonathan paraphrases it,

“and the people thought in their heart, and spake against the Word of the Lord,”

the essential Word and Son of God:

*and against Moses;* his servant, for obeying the orders of the Lord, and leading and guiding the people as he directed him:

*wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?* ascribing this equally to God and to Moses; using a strange word, as Aben Ezra calls it, being in a great passion, and not considering well what they said; showing great ingratitude for such a mercy, and representing it in a wrong light, as if the intent of bringing them from thence was to slay them in the wilderness:

*for [there] is no bread;* no bread corn, nothing in the wilderness to make bread of; nothing that they called and accounted bread, otherwise they had manna, as is presently owned:

*neither [is there] any water;* any fresh water fit to drink, otherwise they were near the sea; what they had from the rock, lately, perhaps was now spent, and it did not follow them as the other rock had:

*and our soul loatheth this light bread;* the manna; this very light, this exceeding light bread, the radicals of the word <sup>f301</sup> used being doubled, which increases the signification: if to be understood of light and easy digestion, it was the more to be valued; but perhaps they meant, it had but little substance and virtue in it, and was not filling and satisfying; or rather that it was exceeding vile, mean, and despicable; so they called the bread of heaven, angel's food, this wonderful gift of Providence; in like manner is

Christ, the hidden manna, treated, and his Gospel, and the precious truths of it, by unregenerate men and carnal professors, (<sup>4023</sup>1 Corinthians 1:23).

**Ver. 6.** *And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people*, etc.] Of which there were great numbers in the deserts of Arabia, and about the Red sea; but hitherto the Israelites were protected from them by the cloud about them, but sinning, the Lord suffered them to come among them, to punish them; these are called fiery, either from their colour, for in Arabia, as there were serpents of a golden colour, as Aelianus <sup>f302</sup> relates, to which the brazen serpent, after made, bore some likeness, so there were others in the same parts of Arabia of a red or scarlet colour, as Diodorus Siculus says <sup>f303</sup>, of a span long, and their bite entirely incurable; or else they are so called from the effect of them, exciting heat and thirst in those they bit; so Jarchi says, they are so called because they burn with the poison of their teeth: these, very probably, were flying ones, as may seem from (<sup>2349</sup>Isaiah 14:29) and being sent of God, might come flying among the people and bite them; and such there were in the fenny and marshy parts of Arabia, of which many writers speak <sup>f304</sup>, as flying from those parts into Egypt, where they used to be met by a bird called Ibis, which killed them, and for that reason was had in great veneration by the Egyptians; and Herodotus <sup>f305</sup> says they are nowhere but in Arabia, and also <sup>f306</sup> that they of that kind of serpents, which are called Hydri, their wings are not feathered, but like the wings of bats, and this Bochart <sup>f307</sup> takes to be here meant:

*and they bit the people, and much people of Israel died*; for, as before related from Diodorus Siculus, their bites were altogether incurable; and Solinus <sup>f308</sup> says, of the same Arabian flying serpents, that their poison is so quick, that death follows before the pain can be felt; and of that kind of serpent, the Hydrus, it is said by Leo Africanus <sup>f309</sup>, that their poison is most pernicious, and that there is no other remedy against the bite of them, but to cut off that part of the member bitten, before the poison can penetrate into the other parts of the body: the Dipsas, another kind of serpent, which others are of opinion is designed, by biting, brings immediately a thirst on persons, intolerable and almost not extinguishable, and a deadly one, unless help is most speedily had; and if this was the case here it was very bad indeed, since there was no water: Solinus <sup>f310</sup> says, this kind of serpent kills with thirst; Aristotle <sup>f311</sup> speaks of a serpent some call the sacred one, and that whatsoever it bites putrefies immediately all around it: these serpents, and their bites, may be emblems of the old serpent the devil, and of his fiery darts, and of sin brought in by him, and

which he tempts unto, the effects of which are terrible and deadly, unless prevented by the grace of God.

**Ver. 7.** *Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, we have sinned,* etc.] Being bitten with serpents, and some having died, the rest were frightened, and came and made an humble acknowledgment of their sins to Moses:

*for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee;* murmuring at their being brought out of Egypt, and because they had no better provision in the wilderness; concluding they should die there for want, and never enter into the land of Canaan, of which evils they were now sensible, and confessed them:

*pray unto the Lord that he take away the serpents from us;* or “the serpent”<sup>f312</sup>, in the singular, which is put for the plural, as it often is; or the plague of the serpent, as the Targum of Jonathan, that it might cease, and they be no more distressed by them: they were sensible they came from God, and that none could remove them but him; and knowing that Moses was powerful in prayer, and had interest with God, they entreat him to be their intercessor, though they had spoken against him and used him ill:

*and Moses prayed for the people;* which proves him to be of a meek and forgiving spirit; who, though he had been so sadly reflected on, yet readily undertakes to pray to God for them.

**Ver. 8.** *And the Lord said unto Moses,* etc.] Out of the cloud; or, it may be, Moses went into the sanctuary, and there prayed, and the Lord answered him from between the cherubim:

*make them a fiery serpent;* not a real one, but the likeness of one, one that should very much resemble the fiery serpents Israel had been bitten with:

*and set it upon a pole;* a standard, banner, or ensign, as the word signifies; perhaps meaning one of the poles on which their ensigns were carried: the Targum of Jonathan renders it, on an high place, that so it might be seen by all in the camp:

*and it shall come to pass, that everyone that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live;* which is very wonderful, that by looking to the figure of a serpent, men should be cured of the bites of real ones, and which bites were deadly; the virtue of healing could not come from the figure, but from

God, who appointed it to be made, the Targum of Jonathan adds, that one bitten should live,

“if he directed his heart to the Word of the Lord,”

even to that divine Logos or Word of God, whose lifting up was figured hereby; (see ~~RB4~~ John 3:14).

**Ver. 9.** *And Moses made a serpent of brass*, etc.] Which was the most proper metal to make it of, that it might resemble the fiery serpents, whether of a golden or scarlet colour: and Diodorus Siculus <sup>f313</sup> speaks of some of the colour of brass, whose bite was immediately followed with death, and by which, if anyone was struck, he was seized with terrible pains, and a bloody sweat flowed all over him; and this was chosen also, because being burnished and bright, could be seen at a great distance, and with this metal Moses might be furnished from Punon, the next station to this, where they now were, Zalmonah, as appears from (~~RB2~~ Numbers 33:42) a place famous for brass mines, and which Jerom <sup>f314</sup> says, in his time, was a little village, from whence brass metal was dug, by such that were condemned to the mines:

*and put it upon a pole*; as he was directed:

*and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived*: which was very marvellous, and the more so, if what physicians say is true, as Kimchi relates <sup>f315</sup>, that if a man bitten by a serpent looks upon a piece of brass he dies immediately: the lifting up of this serpent on a pole for such a purpose was a figure of the lifting up of Christ, either upon the cross, or in the ministry of the word, that whosoever looks unto him by faith may have healing, (see Gill on ~~RB4~~ John 3:14”), where this type or figure is largely explained: the station the Israelites were now at, when this image was made, is called Zalmonah, which signifies an image, shadow, or resemblance, as the brazen serpent was; from Mount Hor, where they were last, to this place, according to Bunting <sup>f316</sup>, were twenty eight miles: this serpent did not remain in the place where it was set, but was taken with them, and continued until the days of Hezekiah, (~~RB4~~ 2 Kings 18:4).

**Ver. 10.** *And the children of Israel set forward*, etc.] From Zalmonah, and came to Punon, which, according to the above writer, was twenty miles from it; though here indeed, some think, the brazen serpent was set up, here being, as before observed, brass mines to furnish with that metal:

*and pitched in Oboth*; which was twenty four miles from Punon, as says the same writer: the word signifies bottles; perhaps here the Israelites got water and filled their bottles, or, as others think, they filled them with the wine of Moab, and called the name of the place from thence; it is perhaps the same with the Eboda of Ptolemy<sup>f317</sup>, which he places in Arabia Petraea; and of which Pliny<sup>f318</sup> also makes mention.

**Ver. 11.** *And they journeyed from Oboth*, etc.] How long they stayed there is not certain:

*and pitched at Ijeabarim*; which, according to Bunting<sup>f319</sup>, was sixteen miles from Oboth; Jarchi says it was the way that passengers pass by Mount Nebo to the land of Canaan, and which divides between the land of Moab and the land of the Amorites:

*in the wilderness which is before Moab*; called the wilderness of Moab, (<sup><0618></sup>Deuteronomy 2:8)

*towards the sunrise*; the east side of the land of Moab, (<sup><0718></sup>Judges 11:18).

**Ver. 12.** *From thence they removed, and pitched in the valley of Zered.*] Or the brook Zered, as in (<sup><0534></sup>Deuteronomy 13:14) that is near it: this seems to be the same station with Dibongad, (<sup><0635></sup>Numbers 33:45), and which, according to the above writer, was sixteen miles from Ijeabarim.

**Ver. 13.** *From thence they removed, and pitched on the other side of Arnon*, etc.] A river on the borders of Moab:

*which is in the wilderness that cometh out of the coasts of the Amorites*; according to Jarchi, they went round the land of Moab, all to the south and east, and came not into the border of Moab, as Jephthah said, (<sup><0718></sup>Judges 11:18) but before they came hither they had a station at Almondiblathaim, (<sup><0635></sup>Numbers 33:46,47)

*for Arnon is the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites*; a river which divided these two countries, and bounded them; and Moses is the more particular in this account, to show that the Israelites took nothing from the Moabites, but what the Amorites had taken from them, they being charged not to distress the Moabites and Ammonites, (<sup><0619></sup>Deuteronomy 2:9,19), see Jephthah's defence, (<sup><0715></sup>Judges 11:15-27).



**Ver. 14.** *Wherefore it is said in the book of the wars of the Lord*, etc.] A history of wars in former times, which the Lord had suffered to be in the world; and which, as Aben Ezra thinks, reached from the times of Abraham and so might begin with the battle of the kings in his time, and take in others in later times, and particularly those of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and his conquests of some parts of Moab; and to this book, which might be written by some one of those nations, Moses refers in proof of what he here says:

*what he did in the Red sea*; that is, what Sihon king of the Amorites did, or the Lord by him, “at Vaheb in Suphah”, as the words may be rendered; either against a king, or rather city, of Moab, whose name was Vaheb, in the borders of the land of Moab, or how he destroyed that city Vaheb with a storm or terrible assault <sup>f320</sup>:

*and in the brooks of Arnon*: some places situated on the streams of that river, which were taken by the Amorites from the Moabites, as the book quoted plainly testified.

**Ver. 15.** *And at the stream of the brooks that goeth down to the dwelling of Ar*, etc.] All that part of the country which lay upon the stream, as far as the city of Ar, the metropolis of Moab, called Ar of Moab, (<sup>2350f</sup>Isaiah 15:1),

*and lieth upon the border of Moab*; as that city did; so far goes the quotation out of the aforesaid book, as a proof of what was taken by the Amorites from the Moabites, and were not in their possession when Israel were upon their borders; and therefore, in taking them from the Amorites, did no wrong to Moab.

**Ver. 16.** *And from thence they went to Beer*, etc.] A place so called from a well which sprung up here, of which the following account is given:

*that is, the well whereof the Lord spake unto Moses*; promising him to give it to the children of Israel, without asking for it; which was a very singular favour, and for which they were thankful: saying to him,

*gather the people together, and I will give them water*; for as they were now gone from the river Arnon, and the streams and brooks of it, they might be in want of water, though they did not murmur as they had been used to do; and without their petition for it, the Lord promises to give it to

them; and that they might be witness of the miracle that would be wrought for them, they are ordered to be gathered together.

**Ver. 17.** *Then Israel sang this song*, etc.] Being affected with the free favour and good will of God towards them:

*spring up, O well*; for the springing up of which they prayed in faith, believing in the promise of God, that it would spring up; and so encouraged one another not only to believe it, but even to sing on account of it before it actually did:

*sing ye unto it*; or on account of it praise the Lord for it; or “answer to it”<sup>f321</sup>, it being their manner to sing their songs by responses, or alternately.

**Ver. 18.** *The princes digged the well*, etc.] The princes and heads of the several tribes:

*the nobles of the people digged it*; the seventy elders, according to the Targum of Jonathan:

*by the direction of the lawgiver*; either the Lord himself, the lawgiver of his people, who pointed out the spot, and directed the princes where to dig, that is, he did this by Moses; and who, as Jarchi thinks, is the lawgiver, and not amiss: the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem render the word by Scribes, in the plural number, and interpret them of Moses and Aaron: and this the princes and nobles “dug with their staves”; either their walking sticks, or their rods, the ensigns of their authority; with these they smote the ground, or stuck them in a soft and sandy place, upon which the waters bubbled up and flowed out. Dr. Shaw<sup>f322</sup> chooses to render the words, “with their united applause”, or “clapping of hands”, as the word  $\hat{\text{C}}$  in Chaldee signifies; or it may be expressed, as by Dr. Hunt, quoted by him, “by describing” or “marking out” the figure or fashion of the well “with staves”. Mr. Ainsworth thinks that this well signified Christ, the fountain of gardens, and well of living waters; and the waters of it the Spirit and his graces, which are a well of living water springing up unto everlasting life; the means of which are the labours of the governors of the church, the ministers of Christ,

by preaching the word, and opening the Scriptures; and such grace is worthy of a song, and to be had with joy out of the wells of salvation, (<sup>211B</sup>Isaiah 12:3):

*and from the wilderness they went to Mattanah*; from the wilderness near Arnon, which came out of the coasts of the Amorites, (<sup>40213</sup>Numbers 21:13) to a place which signifies a gift. The Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem render it,

“and from the wilderness it was given to them for a gift”

that is, the well; and so the people of God, that are called out of the wilderness of this world, and come up from it, are called to partake of the gifts and blessings of grace, which are freely given unto them of God.

**Ver. 19.** *And from Mattanah to Nahaliel, and from Nahaliel to Bamoth.*]

All the Targums interpret this, and the following verse, not of the journeying of the children of Israel, but of the motion of the well, that that, from the place from whence it was given them, descended with them into the valleys, and from thence to the high places, as these words signify: and indeed those places are not mentioned in the journeys of the children of Israel, (<sup>40811</sup>Numbers 33:1-56) and were not stations where they pitched, but places they passed through before they came to Abarim, and the wilderness of Kedemoth.

**Ver. 20.** *And from Bamoth, [in] the valley*, etc.] Or rather “to the valley”, as the Targum of Onkelos, since Bamoth signifies high places; though, according to the Jerusalem Talmud <sup>f323</sup>, Bamoth, Baal, which seems to be the same place, was in a plain:

*that is in the country of Moab*; the valley belonged to Moab, into which Israel came:

*to the top of Pisgah*; not that the valley reached to the top, nor did the children of Israel go to the top of it, only Moses, but rather to the bottom, which indeed is meant; for it intends the beginning of it, where Pisgah, which was an high mountain near the plains of Moab, began, and which was properly the foot of it:

*which looketh towards Jeshimon*; that is, Pisgah, as Jarchi rightly interprets it, which looked over a place called Jeshimon; and which signifies a wilderness, and is no other indeed than the wilderness of Kedemoth, (<sup>4826</sup>Deuteronomy 2:26) for from thence the following messengers were sent.

**Ver. 21.** *And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon king of the Amorites, etc.*] Who were one of the nations of the Canaanites, and a principal and powerful one, and who were devoted to destruction, and their land designed for the people of Israel; (see <sup><0156></sup>Genesis 15:16), at this time Sihon was their king, to whom Moses, in the name of Israel, sent a very peaceable message from the wilderness of Kedemoth, which lay near his country, (<sup><0125></sup>Deuteronomy 2:26):

*saying*; as follows.

**Ver. 22.** *Let me pass through thy land, etc.*] Through some part of it, which would have been a shorter way to the river Jordan, over which Israel was to pass into the land of Canaan; the terms proposed, or things to be observed in their passage, which they would bind themselves strictly to, are the same that were made to the king of Edom. (See Gill on “<sup><0117></sup>Numbers 20:17”).

**Ver. 23.** *And Sihon would not suffer Israel to pass through his border, etc.*] Because he could not trust them, and confide in the promises they made, and thought it not safe to let such a body of people into any part of his dominions, (<sup><0112></sup>Judges 11:20) and chiefly because his heart was hardened by the Lord, that he might be delivered into the hands of Israel, as was determined, (<sup><0120></sup>Deuteronomy 2:30):

*but Sihon gathered all his people together*; all that were able to bear arms out of his cities, and which made no doubt a very numerous and powerful army; but then these being defeated, as they were, it became more easy to the Israelites to take their cities, where there were none left but women and children:

*and went out against Israel into the wilderness*; the wilderness of Kedemoth; not content to reject a peaceable message, he went out in an hostile manner against Israel, even out of his own dominions; so that he was the aggressor and unprovoked, which made his ruin appear the more just, and the children of Israel to have a better claim to his country conquered by them:

*and he came to Jahaz*; a frontier town in the land of Moab, (see <sup><0104></sup>Isaiah 15:4 <sup><0434></sup>Jeremiah 48:34) and which, according to Bunting <sup>f324</sup>, was sixteen miles from Abarim:

*and fought against Israel*; at the above place, where they had a pitched battle.

**Ver. 24.** *And Israel smote him with the edge of the sword*, etc.] Slew him and his army, entirely routed them, and got a complete victory over them; God giving them up into their hands, who otherwise were a very strong, powerful, and warlike people; (see <sup><311B></sup>Amos 2:9)

*and possessed his land from Arnon unto Jabbok*; two rivers, the one to the south, the other to the north of his country; the one was the boundary of his country between him and the Moabites, the other the boundary of his country between him and the Ammonites, as it follows:

*even unto the children of Ammon; for the border of the children of Ammon was strong*; which is given as a reason why the Israelites proceeded no further in their conquest; there was another reason for that, which was the order of the Lord not to distress the Ammonites, nor meddle with them; though Jarchi makes this prohibition to be their strength, (<sup><R29></sup>Deuteronomy 2:19), but this is given as a reason why Sihon could not extend his conquests further, because it was so well fortified, either by nature or art, or both, by the river Jabbok, by mountains and frontier towns, and particularly by Rabbah, as the Targum of Jonathan suggests, which was their royal city in later times, and a very strong place; (see <sup><126></sup>2 Samuel 12:26).

**Ver. 25.** *And Israel took all these cities*, etc.] Which lay between the rivers Arnon and Jabbok; their particular names may be seen in (<sup><31B></sup>Numbers 32:3,34-38),

*and Israel dwelt in all the cities of the Amorites*; being given to the Reubenites and Gadites, who inhabited them, as their possession and inheritance, (<sup><31D></sup>Numbers 32:2,33 <sup><R12></sup>Deuteronomy 3:12,16):

*in Heshbon, and in all the villages thereof*; or “daughters thereof” <sup>f325</sup>. Heshbon was the metropolis or mother city, and all the towns and villages adjacent were as daughters to it; of which city more is said in the following verses, (See Gill on <sup><215B></sup>Isaiah 15:4”).

**Ver. 26.** *For Heshbon was the city of Sihon the king of the Amorites*, etc.] His royal city, where he kept his palace, where he had resided for some time, and perhaps some of his predecessors; and therefore being now in his

possession when taken by the Israelites, they had a good right and title to keep it, and dwell in it: and indeed this is here given as a reason of it,

*who had fought against the former king of Moab*; either the king that reigned before Balak, or some king of Moab, that reigned formerly, against whom one of the name of Sihon, which might be a common name to the kings of the Amorites, as Pharaoh to the Egyptians, had engaged in war:

*and taken all his land out of his hand, even unto Arnon*; and had been in the hands of the Amorites some years; and therefore the Moabites had no reason to object to the Israelites dwelling in it, and possessing it, which they had not taken from them, but from the Amorites in a lawful war. And for proof of this, reference is had to the bards and poets of those times, who were the persons that transmitted in verse the history of famous actions to posterity.

**Ver. 27.** *Wherefore they that speak in proverbs say*, etc.] The historical writers of those times, among the Amorites, who were usually poets, and wrote the history of the wars between the Moabites and Amorites in verse; as Homer among the Greeks wrote the wars of Troy; and the compositions of those ancient bards were short and compendious, and wrapped up in proverbial sayings, and enigmatical and figurative expressions, that they might be the better retained in memory, and therefore were called proverbialists. Jarchi says, they were Balaam and Beor that took up their parables, and said,

*come into Heshbon*; which words are the beginning of the song, and in which the Amorites are represented as inviting Sihon, and his nobles, to enter Heshbon, which he had taken, and make it his royal seat; or as encouraging one another to go into it and repair it, having suffered much at the taking of it, which seems to be confirmed by what follows:

*let the city of Sihon be built and prepared*; that is, let us set about rebuilding of the city, and let us fit it up for Sihon our king, and let it be called his city, and made the place of his residence, his palace, and where his court may be kept.

**Ver. 28.** *For there is a fire gone out of Heshbon*, etc.] Not before, but after Sihon had subdued it, as Jarchi observes; and is to be understood of his soldiers going out from thence, and making desolations in the adjacent parts, like a strong fire, and the fierce flames of it there is no resisting; and so the Jerusalem Targum,

“for a people mighty, and burning like fire, are gone out of Heshbon:”

(see Amos 1:4,7,12,14): a flame from the city of Sihon: which is the same thing in other words, the city of Sihon being Heshbon, and a flame the same with fire; warriors, as both the Targums of Oakehos and Jerusalem interpret it; this seems to be what those composers undertook in their poetical way to foretell would be the case in future times; concluding, from the conquests already made, that they would be extended much further, and that no opposition could hinder:

*it hath consumed Ar of Moab*; the metropolis of the country of Moab, that is, they were as sure of it, and endeavoured to make the people by these their compositions as confident of it, that this city would fall into the hands of their armies, and be destroyed, as if it was already done; otherwise it does not appear that it ever was taken out of the hands of the Moabites, until taken by the Assyrians or Chaldeans; of this city (see Gill on <sup><2151></sup>Isaiah 15:1”)

*and the lords of the high places of Arnon*; who had the government of the high, strong, and fortified places all along the river Arnon; these it is suggested would be conquered by the Amorites; all the three Targums interpret it of the priests and worshippers in the temples, and at the altars of the idols in Arnon; and it may be rendered, “the Baals of the high places of Arnon”, as if the gods of those places should fall into the victors’ hands; and which seems to have some confirmation from what follows; and it may be observed, that in these parts there were some places called Bamoth Baal, or the high places of Baal, (see <sup><0241></sup>Numbers 22:41), and Beth Baal Meon, which has its name from its being the temple and habitation of Baal, (<sup><0317></sup>Joshua 13:17).

**Ver. 29.** *Woe to thee, Moab! thou art undone*, etc.] The whole country ruined, or likely to be so:

*O people of Chemosh*; which was the name of their idol, who is called the abomination of the Moabites, (<sup><1110></sup>1 Kings 11:7 (see Gill on <sup><2487></sup>Jeremiah 48:7”)):

*he hath given his sons that escaped*; that is, the idol Chemosh had given his sons, the men of the country that worshipped him, who escaped the sword of the Amorites, these,

*and his daughters, into captivity unto Sihon king of the Amorites*; who took captive what he slew not, or would do so, Chemosh their god not being able to preserve them, but obliged to deliver them up: thus the composers of this song insult the god of the Moabites, as it was usual for conquerors so to do; (see <sup><2300></sup>Isaiah 10:10,11 36:18-20), though some think these are the words of the Israelites, making their observations upon the above song, which ends at verse twenty eight, and scoffing at the idol of the Moabites.

**Ver. 30.** *We have shot at them*, etc.] Either the Amorites at the Moabites, or else the Israelites at the Amorites; for, according to Aben Ezra, these are the words of Moses, though they, with (<sup><0212></sup>Numbers 21:29), seem rather to be a continuation of the song of the old Amorite bards, describing the ruin of the country of Moab by them; and this clause may be rendered with the next, “their light, or lamp, is perished from Heshbon” <sup>f326</sup>; or their yoke, as Jarchi, and so the Vulgate Latin version; that is, their kingdom, and the glory of it, as the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan interpret it, and so Jarchi:

*even unto Dibon*; which was another city in the land of Moab; (see <sup><2312></sup>Isaiah 15:2):

*and we have laid them waste even unto Nophah, which [reached] unto Medeba*; Nophah perhaps is the same with Nebo, mentioned along with Medeba, (<sup><2312></sup>Isaiah 15:2), however, they were both places in Moab, and are mentioned to show how far the desolation had or would spread; and the whole is observed to prove, that this part of the country of Moab, now possessed by the Israelites, was taken from them, not by them, but by the Amorites, a people Israel now conquered, and so had a right to what they found them in the possession of.

**Ver. 31.** *Thus Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites.*] Not the land of the Moabites; and by those means before mentioned; by conquering Sihon their king, they came into the possession of it, and took up their dwelling in it; this was the beginning of the conquest of the Canaanites, and an earnest and pledge of inheriting their land promised unto them; the Israelites that dwelt here were the tribes of Reuben and Gad.

**Ver. 32.** *And Moses sent to spy out Jaazer*, etc.] Or Jazer, as it is called in (<sup><2310></sup>Isaiah 16:9 <sup><2482></sup>Jeremiah 48:32), another city that belonged to the Amorites, and which they had taken from the Moabites; and which came



into the hands of the latter again, after the captivity of the ten tribes, as appears from the above places; according to Jerom <sup>f327</sup>, it was fifteen miles distant from Heshbon:

*and they took the villages thereof*; not the spies, as Jarchi, but the Israelites under Moses; who upon the return of the spies, and the report they made, marched towards it, and took it, and all the towns and villages round about it; for it seems to have been a principal city:

*and drove out the Amorites that were there*; that dwelt there, and were in possession of it; otherwise they would not have attacked it, had it, and its villages, been in the hands of the Moabites.

**Ver. 33.** *And they turned*, etc.] From Jaazer, after they had taken it, and came back a little way:

*and went up by the way of Bashan*; which was a nearer way to Canaan, a fine country abounding with oxen and sheep, having rich pastures, and very famous for its oaks; it had its name from the mountain of Bashan in it, and has been since called Batanea; it was at this time in the hands of the Amorites, and from them it was taken by Israel, as follows: who marched this way for that purpose, or at least were so directed by the providence of God for that end:

*and Og king of Bashan went out against them*; who was of the race of the giants, and he himself of a gigantic stature, and was a king of the Amorites, as well as Sihon, (<sup><f328></sup>Deuteronomy 3:8,11), he came out in an hostile manner against Israel, to stop them going any further:

*he, and all his people*: out of his many cities, a numerous army no doubt:

*to the battle at Edrei*; where it was fought between him and Israel. Jerom says <sup>f328</sup> it was in his time called Adara, a famous city of Arabia, twenty four or twenty five miles from Bozra, and six from Ashtaroth Karnaim, the ancient seat of the Rephaim, or giants from whom Og sprung, (<sup><f329></sup>Genesis 14:5), and was the seat of Og now, from whence he came to Edrei or Adara, to meet and fight Israel there; (see <sup><f330></sup>Deuteronomy 1:4).

**Ver. 34.** *And the Lord said unto Moses, fear him not*, etc.] Og being of a gigantic stature, and his forces numerous, might cause some fear in Moses, and in the people, and therefore the Lord encouraged them not to be afraid of him and his army:

*for I have delivered him into thy hand, and all his people, and his land;* that is, he had determined to do it, and now promised it, and it might be depended on and looked upon as if actually done:

*and thou shalt do to him as thou didst unto Sihon king of the Amorites, which dwelt at Heshbon;* slay him and his people, and take possession of his country.

**Ver. 35.** *So they smote him and his sons, and all his people,* etc.] They engaged in battle with him, slew him and his sons that came with him, and all his armies; and which consisted, as is probable, of all able to bear arms in all his cities; which the more easily came into the hands of the Israelites after this battle, in which such a carnage was made:

*until there was none left him alive;* so universal was the slaughter at the battle, and in the cities that fell into their hands; they utterly destroyed men, women, and children, (<sup><HRB></sup>Deuteronomy 3:3,6):

*and they possessed his land;* in which were sixty cities fenced with high walls, gates, and bars, besides a great many unwalled towns; these were possessed by the half tribe of Manasseh, (<sup><HRB></sup>Deuteronomy 3:4,5,13-15).