

VI. FINAL INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING
THE SETTLEMENT OF CANAAN (33:50-36:13)

A. ON CLEARING THE LAND (33:50-56)

TEXT

Chapter 33:50. And the Lord spake unto Moses in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho, saying, 51. Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye are passed over Jordan into the land of Canaan; 52. Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places: 53. And ye shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land, and dwell therein: for I have given you the land to possess it. 54. And ye shall divide the land by lot for an inheritance among your families; and to the more ye shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer ye shall give the less inheritance: every man's inheritance shall be in the place where his lot falleth: according to the tribes of your fathers ye shall inherit. 55. But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell. 56. Moreover it shall come to pass, that I shall do unto you, as I thought to do unto them.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 33:50. Then the Lord spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab near the Jordan opposite Jericho, saying, 51. "Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, When you cross over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, 52. then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their carved stones, and destroy all their molten images, and devastate all their high places. 53. You shall take possession of the land and live in it, for I have given the land unto you to possess it. 54. And you shall inherit the land by lot according to your families; to the larger you shall give the greater inheritance; and to the smaller you shall give the smaller

inheritance. Wherever the lot falls to anyone, it shall be his. You shall inherit according to the families of your fathers. 55. But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall come about that those whom you allow to remain will become as thorns in your eyes and as pins in your sides, and they shall trouble you in the land in which you live. 56. And it shall happen that as I plan to do to them, I shall do to you.

COMMENTARY

Here quite briefly, but in details which are certainly adequate, the children of Israel are told precisely what to do when they enter into the land of Canaan: first, they are to drive out all the inhabitants; second, every evidence of their pagan worship, idols, symbols, stones, and sites of desecration, are to be totally destroyed; third, they are to possess and settle in the entire land outlined unto them; and, finally, they are to determine by lot the area to which each tribe is to be assigned, with the division generally awarding larger territories to larger tribes, and smaller territories to smaller tribes. As a corollary, God informs His people of the dire consequences of anything less than total obedience: any of the residents who are left in the land will become a source of irritation and spiritual disruption; and, the Lord will bring upon Israel the same fate as should have come upon the Canaanites.

Two matters are established in God's proclamation that the people of Canaan are to be driven from the land in order that Israel might occupy it. God is at the same time pronouncing judgment upon a polytheistic, decadent and immoral people; and, He is making provision to establish a nation whose laws and conduct He may approve. All of this is an essential link in the chain of promise-fulfillment made to Abraham, Issac and Jacob, and his words to Moses are tantamount to saying, "This is your land, just as I have promised. It shall be the land of your people as long as they are worthy of it. But should they become like the other nations, in idolatry and in conduct, they shall forfeit any claims whatsoever, and shall suffer the same end as

those who held it before their coming.”

Itemized as those factors which are especially offensive to the Lord are the “pictures”, or, more accurately, their carved stone images; the “molten images”, or images which have been cast or engraved of metal; and the “high places” or sites upon which idolatrous rites occurred, often in elevated areas. They were all to be totally demolished. No vestige of these offensive elements were to be left, lest they pollute the thoughts and corrupt the practices of Israel. It would be impossible to misunderstand the meaning of these instructions. They would either be fully carried out, or the very pledge of long standing with the patriarchs was no longer valid. Holding the land was directly associated with religious purity—a factor which should never be forgotten. Failure to apprehend this principle will result in a failure to understand the dozens of associated prophecies which God would later speak through His appointed messengers. It is unfortunate that many otherwise devout and learned students of the Word of God have not given this premise to all their exegesis of the prophetic treatment of Israel, both past, present and future.

Only the unbeliever or the self-appointed expert can question the right of the Creator to declare a portion of His creation for the use of those whom He has chosen. Israel will become stewards of Canaan simply because the previous occupants were poor landlords, worshiping the created rather than the Creator. While Israel retains a faithful stewardship, the land will belong to successive generations.

As in 26:53-56, division of the land by lot is commanded now, along with the provision that the sizes of the tribes are to be factors in allocation of the portions. We may well remember that the size of the allotment alone in some instances is an indecisive factor. Although the territory given Simeon was great, much of it was wasteland (the Negev area); and although the portion awarded Dan by lot was relatively small, it was a most productive and desirable location for shepherding or agriculture. It is not possible, however, to establish a rigid formula relating these factors unexceptionally to the division of

the land.

During his final address to the nation, Joshua alluded to the curse God promised upon Israel if she were disobedient to his laws and plans (Josh.23:13), and the figure is implicit in Judges 2:3, although it is not completely expressed. Little imagination is required to feel the impact of the thought, since anyone who has had sharp grit in an eye, or a thorn in his flesh can appreciate its meaning; and the experiences are virtually universal. Just so, God's blessings become curses to an ungrateful and disobedient people regardless of time or place.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

614. Outline the commandments and conditions laid out by the Lord to Israel regarding their duties in occupying the land of Canaan.
615. How can we justify God's command to exterminate or drive out the people who were already living in the land?
616. What specific items were to be demolished, and why?
617. By what basic principle would their happiness or punishment in the land be determined?
618. Show how God was honoring His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob at this time.
619. Can we reconcile the two instructions about dividing the land by lot and awarding the larger portions to the larger tribes?
620. What other considerations come to mind when we attempt this reconciliation?
621. Under what later circumstances were the figures of punishment against Israel used?

B. BORDERS OF CANAAN ESTABLISHED (34:1-15)

TEXT

Chapter 34:1. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 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:) 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: 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: 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. 6. And as for the western border, ye shall have even the great sea for a border: this shall be your west border. 7. And this shall be your north border: from the great sea ye shall point out for you mount Hor: 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:

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. 10. And ye shall point out your east border from Hazar-enan to Shepham: 11. And the coast shall go down from Shapham 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: 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. 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: 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 of the tribe of Manasseh have received their inheritance: 15. The two tribes and the half tribe have received their inheritance on this side Jordan near Jericho eastward, toward the sunrising.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 34:1. Then the Lord spoke to Moses saying, 2.

“Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, ‘When you enter the land of Canaan, this is the land which shall fall to you as an inheritance: the land of Canaan and its borders. 3. The southern section shall be from the wilderness of Zin alongside the border of Edom, and your south border shall be from the tip of the Dead Sea eastward. 4. There your border shall turn from the south to the slopes of Akrabbim and continue to Zin; its limits shall be from the south to Kadesh-barnea, and shall reach Hazaraddar, and continue on to Azmon. 5. And the border shall turn from Azmon to the wady of Egypt, and its boundary shall be at the Sea. 6. As for the western border, you shall have the Great Sea as its border: this shall be your west border. 7. And this shall be your north border: you shall draw the boundary line from the Great Sea to Mount Hor: 8. from Mount Hor you shall mark out your border to the entrance of Hamath, and the limit of the border shall be at Zedad.

9. Then the border shall proceed to Ziphron, and its limit shall be at Hazer-enan. This shall be your north border. 10. “For your eastern border, you shall also draw a line from Hazer-enan to Shepham, 11. and the border shall go down from Shepham to Riblah on the east side of Ain; and the border shall go down and reach the eastward projection of the Sea of Chinnereth. 12. And the border shall go down to the Jordan, and its limit shall be at the Salt Sea: this shall be your land with its surrounding borders.’ ” 13. So Moses commanded the children of Israel, saying, “This is the land which you shall inherit by lot, which the Lord commanded to give to the nine and one-half tribes; 14. for the tribe of the children of Reuben, according to the house of their fathers, and the tribe of Gad, according to the house of their fathers, have received their inheritance; and the half-tribe of Manasseh have received their inheritance. 15. The two and one-half tribes have received their inheritance on this side of the Jordan, east of Jericho, toward the sunrise.

COMMENTARY

Since two and one-half tribes have already received their

inheritances east of the Jordan, they are not involved in the description of the borders of Canaan. This term is properly applied only to that land west of the Jordan. The remaining nine and one-half tribes are to be bounded within the area set forth in the description before us.

The southern boundary was established from the southern tip of the Dead Sea in a southwesterly direction to Kadesh, generally following the western border of Edom. From Kadesh, it turned northwest at nearly a right angle toward the "river of Egypt," the Wady el-Arish, which was to be commonly cited as a boundary between Egypt and Canaan later (see II Chron. 7:8; Isaiah 27:12). The line met the Mediterranean coast at a point almost directly west of the spot from which it left the Dead Sea.

On the west, the Israelites were to view the Great Sea, or the Mediterranean, as their boundary. The Hebrew word for "west" (*yam*) is the same as that for "sea", and this secondary use is no doubt traceable to the identity of the two in bounding Canaan. Strangely, the Israelites never held the coastal plains along the Mediterranean. The southern portion, the Philistine Plain, was held by the Philistines; the central plains area, the Plain of Sharon, was in the hands of the Canaanites; the northern portion, the Phoenician Plain, was never taken from those people. Even at the peak of the Kingdom during the reigns of David and Solomon, the coastal territories were not fully occupied by Israel. Nevertheless both the word and the concept were perpetuated, even in the language of the people.

Along the northern border, we are not told from what point the line was to leave the Sea. The Mount Hor here mentioned is not to be confused with the peak of the same name where Aaron died, since the two are not less than 120 miles apart. Since the location of each is subject to question, however, an exact figure cannot be given. The one in 33:7 must have been in Lebanon, and it was probably recognizable from the Sea at the point of the border's origin. The "entrance of Hammath" cannot be precisely located today. Perhaps it is that point at which the Orontes River leaves its upper valley, in the Lebanon

mountains, and enters the plains in the vicinity of Hamath. If this is true, the northern boundary of the land was far beyond the ordinary holdings, lying more than one hundred miles north and east of the Sea of Galilee. Identification of the other points mentioned is at best tenuous, with the "fountain of the court", or Hazar-enan offering the most likely identifiable spot as the area of Banias where the source of the Jordan rises.

On the east, the boundary is vague from Hazar-enan to the sea of Chinnereth (Galilee). Those points mentioned, Shepham, and Riblah are unknown. Ain may be the traditional place at which the various sources of the Jordan converge, south of Mount Hermon. The Jordan itself is then named as the final unit of the boundary, along with the Salt Sea.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

622. Why are the boundaries not given for the two and one-half tribes which settled east of the Jordan?
623. Make a list of the points given in the itemized boundaries which can be identified today.
624. Why are so many of the points unidentifiable?
625. Why did the Israelites never occupy the coastal plains along the Great Sea?
626. Draw a map of the land included in these boundaries, showing the locations of the known places named, and, where possible, the suggested locations of those places not positively identifiable today.

C. ALLOTMENTS ASSIGNED TO TRIBAL LEADERS

vv. 16-29

TEXT

Chapter 34:16. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 17. These are the names of the men which shall divide the land unto you: Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun. 18. And ye shall take one prince of every tribe, to divide the land by inheritance. 19. And the names of the men are these: of the

tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh. 20. And of the tribe of the children of Simeon, Shemuel the son of Ammihud. 21. Of the tribe of Benjamin, Elidad the son of Chislon. 22. And the prince of the tribe of the children of Dan, Bukki the son of Jogli. 23. The prince of the children of Joseph, for the tribe of the children of Manasseh, Hanniel the son of Ephod. 24. And the prince of the tribe of the children of Ephraim, Kemuel the son of Shiphtan. 25. And the princes of the tribe of the children of Zebulun, Elizaphan the son of Parnach. 26. And the prince of the tribe of the children of Issachar, Paltiel the son of Azzan. 27. And the prince of the tribe of the children of Asher, Ahihud the son of Shelomi. 28. And the prince of the tribe of the children of Naphtali, Pedahel the son of Ammihud. 29. These are they whom the Lord commanded to divide the inheritance unto the children of Israel in the land of Canaan.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 34:16. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 17. These are the names of the men who shall assign the land to you by lot as an inheritance: Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun. 18. And you shall take one leader from each tribe to assign the land for inheritance. 19. And these are the names of the men: of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh. 20. And from the tribe of the children of Simeon, Samuel the son of Ammihud. 21. From the tribe of Benjamin, Elidad the son of Chislon. 22. And from the tribe of the children of Dan a leader, Bukki the son of Jogli. 23. From the children of Joseph: of the tribe of the children of Manasseh a leader, Hanniel the son of Ephod. 24. And from the tribe of the children of Ephraim a leader, Kemuel the son of Shiphtan. 25. And from the tribe of the children of Zebulun a leader, Elizaphan the son of Parnach. 26. And from the tribe of the children of Issachar a leader, Paltiel the son of Azzan. 27. And from the tribe of the children of Asher a leader, Ahihud the son of Shelomi. 28. And from the tribe of the children of Naphtali a leader, Pedahel the son of Ammihud. 29. These are the ones whom the Lord commanded to assign the inheritance to the children of Israel in the land of Canaan.

COMMENTARY

Overseeing the process of casting lots for the inheritances are the two men most responsible for the two essential of primary responsibility among the people—religious and civil. Whereas we have been accustomed to hearing of Aaron and Moses in these capacities, the mantles have fallen upon their successors, Eleazar and Joshua. To assist them, one man of significance is to be chosen from each of the tribes sharing in the lot. Precise borders may have been left as negotiable points among these men, who must have been men of greatest integrity and trustworthiness. They are named in the order in which their lots progress from south to north generally in the new land. Of these men we know nothing more.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

627. Why are Eleazar and Joshua chosen to guide the distribution of the land by lot?
628. What characteristics would you expect to have found in the men selected to represent each tribe in this process?

D. CITIES RESERVED FOR THE LEVITES (35:1-8)

TEXT

Chapter 35:1. And the Lord spake unto Moses in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho, saying, 2. Command the children of Israel, that they give unto the Levites, of the inheritance of their possession, cities to dwell in; and ye shall give also unto the Levites suburbs for the cities round about them. 3. And the cities shall they have to dwell in; and the suburbs of them shall be for their cattle, and for their goods, and for all their beasts. 4. And the suburbs of the cities, which ye shall give unto the Levites, shall reach from the wall of the city and outward a thousand cubits round about. 5. And ye shall measure from without the city on the east side, two thousand cubits, and on the south side two thousand cubits, and on the west side two thousand cubits, and on the north side two thousand cubits; and the city shall be in the midst: this

shall be to them the suburbs of the cities. 6. And among the cities which ye shall give unto the Levites there shall be six cities for refuge, which ye shall appoint for the manslayer, that he may flee thither: and to them ye shall add forty and two cities. 7. So all the cities which ye shall give to the Levites shall be forty and eight cities: them shall ye give with their suburbs. 8. And the cities which ye shall give shall be of the possession of the children of Israel: from them that have few ye shall give few: every one shall give of his cities unto the Levites according to his inheritance which he inheriteth.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 35:1. And the Lord spake to Moses in the plains of Moab near the Jordan opposite Jericho, saying, 2. "Command that the children of Israel give to the Levites, from the inheritance of their possession, cities in which to dwell; and you shall also give the Levites open ground around the cities. 3. And the cities shall be theirs to live in; and the open ground shall be for their livestock, and for their herds and all their animals. 4. And the open ground of the cities which you shall give to the Levites shall extend outward from the city wall one thousand cubits all around. 5. You shall also measure from outside the city on the east two thousand cubits, and on the south side two thousand cubits, and on the west two thousand cubits, and on the north two thousand cubits, with the city in the center: this shall be the open ground of the cities. 6. And the cities you shall give the Levites shall be six cities of refuge, which you shall give for the man-killer to flee unto; in addition to them, you shall give forty-two other cities. 7. All the cities which you shall give to the Levites shall be forty-eight cities, along with their open ground. 8. Regarding the cities which you shall give from the possessions of the children of Israel, you shall take more from the larger, and less from the smaller; but each one shall give some of his cities to the Levites in proportion to his inheritance which he inherits.

COMMENTARY

No single land inheritance was awarded to the Levites, in

the fashion of the areas allocated to the other tribes. Instead, forty-eight cities together with their stipulated "suburbs" were to be designated Levitical cities. This does not mean that only Levites occupied the cities, but that they were to hold as many residences within the towns as necessary; and their pasturage requirements were to be met through use of the land immediately surrounding the city walls. The arrangement accomplishes several good ends. The Levites are removed from total dependence upon the tithes the offerings of the people; in the event of the failure of the other tribes to fulfill their lawful obligations unto the priests, the priests will not be without any sources of livelihood, since they will be able to maintain their own herds and flocks. The plan disperses the priests among the people, where they will be convenient and available for their services to the congregation. They are not to be an isolated, detached and uninvolved group; they will be able to participate in the day-by-day events of their communities, and become one with those they serve. They will have regular duties themselves to perform in caring for their animals—a responsibility not without its practical values.

The "suburbs" awarded the Levites were open grounds for tilling and for pasturing their animals. The measure of the first one thousand cubits (about 1500 feet), may be set up for cultivation and the second thousand cubits for grazing the animals. This is certainly the most simple method of explaining the manner in which the suburbs were established. *KD*, however, accepts the proposal by Michaelis that the city is to be viewed as a square with pasturage stretching one thousand cubits outward in every direction, so that the length of the extreme border of the environs would be two thousand cubits longer than the dimension of its parallel side. The total area in this latter arrangement would have been considerably smaller; but we cannot be certain which method was actually used.

Six of the Levitical cities were to be appointed as cities of refuge, to which any manslayer should flee until proper disposition might be made of his homicide. The general regulations governing the flight of the manslayer, his confine-

ment to the city of refuge until his trial, and the course to be followed in the event of his being found innocent or guilty are now to be given, enlarging upon the previous suggestion found in Exodus 21:13ff. With the matter of judgment of the manslayer in the hands of the congregation, (v. 24), any of the cities of Israel might have been selected theoretically; but it is especially appropriate that the cities should be those in which there was a concentration of Levites. Such a fact should augur well toward a careful administration of justice under the Law.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

629. How many cities were awarded the Levites?
630. How were these cities distributed among the tribes?
631. Who lived in the cities?
632. Describe the manner in which the extent of the "suburbs" may have been laid out.
633. To what uses did the Levites put the "suburbs"?
634. List the advantages of distributing the Levites in this manner.
635. What was the purpose of the "cities of refuge"?
636. Into whose hands was the judgment of the manslayer delivered?
637. What favorable results might we have expected from having the Levites living in the cities of refuge?

E. REGULATIONS REGARDING THE CITIES OF REFUGE vv. 9-15

TEXT

Chapter 35:9. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 10. Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come over Jordan into the land of Canaan; 11. Then ye shall appoint you cities to be cities of refuge for you; that the slayer may flee thither, which killeth any person at unawares. 12. And they shall be unto you cities for refuge from the avenger; that the manslayer die not, until he stand before the congregation in

judgment. 13. And of these cities which ye shall give, six cities shall ye have for refuge. 14. Ye shall give three cities on this side Jordan, and three cities shall ye give in the land of Canaan, which shall be cities of refuge. 15. These six cities shall be a refuge, both for the children of Israel, and for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them: that every one that killeth any person unawares may flee thither.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 35:9. And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, 10. "Speak unto the children of Israel and tell them, 'When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, 11. you shall select for yourselves cities to be your cities of refuge, in order that the man-killer who has killed any person unintentionally may flee unto them.' 12. And the cities shall be as a refuge unto you from the avenger, so that the man-killer may not die until he appears before the congregation in judgment. 13. And the cities which you are to give shall be your six cities of refuge. 14. You shall give three cities across the Jordan and three cities in the land of Canaan: they are to be cities of refuge. 15. These six cities shall be for refuge for the children of Israel, and for the alien and for the traveler among them, so that anyone who kills a person unintentionally may flee unto them."

COMMENTARY

The first thing to be noticed in the appointment of the six cities of refuge is that they were not intended to protect that individual who had committed deliberate, willful murder. Only where some reasonable doubt existed in reference to the circumstances might that man expect to be permitted sanctuary; otherwise, the sentence of the law was clear and emphatic: he must be stoned to death.

The perspective of the account is clearly that of Israel's being yet on the east side of the Jordan: the cities were not even to be selected until they lived in Canaan. At that time, three cities on each side of the river should be appointed. In the event of any homicide in which the killer believed himself not

to have been guilty of murder, he was obliged to scurry rapidly to the nearest city of refuge. Hence, the location of the six cities was to be a matter of careful concern. As the manslayer fled to the sanctuary, the "avenger of blood", or the male next of kin to the deceased was obliged to make pursuit and, if he overtook the manslayer, he might put him to death without guilt of blood upon his hands.

The import of this law has been much discussed. The emerging value of the law is its emphasis upon the value of human life—even a careless act which results in the death of another is no light matter, and preventable homicide imposes a punishment upon that one who is careless, negligent or unconcerned about another human being. The law was to be enforced not upon the Israelites only, but upon any strangers, and even sojourners in their land. By this method all people who came within the scope of the law's force came under the instruction of those who saw its value and the rationale for the law itself. The basic concept was a gigantic stride forward from any law to be found in pagan contemporary society. The inherent value of each individual's life, and the awesome nature of divine justice are well established.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

638. What were the cities of refuge specifically *not* designed to do?
639. Why should any distinction be made among the manners by which homicide was committed?
640. Describe the conduct expected of the manslayer and of the avenger of blood?
641. Who was the avenger of blood?
642. Why would the avenger of blood be permitted to slay the manslayer outside the city of refuge, or before he reached the city?
643. Show what primary principles were established by this law.

644. For what reasons were strangers and sojourners included under the law?
645. How does this law compare with attitudes and laws of other countries relative to treatment of killers?

F. LAWS OF HOMICIDE vv. 16-34

TEXT

Chapter 35:16. And if he smite him with an instrument of iron, so that he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. 17. And if he smite him with throwing a stone, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. 18. Or if he smite him with a hand weapon of wood, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. 19. The revenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer: when he meeteth him, he shall slay him. 20. But if he thrust him of hatred, or hurl at him by laying of wait, then he die; 21. Or in enmity smite him with his hand, that he die: he that smote him shall surely be put to death; for he is a murderer: the revenger of blood shall slay the murderer, when he meeteth him. 22. But if he thrust him suddenly without enmity, or have cast upon him any thing without laying of wait, 23. Or with any stone, wherewith a man may die, seeing him not, and cast it upon him, that he die, and was not his enemy, neither sought his harm: 24. Then the congregation shall judge between the slayer and the revenger of blood according to these judgments: 25. And the congregation shall deliver the slayer out of the hand of the revenger of blood, and the congregation shall restore him to the city of his refuge, whither he was fled: and he shall abide in it unto the death of the high priest, which was anointed with the holy oil. 26. But if the slayer shall at any time come without the border of the city of his refuge, whither he was fled; 27. And the revenger of blood find him without the borders of the city of his refuge, and the revenger of blood kill the slayer; he shall not be guilty of blood: 28. Because he should have remained in the city of his refuge until the death of the high

priest: but after the death of the high priest the slayer shall return into the land of his possession. 29. So these things shall be for a statute of judgment unto you throughout your generations in all your dwellings. 30. Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die. 31. Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall surely be put to death. 32. And ye shall take no satisfaction for him that is fled to the city of his refuge, that he should come again to dwell in the land, until the death of the priest. 33. So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it. 34. Defile not therefore the land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I dwell: for I the Lord dwell among the children of Israel.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 35:16. But if he struck him down with an iron instrument, so that he died, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. 17. And if he struck him down with a stone in his hand, so that he might have died, and if he did die, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. 18. Or if he struck him down with a wooden instrument in his hand, so that he might have died, and he did die, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. 19. The avenger of blood himself shall put the murderer to death; he shall be put to death when he meets him. 20. Or if he shoved him in hatred, or threw something at him from ambush so that he died, 21. or if in he struck him down with his hand maliciously so that he died, the one who struck him down shall surely be put to death: he is a murderer; the blood avenger shall put the murderer to death when he meets him. 22. But if he shoved him suddenly and without malice, or threw something at him, not being in ambush, 23. or hit him with a stone object capable of killing him, but without seeing him, and was not hostile toward him, and had not sought to harm him, 24. then

the congregation shall judge between the killer and the blood avenger according to these regulations. 25. And the congregation shall deliver the man-killer from the hand of the avenger of blood, and the congregation shall restore him to the city of refuge to which he had fled; and he shall live in it until the death of the high priest who was anointed with the holy oil. 26. But if the man-killer goes at any time outside the border of the city of his refuge to which he has fled; 27. and if the avenger of blood finds him outside the border of the city of his refuge, the blood avenger may kill the man-killer and not be guilty of his blood: 28. because he should have remained inside his city of refuge until the death of the high priest. However, after the death of the high priest the man-killer shall return to the land of his possession. 29. So these things shall be for a regulatory law to you throughout your generations in all your dwellings. 30. If anyone kills another person, the murderer shall be put to death on the testimony of witnesses; but the testimony of one witness alone shall not cause him to be put to death. 31. Furthermore, you shall take no ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death; he shall surely be put to death. 32. And you shall not take a ransom for one who has fled to his city of refuge to permit him to return to live in his land before the death of the high priest. 33. In this way you shall not pollute the land where you are: for blood pollutes the land, and no land can be cleansed of the blood which has been shed upon it excepting by the blood of the one who shed it. 34. And you shall not defile the land which you shall inhabit, in which I dwell: for I am the Lord, dwelling among the Children of Israel.

COMMENTARY

As in other areas of the Law, the provisions defining murder and distinguishing it from accidental homicide; the different tests for determining guilt and innocence; the various punishments determined by the seriousness of the offense—all of these are vast improvements over any other ancient statutes. In essence, there are three differences, as shown in ICC; (1) the Law “insists that life is to be forfeited only in case of wilful

murder," in contrast to primitive measures which did not make such a distinction; (2) the Law "tacitly insists that the life of the actual murderer only can become forfeit"; in primitive cultures the family often might be compelled to share the punishment of the offense of one of its members; and, (3) the Law "forbids the acceptance of a money equivalent for a forfeited life," (p. 471). Additionally, clear points are set forth upon which to form a fair judgment in reference to guilt because of motive. The motivation, if any, behind any homicide was subjected to three areas of inquiry: first, the weapon itself: was it lethal in nature, or not? Implements of iron, large stones, or weapons of wood which were large enough to administer a death blow must first be established as the cause of death, if murder were suspected. Then, had there been enmity between the two? Witnesses would be adduced to confirm or deny this possibility. Feelings strong enough to lead to deliberate murder would be difficult to conceal. Those knowing of such feelings would become prime sources of testimony if murder were suspected. The third factor adduced would be the circumstances of the death: had the murderer plotted the assault? "Laying in wait" need not necessarily mean an ambush, but rather seeking an opportune time or place for the foul deed. Thrusting in hatred suggests an explosion of temper, but it is to be inferred that the circumstances are more than a mere accident; in such a circumstance, the judgment was in the hands of the congregation. Motive, weapon, and occasion, then, were the prime factors to be reviewed in any charge of murder.

The duty of the "revenger of blood" was clear: to pursue the manslayer and, if he be overtaken before reaching a city of refuge, to slay him; no guilt of blood would then be upon his hands. Additionally, he was to make certain that the slayer did not leave the city of refuge at all before he had been pronounced guilty or innocent of murder. Obviously, if he were guilty of murder, the punishment was stoning to death by the congregation. If he were innocent of murder, he was yet required to remain in the city of refuge until the death of the current high priest. To go outside the city was to invite death at

the hands of the "revenger of blood". Even under circumstances of accidental homicide, the guilty man, and the entire nation, were to learn that taking a life was no trivial matter. Courtesy, caution, and preventive measure may be learned from the law: man should do all he possibly can to avoid placing himself in a situation where, even by the remotest accident, he might endanger the life of another.

Because a great responsibility lay with the "congregation", we should recognize the concept behind the word. Ordinarily, *eydab* signified the entire nation assembled together. We cannot believe the trial of a murderer would have been the occasion for such an assembly, especially after they were scattered about in the new land; and the law is tailored to that situation. The force of the word may suggest that any individual of the congregation, or of the assembled ones who answered the call to assemble, might bear testimony if he had reason to do so, or that any one might participate in the decision, once having heard the testimony of all witnesses. If the accused were found innocent, he was provided safe escort back to the city of refuge from the scene of the trial. If he were guilty, all participated in his execution by stoning.

That the manslayer was forced to dwell in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest presents some interesting points. Several restrictions automatically accompany such a sentence. The man, and his family as well, would be required to uproot themselves from their previous residence and live within the city. The man himself dare not go outside the walls. Perhaps a radical change in his life style might be necessary, since he would not possibly be able to pursue either an agricultural or shepherding career within the walls of the city. Unless other members of his family visited him, he would be unable to see father, mother, brothers or sisters until the time of his release. Yet, he had escaped the sentence of death, and the inconveniences of his new life were much to be preferred over the sentence of death. The reason for specifying that the innocent manslayer was to be set free when the high priest died is not given. The proper understanding may be that presented in *PC*:

"The stress . . . which is laid upon the fact of his (the high priest's) decease, cf. v. 28, and the solemn notice of his having been anointed with the holy oil, seem to point unmistakably to something in his official and consecrated character which made it right that the rigour of the law should die with him. What the Jubile was to the debtor who had lost his property, that the death of the high priest was to the homicide who had lost his liberty," (p. 448).

A most significant factor in the general set of laws regarding manslaughter is the stipulation that more than one witness must be heard in testimony against the killer. It is a most reasonable safeguard, requiring none of our defense. If one were a witness of the assault and another of evidence of enmity, the testimonies might condemn the manslayer by their harmony; but no man could be condemned on the word of one other person alone.

The next provisions are equally grave and reasonable. The murderer could offer nothing whatever in place of his life if he were convicted of his crime. Having disregarded the sanctity and the right of another man to his life, the killer could not offer anything other than his own. No amount of money, no servile pledge, no measure of repentance—none were acceptable. The principle had held since the day of Noah: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man," (Gen. 9:6).

Again impressing upon the people the gravity of taking another's life even by accident is the legal provision that the manslayer found innocent of murder may not purchase his freedom by any means. Only the death of the high priest is effectual in procuring his release from the city or refuge. An act with a most serious consequence could only be seen in its true perspective if the consequences were inviolate.

One of the continuing marks of human decadence, especially in the abuse of positions of power, is the callous attitude of indifference to shedding the blood of the innocent. To anyone with a memory of the meaning of Buchenvald, Auschwitz,

Dachau, or other symbols of Hitler's blood-purge of the Jews in the time of World War II; or to those familiar with the political purges in Communist Russia or Red China, it is hardly necessary to point out the fact that men have furthered their own political or social philosophies by wholesale murder of the innocent within their lands. Surely the technique was not invented in our twentieth century, but, to our shame, our generation certainly has not eliminated the atrocious practice. The shedding of innocent blood, whether in individual or mass quantities, is a polluting, profaning crime for which an entire people may be defiled. In a most climactic way, the Lord implores Israel not to pollute their land because He Himself wants to live there! The serious child of God knows that the Divine Presence is more than a wish, more than a myth—it is a glorious fact.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

646. In what three areas can you note a significant difference between the laws of homicide among the Israelites as compared with those laws from other cultures?
647. Why is it necessary to establish motivation behind any charge of murder?
648. Show the importance of the size and substance of the weapon in such a charge.
649. How do the circumstances under which a homicide occurs help to determine whether or not it might be murder?
650. To what facts might witnesses be brought to testify?
651. Exactly what does "laying in wait" mean?
652. Who was the "revenger of blood", and what was his primary obligation?
653. What was the action of the avenger of blood if the manslayer were found guilty of murder by the congregation?
654. What were his duties if the manslayer were found innocent of murder?

655. Define the obligations of the congregation in the accusation and prosecution, as well as execution of a murderer.
656. Discuss some of the lessons the Israelites, as well as other people who might become familiar with their laws, should have learned from these regulations regarding homicide.
657. What is the usual meaning of "congregation" as it is used of the Israelites?
658. How can it be demonstrated that these homicidal laws were designed for implementation after Israel settled in Canaan?
659. How long was the manslayer required to remain in the city of refuge if he were found innocent of murder?
660. What was accomplished by requiring the innocent man to remain away from his home for this period of time?
661. Suggest some of the inconveniences he and his family might have to undergo.
662. What significance do you find in the death of the high priest as it related to the manslayer?
663. Why should the witness of one man alone not be sufficient to establish the guilt of a man accused of murder?
664. To what various facts might the witnesses bear record?
665. What significance to you attach to the fact that the manslayer was unable to purchase his exemption from residence in the city of refuge by recompense of any kind?
666. What lesson attaches to the firm requirement that the murderer could not escape by any method from the sentence of death for his crime?
667. Does this provision contribute in any way to the concept of the intrinsic value of human life?
668. For how long had the principle of "life-for-life" been

- known among men? What were the circumstances of its beginning?
669. Have we a real basis for revoking this law of God?
670. What does history show has happened when human life was held in low esteem?
671. Why are the innocent most likely to suffer under these circumstances?
672. Cite historical instances of the debauches of political and social theorists whose power enabled them to enforce their discriminatory philosophies. Cite both contemporary and ancient examples.
673. For what supreme reason did God ask Israel to refrain from polluting her land?
674. Might He express the same thought today?

G. THE MARRIAGE OF HEIRESSES (36:1-13)

TEXT

Chapter 36:1. And the chief fathers of the families of the children of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of the sons of Joseph, came near, and spake before Moses, and before the princes, the chief fathers of the children of Israel: 2. And they said, The Lord commanded my lord to give the land for an inheritance by lot to the children of Israel: and my lord was commanded by the Lord to give the inheritance of Zelophehad our brother unto his daughters. 3. And if they be married to any of the sons of the other tribes of the children of Israel, then shall their inheritance be taken from the inheritance of our fathers, and shall be put to the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they are received: so shall it be taken from the lot of our inheritance. 4. And when the jubilee of the children of Israel shall be, then shall their inheritance be put unto the inheritance of the tribes whereunto they are received: so shall their inheritance be taken away from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers. 5. And Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of the

Lord, saying, The tribe of the sons of Joseph hath said well. 6. This is the thing which the Lord doth command concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, Let them marry to whom they think best; only to the family of the tribe of their father shall they marry. 7. So shall not the inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe: for every one of the children of Israel shall keep himself to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers. 8. And every daughter, that possesseth an inheritance in any tribe of the children of Israel, shall be wife unto one of the family of the tribe of her father, that the children of Israel may enjoy every man the inheritance of his fathers. 9. Neither shall the inheritance remove from one tribe to another tribe; but every one of the tribes of the children of Israel shall keep himself to his own inheritance. 10. Even as the Lord commanded Moses, so did the daughters of Zelphehad: 11. For Mahlah, Tirzah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, were married unto their father's brothers' sons: 12. And they were married into the families of the sons of Manasseh the son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained in the tribe of the family of their father. 13. These are the commandments and the judgments, which the Lord commanded, by the hand of Moses, unto the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 36:1. And the heads of the fathers' households of the family of the children of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of the children of Joseph, approached unto Moses and the leaders, the heads of the fathers' households of the children of Israel, 2. and said, "The Lord commanded my lord to give the land by lot as an inheritance, and my lord was commanded by the Lord to give the inheritance of Zelophehad our brother to his daughters. 3. But if they marry any of the sons of other tribes of the children of Israel, their inheritance shall be taken from the inheritance of our fathers and will be added to the inheritance of the tribe to which they then belong; in this way it shall be withdrawn from

the lot of the inheritance. 4. And when the jubilee of the children of Israel comes, then their inheritance will be added to the inheritance of the tribe to which they then belong; in this way their inheritance shall be withdrawn from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers." 5. So Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of the Lord, saying, "The tribe of the children of Joseph has spoken correctly. 6. This is what the Lord commanded regarding the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, 'Let them marry whomever they choose; only let them marry within the family of the tribe of their father.' 7. Thus no inheritance of the children of Israel shall be transferred from tribe to tribe; the children of Israel shall individually hold to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers. 8. And every daughter who comes into the possession of an inheritance of any of the tribes of the children of Israel shall become the wife of one of the families of the tribe of her father, so that the children of Israel may each maintain his own inheritance." 10. So the daughters of Zelophehad did just as the Lord had commanded Moses: 11. Mahlah, Tirzah, and Hoglah, and Milcah and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, married their uncles' sons. 12. They married into the families of the children of Manasseh the son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained with the tribe of the family of their father. 13. These are the commandments and the laws which the Lord commanded unto the children of Israel through the hand of Moses in the plain of Moab by the Jordan opposite Jericho.

COMMENTARY

In the previously introduced question about the laws of inheritance as they applied to the daughters of a man without sons, the legislation was aimed at preserving land holdings within the family and the tribe of the father. One circumstance had not been considered at that time: supposing the marriage of an inheriting daughter to a man of another tribe; did the land she had received from her father go with her as a possession of the tribe of her husband? The consequences of such a possibility are endless and, theoretically, very confusing. The

matter of the Jubilee year is introduced since in that year all land was re-settled and all titles cleared for permanent ownership. Titles not challenged were considered settled; and the claims of the children of a legitimate heiress could not be called into question. Hence, parcels of land might readily and in some quantity escape the family and tribe for which they were intended, despite the obvious fact that an essential principle of ownership was being violated.

In answer to the problem, the simple answer is announced: the women who inherited land were forbidden to marry outside their tribes. The instance before us would mean that Zelophehad's daughters must marry men of Manasseh. Any further complications were avoided when they actually married "their father's brothers' sons," (v. 11). The complications of marriage outside the family would be similar to those of marriage outside the tribe; hence, the solution of Zelophehad's daughters was an ideal one.

A single brief sentence summarizes much of the content and intent of *Numbers*: to present the commandments and judgments given by the Lord through Moses to Israel during their last days in Moab opposite Jericho. The many interesting and informative facts of history contained in the book are of secondary importance when compared with the words spoken of God for the common welfare. On the same principle, the details of history reflect the degree to which men have followed or disregarded such words; and the men are themselves justified or condemned upon the basis. Knowing now the general regulations which are intended to govern their lives in the land which God has prepared for them, the Israelites are but briefly removed from that day when they will cross the Jordan and inhabit the land of "milk and honey".

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

675. Review the situation with Zelophehad's daughters, and the verdict rendered at that time.

676. What complications would arise if any of the daughters were to marry outside the tribe of Manasseh?
677. How does the entire situation relate to the year of Jubilee?
678. What simple regulation was pronounced for the problem?
679. Why was it important that the marriages be consummated within family groups?
680. What advantage was there in settling such issues as this before the land of Canaan was actually taken?