

COMMENTARY

Although this portion might seem needlessly redundant to the contemporary reader, what with the detailed repetition of the twelve identical offerings of the princes of the twelve tribes, it would not have been considered so by Moses, nor by the people. The great point being established is that, regardless of the size of the tribe, the status of the prince, the wealth held personally or by his tribe, or any other factor, all were to bring precisely the same elements—nothing more, and nothing less. Before God, all were equal.

When all things were ready, it was appropriate that the initial offerings be made by the leaders of the people themselves. So, following the consecration of the Tabernacle, the initiatory rites of the priests, and the census, at which time the princes were selected, a twelve-day period was set aside for the sacrificial gifts to be presented formally. The phrase "on the day" has troubled some. If it be taken literally, this would be the first day of the first month of the second year (see Ex. 40:17); but the account makes it clear that the census had been finished and duties assigned to the Levitical families. Further, the same phrase occurs in v. 10, at which time, if taken literally, all princes would have made their offerings on the same day. Therefore it is wise to understand the phrase as meaning "at the time"; it is so translated in Gen. 2:4.

When the chosen leaders are called "princes", we must understand the term in its use. Alternate translations would allow "elders" or "leaders", which are better understood today. The men clearly were those of eminence who stood as representatives of their entire tribes. The Septuagint uses *episkopes*, "overseers", suggesting a similarity to the leadership ordained for the New Testament church.

Using the six wagons provided, the offerings were brought to the east side of the Tabernacle—its only entrance. *PC*, after discussing the type of vehicle others have suggested for this duty, concludes that, after the nature of the terrain and the small number of oxen assigned to each, the "wagons" may have

had no wheels, but were carried by one ox at the front with another at the rear, with the load on a bed supported by shafts between the animals, (p. 58).

Two wagons and four oxen are assigned the Gershonites for transporting their burdens when the Tabernacle was moved; four wagons and eight oxen are assigned to the Merarites for a similar purpose, while none are given the Kohathites: they must bear their burdens on their shoulders. The purpose is well summarized in *IB*: "More than ever in this mechanical age we need to realize that there are some things which call for personal handling, and with the utmost care," (p. 175). This suggests both a greater honor and a weightier responsibility to Kohath. *PC* adds that Uzzah's death is an instance of the disregard of such a rule (cf. II Sam. 6:3, 7 and I Chron. 15:13), p. 58.

With v. 10 begins the dedication of the altar in a second sense, since it had previously been consecrated by the sacred oil and stipulated sacrifices (Lev. 8:10, 15). Now it is being designated for use of the people through their legates, the princes. The twelve identical gifts are brought to the place of offering, although the actual sacrifices are made over a period of twelve days, as the Lord instructed (v. 11). The order in which they present their gifts coincides with the order of march established when the census was taken (1:5-15). Sheer weight of numbers of the sacrificial animals would make it impossible to accept, as *ICC* proposes (p. 76) that all the presentations were made on the same day. *KD* shows, that there was not room in the court of the Tabernacle for the 252 bulls, rams and sheep to have been "received, slaughtered, and prepared for sacrificing all at once, or on the same day; and it would have been also impossible to burn 36 whole animals (oxen, rams, and sheep), and the fat portions of 216 animals upon the altar," (p. 44).

The gifts are first detailed as each individual brought them; then a summary follows. Each prince brought one silver "charger", or dish, of 130 sacred shekels each—the equivalent of about 4½ pounds avoirdupois. He also gave a silver basin, used

for pouring, 70 shekels. This was filled with "fine flour mingled with oil", perhaps serving not only as a meal offering and receptacle for the princes, but being designated to similar uses in the future. The "spoon", perhaps a small cup with a handle, and made of gold, weighed about four ounces, but would have been most valuable; it was filled with the prescribed incense.

Next are named the animals given for sacrificing: one young bull, one ram and one lamb—all representing the animals given for a burnt offering, (Lev. 1:2). The single goat, or "shaggy one", was a sin offering. It was followed by a peace offering of two oxen, five rams, five he goats and five yearling lambs. Thus the three kinds of offerings expressed dedication, expiation and fellowship with God.

One slight, insignificant variation may be seen as the offering of Nethaneel is described. V. 19 says, "He offered for his offering," whereas in all other instances the princes' actions are described, "And his offering was" (cf. vv. 13, 25, etc.).

When the summary is given in vv. 84-86, the totals are most impressive: the twelve silver dishes together with the silver basins, came to 2400 shekels; the golden spoon-cups weighed 120 shekels. However, they were quite conservative when compared with the extravagance of the offerings when Solomon's temple was dedicated (cf. I Kings 8:63).

The final verse, 89, is not an isolated, disjointed afterthought, as suggested in *IB* p. 180. Moses goes into the Tent of Meeting as was his custom, and is engaged in conversation with the Lord. It seems quite natural to suppose that the message at this time related to the actions just ended: the Lord expressed His approval of the manner in which the princes had fully complied with His instructions, and their offerings were acceptable.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

131. Why does Moses repeat in such detail every offering of each of the princes?

132. Were the princes' offerings for themselves only, or were they acting in behalf of their tribes and families?
133. Why is it unlikely that all of the offerings occurred on a single day? If the offerings were spread over twelve days, how can we understand the meaning of "on the day", which suggests that the offerings occurred within a one-day period?
134. Discuss the significance of the term "prince" as it is used in reference to the leaders of the twelve tribes.
135. Why were no wagons provided for the Kohathites to carry their assigned burdens of the Tabernacle? Why should the Gershonites need only half as many wagons as did the Merarites?
136. Compute the value of the gifts of silver and gold which each prince brought as his offering. Add this for the combined total.
137. What special attitudes and purposes were expressed through the three kinds of offerings?
138. In what sense does the final verse (v. 89) fit the previous thrust of chapter seven?
139. Compare the offerings of the twelve princes with those of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple. Why is the latter so much greater than the former?
140. Suggest some valuable lessons Christians may appropriate from this chapter.
141. How is it that Moses, who was not designated a high priest, could enter the Tent of Meeting to converse with the Lord?

IX. ASSORTED LAWS AND INSTRUCTIONS (8:1-10:10)

A. ON LIGHTING THE LAMPS IN THE TABERNACLE

vv. 1-4

TEXT

Chapter 8:1-4. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 2.

Speak unto Aaron, and say unto him, When thou lightest the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light over against the candlestick. 3. And Aaron did so; he lighted the lamps thereof over against the candlestick, as the Lord commanded Moses. 4. And this work of the candlestick was of beaten gold; unto the shaft thereof, unto the flowers thereof, was beaten work: according unto the pattern which the Lord had showed Moses, so he made the candlestick.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 8:1-4. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2. "Speak to Aaron and say to him, 'When you serve the lamps, the seven lamps will give light in front of the lampstands.'" 3. And Aaron did so: he served its lamps at the front of the lampstand as the Lord had commanded Moses. 4. Now this was the workmanship of the lampstand: it was of hammered gold; from its base to its flowers it was hammered work. So he made the lampstand according to the pattern which the Lord had shown Moses.

COMMENTARY

The term "candlestick", found throughout the *KJV* and some others, is very misleading. As is commonly known, the sole provision for light in the tabernacle was an ornately carved lampstand with seven small bowls, in which olive oil was burned. It would be a necessity for the priests, since little or no natural light would ever be available for the performance of their duties.

The instructions to Aaron, also, are misleading in the older translations. He was told not to "light" the lamps, but to "attend them" or to set them up. The duty no doubt was refilling them with the oil, and lighting them as required. They would illuminate the table of showbread, opposite on the north side of the tabernacle, and the altar of incense, standing in front of the veil which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. The light thus tended and provided by Aaron make the ministrations of the priests possible, since their service was

entirely with the other two articles of furniture, and they had no duties which required them to use the lampstand itself.

Josephus (*Antiquities* III. 6, 7) says the seven lamps represented the sun, moon and planets, and were a constant symbol of God's creative power, and His work in creating light. Christian scholars have found the lamps symbolic of the Word of God, as in Psalm 119:114, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, And a light unto my path," (cf also Prov. 6:23).

Little needs to be said about the lampstand itself. Of a single lump of solid gold, it was hammered into a base, shaft, and seven cups, each cup resting upon a separate branch. Three of these extended to the left and three to the right, with a single stem in the center. Its stand and its branches were ornately decorated with almond designs, branches and flowers and blossoms, (see Ex. 25:31-36). It was a magnificent piece, the work of Bezaleel and Oholiab, who had been specially endowed by the Spirit of God for the performance of their work, (Ex. 31:1ff.). Here, as in numerous other instances, God emphatically instructs them to work precisely according to the pattern He had entrusted to Moses.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

142. What light was available in the Holy Place, other than that provided by the lampstand?
143. Describe the lampstand fully. Who had made it, and how did they gain their skill?
144. What was burned in the lampstand? What articles of the priests' service required this illumination?
145. At what times was Aaron to attend unto the lamp?
146. Why was God so insistent that this, and the other articles in the Tabernacle, should be made exactly as He commanded? Run the references on this point, and count the number of times God so directed Moses. Is there a lesson we can learn as Christians from the point?

B. CONSECRATION OF THE LEVITES FOR SERVICE

vv. 5-22

TEXT

Chapter 8:5. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 6. Take the Levites from among the children of Israel, and cleanse them. 7. And thus shalt thou do unto them, to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purifying upon them, and let them shave all their flesh, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean. 8. Then let them take a young bullock with his meat offering, even fine flour mingled with oil, and another young bullock shalt thou take for a sin offering. 9. And thou shalt bring the Levites before the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt gather the whole assembly of the children of Israel together. 10. And thou shalt bring the Levites before the Lord: and the children of Israel shall put their hands upon the Levites: 11. And Aaron shall offer the Levites before the Lord for an offering of the children of Israel, that they may execute the service of the Lord. 12. And the Levites shall lay their hands upon the heads of the bullocks: and thou shalt offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, unto the Lord, to make an atonement for the Levites. 13. And thou shalt set the Levites before Aaron, and before his sons, and offer them for an offering unto the Lord. 14. Thus shalt thou separate the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be mine. 15. And after that shall the Levites go in to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt cleanse them, and offer them for an offering. 16. For they are wholly given unto me from among the children of Israel; instead of such as open every womb, even instead of the firstborn of all the children of Israel, have I taken them unto me. 17. For all the firstborn of the children of Israel are mine, both man and beast: on the day that I smote every firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for myself. 18. And I have taken the Levites for all the firstborn of the children of Israel. 19. And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the service of the

children of Israel in the tabernacle of the congregation, and to make an atonement for the children of Israel: that there be no plague among the children of Israel, when the children of Israel come nigh unto the sanctuary. 20. And Moses, and Aaron, and all the congregation of the children of Israel, did to the Levites according unto all that the Lord commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so did the children of Israel unto them. 21. And the Levites were purified, and they washed their clothes; and Aaron offered them as an offering before the Lord; and Aaron made an atonement for them to cleanse them. 22. And after that went the Levites in to do their service in the tabernacle of the congregation before Aaron, and before his sons: as the Lord had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so did they unto them.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 8:5. Again the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, 6. "Take the Levites from among the sons of Israel, and purify them: sprinkle cleansing water upon them, and let them shave their whole bodies, and wash their clothes, thus making themselves clean. 8. Then let them take a young bull with its meal offering, fine flour mixed with oil, and a second bull you shall take for a sin offering. 9. And you shall bring the Levites before the Tent of Meeting. You shall also gather the whole congregation of the children of Israel together, 10. bring the Levites before the Lord; and the children of Israel shall lay their hands on the Levites. 11. Then Aaron shall offer the Levites before the Lord as an offering from the children of Israel, in order that they may perform the service of the Lord. 12. And the Levites shall lay their hands upon the heads of the bulls. Then offer one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering to the Lord to make atonement for the Levites. 13. Then you shall have the Levites stand before Aaron and his sons in order to present them as a wave offering to the Lord. 14. "In this manner you shall set the Levites apart from among the children of Israel, and the Levites shall be mine. 15. After that the Levites may enter into the Tent of Meeting to serve; but

you shall cleanse them and present them as a wave offering, 16. since they are entirely given to me from among the children of Israel. I have taken them unto myself in the place of every first child of the womb, the firstborn of all the children of Israel. 17. Every firstborn of the children of Israel is mine among the men and the animals; on the day that I brought death upon all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I set them apart unto myself. 18. But I have taken the Levites rather than each of the firstborn among the children of Israel. And I have given the Levites as dedicated ones to Aaron and his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the service of the children of Israel at the Tent of Meeting, and to make atonement in behalf of the children of Israel, and there may not be a plague among the children of Israel from their approaching the sanctuary." 20. Thus did Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel to the Levites: according to everything the Lord had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, the children of Israel did to them. 21. The Levites, also, purified themselves from sin and washed their clothes; then Aaron presented them as a wave offering before the Lord. 22. After that the Levites entered to do their service in the Tent of Meeting before Aaron and his sons; exactly as the Lord had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, they did to them.

COMMENTARY

Chapter three has already told us of the selection of the Levites for special service in the sanctuary (v. 5ff). But before they were to begin the performance of their duties, they must be fully set apart from the people of Israel in special rites of consecration. Our passage parallels the instructions of Leviticus 8. ICC cites Kuenen, "Nu. viii. 5-22 . . . is an insipid repetition and exaggeration of the account of the separation of the Levites If the author of these last-named chapters had supposed that the Levites, before entering on their duties, had to be purified, and presented to Yahwe . . . he would not have passed it over in silence" He concludes by saying the passage is a pericope added by some later writer.

On the other hand it is a bit surprising to discover *IB* defending the doubled passage by the suggestion of two results: the exaltation of the priesthood over the Levites (the Levites are simply cleansed; the priests are sanctified); and the notable differentiation between the Levites and the ordinary Israelites.

The Midrash, commenting upon the question, says that when Aaron saw the dedication offerings of the princes, he was much disappointed that neither he nor his tribe was represented. Therefore, God told him, "By your life! Your part is greater than theirs, since you kindle and prepare the lamps," *RCP*, p. 131. The process by which the Levites were cleansed was elementary: they were sprinkled with the water of purification, after which all hair was shaved from the body. We should notice what they were *not* to do: undergo a ceremonial washing, dress in the priestly robes, undergo the oil anointment, nor be sprinkled with the blood of sacrifices. *PC* assumes that the purpose for all these rituals was to assure personal cleanliness. Two bullocks were brought before the Lord; their uses are shown in v. 12: one is a sin offering; the other a burnt offering. These offerings were to be made after all the Israelites assembled and laid their hands upon the Levites, designating the fact that they represented the entire nation in their services. Aaron himself made the pronouncement of their consecration. The Levites must always consider themselves both the property and the servants of the Lord, standing in the stead of all the firstborn sons among the other tribes. Such a provision was a significant advance beyond the pagan practice of sacrificing the firstborn son, as unto Molech, a practice of which Jehovah could not conceivably approve, He much preferred, as it were, living sacrifices.

When God pledged that the nation would be spared the visitation of plagues as long as they were, through the Levites, faithful in their religious service, it was a landmark declaration. We can only understand this to mean that God allows such plagues to visit those who are logically expected to serve Him, but do not. History amply attests to the validity of this conclusion.

The conclusion of the verses merely demonstrates that the divine commission was carried out exactly as ordered.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

147. What purposes are achieved in repeating in this chapter a service which has previously been described?
148. Which of the ordinary portions of the ritual of cleansing are omitted upon this occasion? Why?
149. For what purposes were the two bullocks used?
150. What did it signify when all the people placed their hands upon the heads of the Levites? Does this lessen the duties of the people?
151. Why did God not command the literal sacrifice of Israel's firstborn?
152. Are we to consider that plagues and other catastrophes are always the result of widespread sinful conduct?
153. In what sense have the Levites been given to Aaron and his sons (v. 18)?
154. Discuss the importance of doing exactly what the Lord asks, as is recorded in verses 20, 22.

C. LIMITS OF AGE AND SERVICE FOR THE LEVITES vv. 23-26

TEXT

Chapter 8:23. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 24. This is it that belongeth unto the Levites: from twenty and five years old and upward they shall go in and wait upon the service of the tabernacle of the congregation: 25. And from the age of fifty years they shall cease waiting upon the service thereof, and shall serve no more: 26. But shall minister with their brethren in the tabernacle of the congregation, to keep the charge, and shall do no service. Thus shalt thou do unto the Levites touching their charge.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 8:23. Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 24. "This is the regulation of the Levites: from twenty-five years of age and up they shall go in to do service in the work of the Tent of Meeting. 25. But at the age of fifty they shall retire from service in the work, and not work any more. 26. However, they may help their brothers in the Tent of Meeting, to keep an obligation; but they shall not do any work themselves. You shall use this regulation upon the Levites in their commission."

COMMENTARY

In 4:3-49, the ages for service among the Levites is given at thirty to fifty: but a careful reading will show the logical difference between the two prescriptions. In the earlier passage, the assignment is for the transportation of the tabernacle and its trappings; in the passage before us, the Levites are to render all the services necessary to its use. Such duties would include the tasks of cleaning, preparing the wood and water for sacrifices, slaughter of the animals, and dismantling or assembling the entire sanctuary. As *KD* well points out, "The transport of the tabernacle required the strength of a full-grown man, and therefore the more advanced age of thirty years; whereas the duties connected with the tabernacle when standing were a lighter description, and could easily be performed from the twenty-fifth year," p. 49.

When David established the tabernacle permanently on Mount Zion, he utilized the services of Levites as young as twenty (I Chron. 23:24, 25), saying specifically that this put an end to the transportation of the dwelling and its furnishings. It is most likely that such younger workers would have served only in a kind of apprenticeship, however.

Upon reaching the age of fifty, service was no longer compulsory among the Levites. They might, nevertheless, offer their assistance, and they were held in high honor among their younger counterparts.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

155. Is there a contradiction between the regulations here, calling for the service of the Levites between ages 25-50 and that of Num. 4:3-49, in which the ages are set at 30-50? Explain and defend your answer.
156. What logical division of the work of the Levites might depend upon their ages?
157. How was David justified in using Levites as young as age 20 in service of the tabernacle?
158. What special activities might have been performed by Levites who had reached the retirement age?

D. THE SECOND PASSOVER:

A SUPPLEMENTARY OBSERVANCE (9:1-14)

TEXT

Chapter 9:1. And the Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying, 2. Let the children of Israel also keep the passover at his appointed season. 3. In the fourteenth day of this month, at even, ye shall keep it in his appointed season: according to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof, shall ye keep it. 4. And Moses spake unto the children of Israel, that they should keep the passover. 5. And they kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month at even in the wilderness of Sinai: according to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so did the children of Israel.

6. And there were certain men, who were defiled by the dead body of a man, that they could not keep the passover on that day: and they came before Moses and before Aaron on that day. 7. And those men said unto him, We are defiled by the dead body of a man: wherefore are we kept back, that we may not offer an offering of the Lord in his appointed season among the children of Israel? 8. And Moses said unto them, Stand still, and I will hear what the Lord will command concerning you.

9. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 10. Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be in a journey afar off, yet he shall keep the passover unto the Lord. 11. The fourteenth day of the second month at even they shall keep it, and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. 12. They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it: according to all the ordinances of the passover they shall keep it. 13. But the man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbeareth to keep the passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people: because he brought not the offering of the Lord in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin. 14. And if a stranger shall sojourn among you, and will keep the passover unto the Lord; according to the ordinance of the passover, and according to the manner thereof, so shall he do: ye shall have one ordinance, both for the stranger, and for him that was born in the land.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 9:1. Thus spoke the Lord to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying, 2. "Now let the children of Israel observe the Passover at its established time. 3. At twilight of the fourteenth day of the month, you shall observe it at its established time, according to all its regulations, and all its laws." 4. And Moses told the children of Israel to observe the Passover in this manner. 5. The people observed the Passover in the first month, on the fourteenth day, at twilight, in the wilderness of Sinai; just as the Lord had commanded, the children of Israel did.

6. But some men who were unclean from a dead person could not observe the Passover on that day. They came before Moses and Aaron that day, and said to him, 7. "Although we are unclean because of a dead person, why are we prevented from giving the offering of the Lord at its scheduled time along with the children of Israel?" 8. Moses said to them, "Stand here, and I will hear what the Lord commands you."

9. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 10. "Say to the children of Israel, 'If any of you become unclean from a dead person, or is traveling far away, he may, nevertheless, keep the Passover unto the Lord. 11. In the second month, on the fourteenth day at twilight, he shall keep it; he shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. 12. He shall not leave any of it until morning, nor break a single one of its bones; they shall observe it according to all the law of the Passover. 13. But the man who is clean, and is not away from home, yet fails to observe the Passover, he shall be excommunicated from his people, since he did not give the Lord's offering at its set time. He shall bear his sin. 14. And if a foreigner sojourns with you and would keep the Passover of the Lord according to the law of the Passover and according to its regulation, he may do so; you shall have one law, for both the stranger and the native of the land!"

COMMENTARY

The second passover of Israel, observed at Sinai, celebrated the completion of a full year's reprieve from Egypt. It is placed out of the proper chronological order in the text, having actually preceded the census and most of the other events of the book. The people may have doubted whether or not they were to keep the feast while in the wilderness; but the Lord resolves the question by commanding the feast at the same time of year as its institution. The itemized provisions are not repeated; it is unnecessary, since they would be remembered easily. The single detail which would not have matched the original circumstances was the command to smear the blood of the lamb upon the lintel: the tents of the wanderers would have nothing precisely comparable. We are not given an answer to this matter in the text. In later years, after Israel had been established in the Promised Land, the lamb's blood was sprinkled upon the altar (II Chron. 30:16).

The Passover is to be kept, literally, "between the two evenings," a phrase which later was understood to refer to the time between three and five o'clock in the afternoon.

Leviticus 7:21 declared a man unclean for having touched the corpse of a man or a beast. Should he disregard his uncleanness and participate in a sacrifice, he was to be cut off from among his people. The two unnamed men, temporarily unclean, earnestly desire to participate in the meaningful feast, but with equally strong feelings, they do not want to do so at the risk of excommunication. As was his custom, Moses did not presume to settle the question. Upon consulting God, he was informed they might keep their tryst with the Lord exactly one month later. The same exception was to be allowed for one whose travels kept him from the company of his people when the feast day came. The same regulations applied to the later observation as to the first.

A new note is sounded when God warns against deliberately absenting oneself from the feast for no valid reason—such a one is to be disfellowshipped, a penalty as significant as the death sentence in a society as tightly knit as that of Israel's.

The final words do not require that a sojourner participate in the feast; they simply allow such participation. If the alien chooses to become involved, he is under the same regulations as the Israelites. The feast was prescribed in exact details none of which might be altered.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

159. Upon what grounds might the Israelites have believed they were not to observe the Passover regularly until they occupied the Promised Land?
160. Which of the original provisions for the feast could they not have observed in the wilderness?
161. Explain what is meant by the phrase "at even".
162. Why would the Israelite take care not to participate in any sacrifice while he was ceremonially unclean?
163. Could not Moses have given a judgment on the matter of allowing the two men to observe the Passover—must he have taken the question to the Lord?

164. Why should God allow a postponement of the feast at all?
165. Explain the significance of the penalty levied against anyone who deliberately absented himself from the Passover without a proper reason.
166. Why should any stranger or sojourner be permitted to join in the Passover? What conditions were laid upon him if he chose to do so?

E. THE CLOUD OVER THE TABERNACLE vv. 15-23

TEXT

Chapter 9:15. And on the day that the tabernacle was reared up the cloud covered the tabernacle, namely, the tent of the testimony; and at even there was upon the tabernacle as it were the appearance of fire, until the morning. 16. So it was alway: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night. 17. And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed: and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents. 18. At the commandment of the Lord the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the Lord they pitched: as long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle they rested in their tents. 19. And when the cloud tarried long upon the tabernacle many days, then the children of Israel kept the charge of the Lord, and journeyed not. 20. And so it was, when the cloud was a few days upon the tabernacle; according to the commandment of the Lord they abode in their tents, and according to the commandment of the Lord they journeyed. 21. And so it was, when the cloud abode from even unto the morning, and that the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed: whether it was by day or by night that the cloud was taken up, they journeyed. 22. Or whether it were two days or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not: but when it was taken up, they journeyed. 23. At the commandment of the Lord they rested in the tents, and at the commandment of the Lord they journeyed: they kept the charge of the Lord, at the commandment of the Lord by the hand of Moses.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 9:15. On the day that the Tabernacle was set up, the cloud covered it, the Tent of Testimony. In the evening it had the appearance of fire above the Tabernacle until morning. 16. It was this way from then on: the cloud covered the Tent during the day, and an appearance of fire during the night. 17. Whenever the cloud was lifted from above the Tent, the children of Israel would then set forth; and at whatever place the cloud stopped, the children of Israel would camp. 18. At the word of the Lord the children of Israel would set forth, and at the word of the Lord they would camp; while the cloud remained over the Tabernacle, they stayed in camp. 19. And when the cloud remained over the Tabernacle several days, the children of Israel kept the commandment of the Lord and did not travel. 20. Sometimes the cloud stayed a few days over the Tabernacle. Then they stayed encamped, according to the commandment of the Lord; or, according to the commandment of the Lord, they journeyed. 21. Sometimes the cloud remained from evening until morning; and when the cloud was taken up in the morning, they traveled. Whether the cloud was taken up by day or by night, they traveled 22. or, if it were two days, or a month or a year that the cloud remained over the Tabernacle, abiding over it, the children of Israel stayed in camp and did not travel; but when it was lifted up, they traveled. 23. At the commandment of the Lord they stayed in camp, and at the commandment of the Lord they journeyed; they kept the commandment of the Lord, when He commanded them through Moses.

COMMENTARY

The presence of the Lord at the Tabernacle was a continual matter, from the moment of its erection. We are taken back to the point of the completion of the Tent to establish the fact. Far from needless redundancy, the Divine Presence is stated here just prior to the account of leaving its original site. Wherever Israel was to go, they were assured of two fundamental facts: God was with them at all times, and He led them

in every step of their travels. In a real sense, then, there was no time when Israel was aimlessly wandering about. They were informed by the movement or the halting of the cloud and fire, when to move, when and where to stop moving, and how long to remain in each encampment.

There was one appearance of the overwhelming glory of God within the Tabernacle—the Shekinah—which came upon the tent at its initial construction and was so great as to delay Moses' own entry within (see Ex. 40:34, 35). But the cloud specified in our text is not precisely the same. While both are of God's glory and presence, the first such phenomenon was temporary; the second was continual.

We are not told how long the Israelites camped at their various stations excepting on a few occasions; we do not know where they spent as much as one year after leaving Sinai. But the question is academic. Moses' point is simple: the length of the rest is not the important factor, it is the ever-present God who leads them who is being cited.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

167. What were the two primary functions of the cloud and the pillar of fire?
168. Is it proper to say that the Israelites "wandered" during the time they spent in the wilderness before they came to the Land of Promise?
169. What reasons can you give for a very brief period of encampment; or for a very long one?

F. THE SILVER TRUMPETS (10:1-10)

TEXT

Chapter 10:1. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 2. Make these two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps. 3. And when they shall blow with them, all the assembly shall assemble

themselves to thee at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 4. And if they blow but with one trumpet, then the princes, which are heads of the thousands of Israel, shall gather themselves unto thee. 5. When ye blow an alarm, then the camps that lie on the east parts shall go forward. 6. When ye blow an alarm the second time, then the camps that lie on the south side shall take their journey: they shall blow an alarm for their journeys. 7. But when the congregation is to be gathered together, ye shall blow, but ye shall not sound an alarm. 8. And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow with the trumpets; and they shall be to you for an ordinance for ever throughout your generations. 9. And if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies. 10. Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the Lord your God.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 10:1. And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, 2. "Make two trumpets of silver; of one beaten piece each, you shall make them. You shall use them to call the congregation, and for the traveling of the camps. 3. And when they blow them, all the congregation shall gather themselves to you at the door of the Tent of Meeting. 4. If they blow only one trumpet, then the princes, heads of the thousands of Israel, shall gather themselves to you. 5. When you blow an alarm, the camps that lie on the east side shall go forward. 6. When you blow the second alarm, the camps that lie on the south side shall go forward: they shall blow an alarm for their travels. 7. But when the congregation is to be assembled, you shall blow, but you shall not sound an alarm. 8. And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow the trumpets; and they shall be a law for you forever throughout your generations. 9. And if you go to war in your

land against an oppressor enemy, you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets; and you shall be remembered before the Lord God, and you shall be saved from your enemies. 10. Also, in the day of your gladness and in your feast days, and in the beginnings of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of the peace offerings, so that they may be a memorial to you before your God: I am the Lord your God.

COMMENTARY

The trumpet named here, the *chatsotserah*, was almost certainly a long slender tube of silver with a widened mouth. Two other trumpets were known, the *cheren* and the *shophar*, both curved after the general shape of the ram's horn; often they were actually the ram's horn itself. Two of the trumpets are prescribed, doubtless giving distinctive sounds in order that even a single blast might be recognized at once.

Since the signal for Israel to move from one place to another was the removal of the cloud and pillar, trumpets might seem unnecessary. The purpose of the instruments was not simply to signal movement, but to give an orderly method for the tribes to follow as they disbanded their sites. They further served to call the entire assembly together for any special occasions, for announcements, or for hearing the Lord's instructions in a given situation: unique signals were also established for summoning the princes of the tribes to receive their personal advice from Moses and Aaron.

When the signal of the trumpets designated a forward march, the first sound called the tribes from the east of the Tabernacle: Judah, Issachar and Zebulun. The sound was a long, unbroken note, distinguished from short, sharp tones as in v. 7. The second signal called Reuben, Simeon and Gad from the south. For some unknown reason, the order in which the western and northern tribes is not given; the LXX assigns the west to the third signal, and the northern three to the final blast.

Since the trumpets were to be used only for religious purposes, they were to be kept as sacred utensils; their use was restricted to the sons of Aaron. When they were sounded under the circumstances of war, it was to summon the soldiers—such would have been impossible in Canaan with the tribes widely scattered, and only two trumpets—it was to pronounce to Israel that they were dependent upon Jehovah in battle, cf. 31:6 and II Chron. 13:12, 14. When they were sounded to call the congregation of Israel into holy assembly, it was in conjunction with the designated feasts, at the start of each month, and at appropriate times during the offerings of those days. Later sacred history records that the trumpets were also blown on some very auspicious occasions: when the ark of the covenant was removed from the tent of Obed-edom unto the tent prepared for it by David (I Chron. 15:24ff.); it was sounded when Solomon's temple was dedicated (II Chron. 5:12—Solomon had here increased the number to 120 trumpets and 120 priests); when the foundation of the second temple was laid (Ezra 3:10); at the consecration of the walls of Jerusalem (Neh. 12:35, 41); as well as other occasions of the festivals 29:27).

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

170. Describe the kind of horn used for setting Israel forth on their journeying, and compare it to the other types of trumpets we know about from that time.
171. For what reasons were the trumpets assigned to the sons of Aaron?
172. Why were only two trumpets designated for the use to which these are ascribed?
173. Differentiate between the type of sound made for marching orders and the sound which called the princes of the congregation together.
174. How did the sounding of the trumpets contribute to the orderly process of marching?

175. For what regular, ordinary purposes were the trumpets blown?
176. What was the primary reason for blowing the trumpets at the time of war?
177. What corollary promise did the Lord make unto Israel if they would faithfully remember to sound the trumpets before confronting their enemies in battle?
178. List the occasions upon which the trumpets were used in later history, beyond those originally prescribed.
179. What alteration did Solomon make in the number of trumpets and trumpeters when the temple was consecrated?

Part Two: Sinai to Kadesh-Barnea (10:11—14:45)

I. FROM SINAI TO HAZEROTH (10:11—12:16)

A. DEPARTURE, AND ORDER OF MARCH, vv. 11-28

TEXT

Chapter 10:11. And it came to pass on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was taken up from off the tabernacle of the testimony. 12. And the children of Israel took their journeys out of the wilderness of Sinai; and the cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran. 13. And they first took their journey according to the commandment of the Lord by the hand of Moses.

14. In the first place went the standard of the camp of the children of Judah according to their armies: and over his host was Nahshon the son of Amminadab. 15. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Issachar was Nathaneel the son of Zuar. 16. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Zebulun was Eliab the son of Helon. 17. And the tabernacle was taken down; and the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari set forward, bearing the tabernacle.

18. And the standard of the camp of Reuben set forward according to their armies: and over his host was Elizur the son of Shedeur. 19. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Simeon was Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai. 20. And over the host of tribe of the children of Gad was Eliasaph the son of Deuel. 21. And the Kohathites set forward, bearing the sanctuary: and the other did set up the tabernacle against they came.

22. And the standard of the camp of the children of Ephraim set forward according to their armies: and over his host was Elishama the son of Ammihud. 23. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Manasseh was Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur. 24. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Benjamin was Abidan the son of Gideon.

25. And the standard of the camp of the children of Dan set forward, which was the rearward of all the camps throughout

their hosts: and over his host was Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai. 26. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Asher was Pagiel the son of Ocran. 27. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Naphtali was Ahira the son of Enan. 28. Thus were the journeyings of the children of Israel according to their armies, when they set forward.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 10:11. And it happened on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was lifted from the Tabernacle of the Testimony. 12. Then the children of Israel began their journeys from the wilderness of Sinai; and the cloud stayed in the wilderness of Paran. 13. And they first began their travel according to the commandment of the Lord by the hand of Moses. 14. In the front went the standard of the camp of Judah, according to their armies; and leading his host was Nahshon, the son of Amminadab. 15. And over the host of the tribe of Issachar was Nethanel, the son of Zuar. 16. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Zebulun was Eliav, the son of Helon. 17. And the Tabernacle was taken down; and the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari went forward, carrying the Tabernacle.

18. And the standard of the camp of Reuben went forward according to their armies: and over his host was Elizur, the son of Shedeur. 19. And over the host of the tribe of Simeon was Shelumiel, the son of Zurishaddai. 20. And over the host of the tribe of the children Gad was Eliasaph, the son of Deuel. 21. And the Kohathites went forward, carrying the sanctuary: and the others set up the Tabernacle before their arrival.

22. And the standard of the camp of the children of Ephraim went forward according to their armies: and over his host was Elishama, the son of Ammihad. 23. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Manasseh was Gamaliel, the son of Pedahzur. 24. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Benjamin was Abidan, the son of Gideoni,

25. And the standard of the camp of the children of Dan

went forward, which was the rear side of all the camps throughout their hosts: and over his host was Ahiezer, the son of Ammishaddai. 26. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Asher was Pagiel, the son of Okhran. 27. And over the host of the tribe of the children of Naphtali was Ahira, the son of Enan. 28. These were the travels of the children of Israel according to their armies; then they went forward.

COMMENTARY

Israel had arrived at Mt. Sinai in the third month after their departure from Egypt (Ex. 19:1). Now, on the twentieth day of the second month in the second year, they are summoned for their first march after receiving the Law. It will be the beginning of a long and arduous trip—much longer and more difficult than even the most gloomy pessimist among them might have guessed. Little do they know that only two of their number above the age of twenty years will ultimately walk across the Jordan River into the Land of Promise; indeed, they know nothing of the circumstances which will make it necessary to take the round-about route from the east rather than the nearer, logical approach from the south. It will be their own stubbornness and lack of faith which will make the difference, and this will cost them dearly: more than thirty-eight years must be spent going from place to place in a barren, waste area before they are finally led of God through Moab.

The land in which most of the intervening time will be spent, called Paran, and, in its northern section, the Negev, is a large desert plateau. It is bounded on the east by the slash of Arabah (that portion of a 3000 mile long geological fault which has resulted in, among other things, the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea). On the southwest, the border is the desert of Shur, the generally acknowledged border between Egypt and Philistia. To the north, the barrenness slowly melds into the more hospitable hills of the Amorites, which formed the southern border of Canaan. The Arabs have called the general region *et Tib*, the wandering-place of the children of Israel. Its sandy soil extends approximately 150 miles from north to south, and

virtually the same from east to west. Divided nearly exactly in half by the Wady el Arish, the district is lower in the western half than in the eastern, which rises to lofty mountain heights broken up by many small wadies and large tableland areas. It is hostile country, and far from an ideal place for normal life; this, it would seem, should have made the Israelites even more eager to move quickly into the Land of Promise. That they did not is a reflection upon their unstable faith, and their rejection of the favorable report of the two faithful spies, Joshua and Caleb.

As the cloud was removed from the Tabernacle and the trumpet sounded, the tribe of Judah led the way from Sinai, moving in an almost due north path toward Kadesh-barnea, after a brief northeasterly trek to Hazeroth. There is a slight alteration in the original plan of marching: the Levites, instead of traveling all together, are divided to place the Gershonites and the Merarites after Judah and before Reuben. This allows them, ahead of the Kohathites to erect the Tent of Meeting in advance of its furnishings. It is unnecessary to list the order in which the rest of the tribes follow, other than to demonstrate that they did so in accordance with the divine orders. We may conclude that this experience in such marching became the set pattern for later occasions.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

180. How long had the Israelites actually been living at Mt. Sinai?
181. How long would it be before the Land of Promise was actually theirs at the crossing of the Jordan?
182. Describe the chief characteristics of the territory through which the tribes were to march, and in which they would live for the next several years.
183. What signalled the fact that the tribes were to pack up their belongings and move?
184. Why is the original order of march slightly altered now?
185. For what reason are we taken through the entire order of the first nine tribes' departure, without completing the list with the final three tribes?

B. AN INVITATION TO HOBAB vv. 29-32

TEXT

Chapter 10:29. And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel. 30. And he said unto him, I will not go; but I will depart to mine own land, and to my kindred. 31. And he said, Leave us not, I pray thee; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes. 32. And it shall be, that what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 10:29. And Moses said to Hobab, the son of Reuel, the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, "We are traveling to the place the Lord spoke about. I will give it to you; come with us, and we will do you good, for the Lord has spoken good things concerning Israel." 30. And he said to him, "I will not go; instead, I will return to my own land and to my relatives." 31. And Moses said, "I pray you, do not leave us since you know we are to camp in the wilderness, and you may be more helpful to us than eyes. 32. And it shall be if you go with us that whatever good the Lord shall do to us, we will do the same to you."

COMMENTARY

Hobab is the son of Raguel (another spelling of *Reuel*, based upon the *LXX*: he is also known as Jethro, Ex. 2:18), and hence Moses' brother-in-law. He is invited to accompany the Israelites for two very good reasons, either of which alone would seem sufficient: first, by joining himself to Israel he and his family may share in the rich blessings anticipated by the nation; and, having lived all his life in this area and others similar, Hobab could be invaluable both as a guide and an

instructor in adjustments to living in the desert. This is the gist of v. 31. The initial refusal of Hobab was not accepted by Moses, who repeated the invitation in greater detail.

It is generally assumed that Hobab did join with the Israelites, since it is more probable that a negative answer would have been recorded than an affirmative one, which seems properly inferred from the abrupt ending. Nevertheless, we do not find Hobab's name, nor that of his family and descendants, among the later lists of the children of Israel. He is said to dwell among the children of Judah in Judges 1:16. Since Judah led the march, it is logical that Hobab would have become fixed among this tribe, even if he were not actually made a part of the tribe itself.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

186. Look up the background of the Midianites: the type of life they lived, the areas in which they traveled, and their chief occupation. How would they be especially fitted to aid the Israelites in adjusting to life in Paran?
187. Why did Hobab refuse Moses' invitation the first time it was extended to him?
188. What do we know of Hobab's descendants in later history? Why did they settle where they did?

C. THE CLOUD AND THE ARK LEAD THE PEOPLE vv. 33-36

TEXT

Chapter 10:33. And they departed from the mount of the Lord three days' journey: and the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days' journey, to search out a resting place for them. 34. And the cloud of the Lord was upon them by day, when they went out of the camp. 35. And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee. 36. And when it rested, he said, Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 10:33. And they went a three-days' journey from the mount of the Lord; and the ark of the covenant went ahead of them during the three days' journey to find a resting place for them. 34. And the cloud of the Lord was over them by day when they left the camp. 35. And it happened that when the ark went forth that Moses said, "Rise up, O Lord, and let your enemies be scattered; and let those who hate you flee before you." 36. And when it rested he said, "Return, Lord, to the ten thousand thousands of Israel."

COMMENTARY

From this time onward, the nation will be led by the very Presence, symbolized by the cloud and the pillar which attended and preceded the ark of the covenant. This one great difference would be reassuring at all times. Their first leg of the journey occupies three days, suggesting two nights without establishing a camp. They were traversing difficult, sandy terrain. *PC* claims that "a modern army, unencumbered with non-combatants, does not make more than ten miles a day over difficult country, nor can cattle be driven faster than that," p. 98. From Mt. Sinai to the first known station, Hazeroth, is a distance of nearly twice that traveled in the first three days.

With the ark of the covenant moving before them, the Israelites set out. The usual place for the cloud was above the ark while it was within the Tabernacle. It is not certain whether the cloud encompassed the ark as it was being transported, but this seems unlikely, since the vision of the carrier Kohathites would have been obscured. The full description of the appearance of the cloud implies that it stretched backward above the entire company of the people, and far enough ahead to guide the journey of those carrying the ark.

The sixty-eighth Psalm is considered to be an enlargement of Moses' prayer as the ark moves forward (*PC*, p. 99). The initial verse, "Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him," is certainly similar

enough to suggest Moses' words as the basis upon which David composed the song. The words apparently were spoken whenever the ark was moved; this custom may have continued until the ark found its resting place within the Temple.

A counterpart may be seen when the ark rested: Moses invokes the Lord's return to the myriads of Israel after He has scattered their enemies and caused them to flee from His presence. The contrast between the power of God in destroying Israel's enemies and in protecting Israel is beautifully developed in the whole of Psalm 68 (q. v.). Both prayers of Moses, given in the briefest of forms, are rich and significant.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

189. In what respect was the marching order now changed as Israel left Mt. Sinai? Why?
190. Describe the land into which the Israelites were entering.
191. About how far might such a company expect to move daily?
192. Show how the cloud might have been established to conform to the description given in the text.

D. COMPLAINT AND PUNISHMENT AT TABERAH (11:1-3)

TEXT

Chapter 11:1. And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord: and the Lord heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the Lord burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp. 2. And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the Lord, the fire was quenched, 3. And he called the name of the place Taberah: because the fire of the Lord burnt among them.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 11:1. Now the people complained and it displeased the Lord: He heard it and His anger was kindled; and the fire of

the Lord burned among them, and consumed those who were in the outer sections of the camp. 2. Then the people cried out to Moses; and Moses prayed to the Lord, and the fire was quenched. 3. And he called the place Taberah because the fire of the Lord burned among them.

COMMENTARY

Several factors combine to produce the probable causes of the complaints during Israel's first march from Sinai. *PC* mentions fatigue and anxiety in the march; the year of comparative idleness; the frightful nature of the country into which they were coming; the unknown terrors of the way before them (p. 102). To face such trials, it would be necessary for them to trust implicitly in the God who had promised to lead them and care for their needs. Having but recently been slaves, it is conceivable that the people found such a trust very difficult, despite the signs already given them that God made no foolish, unwarranted pledges.

Even so, the complaints are unjustified. Their needs had always been supplied, often in dramatic and convincing form. The people are, after all, but little more than a year removed from the confounding of Pharaoh's army at the crossing of the Red Sea; they are but a few months removed from the disastrous defection at Sinai when the calf of gold had been erected. From these and other incidents, they might be expected to have found that reliance upon the Lord was a confidence well placed. We are given no precise grounds for their murmuring on this occasion; perhaps no single incident was the precipitator. The dissatisfaction seems to have been general in nature, and significant enough to bring the Lord's intervention dramatically into play.

The fire, whatever its exact nature and however it was brought unto the people, was limited to the outer portion of tents, probably consuming the tents and their occupants. The Targum of Palestine assigns the fire to the tribe of Dan, where a graven image had been concealed; the tradition is remote and

unsupported, and may actually be an anticipation of the defection of Dan reported in Judges 18.

IB states, without evidence, that the place called Taberah was established before the Israelites came upon the grounds; that the story told here is but a familiar legend from the Near East which has been adapted and entered into the text to demonstrate Yaweh's guidance to the spot, p. 193. The assertion is totally unsupported excepting by the wishful thinking of the commentator.

Whether the incident occurred before, during or after the three days' march has been much discussed. Since the tribes were encamped, it seems unlikely they were marching and merely settled down for the night. The site of Taberah, then, would either be near Sinai or, as *PC* suggests may be an earlier name for Kibroth-Hattaavah, p. 103. The exact spot cannot be identified today.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

193. Compare those grounds the Israelites might have used as the basis of their complaints with those factors which should have prevented such complaining.
194. Where did the fire visit? What tradition has grown up about it?
195. What can we say about the nature of this fire?
196. How was the fire ended?
197. What does "Taberah" mean?
198. What can be said about the location of this place?

E. BITTER EXPERIENCE AT THE "GRAVES OF LUST" (KIBROTH-HATTA AVAH), vv. 4-35

TEXT

Chapter 11:4. And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? 5. We remember the

fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic; 6. But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, besides this manna, before our eyes. 7. And the manna was as coriander seed, and the color thereof as the color of bdellium. 8. And the people went about, and gathered it, and ground it in pans, and made cakes of it: and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil. 9. And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it.

10. Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent: and the anger of the Lord was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased. 11. And Moses said unto the Lord, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favor in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? 12. Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers? 13. Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat. 14. I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. 15. And if thou deal thus with them, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favor in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness.

16. And the Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee. 17. And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone. 18. And say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against to-morrow, and ye shall eat flesh: for ye have wept in the ears of the Lord, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? for it was well with us in Egypt: therefore the Lord will give you flesh, and ye shall eat. 19. Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten

days, nor twenty days; 20. But even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the Lord which is among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt? 21. And Moses said, The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. 22. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them? 23. And the Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord's hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not.

24. And Moses went out, and told the people the words of the Lord, and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle. 25. And the Lord came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease. 26. But there remained two of the men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the spirit rested upon them; and they were of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle: and they prophesied in the camp. 27. And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp. 28. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them. 29. And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them. 30. And Moses gat him into the camp, he and the elders of Israel.

31. And there went forth a wind from the Lord, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, as it were a day's journey on this side, and as it were a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits high upon the face of the earth. 32. And the people stood up all that day, and all that night, and all the next day,

and they gathered the quails: he that gathered least gathered ten homers: and they spread them all abroad for themselves round about the camp. 33. And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague. 34. And he called the name of that place Kibroth-hattaavah: because they buried the people that lusted. 35. And the people journeyed from Kibroth-hattaavah unto Hazeroth; and abode at Hazeroth.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 11:4. And the mixed multitude among them lusted greatly. And the children of Israel also wept again, saying, "Who will give us meat to eat? 5. We remember the fish which we ate in Egypt for nothing; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic; 6. but now our soul is withered away: there is nothing at all excepting this manna for us to see." 7. And the manna was like coriander seed, and its color was like the color of bdellium. 8. The people went about and gathered it, and ground it in mills or boiled it in a pot and made cakes of it: and its taste was like that of a cake baked with oil. 9. When the dew fell upon the camp during the night, the manna fell with it.

10. And Moses heard the entire families of the people weeping, each man in the door of his tent: and the anger of the Lord burned greatly, and Moses was displeased. 11. And Moses said to the Lord, "Why have you afflicted your servant? and why have I not found favor in your sight, that you lay the burden of all these people upon me? 12. Have I not conceived all these people? have I not begotten them, that you should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom as a nursing father carries the sucking child, to the land you have pledged unto their fathers?' 13. From what source should I have meat to give to all these people? because they weep to me, saying, 'Give us meat for us to eat.' 14. I am not able to bear all these people alone; it is too heavy for me. 15. And if you deal this way with us, kill me, I pray, here and now if I have found favor in your sight. Do not

let me see my own misery."

16. Then the Lord said unto Moses, "Gather to me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be elders of the people and officers over them, and bring them to the Tent of Meeting, and let them stand there with you. 17. I will come down and talk with you there: and I will take of the Spirit which is upon you, and I will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you so that you shall not bear it all alone. 18. "And say to the people, 'Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat'; for you have wept in the ears of the Lord, saying, 'Who will give us meat to eat? For it was well with us in Egypt.'" Therefore the Lord will give you meat and you shall eat. 19. You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, 20. but an entire month, until it comes out your nostrils, and is loathsome to you; because you have despised the Lord who is among you, and have wept before him, saying, "Why did we leave Egypt?"' " 21. And Moses said, "The people, among whom I am, are 600,000 foot soldiers; yet you have said, 'I will give you meat to let them eat for an entire month.' 22. Shall flocks and herds be killed for them, to satisfy them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to satisfy them?" 23. And the Lord said to Moses, "Is the Lord's hand too short? You shall see now whether my word will come to pass to you or not."

24. So Moses went out and told the people the words of the Lord, and gathered seventy men of the elders of the people, and stationed them around the Tent. 25. Then the Lord came down in a cloud, and spoke to him, and took of the Spirit who was upon him, and gave it to the seventy elders; and it happened that when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied; but they did not do it again. 26. But two men had remained in camp. The name of one was Eldad, and the name of the second, Medad: and the Spirit rested upon them—they were among those who had been registered, but had not gone out to the Tent—and they prophesied in the camp. So a young man ran and told Moses, and said, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in

the camp." 28. Then Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of Moses from his youth, answered and said, "Moses my lord, restrain them." 29. But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!" 30. Then Moses retired into the camp, he and the elders of Israel.

31. Now a wind went forth from the Lord and brought quail from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, about a day's journey on this side, and about a day's journey on the other side, all around the camp, and about three feet deep on the surface of the ground. 32. And the people stood up all that day, and all that night, and all the next day, and gathered the quail: he who gathered least gathered ten homers. And they spread them out for themselves all around the camp. 33. And while the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the anger of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord struck the people with a grave plague. 34. Therefore he called the name of that place Qivroth-hatta'wah (Graves of Lust), because there they buried the people who lusted. From Qivroth-hatta'wah they traveled to Hatseroth, and they stayed at Hatseroth.

COMMENTARY

The term "mixed multitude" is generally understood to mean those riff-raffs who had attached themselves to Israel when leaving Egypt. Some have thought them to be renegade Israelites; others believe they were combination marriages of Israelites and Egyptians. They are mentioned twice elsewhere—as a group in Ex. 12:38, and in an individual instance in Lev. 24:10; both times the occasions are altogether unfavorable. How many of them there were is an unsettled question, but any appreciable number could cause a deterioration of morale quickly. Their wish here is for some of the rich, strongly flavored foods they had enjoyed in Egypt. The wish is shared by Israel, which also "wept again." The "flesh" for which they cry is a general term for all meat. The animals which Israel brought forth with them during the exodus

would hardly have kept their tables supplied with meat, and no real help might have been gained from the locale. Wild animals are sparse enough to be rare.

However unusual it might seem to our tastes that the complaint was for such items as leeks, onions and garlic, we must remember that all of these were delicacies to the Egyptians, as well as other residents of the Middle East. We should not assume, as v. 5 suggests, that the Israelites were given their food for nothing, literally, for as *RCP* shows, the Egyptians were unwilling even to give them the straw necessary for bricks, p. 134. The same source further affirms that the people were murmuring on a trumped-up pretext, since the text would later say that the "Children of Reuben had much cattle," (32:1). Their statement that their souls had withered away may have been correct (v. 6); but they were entirely incorrect in attributing the fact to the matter of their food. The obvious fact is that they had lost their faith in a providential God—assuming that this rabble had had some faith in Him earlier.

The description of manna given in verses 7-9 is only a brief summary of that in Ex. 16:14-30. In the fuller passage, we learn of the versatility of manna: it was capable of being baked or boiled, suggesting a food like our potato whose use is limited only to the genius of the cook herself. Evidently God provided the manna with a careful balance of nutrients to safeguard the health of the people who would eat little else for forty years.

Is the factor of food the only cause for the unhappiness among the Israelites? It is not likely, and the Talmud suggests that the root cause was actually the firm line Jehovah had taken against the marriage of near of kin to one another. Their protests annoy both the Lord and Moses. The former is displeased because of the ingratitude and ungoverned passions of His people; Moses is disturbed because of the consequences of their complaints. They have placed an unbearable burden upon him. His situation is similar to that described in Ex. 18, when Jethro suggested a relief from the intensity of judging all

difficulties through the appointment of judges for lesser problems. Moses is entirely correct when he says, "I am not able to bear all these people alone"; and God did not intend for it to be his sole responsibility.

The dialogue of 10-20 is one of several intimate glimpses we have of the relationship Moses enjoyed with Jehovah. The conversation is much too frank and realistic to have been imagined. We gain a very human picture of Moses, lending strong credence to the genuineness of the text. We are also shown once more the intensity with which this great man identifies himself with his people; even when they are under strong threat. If they are to perish, he will go with them.

In giving of His Spirit to the seventy elders of the people, nothing of the Divine Presence in Moses was diminished, (v. 17). The Holy Spirit may indwell every living person alive at any given time to the full capacity of each. Such is certainly a part of our concept of the omnipresence of God. The seventy will be specially heightened in their powers of weighing right and wrong in settling disputes; they will thus shoulder a portion of the load which has, to this point been Moses' exclusively.

It is fascinating to realize now that God insisted upon having all the people prepare themselves for His revelation by undergoing the process of sanctification; and the purpose of this revelation is to demonstrate His righteous wrath. Severe punishment will follow. Their false words, that all had been well in Egypt, are typical of a spirit of ungratefulness, and show what short memories they had. The arduous burdens of servitude are forgotten, and the few occasional pleasures such as the foods, have been remembered disproportionately. We can only think of them as rather typical—too very much like ourselves.

For many of the murmurers, the food they are about to eat will constitute their last meal. God promises meat in such abundance that they shall eat for an entire month, adding the graphic picture that the food will come out of their nostrils and be loathsome to them. The points to be established are clear:

the people must be sternly rebuked for their complaints and ingratitude; they must be brought to see the mighty power of God again as He provides such a vast quantity of food for them, demonstrating that His hand is by no means shortened; they must come to trust Him to provide their every need, but not to cater to their trivial whims and wants; they must be brought to realize that their present state is infinitely better than their former, and the promised covenant land will shortly be available to them, unless their faith falters. The real key to the Lord's words is the statement that they "have despised the Lord," (v. 20). In this state, we should not be surprised at any actions or any foolish words. The emerging pattern is clear: their love has cooled, they take up unfounded complaints, and the next step would be rebellion.

We can hardly blame Moses for wondering where the Lord will find an adequate quantity of meat for the soldiers, not to mention their families and all the Israelites. He had been frustrated before, as Israel stood at the beach of the Red Sea, having not the least idea of God's plan to divide the waters. He had been uncertain as the Israelites murmured for water. How can he conceivably anticipate the actions of God, when the promise is made to feed the people for an entire month on meat which is not their own? His suggestion that the answer may come from fish out of the sea is typical of his confusion. They are a great distance from any sizeable body of water—at least 20 miles from the Gulf of Aqaba—and whether or not any quantity of fish might be available from this source is highly doubtful. God's rebuke once more is spoken with the typical intimacy between Himself and Moses. Even the great leader needed prodding occasionally, which brings us to see that he was, after all, only a man, however noble. The figure of God's shortened hand suggests His inability to accomplish His purposes. Isaiah used the figure with the same meaning (1:2; 59:1). It is both simple and expressive, occurring here rhetorically. The answer Moses must give is a resounding "No".

The Lord's descent into the Tabernacle is indicated by the cloud once more, and this time under abnormal circumstances.

The seventy specially appointed elders are at hand as the Spirit of the Lord is shared. The scene is allegorized by *RCP* : "What was Moses like at that moment? He was like a light placed in a candlestick from which everyone kindles additional lights, and yet the illumination of the original light is by no means diminished," (p. 136). Their prophesying is limited to this day alone; but it served to demonstrate to the people that God had in fact set them apart unto a holy work. It was a faith-building demonstration.

We cannot know why Eldad and Medad did not join with the others at the Tabernacle. They were, nevertheless, equally endowed with the Spirit and empowered to prophesy. No doubt their reason for abstention was acceptable to the Lord. We cannot fault them, nor can we criticize the young man who reported their works. He might have thought their actions were deliberate disobedience which he was obligated to report. Even Joshua considers their actions in error, and asks for their correction and restraint. He is mildly rebuked by Moses, who sees the deeper issue: God has evidently approved their conduct, since they have shared in the gift of His Spirit. If God approves of their situation, they should be encouraged rather than condemned. It is more to be desired that all of the people might share in this *charisma*. With this preliminary sign, God has prepared the way for the great miracle which is to follow.

A specially prepared wind from the Lord, said to have come from the south and east (Ps. 78:26) rained quail upon the camp in vast quantities. Great migrations of quail have been seen in this area, flying from Africa to Europe in the spring. Using the great wind, He sent the quail off their normal course and directly to the camp. There they were literally said to have been "thrown down" among the Israelites to the depth of about three feet, where they were gathered in vast quantities by the people. It is difficult to say exactly how large these quantities were, since the homer was a variable measure. The size of the homer is often given as ten ephahs, or about two bushels. Whatever the precise amount might have been, it was quite sufficient to show that this was no normal phenomenon. God

was keeping His word literally that there would be enough to suffice for one month. All this would both "shame their unbelief" and "punish their greediness," (*KD*, p. 73). No doubt the quail would have been widely spread over the earth to dry, since their consumption would require many days.

The account now takes an unexpected turn. *PC* proposes to explain the visitation of divine wrath, attributing it to the greediness of the people in gathering such great measures of the quail in anticipation of later feasts, while postponing their enjoyment of the divinely given food, p. 112. It may rather be that, despite this great manifestation of God's providence, the hearts of the murmurers were unmoved, ungrateful and still disrespectful toward the Lord. Their motive is indicated by the name attached to the place: "Graves of greediness"; a greedy spirit cannot allow for gratitude. The location of the spot is not known, nor do we know how long the camp remained. It is certain they were not now permitted to eat of the meat for the thirty days; the patience of the Lord had been exhausted.

Hazeroth, to which Israel is now led, has been identified with a fountain named Ain el Hadhera; but the identification is based solely upon similarity of the words. Like most of the other desert stations, it would be more remarkable if they could be identified than if they could not, since they represent only temporary campsites.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

199. Discuss the "mixed multitude" among the Israelites—who they were, why they were a source of difficulty, and the purported reasons for their complaints.
200. Why were the murmurings of these people of such concern to the Lord?
201. Why did the Israelites not supplement the manna with meat gained from hunting?
202. In what ways were these complainers misrepresenting their situation in Egypt? Show how their position was typical of human nature.

203. Suggest some of the ways in which manna might have been prepared.
204. What was the possible underlying cause for all the unhappiness of the crowd?
205. How is Moses' situation here similar to his previous experience in judging the people?
206. Analyze the warmly human characteristics of Moses as they emerge in his dialogue with the Lord (vv. 10-20).
207. Why did Moses continually identify himself with his people, rather than recognize the foolishness of their complaining natures?
208. For what immediate purposes did the Lord grant His Spirit to the seventy elders? Why did they prophesy? Why did this special gift not continue?
209. What purposes would be served if the Lord provided enough meat for all the children of Israel to eat for one month?
210. Why did Moses not simply accept the fact that God would be able to accomplish this feat?
211. Explain the phrase, "Is the Lord's hand waxed short?"
212. Were there legitimate reasons that Eldad and Medad did not go with the other elders to the Tent of Meetings? How can you justify their absence?
213. How could such a vast quantity of quail be at precisely this place at the exact time the Lord had foretold their coming?
214. Why is the action of the wind important in this event?
215. How long did the Israelites spend in gathering the birds? In what quantities were they taken?
216. God had said the people would eat of the meat for one month; what actually happened, and why?
217. Why is it difficult to identify many of the stations at which the Israelites camped in the wilderness?

F. FOOLISH CONDUCT OF MIRIAM AND AARON
AND RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM (12:1-16)

TEXT

Chapter 12:1. And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. 2. And they said, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the Lord heard it. 3. (Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.) 4. And the Lord spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come ye out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out. 5. And the Lord came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth. 6. And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. 7. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. 8. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? 9. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them; and he departed. 10. And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous. 11. And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my Lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned. 12. Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother's womb. 13. And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee.

14. And the Lord said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again. 15. And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days: and the people journeyed not till Miriam was

brought out again. 16. And afterward the people removed from Hazeroth, and pitched in the wilderness of Paran.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 12:1. Then Miriam and Aaron criticized Moses because of the Ethiopian woman he had married (for he had married an Ethiopian woman). 2. And they said, "Has the Lord indeed spoken only with Moses? Has he not spoken with us as well?" And the Lord heard it. 3. Now the man Moses was very humble, more so than all the men upon the face of the earth. 4. And the Lord spoke suddenly to Moses, and to Aaron and to Miriam, "You three come out to the Tent of Meeting!" And the three came out. 5. Then the Lord came down in a pillar of cloud, in the door of the Tent, and He called Aaron and Miriam. When they came out, He said, "Now hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known to him in a vision, and speak to him in a dream. But not so with my servant Moses: 7. he is the reliable one in all my household. 8. I speak with him mouth to mouth, openly, and not in veiled messages; and he sees the very likeness of the Lord. Why, then, were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" 9. So the anger of the Lord burned against them, and He left. 10. Now the cloud was removed from the Tent, and lo, Miriam was snow white, stricken with leprosy. Aaron looked at Miriam, and behold, she was diseased. 11. And Aaron said to Moses, "Oh, my Lord, I beg you, do not lay this sin upon us; we have behaved foolishly: we have sinned. 12. Do not let her become as a dead person whose flesh is half consumed when he emerges from his mother's womb!" 13. And Moses pleaded with the Lord, saying, "Heal her now, O God, I pray you." 14. But the Lord said to Moses, "If her father had only spit on her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? Let her be shut out of the camp seven days; after that she may be received back again. 15. And Miriam was excluded from the camp for seven days, and the people did not travel until Miriam was returned to them. 16. Afterward the people left Hazeroth, and camped in the wilderness of Paran.

COMMENTARY

Life is plagued by many types of problems. We now face one of the more common and troublesome: Miriam turns upon her brother in a vicious, verbal assault with two thrusts. She is critical of his wife, and she is envious of his special and unique relationship with God. *PC* gives five reasons for laying the sin specifically at Miriam's feet: she is named first in the account; the verb is in the feminine, and properly says, "she spoke out against"; the attack is "a peculiarly feminine one"; she alone was punished; and, Aaron never led out in anything. The third and fifth arguments seem very thin and inconclusive; it is the fourth which would especially establish her great guilt. No penalty of any kind visits Aaron.

Commentators are much divided over the identification of Moses' wife in the passage. Some contend that the reference could not conceivably be to Zipporah, who was a Midianite, not a Cushite or Ethiopian. They suggest, therefore, that Zipporah was dead and Moses had but recently remarried. The argument is altogether from silence, unless one reads such an inference into this passage. Others suggest Moses had taken a second wife, a most improbable proposal, and one the Lord certainly could not have approved without comment of any kind anywhere in the record. Yet others believe Moses' wife's beauty is being compared to that of a Cushite woman's. This is the position of *RCP*, which uses a process of numerology to establish the claim. The word for "Cushite" has a numerical value of 736, the same numerical value as *yefat mareh* ("a woman of beautiful appearance"). Numerologists may give some credence to such speculation, but they must stand alone.

As for the criticisms themselves, they were of a most unkind sort. The criticism of Moses for having married a woman other than an Israelite should have come from the Lord, not Miriam; if there were grounds for any criticism. It is generally assumed that Miriam's motivation was jealousy, which may well be correct. With all the other burdens Moses was carrying, the last thing he needed was for members of his own family to turn

upon him with such a vindictive spirit. After all, Miriam herself had been distinguished above all the other women when she was made a prophetess—the only one of whom we have record among the people; and Aaron was established as the high priest, than which there was no higher office of permanent nature among the Israelites. Only pride and envy could account for the manner in which the two unite in their criticisms. God had, after all, also spoken through them as well as through Moses, as they confess, v. 2.

The next verse, (v. 3), has bothered countless commentators, as in *IB*: "This verse gave much difficulty to those who were concerned to assert the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. The point is, simply, that Moses would not have written so of his own meekness; this would be the most certain indication that he lacked humility." But such a position ignores other possibilities. If God deemed it appropriate that the account should make such a note at this point, where it surely fits, and instructed Moses to state the fact, in no sense could we understand this to have been a boastful assertion of the great man. It has been asserted that the verse was added to the original, and was not the work of Moses himself. We cannot deny the possibility; and, in fact, the *KJV* puts the verse in parentheses as an apparent indication of this. Whatever the actual explanation, one fact is supremely clear, and that is the truth of the statement itself. Moving from year to year and incident to incident throughout the life of Moses, we cannot but marvel at the unbounded humility of so significant a man. This would make the onslaught against him even more difficult to bear, and virtually impossible for the man himself to counter successfully.

God's manner of calling specially to the three is unusual and unexpected. It is thought that the call came simultaneously, and to them at their individual residences. They meet at the Tent, and from that point Aaron and Miriam are separated from Moses.

The divine message is prefaced by a well-understood fact:

when God spoke to the ordinary prophet, He used the technique of dreams or visions. Neither of these methods should be limited to day-time occurrences, however, since nocturnal revelations are a distinct rarity in the Scriptures. They were, nevertheless, less distinctive than the method God used in speaking to Moses: "mouth to mouth." The thought is identical to that of Ex. 33:11, "face to face." Messages to others came darkly, as in riddles or mysterious utterances. To Moses, He spoke clearly, unambiguously.

Even Moses did not look directly upon the face of God. He beheld His "similitude", or the "aftereffects", as in Ex. 33:22, 23. After having lived forty days in intimacy with God, some of the glory of God Himself was infused upon Moses' own face, and the Israelites could not look upon him until he was veiled (Ex. 34:29-35). This transmitted glory must yet have been grossly less than that of God Himself. Aaron and Miriam ought to have been totally ashamed of having expressed themselves derogatorily.

When the cloud of the Divine Presence was lifted, Aaron noticed the leprous condition of Miriam. It is an indication that she had led the verbal assault upon Moses. The fact that her skin was white would indicate she had been visited by a milder form of leprosy. Even so, leprosy in any form is to be greatly dreaded, and this would be sufficient to cut her off from her people for life, or for the duration of the plague itself. Aaron is quick to confess his part, and their mutual guilt; he pleads for pardon of their rash foolishness, and for Miriam's healing. They are compelled to seek the mediation of the very one they have offended!

Moses' intercessory prayer is but partially recorded, only the most briefly relevant summary being contained in the text: but it is all we need. The Lord's answer impresses all of them both with His mercy and His justice. In His mercy, the leprosy is removed. In His justice, it is necessary for Miriam to endure one week of the circumstances of a leper. She would never forget this. It was a sure way of seeing that she remembered the

humiliation brought upon herself by haughtiness. Seven days outside the camp and in the company with others whose bodies were ravaged by such a dreadful disease would be quite long enough for her to learn this lesson. This was the same period of time required of any disrespectful one whose father was required to rebuke her publicly, see Deut. 25:9.

During Miriam's isolation, the people did not move. *RCP* understands this delay to have been a demonstration of God's reward for the time she had spent watching Moses when he was placed in the river (Ex. 2:4). The incident reminds us that she was, after all, only human, and that when she and Aaron were confronted forcefully with their sins, they were brought to repentance and a form of restitution before they could be reinstated in God's good graces.

Leaving Hazeroth, they come into the region of Kadesh, in the desert of Paran. It is on the southernmost border of the land of Canaan. They reached the spot just one and one-half years after leaving Egypt, and might as easily as not have crossed immediately into the Promised Land. The fact that they did not is a reflection upon their small faith.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

218. Why is it usually assumed that Miriam was the ring-leader in complaining about Moses' wife?
219. Is there a contradiction in the accounts which identify the wife of Moses as an Egyptian (our present passage), a Midianite (Ex. 2:21), and a Cushite (*RSV*)?
220. What were Miriam and Aaron attempting to accomplish or to prove by their words?
221. If Moses was truly meek, as v. 3 affirms, how could he possibly have written this of himself?
222. How might Moses himself have successfully answered his sister and brother?
223. Compare and contrast the manner in which God spoke with Moses with the more ordinary methods of communicating with the prophets.

224. Review the provisions which applied to an individual who was thought to have leprosy, and show how it was appropriate that Aaron should have made the discovery.
225. Why does Aaron ask Moses to intercede for himself and for Miriam, rather than directing his own prayer to the Lord.
226. Might a lesser man than Moses have refused this request?
227. For what probable reasons did God insist that Miriam's leprosy should remain upon her for a week?
228. What is the significance of the Lord's words about the time of isolation if one were spit upon by his father?
229. How important was the factor of repentance in God's dealings with the offenders?

II. THE PROMISED LAND REVIEWED AND REJECTED (13:1—14:45)

A. SELECTION OF THE SPIES, vv. 1-16

TEXT

Chapter 13:1. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 2. Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them. 3. And Moses by the commandment of the Lord sent them from the wilderness of Paran: all those men were heads of the children of Israel. 4. And these were their names: Of the tribe of Reuben, Shammua the son of Zaccur. 5. Of the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat the son of Hori. 6. Of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh. 7. Of the tribe of Issachar, Igal the son of Joseph. 8. Of the tribe of Ephraim, Oshea the son of Nun. 9. Of the tribe of Benjamin, Palti the son of Raphu. 10. Of the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel the son of Sodi. 11. Of the tribe of Joseph, namely, of the tribe of Manasseh, Gaddi the son of Susi. 12. Of the tribe of Dan, Ammiel the son of Gemalli. 13. Of the tribe of Asher, Sethur the son of Michael. 14. Of the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi the son of Vophsi. 15. Of the tribe of Gad, Geuel the son

of Machi. 16. These are the names of the men which Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Oshea the son of Nun, Jehoshua.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 13:1. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2. "Send out men, that they may spy out the land of Canaan, which I give to the children of Israel: from each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, each one a ruler among them." 3. So Moses sent them from the wilderness of Paran by the commandment of the Lord, all those men who were heads of the children of Israel. 4. And these were their names; from the tribe of Reuben, Shammua son of Zaccur; 5. from the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat son of Hori; 6. from the tribe of Judah, Caleb son of Jephunneh; 7. from the tribe of Issachar, Igal son of Joseph; 8. from the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea son of Nun; 9. from the tribe of Benjamin, Palti son of Rafu; 10. from the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel son of Sodi; 11. from the tribe of Joesph, from the tribe of Manasseh, Gaddi son of Susi; 12. from the tribe of Dan, Ammiel son of Gemalli; 13. from the tribe of Asher, Sethur son of Michael; 14. from the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi son of Vophsi; 15. from the tribe of Gad, Geuel son of Machi. 16. These are the names of the men Moses sent to spy out the land; and Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun, Joshua.

COMMENTARY

When the second account of this mission is told by Moses (Deut. 1:20-25), it is the people themselves who are made to suggest the mission of the spies. The original idea may well have come from them; it is clear, on the other hand, that Moses would have carried the plan to the Lord before acting upon it. With divine approval, the spies are appointed to their work.

The men who are chosen are prominent men, but they were not the tribal princes. The journey they are about to undertake would require both youthfulness and vigor; the princes may have been a poor selection for these reasons.

Only two names in the list are noteworthy: Joshua (here called Oshea), and Caleb. The change in Joshua's name is slight, but the change in meaning is significant: from "Salvation" to "Jehovah is salvation." Since it is a change appointed by Moses, we should not find it strange that he has used the name already several times. Such apparent anachronisms trouble the negative critic much more than they would have bothered Moses, as author of the events. It would be quite natural for him to use the name he himself had bestowed upon his successor, even in alluding to that time before the actual change was made.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

230. Explain the variation between the two accounts of the sending of the spies in the accounts given in Numbers and Deuteronomy.
231. Why were none of the men sent chosen from the previously chosen tribal princes?
232. No spy is sent for the tribe of Levi. Can you think of a good reason for this omission?
233. If the change in Joshua's name was not made until Israel came to Kadesh-Barnea, how can we explain its use in the earlier records?
234. What is the significance of the change in names?

B. THEIR INSTRUCTIONS vv. 17-20

TEXT

Chapter 13:17. And Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said unto them, Get you up this way southward, and go up into the mountain: 18. And see the land, what it is; and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many; 19. And what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad; and what cities they be that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strongholds. 20. And what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein, or not. And be ye of good courage, and bring of the

fruit of the land. Now the time was the time of the first ripe grapes.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 13:17. As Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, he said unto them, "Go up this way by the South; then go up into the high land. 18. Look over the country as it is, and the people who dwell in it, whether they are strong or weak, few or many. 19. And examine the land in which they dwell, whether in tents or in fortified cities; 20. and learn how the land is, whether it is fertile or poor, whether there are trees there or not. Be courageous and bring back some of the fruit of the land." Now it was the time of the first ripe grapes.

COMMENTARY

The spies did not leave Kadesh to travel in a southerly direction, although the King James and other translations seem to say this. More accurately, the text sends them into the Negev, which is the southern portion of the land later to be given Judah. The territory is poor and barren. By contrast the remainder of Canaan would seem ideal for occupation. The Negev, excepting in the few areas where springs water narrow rivulets and fields, is virtually uninhabitable. Beyond the Negev, traveling northward, the spies would come into the southern hill country, the hills of Judea, which are suitable for both cultivation and grazing. This hill country extends from the Negev to the northernmost parts of Canaan, and continues far beyond as the Lebanon Mountains. It is the very backbone of the country.

Not only are the men to examine the land itself; they are instructed to appraise the residents. Are they strong or weak? Have they fortified cities? Is the land settled heavily or sparsely? Do the people appear to be timid or bold? Do they till the land well? Is the soil productive? Is it well provided with useful trees? All these and many more important observations might be made without any overt actions, in a walk-through

kind of trip. Grapes first ripen in Palestine in late July or early August; they are usually harvested a month later.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

235. Look up a reliable article on the Negev. Learn about the terrain, when and by whom it has been inhabited, and how it figured in later Israelite history.
236. What major types of information were the spies to seek? Which of the items are most important, among those things they are to observe?
237. Why did the Israelites not simply march into the land, trusting in the Lord to deliver it into their hands?
238. Besides the first ripened grapes, what other fruits might the spies have expected to find at this season?

C. SURVEY AND REPORT vv. 21-33

TEXT

Chapter 13:21. So they went up, and searched the land from the wilderness of Zin unto Rehob, as men come to Hamath. 22. And they ascended by the south, and came unto Hebron; where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the children of Anak, were. (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) 23. And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates, and of the figs. 24. The place was called the brook Eshcol, because of the cluster of grapes which the children of Israel cut down from thence. 25. And they returned from searching of the land after forty days.

26. And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. 27. And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. 28. Nevertheless the

people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. 29. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan. 30. And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it. 31. But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. 32. And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof: and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. 33. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 13:21. So they went up and spied out the land from the wilderness of Zin to Rehob, on the way to Hamath. 22. After they went up into the South, they came to Hebron where Ahiman, Sheshai and Talmai, children of Anak, were. (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) 23. They came to the Wadi of Eshcol, and there they cut down a branch with a single cluster of grapes, which they carried on a pole between two men; and they brought back pomegranates and figs. 24. That place was called the Wadi of Eschol because of the cluster of grapes which the children of Israel cut down there. 25. After forty days of searching the land they returned. 26. and came to Moses and Aaron and all the assembly of the children of Israel in the wilderness of Paran at Kadesh; and they brought word back to them and to all the assembly, and showed them the fruit of the land. 27. And they spoke to him, and said, "We entered the land to which you sent us, and indeed it flows with milk and honey; and this is its fruit. 28. However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are

very large and fortified. 29. Moreover, we saw the children of Anak there. Amalek lives in the land of the Negev, and the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites live in the hill country. The Canaanites live by the sea and in the valley of the Jordan." 30. Then Caleb stilled the people in front of Moses and said, "Let us go up immediately and take possession of it, for we are quite able to overcome it." 31. But the men who went up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we." 32. So they spread a bad report of the land they had spied out to the children of Israel, saying, "The land through which we went, to spy it out, is a land which eats up its inhabitants; and all the people we saw in it were men of great height." 33. We also saw the Nephilim there (the sons of Anak were among the Nephilim); and we seemed like grasshoppers in our own sight, just as we were in their sight."

COMMENTARY

Zin is the name given the northern portion of the larger desert, Paran. Crossing the Wady Murreh, which divides the sparsely settled wilderness of the South from the higher hill country later given as the southern part of the territory of Judea, the ten spies traversed the length of Canaan. Their northernmost penetration took them beyond Dan (earlier, Laish), to a well-travelled trade route which led to Hamath. This route passed near Beth-rehob, not far from Laish. In early days the city was of great importance under Syrian rule; it is in the territory of Naphtali when the land is divided among the tribes of Israel.

Having summarized the journey of the spies, Moses now reviews their actions in some expanded details. The first important city they encountered was Hebron, nearly twenty miles south of Jerusalem. Remembered for being Abraham's residence and burial place, Hebron was now held by three clans descended from Anak. These Anakim were of gigantic stature, thought to have been exterminated later by Israel excepting for some who found refuge among the Philistines. At this point Moses interjects a note of information which would have been

very meaningful to him. It is the kind of point we can scarcely imagine anyone else's having inserted—one which nobody would have invented, and one which receives its value from the very casual nature in which it is used: the note that Hebron was founded seven years earlier than Zoan (Tanis) in Egypt. Such incidental references give a ring of authenticity to the account, being completely appropriate to the writer, and irrelevant to those who might have written under other circumstances.

We have no reason whatever to draw any historical relationship between Zoan and Hebron. However, if Zoan was built or enlarged into the pharaoh's residence at the time of the exodus, Moses could well have been personally involved in the affairs of state. The association is purely chronological, which is Moses' point.

The second specific area mentioned is properly "the valley of Eshcol"; here an oversize bunch of grapes, carried on a pole between two of the men, becomes tangible evidence that the land is productive. Indeed, the finest grapes in all Canaan are said to come from north of Hebron on the way to Jerusalem. Here are also found pomegranates, figs and various other fruits. The size of the single bunch of grapes would be such that it would require a second man to carry it, not because of the total weight, but in order to avoid crushing them. Bunches weighing up to twelve pounds have been found in the valley of Eshcol (see *KD*, p. 90). No doubt those brought back to the camp of Israel were picked immediately before the spies' return.

The second factor which would figure prominently in the spies' report involved the inhabitants. We are not given a complete resumé of all the tribes inhabiting Canaan, but we are immediately introduced to those who lived in the vicinity of Hebron, as well as general references to the Amalekites, Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites and Canaanites. Three of the progeny of Anak are named: Ahiman, Sheshai and Talmai. The Anakim, along with the Emim and the Rephaim were notable for their great size, and perhaps for their longevity as well. Their origin is obscure. Fifty years later they would be driven from the city by

Caleb (Joshua 15:14). The Amalekites lived in an area generally including a portion of the northern Negev, and a portion of the area later assigned to Simeon and southern Judah. They were descendants of Esau who lived as nomads, constantly causing difficulty to their neighbors. Saul would later be ordered to exterminate them, I Sam. 15:1-3. The Hittites, a non-Semitic people, had come into the land about a half-century earlier. It is generally suggested that they had come from Cappadocia. Until the early twentieth century, critics of the Scriptures considered them fictitious. They were not mentioned in any extra-biblical writings which had been discovered until that time. But the extensive work of Hugo Winckler at Khattusa (Boghaz-koy) in present-day Turkey in 1906-07 amplified earlier discoveries at Carchemish, and removed any lingering doubts about the Hittites. We now know they were people of a well advanced culture who lived in various portions of Canaan, particularly the south.

The Jebusites were descended from Canaan (see Genesis 10) and are best known in the area of Jerusalem. The Amorites, also descended from Canaan, are thought to have held a rather large kingdom including much of Mesopotamia and Syria, with a capital at Haran before migrating to Canaan. In this latter location, they took land from the Moabites, and usually were found east of the Jordan. The term 'Canaanites' has two uses in the Old Testament. In its broader sense, it includes any of the pagan tribes who lived within the bounds of the Promised Land. More specifically, as used here, it refers to a single tribe living in the coastal plains and the valleys of the land; such is also to be inferred from the meaning of their name: "the lowlanders".

We must admire the integrity and faith of Caleb. He and Joshua had seen exactly what the remaining ten spies had observed, both the good and the formidable, of the land. But his confidence in the guidance of the Lord is unquestioning as he simply says, "Let us go up at once, and occupy it; for we are well able to overcome it." It is noted later (14:6) that Joshua urged the same action. Had their enthusiastic advice been followed, the history of the nation would have been changed,

and they would have been spared the extreme difficulties of wandering for approximately 38½ years in the wilderness before ultimately crossing the Jordan into the Land of Promise.

We should not be unduly surprised that the multitude listened to the counsel of the ten rather than the words of the two. It is always a simpler matter to be negative than positive; to rationalize into disobedience rather than to obey an apparently difficult command. The ten spies, and the people as well, are awed by the stature of the people who make the Israelites look like "grasshoppers"; Joshua and Caleb remember that God has promised this land unto His people, and that He has promised to drive out the inhabitants, if they will but trust Him. Their faith seems too visionary for the cowardly listeners.

Many explanations have been proposed for the statement that "the land eats up its inhabitants." It cannot mean death came upon the people from starvation or similar natural causes—the fruits brought back would not give any credibility to such a thought. Even more nauseating is the suggestion that cannibalism was being practiced. One of the most interesting and logical suggestions comes from *RCP* : the people everywhere were "burying their dead . . . ", an action of God to "keep the people busy in their mourning so that they would not notice the spies," (p. 142).

The final argument proposed to the people is that "all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature." We must view this as unmitigated hyperbole, a further impassioned appeal to discourage the masses from listening to Caleb. It is successful.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

239. Consult a reliable map, and estimate the distance the spies may have travelled in their journey through Canaan. For what things would they especially look?
240. Establish the probable locations of Rehob and Hamath. Why were they important at that time?
241. Why is Hebron mentioned, rather than Jerusalem, as the key city in the South?

242. What can you say of the "children of Anak"?
243. What association is there between Hebron and Zoan? Why are we given information about the date of founding for the cities? How important is this incidental point in establishing Mosaic authorship of the event and book?
244. What is a Wadi? What does "Eshcol" mean?
245. How would the Israelites be impressed by the fruits brought back from the land before them?
246. Explain the idiom used to describe the land: "it flows with milk and honey."
247. Name the different tribes which are reported as inhabitants in the land. Tell where each lived, and whatever we know about the origin of each.
248. In what two senses is the name "Canaanites" used? How is it probably to be understood here?
249. Upon what items do all of the twelve spies agree, and where do they disagree?
250. Explain why these men could come to such widely different reactions to the people and the land they had just visited.
251. What most important factor had the ten spies overlooked in their negative recommendation?
252. How has the phrase "A land that devours its inhabitants" been understood?
253. Why do the ten spies emphasize the negative factors in their report? How could they justify their gross exaggeration?
254. Who were the Nephilim of whom the spies speak?

D. COMPLAINT AND REBELLION (14:1-4)

TEXT

Chapter 14:1. And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. 2. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron:

and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! 3. And wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt? 4. And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return to Egypt.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 14:1. Then all the assembly lifted up their voice and cried; and the people wept that night. 2. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron; and the whole assembly said to them, "Would that we had died in this wilderness! 3. And why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword so that our wives and children should be victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?" 4. And they said to one another, "Let us select a chief and return to Egypt."

COMMENTARY

What should have been a day of rejoicing in anticipation of a great victory through the power of the Lord has been turned into a period of weeping and complaints. Instructions to the people, so confidently expressed by Caleb, are overruled by the discouraging words of the fearful ten, and the spirits of the people are completely extinguished. Now that they are a year and one-half removed from Egypt, the slavery from which they have been delivered does not seem so oppressive. Step by step throughout the interval, the masses have echoed the same tedious refrain: "We never should have left Egypt!"

Moses and Aaron are the immediate targets for criticism. Nothing they might say would be of any weight to them in the present circumstances. Their argument continues, and lays an even greater blame upon the Lord. He has led them here, and certainly must be blamed because they cannot simply march into the new land unopposed. The people have come to expect everything of Him, and nothing of themselves. Murmurings

similar to their protests have been heard before; this is the first time it is actually suggested that another leader be chosen, one who will lead them back to the land of their bondage. We might speculate that, had they actually followed this course, their voices would have risen even more strongly against the renewal of slavery before the first day's servitude had ended.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

255. How do you account for the fact that the words of the ten spies had a much greater effect upon the Israelites than the words of the two?
256. Why should the Israelites have forgotten the fact that they were slaves in Egypt, while they refused to march into the land before them as a free people?
257. Do you think the Israelites would have found true happiness if they had actually returned to Egypt? Defend your answer.

E. MOSES' PLEA AND GREAT INTERCESSORY PRAYER vv. 5-19

TEXT

Chapter 14:5. Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel.

6. And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes: 7. And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. 8. If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. 9. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us; their defense is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not. 10. But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel.

11. And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have showed among them? 12. I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.

13. And Moses said unto the Lord, Then the Egyptians shall hear it, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;) 14. And they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou Lord art among this people, that thou Lord art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, by daytime in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night.

15. Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, 16. Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he swore unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness. 17. And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, 18. The Lord is long-suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. 19. Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 14:5. Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before the entire assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel.

6. And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunnah, of those who spied out the land, tore their clothes: 7. and they spoke to all the assembly of the children of Israel, saying, "The land through which we passed to spy it out is an exceptionally good land. 8. If the Lord is pleased with us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us: a land which flows

with milk and honey. 9. Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land, for they shall be our prey: their defense is removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them." 10. But all the assembly suggested stoning them with stones. Then the glory of the Lord appeared in the Tent of Meeting before all the children of Israel.

11. And the Lord said to Moses, "How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be before they believe me, in spite of all the miracles I have performed among them? 12. I will strike them with a pestilence and disinherit them, and make of you a greater and stronger nation than they."

13. But Moses said to the Lord, "Then Egypt will hear of it, since by your power you brought up this people from among them, 14. and they will tell it to the residents of this land. They have heard that you, Lord, are among this people; that you, Lord, are seen face to face, and that your cloud stands over them, and that you go before them by day in a pillar of cloud and by night in a pillar of fire.

15. Now, if you do kill all this people as one man, the nations which have heard of your fame will say, 16. 'Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land He pledged to them, therefore he has slaughtered them in the wilderness.' 17. But now, I pray, let the power of my Lord be great, just as you have spoken, saying, 18. 'The Lord is slow to anger, great in love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but He will by no means clear the guilty, bringing the iniquity of the fathers upon their children to the third and fourth generations.' 19. Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people, according to the vastness of your love, even as you have forgiven them from Egypt until now."

COMMENTARY

It is sometimes assumed that the congregation desired to stone only Joshua and Caleb (*RCP*); however, the manner in which the Lord responded may indicate that the reaction was against all four. Divine glory flashed forth from the Tabernacle

to halt the actions of the crowd, and refocused their attention upon their rightful position. No doubt the manifestation was both visible and awesome, since drastic measures would have been required to prevent mob actions against the potential victims.

The two faithful spies make one final effort to influence the people. But they cannot do more than specify the conditions upon which the Lord will fulfill the promise of the land: they must be worthy of the delight of the Lord, and cease rebelling against Him. Neither must they any longer fear the pagan inhabitants any longer. The choice is placed squarely upon the rebels. They may march victoriously into Canaan, led by God's powerful hand; or, they may resume their grumbling and anarchy. They choose the latter course.

Unreasoning mobs are seldom stilled by cool heads and calm pleas. Stoning was not only a most horrible means of death, it was a disgraceful punishment reserved for the most grave circumstances. That such a thing was suggested for God's men reveals the hostility and irrationality of the mob.

God's glory, manifested under so many different conditions during all dispensations, has never failed to strike the viewers with awe. These same insurrectionists had viewed His glory at Sinai (Ex. 24:16-17), when He confirmed His covenant with them. That had been a time for rejoicing; this was a time for fear.

For the second time, God proposes to destroy an ungrateful, rebellious troupe and make of Moses a greater people than they. *PC* offers the suggestion that God was not actually serious about eliminating Israel—He was putting Moses to the test of unselfishness, loyalty and courage with respect to his people, fully expecting Moses to refuse the offer. From another vantage point, *RCP* reminds the reader that, even had the Lord put all the rebels down, leaving only Moses, the promise to the patriarchs would not have been broken since Moses was a descendant of the patriarchs. An oversimplified response is simply to point out that *every* Israelite was a

descendant of the patriarchs.

Although verses 13 and 14 are corrupt in the original, their meaning is simple: the Egyptians, from whom Israel has been delivered, would delight in pointing out to the inhabitants of Canaan that the God who had presumably led Israel across the Red Sea and to the edge of Canaan, was now suddenly impotent and could not finish His proposed work. The response the Egyptians might logically expect would be a united attack against the former slaves, resulting in their utter defeat. Then, Moses reasons, the name of the Lord would be subjected to derision and contempt. Any tragedy coming upon them, especially the pestilence such as God threatened, would be further confirming evidence to the pagan mind. The logic of Moses rests upon human principles, failing to recognize that God's actions are not measured by men's reasoning; if, in His judgment the actions of Israel warrant death, the reaction of others is irrelevant.

The second basis of Moses' appeal has much more to commend it as he appeals to God's forgiveness and mercy. Justice may well require the death sentence, but God is free always to temper justice with mercy as it may accomplish His purposes. Before He can extend mercy, however, He must effect pardon; and they have sinned grossly. Thus two supreme divine prerogatives are involved: the power to forgive and the ability to temper justice with mercy.

Moses' intercession is a sublime prayer. It is totally unselfish, since Moses might have been briefly tempted to accept the place of progenitor of a new and faithful people. It is solicitous of the name and reputation of God, which Moses would like preserved without even undeserved tarnish. It appeals to the highest attributes of God, prerogatives He alone may possess, in the resolution of this dilemma. If it is not eloquent in its original form, it is a splendid presentation of the thought that the wicked, much more than the righteous, must depend upon the pardoning mercy of the Lord.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

258. What is the significance of the actions of Moses and Aaron as they fell upon their faces before the people? Are the actions of Joshua and Caleb for the same reasons?
259. What reason might the two faithful spies have for thinking the people might listen to them now, when their earlier words had drawn an unfavorable response?
260. Under what conditions would the "Lord delight in us"? What consequences would follow?
261. Explain the thought, "the people are bread for us" in v. 9.
262. Upon what legal basis could the Israelites have appealed for stoning their antagonists?
263. What is the implied reaction of the people when the glory of the Lord appeared from the Tent of Meeting?
264. Discuss the various motives attributed to God when He proposed the destruction of the rebels in Israel.
265. List the points presented in Moses' petition to the Lord. Discuss the relative weight of each.
266. Why should there be any need for the Egyptians to tell the people of Canaan of the impotence of God, if Israel were not brought into the land?
267. What fate would be demanded of the Israelites if God acted upon sheer justice alone? What point or points would be demonstrated if He were to accede to the petition of Moses?

F. GENERAL PARDON;

SENTENCE UPON THE PROVOKERS, vv. 20-38

TEXT

Chapter 14:20. And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word: 21. But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. 22. Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these

ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; 23. Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it: 24. But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land where-into he went; and his seed shall possess it. 25. (Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwelt in the valley.) Tomorrow turn you, and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea.

26. And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, 27. How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. 28. Say unto me, As truly as I live, saith the Lord, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you; 29. Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness, and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, 30. Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. 31. But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. 32. But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness. 33. And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness. 34. After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise. 35. I the Lord have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die. 36. And the men which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the land, 37. Even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the Lord. 38. But Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of the men that went to search the land, lived still.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 14:20. And the Lord said, "I have pardoned them according to your word; 21. but certainly, as I live, and as all the earth is filled with the glory of the Lord, 22. all those men who have seen my glory and my miracles which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have tested me now these ten times, and have not heeded my voice, 23. certainly they shall not see the land I pledged to their fathers, nor shall any of those who provoked me see it. 24. But my servant Caleb, because he had a different attitude and followed me completely, I will bring into the land into which he went; and his descendants shall possess it. 25. Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites lived in the valleys. Turn tomorrow and set out into the wilderness by way of the Red Sea."

26. And the Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron, saying, 27. "How long shall I put up with this evil congregation who murmur against me? I have heard the complaints of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. 28. Say to them, 'As I live,' says the Lord, 'just as you have spoken in my ears, so will I do to you: 29. your corpses shall fall in this wilderness, according to the total number, from twenty years of age and older, who have complained against me. You shall certainly not come into the land, in which I swore I would bring you to live, excepting Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua, the son of Nun. 31. However, your children, whom you said would become prey, these I shall bring in, and they shall know the land you have rejected. 32. But as for you, your corpses shall fall in this wilderness. 33. And your children shall be shepherds in this wilderness forty years, and suffer because of your unfaithfulness, until your corpses are consumed in the wilderness. 34. According to the number of days in which you spied out the land, that is, forty days, for every day you shall bear your sins one year: namely, forty years; and you shall know my displeasure.' 35. I have spoken, I the Lord; surely I will do it to all this wicked generation which have gathered together against me. In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there shall they die." 36. As for the men Moses sent to spy

out the land, those who returned and caused all the congregation to complain against him by giving a bad report concerning the land, 37. those men who brought a bad report of the land died by a plague before the Lord. 38. But Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, among the men who went to spy out the land, lived.

COMMENTARY

Whatever the intercessory prayer of Moses might have lacked in eloquence was more than supplied by his sincerity and selflessness. God immediately responds, adopting the course of the petitioner. So the course of an entire nation is determined by the "fervent, effectual prayer of the righteous" man, (James 5:16).

We do not have a record of ten instances when the nation of Israel tested God's patience; nor is it necessary to produce such a list. The language of God simply expresses the thought that their provocations have reached the ultimate. The same technique is used again and again in Amos (1:3; 1:6, et passim), when the end of God's patience comes after three, and then four, transgressions.

God's sentence comes upon the people in two pronouncements: those men directly responsible for misdirecting Israel are to be struck down by the plague; and the people, who have been gullible, will not be permitted to enter the Promised Land at all. The punishments fit the crimes. Those who have attained the age of twenty are presumed to be responsible for their decisions. They have chosen to believe ten men rather than the Lord and His two faithful spies; hence, they are consigned to wandering about in the wilderness for the remainder of their lives. The ten unfaithful spies are especially culpable, since it is their word which has incited the disobedience. If they are allowed to remain alive and influential among the people, there is no way of guessing what seeds of discord and disruption they might have sown. Knowing their hearts, and that they will contribute nothing constructive to the morale of their audience, God deems them worthy of death. They are struck dead on the

spot. The term "plague" is general rather than specific, making it a matter of speculation as to exactly how the Lord imposed His penalty upon them.

Sharply contrasting with the sentence of God upon the unfaithful spies and the doubting people, the commendation of the Lord with respect to Caleb particularly, and to Joshua as well, is refreshing. They alone, of all the Israelites above the age of twenty, would be permitted to enter and possess their portions in Canaan. It is safe to assume, at this point, that Moses and Aaron would have been included with the two faithful men. Moses may have omitted himself and his brother at this point when he wrote the record years later, and both of them had also been excluded from the Promised Land.

An ironic note is inserted into the pronouncement of God when He informs the murmuring people that their children, for whom they have expressed special concern about marching directly into the Promised Land, are to be spared through the wilderness ordeal. They, not their fearful parents, will know the full promise of life in a free land of their own. We must conclude that the expressed fears were only alibis; the people were afraid on their own account, not because of their children. Their carcasses, rotting in the desert, would provide stark evidence of this fact.

The words to the children, and their time in the wilderness, are properly, "Your children shall pasture in the wilderness forty years," suggesting something quite different from aimless wandering, which is the common thought from earlier translations. The area of this pasturing was irregularly used for the same purposes by the Amalekites, the Midianites, and a few other nomadic tribes. At its best, however, the land is bleak and unsuited to permanent residence. It is hot, arid, mountainous, and inhospitable. For forty years the children of the rebels would endure its privations because of the sins of their fathers. "Whoredoms", as used in this context, unquestionably refers to the idolatrous acts of the Jews, as in Ex. 34:16. Blame for these iniquitous deeds rests squarely upon the souls of the defectors: but the consequences of their idolatry come upon the children

as well. Obvious spiritual overtones are to be found in these facts.

Little wonder that the people wept when Moses informed them of the decision of the Lord! They could find neither consolation nor hope in it. Before them lay a difficult life, and death would come upon them all without their having realized the one really wonderful promise which would have made all their trials bearable. Again, the punishment well fits the crime. At this point, Moses inserts the editorial comment which confirms the Lord's prophecies: death came upon these apostates in such a manner as to make it clear that they did not die natural deaths, and all within the time foretold.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

268. The Lord pronounced two judgments and punishments upon various portions of the Israelites because of their faithlessness. What were these two pronouncements, and whom did each affect?
269. Name the previous occasions on which the murmuring people tested God's patience.
270. Why did God set the period of wilderness wandering at forty years?
271. Of the total number of people in the tribes of Israel, how many adults eventually entered into the Promised Land?
272. What alibi did the people give for not moving immediately into the Promised Land? How did God turn this very argument against them?
273. How is the word "whoredoms" used with reference to the conduct of the people?
274. Why did Moses not include himself and Aaron among those whom God promised entrance into the Promised Land?

G. DEFEATS BY AMALEKITES AND KENITES vv. 39-45

TEXT

Chapter 14:39. And Moses told these sayings unto all the children of Israel: and the people mourned greatly.

40. And they rose up early in the morning, and gat them up into the top of the mountain, saying, Lo, we be here, and will go up unto the place which the Lord hath promised: for we have sinned. 41. And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the Lord? but it shall not prosper. 42. Go not up, for the Lord is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies. 43. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are before you, and ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from the Lord, therefore the Lord will not be with you. 44. But they presumed to go up unto the hilltop: nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and Moses, departed not out of the camp. 45. Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, even unto Hormah.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 14:39. And Moses told these words to all the children of Israel; and the people grieved very much. 40. And they rose up early in the morning and went to the top of the mountain, saying, "Here we are. We have sinned; nevertheless, we will go up to the place which the Lord has promised." 41. And Moses said, "Then why are you transgressing the word of the Lord, when it will not succeed? 42. Do not go up, lest you be struck down before your enemies, for the Lord is not among you. 43. The Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and you will fall by the sword because you have turned away from the Lord. Therefore the Lord will not be with you." 44. But they presumed to go up to the hill top, although neither the ark of the covenant nor Moses left the camp. 45. Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in that mountainous region came down and attacked them, and utterly drove them away as far as Hormah.

COMMENTARY

When the verdict of the Lord is brought unto the people, their response is typically human. Having been told they cannot enter the Land before them, that is exactly what they now say they want to do! But it is much too late. God's patience has been tried beyond reason, and they must face the consequences of their rebellions. Even their belated expression, "We have sinned," is of no avail.

Ironically, the course now announced by the people, which would have been exactly what God wanted them to do shortly earlier, is now strongly forbidden; what would have been faithful obedience is now another instance of disbelieving rebellion. Moses stands before them to point out the radically changed circumstances, and the certain consequences of their new resolution: God is not with them, and they will be badly beaten by their enemies. When Israel moves to battle, it is without Moses or the ark of the covenant: and, we may be certain, neither Caleb nor Joshua was among them.

Complete defeat was the inevitable consequence. The Amalekites and the Canaanites descended upon them from the hills, and routed them to Hormah, and unidentified city of the region.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

275. How is it that when the Israelites now want to enter the Land of Promise, they are forbidden?
276. When would it have been more appropriate for the people to confess that they had sinned?
277. Would the presence of Moses, or of the ark of the covenant, have assured victory for Israel at this time?
278. The Amalekites are regularly assigned to live in and around the territory of Kadesh-Barnea; the Canaanites are not. Consult a good Bible dictionary or atlas, and determine the areas of their inhabitation.

Part Three: The Years of Wandering (15:1–21:35)

I. IN PARAN (15:1–19:22)

A. LAWS OF OFFERINGS vv. 1-31

TEXT

Chapter 15:1. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 2. Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land of your habitations, which I give unto you, 3. And will make an offering by fire unto the Lord, a burnt offering, or a sacrifice in performing a vow, or in a freewill offering, or in your solemn feasts, to make a sweet savor to the Lord, of the herd, or of the flock: 4. Then shall he that offereth his offering unto the Lord bring a meat offering of a tenth deal of flour, mingled with the fourth part of a hin of oil. 5. And the fourth part of a hin of wine for a drink offering shalt thou prepare with the burnt offering or sacrifice, for one lamb. 6. Or for a ram, thou shalt prepare for a meat offering two tenth deals of flour, mingled with the third part of a hin of oil. 7. And for a drink offering thou shalt offer the third part of a hin of wine, for a sweet savor unto the Lord. 8. And when thou preparest a bullock for a burnt offering, or for a sacrifice in performing a vow, or peace offerings unto the Lord; 9. Then shall he bring with a bullock a meat offering of three tenth deals of flour, mingled with half a hin of oil. 10. And thou shalt bring for a drink offering half a hin of wine, for an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord. 11. Thus shall it be done for one bullock, or for one ram, or for a lamb, or a kid. 12. According to the number that ye shall prepare, so shall ye do to every one according to their number. 13. All that are born of the country shall do these things after this manner, in offering an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord. 14. And if a stranger sojourn with you, or whatsoever be among you in your generations, and will offer an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord; as ye do, so shall he do. 15. One ordinance shall be both for you of the congregation, and also

for the stranger that sojourneth with you, an ordinance for ever in your generations: as ye are, so shall the stranger be before the Lord. 16. One law and one manner shall be for you, and for the stranger that sojourneth with you.

17. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 18. Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land whither I bring you, 19. Then it shall be, that, when ye eat of the bread of the land, ye shall offer up a heave offering unto the Lord. 20. Ye shall offer up a cake of the first of your dough for a heave offering: as ye do the heave offering of the threshingfloor, so shall ye heave it. 21. Of the first of your dough ye shall give unto the Lord a heave offering in your generations.

22. And if ye have erred, and not observed all these commandments, which the Lord hath spoken unto Moses, 23. Even all that the Lord hath commanded you by the hand of Moses, from the day that the Lord commanded Moses, and henceforward among your generations; 24. Then it shall be, if aught be committed by ignorance without the knowledge of the congregation, that all the congregation shall offer one young bullock for a burnt offering, for a sweet savor unto the Lord, with his meat offering, and his drink offering, according to the manner, and one kid of the goats for a sin offering. 25. And the priest shall make an atonement for all the congregation of the children of Israel, and it shall be forgiven them; for it is ignorance: and they shall bring their offering, a sacrifice made by fire unto the Lord, and their sin offering before the Lord, for their ignorance: 26. And it shall be forgiven all the congregation of the children of Israel, and the stranger that sojourneth among them; seeing all the people were in ignorance.

27. And if any soul sin through ignorance, then he shall bring a she goat of the first year for a sin offering. 28. And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly, when he sinneth by ignorance before the Lord, to make an atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him. 29. Ye shall have one law for him that sinneth through ignorance, both

for him that is born among the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them.

30. But the soul that doeth aught presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. 31. Because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 15:1. And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2. "Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, 'When you come to the land of your dwellings, which I give to you, 3. make an offering of fire to the Lord, a burnt offering or a sacrifice to fulfill a special vow, or as a freewill offering, or in your solemn feasts to make a sweet aroma to the Lord, from the herd or the flock; 4. then he who presents his offering to the Lord shall bring a meal offering of one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of oil. 5. You shall prepare wine for the drink offering: one-fourth of a hin, with the burnt offering or sacrifice for each lamb. 6. Or for a ram, you shall prepare as a meal offering two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with one-third of a hin of oil. 7. And for a drink offering you shall give one-third of a hin of wine as a sweet aroma to the Lord. 8. And when you prepare a bull for a burnt offering or a sacrifice, to fulfill a special vow, or as a peace offering to the Lord, 9. then he shall bring with the bull a meal offering of three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with one-half a hin of oil. 10. And you shall bring for a drink offering one-half hin of wine for an offering by fire, of a sweet aroma to the Lord.' 11. "Thus it shall be done for a bull, for a ram, for a lamb, or for a goat. 12. According to the number you shall prepare, so you shall do for everyone according to their number. 13. All who are born in this country shall do these things in the same manner in presenting an offering by fire, of a sweet aroma to the Lord. 14. And if an alien sojourns with you, or anyone who is among you throughout your generations, and

if he wishes to present an offering by fire, of a sweet aroma to the Lord, he shall do as you do. 15. There shall be just one regulation for you of the congregation, as well as for the alien sojourning with you, a regulation forever throughout your generations: as you are, so shall the alien be before the Lord. 16. One law and one code shall apply both to you and to the alien who sojourns with you."

17. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 18. "Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, 'When you come into the land into which I bring you, 19. it shall be that when you eat of the bread of the land you shall offer up a gift to the Lord. 20. You shall offer a cake from the first of your dough as a gift; just as you offer the gift of your threshing floor, in the same manner you shall set it apart. 21. You shall give an offering to the Lord from the first of your dough throughout your generations.

22. "If you have erred and have not kept all these commandments which the Lord spoke to Moses, 23. everything the Lord has commanded you through Moses, from the day the Lord gave commandment and onward throughout your generations; 24. then if it is done unintentionally or without the knowledge of the congregation, all of the congregation shall offer one young bull for a burnt offering, for a sweet aroma to the Lord, along with its meal offering and its drink offering according to the regulation; and one young goat shall be given as a sin offering. 25. Then the priest shall make atonement for all the congregation of the children of Israel, and they shall be forgiven; since it was unintentional, and they have brought their offering, a sacrifice brought by fire to the Lord, and their sin offering made before the Lord, for their ignorance. 26. And it shall be forgiven unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and the alien sojourning among them, since all the people were in ignorance.

27. Also, if one person sins through ignorance, he shall bring a year-old female goat for a sin offering. 28. And the priest shall make atonement for the person who sins in ignorance when he sins unintentionally before the Lord, to make atonement for

him: it shall be forgiven him. 29. "You shall have just one law for him who sins ignorantly, whether he is born among the children of Israel or the alien who sojourns among them.

30. But the person who acts defiantly, whether he is native born or an alien, dishonors the Lord: that person shall be excommunicated from among his people. 31. Because he has despised the word of the Lord and has broken His commandment, that person shall be entirely cut off; and his guilt shall be upon himself.

COMMENTARY

At this point comes a most abrupt break in the account of Israel's history. For thirty-seven years, with the exception of a single item, in chapter 16, no actions of the people are recorded. It is as if the time spent in the wilderness should be forgotten. True, the places of their encampments are given (33:19-30); but even these are all but unidentifiable. We must not assume that God abandoned the people. They were certainly provided their daily manna, and, just as certainly, it would have been necessary that He furnish copious supplies of water for the people and their animals. In addition, the fire and the cloud went before them (see Ex. 40:34-37), so that the 'wandering' was not aimless and undirected; the Lord led them from place to place as it was appropriate. In analyzing the general circumstance, *KD* suggests the silence of the account is to be attributed to the fact that "the fighting men of Israel had fallen under the judgment of Jehovah, and the sacred history, therefore, was no longer concerned with them; whilst the youth, in whom the life and hope of Israel were preserved, had as yet no history at all," (p. 100).

Anticipating the time when the young generation should arrive in the Promised Land, the Lord reveals certain provisions which complete previous laws. When *KD* proposes that the reason for this revelation is to revive the hopes of the oncoming generation and direct their minds toward the Land, the reasoning seems too thin. It is hard to see how such a minor factor could serve as such a buoy for forty years. Perhaps a

better reason is that of *PC*: "it is evident that the primary object of their promulgation was simply to supply certain defects and omissions in the Levitical legislation," (p. 181).

The laws pertain to certain meal offerings, which are to be added to other sacrifices. The first of these relates all burnt offerings and all offerings which were killed to meat and drink offerings. A fixed amount of meal, oil and wine should be presented with each animal. The quantity differed according to the kind of animal being sacrificed. The occasion of the offering had no effect upon this law—it did not matter whether the animal was being given during the observation of a feast, or in confirmation of a vow, or as a free will offering.

The second law, vv. 17-21, establishes a procedure for offering the "first-fruits"—coarsely ground meal was to be made into a "cake", which, in turn, was lifted up or "heaved" unto the Lord in token of gratitude and blessing. It then became food for the priests.

A final enlargement, 22-31, relates to offerings occasioned by sins of omission. Considering the broad expanses of the terms of the Law, and countless points upon which questions of personal interpretation might arise in carrying out the Law, it is not at all surprising that provision is made for those who, in ignorance or oversight, err. This law had no relationship whatever to deliberate or willful sins, such as blasphemy or rebellion against the Lord. In each of the three provisions, the same details are to apply to both stranger and native-born (see verses 16, 26 and 30).

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

279. What purposes would be served in giving the Israelites instructions for sacrificial procedures they would not use until they occupied their new land?
280. Is it logical for Moses to change the account so abruptly at this point in his history of the people? Enlarge upon your answer.

281. The period in Israel's history between Kadesh-Barnea and the end of their days in the desert have commonly been called the "Wilderness Wanderings." How is this both accurate and inaccurate?
282. Why are the special provisions given in this section to be applicable to both native Israelites and strangers alike?
283. Under what circumstances should an Israelite make an offering for unknown sins?

B. STONING OF THE SABBATH-BREAKER vv. 32-36

TEXT

Chapter 15:32. And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day. 33. And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. 34. And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. 35. And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. 36. And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the Lord commanded Moses.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 15:32. Now while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the sabbath day. 33. And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation. 34. And they held him in custody, since it had not been told what should be done to him. 35. And the Lord said to Moses, "The man shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp." 36. And all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him to death with stones just as the Lord had commanded Moses.

COMMENTARY

Following immediately upon the law distinguishing between unwitting and deliberate sins, the brief account of the Sabbath-breaker may well be introduced as an exemplum, as well as a concrete reference for future cases in which labor on the Sabbath might require judgment. The man appears to be acting presumptuously rather than in ignorance of the law. Much of the discussion upon the incident, especially that of liberal scholarship, purports to find a basic contradiction between the statement here that "it was not declared what should be done to him," (v. 34), and the clear teaching of Ex. 31:14ff. and 35:2—that Sabbath-breaking is a capital offense—overlooks a basic point. Labor on the Sabbath clearly is such an offense; but, is gathering sticks considered labor, or is it an excusable necessity under the circumstances? God's answer is quick and decisive: the man had broken the law, and must suffer the consequences previously prescribed. He is stoned by the congregation to his death.

The incident offends certain modern minds which find the death penalty horrendous under any or all circumstances. They are especially disturbed that death should come upon an individual for such an apparently trivial reason. Where such an attitude can be found, it is evidence of a more deeply seated reaction against the sovereign right of God to prescribe laws and govern human conduct by standards which do not rest upon human reasoning. Much more than our present age, the Israelites were taught from infancy to recognize the holiness of the Lord. Since His laws were nothing less than the extension of His will and His person into the ideal human society, they were always justifiable, always above question. Such conclusions were inevitable and essential in a truly theocratic system.

Stoning "without the camp" preserved the undefiled nature of the camp. In no manner were the people to be held accountable for the presumptuous man's sins; they were to be totally dissociated from both the living violator and the dead victim of the law of God.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

284. Upon what grounds can we justify the death sentence for this apparently trivial offense?
285. What point of the Law needed clarification before the man's fate could be decided?
286. Why should the congregation participate in execution of the sentence?
287. What important fact is impressed upon us regarding the Sabbath in the incident?

C. LAW OF THE TASSELS vv. 37-41

TEXT

Chapter 15:37. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 38. Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments, throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue; 39. And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring: 40. That ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God. 41. I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the Lord your God.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 15:37. And the Lord spoke to Moses saying, 38. "Speak to the children of Israel and tell them that they shall make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and they shall put on the tassel of each corner a blue cord. 39. And it shall be a tassel for you to see and remember all the commandments of the Lord, to do them. Do not seek after your own heart or your own eyes, after which you wander, 40. in order that you may remember to do all my commandments, and be holy to your God. 41. I am the Lord

your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am the Lord your God."

COMMENTARY

Tzitzit, the Hebrew term used in v. 38, probably means "tassels". Ezekiel used the word (8:3) where its apparent meaning is "lock of hair." They were placed at the corners of the garments, attached by a blue cord. Two purposes have been ascribed to the tassels: they are to remind the people of their living relationship to the Lord and His Laws; and, they serve as a readily recognizable means of identification for His people. Wherever they went, and among whatsoever people they might mingle, they were uniquely marked unless, in repudiation of this commandment, they should be ashamed or unwilling to comply with God's requirement.

Historically, the Israelites complied with the commandment by wearing the *tallith*, a special garment worn by all males beyond the age of thirteen. It was a long, narrow cloth with a tassel at each corner and a hole in the center. The head was passed through the hole, and the cloth fell to the chest and the mid-back. Among the many other aberrations and showy practices of the Pharisees, making these tassels extremely large was a practice which Jesus condemned (Matt. 23:5). Their actions had become exhibitions of pride—far from the purpose for which the Lord had prescribed the tassels in the first place. Numerology has figured in the rabbinical attitude toward the *tzitzit*, whose gematria is six hundred. Adding eight threads and five knots (arbitrarily assigned as components of the garment), one arrives at the total of 613, the total number of commandments accepted as obligatory upon the Jews. Of further interest is the fact that the blue dye used for the tassels was derived from the blood of the *hilazon*, a shellfish, and was very expensive. It was later determined, perhaps because of the prohibitive cost, that the knotted cord might be white.

Non-Jewish scholars have usually cited the psychological importance of the *tzitzit* as constant reminders of the individual's relationship to God. Following "their own heart

and their own eyes" would mean spiritual defection according to their personal whims rather than the righteous laws God had delivered to them. Such a defection is termed "a whoring" here in *KJ*—a strong, symbolical term frequently applied to such conduct in both testaments.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

288. Describe the *tzitzit*, its appearance and function.
289. What use, and what abuse, was made of the tassels?
290. Discuss the numerological significance attached to the tassels.
291. For what reason were the Israelites later permitted to make the tassels white rather than blue?
292. Do you find any memorials or instructions in the New Testament which resemble the one given here?

D. REVOLT AND PUNISHMENT OF KORAH, DATHAN AND ABIRAM (16:1-40)

TEXT

Chapter 16:1. Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men: 2. And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown; 3. And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord? 4. And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face; 5. And he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even to-morrow the Lord will show who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him: even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him. 6. This do: Take you censers, Korah, and all his company; 7. And put fire therein, and put incense in them before the

Lord tomorrow: and it shall be that the man whom the Lord doth choose, he shall be holy: ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi. 8. And Moses said unto Korah, Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi: 9. Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? 10. And he hath brought thee near to him, and all the brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and seek ye the priesthood also? 11. For which cause both thou and all thy company are gathered together against the Lord: and what is Aaron, that ye murmur against him?

12. And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab; which said, We will not come up: 13. Is it a small thing that thou hast brought us up out of a land that floweth with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, except thou make thyself altogether a prince over us? 14. Moreover, thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey, or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards: wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? we will not come up. 15. And Moses was very wroth, and said unto the Lord, Respect not thou their offering: I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them. 16. And Moses said unto Korah, Be thou and all thy company before the Lord, thou, and they, and Aaron, to-morrow: 17. And take every man his censer, and put incense in them, and bring ye before the Lord every man his censer, two hundred and fifty censers; thou also, and Aaron, each of you his censer. 18. And they took every man his censer, and put fire in them, and laid incense thereon, and stood in the door of the tabernacle of the congregation with Moses and Aaron. 19. And Korah gathered all the congregation against them unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the congregation. 20. And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, 21. Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment. 22. And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt

thou be wroth with all the congregation?

23. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 24. Speak unto the congregation, saying, Get you up from about the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. 25. And Moses rose up and went unto Dathan and Abiram; and the elders of Israel followed him. 26. And he spake unto the congregation, saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins. 27. So they gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side: and Dethan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children. 28. And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind. 29. If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the Lord hath not sent me. 30. But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord.

31. And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: 32. And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. 33. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation. 34. And all Israel that were around about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also. 35. And there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense.

36. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 37. Speak unto Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, that he take up the censers out of the burning, and scatter thou the fire yonder; for they are hallowed. 38. The censers of these sinners against their own souls, let them make them broad plates for a covering of the altar: for they offered them before the Lord, therefore they are

hallowed: and they shall be a sign unto the children of Israel. 39. And Eleazar the priest took the brazen censers, wherewith they that were burnt had offered; and they were made broad plates for a covering of the altar: 40. To be a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger, which is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before the Lord; that he be not as Korah, and as his company: as the Lord said to him by the hand of Moses.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 16:1. Now Korah, son of Izhar, son of Kohath, son of Levi, along with Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and On, son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, gathered men 2. and rose up against Moses, together with certain of the children of Israel—two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, regularly chosen by the assembly, men of renown. 3. And they gathered themselves together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, “You assume too much, since all the congregation are holy, each one of them, and the Lord is in their midst. Why, then, do you exalt yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?” 4. When Moses heard this, he fell on his face 5. and spoke to Korah and all his company, saying, “Tomorrow morning the Lord will show who is His, and who is holy, and will cause him to draw near Him; even the one whom He will choose. He will bring near to Himself. 6. Do this: Take censers, both Korah and all his company. 7. Put fire in the censers and put incense in them in the presence of the Lord tomorrow. The man whom the Lord chooses, he shall be holy. You assume too much, you sons of Levi!” 8. Then Moses said to Korah, “I ask you to listen, sons of Levi. 9. Is it too little for you that the God of Israel has set you apart from the congregation of Israel to bring you near to Himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister to them? 10. He has also brought you near Him, and all your brothers, sons of Levi, with you? 11. Do you also seek the priesthood? For this reason you and all your company who are brought together are against the Lord. And who is Aaron, that you

complain against him?

12. Then Moses issued a summons to Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab; 13. but they said, "We will not come. Is it not enough that you have brought us up from a land flowing with milk and honey to kill us in the wilderness? and now you also make yourself a prince over us? 14. Furthermore, you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor have you given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards. Would you gouge out the eyes of these men? We will not come up!" 15. Then Moses was very angry and he said to the Lord, "Do not regard their offering. I have not taken a single donkey from them, nor have I hurt any of them." 16. And Moses said to Korah, "Be present before the Lord with all your company tomorrow: you, they, and Aaron. 17. Let every man take his censer and put incense in it, and present his censer unto the Lord—two hundred and fifty censers. You and Aaron, each shall bring his censer. 18. So each man took his censer, putting fire in it, and laid incense on it, and stood in the door of the Tent of Meeting with Moses and Aaron. 19. And Korah gathered all the congregation before them at the door of the Tent of Meeting; and the glory of the Lord appeared to the entire congregation. 20. Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron saying, 21. "Separate yourselves from among this congregation so I may consume them immediately." 22. But they fell on their faces and said, "O God, God of the spirit of all flesh, if one man sins, will you be angry with the entire congregation?"

23. Then the Lord said to Moses, "Speak to the congregation, saying, 24. 'Get away from the area around the homes of Korah, Dathan and Abiram' " 25. And Moses arose and went to Dathan and Abiram, with the elders of Israel following him. 26. And he said to the congregation, "I pray you, get away from the tents of these corrupt men, touching nothing of theirs, lest you be consumed among all their sins." 27. So they left the homes of Korah, Dathan and Abiram on all sides; and Dathan and Abiram came out and stood in the door of their tents, as did their wives, their sons, and their little children. 28. And Moses said, "By this you shall know that the

Lord has sent me to do all these works; I have not done them of my own volition. 29. If these men die a death common to all men, or if that which comes upon them also comes upon all men, then the Lord has not sent me. 30. However, if the Lord creates something quite new, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up with everything related to them and they enter alive into the Grave, then you shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord."

31. As he finished speaking these words, it happened that the ground split open beneath them. 32. The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, their homes, and all the men associated with Korah, together with all their possessions. 33. They, and all their belongings descended alive into the Grave, and the earth closed upon them; and they perished from among the congregation. 34. And all the Israelites surrounding them fled at their shout, for they said, "The earth must not swallow us also!" 35. And a fire came from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering incense.

*36. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 37. "Tell Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, that he should take up the censers from the fire and scatter the burning coals around; the censers have become holy. 38. As for the censers of these men who sinned at the cost of their very lives, let them be made into beaten plates for a covering for the altar, since they presented them before the Lord, and they have become holy. 39. They shall be a sign unto the children of Israel." So Eleazar the priest took the brass censers which had been offered by the men who were burned; and they beat them into a covering for the altar, 40. to be a reminder to the children of Israel so that no one who is not a priest, who is not a descendant of Aaron, may come near to burn incense before the Lord, lest he become like Korah and his company, as the Lord told Eleazar through Moses.

COMMENTARY

This section has been subjected to severe attack by the

*Some versions divide the chapter at this point.

critics' knives. The usual contention is that we have here not one rebellion, but two; and that they are interwoven records of the revolt of Dathan and Abiram against Moses' civil authority, while the revolt of Korah and his company is directed against the religious authority of the great man of God. The first account is presumed to be that of JE; the second, by P. Admittedly, there are some problems with the early portion of the text, but in no logical manner do these problems give substance to the critical view. Besides the contention that we have two, rather than one incident, critics have pointed to the fact that the verb "took" (v. 1) has no object. Finally, there is a change of number in the verbs from verse 1 to the following verses— from the singular to the plural.

Each of the charges can be answered without straining the intent or the integrity of the text. Regarding the change of number, we may assume that Moses himself began the account by calling attention to Korah, the instigator of all of the difficulty, as he gathered the other leading participants about him and influenced them to join in the protest against Moses. From that point, we are dealing not with one individual, but with a group; hence, the entire group receive the author's attention.

Nobody knows certainly what is the intended object of the verb "took", although the *KJ* supplies "men", a very logical choice under the circumstances; the Jerusalem Targum suggests "counsel", which would also fit the situation; *RCP*, more original but less probable, supplies "himself". With Dathan and Abiram having been mentioned within the same verse, and anticipating the association all would have in the revolt, the conjecture that Korah "*took men*" for the purpose of organizing the resistance would seem most probable; and it would reinforce the argument regarding the change of number previously discussed.

The suggestion that we are dealing with two interwoven records, not a single incident, is purely a subjective judgment. *IB* demonstrates well a very obviously anachronistic prejudice in

commenting that the mistake of all the revolutionaries was not that of insurrection, disrespect for authority, or attempted usurpation of rights not properly theirs; it was, instead, a mistake of bad timing. In the commentator's words, "In what then did the crime of Korah and his associates consist? Was it not that they failed to see that their timing was wrong?" (p. 222). The conclusion is based upon the premise that the contemporary reader should "glory in their two main contentions, viz., ecclesiastical and political democracy as over against autocracy", (*Ibid*). It is hard to imagine a more unwarranted and myopic argument. The author has ignored the facts that Moses served in his place, not by demagoguery or without divine sanction, but as the very personally appointed legate of God Himself. It is historical folly to suggest that a democratic government among either the priests or the people of Israel would have been a more equitable form of rule than that which had been ordained by the Law: a theocracy, with political leadership placed squarely in Moses' hands, and religious leadership assigned to the Levitical priesthood, with Moses and Aaron standing in primary positions. It must not be forgotten that these positions, while most honorable and prestigious, also were positions of almost incalculable responsibility. Rebels like Korah and his crew have, more often than not, sought honor and prestige rather than equity and responsibility. From the manner in which the revolt began, but more particularly from the manner in which God dealt with it, we may confidently affirm that the critics stand upon thin ice.

The most interesting treatment of Korah's mutiny undoubtedly is that of Rabbi Tanhumah in the Midrash. He points out that Reuben camped on the south side of the Tent, which put Korah and the other rebels in near proximity to each other. And why did Korah rebel? Because of jealousy toward Elizaphan, son of Uzziel, who was appointed prince of the Kohathites (at Moses' hand, but at God's instruction), whereas Korah, son of Izhar and in seniority next to Amram, should have received the honor, in his own opinion. Tanhumah relates a test question devised by Korah and his company, by which he

proposed to humiliate and expose Moses as unfit to lead the people: standing before Moses, Korah asked, "Does a garment made entirely of blue wool still require the *tzitzit* with its single blue thread, or is such a garment exempt?" When Moses replied that the *tzitzit* must still be fastened to the garment, the scoffers retorted, "Is it possible that a garment of a different color is legally covered by a single thread of blue, while this robe made wholly of blue should not be exempt?" (*RCP*, pp. 148, 149).

While such a story may lack historical validity, it would blend well with the true meaning of "rose up *before* Moses", v. 2; in harmony with v. 3, we may understand that the rebels "rose up *against* Moses," plotting their insurrection, but not necessarily standing directly before his face at the outset of their plot.

At the actual confrontation (v. 3ff.), their words accuse Moses of assuming too much authority, elevating himself above all the people without authorization. Their weak premise is that all of the people, not Moses alone, had the abiding presence of the Lord in their midst; hence, the proposal is that all the people should be a holy people—perhaps even an entire nation of priests. Such a proposal ignores, according to *KD*, both the "transition of the universal priesthood into the special mediatorial office and priesthood of Moses and Aaron," and overlooks "the fact that God Himself had chosen Moses and Aaron, and appointed them as mediators between Himself and the congregation, to educate the sinful nation into a holy nation . . . the rebels, on the contrary, thought that they were holy already," (pp. 106, 107).

For the fourth time, a serious incident has disrupted the smooth progress of history among the Israelites. They had worshipped the golden calf, murmured bitterly against Moses and the Lord, and followed the bad advice of the ten faithless spies. Each time Moses had interceded in their behalf; each time God had been merciful. But the potential of this rebellion seems to be the worst of all. Moses "fell upon his face" once more,

doubtless experiencing a combination of frustration, bitter disappointment, and grief. Only the Lord can fully and properly handle the problem and, while prostrate, Moses seeks the course of Divine counsel. When he rises, it is with God's own prescription for action: the rebels are to bring their censers into His own Presence on the following day, and He would make his verdict clear to the entire camp. Of course, only the Levites following Korah would be involved in the test at this point. Theirs is a higher station than that of the Reubenites; theirs is, therefore, a weightier responsibility. The Reubenites will be dealt with differently but appropriately. Moses pinpoints the sin of Korah and his troupe in v. 7 when he turns their own argument upon them: "Ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi!" They have been presumptuous to the extreme, standing in criticism of a system designed by God, but making Moses the butt of their snide remarks.

The entire structure of the priestly system is placed in its proper perspective in vv. 9-11. Every Levite holds a place of special honor and service of ministry; now these malcontents seek to break out of their prescribed assignment, considering it beneath their dignity or their ability. Typically human, they complain about not holding the highest stations while ignoring the singular place of honorable service to which they have been set aside.

Moses next turned his attention to Dathan and Abiram, whose precise role in the conflict is not clear. They were not of the two hundred and fifty previously referred to, but they are called to the same scene of impending trial. They refuse emphatically. They propose four basic criticisms against Moses: 1. he has brought them from a land of plenty; 2. he will cause their death in the desert; 3. he has made himself a prince over the people; and, 4. he has failed to bring them to the land promised them when they left Egypt. The charges have no substance whatever. They have forgotten that they were slaves without privilege, and under heavy oppression, regardless of any other circumstances. Again, although death has indeed been promised to all those adults now in the camp before they

emerge from their time in the wilderness, it is a death they have brought upon themselves because of their hardness of heart and refusal to follow God's will in entering into Canaan. This argument is directly related to the last point, since their failure to enter the Promised Land is coupled with their own obstinacy, and the resultant promise of death. The charge that Moses had made himself a prince over the people is patently untrue. The accusers had forgotten, or did not know, that, although Moses chose to repudiate his place among the royal family in Egypt in order to identify himself with his own people (Ex. 2:11-15; cf. Heb. 11:24-27), God had selected him to return from Midian as the leader of his people from the land of bondage over Moses' sincere efforts to refuse the place of leadership (see Ex. 3:7-4:17). These circumstances made the unkind criticisms even more difficult for Moses to bear. His angered response (v. 15) is not only understandable, it is wholly justified. His counsel to the Lord, that He should not recognize their offering, hardly seems necessary, although it is a natural statement, as is his defense of personal integrity.

To Korah, Moses repeats God's instructions, (vv. 16, 17). The next day arrives, and Korah appears as directed, with his companions, while the congregation draws near to watch the proceedings. When God warns Moses and Aaron to draw apart from the throng to avoid being caught in their destruction, they immediately react against the thought that punishment might visit upon the entire audience—how shall they all be held responsible for the deeds of a few? Their intercession is based upon the knowledge that God is aware of the innermost thoughts of all men, and He will not cause the innocent to suffer here with the offenders; He will punish with discrimination. To this end, Moses and Aaron are told to leave the dwelling of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.

Moses makes one last effort to dissuade the revolutionaries from their course. He came before Dathan and Abiram to request an end to their rebellion, but his efforts are without success. Consequently the people are told to separate themselves from the spot and to touch nothing whatever among

their belonging, for all are to be destroyed. This leaves the rebels and their families in virtual isolation, whereupon Moses sets forth the terms of the divine ordeal: if the men die an ordinary death, then he is not God's ordained spokesman. If, however, the earth splits and they are taken into the crevice, the people must recognize them for what they are: rebels against the Lord. He had scarcely finished his charge when the earth opened up and they were destroyed. The sight was made more horrendous by the accompanying screams of the victims, a flame which no doubt flashed forth from the sanctuary like lightning, and the disappearance of people, houses and possessions. Fear struck the hearts of the congregation and they fled to escape a similar fate. At the same instant, the two hundred fifty Levites and, no doubt, Korah himself were overcome by a fatal fire emanating from the Tabernacle. It was a most convincing demonstration of righteous judgment, and a clear exoneration of Moses and Aaron.

The closing verses of this section (vv. 36-40), establish the sacredness of the vessels used by the lately deceased. They are not to be discarded or used profanely. Rather, they are to be made into brass covers for the altar of incense. As such, they would be continuing reminders of the fate which surely awaits any who would be so foolish as to repeat the irreverent errors of Korah. The incident is closed. Moses and Aaron have been vindicated, and the justice of God has again been demonstrated most convincingly.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

293. Review the distinction between priests and Levites, and relate this to Korah, Dathan and Abiram.
294. Upon what grounds do critics attempt to show that chapter 16 is actually a composite of two separate incidents? Look through the chapter carefully, separating the proposed incidents. What happens to the text's logic, order and credibility?
295. List the actual problems encountered in the account.

How is each of them interpreted by the critical schools?
How can the problems be explained without doing violence to belief in the Mosiac authorship of the chapter?

296. What is essentially wrong in suggesting that the error of the revolutionaries was simply a matter of bad timing?
297. Pinpoint the primary point of guilt in Korah's criticism and ambition.
298. Relate the test Korah is said to have proposed to Moses, in an attempt to trap him.
299. Explain why Moses would continue to intercede before the Lord in behalf of a rebellious people time after time.
300. Why should the verdict of God be pronounced separately and differently upon the Levites and the Reubenites?
301. What four basic criticisms do Dathan and Abiram level at Moses? Answer each of them.
302. Why was it necessary for God to call the congregation apart from Korah—would He have destroyed them along with the rebels?
303. Others, besides Moses, have predicted the manner of God's destruction upon false prophets or revolutionaries. Find as many examples as you can, such as Micaiah (I Kings 22:24-28).
304. What would be considered an "ordinary death", as Moses speaks to the rebels?
305. Describe the circumstances under which God effected the punishment of the rebels.
306. What emotion came upon the congregation as they witnessed this scene?
307. Why were the censers not destroyed? To what use were they finally put?

E. THE FATAL PLAGUE vv. 41-50

TEXT

Chapter 16:41. But on the morrow all the congregation of

the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord. 42. And it came to pass, when the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation; and, behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared. 43. And Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of the congregation.

44. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 45. Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment. And they fell upon their faces.

46. And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the Lord; the plague is begun. 47. And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people. 48. And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed. 49. Now they that died in the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred, besides them that died about the matter of Korah. 50. And Aaron returned unto Moses unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the plague was stayed.

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 16:41. But on the next day all the congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, saying, "You have killed the people of the Lord." 42. And it happened when the congregation had gathered against Moses and Aaron that they looked toward the Tent of Meeting, and behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared. 43. Then Moses and Aaron came before the Tent of Meeting.

44. And the Lord said to Moses, "Get away from this congregation so that I may consume them immediately." 45. And they all fell on their faces. And Moses said to Aaron, "Take

a censer and put fire from the altar in it, and put incense on it, and take it quickly to the congregation to make atonement for them;

46. for wrath has gone out from the Lord, and the plague has begun.” 47. And Aaron took the censer as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and behold, the plague had begun among the people. Therefore, he put incense on the censer, and made atonement for the people. 48. And he stood between the dead and the living so that the plague was stopped. 49. Now all those who had died in the plague were 14,700, besides those who died in the incident of Korah. 50. Then Aaron returned to Moses, to the door of the Tent of Meeting, since the plague had been ended.

COMMENTARY

While the incident given in closing chapter sixteen may almost seem to be an epilogue to the account of Korah and the rebels, it is only partly so. The multitude had had no part in the rebellion, and should have been convinced by the dramatic visit of divine justice that Moses' conduct was altogether acceptable to the Lord, and that the destruction was nothing less than deserved. Had the matter been left here, the story would have had a different end. But, with the unpredictability of human nature, the crowd now proved to be most fickle as they hurled bitter charges against Moses and Aaron, accusing them of having “killed the people of the Lord”! Such a judgment cannot be justified, under any circumstances. True, the lives of a number of people have been taken, but they have suffered a self-imposed condemnation; and the people themselves were spared only because Moses and Aaron had interposed for them, eliciting God's instructions that they all should withdraw from the proximity of the destruction (v. 26). Since the 250 men had been very important men in the community, their loss would be a serious blow. But it should not have obscured the issues themselves, which the people have now forgotten.

While the protest is being lodged with Moses and Aaron, God again takes decisive action, appearing in a covering cloud at

the tabernacle. From this covering, His words issue a call for the two faithful men to separate themselves again from the murmurers. Quickly, Aaron is dispatched to offer incense in behalf of the offenders, to prevent their death. And what is the plague which has already begun to ravage the camp? Our information is inadequate, but it seems to have been a direct visit of death upon them. In a very brief time, 14,700 had been victims. That there were not many more is directly due to the quick actions of Aaron at the instruction of Moses. For so fierce a visitation to have ended so suddenly would leave no doubt whatever but that God heard the intercession of His servants once again; the surviving people owed their very lives once more to the men of whom they had been most severely critical.

QUESTIONS AND RESEARCH ITEMS

308. By what sort of logic could the congregation hold Moses and Aaron responsible for the death sentence executed upon the rebels?
309. Why would the loss of these 250 men be a special blow against the life of the community?
310. The Law prescribed no such service as Aaron's special incense offering, made on this occasion. Why should it have been effectual?
311. What do we know about the kind of plague which visited the people?
312. Explain the scripture saying that Aaron "stood between the dead and the living" in giving his offering.

F. BUDDING OF AARON'S ROD (17:1-13)

TEXT

Chapter 17:1. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 2. Speak unto the children of Israel, and take of every one of them a rod according to the house of their fathers, of all their princes according to the house of their fathers, twelve rods: write thou every man's name upon his rod. 3. And thou shalt write Aaron's name upon the rod of Levi: for one rod shall be for the head of

the house of their fathers. 4. And thou shalt lay them up in the tabernacle of the congregation before the testimony, where I will meet you. 5. And it shall come to pass, that the man's rod, whom I shall choose, shall blossom: and I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel, whereby they murmur against you.

6. And Moses spake unto the children of Israel, and every one of their princes gave him a rod apiece, for each prince one, according to their father's houses, even twelve rods; and the rod of Aaron was among their rods. 7. And Moses laid up the rods before the Lord in the tabernacle of witness, 8. And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds. 9. And Moses brought out all the rods from before the Lord unto all the children of Israel: and they looked, and took every man his rod.

10. And the Lord said unto Moses, Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels; and thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from me, that they die not. 11. And Moses did so; as the Lord commanded him, so did he. 12. And the children of Israel spake unto Moses saying, Behold, we die; we perish; we all perish. 13. Whosoever cometh anywhere near unto the tabernacle of the Lord shall die; shall we be consumed with dying?

PARAPHRASE

Chapter 17:1. Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2. "Speak to the children of Israel, and take from each one of them a rod, one for each father's family, of all their princes according to the father's family: twelve rods in all. Write every man's name on his rod, 3. and write Aaron's name upon the rod of Levi, for one rod shall represent each of the fathers' families. 4. And you shall lay them up in the Tent of Meeting in front of the Testimony, where I will meet with you. 5. And it will happen that the man whose rod I shall choose shall blossom. In this way I will put an end to the grumblings against Me—the

grumbings of the children of Israel who complain against you.”

6. So Moses spoke to the children of Israel, and each of the princes gave him a rod, one for each prince, according to their fathers' families: twelve rods, among which was the rod of Aaron. 7. So Moses put the rods before the Lord in the Tent of the Testimony. 8. And it happened on the next day that Moses went into the Tent of the Testimony; and lo, the rod of Aaron, representing the house of Levi, had sprouted and brought forth buds and bloomed, and had produced ripe almonds. 9. Moses then brought out all the rods from before the Lord to all the children of Israel; and they looked, and each man took his rod.

10. But the Lord said to Moses, “Put Aaron's rod back before the Testimony, to be kept as a sign against the rebels so that you may put an end to their complaining against Me, in order that they may not die.” 11. And Moses did it; just as the Lord commanded him, he did it. 12. And the children of Israel spoke to Moses, saying, “Look we are dying! We perish! We are all dying! 13. Everyone who comes near, everyone who even approaches the Tabernacle of the Lord dies! Shall we all perish?”

COMMENTARY

Of this account, *IB* says, “The story of Aaron's rod presents a miracle which the modern mind finds difficult to accept as a literal historical fact,” (p. 227). The revealing comment is hardly surprising from such a source; we might expect it to have been made of virtually any miracle in Scripture, since all revolve about the intervention of God in normal life, and they vary only in time, dimension and circumstances. But to the man who is convinced of God's supreme power, and of His concern with the affairs of men, the miracle is more than credible, it is virtually mandatory at this point in time. When the seeds of rebellion have been sown widely among Israel, and the full crop has led to the deaths of nearly 15,000 people; when God's appointed leaders have been subjected to crude, cruel and totally unjustified criticism, nothing could be more appropriate than for God to demonstrate convincingly that He is still in

power upon His throne, and that His selection of Moses and Aaron is now more fully justified than ever before.

True, it is unusual that a branch, broken from its source, should live, let alone bring forth buds, blossoms and fruit overnight. But who would have been convinced by a sign requiring natural processes to produce the same effects in four months? The God of nature, Whose Son eliminated the time and process required to turn water into wine naturally, chose a like technique to gainsay the scoffers of Israel and reaffirm the station of Aaron, further setting him apart to the highest permanent office among the people: High Priest.

It is probable that the twelve rods presented before the Lord were not sticks randomly chosen to fulfill a specific commandment of the Lord, but that they had served each individual man as a useful staff in daily life; and that each might have been identifiable to its owner even without inscribing his name upon it. The identification would demonstrate beyond dispute, however, ownership of the rod chosen of the Lord; and none could question it. Hebrews 9:4 lists the rod, along with the tablets of the Law and a pot of manna, as an item kept within the Ark of the Covenant—continuing as a reminder of the divine appointment of the High Priest. And, just as the rod, separated from the tree, could have produced nothing at all except by divine power, so the priesthood itself, if severed from God, would be sterile.

The rod is preserved as a sign against rebellion, and God remarked that thus He had literally “buried” their murmurings (v. 10). When the people witnessed the sign of the fruitful rod, they were struck with terror, perhaps realizing the gravity of their complaints more fully than ever before. They feared another fatal judgment upon their number at the moment, or at intervals in the future when they approached the Tabernacle, and their cries, “We are dying!” are expressed in what are known as “perfects of certainty”, indicating the inevitable. But they have only seen God’s warning, not His execution, in the sign: and they have no reason to fear unless they should repeat the dastardly conduct of the recent past.