

CHAPTER 34

INTRODUCTION TO NUMBERS 34

In this chapter the bounds and borders of the land Canaan are described, according to the direction of the Lord to Moses, (^{<0640>}Numbers 34:1,2), the south border, (^{<0643>}Numbers 34:3-5), the western border, (^{<0645>}Numbers 34:6), the north border, (^{<0647>}Numbers 34:7-9), the east border, (^{<0640>}Numbers 34:10-12), which is ordered to be divided by lot to the nine tribes and a half, two tribes and a half having received their inheritance on the other side Jordan, (^{<0643>}Numbers 34:13-15), and the persons are nominated to divide the land, Eleazar and Joshua, with one prince out of every tribe, and who are mentioned by name, (^{<0646>}Numbers 34:16-29).

Ver. 1. *And the Lord spake unto Moses*, etc.] At the same time that he ordered him 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.

Ver. 2. *Command the children of Israel, and say unto them*, etc.] 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 ^{<0638>}Deuteronomy 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 neighbours, 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.

Ver. 3. *Then your south quarter*, etc.] 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, (^{<0810>}Numbers 20:1 33:36), and if this Kadesh was Kadeshbarnea, as Dr. Lightfoot seems to have proved ^{f484}, from whence 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, (^{<0437>}Numbers 13:17), and so Kadeshbarnea is hereafter mentioned, as being in the southern border: the Targum of Jonathan paraphrases it,

“from the wilderness of the palm trees of the mountain of iron;”

there is a smaller palm tree, which by Jewish writers is called Zin, of which there were great quantities on a mountain famous for iron mines, in this wilderness, from whence it is thought it had its name; hence we read ^{f485} of palm trees of the mountain of iron, as fit to make the bunch of branches of trees, called the “lulab”, carried in the hand on the feast of tabernacles:

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.

Ver. 4. *And your border*, etc.] That is, the south border, which is still describing:

shall turn from the south to the ascent of Akrabbim; or Maalehacrabbim, as in (^{<0853>}Joshua 15:3) so called from the multitude of serpents and scorpions in it, (see ^{<0885>}Deuteronomy 8:15), so Kimchi says ^{f486}, a place of

serpents and scorpions was this ascent: Dr. Shaw ^{f487} says Akrabbim may probably be the same with the mountains of Accaba, according to the present name, which hang over Eloth, where there is a “high steep road”, well known to the Mahometan pilgrims for its ruggedness: and he thinks ^{f488} 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 ^{f489} 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: perhaps Zinnah is rather the name of a city; the Septuagint call it Ennac: the Vulgate Latin, Senna: Jerom ^{f490} makes mention of a place called Senna, seven miles from Jericho:

and the going forth thereof shall be from the south to Kadeshbarnea; from whence the spies were sent southward to search the land, (^{<04E37>}Numbers 13:17 32:8)

and shall go on to Hazaraddar; called Adar, (^{<06E3B>}Joshua 15:3) and where it seems to be divided into two places, Hezron and Adar, 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.

Ver. 5. *And the border shall fetch a compass*, etc.] 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”, Casiotis, 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.

Ver. 6. *And as for the western border*, etc.] 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.

Ver. 7. *And this shall be your northern border*, etc.] 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, (^{<6615>}Joshua 13:5) as this Mount Hor is in the following verse; or some part of Mount Lebanon might be so called, which was the northern border of the land: the Targum of Jonathan calls it Umanus; and the Jerusalem Targum, Manus or Taurus Umanus, the Mountain Umanus, which divided Syria and Cilicia; it is joined with Lebanon by Josephus ^{f491}, and with that and Carmel by Aelianus ^{f492}.

Ver. 8. *From Mount Hor ye shall point out your border unto the entrance of Hamath*, etc.] Antiochia, as Jarchi; or rather Epiphania, as Jerom ^{f493}; the former being described by Hemath the great, (^{<3112>}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 (^{<2475>}Ezekiel 47:15).

Ver. 9. *And the border shall go on to Ziphron*, etc.] Which in the Jerusalem Targum is called Zapherin; and Jerom ^{f494} 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 Hazarenan; which was the utmost of the northern border, and so it is in (^{<2477>}Ezekiel 47:17) and there called the border of Damascus: Reland ^{f495} takes it to be the same with Enhazor, a city in the tribe of Naphtali, (^{<6637>}Joshua 19:37), the words only inverted:

this shall be your northern border: from the Mediterranean sea to Hazarenan in Naphtali.

Ver. 10. *And ye shall point out your east border from Hazarenan to Shepham.*] From the place where the northern border ended, which Jerom says ^{f496} the Hebrews call Apamia, as both the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem do here. Shepham was a city between Hazarenan and Riblah in the tribe of Naphtali, where Adrichomius ^{f497} places it.

Ver. 11. *And the coast shall go down from Shepham to Riblah,* etc.] Said to be in the land of Hemath, (²⁶³⁹Jeremiah 52:9), which, according to Jerom ^{f498}, 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 ^{f499} 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 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 (²⁶⁷⁸Ezekiel 47:18), called the east sea.

Ver. 12. *And the border shall go down to Jordan,* etc.] 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, through the great quantity of bitumen and nitre in it; hence it was called Asphaltites; thus as the description of the borders of the land began with the salt sea, (²⁶⁴⁸Numbers 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, Rekangea (or Kadeshbarnea) on the south, Taurus Urnanus (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.

Ver. 13. *And Moses commanded the children of Israel, saying,* etc.] Strictly enjoining them to observe what he was about to say to them:

this is the land which ye shall inherit by lot; as above described and bounded:

which the Lord commanded to give unto the nine tribes, and to the half tribe; to the tribes of Judah, Simeon, Benjamin, Dan, Ephraim, Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, and Naphtali, and the half tribe of Manasseh; though this command is not before expressed, it is very probable it was delivered to Moses at the same time he had the mind of God concerning the settlement of the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the other half tribe of Manasseh, on the other side Jordan; (see ^{<0423>}Numbers 32:31).

Ver. 14. *For the tribe of the children of Reuben, according to the house of their fathers,* etc.] 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, (^{<0421>}Numbers 32:1-42).

Ver. 15. *The two tribes and the half tribe,* etc.] 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 sun rising; 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.

Ver. 16. *And the Lord spake unto Moses,* etc.] 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.

Ver. 17. *These are the names of the men which shall divide the land unto you,* etc.] Or “inherit the land for you” ^{f500}; that is, as Jarchi interprets it, they were to take possession of it in their name and stead, 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.

Ver. 18. *And ye shall take one prince out of every tribe*, etc.] 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 had 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 honour, 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.

Ver. 19-28. *And the names of the men are these*, etc.] 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 hence, to the end of (⁻⁰⁴⁰⁰Numbers 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, (⁻⁰⁴⁰⁰Numbers 1:1) or at the offerings for the dedication of the altar, (⁻⁰⁴⁰⁰Numbers 7:1-89) or at the taking the sum of them, (⁻⁰⁴⁰⁰Numbers 26:1-65) 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.

Ver. 29. *These are they whom the Lord commanded*, etc.] 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 ~~695~~ Joshua 19:51).